



Funded by
the European Union



Vol. 1 Issue 2
July–November 2024

The official newsletter of the Strengthening Capacities of Civil Society
in Caraga and BARMM for Good Governance Project
People in Need Philippines

STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN CARAGA AND BARMM FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE



Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from BARMM and Caraga engages in the Barangay Development Planning process of Pasig City. They observed how barangays unite to collaborate on priority projects, plans, and activities, gaining invaluable insights into this participatory approach that fosters community development.

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CSOs, LGUs Gain Insights to Enhance Governance Through Island-to-Island Learning Visits

Representatives from community organizations (CSOs) and local governments (LGUs) in Caraga and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) joined hands for two study visits to Metro Manila and Cagayan de Oro, in June 2024. These trips aimed to bring back ideas on better governance and deeper collaboration, ensuring government decisions reflect community needs.

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Exploring governance in Metro Manila

On June 3, representatives from 17 CSOs and LGUs visited Quezon City and Pasig City to see how local communities work hand-in-hand with their governments. The group toured government offices, participated in community planning sessions, and engaged in discussions with officials and other CSO members. A highlight

ADVANCING LITERACY AND SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN THROUGH COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

In remote communities in Tawi-Tawi, Philippines, the Tawi-Tawi Family Life Foundation Inc. (TFLF) is not only working to improve literacy among children but is also strengthening local governance through the active participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). With our financial support, TFLF has been able to provide a targeted literacy project to students at Badjao Kasulutan Elementary School and collaborate with the local government and CSOs to introduce initiatives for children.



TFLF holds a forum with community representatives to address pressing local issues. Through their discussions, they recognized the urgent need to support children with special needs.

“We focused on helping children who were struggling the most in their studies. These kids were not getting the support they needed,” shared Satra H. Mohammad Tilka, one of TFLF’s project implementers. Recognizing the gap in basic literacy skills, their project aimed to provide the necessary support for these children.

Educators from the TFLF trained 30 student mentors to help their peers improve their reading and literacy skills. “These mentors learned the Marungko method, which teaches Filipino reading through step-by-step sound recognition, and the Fuller method, which focuses on practical exercises for reading and writing in English,” Satra explained.

This engaging peer-to-peer approach empowered the mentors to support classmates struggling with reading. Over the course of the project, 72 mentees completed 12 peer

mentoring sessions, leading to an impressive 85% improvement in their literacy skills. “We’ve seen firsthand how the program has significantly improved their reading abilities,” Satra noted, reflecting on the project’s positive impact. The project’s success extended beyond the classroom. The school recognized the value of the initiative and committed to continuing the use of the introduced modules. “After the project, the school decided to continue using the module because they saw how much it helped their students,” Satra added.

Expanding to Local Governance and Advocacy

Beyond educational support, TFLF has also focused on mobilizing CSOs and collaborating with the local government unit (LGU) to advocate for children with disabilities.

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Social Accountability Mechanisms



- Tools and processes that allow citizens to monitor and evaluate government actions and services. This ensures that government decisions reflect the needs and interests of the community.
- Our project has helped strengthen or establish 10 social accountability mechanisms through the collaboration of CSOs and LGUs.

Buliok Women’s Association

Participatory Rural Appraisal for Barangay Development Plan

- A 3-year Barangay Development Plan based on input from 60 participants across various sectors
- A technical working group to address data gaps

Hiniusang Kababayan-an sa Barangay Hinimbangan

Review and Update of Barangay and Municipal Nutrition Action Plan

- Strengthened the Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC) by reviewing roles and responsibilities.
- Formalized CSO involvement in nutrition initiatives by including the group in the MNC.

Hugpong ng Kababajen-an nan Tagbuyawan

Creation of People’s Council

- Coordination meetings with partners, department heads, and CSOs (farmers, fisherfolks, youth, PWDs, Senior Citizens, LGBTQI group) to lay the groundwork for the People’s Council.
- Strategic Workshop involving 80 CSOs and 10 office heads to craft a 3-year plan for the Mainit People’s Council, integrated into the municipal development plan.

Poblacion, Violanta, Waloe Women’s Association

Creation of People’s Council

- Developed the People’s Council Mission and Vision.
- Elected officers and conducted strategic planning to enhance participatory governance.

