

Women and Children in the Bamboo Craft Villages of La Paz, Abra

Eloida Mailed

Alma B. Segismundo.

Abstract

This study generally aimed to describe the status and involvement of women and children and the related local government support program in the community-based bamboo craft industries in La Paz, Abra.

Women and children in the craft villages were weavers. Most of the women weavers were above middle-age housewives married to low-income farmers who are also engaged in the bamboo industry as an off-farm income source. Women are engaged with their craft only when there are big job orders from private entrepreneurs. The fact that weaving is not a stable source of income, job satisfaction level is moderate. Membership to civic and social organizations was limited to the Rural Improvement Clubs. Most of the children weavers were of school age; however, they also help supply job orders. The children's aspiration level is high as evidenced by their diligence and determination to finish their studies. There are no specific government programs that help uplift the living condition of women and children in the craft villages. Some parts of the villages are not yet reached by electricity and modern communication facilities.

The researchers recommend that a lead committee in the concerned local government unit be created to look into the business aspect of the bamboo industry especially to protect weavers from getting exploited by unscrupulous traders. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) should help look for more stable market for bamboo products; the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) should put up a project on the propagation of bamboo and grass species; and the University of Northern Philippines (UNP) through the extension programs of its different academic units should conduct seminars to educate the village folks especially the women and children on sound financial management, health care, skills improvement and product training and development. These efforts will eventually uplift the status of the bamboo craft villages.

Introduction

Background of the Study

Bamboo has always been a part of Filipino culture. It is an indispensable material in the construction of the *bahay kubo* - the native Filipino home and other semi-permanent type of houses. It is the material from which most of the indigenous kitchen utensils, decors and furnitures are made from. For its quality of being sturdy and its ability to withstand even the strongest typhoon, the bamboo is compared to the Filipino who is able to survive amidst economic instability and material insufficiency and recover fast in the face of distress. This makes the bamboo very popular to all Filipinos, then and now.

Abra, which is located in the Cordilleras, has been a major supplier of bamboo and bamboo products in local as well as national markets. The province's mountainous terrain is very ideal for bamboos to thrive and to grow to its maximum size.

Many decades ago, the Abra local bamboo industry was borne out of necessity. Abrenians at first supplied bamboo poles by the truckloads to various construction and manufacturing firms in and outside the province. Communities of weavers were later put up to process raw bamboos into finished products like bags, trays, hats, etc. Other Abrenians made money by harvesting young bamboo shoots or *rahong* used in various food recipes. It is cheap, easy to cook and is very delicious. The over-gathering of *rahong* somehow put the bamboo industry in danger because it led to scarcity of mature poles due to the removal of the bamboo shoots.

In most of the phases of the bamboo industry, women and their children are actively involved. Except of course in the gathering phase, where muscle power of men is essential, women and children are the prime workforce in keeping the bamboo industry going. In the municipality of La Paz, Abra, craft villages were set up according to what particular product or task fits market demand, availability of supplies and the skill of the village folks. These small-scale backyard industries were put up upon the encouragement of private entrepreneurs who are in need of bamboo products to be sold in bulks. With meager support from the government, these bamboo craft villages exist with women at the forefront.

The result of this study may be used as basis of the University of Northern Philippines (UNP) in drawing plans for the extension programs for women and children. Since this study concerns women, the Center for Gender and Development may find the result useful in determining women-roles in community building. Moreover, this study is also very helpful to the local government officials of La Paz

and the provincial government of Abra in the performance of their functions as implementers of the existing laws/ordinances governing the use of bamboo; and as legislators; to pass more realistic laws that would further improve the status of the bamboo craft villages and uplift the condition of women and children.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to

1. determine the status of the respondents in terms of the following:
 - a. demographic factors:
 - a.1 age
 - a.2 civil status
 - a.3 family background
 - a.4 educational attainment
 - a.5 membership in social/civic organizations
 - a.6 leisure activities
2. identify the type and nature of involvement of women and children.
3. determine the level of job satisfaction among the women respondents.
4. determine the level of aspiration among the children involved.
5. identify local government programs that promote the welfare of women and children.

