



PROCEEDINGS 2026-05

Local Regional Studies Network

Fostering Sustainable Weaving Heritage and Industry through an Inter-Local Government Unit Alliance in Northwestern Panay

Pagrara: Exploring Northwestern Panay Weaving Heritage

18 June 2025

Office of Initiatives in Culture and the Arts Conference Room
University of the Philippines Visayas, Iloilo City

Thania Margarrette O. Coronica



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"Woven *bariw* products at the 50th Anniversary of the Center for West Visayan Studies (June 18, 2025)."

Photo by the University of the Philippines Visayas Iloilo City

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Proceedings 2025-18

Local Government Units and the Handicraft Weaving Heritage in Northwestern Panay, Philippines

Pagrara: Exploring Northwestern Panay Weaving Heritage Project Stakeholders' Meeting and Workshop Day 1

28 September 2024 | 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
University of the Philippines Visayas - Antique Extension
Naurang, Pandan, Antique

Prepared by Sashah B. Dioso



PROCEEDINGS

Local Government Units and the Handicraft Weaving Heritage in Northwestern Panay, Philippines

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ISSN 2019-7278 (Print)
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Policy Brief
2025-25

LOCAL REGIONAL STUDIES NETWORK

PAGRARA IT KINAARAM

Weaving Weaves in the Classrooms

Sashah B. Dioso¹

INTRODUCTION

Republic Act (RA) 10533, otherwise known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 added two more years of high school to the basic 10-year education cycle. Under the K to 12 Curriculum, Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) and Technical-Vocational-Literacy (TVL) Track specializations may be taken between Grades 9 to 12. TLE Track has four strands: Agri-Fishery Arts (AFA), Home Economics (HE), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and Industrial Arts (IA).² Curriculum contextualization is another essential feature of the K to 12 Curriculum where new contents are linked to learners' experiences to make learning facilitation effective and discussions relevant to them.³

In the case of Northwestern Panay, *pagrara* (handicraft weaving) is one of the topics contextualized in schools. It is a handicraft weaving practice in Northwestern Panay that utilizes abaca (Musa textilis), barite (Pandanus apiculata), abito (Upogium circumdatum), and other natural fibers to produce bags, hats, corsets, placemats, and other weaving products for local and export markets. These products reflect the knowledge and skills of local culture bearers in weaving as they continue to sustain a tradition that is part of their identity. However, challenges to the heritage's sustainability in terms of awareness and knowledge transfer in the community need to be addressed. Schools, in particular, have significant roles in this matter.

In this context, this paper locates the *pagrara* (handicraft weaving) heritage in curriculum and instruction in public high schools in Northwestern Panay and how the promotion and inclusion of handicraft weaving heritage in schools can be enhanced in terms of policies and guidelines.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection was done either through interviews or correspondence with five public school teachers who are knowledgeable and with experience in integrating *pagrara* into their classes. They were asked about the role of schools in the preservation and sustainability of handicrafts, the challenges that they experienced in integrating *pagrara* in classrooms, and how such integration be enhanced. Data collection happened between November to December 2024. Findings are discussed in connection to existing Department of

¹ University Research Associate, Center for Mind Visayan Studies, University of the Philippines Visayas.
² Department of Education, Revised List of TVL Specializations.
³ Department of Education, The Learning Action Cell as a K to 12 Basic Education Program School-Based Continuing Professional Development Strategy for the Improvement of Learning, DO No. 35, s. 2015 (7 June 2015).

POLICY BRIEF

Pagrara it Kinaaram:
Weaving Weaves in the Classrooms

Introduction

This manuscript is the proceedings of the stakeholder dialogue conducted on June 18, 2025 at the University of the Philippines Visayas, Iloilo City as part of the project “*Pagrara*: Exploring Northwestern Panay Weaving Heritage.” The project is one of two undertakings under the Panay Weaving and Culinary Heritage Program of the UP Visayas Center for West Visayan Studies (UPV-CWVS), funded by the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

The dialogue included participation from the municipal tourism officers and representatives from the partner local government units (LGUs) of Ibajay and Nabas in the province of Aklan and Libertad and Pandan in the province of Antique, as well as members of the *Pagrara* project. Aiming to bridge new insights and the findings of the initial fieldwork and workshop held in September 2024, the dialogue served as an avenue for the project team to present a proposed inter-LGU weaving alliance to stakeholders. This alliance is envisioned to foster a sustainable weaving heritage and industry among the four partner LGUs in Aklan and Antique. The dialogue likewise allowed stakeholders from the two Western Visayan provinces to elaborate on the prospective benefits and challenges of the alliance.

