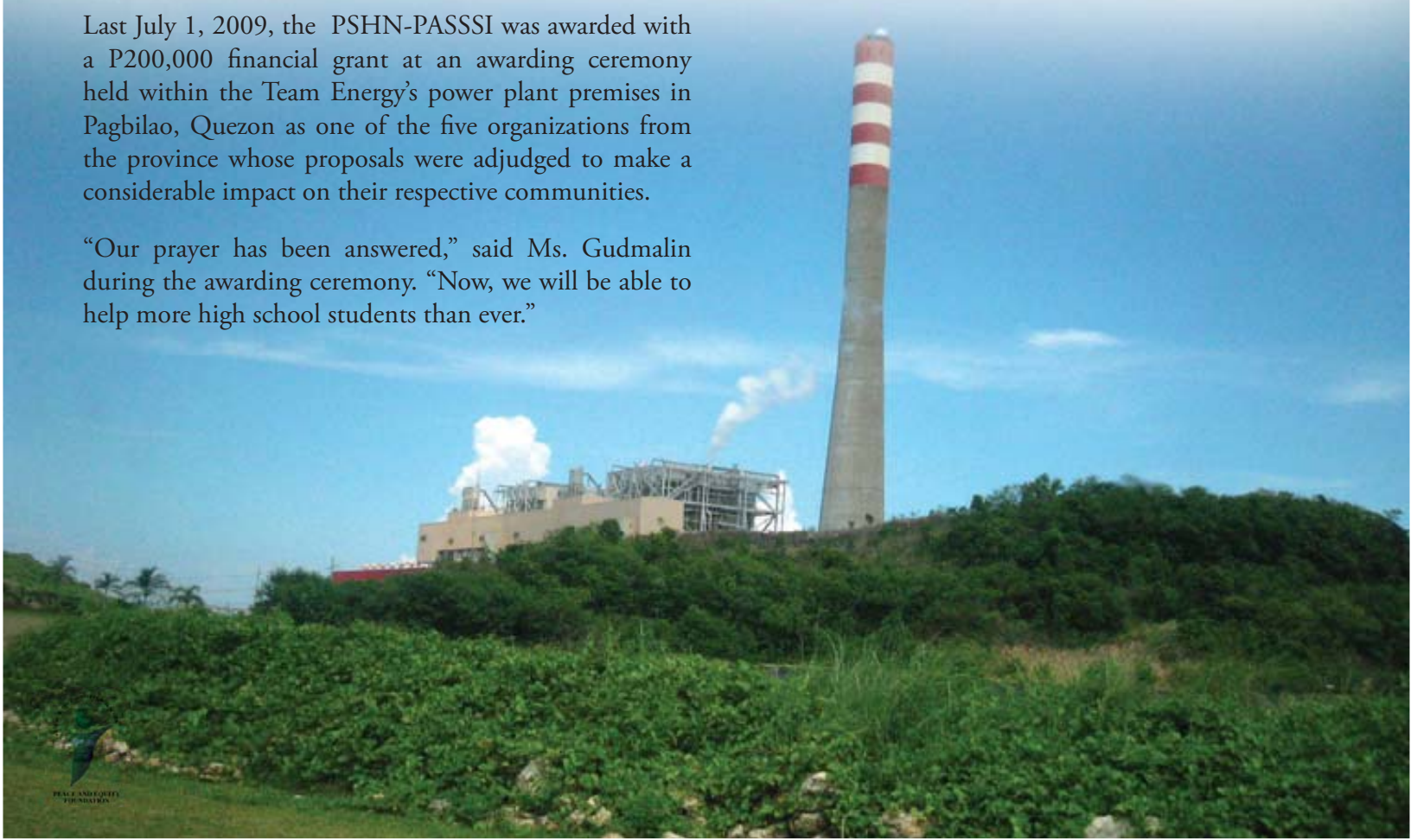


Facilitating a 'competition for development' among Team Energy beneficiaries

At first, Arsenia Miguel Gudmalin was reluctant to respond to a community bulletin in General Nakar, Quezon inviting organized groups to submit project proposals for funding by a leading independent power producer, Team Energy. After all, the announcement indicated it was designed as a 'competition' (for development) and that she was only tipped about it a few days before the deadline on April 15, 2009. Thinking nothing was there to lose by joining the 'competition', the cooperative where she is president- the Paaralang Sekundarya ng Heneral Nakar (PSHN) Alternative Student Support Systems Initiative (PASSSI)- rushed to gather all requirements and submitted a proposal anyway.