Review of Literature

Bamboo, is the common name for about 45 genera and about 48) species of perennial, woody, usually shrubby or treelike plants of the grass family. Bamboos occur mostly in tropical and sub-tropical areas, from sea level to snow-capped mountain peaks, with a few species in the Americas and African and none in Australia. The plants, range from stiff reeds about 1m tall to giants reaching 50 m in height and 30 cm in diameter near the base. Most bamboos are erect, but some are vine, producing impenetrable thickets in some areas

Bamboos are among the plants most widely used by humans. In the tropics, they are used for constructing houses, rafts, bridges, and scaffoldings. Split and flattened culms can be used as flooring and interwoven to make baskets, mats, hats, fish traps, and other articles; culms of large species may be used as containers for liquids. Paper is made from bamboo pulp, and fishing rods, water pipes, musical

instruments, and chopsticks from other parts. Many bamboo species are planted as ornamentals, and young shoots are eaten as vegetable (Crosby, 2003).

The impressive economy of bamboo housing stems largely from the materials extraordinary low cost of production. The energy needed to produce bamboo is approximately half that required for wood. For one thing, bamboo grows quickly, up to three feet a day. While a tree can be harvested only once every 20 years, bamboo can be harvested every year. Also, the harvesting is simpler – a machete or hacksaw is all that is needed – and sawmills are unnecessary.

Bamboo compares even more impressively with concrete and steel. It requires one-eighth the production energy concrete does to create material of the same bearing capacity. With steel which must be smelted, poured, forged, alloyed, cast, and tempered, the figure is close to one-fiftieth (Roach, 1996).

The role of women in the workforce varies according to the structure, needs, customs, and attitudes by the societies in which they live. In prehistoric times, women and men participated almost equally in hunting and gathering activities to obtain food. With the development of agricultural communities, women's work revolved around the home. They prepared food, made clothing, and cared for children, while also helping to plow fields, harvest crops, and tend animals. As cities developed, some women sold or traded goods in the marketplace.

Some major changes are now occurring in industrial nations, including the steadily increasing proportion of women in the labor force; decreasing family responsibilities (due to both smaller family size and technological innovation in the home); higher levels of education for women; and more middle and upper income women working for pay.

Much of Africa, **Asia**, the Middle East, and Latin America remain primarily poor in terms of agricultural economy. Most women work in the fields and marketplaces, but their economic contributions are generally unrecognized. As men migrate to the cities in search of increasingly important cash incomes, many reveal women are left to support families alone.

In many countries, children endure hard physical labor and dangerous working condition in factories and fields. Child labor is traditional in some countries in South Asia.

Throughout the ages and in all cultures, children joined with their parents to work in the fields, in the marketplace, and around the home as soon as they were old enough to perform simple tasks (O'Farrel, 2004).

According to Pablico (2005), bamboo handicrafts have become a profitable source of income for many people in La Union. In the town of Caba alone, a good

number of people have taken bamboo furniture making as a major source of livelihood. Local bamboo craft makers display their products along the highway, especially bamboo furniture, attracting interested motorists to simply drop by and buy.

In San Fernando City, farmers in the hilly eastern barangays are also engaged in making large bamboo baskets, locally called *kuribot*, which are used mainly for carrying agricultural products like vegetables, as well as market baskets.

The residents of Barangay Abut, San Fernando City, however, say that the supply of bamboo poles has been dwindling for quite sometime now. Basket weavers now go to other places in search of bamboo poles whenever they could no longer harvest even a single pole from their own bamboo groves.

Cesar A. Orallo, regional director of the Ecosystems Research and Development Service (EROS) in the Ilocos, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), is afraid that the time will come when the bamboo handicrafts industry in La Union would eventually die a natural death if the situation continues unabated. That is why in 2002, ERDS embarked on a modest project to encourage farmers to plant bamboos in their communities. The project aims to generate livelihood and employment opportunities, disseminate bamboo technologies, support the continuing demand of bamboo industries, and increase the bamboo pole supply in the province. They projected that the plantation establishment cost will be recovered in 2007 with a net income of P19,210.00 a hectare or a total of P960,500.00. The production cost in the first four years, including labor which is provided by the farmer-partners, amounts to P1,975,000.00 a hectare. In the sixth year (2008), the plantations are expected to yield P1.56 million as net income.

Given this staggering financial returns as projected by the ERDS researchers, there should be more than enough reasons for people in almost denuded mountain sides to have their areas planted with bamboo.

