

## *Nang lumiwanag ang Sapang Liwanag:* **big businesses join hands to revive dying creek in Pasig**

DILG Cluster Leader Merce Tuico is transferring from Pasig City to San Juan City beaming with newfound confidence working with big business.

I've learned a lot from my experience in DILG tapping business establishments for community causes and I intend to use this when I move to highly urbanized San Juan, vowed the lady Cluster Leader.

Merce was well-aware that all waterways in the metro flow into Manila Bay and had to be cleaned up. *Kasi kahit na anong linis ang gawin nila sa Manila Bay kung patuloy ang dating ng basura galing sa mga sapa, walang mangyayari sa Manila Bay at Pasig River*, she reasoned.

Merce knows exactly where she is coming from. Early on, DILG pushed for the clean-up of a creek in Pasig City that flows into the Pasig and Marikina Rivers.

When we inspected the waterways of Pasig City, said City Director (CD) Jay Timbreza, we found out that *Sapang Liwanag* stretched along an industrialized area and was clearly polluted and clogged with garbage. The stench coming from the creek smelled of its impending death. Something had to be done about it quickly, CD Jay added.

The City Director realized that proposals for funding would take some time to develop and get approved. The first thing that came to mind was to tap resources swiftly to revive the dying *Sapang Liwanag*. The DILG cluster buckled down to work.



Merce donned on her street clothes and interviewed residents and officials of Barangay San Miguel. There she learned that three large establishments nested on the riverbanks—Super Globe, which is a manufacturer of paint chemicals; East Raya Condominium, and a large food processing plant.

The tricky part was getting the three firms to agree to an inspection. They refused to cooperate at first, wary about privacy and security. They also feared that government fact-finding would lead to fault-finding and blame.

We dialogued with them to show that the DILG and other stakeholders were serious in wanting to become partners in restoring the waterways, explained Cluster Leader Merce.

They agreed. The DILG team inspected the facilities and singled out the source of the foul smell from the creek. The meetings built trust and paved way for solution-seeking behaviors from everyone, rather than fomenting blame. As a result, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was forged for *Sapang Liwanag*.

It took six months to organize and build the community from DILG, the barangay, the *Punong Barangay* of San Miguel, and the city government. Together, they pooled manpower, supplies, money, dump trucks, rubber boats, and cleaning implements to de-clog the creek.

Although faced with no funds, CD Jay Timbreza and his DILG Team generated resources from the community most affected by the poor conditions of *Sapang Liwanag*. Today, the creek is regularly being cleaned by the community.

I learned how to develop positive relationships in the community, says Merce Tuico. Shared understanding of a complex issue precedes commitment. Resources come after the heart is compelled, she ended.

Now, *Sapang Liwanag* is alive and clean.

