

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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Introductory words by our Regional Director **Felipe S. Ramiro, Jr.**

2021 was my first year with Trias.

I had the unenviable task of leading my hardworking team in closing the 2017–2021 DGD program and developing the next five-year program while I was yet acquainting myself with the organisation, its mission, the 10-year Strategy Note, its partners, the SPIDER tool, and the general management policies and practices, among many others. If there was anything that helped me get through, it was applying and polishing the art of listening.

The kind of listening that I applied involved immersing myself in understanding Trias' distinct identity as a development stakeholder and as an agent of change. This Annual Report for 2021 sets down the many discoveries made from listening, ranging from the capacity areas of member-based organisations (MBOs) that are being strengthened by Trias, to understanding which of the changes in capacity are valued most by family farmers and entrepreneurs. When flipping the pages of this report, I cannot help but remember conversations with MBO leaders and members (mostly online), the ideas and insights they shared generously about the program and next steps, and the plans agreed on for the new five-year DGD program.

Behind the various figures in this report are stories on how MBOs embraced the challenge to be more inclusive, or pursued climate action while scaling up their businesses, or made local governments more accountable through lobbying and advocacy. Certainly, the year 2021 was most productive and gratifying, despite the pandemic still affecting program operations.

Trias extends its appreciation to all its partners and collaborators for 2021. The implementation of the new DGD program for 2022–2026 will build on the gains achieved and lessons learned in 2021.

Padayon! (Onward!)

Felipe S. Ramiro, Jr.
Trias Southeast Asia Regional Director

“**If there was anything that helped me get through, it was applying and polishing the art of listening**”

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► Trias Southeast Asia 2021

OUR PARTNERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



An overview

10
staff members

PHP 42 million
Budget

4
Projects
Supported by 6 donors

Interventions in collaboration with:
9 member-based organisations
3 strategic partners

Reaching around
164,575
farmers and non-farmer family entrepreneur members

Main value chains members are engaged in:



Organic rice, abaca (manila hemp), dairy, pili nut, pineapple, coconut, citronella, fishery, home/community-based industries, and mass consumer goods



Have a look at our corporate annual report

Who we are



Trias is an international development organisation with strong roots in Belgium. In 15 countries, we support the realization of dreams of millions of family farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs through their member-based organisations (MBOs). In that way, we offer them opportunities and generate sustainable development. Trias connects, empowers and brings about change.

Our interventions are focused on organisational strengthening and institutional development, structured around three areas of expertise:



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKET ACCESS



INCLUSION AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT

In 15 countries, we support the realization of dreams of millions of family farmers and non-farmer entrepreneurs.



Since 2007, we have supported a total of 21 organizations to improve people's living conditions

Vision

We envision a world in which prosperous, self-reliant, democratic member-based organisations of farmer and non-farmer family entrepreneurs take on a leading role in their communities to further inclusive and environmentally sustainable socio-economic development. We believe this development will produce collaborative societies that aspire to autonomy, equal opportunities and financial security for all, and in which all people exercise self-determination, solidarity and cooperation.

Read more about our work worldwide



History

Trias Southeast Asia started its work in the Philippines in 1993 and was formally registered in 2006. Our 2017-2021 program in the Philippines endeavoured to increase the income and wellbeing of family farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs, particularly, women, youth, and other underprivileged groups. In our program, we partnered with 9 member-based organisations located in Metro Manila and the Bicol Region.



Mission

We empower organisations of farmer and non-farmer family entrepreneurs worldwide, so that they can act as powerful catalysts for social and economic change towards an equitable economy and a just society.



Philippines

Population (2021 est.)	> 111 million
Population <35 years (% , 2020) ¹	>65%
Population below the poverty line ²	16.7%
GDP per capita (current US\$, 2021)	3,323.8
GDP growth rate (annual %, const. 2015 prices)	5.9
Employment in agriculture (% of employed)	22.5
Unemployment (% of labour force)	2.2
Individuals using the Internet (% of total population)	43
Main export products ³	sugar cane, rice, coconuts, maize, bananas, vegetables, tropical fruit, plantains, pineapples, cassava

Source: data.un.org (unless mentioned otherwise)

¹ <https://www.populationpyramid.net/>

^{2,3} <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/philippines/>

▶ Targeting resilience in a year filled with uncertainty



2021 was another year affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our team and partners were faced with new challenges, which could easily have a long-term impact on family farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs, particularly for women, youth, and other underprivileged groups. For women, these effects included an increase in their domestic burden because they assumed additional household tasks, took care of sick family members, and kept on top of their children's education. Gender-based violence also worsened for marginalised groups, because victims were living in isolation with their perpetrators, who are often family members or intimate partners. Finally, young people living in poor communities were heavily burdened by online schooling and increased unemployment.