Methodology

Research Design. The descriptive research design was used in this study. The approach was both qualitative and quantitative. It made use of interviews and documentary analysis of pertinent records obtained from concerned government and private agencies in the municipality of La Paz, Abra.

Sampling. The respondents in this study were 130 women (aged 18 and above), 48 children or minors (aged 0 to 17) from the craft villages of Udangan and Iudeng and three (3) key informants from *barangays* Benben ad Liguis.

Concerned personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) of La Paz, Abra, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Local Government Units (LGUs) also provided pertinent data.

Data Gathering Instrument. This study made use of an interview schedule which included questions that were answered by women and children employed as farmers, gatherers, weavers, sellers, and exporters. A survey questionnaire was also used to determine the level of job satisfaction among women respondents and level of aspiration among children. Key informants were interviewed on some important aspects of the business.

Statistical Treatment. Frequency counts, percentages and means were used in the profile of the respondents. The levels of satisfaction and aspiration were measured using a five-point scale as follows:

Rating	Description
5	Very high
4	High
3	Moderate
2	Low
1	Very low

Discussion of Results

Profile of the Respondents

Table I presents the profile of women respondents. Out of 130 women, 52 (40%) belonged to age group 41-50 and 30 (23.08%) belonged to age group 51-60. Most women involved in the industry were above middle age as evidenced by the mean age of 48.15. However, there are also senior women among the respondents (16 12.31%) in the age group 61-70 and five (5 or 3.85%) who are above 71 years old. This means that even old women are still productive and are capable of doing particular tasks in the bamboo craft industry.

Of the 130 women respondents, majority (111 or 85.38%) were married. Only 13 (10%) were single and six (6 or 4.62%) were either widowed or separated. These data show that women involvement in bamboo craft making is not hampered by the performance of household tasks.

Table 1. Profile of women respondents.

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age		
below 30	9	6.92
31–40	18	13.84
41 –50	52	40.00
51–60	30	23.08
61– 70	16	12.31
71– up	5	3.85
<i>Mean Age - 48.15</i>		
Civil Status		
Single	13	10.00
Married	111	85.38
Separated/Widow	6	4.62
Educational Attainment		
Elementary	77	59.23
High School	46	35.38
Vocational	3	2.31
College	4	3.08
Membership in Organizations		
Rural Improvement Club	23	17.69
<i>Timpuyog Dagiti Inna</i>	7	5.38
Cooperative	3	2.31
No membership	97	74.62
Leisure Activities		
Watch TV	5	3.85
Read magazines	2	1.54
No response	123	94.61

Most of the women respondents had not been in college. Seventy-seven (77 or 59.23%) have finished or at least started their elementary education and 46 (35.38%) were high school graduates. There were three (3 or 2.31 %) who enrolled in vocational courses namely: radio operator, dressmaking, and secretarial. This means that the women have skills other than weaving and this gives them additional options for livelihood. There were four (4 or 3.08%) who finished degrees in college; one each for BSE, BEEd, BSIE and AB. However, they say that they find these degrees not very helpful in finding a stable employment.

In terms of membership in organizations, majority (97 or 74.62%) do not get involved in social or civic organizations. They claimed that they find little interest in joining clubs because they do not get anything or any benefit from

organizations. However, there were 23 (17.69%) members of the Rural Improvement Clubs (RIC). Some of these RIC members take pride of being involved in the clean and green projects in their respective communities. However, there were some who were not very active in the organization. Seven (7 or 5.38%) are members of the *Timpuog Dagiti Inna*, local chapter a province-wide organization of mothers. Only three (3 or 2.31%) claimed to be members of small cooperatives.

The women respondents were hesitant to describe the ways in which they entertain themselves when they do not have any work to do. Most of them (123 or 94.61%) did not respond to the question about leisure activities. They said that they devote most of their time rearing their children and doing household chores. However, there were some who said that they do have "but not all the time" cards or bingo sessions under the trees. Since these were considered forms of gambling, the women were rather shy to admit it. There are also women who just relaxed and talked with other people when there lull in their no work. Only five (5 or 3.85%) women watch TV for news and entertainment while two (2 or 1.54%) read magazines. This was due to the very few respondents who have TV sets and magazines at home.

