News
Ministry



The Claretian Missionary Sisters at the congregation's house in Quezon City, Philippines (GSR photo/Oliver Samson)



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A mother of three, Narcisa depended on her sewing machine: The clothes and materials she made were how she provided for her family, as her husband had had a stroke and was left unfit to work.

When her sewing machine broke in mid-2022, she worried that she would not be able to buy food for her family — until the Claretian Missionary Sisters stepped in. By September, they connected her with a donor who gave her a new sewing machine, making her one of many whose entrepreneurial endeavors the sisters have supported.

Her story encouraged the nuns to offer free skill and livelihood training to those who had previously received relief goods, calamity assistance, and health care aid from the congregation, so that the beneficiaries would have a chance to earn more for their family and make a better life.

After they've been trained in skills such as how to make dishwashing soap, candles and bags, the sisters promise to become regular clients to help them sell their products and expand their market, as these are items the sisters already need on a regular basis, said Sr. Rizalyn Solitario, the congregation's provincial superior for East Asia. Solitario is also the director of Claretian Missionary Sisters Philanthropic Development Office (CMS-PDO).



Sr. Rizalyn Solitario, the provincial superior of Claretian Missionary Sisters in East Asia, is also the director of the Claretian Missionary Sisters Philanthropic Development Office in Quezon City, Philippines. (GSR photo/Oliver Samson)

"They can make liquid soaps and candles right in their home and start selling to their neighbors," said Alma Corazon Paredes, a layperson and assistant director of the Philanthropic Development Office. "In that way, they could start making an income."

Today, the sisters support about 100 individuals a year through their skills training, with hundreds more receiving relief items.

In the past 10 years or so, the congregation has been distributing food, clothes, construction materials (such as cement and galvanized iron sheets), and other needs to survivors of fires, typhoons and floods in metro Manila and other parts of the country. The beneficiaries faced financial difficulties even before the disasters struck them.

Solitario said that today, the congregation has a philanthropic development office in the Philippines, in partnership with Spring Rain Global, an organization that offers philanthropic and financial consultations as well as risk management.

The congregation's members in the Philippines are praying the economically challenged beneficiaries of their ministries rise above their condition sooner or later.

"The sisters and the donors would be happy to see our beneficiaries becoming self-sufficient," Solitario said. "We are offering them trainings to help them make it happen."



Claretian Missionary Sisters meet with representatives of the enterprise that donates sewing machines to the congregation's beneficiaries. (Photo courtesy of Claretian Missionary Sisters)

The beneficiaries could become dependent on dole-outs if not empowered with skills and know-how that could be monetized, she added.

Knowing the sisters offer rice and groceries to the needy, some people come to the congregation's central house in the city's *barangay* (neighborhood) of Culiat to ask

for food despite the fact that there had been no disaster recently.

The idea behind providing the beneficiaries with livelihood training is to equip them with skills that could help them improve their lives and not depend on charity anymore.

More skill and livelihood trainings are in development and later will be offered to the recipients of relief and other beneficiaries, she noted.

Inviting the beneficiaries to the livelihood trainings could be a challenge, Solitario said.

Many were aware that people who finished similar training by other groups did not do well due to absence or lack of marketing and financial management support. Assuring them of sustained support could encourage them to join the Claretian Missionary Sisters' trainings, Paredes said.

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"We are going to support them after they have completed the trainings," she said. "We are going to help them sell their products."

The congregation would also offer backyard gardening to its beneficiaries so they could produce their own food right at their home, which would also help decongest the traffic of commuters and cut domestic expenses.

Skill and livelihood trainings also include massage and reflexology, and bag and T-shirt printing, Solitario mentioned.

"We understand that we cannot always just give a dole-out," she said.

"We believe the skill and livelihood trainings would produce self-sufficient people who are currently beneficiaries of the CMS-PDO," Paredes said. "The goal of the skill and livelihood trainings is to help them become not dependent on dole-outs."

Nothing good would happen if the beneficiaries would remain dependent on charity, Solitario said.

She also mentioned that donor fatigue could happen, and that donors might also face personal crises.

Paredes shared the same observation. The beneficiaries would not improve in their lives if they would just rely on charity. Empowering them with skills that could be monetized and providing them proper assistance could be helpful in their growth.



Alma Corazon Paredes, assistant director of the Claretian Missionary Sisters Philanthropic Development Office (GSR photo/Oliver Samson)

The recipients of the Claretian Missionary Sisters Philanthropic Development Office's health care program could acquire the capability to at least buy their own medicine, she added, or their own rice.

The congregation would also train people who would plant falcata tree seedlings and manage the plantation where the sisters have a two-hectare land in Guimaras, an island province in western Visayas.

Solitario said that they are also in partnership with a local company that provides the beneficiaries with seedlings, and that the company would later buy whatever is harvested from the plantations.

The sisters were looking at planting 2,000 falcata tree seedlings — one of the fastest-growing trees that is also commercially processed into shipping pallets, match sticks, and chopsticks. They would hire locals, especially economically challenged ones, to plant the seedlings and maintain the plantation.

Benefactors have suggested to the Philanthropic Development Office that it train beneficiaries in taking blood pressure, providing first aid and other skills, Paredes added.

"The donors would be happy to see their beneficiaries doing their best to improve their lives and become not dependent on charity anymore," she said. "Empowering them through trainings is helping them to make a living."