



Chronicles of Transformation

PSRTC EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

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Development of a Rural Community Empowerment Model

The collaboration between Sunrise Potato Systems Institute (SPSI) and Potato Systems Research and Training Center (PSRTC) is coming to the completion of the 10 year plan. Much was learned and many local and national partners have joined us in our unique strategy of empowering rural mountain communities.

Initially the development of appropriate simple technologies was clearly the role of PSRTC with the unique qualifications of Dr. Demonteverde and her “green thumb” husband Regie on their 8 hectare Canlaon Potatoes & Flowers (CP&F) farm on the slopes of Mt. Kanlaon. The introduction of pathogen free planting materials of new varieties of potatoes and sweet potatoes was the initial pillar of our work. The expansion to providing seedlings of many vegetable crops demanded by farmers meets an important niche. Our model of developing sustainable cropping with cover crops and strip tillage are understood to be important, however their adoption is slow.

Education and training activities are an important major way that we share the multifaceted approach to empowering communities. Partnering with universities and national agencies has allowed PSRTC and CP&F to diffuse our 10 years of learnings on Mt. Kanlaon. Only in the last 2 years has PSRTC started to add the funding of business plans for projects that create entrepreneurs in rural areas, with a focus on the younger generations.



SPSI decided last year that the 2nd five year phase of PSRTC will be focused on supporting new and larger business plans for new entrepreneurial projects on Negros and Guimaras. Supporting the education and training work that is officially lead by CP&F will also have some SPSI support through the leadership of Dr. Demonteverde.

SPSI is grateful for all of the impact and accomplishments that have been obtained during the last years, particularly how many local agencies and academe have adopted out strategies and supported the expansion of our technologies!

Sincerely,

Peter VanderZaag Ph.D.
Executive Director, SPSI

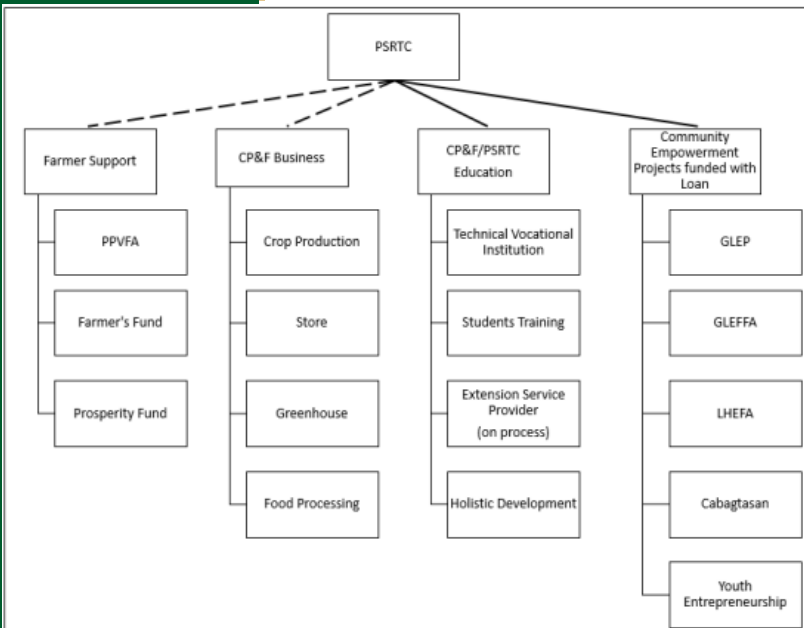
PSRTC EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES



The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations defines empowerment as the process of enhancing individuals' or groups' ability to exercise choice, voice, and influence within food and agriculture systems, leading to greater control over their lives and improved well-being. It has multiple dimensions, including access to resources, services, economic opportunities, and the ability to make decisions and control one's life.

In 2016, SPSI partnered with PSRTC. In turn, PSRTC initiated and/or worked with several organizations, group, and individuals by providing technical, financial, and other forms of support. PSRTC also served as bridge to promote linkages with other government/ non-government organizations.