Table 2 presents the family background of the 111 married respondents. In terms of number of children, there were 70 (63.06%) who have less than four children, and 33 (29.73%) with 5 - 8 children. Three (3 or 2.70%) have extremely big families of inore than nine (9) children. Only five (5 or 4.51%) have no children yet because they just got married. This implies that most of the women involved in the bamboo craft industry have average sized families.

Most (69 or 62.16%) of the husbands of the respondents were farmers; although most of these farmers were also skilled weavers who get involved in the bamboo industry during peak seasons. Twenty-one (21 or 18.92%) were purely weavers. Other occupations of the husbands were driving, carpentry, fishing, ferrying people and cargoes across the river, etc. There were four (4 or 3.61%) who were jobless. According to the wives of these jobless men, their husbands just do errands for other people at times and receive whatever meager amount given them.

All the 111 married women interviewed claimed that their husbands' earnings are not sufficient to meet the needs of the family. Forty-eight (48 or 43.24%) have husbands whose income ranged from B1,001 to B,000. There were 21 (18.92%) husbands whose monthly earnings fall below P1,000; 11 (9.91%) with P2,001 to P 3,000; and 9 (8.11%) with P 3,001 to P 4,000. Very few respondents have husbands who earn more than P4,000. There were 15 (13.52%) who dared not to answer the question. The women were not very comfortable talking about the financial status of their families.

Table 2. Profile of married respondents.

ITEMS	FREQUENCY (N=111)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Family Background (for married respondents)		
<i>Number of Children</i>		
none	5	4.51
1-4	70	63.06
5-8	33	29.73
9-- up	3	2.70
<i>Husband's occupation</i>		
Farmer	69	62.16
Weaver	21	18.92
Driver	6	5.41
Carpenter	3	2.70
Fisherman	3	2.70
Ferry man	2	1.80
Utility worker	1	0.90
Construction worker	1	0.90
Sari-sari store owner	1	0.90
No job	4	3.61
<i>Husband's monthly income</i>		
Below P1000	21	18.92
1,001 - 2000	48	43.24
P2,001 - 3000	11	9.91
P3,001 - 4000	9	8.11
P4,001 - 5000	2	1.80
P5,001 -- 6000	4	3.60
P6,001 -up	1	0.90
No response	15	13.52

Table 3 reflects the data to describe the 48 children respondents. There were 27 (56.25%) who belonged to the age group 16 to 18; 15 (31.25%) belong to 13 to 15 and six (6 or 12.50%) belong to age group 10 to 12. It is evident that most of the respondents are teenagers who are already old enough to be of help in the bamboo craft industry.

Of the 48 children, 26 (54.17%) were males and 22 (45.83%) were females. This data show that children's involvement in the industry is not determined by sex but by the child's willingness to work and earn money. In two (2) cases, the children were forced into the industry by the poor living condition of the family.

The children had to stop their studies in order to work. Their minimal earning adds up to their parents low-income.

Table 3. Profile of children respondents.

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
	N=48	%
Age		
10–12	6	12.50
13–15	15	31.25
16–18	27	56.25
Sex		
Male	26	54.17
Female	22	45.83
Educational Background		
Studying	25	52.08
Not studying	23	47.92
Father's Occupation		
Farmer	33	68.75
Weaver	4	8.34
Driver	2	4.17
Ferryman	1	2.08
Fisherman	1	2.08
Construction worker	1	2.08
None	2	4.17
Deceased	4	8.33
Mother's Occupation		
Housekeeper	35	72.92
Farmer	10	20.83
Laundrywoman	3	6.25
Membership in organizations		
Sangguniang Kabataan	24	50.00
CAT Officer!school organization	1	2.08
None	23	47.92
Leisure activities		
Basketball	14	29.17
Picnics	1	2.08
Dancing	9	18.75
Watching TV	2	4.17
Listening to the radio	10	20.83
None	12	25.00

There were 25 (52.08%) who were enrolled and 23 (47.92%) who were not studying. Those who were not studying were the full time weavers especially when there were big orders. Those who were studying worked as part time weavers.

Most (33 or 68.75%) of the children have fathers who were fanners. Only four (4 or 8.34%) claimed to have fathers who are full time weavers. Other fathers were engaged in varied occupations. However, all of the children respondents mentioned that their fathers are skilled weavers. Two (2 or 4.17%) children said that their fathers have no full time occupation; however, their fathers weave during peak seasons. Four (4 or 8.33%) children have widowed mothers working as weavers and have other sources of income.