Maluso Women Gender and Development Association

Implementation of “No Single-Use Plastics” Policy and Monitoring Mechanism

- Secured LGU commitment through a signed pledge to implement a no-plastic ordinance.
- Established community consultation mechanisms for solid waste management.

Marantao Women’s Dressmaking Service Cooperative

Lobbying for CSO Desk and Awareness Campaigns

- Established a CSO Desk to formalize CSO participation in local governance.
- Conducted awareness campaigns to empower the community and enhance transparency in local projects.

Banahao, San Isidro, San Pedro, St. Christine, Kalinaw Tu Kabudagan Women’s Association

Establishment of *Lawig Kalinaw* - Community Peace and Development Council

- Created and lobbied for a peace and development coalition called *Lawig Kalinaw*, ensuring inclusive representation of CSOs.
- Lobbied to hold annual peace conversations and proposed budget allocations for the initiative.

Sulu Youth Peace and Development Association

Lobbying for People’s Council Resolution

- Lobbied a resolution to establish a People’s Council.

Tawi-Tawi Family Life Foundation, Inc.

Strengthening Local Council for the Protection of Children focusin on Children with Special Needs

- Conducted CSO-LGU consultations and organized thematic workshops.
- Increased CSO participation in local special bodies, with a focus on child protection and education.

Teduray Day School Project

Strengthening Barangay Council for the

Protection of Children

- Empowered 78 participants from 23 barangays to design BCPC plans for 2025.
- Facilitated a CSO-LGU forum to strengthen collaboration on child rights and governance.

CSOs participates in the barangay development planning of Pasig City during their study visit in Metro Manila.



CSOs share the gaps and challenges they face in collaborating with the local government during their social accountability training in Cagayan de Oro City.



of the trip was a full-day training at the University of the Philippines - National College of Public Administration and Governance (UP-NCPAG), where they explored strategies to empower citizens and improve government services through transparency and accountability.

Marcelina R. Brussett, a CSO leader from Basilan, expressed, “We will bring back what we’ve learned to strengthen our partnership with the local government. This will help us create a more inclusive and participatory government process, making sure everyone in our community has a voice.”

Learning More in Cagayan de Oro City

34 more representatives from Caraga and BARMM visited Cagayan de Oro to explore how the city fosters citizen involvement in local governance. They observed CSO engagement in projects and initiatives and saw social accountability in action through practices like citizen feedback and public hearings. Visits to local

barangays helped participants witness community-driven solutions championed by local advocates.

Mayor Clarex Uy emphasized the value of government-citizen collaboration, saying, “By fostering cooperation, we ensure that governance remains inclusive and people’s voices are truly heard.”

Bringing Back Learnings from Field

These visits have strengthened ties between communities and local governments in Caraga and BARMM, helping them tackle important issues like women’s and children’s rights, agriculture, peace, and Indigenous Peoples’ rights. With support from our project, CSOs and LGUs are launching 10 joint initiatives to promote transparency and accountability in their respective communities. Together, They are building a foundation for a lasting positive change in Mindanao, showing that when communities and governments unite, everyone benefits.

CSOs from BARMM and Caraga visit the Cagayan de Oro City government to learn about their citizens’ council processes.



STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN CARAGA AND BARMM FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

34 CSO: Two Years of Change and Making Waves

- Funded by the European Union
- Implemented by People in Need Philippines, Balay Mindanaw Foundation Inc., and Maranao People Development Center Inc.,
- Works with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and CSO Networks in the Caraga and BARMM regions to strengthen their role in public decision-making at the local, regional, and national levels through:



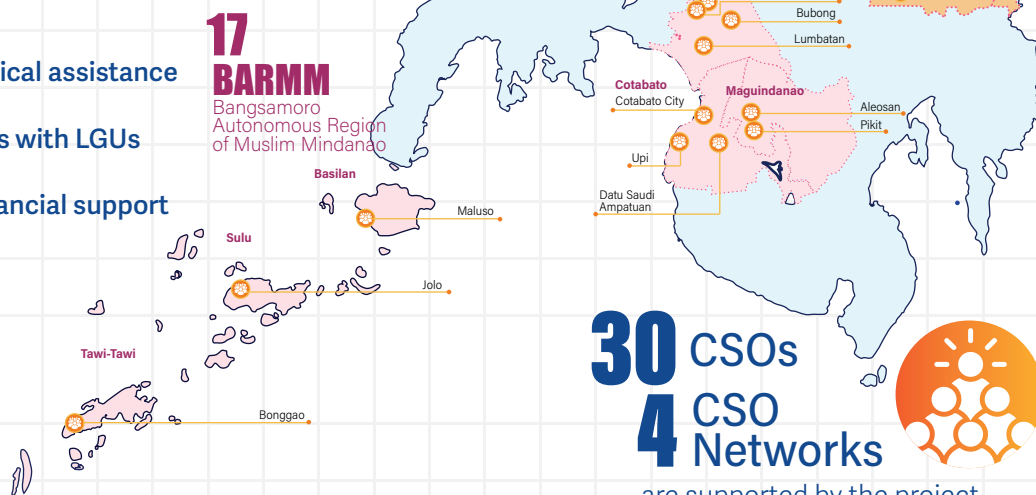
tailored technical assistance



joint initiatives with LGUs



access to financial support



30 CSOs
4 CSO Networks



are supported by the project

Activities Conducted

OCA & SAP

Conducted participatory **Organizational Capacity Assessments (OCA)** and the development/ revision of **Strategic Action Plans (SAP)**.



34 OCA conducted
34 SAP formulated



Main Capacity-building Needs

- Influencing the public sphere
- Resource Mobilization
- Skills and capacities needed in the organization
- Communication plan and strategies
- Projects, Activities, and Services
- Organizational Management - Finance and Admin

Tailored technical assistance



8 Trainings conducted
279 CSO members attended

- Organizational Management
- Financial Management
- Resource Mobilization
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Advocacy, Networking, Lobbying
- Communications
- Strategic Planning
- Advocacy Workshop

Registration and accreditation



Only **25 out of 34 CSOs** are registered to various government accrediting agencies

Registration to accrediting government agencies

Only **18 out of 34 CSOs** are members or accredited to the local special bodies

Membership/accreditation to Local Special Bodies



All the **34 CSOs** have been registered to various government accrediting agencies

31 out of 34 CSOs are members and or accredited to the local special bodies

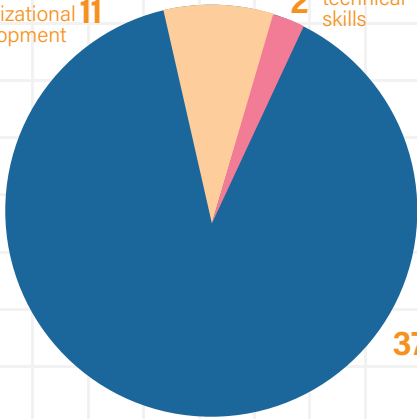
Financial Support

FSTP 1 (Financial Support to Third Parties 1)

34 grants supported CSOs to help strengthen their organizational capacity and drive key programmatic initiatives like community mobilization and policy advocacy

organizational development 11

2 technical skills



50 projects and activities supported

18 BARMM | 32 Caraga



PHP 4,700,000 total grant provided

37 sector-based advocacy

Target Groups:



Issues and topics:



Agriculture



Environment



Indigenous People's rights



Reproductive Health



Children



Health



Conflict resolution



Women Empowerment



Economic



Internal displacement



Out-of-school youth



Multi-sectoral

FSTP 2

(Financial Support to Third Parties 2)

FSTP 2 is a scale-up grant that supports 10 CSO-Local Government Unit (LGU) initiatives, focusing on establishing and strengthening social accountability mechanisms proposed by CSOs and LGUs.



10 social accountability mechanisms established/supported

5 BARMM | 5 Caraga



PHP 1,800,000

total grant provided



- Strengthening of Participatory Rural Appraisal for the Barangay Development Plan
- Review and Update of Barangay and Municipal Nutrition Action Plan
- Creation of People's Council (2)
- No-single use plastic policy with establishment of monitoring team



- Establishment of CSO Desk
- Establishment of Municipal Conflict Mitigation and Response Mechanism (Lawig Kalinaw)
- Strengthening of Local Council for the Protection of Children with focus on Children with special needs
- Strengthening of Barangay Council for the Protection of Children



TFLF conducts an orientation for school teachers on supporting children with special needs.