The meeting was organized by the program leader Prof. Frances Anthea Redison, together with *Pagrara* project leader Mr. Sashah Dioso, and assisted by senior office assistant Ms. Febrey Bless Esclares and junior administrative aides Atty. Joefritz Varon and Ms. Ericka Paula Galvan. These proceedings were prepared by Thania Margarrette Coronica.

Bridging the Findings of Initial Workshop and New Insights

Program leader and CWVS director Prof. Frances Anthea Redison began the meeting by highlighting the initial activities conducted by the project in northwestern Panay in 2024. The first activity was the documentation of the narratives of weavers coming from the municipalities of Ibajay and Nabas in Aklan and the municipalities of Libertad and Pandan in Antique. The second was the two-day stakeholders' meeting and workshop attended by weavers, officers of local weaving cooperatives, and LGU representatives in September 2024.

Prof. Redison has integrated the results of the documentation fieldwork in the discussion paper, "Issues and Concerns: Crafting the Weaves of Northwestern Panay" published by the UP CIDS in 2025. Based on the same fieldwork and the stakeholders' meeting, *Pagrara* project leader Mr. Sashah Dioso made two key recommendations reflected in the policy briefs, "*Pagrara it Kinaaram*" and "Local Governance and the *Pagrara* Heritage of Northwest Panay." The first recommendation is focused on incorporating weaving education in the curriculum of secondary schools found in weaving communities in northwestern Panay. Mr. Dioso emphasized that, while some high schools in the focus areas have weaving as part of their Technical Vocational Livelihood offering, these schools could further entice students to take on weaving if they could establish a Technical Education and Skills Development Authority or TESDA-accredited program on weaving that would provide students a National Certificate Level II (NC II) upon passing the assessment.

The second recommendation is the institutionalization of an inter-LGU weaving alliance among the four LGUs where handicraft weaving is a major industry. Mr. Dioso made this recommendation after noting similarities highlighted by stakeholders about their LGUs and their weaving industry. For instance, the Banigan Festival of Libertad and the Bariw Festival of Nabas both celebrate and promote the rich weaving tradition of these municipalities, while the same initiatives at actively promoting weaving have been done by Ibajay and Pandan in their respective festivals. Another significant point of congruence identified among the LGUs is the sourcing of raw materials, like abaca (*Musa textilis*), by weavers of Libertad in Antique from Nabas in Aklan.

Prof. Redison noted that a crucial component of this proposed alliance is coordinating and negotiating with the four LGUs on how the association would work and how the weaving communities would be incorporated and

ultimately benefit from the alliance. She also pointed that another important aspect of the alliance is coming up with respective Sangguniang Bayan (SB) resolutions that consider both the context-specific issues and concerns of weaving communities in each LGU and the shared mechanisms that could be implemented across the four areas to promote sustainable weaving. She cited as an example a similar SB resolution that would identify local weaving heritage as an important cultural heritage of each of the four municipalities.

Prof. Frances Anthea Redison recapped the initial activities under the project.



After this overview of the proposed alliance, Prof. Redison opened the discussion to the participants. She encouraged them to share their ideas and identify possible challenges regarding the endeavor.

Reactions from Stakeholders: Nabas, Ibajay, Pandan, and Libertad

Mr. Bryan Briones, the designated Municipal Tourism Officer of LGU–Nabas, Aklan, raised that the impermanence of his position as an officer designated by the outgoing municipal mayor may affect his participation in the inter-LGU alliance, should it be established. This reflects the common problem among different LGUs in the Philippines where the tenure of designated local government staff is coterminous with the term of elected officials who assigned them to their posts. When the term of the incumbent

mayor ends, these designated officers also tend to be supplanted from their posts. Consequently, projects started and/or participated by these officers tend not to be carried over by the next administration because of their different policy goals. In the context of promoting local weaving heritage, this raises the concern about building sustainability. Prof. Redison responded that one thing the project team could do is request a meeting with the incoming mayor of Nabas to introduce the project and its goals and secure that the partnership would continue under the new administration.

