



# ASA Philippines Foundation

## Success Stories

Submitted by



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# Rosemarie Rodriguez Juan



*Rosemarie Juan is happy with her group of enterprises that include a hamburger stand (top left), a fast-selling sari-sari store (top right), processed food she holds in hand (below right) and the PC and printer set she bought as the fruit of her labor. This computer set is used by her children in their research activities and also by Rosemary to keep track of her income on business (bottom right).*

## Client Profile

Name	Rosemarie Rodriguez Juan
Address	Quisumbing, Camarin, Caloocan City
Origins	Real, Quezon
Age	36 years old
Education	Computer Secretarial Undergraduate Arellano University, Legarda, Manila
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Three: Ericson (16 yrs); Robinson, Jr. (15 yrs); Ruby Rose (10 yrs)
Loan Cycle	18 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	GROUP LEADER-TREASURER, ASA St. Jude Group
Loan Amount	PHP55,000
Savings	PHP34,500
Enterprise	MULTI-LINEAR: -Sari-sari Store - Hamburger Stand - Breakfast Delivery -Frozen/ Processed Food Sales - Mineral Water Delivery - Direct Selling
Dwelling	Renter at PHP1,500/ month



# *"Nakayanan kong umangat noon, kakayanin kong umangat ngayon" - I was able to rise before, I could rise again now*

## **My uphill journey**

**A**ng gising ko ay alas-tres madaling araw para maihanda ang mga anak ko sa pagpasok sa paaralan at maumpisaban ko ang pagluluto ng ulam na pangalmusal na pang-tinda sa aking mga suking kapitbahay para sa pabaon ng kanilang mga anak at para sa kanilang hapag-kainan (I wake up 3:30 at dawn to prepare my kids for school and start cooking breakfast for sale to my client-neighbors which they need for their children's packed lunches and for their own tables).

I am happy to do all these and attend to my different enterprises. However, when I look back on my own childhood, the road was not easy.

I had always wanted to finish college but my parents were not able to afford it. I made plans to come to with a friend who was one of our neighbors back in Quezon. Together, we hunted for jobs and the only jobs we could be hired for was as domestic helpers and *yayas* (nursemaid).

I moved from one household to another as a house helper until I landed a job with an accountant-couple who worked at the Arellano University. When they learned that I wanted to go to college, my *amos* (employers) encouraged me to enroll in a Computer then popular among young

could not afford the course. I became a at daytime and attending afternoons.

I was not able to eventually dropped out of send whatever money I province. Meantime, I met who was also a helper Sta. Mesa where I became employer.

Robinson and I Camarin, Caloocan City husband would have jobs "on and off" all of which did not cover all our basic needs. To make ends meet, I washed clothes for richer families from 2003 to 2004.

With the little income I made as a *labandera* (washerwoman) and from a cooked food selling business that I ventured into, I was able to send my children to elementary schools.

*ASA came into our lives in 2004 when it established a branch in this section of the city. I have never ceased being a client since then. I used my first loan cycles in the cooked food business and in enterprises that I opened . . . my biggest breakthrough was my Hamburger Stand that has become a popular hang-out of kids in the neighborhood.*

Secretarial course that was college hopefuls who

tuition of a regular degree working student, working classes in the late

complete the course and

school because I had to earned back to the my husband, Robinson around the neighborhood the housemaid of another

settled on a "rights" lot in after marriage. My

## **ASA's role in our lives**

ASA came into our lives *parang sikat ng araw* (like the rays of the sun) in 2004 when it established a branch in this section of the city. I applied for membership and was qualified as a borrower on that year. I have never ceased being a client since then. I used my first loan cycles in the cooked food business and the succeeding enterprises that I opened.

I stocked up my store by investing in a wider assortment of merchandise that I procured from the Caloocan Public Market. I went into the direct selling business of Natasha and Avon products even if I was told that this was risky due to the high products costs, deferred payment scheme, and the unpredictability of clients. Tester items of these popular brands are now displayed in my counters.

I introduced Mineral Water as a major store item, focusing on five-liter jugs that are replenished on a daily basis.

It was with ASA's assistance that I was able to enter the processed food business as a buy-and-seller of *Mekeni* Food Products.

My biggest breakthrough was my procurement of an aluminum cookware for my Hamburger Stand that has become a popular hang-out for kids in the neighborhood. ASA was likewise instrumental in making this happen.



ASA loan proceeds were also used to purchase the computer and printer set now used by my children and myself, the refrigerator as storage for my cold meat products, a washing machine now that I no longer have to take in laundry, and the construction of a bigger store.

### ***My work, my enterprise***

I now invest about PHP18,000 to PHP20,000 in the expansion of my sari-sari store. I realize a daily income of PHP1,000 per day, profiting a modest PHP250 to PHP300 in the process.

In contrast, I invest about PHP7,000 in Natasha and Avon ordered products, netting about PHP2,000 from cash payments. I usually reserve my Tuesdays for the procurement of the orders from the authorized outlets and their distribution to individual clients.

The Mineral Water items are a standout in my store because I am able to recycle all 25 of the water jugs in a given day. I keep the price down at PHP35 per jug in order to stay ahead of competition.

I still cook breakfast food because at this stage in my children's lives, I make sure they are well fed while doing business on the side. My breakfast menu includes spaghetti, *pancit bibon* and *palabok* (native noodles dish) that I sell at PHP12 per pack, and hot chocolate) at PHP10 children's favorites. PHP500 from my alone.

My Meken food because for every business, I realize a gross PHP1,000.

My best seller, of Stand. This is a relatively started it in May 2012 ASA. The grand capital

I don't just sell cost an affordable

with eggs or cheese to become Combo Burgers that I sell for PHP23 each. I also sell French Fries at PHP10 per pack, way below the fastfood price you get for this product.

Aided by the careful attention I pay to each of these micro enterprises, and by tracking the income on my computer, my income for the education of my children has become more than adequate and sustainable.

As a result, all my children are well- provided for. Ericson, the oldest is now 16 and in college at the Quezon City Polytechnic University. He is a freshman in Industrial Engineering.

My son Robinson, Jr. is 15 and a junior high school student at the Camarin High School. Thankfully, he has skipped the K-12 curriculum that has been installed for the freshmen batch of the school.

My youngest child, Ruby Rose, is ten and in Grade 5 at the Camarin Elementary School. Meanwhile, my husband has gained a stable job as a night-shift utility personnel of the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant in Sto Niño, Bulacan.

*We have no choice but to pray for a better place because at present, we are mere renters of the house and lot occupied by the store. The most encouraging part was when ASA stood by me and continued to renew my loan cycles. ASA truly lessened the weight of that loss and gave me reason to hope for.*

*chamorado* (gelatinous rice in per cup which are all Over all, I earn about cooked food enterprise

line does not lag far behind PHP2,000 I sink into this profit of 100% or

course, is still my Burger

new investment because I aided by my last loan from totaled PHP6,500.

hamburgers in buns that PHP10; I also spice these up

### ***Tests of will and courage***

I draw strength from being a Group Leader of ASA St. Jude Branch. We always start our group meetings with a prayer for the blessings we have received. ASA's savings and loan services have stabilized all my old enterprises and supported the addition of newer lines.

Since my husband earns the minimum income of PHP330 per day for five days a week, I have no thoice but continue strengthening my enterprises.

### ***Tests of will and courage***

Bad times do not spare anyone and even as Robinson and I were able to nurse our enterprises and make them grow, we encountered an unforgettable ordeal.

In invested four ASA loans in the construction of our house on Quisumbing Street but in 2010, a demolition order from the city government destroyed huge housing blocks in the area. We lost most of our belongings in that incident.

We have no choice but to pray for a better place because at present, we are mere renters of the house and lot occupied by the store. The most encouraging part was when ASA stood by me and continued to renew my loan cycles. ASA truly lessened the weight of that loss and gave me reason to hope for.

### ***The road to transformation***

I have come a long way from the time I was a nursemaid and dirt poor. There are times when I break down thinking about the past but these are behind me now. I want Ericson to be the first to earn his college degree so that the others would emulate him. Now, I have the extra income to continue supporting my parents in Quezon who are growing older.

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

Because we are transient and renting, my wish is to acquire and legitimately own a property where we could build a thriving grocery without fear of demolition in the near future. *Nakayanan kong umangat noon, kakayanin kong umangat ngayon* (I was able to rise before, I could rise again now). ▲

# Minerva Villamar Eniego



*Minerva Eniego manages two enterprises: Patrick's Boutique and School Supply/ Sewing Materials and Copy Center across the Sampaguita High School, and a Steel and Ironwork assembly shop. Photos on this spread show her minding the counter and paper copier in her rented store space and one of the welders at work on an ongoing project, a steel gate.*

## Client Profile

Name	Minerva Villamar Eniego
Address	Sampaguita Subdivision, Camarin, Caloocan City
Origins	Calaca, Batangas
Age	55 years old
Education	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year, Bachelor of Science in Nursing University of the East, CM Recto, Manila
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Six: Dina May (31 yrs); Joanna (30 yrs); Rowena (27 yrs); May Ann (23 yrs); Jennifer (18 yrs); Patrick James (14 yrs)
Loan Cycle	15 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	GROUP MEMBER, ASA Magenta Group
Loan Amount	PHP30,000
Savings	PHP9,000
Enterprise	MULTI-LINEAR: - Boutique and Gift Shop - School Supplies, Toy Store, Party Favours - Breakfast Delivery - Sewing Center and Sewing Materials - Made-to-Order School Uniforms - Variety Store
Dwelling	Titled Property: 70-square-meter House and Lot Sampaguita Subdivision Corner Store Renter, PHP2,500/Month



# "Simpleng sagot ko sa kahirapan, manindigan sa sariling paa" - My simple response to poverty, stand on your own feet

## My uphill journey

People here call me *Aling* or *Nanay*.  
**P**eva as a term of endearment, as I have walked many of them from childhood to their middle years. As you can see from the color of the hair, I am wise in the ways of the world at my age of 55.

I am a Batangueña from the small town of Calaca, Batangas Province. *Matapang ako sa buhay, malumanay makitungo sa mamimili, pero matapang din ako sa harap sa pagsubok* (I am fearless in life, mildly mannered when dealing with customers, but fearless as well in the face of trial).

I spent my early childhood in Calaca where the living was hard because it was rural. The family started moving to Manila where life was equally hard but the commercial prospects, more plentiful.

I went through high school and two years of college pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree at the University of the East, Manila.

However, I sought knowledge not just from school but also from a source nearest to me, my elders. I grew up in a family of *modistas* (dressmakers), sewers, and dress shop owners. This is why I learned how to sew on practically any kind of sewing machine, from pedal machines to high speed ones. I started earning income this way.

I dropped out of my Nursing course when I met my husband Benjamin, then a welder of Wescon Engineering, a transformer production company. We got married and settled down in Dapitan, Manila before we moved to Caloocan City

when it was still an emerging metropolis. This is where Benjamin started the family's ironwork business in 1983. When this venture showed promise, we settled down permanently in Sampaguita Subdivision, Camarin. This community is a mix of small to medium income families. *Labat ng*

youngest child is Patrick James, 14, a high school junior at the Immaculate Mother Academy where May Ann is a staff.

## My work, my enterprise

It was very opportune indeed that an elementary and high school was established right across the subdivision. Aside from the school, there were many small trading firms, mini-factories, and home-offices that broke ground here.

Entrepreneurs like myself started building stores and food shops around the school. On my part, I thought of setting up not just an ordinary store but a combination boutique and supply center because these attract students, their parents, teachers and school personnel.