“Involving CSOs in governance is not just a responsibility; it’s about creating communities that are more inclusive and responsive to their needs,” Satra emphasized.

They organized a dialogue called *Kapehan* (coffee talks) to bring CSOs and LGUs together to identify pressing community issues. The event was attended by 30 participants from 10 CSOs focused on women, children, indigenous people, farmers, and senior citizens. Together, they prioritized supporting children with special needs.

“In Tawi-Tawi, many parents lack the knowledge and resources to support children with special needs. This often leads to feelings of shame and causes them to keep their children at home instead of sending them to school. We all agree that addressing this issue is crucial now more than ever,” Satra emphasized.

Participants committed to rolling out the orientation campaign focused on children with special needs to their members. At the same time, the LGU pledged to hold orientations in pilot schools and daycare centres, highlighting the collaborative effort to raise awareness and improve support for vulnerable children.

TFLF, together with the LGU and other CSOs, conducted an orientation for

schoolteachers and daycare workers across 35 barangays, focusing on recognizing signs and symptoms in children with special needs, how to manage these situations and understanding the broader impacts on children and their families.

To ensure continuity, the project ended with a commitment from the Gender and Development focal and the Local Council for the Protection of Children to keep advocating for these children. They also agreed to include CSO representatives in local special bodies to strengthen partnership community support for inclusion and long-term solutions.

A Path Toward Sustainability

These initiatives have not only improved literacy rates but also fostered a culture of active citizenship and community engagement. The collaboration between local government and CSOs has laid the foundation for sustainable development, ensuring that the voices of all community members, especially the most vulnerable, are heard.

“We will continue our advocacy as we always have. Through this project and the financial support, we’ve been more encouraged to do more for our community and engage more CSOs,” Satra concluded.

ENFORCING NO-SINGLE-USE PLASTIC IN MALUSO, BASILAN

Plastic waste has become a concern for the community of Maluso, Basilan, despite a local ordinance banning single-use plastics in the municipality. To tackle this issue, the Maluso Women Gender Development Association Inc. (MAWGEDA)

organized a community forum, bringing together representatives from various sectors to discuss the impact of plastic pollution and explore solutions collaboratively.

Working closely with the local government of Maluso, they

established a monitoring committee to ensure effective enforcement of the ordinance across Maluso. MAWGEDA will conduct regular visits to each barangay, tracking progress on their Solid Waste Management Plan. The association will also coordinate with barangay leaders to finalize implementation schedules, ensuring these waste management efforts become a reality and create a lasting, positive impact on the community.

MAWGEDA advocates for the use of materials recovery facility of each barangay.



Municipality of Maluso, Basilan



“We want everyone to have a say in decisions that affect our community,”

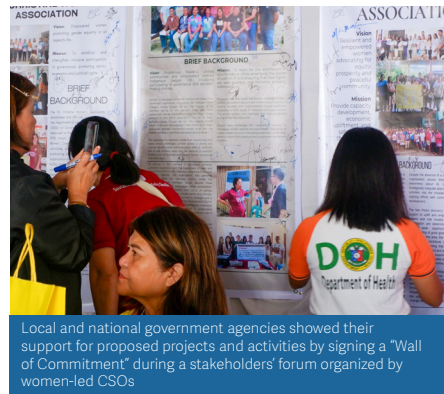
WOMEN IN CARAGA ADVOCATE FOR PEACE AND INCLUSION



The Sangguniang Bayan of Lianga has included the Lawig Kalinaw in their sessions. This resolution will go three readings before it can be formally approved.



Women CSOs of Lianga presented priority projects and activities identified during the initial community peace conversations to various stakeholders, gaining support and resources.



Local and national government agencies showed their support for proposed projects and activities by signing a “Wall of Commitment” during a stakeholders’ forum organized by women-led CSOs

Women in Lianga, Philippines, have established an initiative called Lawig Kalinaw—a Community Peace and Development Coalition (CPDC). Their focus is on resolving local conflicts, addressing grievances, and ensuring that women and other groups are included in decision-making processes.