The pandemic also further exacerbated the challenges posed by climate change. In the Philippines farmers are regularly affected by natural calamities, but the pandemic meant that vulnerable communities were faced with both global economic downturn and natural calamities simultaneously. Furthermore, recovery from the pandemic was hampered by mobility restrictions and insufficient support from local governments. In this context, disaster risk reduction and management became crucial in building communities' resilience. Trias developed a tool for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (DRR-CCA) and organised trainings for MBO partners to use the tool.

Another challenge posed by the pandemic was the need for small-scale enterprises to adapt to rapid digitalization. The pandemic widened the digital divide, as marginalised communities tend to have lower access to internet connectivity, gadgets, and online skills development.

By tackling these challenges head-on, Trias Southeast Asia ensures the relevance of its programmes. Our work continues to strengthen MBOs, which in their turn uplift communities impacted by the pandemic. Trias has been supporting the transition of MBOs into the 'new normal' throughout the pandemic, such as by helping MBOs recalibrate their business development services to support their members' lives and livelihoods via access to savings, credits, and other financial services at the height of the pandemic; by building MBOs' capacities for disaster resilience, developing business continuity plans, and shifting to alternative livelihoods that guarantee food security and continued income generation; and, finally, by institutionalizing inclusivity approaches to ensure that women, youth, and underprivileged groups have equal access to MBOs' services for economic empowerment.

EXAMPLES OF HOW WE ADAPTED OUR WORK

▶ Learning series on mental health and well-being

The pandemic disrupted mobility and youth education. This went hand in hand with a rise in teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and mental health issues, particularly affecting women and youth. Trias Southeast Asia discerned that the pandemic should not be treated as a physical health risk only, but also as a threat to our mental health. Low levels of well-being should be considered as invisible barriers to learning. To limit the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's mental health, Trias Southeast Asia conducted a learning series on mental health and well-being, in which around 90 young people participated. This helped them process the ongoing effects of the health crisis.



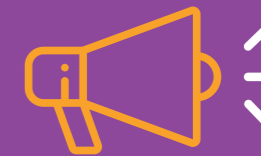
▶ Shift to online learning

Programme implementation slowed down due to government lockdowns and mobility restrictions, thus increasing transportation, food, and accommodation costs. Inter-partner activities were more difficult to implement due to limitations in terms of mobility. Partners were also hesitant to continue their regular activities due to health and safety risks. Trias Southeast Asia was compelled to develop, reinvent, and test new learning delivery methods to ensure partners' business continuity. Online tools decreased the costs of conducting training. However, the quality of online training may need to be assessed to ensure effective learning, thus emphasizing the importance of learning assessment to address difficulties of online learning delivery. These learnings can be shared with other organisations who are adapting new processes and policies related to digital transformation.



Rapid digitalisation must be seen through the lens of inclusivity in order to address gaps in accessibility

► **Our international expertise**



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKET ACCESS



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKET ACCESS



INCLUSION AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT

Village Savings Loans Associations

Women, youth, and underprivileged people (WYU) generally have limited access to financial services such as bank loans for livelihood and business opportunities and social protection during times of crisis. This leads to higher vulnerability for communities. As of 2021, Trias' seven MBO partners (TKFPI, LPMPC, CANOFECO, BFDC, GSAC, PDCI, and PATAMABA) formed the Village Savings Loans Associations (VSLA) as a strategy both for financial inclusion and membership expansion.

VSLAs are considered a self-help mechanism that promotes developing business capacities. They simultaneously support income-generating activities and operationalize the cooperative inclusion agenda. Members showed interest in the VSLA strategy by participating in various capacity building and training opportunities on how to grow funds, increasing savings contributions, and availing of loans for productive use. In the midst of the pandemic, the positive impact of VSLAs can be seen through the steep increase in membership. This grew from 30 community groups and 893 individual community members in 2019 to 56 groups and 1,387 individual members in 2020. There was an encouraging increase the membership of women and youth. For these categories, numbers increased from 483 women and 122 youth in 2019 to 1,065 women and 153 youth in 2020. Plans for the future include a further improvement in terms of women and youth's inclusion in community roles, prioritization of credit for livelihood purposes, and resilience against ecological and climate change issues through collective actions.