I named the store *Patrick's Boutique* after my youngest child and chose to rent this corner space rather than own because this location is just across the Sampaguita High School of Camarin while my residence is a block away and occupied by our ironworks shop. The school uniforms are all sewn by me, or contracted in bulk to highspeedsewers in the neighborhood.

I have a wide line of school and office supplies from desktop materials like copy paper to compact discs to general office supplies. Name the paper, I have it in all sizes and weights. More importantly, I have invested an ASA business loan in a copying machine. This is my store's 'cash cow' that guarantees automatic earnings of about PHP600 to PHP800 per day.

*I went through high school and two years of nursing, seeking knowledge not just from school but also from my elders. I grew up in a family of modistas (dressmakers), sewers, and dress shop owners. This is why I learned how to sew on practically any kind of sewing machine, from pedal machines to high speed ones. I started earning income this way.*

*kalakaran na pinasukan ng mga tagarito ay bumenta* (all kinds of businesses ventured into by people here have turned lucrative).

The point of it all for me was my children's education. I did not waste time or effort to counsel my children to pay heed to their studies but some of them just had it their way. My eldest child, Dina May, 32, did not make it to college and is now married. Neither did my second 30-year-old daughter, Joanna who, like me, ended up in her sophomore year in civil engineering. She also got married.

The precocious one is May Ann, 23, who obtained her Bachelor of Nursing and Master's degree in Public Administration from Fatima University of Caloocan. She now works at the Immaculate Mother Academy.

I have a fourth daughter, Jennifer who is 18 and enrolled in Information Technology at Datamex. My



This store also offers a wide assortment of sewing tools and threads for machines, embroidery and crochet and accents like ribbons, beads and laces. I saw all kinds of school wear from daily uniforms, long slacks, neckties, and athletic wear that you see on the racks.

The family's ironwork business is my other passion although it is the exact opposite of what I am

doing. Whereas I work mostly with soft clothing materials, my husband works with hardcore steel and iron materials.

### ***ASA's role in my life***

I became a client of ASA in 2005. ASA business loans pad up the capital I bring two to three times a week to my shopping destinations. Most of the store's merchandise is bought from a supplier I have known for a lifetime in Blumentritt, Sta. Cruz, Manila.

ASA helped raise the store size from PHP20,000 to PHP70,000. Sales rise during school enrolment from April to June, and school closing from February to April. Gross sales surpass the PHP100,000 mark during these occasions.

The different textile materials for my sewing shop are all purchased in bulk rolls from Binondo, Manila. A daily uniform set for a child of average build in the elementary grades sells for PHP360 while that of a high-school student sells for PHP380. My net gain for each of these examples is about PHP100.

ASA has also swelled up the capital for our ironwork business. Income and profit margins in this business has always been encouraging.

*My prime capital was my own sewing capability while that of my husband's was his welding skills. We owe the changes in our lives to industry and patience and just as importantly to the availability of capital we have bank-rolled ourselves that were reinforced and multiplied by business loans from ASA.*

I would like to show you the beautiful gatework we are finishing this very moment for a client business owner at our welding and organizing plant beside our own residence.

There are times when we have to bring the assembly to one side of the street if the size is bigger than our interior space. The framework of a 16 feet-wide gate can cost over PHP100,000 depending on the steel bar spacing. Profit margins are about 50% of labor and material costs.

We are general assemblers of almost any kind of ironwork, from steel gates to doors and window grills. We also construct sliding doorways, dog and pet houses, playground structures like swings, see-saws and slides, and grill work for terraces, staircases, and garage doors.

To encourage our children's involvement, we established another welding shop in Molino, Cavite that will soon be fully managed by our eldest daughter who has shown interest in the business.

We have a workforce of two senior welders who are paid PHP400 per day and eight junior welders and laborers who are paid PHP350 per day. We rent a truck for big deliveries or use our own brand new 2012 Suzuki pick-up truck that is driven by a family driver for smaller items.

### ***The road to transformation***

Building an enterprise from scratch is no mean job, *magsisimula ka talaga sa wala* (one has to start from nothing). My prime capital was my own sewing capability while that of my husband's was his welding skills. From these bases, we worked our way up. The results are all that you

see before you.

We owe the changes in our lives to industry and patience and just as importantly to the availability of the capital we have bank-rolled ourselves that were reinforced and multiplied by business loans from ASA.

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

In addition to our new plant in Molino, Cavite, I plan to open a branch of Patrick's Boutique in our hometown of Calaca. We are fortunate that our 746-square-meter property there also faces a school, the Calaca Elementary School where surely, the store would earn patrons.

By the end of 2012, one of our daughters would be ready to move back to Calaca and oversee the store and an ironworks extension already in the start-up stage.

*Walang dapat pumigil sa pag-asenso dahil ito lang ang lunas sa kahirapan.* (There should be no borders to progress because this is the only solution to poverty). I may not have addressed poverty as a nurse, but I probably have done so as a business person. *Ang simpleng sagot sa kahirapan? Manindigan sa sariling paa!* (My simple response to poverty? Stand on your own feet). ▲

# Sharon Marzan Sevilla



*Sharon Sevilla considers herself blessed to have three bright and precocious children, one a graduate of a Bachelor's degree in Business Management from the University of Caloocan, the second a candidate for graduation in Human Resource Development (HRD) Management from the same university, and the third in his junior year in Civil Engineering at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Laguna. All these are the fruits of her earnest labor as a storekeeper and micro entrepreneur. She is shown with husband Dionisio busy at her store that sells school supplies, household commodities, electronic load, frozen food, and other kinds of merchandise.*



## Client Profile

Name	Sharon Marzan Sevilla
Address	Barangay 175, Camarin, Caloocan City
Origins	San Juan, La Union
Age	43 years old
Education	High School Graduate Pasig City Experimental Pilot School of College Industries
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Three: Dionisio, Jr. (22 yrs); Sharmaine (20 yrs); Shane (18 yrs)
Loan Cycle	19 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	GROUP SECRETARY, ASA Cattleya Group
Loan Amount	PHP45,000
Savings	PHP17,260
Enterprise	MULTI-LINEAR: - Sari-sari Store - Electronic Loading Service - Plastic Ware
Dwelling	Titled 40-square meter house and lot Awarded by the National Housing Authority, 1993

# *"Malayo ang mararating ng kababailan, ang kailangan lang ay kasipagan"- Women can go far, they only need to be hardworking*

## *My uphill journey*

I hardly recall a time in my childhood when my family stayed in one place. I was born to a couple of humble means in the small town of San Juan, La Union. We were nine children in all and to support us, my parents had to move to different locations from time to time to wherever my father could find a better-paying job.

My father was a paper mill machinist, a skill for which he could have earned ample

compensation, were it not too many of us to feed. *hapdi ng kabirapan* (I truly

Nevertheless, my parents worked hard because they wanted us to have a better quality of life. They succeeded in sending

college. I was not as second to the eldest child responsibility to help my meet.

We moved from La Union to Tondo,

Pasig City in pursuit of small jobs and micro enterprises like buy and sell, cook and sell, and direct selling, among others. The family was based in Pasig when I graduated from high school. It was not long before I met my husband, Dionisio and settled down in an informal community in Camarin, Caloocan City.

Because our experiences were identical, my husband and I resolved to keep our family small so we could tailor our income to our needs, and to send our children to college on whatever income we could make either by employment or enterprise.

## *My work, my enterprise*

It was a challenge to establish a *sari-sari* store in Camarin because this kind of trade is practically engaged in by every two out of three households here. We were intimidated by the stiff competition. For this reason, I started to buy and sell merchandise not from an extended structure attached to the house but from cardboard boxes.

I kept a record of the inflow and outflow of merchandise. With extreme patience, an austere lifestyle, and a tremendous amount of self-restraint to keep our savings intact for school tuition and other educational expenses, we were able to live modestly and enroll the children in college.

Our efforts have borne fruit because today, my three children are about to embark on lives that are hopefully more prosperous than ours. My oldest son, Dionisio, Jr., 22 years of age, has completed his Bachelor of Science in Business Management course from the University of Caloocan. He is married with one child. He is now employed at the Philippine Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAR).

My 20-year-old daughter Sharmaine is a candidate for graduation. She is about to earn a degree in Human Resource Development (HRD) Management from the same school. She is undergoing on-the-job training at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Our younger son Shane is 18 but already a junior in Civil Engineering from the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Laguna.

I am so proud of my children because they bore up well with the simplicity of our lives, were self-motivated, and nurtured dreams and ambitions of their own. I am always beside myself with pride to visit Shane in his U.P. Los Baños

*It was a challenge to establish a sari-sari store in Camarin because this kind of trade is practically engaged in by every two out of three households here. We were intimidated by the stiff competition. For this reason, I started to buy and sell merchandise not from an extended structure attached to the house but from cardboard boxes.*

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parents worked hard have a better quality of life. two of my sisters to

fortunate because I was the and it was my parents make both ends

Union to Baguio City, Manila, and from Tondo to

dormitory to look after his needs. Very soon, we will have our own civil engineer and be done with our mission to educate.



## ***ASA's role in my life***

*Ang ASA ay baligi ng aming buhay hindi lamang dahil kami'y pinapautang kundi dahil din sa pagtivala sa aming kakayahang magbayad, kahit kami ay maliit na negosyante lamang* (ASA is a pillar in our lives not only because it lends us money, but also because it trusts in our capability to pay, even if we are very small business owners).

ASA's scale-up loans enabled us to expand the quantity and range of the store's merchandise. My cardboard boxes are gone because we were able to wall off a section of the house for the store space.

We began adding softdrinks in bottles and in cans, a wide array of canned goods, and rice that we sell in sacks or in packs depending on the orders we receive from our buyers.

ASA assistance emboldened me to venture into new business lines. For instance, I broke into the bulk procurement and distribution of the CDO brand of frozen food products that I distribute to a number of regular buyers.

I also retail farm eggs. I continue to scan of new business lines confidence to invest in business line is plastic

for refrigerated food, water pails, and other

Also with the help loading service across replenish this as well as

store twice a week from Puregold Supermarket, PHP17,000 to

*sa lakas ng tindahan namin lamang ito* (I am quite of our store, even if at a glance, it appears quite small).

It posts a daily gross sale between PHP2,000 to PHP5,000 and a net sale between PHP1,000 to PHP1,500 depending on the volume of buyers.

ASA loans have additionally equipped me with the appliances I needed to support my enterprises. Some of these are my 12-cubic-foot upright freezer that contains my frozen food assortment, a weighing machine to accurately measure rice for repacking purposes, new cellular phones necessary for my electronic load sales, and display cabinets for the store.

*ASA loans have additionally equipped me with the appliances I needed to support my enterprises. Some of these include my 12-cubic-foot upright freezer, a weighing machine to accurately measure rice for repacking purposes, new cellular phones necessary for my electronic load sales, and display cabinets for the store.*

fresh eggs, including salted the market for the adoption because I now have the borrowed capital. My newer ware such as stacking boxes

storage essentials such as similar products.

of ASA, I added an electronic all the major networks. I the rest of the goods in my

the San Roque Market or the armed with a budget of PHP21,000. *Nagugulat din ako kahit sa unang tingin, maliit* amazed by the performance

## ***The road to transformation***

Having worked this long and hard on the store, I no longer recall my starting line but apparently, I seem to have survived because I observed a code of conduct and a goal for future accomplishment. Others do the same thing but when I set a goal, I make sure I reach my target.

For instance, when I declared a budget of not more than PHP300 per day for general household expenses, my family kept to it. I was motivated by my own personal experience.

I came from a big family with a brood of nine children. I wanted to change that because it presented problems of survival. I vowed to have only the number of children I can capably support. I ended up having three.