Most (35 or 72.92%) of the children said their mothers have no jobs and therefore are full time housekeepers; 10 (20.83%) have mothers who are farmers and three (3 or 6.25%) laundrywomen. The children respondents said that they do not consider their mothers' involvement in the weaving industry as a stable source of livelihood since this happens only when there are big orders from private entrepreneurs.

In terms of membership in organizations, Table 4 reflects 24 (50%) members of the *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK): One (1) was a CAT officer who is active in his school organization. The 23 (47.92%) had no membership in any social or civic group. The SK members however were not very active in SK activities and that they only join during fiestas. The 23 who have no membership just don't care about organizations because according to them, joining such is just a waste of time.

Table 4 shows the leisure activities of children respondents. Playing basketball as their most popular activity with 14 (29.17%) respondents; 10 (20.83%) prefer listening to the radio; nine (9 or 18.75%) love to dance and only two (2 or 4.17%) watch TV. There were 12 (25%) who claimed not to have any leisure activity; though they "sometimes" join the bingo sessions under the trees.

Table 4. Schools where the children respondents study.

LEVEL/SCHOOL	FREQUENCY N=25	PERCENTAGE (%)
High School		
Abra High School Mudeng Annex	14	56.00
College/Vocational		
Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology		4.00
Divine Word College of Bangued	1	4.00
Abra Valley College	8	32.00
Data Center Philippines	1	4.00

Table 4 presents the data on the enrolment of the children. There were 14 (56%) children who were enrolled in high school. The putting up of the Abra High School Annex in Mudeng is very advantageous since the children no longer cross the Abra River to attend school. During the rainy season, the bank of the river swells which prompts ferryboat owners and jeepney operators to increase the fare to Bangued, the capital town where most schools are located. There were 11 respondents enrolled in college; eight (8 or 32%) go to the Abra Valley Colleges, and one each to the Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology, Divine Word College of Bangued, and the Data Center Philippines. These students were hopeful to finish their courses and land in a stable job in the future.

Type and Nature of Involvement

The women and children perform varied tasks in the craft villages. Majority are weavers. Table 5 and 6 shows the type and nature of the respondents' involvement in the bamboo craft industry.

Table S. Type and nature of involvement of women respondents.

NATURE OF INVOLVEMENT*	FREQUENCY n= 130)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Manager	1	0.77
Weaver	129	99.23
Gatherer	37	28.46
Designer	76	58.46
Quality control	87	66.92
Trader	1	0.77
Helper	1	0.77
Cultivator	0	0.00

Multiple responses

Of the 130 women respondents, 129 (99.23%) were primarily weavers. These women performed other tasks, however, like gathering of bamboos and reeds, designing products, and checking finished products for quality control. Only one (1) said she no longer weaves but manages her own bamboo craft business. This finding implies that women perform most of the tasks in the industry except for the splitting process which is normally done by men. Until this time, there are no machines in the villages to split the bamboos except for the usual bolo or a sharp knife. Men in the villages are also the ones who look for raw materials and prospects for new sources.

The women are highly skilled weavers. They don't have regular working hours however. when there are big orders, they are forced to work up to 12 hours a day. When there are no orders, they don't weave at all. They weave fast and can finish 5-6 products a day depending on the kind of product desired. They follow intricate patterns and strict specifications which are prescribed by the job orders. However, they also can make designs of their own. Women are also keen on quality. Most of them supervise and teach other weavers so that the quality of their products is consistent and acceptable in the market. The products made in the craft villages include placemats, hats, trays, bag, attache cases, fans, and other decorative items. The most common bamboo species used is the *puser* (*Cyrtochkia* sp), which according to them is the easiest to manipulate because it doesn't easily break.

The women were hesitant to talk about their income derived from weaving since they do not get fixed amounts for their products. In fact, different respondents sell the same kind of products at different prices. Among the respondents, the highest income quoted was P500/week during peak seasons. The lowest was P 100. Most of them sell their products in cash, directly to private traders and exporters. Sometimes they just give their products as payment for loans obtained from the private traders. There are also some who get the payment of their products on an installment basis. According to the respondents, this puts them at the mercy of private businessmen who buy the products at very low prices.