In the midst of the pandemic, the positive impact of VSLAs can be seen through the steep increase in membership.



INCLUSION AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT



Young Farmers Inclusion

Gubat Young Farmers Association (GYFA) is a young farmers' group based in Sorsogon, Bicol Region. The group was inactive for a while until Trias encouraged it in 2020 to revive its work, recognising its potential as a leading organisation that could strengthen young people's role in the agricultural sector. Over the past two years, GYFA members participated in several trainings and coaching sessions with Trias on leadership trajectory, entrepreneurship, inclusion, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Members were also mentored by sustainable agriculture advocates, themselves former attendees of Trias trainings. In early 2021, GYFA reorganized and recruited more members via social media and through networking. Membership increased from 7 to nearly 100 in 2021. In addition, GYFA was recognized for its work by the Municipal Local Government of Gubat and also received a certificate of recognition from the Sorsogon Provincial Government. It was awarded as an outstanding youth organisation that contributed to its community during the pandemic. The Association's President is now a member of the Local Youth Development Council. GYFA has implemented various projects with Trias and established links with other organisations as part of its efforts to advocate for young farmers and the environment.

In 2021, the farmer's association GYFA increased its membership from seven to nearly 100



Our work on Disaster Risk Reduction & Management

The Bicol Region is frequently affected by typhoons, leading to repeated devastation in the lives and livelihoods of family farmers. Hence, disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) interventions are of critical importance. With the support of Trias, Bicol Federation of Dairy Cooperatives (BFDC) initiated DRRM capacity building for farmers and their households. This included awareness raising, deepening people's understanding on disaster vulnerability, and business continuity planning.

Through Trias' organisational strengthening and institutional development (OS/ID) approach, BFDC farmers collaborated closely and strengthened their capacity. MBOs and their members, like farmer Nerian D. Palaypayon and her family (photo below), worked closely to collectively strengthen their enterprises, which helped them face the impact of natural disasters alongside the pandemic.

With a focus on sustainable development, BFDC made changes at the policy-level of the MBO by investing in and creating a strong and relevant cooperative to attain and sustain resilience for frequently affected communities. Institutionalizing DRRM in BFDC contributed to improved business capacities, resource mobilization, and networking activities between public and private sectors. As members became more acquainted with the process of DRRM, farming communities became more disaster-resilient and able to build back better after calamity strikes. This lessened income loss, improved members' confidence, and increased networks via lobbying and advocacy, which are critical in becoming disaster-resilient communities guided by the MBO and supported by different sectors of society.



► Our projects in the spotlight



► PROJECT 1

Selling products through Facebook during the pandemic

DURATION OF THE PROJECT:
September 2020 to present

BUDGET: PhP 800,000

STRATEGIC MBO AND RESOURCE PARTNERS:
Belgian Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGD program funding), PATAMABA

This project focused on business recovery and growth during the pandemic by creating a platform for online sales through Facebook. PATAMABA is a national network of informal workers in the Philippines, and 98% of its members are women. Many of these small-scale entrepreneurs lost their income during the pandemic, as businesses were forced to close. With the support of Trias, PATAMABA developed the Purple Market PH, a Facebook shop that offers food, accessories and household products. Through this initiative, PATAMABA members continued to generate an income despite the pandemic. Between October and December 2020, sales reached around 4,000 euro. The initiative directly benefitted women small-scale entrepreneur members, one of which is Adelia Reyes, a mother of seven who makes peanut butter.

'Because of the Purple Market, I was able to improve the quality of my peanut butter product and sell to more customers even during the pandemic. My income increased and this allowed me to support the daily needs of my family and save money for myself.'

As of 2021, there are more than 150 female members from different provinces in the Philippines who supply products to the Purple Market. PATAMABA plans to continue providing product development and skills training for members to help them produce products for the Purple Market.