Only two of my nine siblings were able to reach college but instead of using my deprivation in a negative way, I used my store as a cash mill that provided the children with their college education. Two of the children are professionals with the third and the last about to become one.

In the past, my family can be likened to the nomads because we did not have a permanent place of residence. For me, this was another change center. Although many of the communities in this side of Camarin were informally based, we were happy to be counted among those who were enrolled by the National Housing Authority in the Community Mortgage Program.

As early as 1993, we were identified as one of the family recipients of the CMP Award and started paying our dues.

## ***Sharing insights and future plans***

Since we expect to become the legitimate owners of the lot occupied by this house and the store, we have plans to expand the store not exactly in terms of size but in terms of contents.

I am not yet targeting the distant future because the turnout of this kind of enterprise will still have to be seen.

I also reward myself with a break from storekeeping which my husband Dio would willingly oblige. At such times, I grab the opportunity to go to the Brickston Health Center where I report three times a week as a Barangay Health Worker or BHW.

This is the other personal goal that I want to achieve as soon as my younger son graduates—to be of service to the women and children in our community.

In interacting with patients, I always share my own knowledge of entrepreneurship: *Malayo ang mararating ng kababaihan, ang kailangan lang ay kasipagan* (Women can go far, they only need to be hardworking). ▲

Rosalinda Adobas Santos

## Client Profile

Name	Rosalinda Adobas Santos
Address	Sitio Matarik, Camarin, Caloocan City
Origins	Maasin, Zamboanga
Age	37 years old
Education	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Bachelor Secretarial Philippine Christian University, Taft Avenue, Manila
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Three: Kate Rose (13 yrs); Kiana Rave (11 yrs); Kathleen (4 yrs)
Loan Cycle	17 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	GROUP LEADER, ASA Daisy Group
Loan Amount	PHP60,000
Savings	PHP20,000
Enterprise	MULTI-LINEAR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stallholder, Bagong Silang Public Market</li> <li>- Manager/ Sales Leader and Authorized Outlet of Avon, Natasha, MSE, Boardwalk and Personal Collection</li> <li>- Wholesaler/ Retailer, Babies' Diapers</li> <li>- Coffee/ Hot Chocolate Vending Machine</li> <li>- Puto (Native Rice Cake) Making</li> </ul>
Dwelling	Titled house and lot Awarded by the National Housing Authority (NHA) Amortized at PHP450/month Rented Stall, Bagong Silang at PHP7,000/month



*Rosalinda Santos is young entrepreneur known for her keen business sense. At 37, she is a prolific Direct Seller of the country's top brands. Her stall in Bagong Silang Public Market is an authorized outlet of these products. The stall also situates her bakery that turns out 900 native rice cake delicacies in one cooking that are a top sell-out among the breakfast crowd of students, office goers and commuters because the cakes go well with hot chocolate or choco-coffee sold from her own vending machine. The stall is also a hub of babies' diapers.*

*"Kung di ka mabait, walang lalapit sa iyo, buyer man o kamag-anak"-  
If you are not kind, no one will come near you, neither buyer or relative*

### *My uphill journey*

**Y**outh is my forte and while I still have it, *sige lang nang sige* (I just keep going). I learned to appreciate the value of work early in life because I am the eldest in a brood of eight. Life in Maasin, Leyte was laid back then and the only job opportunities available were rice, coconut, and crop farming and coastal fishing. Thus, my parents found the need to move to Metro-Manila in the hope of securing the family's brighter future.

My father became a foreman in the construction industry. While his work took him to distant sites, my mother would busy herself with her own tasks. She was an expert sewer of crocheted bags, wallets, and accessories.

I would come home early from school to help her care for my brothers and sisters. After graduating from high school, I decided to take up a short course in Computer Secretarial at the Philippine Christian University so that I could immediately land an office job.

However, I had to drop out after the first year because my parents could not cope with the expenses. I went to work for a number of small firms and business owners.

### *My work, my*

I married Onofre cook and who still does. native cake-making from family. We made it as a both commonly inclined After the birth of

decided to plunge jointly first-line dealer of Avon Eventually, as I rose up networks and learned the became the concurrent and Personal Collection.

*ASA's pioneering move in Camarin in 2004 was a welcome development. When I applied for the first loan cycle and was qualified, my husband and I were elated. This was the start of a long and enduring relationship with the Foundation that offers protection from what small business owners dread most: closure and bankruptcy.*

### *enterprise*

Santos, Jr. who loved to He learned the craft of his predecessors in the couple because we were toward enterprise. our first child, Kate, we

into business. I started as a and Natasha products. the levels of the two mechanics of dealership, I dealer of MSE, Boardwalk,

To keep my good standing, I follow the purchasing and accounting policies of each of the marketing companies. My combined gross earnings from direct selling reaches PHP30,000 upward over a particular time curve.

When I was a baseline seller, my income was minimal but today, I no longer need to do hard person-to-person sales except when there are walk-in or referred customers at my outlet in *Bagong Silang* Market. As manager and sales leader, I enjoy rebates from a broad base of 100 dealers.

Inside my stall you will find tester bottles, a display counter showcasing the different products, and updated catalogues for walk-ins and chance buyers. As I gained mileage in direct selling, so did my husband in his native rice-cake making. In fact, we decided to rent the market stall to serve as a hub of our enterprises.

### *The role of ASA in my life*

ASA's pioneering move in Camarin in 2004 was a welcome development for start-up entrepreneurs like us. A lending institution could offer a solution to what we suffered most from: low business capital.

When I applied for the first loan cycle that year and was qualified, my husband and I were elated. This was the start of a long and enduring relationship with the Foundation that offers protection from what small business owners dread most: closure and bankruptcy.

As I went further up the loan cycles and my loan amounts increased, we planned and diversified our business lines, creating appreciable returns in the process. Our rice cake business grew in terms of production and sales.



We would budget and allocate the loan releases to conform with our timed buying schedules. Total capital needed for our rice cake making is about PHP2,500 per cooking session. This amount produces about 900 rice cakes individually wrapped in banana leaves, sold for PHP5 each.

The clean profit is a high PHP2,000 per day—provided all the cakes are sold which is often the case.

Our rice cakes are popular with regular passersby and with clients in the different offices, schools, the tricycle line-up, including the policemen and building security guards. When we get bulk orders for birthdays and celebrations, we arrange the rice cakes neatly on native trays.

We used an ASA loan to procure our PHP17,000 coffee maker and dispenser that complements our rice cake making.

This became an instant hit. We became known in the marketplace and beyond it as a combo breakfast corner. The rice cakes are perfect companions to our beverage products that include plain brewed coffee, chocolate, choco-caramel coffee, and coffee latte. Truly, ASA was a growth factor.

Of course, there are other capital outlays to consider in determining income from our coffee business. Hot coffee is a paper cup intensive have to come up with 100 cups in every three (3) hours. We have to replenish the paper cup stocks every other day at the cost of PHP1,000 per bulk. Brisk coffee sales promise a rewarding gross income of about PHP700 per day.

We give employment to others who are mostly our relatives on either side of the family. I have one assistant who helps me track the sales of my downstream salespersons and dealers. My husband has three helpers who take

charge of cleaning the stall, procuring the basic rice flour and other ingredients, the banana leaf deliveries in case of placed fronds, and who make the orders. We have another helper who minds our coffee dispensing machine and checks it regularly if it is in excellent condition, since any malfunction could lead to zero sales.

I am also a dealer of leading brands of babies' and adult diapers, local and imported. My net sale from this activity is a steady PHP300 per day.

Although our total take-home is high enough to be a cause of envy of other entrepreneurs, the thing is, we have workers to pay, ingredients to procure non-stop, shield funds to cover shortfalls in payments to my direct sale companies, delivery costs, regulatory taxes and permits, stall rental fees, and other hidden expenses.

In addition, we have not reached middle ground yet on the matter of educating our children. My eldest daughter is only 13 years old and a sophomore at the Camarin High School. Our next child Kiana Rave is eleven and a sixth grader at the Camarin Elementary School. I have a pre-schooler, four-year-old Kathleen who just started out as a pupil of the Angel Wings Learning Center nearby.

### ***The road to transformation***

My road to progress was neither hard nor easy but I did encounter resistance along the way. Before my ASA days, I had to guard my capital, no matter how small it was, from non-business expenditures.

Then of course there were family pressures that made us divert money from its intended purpose to respond to emergencies like sudden illnesses and other family crises.

Whereas we were able to make things happen so that we could ably provide for our own basic needs, not all members of our families were able to do the same and this compelled us to intervene.

*Ako ay natutong maging mapag-pasensiya, mapang-unawa, masipag at, sa katunayan, maging mabait. Kung hindi ka mabait, walang lalapit sa iyo, buyer man o kamag-anak* (I learned how to be patient, understanding, industrious and in truth, to be kind. If you are not kind, no one will come near you, neither your buyers nor your relatives).

And even if there are profits to count at the end of the day, I have to roll back a little to the capital, deduct household and children's expenses, utility costs, and maintenance expenses on our FX delivery vehicle and savings before I could set aside savings and personal expenditures like family outings. I am a very cautious spender. I make this a point of discussion among the members of the ASA group I lead.

*Ako ay natutong maging mapag-pasensiya, mapang-unawa, masipag at, sa katunayan, maging mabait. Kung hindi ka mabait, walang lalapit sa iyo, buyer man o kamag-anak (I learned to be patient, understanding, industrious and in truth, to be kind. If you are not kind, no one will come near you, neither your buyers nor relatives).*

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stall, procuring the basic ingredients, the banana leaf deliveries in case of placed helper who minds our and checks it regularly if it

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

*Sa aking mga ka-grupo, ako ay lagging nangangaral kabit pa sabihin nila na ako ay walang karapatan dahil ako ay may kabataan.* (I consistently counsel my group, even if they think I have no right to do so due to my age).

I thank ASA because I was able to enter unexplored business areas. ASA's obligatory savings has become second nature to me. I also learned how to think beyond profit and focus on building the enterprises first.

I advise my fellow entrepreneurs to avoid extravagance and wastage of loaned money. *May karapatan tayong makialam basta't tayo ay kabilang sa isang grupo dahil sa ganitong concepto, ang tagumpay ng isa ay tagumpay ng lahat* (We have a right to intervene if we are members of one group because in this concept, the success of one is the success of all). ▲

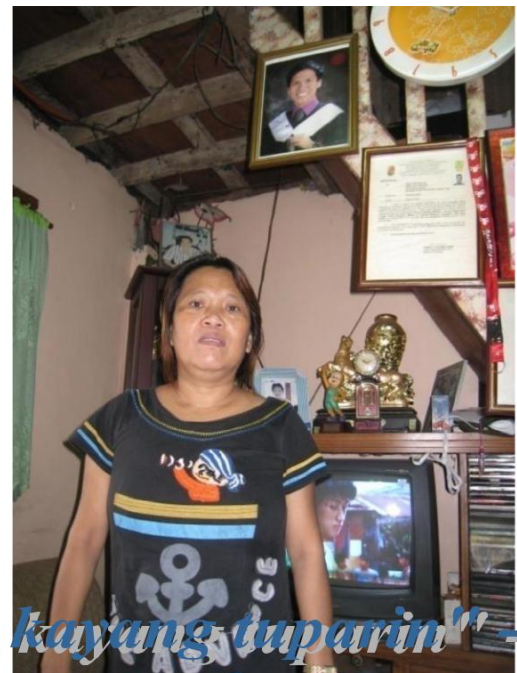
# Patricia Mangao Reyes



## Client Profile

Name	Patricia Mangao Reyes
Address	Tagumpay, Gulod Novaliches, Quezon City
Origins	Paco, Metro-Manila
Age	51 years old
Education	High School Graduate Araullo High School, Taft Avenue, Manila
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Four: Edwin (35 yrs); Robert (33 yrs); Chona (31 yrs); Anthony (20 yrs)
Loan Cycle	20 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	GROUP LEADER, ASA Daisy Group
Loan Amount	PHP60,000
Savings	PHP30,000
Enterprise	SARI-SARI (VARIETY) STORE - Softdrink Dealership - Rice Dealership - CDO Processed Foods
Dwelling	Titled 24-square-meter house and lot Awarded by the National Housing Authority (NHA) in 2002

*Patricia Reyes' hilltop home in Barangay Gulod, Novaliches, Quezon City is a long hike from the nearest unloading zone. She does not mind the effort because she commits her time and resources to the building of her store that is open on a day-and-night shift with the help of her husband, former Barangay Public Safety Officer Mario Reyes. Photos show Patricia's store (left), recording sales entries (top), posing under the staircase and graduation picture of her son (below), and with husband checking a new beverage delivery (bottom left).*



*"Ang kayang pangarapin, kayang tuparin" -  
What you can dream, you can become*



## My uphill journey

iving my life to the fullest with open acceptance of all its ups and downs is my coping attitude

*Kung tanggap mo ang*

**L**taas-baba ng buhay, hindi mangangahulugang ikaw ay susuko sa labat ng pagsubok, ang dapat ay lumaban ka (If you accept the ups and downs of life, this does not mean you must surrender to all kinds of tests, you must learn how to fight).

