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Bicolana finds fortune in pili oil; bags top plum in 15th Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards



IN PHOTO ARE ALL THE 8 WINNERS TOGETHER WITH THE ILLUSTRIOUS PANEL OF JUDGES THAT CHOSE THEM. (SEATED L-R) KEITH VARIAS, YOUTH MICROENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR; ROWENA MANALO, GREEN/SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS AWARDEE; IVY MILLARE, REGIONAL AWARDEE FOR MINDANAO; MERLE PAETE, MICROENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR; MIMOSA CORTEZ, REGIONAL AWARDEE FOR VISAYAS; ABDULIA AUSTRIA, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARDEE; CARMELITA DAPANAS, AGRI MICRO-BUSINESS AWARDEE; AND REYNANTE MANIMTIM; REGIONAL AWARDEE FOR LUZON. (STANDING L-R) AYALA CORPORATION PRESIDENT FERNANDO ZOBEL DE AYALA; PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP JOSE MA. A. CONCEPCION III; BSP DEPUTY GOVERNOR CHUCHI G. FONACIER; PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER CHAIRPERSON MARIXI RUFINO-PRieto; CITI PHILIPPINES CEO AFTAB AHMED; SPARK! PHILIPPINES TRUSTEE IMELDA M. NICOLAS; AND DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY SECRETARY RAMON M. LOPEZ.

The pili is not a tough nut to crack after all, especially for an enterprising Bicolana, who was named Microentrepreneur of the Year in the 15th Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards (CMA), presented by partners Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Citi Foundation, Citi Philippines, and the Microfinance Council of the Philippines, Inc.

In ceremonies held at the BSP Assembly Hall last December 6, Merle Paete, who has made exciting discoveries in the use of pili and its by-products, was presented the top award. Paete is joined by other awardees: Reynante Manimtim, a siomai food cart owner, the Regional Awardee for Luzon; Mimosa Cortez, a fishing and crab picking business owner, the

Regional Awardee for Visayas; Ivy Millare, buko pie and egg pie manufacturer, the Regional Awardee for Mindanao; and Keith Varias, an internet café owner, recognized as the Youth Microentrepreneur of the Year.

Special awards were also given to Rowena Manalo, a supplier of driftwood used in landscaping, for Green/Sustainable Business; Carmelita Dapanas, a semi-hydroponics farm owner, for Agri Micro-business; and Abdulia Austria, a lodging house and tour boat rentals business owner, for Community Leadership.

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“Through the Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards, we are able to recognize and celebrate successful entrepreneurs who have made a difference for themselves, their families and their respective communities. These entrepreneurs serve as an inspiration to others through their tenacity, perseverance, ingenuity and conviction to pursue their dreams. Citi Philippines is committed to continue its support of financial inclusion initiatives that help Filipinos achieve financial independence, improve their ability to support their families and contribute to their respective communities.” said Citi Philippines CEO Aftab Ahmed.

Paete, who hails from Bacon, Sorsogon City, started a small sari-sari store in 2002. At the same time, she was in the business of buying and selling pili nuts and woven mats. In her hometown, pili trees, from its fruit to its bark, are proven to have many uses. Paete discovered that the pili oil, locally called lana, could be extracted from the fruit’s outer covering. Lana can be used to alleviate skin conditions, regulate a person’s cholesterol levels, and help in weight loss. Eventually, Paete worked hard to buy a three-hectare land, cultivate it to grow pili trees, while gathering

additional pili fruit from neighboring farms.

“Their stories are reminders of the value and nobility of our work... that is why we constantly apply creativity and conviction in creating a regulatory framework that encourages an ecosystem where the poor are granted increased access to and usage of financial services,” said BSP Governor Nestor Espenilla, Jr.

This year’s winners received close to PhP2 million in cash and non-cash prizes that include life and health insurance coverage for one year; entrepreneurship training at the Citi Microenterprise Development Center; laptops and IT training. The winners will also be showcased during the celebratory town halls to be held in their respective hometowns after the awarding ceremony.

The National Selection Committee that chose this year’s winners is headed by Gov. Espenilla and Mr. Ahmed as co-chairs; with members Mr. Antonino Alindogan, Jr., Independent Director of Philippine Airlines, Inc.; Mr. Jose Ma. Concepcion III, Presidential Consultant on Entrepreneurship; Ms. Teresita Sy-Coson, Vice Chairperson of SM Investments Corporation;

Atty. Felipe Gozon, Chairman and CEO of GMA Network, Inc.; Secretary Ramon Lopez of the Department of Trade and Industry; Ms. Mary Ann Montemayor, Mindanao Private Sector Representative of the National MSME Development Council; Ms. Imelda Nicolas, Trustee of SPARK! Philippines; Ms. Marixi Rufino-Prieto, Chairperson of the Philippine Daily Inquirer; Dr. Michael Tan, Chancellor of the University of the Philippines; Mr. Orlando Vea, President of Voyager Innovations, Inc.; and Mr. Fernando Zobel de Ayala, President of Ayala Corporation.

CMA marks another milestone this year as it celebrates its 15th year of recognizing outstanding microentrepreneurs across the Philippines. Through the years, this awards program has highlighted the efforts of multiple stakeholders working together to strengthen microfinance and enterprise development in the country. After its launch in 2002 as part of Citi’s 100th anniversary celebration in the Philippines, CMA has given recognition to over one hundred microentrepreneurs across the country, including youth microentrepreneurs and those with notable contributions to the community, agriculture, and environmental sustainability.



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Green Energy Solutions through Microfinance

The Microfinance Council of the Philippines, Inc. (MCPI) conducted the Training on Accessing Green Energy Solutions through Microfinance on October 9-13, 2017 at the Discovery Suites, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, Philippines. It was organized in partnership with ADA and with support from the Ministère du Développement durable et des Infrastructures (MDDI) of the Luxembourg Government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The training program builds on the expertise developed by MCPI from implementing the Developing Sustainable Energy Access (DevSEA) program in 2013-2016.

The training aimed at providing relevant skills and know-how to microfinance institutions (MFIs) in the development and implementation of clean energy initiatives. It was attended by 19 participants, representing 11 MFIs from the membership of MCPI.

The first four days covered tools in launching a green energy portfolio including the Energy Needs Assessment process, Technology Matching, Business Planning and



Pilot Preparation. SELCO, a social enterprise based in India, also shared its experiences in collaborating with financial institutions to provide sustainable energy solutions in communities with no or limited access to energy.

The last day showcased various clean energy solutions and sharing of experiences, lessons, and challenges on clean energy projects by technology service providers - Hybrid Social Solutions, One Renewable Energy Enterprise, Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and

Mechanization, PR Gaz, Tagsibol Development Enterprise, and Bataan Peninsula State University-Abucay campus.

MCPI Executive Director, Mr. Allan Robert Sicat capped off the training with an inspiring message indicating that MFIs play a significant role in providing green energy solutions through microfinance. He further emphasized the need to generate a stronger buy-in in MFIs to bring the sector a step closer in achieving the third bottom-line or environmental sustainability.