The PSRTC was established in 2016 on the 8 hectares farm of CP&F, which was purchased in 2013. The facility includes two offices, two dorm rooms, a tissue culture laboratory, kitchen and bathroom facilities, lecture hall and large utility building for storing agricultural products and equipment. Adjacent are series of screen houses for the multiplication of planting materials for all the crops demanded by farmers. In November 2018, PSRTC was officially registered as a non profit corporation under Philippine law with a Board of Trustees and officers.



PSRTC brought about changes in countless lives. CP&F, with support from PSRTC has blossomed promoting both Agribusiness and Agricultural Education. CP&F is also a home to Pula Potatoes and Vegetable Farmers Association (PPVFA) and holistic development program for farmers and their families. On the island of Guimaras as well as in Cabagtasan, Brgy. Codcod, Negros Oriental, PSRTC supports improved agricultural practices with financing of loans to permit livelihood projects to be initiated and flourish. In 2024, proposal based projects were initiated with 5 recipients in Guimaras and 1 in Negros. For details, kindly refer to the Organogram and details of the individual programs.

PSRTC has 5 staff namely Victoria Demonteverde (Director), Jose Regie Demonteverde (farm manager), Jessica Nemenio (admin/bookkeeper) and focal person for PPVFA, Vickie Joy Demonteverde (Study Leader and focal person for Education), and Beverly Marquez (Study Leader and focal person for Food Processing).

Table 1. Number of Farmers that ordered vegetable seedlings at CP&F in 2020 -2024

CROP	Number of Farmers per Year					TOTAL
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Pechay	4	4	25	52	35	120
Lettuce	13	1	29	44	29	116
Broccoli	5	3	7	23	19	57
Pepper	1	36	2	5	11	55
Eggplant		33		3		36
Cucumber		2	11	5	6	24
Malabar Spinach		24				24
Tomato			5	6	13	24
Cabbage	2	1	3	7	10	23
Squash	4		3	2	2	11
Coriander		8				8
Bitter gourd		4		1		5
Cauliflower		1		3	1	5
Total	29	117	85	151	126	508



Empowered to Empower: Canlaon Potatoes and Flowers in Perspective

CP&F promotes agricultural business and education. The farm grows mainly sweet potato, corn, rice and some vegetable crops. The store mainly sells items needed by the community. PSRTC initiated a program on “Multiplication of Planting materials as a sustainable business that serves farming communities” which focused on the provision of high quality planting material of selected varieties that are requested by farmers. It became a business start-up for CP&F. Initially, acceptance of the technology was low but eventually the number of farmers and the number of seedlings ordered by farmers had increased to over 1.2M in 2024 with lettuce, pechay, cabbage and broccoli having the largest orders.

Milestones in Food Processing

The Food Processing was initiated by PSRTC and CP&F to produce sweet potato based products. It gained momentum during the implementation of Department of Science and Technology’s Project “Community Empowerment through Science and Technology for Sustainable Crop Production with Focus on Potato Production, Processing, and Marketing”. Tools and equipment and other support were provided to enable the start up to take off and work towards bigger scale production.

PSRTC and CP&F are grateful for the support of partners as Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Carlos Hilado Memorial State University, Technical University of the Philippines-Visayas, City Social Welfare and Development, Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) for various technical support in the development of food processing technology, packaging, and marketing of products. CP&F has taken initial steps to start commercialization. Steps are underway to obtain a license to operate as a Business Enterprise.



Display during NOFEX, standing is the former DTI Director Nimfa M. Virtucio

The group participated as exhibitor during Negros Oriental Food Exhibition (NOFEX) on July 10-16, 2025. CP&F also joined the Service Caravan in Canlaon City as part of the booth of Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). We note with great appreciation the continuous support of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU)-Guihulngan Campus, Dumaguete Cathedral Multipurpose Credit Cooperative (DCCCO), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and by the City Agriculture Office and City Tourism Office of Canlaon City.

Promotion of Agricultural Education



Students training in Grains Production NCII

In 2024, there were 40 On the Job Trainees from NORSU-Guihulngan and Central Philippines State University-San Carlos City. In addition, there were 36 Practicum students from Foundation University. In 2025, these activities were canceled due to the Mt. Kanlaon volcanic eruption.

CP&F is a registered Technical Vocational Institution of TESDA and offered Agroentrepreneurship NCII and Grains Production NCII. Seventy five learners from Barangays Pula, Masulog, and Linothagan had graduated from Agroentrepreneurship NCII.