I was my mother's husband. My father was a War II taxi company called after my father's work.

Early on, I have there are things I could not as having half-siblings on having stepped into college not afford the cost of I vowed to be

completing my secondary High School on Taft walking distance from

However, this desire because I fell in love right

house painter who became my husband, Mario Reyes. We continued to live in Paco for the next eight years, during which time I bore three children.

Mario's income on painting jobs not being enough, I applied for a factory job to help come up with a sufficient household budget. In the next three years, I trained and worked as a machine operator for United Container, Inc., makers of bottles for a popular food brand. When my supervisor resigned, I did the same thing and settled right back to the routine of housework.

At about this time, we had moved to my mother's rented home in one of the informal communities in Novaliches, Quezon City. When my mother moved to yet another place, we continued to stay in this house for the next two years until the owners sold us the "rights" to this place.

With the help of the Gulod Barangay Government, we were able to officially procure the property as beneficiaries of the National Housing Authority in 2002.

Even as a plain housewife, I felt I had to generate the needed income to send the children to college. With the little money that I could wring from my husband's small wages, I began to buy groceries at wholesale prices and retail them to my fellow housewives in the neighborhood.

*Marunong akong humawak ng pera at unti-unti, napalago ko ang negosyo sa tulong ng aking asawa at ng ASA.* (I know how to handle funds and gradually, I was able to make the business prosper with my husband's support and that of ASA's).

## My work, my enterprise

When word came to storeowners here that the ASA Philippines Foundation had opened a branch in Novaliches in 2005, I immediately went over to look at my chances of becoming a group member. When I received my first business loan, I invested the amount at once in the purchase of additional merchandise for the store and its physical improvements like shelves and a desk.

Merchandise types and quantities improved as we added rice and softdrink dealerships and later on, the CDO processed food brand.

I had identified some wholesalers from whom I procure goods worth PHP5,000 to PHP6,000 every other day. If sales are average, I earn a net profit of PHP500 per day. If times are good, this shoots up to PHP800 or even more.

We attribute our store's performance to the fact that we keep long hours. We are open from 3:00 a.m. and close at midnight, to the extent that people here call us *gising hangang hating-gabi* (awake till midnight) or "convenience store" or "call center store." We do this by shifting. My husband takes the early morning shift while I take the graveyard shift.

*We attribute our store's performance to the fact that we keep long hours. We are open from 3:00 a.m. and close at midnight. We do this by shifting. My husband takes the early morning shift while I take the graveyard shift. We are not afraid of street gangs, robbers or hold-uppers because of our close ties with the barangay government.*

only child by her second taxi driver for a pre-World the Golden Taxi. I took persistence and hard

learned to accept that

change but live with, such my mother's side and not because my parents could higher education.

independent right after

studies at the Araullo Avenue, Manila, within Paco, where we lived.

did not materialize at once away at the age of 17 to a



We are not afraid of street gangs, robbers or hold- uppers because of our close ties with the barangay government. Besides, local government leaders here are role models in the community and the people respect and emulate them. There are roving patrols who maintain peace and order. This is one corner of Novaliches where one can walk safely in the dark.

### ***The role of ASA in my***

*Ang ASA ay talagang naming maliliit na negosyante,*

*Mabusay magpasunod sa mga*

*lang yan dahil kung walang ang panungutang (ASA can persons like ourselves, and know how to make people just right because if no one not serve their purpose).*

The best thing about Savings is not quite *Pilipino oras na pinabawak ng*

*paano gagastusin. Kakaunti ang Pilipinong marunong mag-impok.* (When Filipinos are given cash, the first thing that comes to their minds is how to spend it. There are few who know how to save).

As far as I am concerned, savings are very important and should be kept out of reach except in cases of extreme emergency. That is what it is intended for. I look at my PHP30,000 ASA savings account as money in reserve/

Here lies the value of ASA. You cannot qualify for the loan unless you keep part of it in reserve. There should even come a time when you will no longer have to depend on a loan, and merely utilize what has been saved as business capital. In this way, we can be financially self-sufficient. This is what I want to become.

In my case, ASA was a chief capital provider. In a sense, it was also a life-giver because it not only supported the store, it supported us. The store never for once in my ASA membership run short of; on the contrary, it made possible the inclusion of a soft drink and rice dealership as well as a CDO processed food line.

We sink in PHP8,000 to PHP10,000 worth of capital to our CDO Foods every Sunday of the week. Our returns on this investment are almost 100%, or PHP4,000 for every PHP8,000 input.

### ***Tests of will and courage***

On the other hand our children's education was rather a grey area since only one has been through college. There were forces beyond our control that somehow influenced our children to think differently. Our eldest and youngest sons became members of the *Iglesia ni Cristo* although we are staunch Catholics. As I said in the beginning, there are things we cannot change. And my children have ideas of their own that we have to respect.

Our eldest son, Edwin is now 35 years old, a Bachelor of Science in Education degree holder from the Eulogio Amang Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology or EARIST. His circle of friends included members of this church and soon, our youngest son Anthony, 20 years of age, also joined him.

Edwin now works at a private hospital in Olongapo City, Zambales managed by the *Iglesia*. Anthony has become an *Iglesia alagad* (assistant). I feel it is important for me to point this out because the two have shown us their support, remitting as high as PHP12,000 per month as their share in the running of the store and the care of Edwin's only child who lives with us.

Our other son, Robert, 33, a high school graduate, took after his father and is now a house painter. Our only daughter, Chona may have been similarly a high school graduate but is work-oriented. She is a Tourist Guide in a Subic Bay Freeport resort facility, and has plans of pursuing college education on her own merit.

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

To transform, life has to be taken seriously. If we had taken our business lightly, our store would not have grown. We continue to toil and run our day-and-night store, even if our children have declared their independence by choosing their own pathways. We dedicate our efforts to our future, so we can leave a thriving business behind that the children can someday choose to assume, so they can look back upon us not as idlers, but as workers they can respect.

### ***life***

*maaasahang tumulong sa tulad atmapapatunayan yan.*

*patakarang ngunit nararapat*

*susunod, wala ring ibubunga truly be trusted by business that can be proven. They follow the rules but this is follows the rules, loans do*

ASA is its savings program. inherent in the Filipino, *ang pera, ang unang iisipin ay kung*

*Kakaunti ang Pilipinong marunong mag-impok. (Few Filipinos know how to save). As far as I am concerned, savings are very important and should be kept out of reach except in cases of extreme emergency. That is what it is intended for. I look at my PHP30,000 ASA savings amount as money kept in reserve.*

We plan to buy another piece of property beside our lot area that we can turn into a stockroom. On top of this, we plan to build a second floor that could serve as a room for rent. We are also scouting the area for the establishment of a separate *bigasan* (rice center) *Ang kayang pangarapin, kayang tuparin* (What you can dream you can become). ▲

# Maribel Celendro Espinosa



## Client Profile

Name	Maribel Celendro Espinosa
Address	Nitang, Gulod Novaliches, Quezon City
Origins	Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija
Age	37 years old
Education	Vocational-Secretarial Datapro, Caloocan City
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Three: Tresia May (13 yrs); Tristan (11 yrs); Teejay (7 yrs);
Loan Cycle	20 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	GROUP MEMBER, ASA Genesis Group
Loan Amount	PHP48,000
Savings	PHP27,000
Enterprise	LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS (LPG) RETAILER -Two outlets, Gulod Novaliches and Deparo, Caloocan City -Door-to-door distribution: motorcycle and van SARI-SARI STORE: Deparo, Caloocan City
Dwelling	Rights: 60-square-meter house and lot

*Maribel Espinosa distributes LPG cooking gas to households and businesses in and around Gulod, Novaliches and Caloocan City. She is shown in these photos giving directions to her delivery crew of two nephews on wheels, discussing accounts with niece Sally who works for her, and posing in her home office with daughter May and son Teejay.*

# ***"Pagbabago at pagtitipid ang kalakaran ng buhay" - Renewal and thrift are the pathways of life***

## ***My uphill journey***

Nuns at the Religious of the Virgin Mary (RVM) monastery in Caloocan City where I worked as a building maintenance crew one and a half years after my college secretarial course were the ones who taught me to be simple in my wants, and thrifty in my expenses. These traits were to serve me well later in my married life.

I grew up in Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija, a quick bus ride to Caloocan City, Metro-Manila where my parents decided to reside permanently. Soon after my convent employment, I tried various jobs, first as a watch store employee then as a contractual sales crew of the SM chain of department stores. In this last stint, I met my husband Jose after which I had to quit my saleslady job to attend to our three children.

When Jose and I settled down, we began to experience financial hardship because of the children's food, medical, and educational needs. It was then that I put up a bakery on whatever savings I had left during my SM years. Like I said, I was cautious when it

and used my savings as by some help from Jose  
The bakery operated

decided to close it down. maintenance, bakers' costs kept rising, and my business partners could going break-even, which for the children or for us. over by a sister of mine another two years.

*I became a client of ASA when the bakery was still in operation, but it was ASA as well that encouraged me to make the big leap toward the small-scale distribution of LPG that became my family's winning source of income.*

came to holding money start-up capital, padded up and our parents. for the next six years but I

Oven operation and salaries, and flour and sugar husband and I who became not keep it up without did not augur well, either Temporarily, this was taken who kept it running for

I shifted to another enterprise but chose to keep my bakery equipment on stand-by, in case of future re-investment.

I became a client of ASA Philippines Foundation in 2005 when the bakery was still in operation and when I had already started to sell a limited number of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tanks to neighboring households.

When we closed down the bakery, it was ASA as well that encouraged me to make the big leap toward the large-scale distribution of LPG that became my family's winning source of income.

## ***My work, my enterprise***

I carry the complete line of LPG brands that include *Solane, MGA, Total, Gasul*, and *Super Kalan*. I supply these items via single motorcycle and van door-to-door delivery.

In addition to my LPG business, I have established a *sari-sari* (variety) store at Deparo, Caloocan City that also takes in LPG orders; however, the merchandise has been temporarily shelved in favor of the LPGs. Thus, I have two outlets for my LPG sales, one in Gulod and the other at Deparo. I have one nephew who manages Deparo and two nephews who take charge of the deliveries. For larger deliveries, my husband drives and maintains a delivery van. I average a total of 60 deliveries per day.