Table 6. Economic activities other than weaving.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES	FREQUENCY N=130	PERCENTAGE
Farming	33	25.38
Laundry	4	3.08
Manicure/pedicure	4	3.08
Poultry raising	3	2.31
Hog raising	2	1.54
Fishing	2	1.54
No response	82	63.07

Table 6 shows the women's sources of income other than weaving. Most (82 or 63.07%) of them do not have any other economic activity aside from weaving. There were 33 (25.38%) who said that they eam extra income by helping in farms during the planting and harvesting seasons. Their additional income from fanning does not usually come in cash. They bartered their farm products with other crops and goods for their families' needs. Four (4 or 3.08%) women earned cash from laundry service on a daily basis. There were also four (4 or 3.08%) women who used their special skills in doing manicure and pedicure jobs for other

women in the community. Other activities were hog-raising and fishing. This data imply that the women can engage in other activities when there were no weaving jobs in the craft villages. According to the women, job orders are so seldom that they feel the weaving industry is no longer profitable. They mentioned that the younger women and even young men preferred to go to other places to serve as maids, sales ladies or construction workers rather than being idle while waiting for weaving jobs to come. Women expressed fears of losing the family bamboo-weaving tradition since children are lured into other interests. The need for financial security prompted the village folks to engage into other livelihood activities which were more stable and profitable.

Table 7. Type and nature of participation of children in the craft villages.

SPECIFIC TASK	FREQUENCY (N=48)	PERCENTAGE
Weaving	48	100.00
Gathering raw materials	19	39.58
Carrying materials to the village	21	43.75
Designing products	2	4.17
Splitting bamboo poles	6	12.50
Sewing parts / putting accessories	6	12.50
Polishing products	2	4.17
Painting/varnishing finished products	10	20.83
Packing/bundling products	14	29.17
Transporting finished products to designated buyers	2	4.17

Note: multiple responses

Table 7 shows that all (100%) children respondents were skilled weavers. Some of them were engaged in other tasks like carrying materials to the village (21 or 43.75%), gathering of raw materials (19 or 39.58%), packing or bundling of products (14 or 29.17%), painting or varnishing of finished products (10 or 20.83%), and other tasks which they were capable of doing to be of help to the bamboo craft business in the village. Those who were studying help in the business after class hours and during weekends. If big orders come, they brought their work to school and wove during break time: or when the situation demands, they skip their classes and work in the village. However, those who were not studying usually worked for three to six hours a day. During peak season when job orders from big entrepreneurs are placed, the children were required to work even at night just to finish the order in time.

The children were also asked about how they learned to weave. Most of them said that this kind of craft does not require much training and it is more of a family tradition that is passed-on to them. They said that by simply watching, they learned how to weave a particular product and with the supervision of adults, they were able to come up with quality outputs. Nevertheless, the children mentioned that they were trained by their parents especially their mothers. There were three children who also acknowledged the services of an extension worker regarding the training in weaving a particular product for export.

Products made by the children are fans, placemats, barbecue sticks, mats, and other decorative items. Attache cases, bags and trays were made by more skilled children weavers. Their daily output depended on the complexity of the product being made. Most of them can finish an average of three small items a day. Regarding the mode of receiving their wage, most of them said that they are paid per piece finished. Some of them however said that they received their wage daily and sometimes weekly. The respondents who were studying mentioned that they use the money they earn from weaving for allowance and for the purchase of materials needed in school. Other children said that they give the money to their parents for food and other family needs.

Job Satisfaction among Women Respondents

Table 8 shows the level of job satisfaction among women respondents in the craft villages. Based on the means generated, items which were described at low level referred to the economic aspect of the bamboo craft industry and its emotional and psychological impact on the women. Described as moderate were the perceptions that women are better weavers than men ($S = 2.62$); that their involvement in the craft depends on their capability and health ($X = 3.07$) and that weaving is the most appropriate job for the women respondents ($X = 3.05$). However, there were also items rated at high level: weaving as a decent job ($S = 3.44$); pride in their outputs ($X = 3.52$ and 3.51); and hope for the expansion of the bamboo industry ($S = 3.77$). As a whole, the women's job satisfaction was placed at moderate level ($S = 2.74$). This finding implies that the women do not find much fulfillment in the bamboo craft industry. This may be due to the low and unstable income derived from weaving. Women as mothers especially are very much concerned about the needs of the family. Most of the mothers expressed their reluctance for their children to be involved in the bamboo craft industry due to the low economic returns. However, since they believe it is a decent job, they might as well let the children become weavers especially if there is no other job available for them.