► PROJECT 2

LPMPC decorticated fiber:

Export-ready business expansion during the pandemic

DURATION OF THE PROJECT:
July 2020 to present

BUDGET: PhP 720,000

STRATEGIC MBO AND RESOURCE PARTNERS:
LPMPC Decortication fiber business team, pineapple farmers, Finance Consultant, AgriCord

Our MBO partner LPMPC (Labo Progressive Multi-Purpose Cooperative) revitalized the pineapple decorticated fiber (decofiber) business in 2020 after two years of declining production. During the pandemic, off-farm workers lost jobs, which became an opportunity of LPMPC to recruit and form groups for fiber production. Various machine operation and decofiber enterprise orientations were conducted to increase the number of groups within communities. In 2020, five groups were formed producing at least 2 tons of decofiber per year, and upscaling continued in 2021. In 2022, LPMPC proposed to access a revolving fund to be utilized by new family or group enterprises as initial capital, or to acquire their own decofiber machine. Because of this, 8.7 tons were produced and total income from farmers supplying fiber increased by 44% compared to 2019 (pre-pandemic). Increase in sales, profits, and volume made the venture attractive to pineapple farmers and their families, especially that this provided employment for displaced workers from Metro Manila. LPMPC continues to negotiate for better prices to take into account rising costs of fuel and also to continue interventions in gender awareness raising to contribute to sustainable and just development of the enterprise.



MEET OUR PRODUCERS

Vilma Palmero Ruz
handwoven
doormats



“
Because of the Purple Market,
I was able to improve the quality
of my peanut butter product and
sell to more customers.
”

Adelia Reyes

In 2020, five groups were formed
producing at least 2 tons of
decofiber per year, and upscaling
continued in 2021



► Financial overview

Statement of comprehensive income and expenses for the year ending 31 December 2021 in PHP



PHP	Income
42,051,614	Funds received from donors
-	Other income
-	Net foreign exchange gain
42,051,614	Total Income

PHP	Expenditure
23,897,818	Funds at the disposal of strategic partners
15,855,532	Functioning, evaluation and personnel costs
2,325,040	Service delivery and capacity building
3,635,203	Net foreign exchange loss
45,713,593	Total Expenditure

► Looking forward

Building a more sustainable, equitable and inclusive organisation

With Trias Southeast Asia we aim to expand our nationwide reach in our 2022–2026 programme with 8 member-based organisation (MBO) partners from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. These MBOs are composed of 6 rural family farmer groups and 2 urban family entrepreneur groups with a total membership of 808,750. Their primary value chains include amongst others microfinance, organic rice, cacao, pineapple, vegetables, corn, muscovado sugar, coconut sugar, fish, and seaweed. We are also exploring possibilities to extend our work to other Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and Myanmar.

We will continue to work through MBOs as a way of contributing to inclusive and sustainable development, using an integrated approach that pays attention to inclusivity, environmental sustainability, and business development. We believe that this approach is crucial because we foresee that widespread marginalization, climate change-related disasters, and economic downturn will have long-term effects for many people, particularly for women, youth, and other underprivileged groups. Trias' vision is that MBOs are catalysts of societal change because of their power to uplift the lives and livelihoods of their members. In our view, empowering MBOs is an important avenue to facilitating inclusive and sustainable economic development. This is particularly the case in the context of the 'new normal', brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of which many entrepreneurs have suffered losses in their businesses and lives.

Trias Southeast Asia banks on its more than 20 years of experience in the Philippines, especially on organisational strengthening and institutional development of MBOs. It aims to facilitate the way forward for MBO partners to adhere to the practice of inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and social justice; for MBOs to promote sustainable production and resilient livelihoods; to improve quality and accessibility of MBO services; and to build powerful alliances and influence public policy. At the individual level, Trias' aim is that MBO members, especially women, young people, and the underprivileged pursue desired changes at personal, family, enterprise and MBO levels and implement sustainable entrepreneurial activities.

Trias Southeast Asia will continue to position itself as a preferred MBO partner, with a dedicated and competent team that has the technical expertise required to provide support on sustainable development approaches, particularly around the three key themes of inclusion, business development and climate change. Our team will continue to be proactive in seeking strategic and synergistic partnerships with the private sector, development agencies, higher education institutions, and other organisations.



We are exploring possibilities to extend our work to other Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and Myanmar.



▶ How to get involved with our work

Trias Southeast Asia realizes the importance of collaboration in attaining sustainable development through its work with member-based organisations. We are open for collaborations, knowledge exchanges, and partnerships with individuals, private companies, universities, local government units, and other development organisations both local and international.



▶ Colophon

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Lay-out, graphics and design: Ruben Stragier



Become a partner!



If you are interested in getting involved in projects with our partner member-based organisations, kindly reach out to Trias Southeast Asia via our Partnerships & Media Officer, Samantha Coronado at samantha.coronado@trias.ngo

Would you like to learn more?



While waiting for our next annual report, keep up with our activities and the amazing work of our partners by checking the Trias website!!

Visit our website:



► Thank you



While waiting for our next annual report, keep up with our activities and the amazing work of our partners by following Trias on social media!



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