In terms of inventory, I keep a total of 100 tanks in both outlets, capitalized at the rate of PHP100,000. This is a capital-intensive enterprise mainly due to the erratic and unstable cost of LPG in the local market and the high cost of the containers.

I earn a net income of PHP4,000 to PHP5,000 per day that I dedicate to my children's future and benefits for my hired family helpers.

My nephew who manages the Deparo outlet earns PHP5,000 per month while the other members of my delivery crew and bookkeeper earn PHP2,500 each. In addition, I provide them with board and lodging, food and other incentives.



I pay just wages because this is my way of sharing my blessings, and sharing first with blood relations. I don't think I could eat and swallow my food knowing there are hungry people who knock at my door.

My business, like the bakery in the past, is a husband-and-wife tandem. My husband takes care of the bulk procurement at the different unloading bays of gas companies and distribution stations. He is also the van driver and his daily rounds take all morning.

I record all my business transactions including input, output, and expenses at my home office. I monitor the progress of my sales and collections even when I am not around. My niece Sally assists me in tracking all receivables and payables. We also see to it that we comply with government taxes and regulations.

### ***ASA's role in my life***

I am aware that every enterprise owner should have access to bank loans but when ASA showed up in our lives, it was a great relief to avail of its savings and loan assistance.

*Ang ASA ay napakahalagang katunwang sa negosyo. Ito ay mas madaling lapitan ng mga negosyanteng katulad namin dahil wala kaming pang-sangla sa malalaking pantangan tulad ng mga bangko* (ASA is such an indispensable partner in business. For micro entrepreneurs like us, it is quicker to approach the collateral required by

because we do not have bigger lenders like banks).

ASA also gave me and I am happy for this assurance that I could incremental loan amounts.

My stable enterprise lives and facilitated the children. Our oldest years old and a second the Doña Rosario High

My son Tristan who is 11 years old is in sixth grade at the Gulod Christian School. Our youngest, Teejay, is a second grader in the latter school. All of them are aware of the effort we put into the business because they wake up each day to the sound of motorcycles gearing up for the regular deliveries.

They are also aware that our hard work has resulted in trade-offs such as a computer set we have invested in for their use so that they don't have to run to computer shops every time they need to access the internet for their research-studies.

*I have tried to analyze where my strengths as a woman-entrepreneur lie and I found these to be no other than in my own exploratory attitude, my communication skills, and a seemingly bottomless reservoir of patience.*

the chance to prove myself

process because of the keep availing of

raised the quality of our education of our young child, Tresia May is now 13 year high school student at School.

is 11 years old is in sixth

### ***The road to transformation***

The only business- related challenge I encountered was my radical management shift from bakery to LPG distribution. *Ang tanging kailangan lang ng isang negosyante ay tapang sa mga desisyon tulad nito dahil siya din ang malulugi pag nagkamali* (One thing an entrepreneur should have is strong decision making skills like this because he only has himself to blame in case a mistake is committed).

So far, we have been able to help the members of the family cope with health issues that have confronted some of them.

I can say with confidence that the enterprise is on course because the list of our customers keeps lengthening, which we have tried to address with the opening of our Deparo outlet.

Should this trend continue, given our on-going partnership with ASA, we are open to the possibility of establishing another outlet in an equally strategic area.

*Sinubukan kong alamin kung saan nagmula ang aking kakayayan sa negosyo at napag -alaman ko na ito ay ang aking pagiging mapag-subok, ang pagiging mabusay sa pananalita, at ang walang kaibusang balon ng pasensya* (I have tried to analyze where my strengths as a woman -entrepreneur lie and I found these to be none other than in my own exploratory attitude, my communication skills, and a seemingly bottomless reservoir of patience).

My patience gets a daily exercise from the unpredictable behaviors of my customers, suppliers and their representatives, and even my own workers.

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

Precisely because of the long list of customers I have at present, I plan to add more tanks to my stock inventory. In lieu of 100 tanks, I would like to hazard 25% more, if higher profits and future loans from ASA would allow it.

Another idea I am trying to put into action hopefully soon is the establishment of a rice outlet. My side of the family comes from Nueva Ecija where we still have tracts of rice farms that could be exploited. I am sure that with the increasing population of Caloocan and Quezon cities, there is room for greater competition among rice providers.

I have already discussed this matter with my husband and the members of my family and they all agree that it could be a lucrative source of supplemental income. They were all motivated by my proposal to fund the endeavor, to furnish them with rice seedlings for their planting, and to grant their own share of harvested products should the plan push through.

I also plan to re-open the bakery and the variety store at Deparo as prospective outlets of the new rice business. I am ready at all times to shift and change. I am also keeping the code of frugality and thriftiness taught by the nuns and ASA. *Pagbabago at pagtitipid ang kalakaran ng buhay* (Renewal and thrift are the pathways of life) ▲

# Fely Terredano Paz



*Fely Paz' real estate properties, all individually titled, include a garage and multi-purpose structure (top left) on a 35-square-meter property that houses a brand new Mitsubishi GLX 2012 for rent, a beautiful home above that also serves as her office hub on a 48-square-meter lot, a variety store and drop center for her bigasan (rice dealership) that is managed in tandem with a business associate at middle left, and the new row of apartments for rent on a 35-square-meter property at lower left. She has just purchased another 35-square meter property in an adjacent section of Old Balara.*

## Client Profile

Name	Fely Terredano Paz
Address	Luzon, Old Balara, Diliman, Quezon City
Origins	Dolores, Abra
Age	52 years old
Education	High School Graduate Lam-ag High School, Dolores, Abra
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Two: Faye Anne (27 yrs); Abraham, Jr. (24 yrs)
Loan Cycle	16 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	MEMBER: Penshoppe Group, ASA Barangay Holy Spirit Branch, QC
Loan Amount	PHP72,000
Savings	PHP29,350
Enterprise	REAL ESTATE PROPERTY INVESTOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sari-sari Stores</li> <li>- Rowhouse and Apartment Rental Business</li> <li>- Garage and Rice Warehouse</li> </ul> Other Enterprise: Rice Dealership
Dwelling	Titled Property: 48-square-meter Residential House and Lot, Luzon, Old Balara, QC Titled Property: 64-square-meter Apartment Rowhouse for Rent, Luzon, Old Balara, QC Titled Property: 35-square-meter Garage, Vegetable Garden and Storage, Luzon, Old Balara, QC Newly-Titled Property: 35-square meters for Targeted 4-level Apartment Building, Luzon, Old Balara, QC

# *"Ilagay ang kita sa lupa" - Invest income in land*

## *My uphill journey*

Dolores, Abra, my birthplace, was anywhere but progressive. This was how I look back on it from my perspective of 52 years now. I am the youngest of five children born to my farmer-parents who lived by tilling lands that were not their own.

The hardships we experienced were traumatic because food was not always enough, and our home was in dire condition. Upon graduating from Lam-ag High School, I followed my four older siblings to Manila in order to find a job and help our parents.

For the next six years, I worked for several garments factories, moving from one employer to another, depending on the wages offered. I did not earn much and sent most of my wages back to Abra. It was in one of my workplaces where I met Abraham, my husband. He was bagger at the packaging department while I was a spinner at the machining section.

When we tied the knot, we both decided to leave the factories behind as we were hired by a rich family as driver and caretakers of their home in Tierra Pura Subdivision in Tandang Sora, Quezon City.

We decided to plan kids to two in order to fit basic needs. When they moved out of the our own in Luzon Area,

Here, 27 years ago, born. I am happy that my paid off because we were to complete her Bachelor (BSN) degree. She is now in Jeddah, Kingdom of

Our younger child is He is a graduate of Hotel Management (HRM) at works as a salesperson at a tube ice manufacturing plant.

*My yearning for the good life burned within me ever since I was a small child in Abra where I saw my parents coming home perspiring and exhausted from working on lands that did not belong to them. When I became a factory worker, this yearning to own a real estate property began to intensify.*

our family and limit our our small wages to our started going to school, we subdivision into a place of Old Balara, Quezon City. our first child, Faye was personal scheme of values able to send her to college of Science in Nursing an overseas contract nurse Saudi Arabia.

Abraham, Jr., now age 24. and Restaurant STI College, Fairview and

## *My work, my enterprise*

My yearning for the good life burned within me ever since I was a small child in Abra where I saw my parents coming home perspiring and exhausted from working on lands that did not belong to them. When I became a factory worker, this yearning to own a real estate property began to intensify.

When we moved into Old Balara in 1997, I thought that this would satisfy my craving but life here was no different either because we were in the midst of informal settlements where the lots and houses were not owned by their occupants. Besides, my own home stood over a piece of a “rights only” lot where a shanty used to stand.

I kept a strong faith in my capacity to survive, and an equally strong focus on my early enterprises—*pinasukan ko ang lahat makapag-hanapbuhay lang at mapag-aral ang mga bata* (I tried everything just to earn a living and send the children to school). I ventured into the selling of home-cooked meals, direct selling of branded line products, and the sale of processed food to neighboring households.

Additionally I invested in the buy-and-sell of purchase orders (POs) in league with a friend who is a business associate of Glory’s Supermarket when this company was still operating at the corner of Tandang Sora and Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City.

When the supermarket closed down, I began investing in a few sacks of rice and selling them around the neighborhood. The business clicked and soon, I needed to hire transport services to procure and deliver orders on specified schedules to a growing number of store clients.

Today, I am still a rice dealer of popular rice varieties such as the *Super Angelica*, *Angelica* and *Senandomeng* that range from PHP1,000 per 20-kilo sack upward. All my rice stocks are supplied by *suki* (client) traders with whom I regularly transact business and they transport them directly to my stockroom.

I gave employment to two of my younger relatives who help cart the rice supplies to several store buyers



My sales from rice dealership varies depending on the volume of orders but I regularly net about PHP40,000 per month. I invested most of the income I made after deducting basic household and educational expenses to the full payment of our 48-square-meter lot to the National Housing Authority.

For the purpose of starting a Build-and-Rent-Out business, I acquired other properties from previous owners who publicly offered them for sale. Before I bought them, I made sure they were individually titled.

One of these is a 35-square-meter lot on which I have just constructed a rowhouse. Two of the units are now occupied by renter families at the cost of PHP2,800 each per month. As of the moment, my income from rentals of less than PHP6,000 per month is still minimal since the other real properties non-performing, one being my residence and the other, a garage-stockroom.

Since my husband and I were able to purchase a brand new Mitsubishi GLX on a term basis, I next purchased another property that would serve as a garage, small storehouse, and a vegetable garden.

We placed our vehicle on hire to be able to come up with the funds needed for amortization. My husband, who has been very supportive of my entrepreneurship, drives the vehicle which can be contracted for airport services or out of town trips at affordable rates—from PHP1,500 upward—depending on distance.

### ***ASA's role in my life***

I had been an ASA proud of my track record presently on my 16<sup>th</sup> cycle loan. I regard ASA as a grew up as an entrepreneur side.

I used my earlier ways, chiefly as capital for operation of a *sari-sari* partnership with a friend.

My last loan amount biggest so far and I used part of it as capital for my property procurement and to fund the finishing works on the garage and the rowhouse. My daughter Faye is our partner in development.

Whenever and wherever funds come in the form of her remittance, my ASA loan releases, collections on rice sales, or payments for house or vehicle rentals, I do not segregate. I allocate the grand total to the operation and maintenance of the mix of enterprises. I make sure that I pay my bills, workers, and ASA dues on time as well as check the balances on my savings passbook. My savings of PHP29,350 could bridge my future gaps.