At present, there are 23 from Brgy Pula and Buglasan that finished the training in Grains Production NCII. Another group of 13 learners from Barangay Binalbagan had done Agroentrepreneurship NCII.

Learning and Experiences of Grains Production NC II Learners

One of the qualifications being implemented with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is Grains Production NC II, that is designed to enhance knowledge, desirable attitudes and skills of rice or corn farmers/growers. Below are the impressions from Grains Production NCII learners:

"I learned what nutrients are needed by crops. Its only here that I learned the use and purpose of NPK and how to compute the fertilizer needed by the crops. I learned how to prepare the land for planting, transplanting rice and sowing corn"

- Cherelyn Buenaflor

"I experienced how to do the soil analysis. The soil test kit is very helpful as it will guide us on what is the appropriate fertilizer to use. I also learned about Integrated Pest Management and to manage crop using biological control and chemical control as the last option".

-Ma. Juvie Buenaflor

"It is my first time to plant corn, sow and transplant rice in terraces. I also learned the importance of soil analysis and compute the needed fertilizer before planting".

-Nicky Jane Decatoria

"My most unforgettable experience was to use the floating tiller. That night, I can hardly sleep because I was so tired and my whole body ache. But overall it was a great experience as I learned a lot"

- Amalia Morales

"We also learned how to use the corn mill to process corn grains into grits. We also made bread from corn flour. We also used the shredder to make compost from corn stovers and other farm wastes."

-Gregorio Baylosis



The learners were thankful to TESDA, CP&F, trainers, and facilitator for the learning opportunity and experiences.

Notable Insights from Agroentrepreneurship NCII Learners



The Agroentrepreneurship NCII qualification consists of competencies that a person must achieved to assess market opportunities, establish farm production plans, handle finances, and market produce. It prepares learners to be competent farm production and market coordinators. Herewith are excerpts from insights of trainees:

"We learned a lot about new ways of farming, processing, marketing and making agriculture more efficient and profitable."

- Ma. Cecilia Hubahib

"This is a big opportunity for me to finish the training as I was not able to finish my formal schooling. I learned a lot on how to do business."

- Ziesar Jimenez

"I learned a lot, and in spite of many struggles, I continued to attend the training."

- Irene Macahibag

"The trainer always used different teaching strategies for us to understand the lessons and provided different activities so we can fully understand the lessons. I learned to do safety measures during work, making good decisions, and explore opportunities."

- Baby Lyn Carigay

The learners were thankful to TESDA, CP&F, trainers, and facilitator for the learning opportunity and experiences.



Youth Agribusiness Program

During his visit on March 2024, Dr. Peter VanderZaag encouraged On the Job Trainees to venture into Agribusiness by providing a non-collateral loan with minimum interest and flexible term.

Jose Perfecto Tuanda, one of the Senior Agriculture students applied for a loan of Php 70,000 for the project "Eggcellent: Fresh Farm Eggs; Better Taste, Better Diet, Better Eggs".

Jose Tuanda said, "Starting a layer farm was all about fulfilling a simple dream: to provide a stable income for the family while creating a sustainable source of income. I started with only 50 layers, a simple coop, and a lot of trust. Things were difficult at first, I have to learn everything from feeding to lighting schedule and proper hygiene. I doubted my capabilities and at times thought of giving up. However, instead of giving up I researched on the topic and sought advice from experienced farmers."

Slowly but surely, Jose's hard work paid off; from a single coop of 50 layers, he has already expanded to 5 coops within a year.

Presently, he is one of the egg suppliers in Vallehermoso, Negros Oriental producing quality and accurate sizes of eggs. He is working towards a sustainable program of egg production. He is thankful to PSRTC for the opportunity to start an agribusiness venture.

Pula Potatoes and Vegetable Farmers Association (PPVFA)



PPVFA with DAR Staff

Cognizant to its mission to Empower Communities, PSRTC had bridged the gap between government and farmers. PSRTC initiated the organization of PPVFA so that farmers can collectively plan and take action for the common good. PPVFA was accredited by the Department of Labor and Employment on June 19, 2017. The 273 members had availed of the Farmers Fund, training, technical support, and relevant programs initiated by PSRTC.