Last July 1, 2009, the PSHN-PASSSI was awarded with a P200,000 financial grant at an awarding ceremony held within the Team Energy's power plant premises in Pagbilao, Quezon as one of the five organizations from the province whose proposals were adjudged to make a considerable impact on their respective communities.

"Our prayer has been answered," said Ms. Gudmalin during the awarding ceremony. "Now, we will be able to help more high school students than ever."



The PASSSI intends to establish a mini bookstore offering student services such as photocopying and identification card lamination. Ms Gudmalin said 80 percent of the earnings from this enterprise will provide sustainable source of funds for PASSSI's support program to indigent high school student beneficiaries covering their school supplies, fees, uniform and board and lodging.

Like the PSHN-PASSSI, four other organizations – the Banahaw Parents Association, Inc from Lucban, Quezon; Hardin ng Kalikasan from Real, Quezon; Angat-Buhay/Timong Infanta Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative from Infanta, Quezon and the Pagbilao Teachers and Employees Multi-Purpose Cooperative from Pagbilao, Quezon – were chosen out of the eight (8) project proposals submitted, thanks to the evaluation work by the Peace and Equity Foundation (PEF) as Team Energy's institutional partner.

PEF AND THE 'COMPETITION' MECHANICS

PEF's expertise in project development, monitoring and evaluation played a key role in organizing the 'Competition for Development', one of Team Energy's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs that offered to fund high-impact community projects proposed by local nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs) belonging to the first congressional districts of the company's host provinces, Quezon and Pangasinan.

Anchored on the third line of its vision statement, "significant social contribution" (the others being "sustained profitability", "operational excellence", and an "inspired team"), the Team Energy Corporation (TEC) launched the Competition to encourage community groups from the provinces of Quezon and Pangasinan to put together project proposals on education, environment, health and livelihood, that promise tangible and meaningful impact on the quality of lives of their stakeholders as well as offer high prospects for sustainability. The program's public information campaign was assisted by the Office of Congressman Wilfrido Mark Enverga (First District, Quezon) and the Office of Congressman Arthur F. Celeste (First District, Pangasinan).

The CSR strategy is, according to Team Energy's Community Affairs Manager Ethel O. Mendoza, the company's contribution to "alleviating poverty in the low-income municipalities of the provinces." While it covered areas even outside of the Team Energy power plants' host towns, the competition favored the "most viable and sustainable project proposals that can be implemented in one year".



Awarding of winning proposals in Sual, Pangasinan



Awarding of winning proposals in Pagbilao, Quezon

As Team Energy committed the financial counterpart for awarding the ‘competition winners’ with roughly 80 percent of each total project cost, PEF-Luzon led by Mr. Allyn Lopez has been responsible in designing the eligibility criteria for selecting the most deserving projects. The team also developed a template for counterparting among partners, objectives-setting among participating organizations and the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating (M&E) the approved projects. PEF’s recommendations were considered in selecting the winning beneficiaries after their proposals were validated during PEF team’s series of area visits.

DIVERSE ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGIES

Projects proposed and approved were as diverse as their number, from garment-sewing, charcoal briquette production to bangus processing and bio-organic fertilizer production, most of which presented innovative ways to increase the income level of the organization and its members. Team Energy awarded a total of P1,060,000 worth of grants to the five projects in Quezon and P720,000 to the four projects in Pangasinan.