I plan to continue with my ASA loans because I want to strengthen my Build-and-Rent-Out business. This will not only give us and our children a measure of financial stability in life, but also the chance to become the managers of owned property assets of value that are correctly invested and earning sustainable income.

*I am so happy that ASA helped me transform dreams into reality through sustained loan and savings build-up assistance. Maybe I have proven in my own way that any dream is worth achieving, one only has to will it with all the power that honest labor and capital resources can put in one's hands.*

client since 2006 and am as a borrower. I am and about to renew my pillar of support because I with this institution by my

business loans in several my rice dealership and the store that I manage in

(PHP70,000) was the

### ***The road to transformation***

I have not consciously intended to become an entrepreneur developer, or of engaging in real estate development of small proportions such as mine because of my lack of credentials, being a mere high school graduate.

All I can say is that this has been a dream all my life, and I am so happy that ASA helped me transform it into reality through the sustained loan and savings build-up assistance. We did not own any piece of property but life taught me that *ang kita pwedeng gawing lupa* (income can turn into assets).

Maybe I have proven in my own way that any dream is worth achieving, one only has to will it with all the power that honest labor and capital resources can put in one's hands.

There are character traits that an entrepreneur must cultivate in order to succeed in business. In my case, I was first of all forward-looking because I never lost sight of my humble beginnings in Abra.

Secondly, I also had an extraordinary amount of self-determination to earn money and convert money into assets made of steel and concrete. And since I came from a poor family, I had the strong desire to rise above poverty.

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

*Ilagay ang kita sa lupa* (turn income into land) has become my lifetime commitment to myself and my family. I plan to extend the one-story rowhouse to accommodate more renters.

Given funds from my enterprises and an ASA loan, I may soon build a four level flat-type apartment building on the new 35-square meter lot I have procured for individual, small and medium-sized family renters.

When this is completed, income will again be used to buy other properties to be developed along the same lines. This is my faith. ▲

# Juvylyn Patelo Malicdem



*Juvylyn Malicdem attended college until her junior year in Elementary Education at the National Teacher's University. Knowing some principles of education, she was able to mentor to her three children so well that they became scholars. Left, she is serene and relaxed in one of her two sari-sari stores, eagerly awaiting the graduation of her youngest child. At lower left are framed photographs of her two older daughters in their graduation robes. Below she poses with husband Jose who goes daily to Antipolo, Rizal to man the second store on an NHA-awarded property located in the hillside barangay of Pinugay.*



## Client Profile

Name	Juvylyn Patelo Malicdem
Address	Barangay Pasong Tamo, Luzon, Quezon City
Origins	San Juan, Metro-Manila
Age	48 years old
Education	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education National Teachers' University, Manila
Status	Married
Religion	Iglesia ni Cristo (INC)
Children	Three: Joeylyn (25 yrs); Jessamine (24 yrs); Jose Mari (22 yrs)
Loan Cycle	16 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	MEMBER, ASA Pegasus Group, Barangay Holy Spirit Branch, QC
Loan Amount	PHP40,000
Savings	PHP13,500
Enterprise	SARI-SARI STORE (2 Locations) 1) Barangay Pasong Tamo, Luzon QC 2) Barangay Pinugay, Antipolo, Rizal Other Enterprises: House Rentals (2 units) 1) Anonas, Barangay Pasong Tamo 2) Lukban, Barangay Pasong Tamo
Dwelling	QC home and house rentals – Informal (Rights) Pinugay, Antipolo store – NHA-Awarded

# ***"Sa ASA nabuo ang aming puhunan at pangarap" - ASA gave form to our capital and our vision***

## ***My uphill journey***

**T**eaching was my first love back in my youth. I had wanted to become a teacher in elementary schools someday and gain experience in this field. Sadly, I was not able to become one.

I fell in love at the age of 23 and got married soon after to a fellow student, Jose. This was a misgiving but I am thankful because we were blessed by three diligent children.

We spent the early years of our marriage in Barangay Sta. Lucia, San Juan, Metro Manila where I used to help my mother run our *sari-sari store* along P. Parada street located in a busy section of the city.

My husband did was helping his parents

the owners of the famous (mixed fruit and milk on City Market. *Lumaki kami* both grew up in a store We are devout

Cristo and we used to twice a week at the Eraño Close tie-up between practical living stood at the succeeded in child-raising storekeeping but also due dedication and will to

I had a hand in this did when they came home after school was to guide them in their lessons. I also saw to it that all their school needs, no matter how expensive, were met.

I was particularly challenged, however, when they reached their higher years by the high tuition fees which we thought were beyond our means. However, God intervened.

My three children applied for scholarships offered by various private corporate foundations and the Philippine government. Thankfully, they qualified. With income from my stores and business loans provided by ASA Philippines Foundation, we were able to support our children's other educational requirements.

Our eldest child Joeylyn is now 25 years old. She graduated Cum Laude with the degree of Information Technology (IT) from the Far Eastern University, Manila. She went through college with a scholarship from SM Foundation. She now works at Logica Corporation, Taguig Global City.

Our middle child Jessamine is 24. She graduated with a degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) from New Era University of the Iglesia ni Cristo. She also received scholarship grants from the Quezon City Government and Greenwich Corporation. She is now the Manager of Jollibee Foods Corporation, Katipunan branch.

Our youngest child Jose Mari is 22. He is in his fifth and last year in Civil Engineering at the Technological Institute of the Philippines (TIP) on Aurora Boulevard, Quezon City and the beneficiary of a full scholarship grant from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

## ***Tests of will and courage***

One of the greatest fears of an informal settler is sudden eviction from occupied property and the house demolition that follows. There was a massive demolition in Luzon in 2010 that affected one of the rooms I was renting out.

*My three children applied for scholarships offered by various private corporate foundations and the Philippine government. Thankfully, they qualified. With income from my stores and business loans provided by ASA Philippines Foundation, we were able to support our children's other educational requirements.*

likewise because he, too, whose clan members were

*Banang's* eatery and *halo-halo* (ice) business at the Agora *pareho sa bubay tindahan* (we setting).

members of the Iglesia ni

attend church services Manalo INC Temple. religious belief and center of our lives. We not only due to good to the children's own complete their education.

because the first thing I



The space was previously pawned to my by one of my co-entrepreneurs. We had to let go because in the first place, we had no tenure of ownership.

The lot on which we built our house and an annexed structure on Anonas street is untitled. Another lot on Lukban Street that I also rent out is also untitled.

I hope that when Jose Mari graduates from college this school year, we would have found the means to acquire these properties through legal means. It is hard to live on the “Right to own” principle alone and we are willing to pay for our shelter, given the right opportunity.

Thus, I was glad when we opened another *sari-sari* store in Pinugay, Antipolo, Rizal. This is a National Housing Authority-declared human settlement for families evicted from Luzon. We were one of the family-awardees. We are currently amortizing the property at the affordable rate of PHP200 per month for a fixed number of years.

### ***My work, my enterprise***

My two stores not only provide us with the main source of our daily income, they also serve as a wholesome *libangan* (pastime). The list of merchandise is what you normally find in other variety stores such as rice, charcoal, softdrinks, juice in packs, candies, kiddie snacks, a wide variety of bath soap and laundry detergents, toothpaste, culinary products in sachets, noodles in packs or cups, and small canned goods.

I also carry a complete line of basic school supplies like crayons, pad paper, drawing sheets, and notebooks. I have a glass counter filled with boutique items for gift-giving such as table decors, face towels, toys for all ages, children’s coloring books, playing cards, game sets, handicraft, clocks, and even lanterns, car fresheners and solar decors.

There are also times bigger gift items such as figurines and kitchenware during peak buying

I have also gone into I see to it that I have the Products for interested

The income from modest, maybe just equal making. In Luzon, I PHP2,000 per day but just break even such as

*I joined ASA at a critical time when the kids were in college and our expenses were highest. To me, this was a big relief because I was able to avail of running capital for the stores. Otherwise, the cost of college would have crippled us completely and my stores would have collapsed.*

when I would stock up on ceramic vases, blankets, but these are rare and only seasons.

the direct selling business. latest catalogues of Avon neighbors and clients.

both our stores may be to what other stores are average from PHP1,000 to there are days when we during calamities.

Those of us in the store business are familiar with the slower sales during the summer months and the faster sales the rest of the year. There are days when our store in Pinugay posts higher sales than our store in Luzon, due to the scarcity of stores in the hills and the steeper competition in here Quezon City.

### ***ASA’s role in my life***

ASA has been instrumental in the education of my child- scholars because my savings and loan proceeds patched the gaps during the timed payment of tuition and miscellaneous fees, books, uniforms, and very importantly, daily school allowances.

IT and HRM courses are quite intimidating because we had to procure a computer (PC) and printer set for Joeylyn that we needed to maintain and upgrade regularly. Cooking ingredients and utensils needed by Jessamine were very expensive. Earlier, we had to supply Jose Mari with his drawing and art materials for his scale models and today, transport and safety gear during his hands-on engineering projects.

I joined ASA at a critical time when the kids were in college and our expenses were highest. To me, this was a big relief because I was able to avail of running capital for the stores. Otherwise, the cost of college would have crippled us completely and my stores would have collapsed. *Sa ASA nabuo ang puhunan at aming pangarap* (ASA gave form to capital and our vision).

### ***The road to transformation***

Changes came into our lives when we watched our daughters graduate with citations and medals. These were our dreams turned real, considering the fact that both my husband and I did not have the passion and zeal for studies that they had.

Whereas before, my parents strove to buy my books, it was my ASA loans that covered the cost of books and school supplies. Today, my daughters are the ones who buy their own laptops and state-of-the-art cellular phones.

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

As you can see, we have not made marked improvements on the house, precisely because we are informal settlers.

Should the Quezon City government not declare this section of Pasong Tamo a CMP (Community Mortgage Program) area, we may have to move out.

Together with our daughters, we are planning to buy a house and lot in a different section of Quezon City and to re-develop our property in Antipolo Hills.

My daughters have made up their minds to purchase a condominium unit in a building close to their worksites, where they suggest we all move.

We have discouraged them from doing this because it is much better to invest in a property with the earth under your feet. Not only can you plant fruit trees and vegetables on it; you can invest the empty spaces in other businesses. For me, this is God's best design. ▲

# Merly Ramos Sharma



*Photos on this spread show the Sharma Purified Drinking Station owned by Merly Sharma, widow of an Indian national. She bravely stood the tests of time and tragedy that took the father of her children permanently away from her family. Shown are her water filtration machines (left), her tall refilling bottles (below) and her round galloners (bottom). She braved the odds to emerge a true entrepreneur, faithful to her children, her ambitions for them, and her commitment to produce potable water of fine quality that is beneficial to her clients in the community.*

## Client Profile

Name	Merly Ramos Sharma
Address	Home: San Antonio Village, QC Business: Infantry Road, Veterans Village, Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City
Origins	Ragay, Camarines Sur
Age	51 years old
Education	High School Graduate Ragay High School, Camarines Sur
Status	Widow
Religion	Church of God International (Christian)
Children	Four: Karmjit (26 yrs); Rochelle (24 yrs); Amandeep (23 yrs); Sunny (21 yrs)
Loan Cycle	12 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	MEMBER, ASA Orchid Group
Loan Amount	PHP50,000
Savings	PHP13 ,000
Enterprise	PURIFIED WATER REFILLING STATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Own machinery and equipment</li> <li>Kia Delivery van/ motorcycle with sidecar</li> <li>Three (3) refilling and delivery crew</li> </ul>
Dwelling	4-STORY APARTMENT BUILDING FOR RENT Titled Property: Purified Drinking Station, Infantry Road, Veterans Village, Holy Spirit, QC Titled Property: House and Lot in San Antonio Village, Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City Titled Property: Four-story Apartment Building, Infantry Road, Veterans Village, Holy Spirit, QC







## *"Sa tulong ng ASA, napagayaman ko ang iniwan ng aking asawa" - With the help of ASA, I was able to prosper what my husband left behind*

### *My uphill journey*

**D**estiny is something people have to accept from the time of birth. I was born in Ragay, Camarines Sur, and have known what it was to live in a poor municipality where farmer families had to beat the odds to put rice and sardines on their tables. They lacked capital for planning, harvesting, and marketing their products. This was something I resolved to fight against. I guess it was my destiny to work myself up from where I was.

