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Weaving Policy and Tradition

The Role of Local Government Units in Sustaining Handicraft Weaving in Northwestern Panay

Frances Anthea R. Redison, Sashah B. Dioso, and Thania Margarrette O. Coronica

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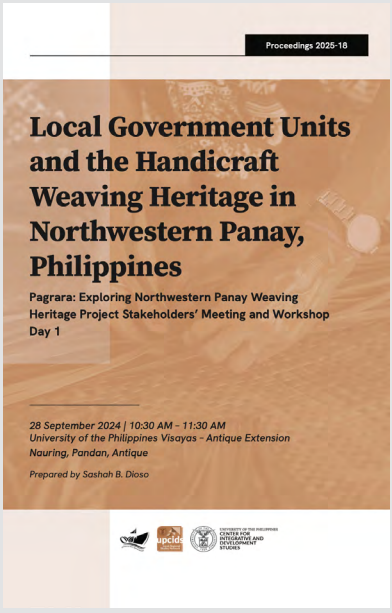
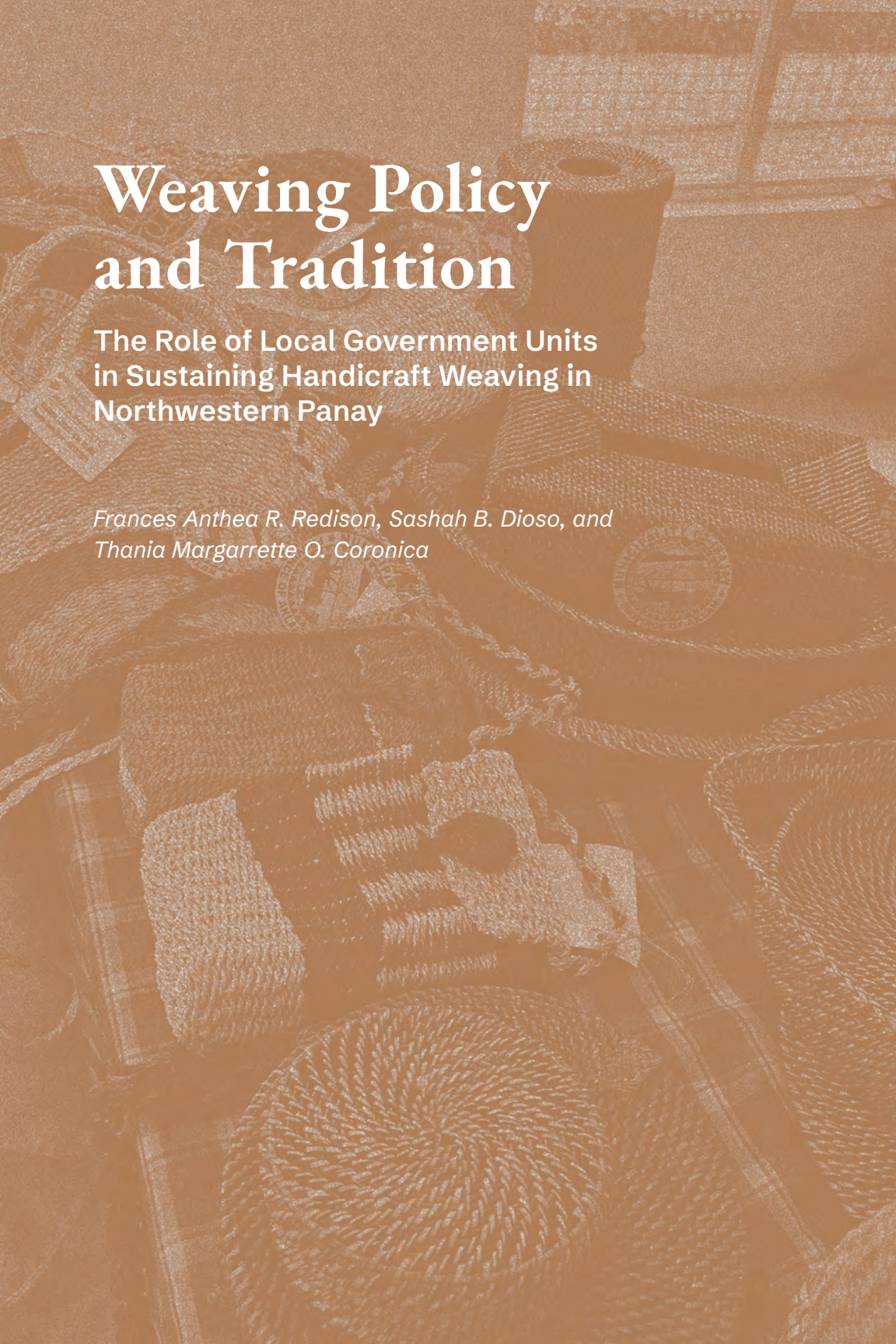
Fostering Sustainable Weaving Heritage and Industry through an Inter-Local Government Unit Alliance in Northwestern Panay



PROCEEDINGS

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



Weaving Policy and Tradition

The Role of Local Government Units in Sustaining Handicraft Weaving in Northwestern Panay

Frances Anthea R. Redison, Sashah B. Dioso, and Thania Margarrette O. Coronica

Key Highlights

On 8 October 2025, stakeholders from the four partner local government units of Pandan, Libertad, Ibajay, and Nabas including representatives from the Department of Education gathered for a dialogue in Pandan Extension Campus, Pandan, Antique to discuss the following agreements:

- The group proposed the drafting of LGU resolutions on handicraft weaving as a significant intangible cultural heritage (ICH). It includes the recognition of handicraft weaving as a shared cultural heritage in northwestern Panay. The local resolution will serve as the basis for future local legislations.