The women leading this effort are Banahao Women’s Association, Kalinaw Tu Kabudagan Women’s Organisation, San Isidro Women’s Welfare Association, San Pedro Women’s Association, and St. Christine Women’s Association. Together, they are the 34 civil society organizations (CSOs) cooperating under the Strengthening the Capacities of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Caraga and BARMM for Good Governance project.

Lawig Kalinaw Matters

The *Lawig Kalinaw* initiative is integrated into the Lianga People’s Coalition, a platform designed to represent diverse voices in local governance. This ensures that marginalized people in remote communities, including women, indigenous people, farmers, fisherfolk, and persons with disabilities, are represented in local government decisions.

Rowena P. Quezada of the San Pedro Women’s Association, one

of the initiative’s leaders, shared their motivation: “We started Lawig Kalinaw to ensure that small groups in our *barangay* have a voice. For too long, their concerns haven’t been properly addressed. Now, we want to make sure everyone has a say in decisions that affect our community.”

With our support, the women organized a stakeholders’ forum. They held conversations with representatives from various marginalized sectors to identify priority projects for proposal to local and national government agencies. These peace and development conversations led to the creation of *Lawig Kalinaw*, a social accountability mechanism aimed at promoting transparency and ensuring that public services genuinely benefit the community.

A crucial aspect of the mechanism is the recognition of these women’s groups as part of the Local Special Body (LSB). The LSB is responsible for ensuring that local government decisions reflect the needs and concerns of the broader community, particularly those from marginalized groups. Through the LSB, these women’s organisations can help plan local projects, recommend policies, and monitor resource use to ensure transparency and accountability.

The women behind Lawig Kalinaw submitted a resolution that would allow the mechanism to become an

official part of local governance and ensure that community voices are consistently heard.

“We started Lawig Kalinaw to ensure that small groups in our barangay have a voice. For too long their concerns haven’t been properly addressed. Now we want everyone to have a say in decisions that affect our community.”

Rowena P. Quezada

Moving Forward

As Vice Mayor Diory C. Lamigo remarked, “Our women-led CSOs have been empowered and have gained a deeper understanding of their rights. It’s encouraging to see them actively involved in municipal activities. We are committed to supporting and sustaining these initiatives for the benefit of the community.”

With the full implementation of Lawig Kalinaw, the voices of the community, particularly the marginalized groups, are set to shape a more peaceful and collaborative future for everyone.

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH PEOPLE'S COUNCIL



Representatives from 40 CSOs in Loreto came together to elect the officers of the newly established Umajam People's Council.

A People's Council, or local community assembly, give citizens a voice in decisions that affect their daily lives, allowing communities to bring their most pressing concerns into focus. This council provides a space where residents can work together, shaping a future that reflects their shared values and priorities. By connecting local voices with government decisions, they ensure that policies align with the genuine needs of the community, extending inclusivity and transparency all the way to the grassroots.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government encouraged Local Government Units (LGUs) to set up People's Councils, hoping to build a consistent platform for public involvement in governance. But not all LGUs have responded, some may struggle to prioritize this initiative because of limited resources or concerns about the process.

Recognizing the need, our supported Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Caraga and BARMM have pursued efforts to establish People's Councils. Building on insights gained from study visits to LGUs with well-established councils, these CSOs are adapting valuable lessons to fit their communities' specific needs and

strengths, turning inspiration into action.

In Loreto, Agusan del Sur, a coalition of women-led CSOs, including the Poblacion, Violanta, and Waloe Women's Associations, has united to form a People's Council, striving to make sure every voice within the community is represented. Similarly, in Mainit, Surigao del Norte, the Hiniusang Kababajen-an nan Tagbuyawan is leading a movement rooted in the shared mission.

In both Loreto and Mainit, these CSOs have taken steps to prioritize transparency, accountability, and sustainable development. Their efforts align with DILG's Memorandum Circular No. 2021-012 and the Local Government Code of 1991, which encourage partnerships with non-governmental organizations to enhance local planning and program implementation.

Through our support, these People's Councils have developed three-year strategic plans focused on economic growth, environmental preservation, and social inclusion. For instance, in Mainit, the Hugpong ng Kababajen-an nan Tagbuyawan has been organizing coordination meetings, gathering community data, and leading workshops with a range of groups—including farmers,

fisherfolk, youth, seniors, and LGBTQI individuals. Together, they have crafted a strategic framework that will soon be presented for adoption in the local development plan.