To *probinsyano*s like myself, Manila was an attractive place to go to and find work in; this was much better than tilling the soil and getting very little in return. I came here after finishing high school in Bicol to be with my relatives.

I met my husband, Ashok Sharma in Manggahan, Quezon City while I was doing private chores for richer families. He was a salesman on wheels and a native of Punjab, India. We fell in love and got married. We were blessed with four children.

Ashok was a devoted breadwinner. He would

have finished his business where he transacted owners, since he was a small-time individual

Because he made home to take care of the earnings, Ashok was able children with a decent conveniences in San Commonwealth Avenue,

My children took and industry. The two Rochelle, graduated with Nursing degrees from the University of the Philippines. They are now overseas contract workers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

*I tried to follow my husband's footsteps after he passed away, although not as a mobile salesman and investor, but a store-based entrepreneur. I would have none of the dangers that on-the-road commerce was so full of. I chose to direct my business from indoors, assisted only by trusted helpers and within easy reach of my clients.*

father and a tireless not come home until he rounds of the communities business with business roving merchandiser and lending investor.

good income, I stayed children. With his to provide me and the home with modest Antonio Village, Quezon City.

after their father's patience older children, Karmjit and Bachelor of Science in

My two younger children are both graduating college students. Amandeep is taking up Information Technology at the Technological Institute of the Philippines, Quezon City while Sunny is engrossed in his Bachelor of Science in Business Management course at the Far Eastern University, Manila.

### *Tests of will and courage*

The darkest day of my life came in 1995. I was riding with Ashok on our motorcycle during one of his rounds when we were stopped and confronted by a group of armed bandits who demanded that we hand over our bags to them. Frightened, we tried to get away but one of the men took aim and shot at my husband. Unable to control the bike, we veered off the road, with Ashok trying to keep the balance while holding me so I would not fall off. The men snatched our bags and ran off with all our cash, while a couple of onlookers rushed over to help us.

We brought Ashok to the Malvar Hospital of Quezon City, but no amount of resuscitation by the doctors was able to bring him back. He left me devastated and alone with the children but with the house, some possessions, and a moderate amount of business capital to pick up from where he left off and start anew.

I tried to follow my husband's footsteps after he passed away, although not as a mobile salesman and investor, but a store-based entrepreneur. I would have none of the dangers that on-the-road commerce was so full of. I chose to direct my business from indoors, assisted only by trusted helpers and within easy reach of my clients.

## ***My work, my enterprise***

I set up the *Tubigan* I called the Sharma Purified Drinking Station (after my husband's name) in 2001, seven years after my husband's death. I could not have done so earlier because I was busy taking care of my small children. Earlier, I tried to continue my husband's micro-lending businesses but when I saw that purified drinking water was fast becoming a popular commodity in the barangay, I made the move.

I have a production capacity of 1,500 five-gallon round bottles and 750 slim blue bottles. I realize an estimated gross monthly income of from PHP70,000 to PHP80,000 per month.

In addition to my personal deliveries, I have a dealership network consisting of 15 dealers who distribute the products to various establishments. I have procured one KIA van that is used for volume deliveries and one motorcycle with a sidecar for my smaller deliveries.

I have three hired helpers who help me run the purifying machines, clean and bottles, and do the rationing. They are all my nephews and receive a monthly wage of PHP5,000 per month, with free board and lodging. My sister, Dominga, 58 years old, also helps me keep track of my business transactions.

I have also involved other family members in my business because I believe that the best way I can help poorer relations is to provide them with their means of livelihood. No one nowadays can subsist on charity because the moment you start giving cash, people will keep returning again helped.

I used my income on personal savings left by my

a spacious three door, three- that I rent out for There is a roofdeck on top previously rented by the ministry. This

has vacated the place and I fourth level in order to prospective renters again.

I spend daylight hours and return to my home in

My two sons Amandeep and Sunny still live here along with a brother-in-law of mine whose children are now abroad.

I am preparing my children to one day become entrepreneurs on their own merit. I will gladly turn over the businesses to them only if they seriously desire and intend to take over them. Otherwise, business will not succeed in the wrong hands.

*Since the approval of my first loan cycle, my partnership with ASA has greatly benefited my water station and house rental business. I used the loans to maintain my purifiers and the building which was built on top of the 240-square meter lot fully paid for by my husband. These are gifts I will treasure all my life.*

business and added the husband to come up with

level apartment building PHP7,000 per door. of this building that was Dating Daan religious congregation, however,

plan to renovate this make it attractive to

here in Veterans Village San Antonio at nightfall.

## ***ASA's role in my life***

I became a client of ASA in 2006 when the *Tubigan* was already five years into its operation and in full swing. This was for me a reasonable step because it came to my knowledge that ASA was a legitimate and reliable lending institution that supported the capital needs of micro entrepreneurs in this area.

*Sa tulong ng ASA, napagayaman ko ang ininwan ng aking asawa* (With the help of ASA, I was able to prosper what my husband left behind). Since the approval of my first loan cycle, my partnership with ASA has greatly benefited my water station and rental business. I used the loans to maintain my purifiers and the building which was built on top of the 240-square meter lot fully paid for by my husband. These are gifts I will treasure all my life.

With each of my loan releases, I was able to pay for spare part replacements and the servicing of the instrumentation, as well as provide for the electrical, material and plumbing fixtures of the apartment structure, in compliance to building safety rules and regulations.

The water station is also costly to maintain because if the machines bog down, our sales will drop to zero and if not fixed and made operational on time, we stand to lose not only our customers but the entire business as well.

My last ASA business loan of PHP50,000 was invested fully in both businesses. I had withdrawn an amount from my savings passbook in order to support the overseas job applications of my two registered nurses.

## ***The road to transformation***

For a person in business like me who was held up at gun point while doing business, moving beyond trauma was difficult because I lost a husband. But the experience was completely transforming, just as I was transformed from being the provinsiyana that I was into the entrepreneur that I am.

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

*Ang sabi ko nga, ang kapalaran ay hindi mababago—nasa atin ang pagbabago* (I keep saying, destiny cannot be changed, we are the ones who should change ourselves). I will keep making changes to my own life and the lives of my children and the people I care for. I draw inspiration from my courageous and hardworking husband because this keeps his spirit alive.

I have lost all enthusiasm to follow the children to Saudi or to engage in a new kind of business. My sole ambition is to redevelop the apartment building so that in case my younger children would prefer to invest in the Philippines, they will have a fitting workplace. Surely I have a reason to smile, on my youngest sons' graduation day. ▲



# Erlinda Torres Bustos

*Erlinda Bustos, shown at right, is seated at her front door terrace, overlooking a driveway where vans and trucks loaded with masonry and flooring materials can park with ease. The family contracting business she runs with her husband Leopoldo is abuzz these days with an 800-square-meter swimming pool flooring project. Beside her and the photo below shows the mosaic of ceramic and clay tiles that client project owners can choose from. These materials are supplied by local and foreign manufacturers.*



## Client Profile

Name	Erlinda Torres Bustos
Address	Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City
Origins	Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental
Age	57 years old
Education	
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Three: Leopoldo, Jr. (32 yrs); Ronald (31 yrs); Noel (30 yrs); 15 <sup>th</sup>
Loan Cycle	
ASA Position	MEMBER, ASA Group
Loan Amount	PHP37,000
Savings	PHP13,000
Enterprise	CONTRACTOR and SUB-CONTRACTOR: Flooring Masonry and Steelwork for Architects, Engineers, and General Builders A Family-owned Business with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Machinery and equipment</li> <li>10 employees</li> <li>Network of local suppliers in Romblon and Bulacan and local importers of products from China and Italy</li> </ul>
Dwelling	Titled Property, 240 square meters Residence and Flooring Equipment/ Materials Stockyard: Barangay Holy Spirit, QC

# ***"Kahusayan ang nagpapaunlad sa negosyo" - Excellence promotes the business***

## ***My uphill journey***

**A**ng pagiging abala sa mabubuting gawain ay utos ng Diyos. At kung hindi tayo masipag sa gawaing ito, wala nang dahilan upang mabuhay pa sa mundo. (Preoccupation with good work is the commandment of God. If we are not industrious, there is no reason to go on living in this world).

This has always been my personal thoughts even as a young girl growing up in the city of Dumaguete. When not attending my classes, I made sure I helped my parents with housework, tend to my brothers and sisters, or help my mother take farm products to the market.

When I came to Manila, I met my husband Leopoldo, a construction laborer. When we got married, he became more conscientious in his job. In the process, he mastered the skills of masonry and steelwork on the jobsite and was promoted to these tasks in various projects in Metro-Manila. As projects went by, Leopoldo began to accept direct-hire jobs from various homeowners and project managers. He was much favored by foremen and construction managers who came to seek him out.

When his clients grew in number, we decided to establish a contracting business in 1982 and set up shop on a leased property near the Immaculate Conception Church of Cubao, Quezon City. In 1997, we moved where the building and construction activities were at their peak.

*We chose to specialize in flooring and general masonry work because this is a*

*focused area of the contracting business*

*and a field where my husband excels.*

*Furthermore, it is a finishing job that entails less groundwork and manpower*

*overhead. I am proud to say that we have been in business for the past 30 years now.*

grew in number, we decided business in 1982 and set up property near the Church of Cubao, Quezon to Barangay Holy Spirit construction activities were

I became his partner—taking the calls, dealing with clients, and doing the bookkeeping. Together we would close contracting agreements and gain the income necessary to sustain the business and send our three sons to college.

We chose to specialize in flooring and general masonry work for floor tile installation or pour-type finishes because this is a focused area of the contracting business, and a field where my husband excels. Furthermore, it is a finishing job that entails less groundwork and manpower overhead. I am proud to say that we have been in business for the past 30 years now.

Today, all my sons are in the prime of their lives: the oldest, Leopoldo, Jr., is 32. He is an architectural undergrad of the Mapua Institute of Technology (MIT). He is his father's right hand person in the business.

Our second son, Ronald, 31 years old, is a graduate of Business Management while the third, Noel, graduated with a degree in Accountancy. All are financially independent, married, and with families of their own.

I have a grandson, 10-year-old Gian Aaron that I dote upon and send to school because he is a consistent honor student. We are grooming this child to become a responsible partner in business someday.

## ***My work, my enterprise***

After 30 full years, I could say that the business has prospered even if until this day, we move within a small market. We do not have the ambition to join the top ranks of contracting.

We have under our employment ten workers consisting of masons and laborers (spade mixers of concrete). We pay our masons PHP500 per day and our laborers, PHP300 per day. All of them are relatives from both sides of the family. They are not provided with board and lodging because they have places of their own.

Our equipment consists of two fixed grinding machines for marble and granite and another fixed grinder for wood. We have three portable grinders that we hand-carry to the sites

On the management side, my husband and son team up with myself as the bookkeeper. They supervise and monitor the projects while I control the flow of funds.