Table 8. Level of women's job satisfaction.

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	DESCRIPTION
Bamboo craft is a worthwhile occupation.	2.51	Low
Weaving is a decent job.	3.44	High
Weaving gives me a lot of profit.	2.15	Low
Engaging in bamboo craft makes me feel successful as a woman.	2.28	Low
Income from weaving helps me send my children to school.	2.39	Low
Women are better weavers or craft makers than men.	2.62	Moderate
I wish my children to be weavers or craft makers, too.	2.10	Low
Bamboo craft brings out the artist in me.	2.48	Low
I am proud of my bamboo products.	3.52	High
I will be a weaver or craft maker as long as I can.	3.07	Moderate
Weaving is the best job for me.	3.05	Moderate
My children and husband are proud of my being a weaver or craft maker.	3.51	High
My income from bamboo crafts helps a lot in the repair of my house.	2.14	Low
My income from bamboo craft helps me buy the things I want.	2.14	Low
I wish that the bamboo craft industry will expand.	3.77	High
As a whole	2.74	Moderate
Note:	4.21–5.0	Very High
	3.41–4.2	High
	2.61–3.4	Moderate
	1.81–2.6	Low
	1–1.8	Very Low

Aspirations of Children in the Craft Villages

The children's level of aspiration was generally high ($X = 3.89$). The items which were given high rating were on personal aspirations and plans for a bright future. The children's idea about travel around the world was moderate ($X = 3.19$). Education is very important to the children ($S = 4.77$) and most of them want to finish a degree ($C = 4.4$). They said that a degree in college would be very helpful in finding a stable job. This eventually allows them to be of help to their parents,

brothers and sisters ($X = 4.77$). However, they gave a very low rating to the item about being a government official ($5=2.31$) and they expressed their frustration about the insensitivity of the government to their condition. This was the reason why they do not aspire of engaging in politics. The children believed that they can get rid of poverty by finishing their studies and working hard for their family.

Table 9. Level of aspiration of children respondents.

RESPONSES		DESCRIPTION
When I grow up to be an adult, I want to have my own business enterprise.	3.94	High
I want to finish a degree course.	4.44	Very High
I will have a husband and kids.	3.71	High
I will help other people in my <i>barangay</i> .	4.17	High
I will have a big house.	3.92	High
I will own a car.	3.83	High
I will travel around the world.	3.19	Moderate
I will be a government official.	2.13	Low
Education is important to me.	4.77	Very High
When I have a stable job, I will help my parents, brothers and sisters.	4.77	Very High
As a whole	3.89	High

Note:

4.21–5.0	Very High
3.41–4.2	High
2.61–3.4	Moderate
1.81–2.6	Low
1–1.8	Very Low

When asked about their ambitions in life, a big number of children respondents (18 or 37.50%) wanted to become policemen and one girl wanted to be a policewoman; 12 (25%) prefer to engage in the nursing profession, eight (8 or 16.67%) wanted to be in business and the rest wished to become professionals; i.e. teacher, architect, engineer, accountant, doctor, and computer specialist. This proves the respondents' desire to improve their present life condition. To them, depending solely on the present kind of livelihood the parents have at present have is to be tied-up with poverty.

Government Programs for the Welfare of the Craft Villages

Most of the respondents were not aware of any specific government project or program to support the craft villages. However, there were three children who

mentioned that they were assisted by an extension worker in their basic training in weaving.

In an interview with the mayor of La Paz, Abra and other municipal employees said that the local government has been rying its best to support the weavers and the industry as well. However, the LGU finds it difficult to meddle with the industry since the weavers prefer to do business by themselves. Poverty is the main reason why the weavers transact directly with private entrepreneurs. The municipality also gave ten (10) units of kerosene lamp (Coleman) to a remote village not yet covered by the electrification program of the government. These were given when a big job order was required for export. The LGU was pressured to bring electricity to the said area that time but B8 million was required for the electrification of the village. Nevertheless, the municipal government is currently drafting plans that include electrification and putting up of a crafts display area in the business center of the town.