- With the goal of strengthening the policymaking on handicraft weaving at the local level, the dialogue allowed the participants to discuss what their LGUs could do to facilitate the creation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and consider the possible involvement of the provincial governments of Aklan and Antique. A joint MOU between partner LGUs will work for the establishment of an Inter-LGU Alliance on Weaving Heritage.

- Lastly, reincorporating handicraft weaving in the educational curriculum and eventually applying for competency certification to supplement the efforts of the LGU. The suggestions from the Department of Education were sought by the team.

Intangible Cultural Heritage: Binding Identity, Generating Income

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) defined intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage." Passed down from generation to generation, UNESCO (2024, 5) deems ICH as constantly evolving as communities recreate in the context of their environment and history. It also creates in communities "a sense of identity and continuity" that fosters "respect for cultural diversity and human creativity." In contrast to tangible heritage like monuments and other sites, ICH encompasses oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, knowledge and practices, and traditional craftsmanship.

As in other countries, ICH in the Philippines significantly contributes to local and national identity (Eslit 2023). Vitorillo and Arriola (2019, 375) underscore that, in safeguarding the *Hudhud* chant of the Ifugao in the Cordilleras, the initial step taken by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) through the *Hudhud* Schools for Living Traditions (HSLT) was to develop among the Ifugao youth a sense of pride in the practice of the *Hudhud*. By providing them spaces to practice and perform and by recognizing and granting them awards, the HSLT helped nurture a deeper sense of pride and identity among new practitioners of the *Hudhud* from the younger generations. Also focusing on the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Salvador-Amores, Martin, and Acabado (2021) highlight how textile weavers in the mountainous provinces display their ethnic pride as they collectively practice the weaving traditions of their ancestors and consequently promote their heritage. In a similar vein, Roque (2025, 135) argues in his ethnography of recreational activities in Isabela like *pabitin* and cultural dances like those of the Gaddang people that, aside from such intangible cultural heritage, "the gathering, the shared labor of preparation, and the mutual recognition among participants and audience," themselves produce and sustain shared cultural identity. A related finding is made by Pacio (2023, 1713), whose study on the oral history of the Yakan in Basilan reveals that, while the older generation of Yakan has adapted their songs and stories to their group's contemporary context, they have consistently subscribed to their ancestors' worldview and core values, thereby maintaining their cultural identity.

Aside from fostering identity, ICH also contributes to the livelihood of local communities. In Lagawe, Ifugao, traditional weaving has been a reliable source of income for the communities. Malinao (2025, 117) emphasizes the "strong craftsmanship and cultural authenticity" of the woven products sold by traditional weaving enterprises in the municipality. However, in employing the One Town, One Product criteria created by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to evaluate these ventures, he details the challenges they face in terms of product labeling, packaging, marketing, and overall scalability (108–16). In surveying the contribution of the *tikog* handicraft industry to the local economy of Basey, Samar, Cuaton (2019, 498–99) shows that an aggregate income of ₱16.5 million was contributed by farmers and women-dominated weavers involved in the *Tikog* Value Chain Industry in 2015. Although this figure is substantial, Cuaton notes that the viability of the industry is threatened by the limited supply of *tikog* grass used in weaving as well as the inconsistent quality of these grasses once dried (502). He therefore forwards the need to institutionalize measures not only to sustain and develop the industry but also to properly recognize and incentivize the contribution of female weavers to the industry (504). These cases underscore that, aside from intrinsic gains in terms of safeguarding heritage and strengthening identity, economic benefits could be gained from promoting intangible cultural heritage if context-specific challenges could be comprehensively addressed. This insight is highly relevant to the case of handicraft weavers in Northwestern Panay.

The Governance of Heritage Conservation and Promotion

Central to safeguarding ICH like *pagrara* is the role of the national and local governments. In 2023, the Congress of the Philippines passed the Cultural Mapping Law (Republic Act [RA] No. 11961), amending the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 (Republic Act No. 10066). The law aims to strengthen the conservation and protection of Philippine cultural heritage by establishing cultural mapping and an expanded cultural heritage education program. It therefore mandates local government units to conduct a comprehensive cultural mapping of areas under their administration. Vigorously responding to this directive, LGUs across the Philippines have conducted their own cultural mapping of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage (e.g., Cultural Mapping of Panay, Guimaras and Negros Occidental 2024; Mendoza and Ramirez 2025; Garcia et al. 2025). Many of them have sought expert assistance and material support from academic institutions, cultural organizations, and nongovernment organizations. Most significantly,

community members, who are bearers of their culture, have played an active part in the documentation and conservation of their tangible and intangible heritage.