Construction is basically a world of materials and labor and in our particular trade we utilize concrete mixes as the substrate of poured marble, pebble finishes, or tiles of all kinds including glazed and unglazed ceramic, cement, granite and clay tiles.

We do not actively market or offer our services to the public because the types of flooring we do are pre-specified in the official buildings plans of architects and building contractors subject to the approval of the owners. The general builder also dictates whether the poured or tile materials would come from local or foreign sources.

Once contracted, we deal with a network of marble suppliers in Bulacan and Romblon provinces or with local importers of Italian and Chinese ceramic and granite materials.

We accept orders from individual homeowners but many of our projects are referred by architects and engineers. We have been on the short-list of some mall owners in Metro-Manila.

The contract size owner's budget and on our We can process flooring two to three (2-3) clients construction period.

A straight-contract anywhere from Million but I always tell although the business actually small because the material costs, labor costs, cost of money itself.

We average a clean PHP50,000 per contract gross income is distributed across many items of expense.

*Through the years that I have been a client of ASA, I gained the assurance that I could obtain the financial relief needed by the enterprise to keep it going. To us, ASA became not just a lending facility, but a business associate that could replenish our business capital during critical stages of our projects.*

depends a lot on the own production capacity. work simultaneously for within a given

flooring can cost PHP250,000 to PHP.5 anyone who asks that, appears big, the profit is budget is cut up into transport costs, and the

income of about per month because the

### ***ASA's role in my life***

This is where ASA comes in because in our business, we encounter slowdowns and at times, the absence of projects. We also suffer from delayed contract payments, increasing fuel costs, and even labor problems because there are times when we have to deal with irate workers or workers in conflict with their families or with the law. There are also many clients who haggle and bargain for the lowest prices they could get.

I invested all my 15 ASA loan releases in the business. I was able to buy much needed hand tools like our portable machines, as well as inputs like fine sand, aggregate stones, and cement adhesives.

I lost count of other loan releases that were also made to cover the salaries of our workers, general repair and maintenance, or were deposited in bank accounts to serve as a stand-by fund for other project-related expenses.

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Having ASA for a partner also makes us pay attention more closely to our own financial management. We have learned from ASA. Just as it expects us to follow credit rules and regulations, we expect our clients to do the same.

I am careful in the treatment of my ASA loan cycles. I have an ongoing loan of only PHP37,000 now. I keep the borrowings low to give me more room to utilize our staggered incomes on business.

Like other business owners, I would want higher loan ceilings, but I have to weigh our chances carefully because we want to pay our dues to ASA, our salaries, suppliers, and government taxes on time.

### ***The road to transformation***

When we set up the business 30 years ago, we never thought of becoming an independent contractor because my husband was a mere laborer.



I like to think that we are still growing, although it will be up to our sons to carry our small contracting business to a higher level. We will share with them our knowledge of the business and the value of partnering with financial institutions like ASA.

I want them to look up to my husband as their role model because he came from humble beginnings. *Hindi lang mabusay na mason ang aking asawa, mabusay siyang mangontrata, makipag-kasundo sa presyo, at makitungo sa kliyente* (my husband is not just a good mason, he is skilled in contract negotiations, contract pricing and customer relations).

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

My husband was always ready to prove himself beyond his capacity just to finish the job to the satisfaction of the most demanding engineer.

He keeps saying that the beauty of the construction work always lies in the hands of the finishers. We always work on the principle that if you do the job well, the job speaks for itself. *Kabusayan ang nagpapaunlad ng negosyo* (Excellence promotes the business). This is the only secret of our trade and the only legacy we could leave to our sons. ▲

# Merly Gesmundo Gutierrez



*Merly Gesmundo Gutierrez is happy with what she has achieved. With her husband's retirement pay from the Philippine National Police and 15 cycles of ASA loans, she was able to construct houses for rent (shown in the two photos above), put up a small variety store, and sell frozen foodstuff. She is shown at right making a shopping list and below, posing in front of her daughters' portraits.*



## Client Profile

Name	Merly Gesmundo Gutierrez
Address	Infantry, Veterans Village, Barangay Holy Spirit, QC
Origins	San Pablo, Laguna
Age	57 years old
Education	Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance San Pablo College, Laguna
Status	Married
Religion	Catholic
Children	Four: Meldy (32 yrs); Melvin (30 yrs); Mary Diona (29 yrs); Mary Joy (26 yrs)
Loan Cycle	15 <sup>th</sup>
ASA Position	GROUP MEMBER, ASA Orchid Group
Loan Amount	PHP69,000
Savings	PHP39,000
Enterprise	MULTI-LINEAR: HOUSE RENTAL Small Variety Store Swift's Processed Food Sale
Dwelling	Titled 310-square-meter lot with two-story residence Two (2) units of 1-story houses for rent One unit 2-story house for rent



# *"Tao ang simula ng pagbabago, ang ASA ay kasangkapan lamang" - Change begins with the person, ASA is just an instrument*

## *My uphill journey*

being called a "Top Saver" by ASA managers and staff can be quite flattering but this should not even be the exception in the case of micro entrepreneurs. Savings must come naturally to someone who invests money and time into his or her business.

I just happen to have a good background in banking and finance, having received a college diploma in these disciplines from San Pablo College, Laguna many years back. It is my orientation that gives great importance to savings. Savings back me up when there is a financial crisis in the outside world, or even within the family itself.

*Kung wala kang savings at ikaw ay mangangailangan, hindi mo alam kung saan ka tatakebo* (If you do not have savings and come to a need, you will not even know where to run to)

When my husband Dionisio retired from the Philippine National Police in 2005, I made sure that part of his retirement pay went to savings. When my children were still in school, my constant advice to them was to save part of their allowances for the "rainy days."

As a member of an ASA microfinance group, I made sure I applied the same principle to myself. It should not even be a cause for pride. It should instead be a habitual good.

Right after my graduation I applied for a job at the Bureau of Lands, Lucena Branch and stayed there for some years. This was where

I met my husband, Dionisio who was then connected with the Laguna PNP.

I felt comfortable working for government because both my father was a government employee who worked tirelessly to send us all to college.

Because our children had the same reverence for their studies, all of them became professionals. Our eldest daughter is 32 years of age and

*Rentals not only enable me to recover the cost of investment, they guarantee a steady source of income for my whole family. In this way, we could lie back and at the same time, allow the money to come in. I am just what you can call, a small-time property investor.*

a nurse at the Carlos Lantin Colleges.

Our eldest son Melvin, 30, is a graduate of Computer Engineering from the Technological Institute of the Philippines. May Diona, another daughter is 29, and a graduate of Mass Communications from New Era College. Mary Joy, our youngest daughter, 26, took after me. She has a Bachelor of Commerce degree also from the TIP.

At this stage in my life when all the children hold their lives in their hands, two of them having had families of their own, there are times when I am tempted to lay back and do nothing.

The business person inside me, however, would not agree. However, instead of putting up a big grocery or engaging in a high-energy business, I chose to plan and put our acquired property to work.

## *My work, my enterprise*

Early in our marriage, this area of Luzon in Quezon City was largely informally occupied. However, when the National Housing Authority stepped in to declare the awarding of titles to deserving families, we applied and were granted the mortgage agreement.

Thankfully, we now hold the title to this 310-square meter property on which we built the modest two-story family residence. What we did was to situate the house to one side of the property attached to the adjacent wall of a neighbor.

Since there were vacant spaces on three sides of the house, I chose to build two other townhouse-type structures on spaces to the left and right of the main house. Each of these houses could accommodate two families or a total of four renters.

Capital came from my husband's pension funds, 15 cycles of ASA loans, and savings generated from my smaller entrepreneurial activities, mainly buy and sell.

When the houses were completed, they were quickly occupied. Both structures are well built with all the basic amenities such as good plumbing, spacious rooms and even terraces.

Rentals not only enable me to recover the cost of investment, they guarantee a steady source of income for my whole family. In this way, we could lie back and at the same time, allow the money to come in. I am just

what you can call, a small-time property investor.

All of the four houses are rented at the rate of PHP3,500 for the smaller structures, and PHP4,500 for the bigger structures. I keep my rental fees low so that they would be affordable. There are indiscriminate owners who raise rental fees but if they do, vacancies are the consequence.

As of now, my store has closed down in anticipation of a planned construction on the street side of the compound. My capital for this activity is now a very low PHP5,000 but I have plans to increase this when a more permanent and visible store house will materialize.

My frozen food sales are also ongoing although on a minor scale too, because I am still trying to gain the momentum. This will also have to be integrated with the store.

### ***ASA's role in my life***

The support that ASA extended was behind many of the good things that happened to us. I was one of the pioneer borrowers here in Barangay Holy Spirit, having been a client since 2006. Since then, my life has significantly improved. ASA funds have contributed to my housing projects, my variety store, and my frozen food business.

My savings propped up all these engagements; although I have withdrawn from the balance a number of times, I made sure I returned what I have taken and kept it to a level that I could again borrow from in the future. I think that without savings, an entrepreneur could not succeed very much.

### ***The road to transformation***

*Tunatabda na kaming mag-asawa at hindi na nadidiin tulad nung dati noong may*

*pina-paaral pa naming ang mga bata* (my husband and I are getting older and we are not as pressured as we were previously when we used to send the children to school).

I have been transformed. *Ngunit, tao ang simula ng pagbabago, ang ASA ay kasangkapan lamang* (Change begins with the person, ASA is just an instrument).

I am a devout Catholic and a member of the Legion of Mary. I am also a catechist and I always tell my students that we have to will and desire the change that we want to take place in our lives, only then will God intervene.

I truly believe that parental advice, academic degrees, businesses,

*There are other microfinance institutions who invite entrepreneurs in Luzon to "try" their credit facilities. I have to consider my own situation because as far as I am concerned, ASA has satisfactorily responded to my needs and contributed to the building of my projects. . . ASA was a "co-builder".*

and lending opportunities from ASA are all support mechanisms. They facilitate the transformation process but by themselves do not transform because all these, if used the wrong way, will not lead to improved quality of life. I am guided by spiritual calling *dabil ako ay taong-simbahan* (I am a church-based person) and I have my own personal principles.

### ***Tests of will and courage***

Of my three enterprises, store-keeping was the greater challenge area because I could not avoid encountering irritable and quarrelsome customers. And almost always when operating in low-key communities such as Barangay Holy Spirit, credit is a way of life. *Pag hindi ka magpautang, huwag ka nang mag-*

*negosyo* (If you do not sell goods on credit, don't go into business).

In contrast, my renter families are good payers and I am very much encouraged to stay in this business rather than operate a store.

### ***Sharing insights and future plans***

I am satisfied with what I already have because my own family background, education and the church also teach moderation. I intend to pass on the business to my children especially the women who have a greater inclination toward commerce.

I want my rental business to gain greater stability; since there are still ample spaces left on the property, I plan to add five more townhouse segments in the future, this time in collaboration with my own children. This will depend on their capability to help us come up with the needed capital for construction, and the Lord's provisions.

With respect to my ASA membership, I plan to go into further loan cycles because of my plans to revitalize my store and frozen food business. I may even embark on a joint partnership with my children in these activities.

My daughter Meldy is my co-maker and guarantor. One thing good about being a member of ASA is that it is always responsive to demands for capitalization. In my construction activities, I could safely say that ASA was a "co-builder."

*Sa totoo lang* (in truth), there are other microfinance institutions who invite entrepreneurs in Luzon to "try" their credit facilities. I have to consider my own situation because as far as I am concerned, ASA has satisfactorily responded to my needs and contributed to the building of my projects.



I plan to dedicate my days ahead  
only to the Lord in the company of  
my fellow-catechists in the Heart of  
Jesus Parish. ▲