Meanwhile, Ms. Lyn Ilinon, who serves as the Municipal Tourism Officer of LGU–Ibajay, Aklan, brought up that there is already an existing informal alliance between weavers of Libertad, Antique and residents of Ibajay, Aklan. During the artisanal fair and exhibition of weavers held on the same day in UPV Iloilo, Ms. Ilinon learned from the participating weavers of Libertad that they source their raw materials from barangay Aparicio in Ibajay, Aklan. In connection to this, she emphasized that there is no problem in terms of the supply of raw materials in Ibajay. The problem, rather, was in terms of the decreasing number of artisans. During the last Tourism Week celebration of the municipality, Mayor Jose Miguel Miraflores saw the skillful and intricate handicrafts exhibited and sold by weavers whose number was down to only three individuals. Ms. Ilinon built on the mayor’s comments and recommended the conduct of weaving training for residents of Ibajay. At the SB level, SB members recognized the lack of ordinance pertaining to weaving and the significance of abaca not only as a source of livelihood but also a part of the municipality’s cultural heritage. Prof. Redison commented that the challenge in Ibajay is identifying an SB member who could promote sustainable weaving by sponsoring an ordinance institutionalizing the cause.

Speaking on behalf of the LGU–Pandan, Antique, Atty. Joe Fritz Varon shared that Mayor Tomas Estoperez and the LGU have positively recognized the findings of the discussion paper written by Prof. Redison. However, the LGU needs technical assistance in developing a policy or program centered on promoting handicraft weaving. Atty. Varon also enumerated the need for financial assistance either from the national or local government in relation to weaving in Pandan. Committing to encourage the mayor to forge the inter-LGU alliance, he cited data from the documentation fieldwork that Libertad and Pandan share sources of raw materials as well as problems in terms of marketing weaving as a profitable industry and significant heritage. Moreover, Atty. Varon highlighted the benefits of the alliance if it is realized:

Atty. Joe Fritz Varon (L) highlights the benefits of the institutionalization of the inter-LGU alliance



If we are an alliance, we can ask for assistance from the national government. We can [lobby] Sen. Loren Legarda, perhaps.¹ If we are an alliance, [there is more of us to ask for assistance]. At the same time, we can share best practices. If weaving is thriving in Pandan, for example, how can we learn from it? How can we apply it to the neighboring municipalities? Since we share the same cultural heritage as weavers, perhaps we can confront the problems together.

He added that there seems to be no competition among weavers in the four LGUs, since they have different final products, including designs. Hence, he foresees that the alliance will work.

As for LGU–Libertad, Antique, the Tourism Office staff Ms. Dangielyn Unilongo underscored the inconsistent commitment of weavers from the municipality to practice the craft and keep the tradition relevant. She lamented that weavers from Libertad are usually just excited in the beginning, but their interest in the endeavor dwindles especially when they see that the income they could get from selling in the local market is low. Although there were instances when their sales are thriving in the international market, there are also instances of low income. Hence, Ms. Unilongo said that the LGU only has two committed weavers whom they could tap to demonstrate and sell during exhibits. She also commented on what Ms. Ilinon shared about weavers from

¹ Sen. Loren Legarda is the Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Culture and Arts.

Libertad buying their raw materials from Ibaday, saying that the supply of raw materials is a problem in Libertad. In the municipality, there is a lack of *bariw* leaves or *pandan* (*Pandanus copelandii*), resulting in weavers occasionally utilizing other raw materials to sustain their livelihood. Ms. Unilongo also echoed Atty. Varon's comment that, like LGU–Pandan, LGU–Libertad also needs technical support to sustain and encourage weaving in the municipality.

Woven handicraft products made of *bariw* (*Pandanus copelandii*) sold during the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Center for West Visayan Studies



Responses and Recommendations from *Pagrara* Team

Considering the concerns and comments of the LGU representatives, Prof. Redison outlined the prospective structure and component of the proposed alliance. She suggested that it could be a semi-private organization composed of weavers, tourism officers from the different LGUs, and committed SB members who will champion the promotion of weaving through ordinances. Moreover, she recognized the higher level of commitment, technicality, and political will needed to institutionalize the alliance. She likewise acknowledged the challenge that comes after local elections: changing administrations with varying policy goals could hamper the institutionalization of the organization.