Similarly, in Loreto, the Umajam People's Council emerged through collaboration between women's CSOs and municipal representatives, with over 40 accredited CSOs actively participating. Their strategic plan includes training, resource allocation, and officer elections, all aimed at amplifying community voices and aligning council initiatives with the municipal development agenda.

Leaders from organizations like the Loreto Poblacion Women's Association are driving these initiatives, underscoring the community's commitment to inclusive, participatory governance. The establishment of this council exemplifies the transformative power of community-led governance.

By providing citizens with a direct channel to express their needs, this will foster trust, accountability, and transparency, setting the stage for long-term sustainable development. This initiative brings local governance closer to the people, ensuring it reflects and responds to the true needs of the communities it serves.



Echoes from the Ground



Leslie Ann Bantasan
Municipal Local Government
Operations Officer
Kitcharao, Agusan del Norte

“

The CSOs are the voice of the people, the first to identify the real issues in the barangay. They provide valuable feedback, as they can give objective assessments of the implemented projects, plans, and activities. They also serve as essential partners in governance, working alongside the municipality or local government unit.



Rayconiff Castillo
Municipal Planning and
Development Coordinator
Loreto, Agusan del Sur

“

Since CSOs serve as a bridge between the government and the people, it's essential for them to be involved in planning and budgeting processes. That's why empowering and equipping our CSOs is so important—when they are capable and well-supported, they can help the government deliver services to communities more effectively.



Khumaidy Tan
Municipal Administrator
Jolo, Sulu

“

Our collaboration with CSOs continues to strengthen, fostering smoother implementation of our plans and activities. Their involvement is essential, as they help ensure government accountability in its work. Before executing any project, we conduct brainstorming sessions where CSOs play a key role, contributing valuable insights and perspectives.



Mohammad Saad Indar
Mindanao Center for Local Governance
Marawi City

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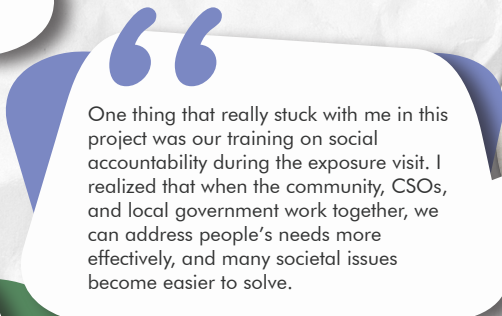
We are grateful for all the comprehensive training we received; it has been instrumental in organizing and empowering us, Civil Society Organizations. We are able to develop a concrete plan for our advocacy and learned strategies that we can use to successfully achieve our goals.



Nurkaima Ajarae
Sulu Youth Peace and Development
Association

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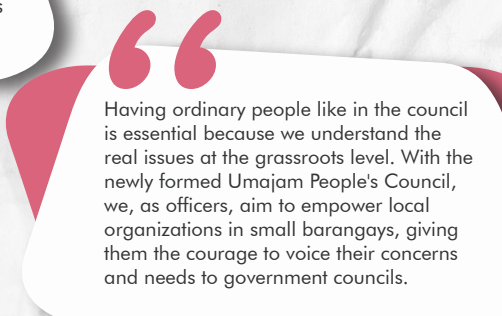
I'll never forget our visit to Manila, where we met local governments with strong partnerships with CSOs. Inspired by their People's Council, we've since lobbied to establish one in our own municipality, an essential step toward a more inclusive and participatory governance.



Salip Nur-Aisa Hairal
Tawi-Tawi Family Life Foundation Inc.

“

One thing that really stuck with me in this project was our training on social accountability during the exposure visit. I realized that when the community, CSOs, and local government work together, we can address people's needs more effectively, and many societal issues become easier to solve.



Rick Puig
Umajam People's Council
A project of Loreto Women's Association

“

Having ordinary people like in the council is essential because we understand the real issues at the grassroots level. With the newly formed Umajam People's Council, we, as officers, aim to empower local organizations in small barangays, giving them the courage to voice their concerns and needs to government councils.