PPVFA was a beneficiary of a rice reaper, floating tiller, hand tractor, hybrid rice seeds, inbred rice seeds from the Department of Agriculture.

PPVFA members also received equipment, seeds, tools, and swine from the Special Assistance for Agricultural Development Program. In 2020, PPVFA was awarded the Outstanding Organization by DCCCO Dumaguete. PPVFA savings from various ventures was used for non-collateral loans by members.

The Mt Kanlaon volcanic eruption on June 3 and December 9, 2024 was costly as most families within the 6 km danger zone were forced to evacuate for many months abandoning their farms. At present, families within the 4kms danger zone are still at evacuation centers.

Surely, there are Blessings Behind the Blues as on July 29, 2025 the association receive from the Department of Labor and Employment assistance for agricultural input worth Php 1,235,000 (C\$31,000). This support was intended for the rehabilitation of farming activities that were damaged by volcanic eruption.

Farmers Supported by Private Partners



PSRTC had encouraged support for farmers by private individuals and entity. Foremost, is the Farmers Fund. This fund was established in 2018 to address the need for insufficient capital in the adoption of technology or variety and/or increasing farm productivity. SPSI Board members saw the need and provided a grant of Php 533,282 (C\$13,000).

A total of 261 farmers had benefited from the program with a total amount loaned to date of Php 2,228,904 (C\$ 53,500). Majority of loans were for farm inputs as fertilizer, seeds, pesticides, sprayer and utensils for food processing

Prosperity Fund. This program was initiated in 2018 to provide non collateral loan with minimum interest to assist farm workers in their financial needs and encourage them to save. Initial capital was Php 25,000 (C\$ 600). As of August 2025, the total loaned amount is Php 685,000 (C\$ 16,500) and amount collectibles is Php 138,840 (C\$ 3,330).

Loans were used for school supplies, labor expenses for their own farms, purchases of animals (cow, goat), pipes for drinking water, processing of legal documents, house repair, support relatives, medical needs, and other emergency expenses. Prosperity fund benefited the farm workers by providing them financial assistance to meet dire needs and improve certain aspects of their family lives.

Partnership with Church and Academe

In January 2021, PSRTC and the Foursquare Gospel Church organized the Guimaras Livelihood Empowerment Program (GLEP). On December of the same year, the tripartite agreement with Guimaras State University (GSU), Baterna Campus as formed.

This positive development was provided much needed technical support through the conduct of relevant training for the church communities. In 2024, the program expanded and was registered with DOLE as Guimaras Empowerment for Farmers and Fisherfolks Association (GLEFFA) to promote livelihood opportunities both for farming and fishing communities in Guimaras. One of the communities, Living Hope Empowered Farmers Association (LHEFA) is also registered with DOLE.

The visit of Dr. Peter VanderZaag on March 2024 ushered in a new Empowerment Model whereby Project Support was based on Agribusiness Proposal. To this end, GSU-Baterna Campus conducted a workshop on Making Business Proposal facilitated by Mr. Rhenro T. Herrera. The approved projects were the following:

Approved GLEFFA Projects (June 2024)			
Name/Address	Proposed Project	Business Name/Tagline	Amount (Php)
Herald G. Ebuena Suclaran, San Lorenzo	Banana Chips	BLISS N'CRISP HEALTHY SNACKS "A healthy snack that can be enjoyed anytime of the day"	24,500
Lilet B. Bayhante Tumanda 1, Cabano, San Lorenzo	Ginger Tea Processing	GINGER TEA "Health Terrific and Tsa-ang Fantastic at Walastic, Masarap sa Panlasa pero Magaan sa Balsa"	32,209
Ricardo G. Villasis Sitio Grande, Brgy. Salvacion, Buenavista	Chicken Broiler	CARDO BROILER CHICKEN "Ang Chicken na Inyong libigin"	50,000
Lory Mark Asoy Sitio Paho, Ayangan, Sibunag	Swine Production	JOLLY PIG "The Good Looking Baboy"	75,000
Eliza A. Tibus Maabay, Sibunag	Swine Production	NLT PIGGERY FARM "Baboy na Pagkain, Safe Kainin"	142,820
Subtotal			324,529.00



The term of loan is one year and the new cycle of loans will commence by October 2025. PSRTC is grateful for the support of Dr. Lilian Diana B. Parreño, University President; Dr. Julius Vergara, Vice President for Research, Extension, Training, and Innovation; and Dr. Rhea Joy D. Flora, Dean of GSU-Baterna; and her staff for their support. Likewise, we are grateful for the support of Pastor Carlos Gamilong, Superintendent of Foursquare Gospel Churches of Guimaras and church pastors for their support.