In Quezon, a garments project proposed by the Banahaw Parents Association, Inc (BPAI) in Lucban town is expected to provide livelihood opportunity by maximizing the skills of some 60 women members in high-speed sewing. The project grant is the highest among the nine approved projects at P250,000. BPAI president Ms. Josephine C. Valde said through their earnings, they intend to train and enable more jobless mothers to make a livelihood while aiming to purchase more sewing machines every year.

Another women’s project by the Hardin ng Kalikasan in the town of Real intends not only to train women in making charcoal briquette using organic wastes as a major raw material but also in marketing their own products. They partnered with the Asian Alliance of Appropriate Technology Practitioners Inc., (APPROTECH ASIA) for the conduct of the technical training on charcoal briquette production. After one year, the

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project aims to not only provide jobs to women but likewise ‘to their male counterparts as well’.

The disappointment with the low returns from palay buying and rice trading has encouraged members of the Angat-Buhay/Timong Infanta Farmers Multi-Purpose Cooperative in the town of Infanta to seek another livelihood alternative by proposing to engage in *lambanog* (palm wine) trading. With a P180,000 fund from Team Energy, cooperative president Emmanuel Penamante said his 27 members hope to grow the grant to P300,000 after one year of operation by expanding their market and introducing their tasty *lambanog* brand outside of North Quezon.

While PSHN-PASSSI in General Nakar chooses to sell books and school supplies to help their sponsored poor students attend school comfortably, the Pagbilao Teachers and Employees Multi-Purpose Cooperative (PATEMCO) from Team Energy’s host town of Pagbilao intends to establish a consumer store to increase the cooperative’s loan portfolio.



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PATEMCO president Ms Stella Castilla said they want to help members do away with usurious money lenders colloquially known as “5-6” operators.

MORE PROPOSALS IN PANGASINAN

In Pangasinan, more project proposals with a total of 17 were submitted but only four of which were approved for Team Energy funding.

Displaced market vendors in Pangasinan’s Alaminos City will now have the chance to recoup their livelihood as the Alaminos Market Vendors Multi-Purpose Cooperative obtained a P195,000 grant to farm fresh bangus and turn them boneless and smoked before being sold either by retail or wholesale.

In the Pangasinan town of Infanta, the Bayambang Mangrove Growers and Fishermen Association, Inc is expected to generate jobs and provide additional income to members by engaging in Siganid cage culture, believed to have high profitability within its one cycle of operation. Siganid is a high-value fish species with high-end hotels and restaurants as the main market. The cooperative received a total of P195,000 from Team Energy.

Unlike in Quezon’s Infanta town, palay trading looks more lucrative to the members of the St. Isidore Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Burgos, Pangasinan as they proposed to buy

and sell palay produce of members at slightly higher buying price against the market rate. Proponents said that by buying palay produce at P12 per kilo against the P10 per kilo in the market, they can improve the income of farmers while still returning profits to the cooperative by selling them between P16 to P19 per kilo.

In Burgos, Pangasinan, the Cacacente Masanta Multi-Purpose Cooperative aims to engage in bio-organic fertilizer production and marketing but intends to make it available to member farmers first as an alternative to their commonly-used commercial fertilizer. In the long run, members said their ultimate vision is to promote market acceptability of the bio-organic compost in lieu of chemical fertilizers.

By building on the success of its implementation last year, the “Competition” project aims to leave a mark in continuing to empower locally-based organizations to take initiative in enhancing and influencing development outcomes, and to further strengthen partnership with the Offices of the First Congressional Districts of Quezon and Pangasinan, LGUs, civil society groups and the public sector.

PEF’s trailblazing mode of partnership with Team Energy including the collaboration with the Offices of Congressmen Enverga and Celeste in carrying out a development undertaking goes to prove that poverty alleviation is foremost in everyone’s concern and all that is needed is a venue and a platform to actualize that concern, said PEF Manager for Luzon Mr. Allyn Lopez.



“Enabling communities to address their problems may even just require local stakeholders and their partners to understand their stakes and therefore be willing to invest in an initiative such as Team Energy’s Competition for Development,” said Mr. Lopez. “Thus, PEF’s participation may take the form of non-monetary contribution.”