Mr. Dioso recommended that to operationalize the inter-LGU alliance, the LGUs must seek support from their respective provincial governments who,

through executive orders, could supply the budget. In terms of ensuring continuity in the alliance despite changing administrations, Mr. Dioso conveyed that one way this could be done was through the assignment of a counterpart to the municipal mayor who would serve as signatory to the alliance. This way, regardless of change in the composition of the local government after elections, the individual who serves as signatory would continue to sit in and help administer the organization.

Prof. Redison, meanwhile, underscored the importance of forging partnerships with civil society groups, people's organizations, and the business sector. Representatives from these sectors could be involved in the crafting of ordinances and executive orders. Likewise, cooperatives of weavers could be organized or reorganized as members of the proposed inter-LGU alliance. While the alliance is envisioned by Prof. Redison to be semi-private, Mr. Dioso suggested that it should be organized through the government because partnerships are easier to be forged through the government.

Responding to Prof. Redison's question on what measures could be done to make the alliance sustainable, Ms. Roselle Ruiz, Head of the Aklan Provincial Tourism Office, proposed that the first step could be formulating and passing individual ordinances to create and support the alliance in the four LGUs. At the provincial level, Aklan and Antique could sign a memorandum of agreement (MOA) creating the inter-LGU alliance. This way, the two provinces could be funding sources to sustain the activities of the group. Atty. Varon suggested that once it is institutionalized, the alliance could benchmark with one municipality in Panay with a successful weaving industry, such as the municipality of Miagao in Iloilo.

While it could learn from the best practices of Miagao when it comes to the marketing and trade of its *hablon*, the alliance should ultimately diversify their final products from that of the Ilonggo municipality.

Mr. Dioso further reiterated that a government approach is needed to start the alliance. Through focus group discussions spearheaded by the Pagrara project team, the local government could identify ways to bridge gaps in terms of human resource, enterprise, and marketing. Mr. Dioso said that the local governments should find the means to effectively distribute and sell the woven products to the market. This could be done through the assignment of representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in the alliance.

Representatives from the LGUs of Ibajay, Nabas, Libertad, and Pandan



Pagrara kag Kinaaram: Weaving Weaves in the Classroom

Specifically targeting the problem of decreasing number of weavers in the four LGUs is the proposed program of the *Pagrara* project team, “*Pagrara kag Kinaaram: Weaving Weaves in the Classroom.*” Through the establishment of a TESDA-accredited program on weaving in various secondary schools, students would be incentivized to undertake weaving as a technical vocational course where they would be provided with an NC II after completion. *Pagrara* project leader Mr. Dioso underlined that there are private institutions that could aid in training students. However, he said that “It would be better if young students could be trained by weavers themselves who are bearers of their culture.”

Mr. Dioso emphasized that the proposal for this educational program could only be started after the institutionalization of the inter-LGU alliance. Once the alliance is established, the team could entertain the idea of proposing the establishment of a school of living tradition. Program leader Prof. Redison remarked that the team could assist in crafting the program design and proposal for the school of living tradition.

Weavers from Ibajay and Nabas, Aklan and Libertad and Pandan, Antique showcase and market their craft at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the CWVS.



Ms. Unilongo of the LGU–Libertad responded that the Pagrara kag Kinaaram initiative is most welcome because there is an imperative to engage young students in weaving activities especially that the current generation of weavers is getting old. She suggested that in this educational initiative, there must be means put in place for the younger generations to unlearn the mindset propagated for decades that there is no money in weaving and that being a weaver equates to being poor. If the NC II program is implemented, the youth would be encouraged to take on weaving because of the great addition to their credentials, which would further translate to their employability and higher income.

Ways Forward and Conclusion

To close the dialogue, Prof. Redison reiterated that the project could “help pave the way” for the inter-LGU alliance to be established. The beginning is at the LGU level where each municipality should draft an ordinance establishing an organization of representatives from the LGU, people’s organizations, and weavers themselves. Once a “champion” for sustainable weaving heritage and industry is identified at the LGU level, the project will prepare the proposal for individual ordinances in Ibajay, Nabas, Libertad, and Pandan. Prof. Redison then commended the partners for their continuous and active participation

in the project. The key, she noted, is keeping the members of the partnership close and the communication lines open. One way of doing so is through individual LGUs inviting others in their festivals and allocating spaces for them in their cultural fairs or exhibits. Prof. Redison ended the meeting by thanking all the participants for coming to Iloilo City and for engaging meaningfully in the discussion. She noted, “[W]e invited all partner LGUs to be together in one room because we know we can learn from each other.”

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