Indeed, this proposal-based business initiative had positive impact on the families and churches. The ginger tea business of Lilet Bayhante supported the family for almost a year as her husband do not have regular source of income. Her customers increased as she has diversified tea formulation. Her products were brought as gifts to relatives and friends abroad (USA, Hongkong, Spain, Singapore, and Germany). In addition, she started producing "Crispy Dilis (anchovy)".

Mark Asoy started with 5 piglets and has now 2 sows. From his income, the church bought a piano, drum to store water, and pipes. Herald Ebuena has already different flavors of banana chips and started selling sunflower seeds. For Pastor Eliza, the loan was very helpful as they were able to grow 11 piglets each for their 1st and 2nd fattening cycle. Now they have 13 piglets and they selected 2 gilts for piglet production. In this way, they do not need to buy piglets for the successive fattening cycles. The number of pigpens increased from 2 to 4. At present, they are constructing additional 2 pigpens. Their tithes were used to buy chairs and amplifier for the 2 churches that she leads. Indeed, this initiative provided livelihood opportunities and propelled economic growth in families and communities.

Potato Farmers : A Small Group in Cabagtasan with a Big Dream



Engagement with this community started in January 2016, when representatives from the group became the 1st batch of trainees in PSRTC. There are only 11 families in this group of potato farmers that belongs to Bukidnon tribe. The group partnered in germplasm evaluation and growing potato apical rooted cuttings for tuber seed production as well as a germplasm trial for sweet potato.

In the year 2019, they produced a good quantity of potato seed for farmers in Canlaon. They received loans from PSRTC for agricultural inputs, which became a revolving fund for their projects. The volcanic eruptions in 2024 and volcanic ash is still being experienced to this date. In spite of these limitations, the group was able to produce more than 500 kgs of saleable seed potatoes for planting this October.

The group's Big Dream is that they become the best producer of seed potatoes for all Negros. The journey will be tough but possible as their area and their farms are isolated at a high elevation with proper crop rotation leaving their area free of the devastating disease called Bacterial Wilt.

Their DREAM is slowly turning into reality.

Holistic Development : an Essential Component of Empowerment

Holistic empowerment in communities, must include socio-economic, physical, and spiritual development. PSRTC served as a conduit whereby holistic development in partnership with Canlaon Bible Community Church (CBCC)-Lampara can be implemented in CP&F farm in Barangay Pula. At present, there are twenty nine farmer's children that availed of the Sponsorship Program implemented by CBCC-Lampara with Compassion International-Philippines. Children have weekly developmental activities to promote their physical, social, moral, and spiritual well being. They also have educational and medical support. In addition, parents and children are enjoined to attend bible studies and Sunday worship service.

Since 2014, bible studies is being conducted in the farm mostly on Saturdays for workers, neighbors and students. Participants are encouraged to perform leadership roles so they can be equipped to be leaders at various capacities in places where God may lead them.

People come and go but we are witnesses to how God's Words grow in some wonderful and unexpected ways. Some grow in their respective churches, becoming pioneering pastors or lay leaders. Some are not leaders, but they have grown to be better persons and active members of their churches. In one way or another, God's Word grows, blooms and bear fruits at God's appointed time and place.



Visit of Undersecretary of Agriculture and DA-NIR Regional Director



USEC Cheryl Marie Natividad-Caballero, the Undersecretary of Agriculture for High Value Crops, and Engr. Jose Albert A. Barrogo, the (OIC) Regional Executive Director for the Department of Agriculture, Negros Island Region, along with some staff, visited Canlaon City to see first hand the situation in Canlaon City and the activities being conducted at PSRTC.