Executive Order No. 08, s. 2002 created the Provincial Bamboo Industry Cluster Committee (PBICC) which was tasked to plan, coordinate, implement and evaluate programs and projects included in the Bamboo Industry Cluster Plan. This plan has identified some priority projects that need assistance from various local, national, government and private agencies and that provide economic benefits to the province in terms of employment, investment generation, increase in income of bamboo stakeholders, and reduction of poverty in the poor rural communities of the province. The committee is composed of representatives from agencies like the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Agriculture, In-Hand Abra Foundation, Abra State Institute of Sciences and Technology, Technical Education Skills Development Authority, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Interior and Local Government, Land Bank of the Philippines and other institutions.

The Provincial Government of Abra has also passed several resolutions and ordinances that aimed at improving the bamboo industry. like the ordinances to regulate the transport of unprocessed bamboo poles outside the province, and, a resolution requesting Senator Heherzon Alvarez and the DENR to grant or award a bamboo reforestation project in the identified craft villages.

The DTI Personnel-In-Charge informed the researchers of the agency's programs to support the bamboo craft industry of Abra. They regularly sponsor skills training/seminar in order to train new weavers and update old ones of new designs and trends in bamboo craft. DTI is one of the key agencies that comprise the Provincial Bamboo Industry Cluster Committee. It also sponsors the annual Bamboo Festival in March which showcases the craftsmanship of the local weavers and the diversity of products made in the different craft villages.

On the part of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, it has conducted an inventory of bamboo species that thrive in the province of Abra. At present it is maintaining a bamboo propagation *site* in Lagangilang, Abra. It is also a very active member agency in the Provincial Bamboo Industry Cluster Committee.

Despite the programs being done by the aforementioned government agencies, the respondents were not aware of the government interventions in the bamboo industry and they find very little significance the role of the government in their lives. This may reflect poor dissemination at the level of the village folks.

Summary and Conclusion

Most of the women respondents are weavers. They are above middle-age housewives married to low-income farmers who are also engaged in the bamboo industry as an alternative source of income especially after the farming season. These women are elementary graduates and their membership to civic and social organizations is limited to the Rural Improvement Clubs. Most of the children weavers are teenagers old enough to be of help in the bamboo craft industry. Some are part time weavers because they are still studying. The members of the *Sangguniang Kabataan* are active during fiestas.

The women weavers are busy with their craft only when there are big job orders from private entrepreneurs. They perform other tasks like gathering of bamboos and reeds, designing products, and checking finished products for quality control. The children are also weavers but they perform other tasks to help their parents especially during peak seasons. Those who are still studying weave after their classes. Their minimal earnings help augment their parents' income.

The fact that weaving is not a stable source of income, the women's job satisfaction level is moderate. However, they perceive weaving to be a decent job. The children's aspiration level is high. Most of them want to become professionals as evidenced by their diligence and determination to finish their studies.

There are no specific government programs that help uplift the living condition of women and children in the craft villages. The respondents are not aware of the government interventions in the bamboo industry and they find very little significance in the role of the government in their lives.

Recommendations

A **lead** committee in the local government unit be created to look into the business aspect of the bamboo industry to prevent big entrepreneurs from taking advantage of the weaknesses of the weavers.

The DTI should help look for more stable market for bamboo products. It should establish linkages with export firms and assist in the promotion of the bamboo products.

The DENR should put up more project sites for the propagation of bamboo. Furthermore, the possibility of propagating other bamboo and grass species which can be used for handicrafts and furniture should be studied. DENR in cooperation with the local government of La Paz should identify idle lands suitable for propagation and encourage the villagers to produce the materials they need.

The local government should sponsor scholarship grants to children of weavers and encourage them to enroll in courses that will enhance the capabilities of craft villagers in terms of design, product development and innovations.

The UNP through its extension programs should conduct seminars to educate the village folks especially the women and children on sound financial management, health care, skills improvement and product training and development.

Wider dissemination should be done to promote the bamboo-related programs among the villagers to make them aware of the government's efforts in improving the bamboo industry. Planning for such programs should include representatives from the weavers.

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