The Hon. Mayor Jose Chubasco Cardenas gave them updates about potato production in the area, situation and challenges of the farming communities. We also appreciated, Atty. Gilbert Arbon for the great contribution of Department of Science and Technology (DOST) through its CEST Program to PSRTC.

Together with Melo Jean Villamonte, OIC, City Agriculture Office we briefed them of the activities in the center. Possibilities were discussed and finally, we enjoyed the snacks of sweet corn and sweet potato based recipes.

We look forward to further collaboration with the Department of Agriculture for the benefit of our farmers.
Thank you and Mabuhay!

Looking Forward to be an Extension Service Provider

The Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Service Provider (AF-ESP) Council and Secretariat of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) visited Canlaon Potatoes and Flowers on August 19 and 20, 2025 to evaluate its capacity to become one of the Extension Service Provider. The AF-ESP Council is composed of ATI Director and representatives from the National Agriculture and Fisheries Extension Network, State Universities and Colleges, local government units, and representatives from farmers and fishery sectors. The function of the council is to provide over all direction, conduct field validation evaluation, recommendation and approval and issue accreditation certificate. Likewise, to conduct continuous appraisal and evaluation of ESP's capacity and competence.



ATI's partnership with private sector will hasten delivery of extension services to DA's stakeholders and clients. Likewise, to be able to provide a variety of extension activities for extension workers, farmers, fisher folks, and other clients.

If given a chance, this will be an added opportunity for CP&F and PSRTC to be working closely with ATI and other organizations in Empowering Communities. May God be Glorified!

Empowerment through Linkages with Government Organizations



Technology Package on Composting Facility for Biodegradable Waste. The Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Bureau of Soils and Water Management (BSWM) has awarded a rotary composter and a shredder to CP&F. These machines are being used for production of compost for seedling production and for the farm. It is also being used by TESDA learners and students as part of their learning activities.

Thank you to DA and BSWM for the support!

Participation in the National Academy of Science and Technology



The National Academy of Science is a scientific organization that promotes Science, Technology and Innovations. Regional and National Scientific Meetings are held yearly.

This Year's Visayas Regional Scientific Meeting was held in Iloilo City on April 29-30, 2025 with a Theme

"Bioscience Innovations: Transforming Ecosystems for Wealth Creation".

Dr. Victoria Demonte Verde, PSRTC Director was invited to be one of the Speakers for the Plenary Session **"Bioscience Breakthrough: Innovating Agriculture, Resource Management through Enterprise Ecosystems"**. Her presentation was on "Innovation on Production of Quality Planting Materials and Post-harvest Technology: A Business Start Up".

The presentation included production of planting materials of potato, sweet potato, and vegetables as well as post harvest technology for sweet potato.

Partners

"Community is much more than belonging to something. Its doing something together that makes belonging matter" - Brian Solis



Sincere Thanks to All Our Partner Organizations:

- ♦ Agricultural Training Institute
- ♦ Barangay Pula, Canlaon City
- ♦ Barangay Binalbagan, Canlaon City
- ♦ Bureau of Plant Industry
- ♦ Canlaon Bible Community Church-Lampara
- ♦ Canlaon City-Local Government Unit
- ♦ Carlos Hilado Memorial State University
- ♦ Central Philippines State University-San Carlos City
- ♦ City Agriculture Office, Canlaon City
- ♦ City Social Welfare Development, Canlaon City
- ♦ City Tourism Office, Canlaon City
- ♦ Department of Agrarian Reform
- ♦ Department of Labor and Employment
- ♦ Department of Science and Technology
- ♦ Department of Trade and Industry
- ♦ Dumaguete Cathedral Multipurpose Credit Cooperative
- ♦ Foursquare Gospel Church-Guimaras
- ♦ Guimaras State University
- ♦ Negros Oriental State University-Guihulngan Campus
- ♦ Northern Root Crops Research and Training Center
- ♦ Philippine Center for Postharvest Development and Mechanization
- ♦ Provincial Agriculture Office
- ♦ Public Employment Service Office, Canlaon City
- ♦ Pula National High School
- ♦ Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
- ♦ Technological University of the Philippines-Visayas

Partners



Partners

Without the combined efforts of every individual who believed that progress is possible, we would have not been able to come this far.

Thank you very much for your support!

Let us continue to hold each other's hand and together empower our communities!