The roles played by these different stakeholders in documenting and protecting cultural heritage are captured in the concept of cultural governance. Drawing from Gattinger and Whitehorse (2011), Vitorillo and Arriola (2019, 380) describe governance as "encompassing, non-hierarchical, decentralized, and collaborative policy-making approaches between interdependent public, private, and civic actors." Stakeholder collaboration that follows the governance framework, thus, goes beyond the traditional modes of cultural heritage conservation work where private entities independently pursue their market-oriented goals and governments fulfill their mandate top-down (Baltà Portolés, Čopič, and Srakar 2014, 194). Multistakeholder collaboration could be horizontal, which refers to cooperation among stakeholders fulfilling similar mandates and providing similar services. It could also be vertical, meaning cooperation among stakeholders providing compatible services within the same sector, or lateral, meaning cooperation among stakeholders from different sectors. It could also be a combination of horizontal, vertical, and lateral collaboration.

The necessity for multistakeholder collaboration in safeguarding cultural heritage in the Philippines is reflected in various case studies on different regions in the country. In Marinduque, for instance, Viray (2025, 695–96) emphasizes that the construction and representation of cultural heritage by the national government, which are formulated by the political elite and drawn from Western frameworks, tend to contradict local beliefs, values, and perspectives on heritage. He illustrates that government-led conservation programs usually limit, or altogether exclude, nonprofessional or community perspectives in framing these very communities' heritage. Similarly, Acabado and Martin (2020, 6–7), in their study on community-led heritage conservation in Ifugao, note that nationalist historical narratives, forwarding dichotomies like "lowland" versus "highland" and "original Filipinos" versus "Hispanized Filipinos," disregard local histories and reinforce ethnocentric views. Therefore, through a partnership with the local community in Ifugao, the authors sought to empower community members to unlearn flawed national narratives and actively sustainably safeguard their cultural heritage by helping establish a community-led museum (12). As the following sections show, this example of inclusive, bottom-up co-production of knowledge and amplification of marginalized voices has also been done in crafting policies and programs in safeguarding the weaving heritage of Northwestern Panay.

Establishing Trust and Building Connections: Milestones from Year 1

The UP Center for West Visayan Studies (CWVS), in collaboration with the UP CIDS LRSN Iloilo Project, has successfully forged partnerships with local government units (LGUs) from Nabas and Ibajay in Aklan, as well as Pandan and Libertad in Antique. These collaborations, formalized through four memoranda of understanding (MOUs), aim to promote the preservation and revitalization of Northwestern Panay's rich weaving heritage. Various initiatives have been conducted by different groups to discuss and promote weaving in terms of looms, like the *patadyong*, *piña*, and *hablon*. However, relative to loom weavers, the conditions of handicraft weavers who use natural fibers are more marginalized, given the challenge of sourcing natural fibers. The project saw this in its documentation of the experiences of weavers in 2024. Interviews with weavers and local chief executives also revealed that weavers, suppliers, and middlemen from the four LGUs interact. Hence, the project focused on handicraft weaving in the four LGUs where it is a source of livelihood. By fostering cooperation between academic institutions and LGUs, the project highlights a shared commitment to cultural sustainability and community empowerment in the region.

A key objective of the UP CWVS and UP CIDS LRSN Iloilo Project is to develop policy recommendations to preserve and promote the weaving heritage of Northwestern Panay. Central to this goal is the active engagement of grassroots stakeholders through key informant interviews (KIIs). These interviews, conducted by Attorney Joefrtiz Varon and Erika Paula Galvan, involved in-depth discussions with representatives from local government units (LGUs), including local chief executives, Sangguniang Bayan committee chairs on tourism, municipal tourism officers, as well as members of weaving associations and individual weavers. By integrating the valuable insights and shared experiences of those directly involved in the weaving tradition, the project ensures that the resulting recommendations are grounded in local realities and responsive to the needs of the community and aspirations of local stakeholders.

On 28–29 September 2024, a two-day Stakeholders' Meeting and Workshop was also held at the UP Visayas Extension Campus in Pandan, Antique. The event brought together local weavers, cooperative officers, tourism officials, and representatives from municipalities in Aklan and Antique, where traditional handicrafts are made from *bariw*, *nito*, and *abaca*. Discussions

focused on the economic viability and sustainability of Northwest Panay weaving, exploring its cultural significance, assessing its status, and identifying community capacity-building needs. The workshop also fostered collaboration between local governments, national agencies, and academic institutions to strengthen support for preserving and promoting the region's weaving heritage.

The project's publications in its first year of implementation include two proceedings: *Local Government Units and the Handicraft Weaving Heritage in Northwestern Panay, Philippines* and *Documenting the Craft, the Artisans, and their Weaves*. The project also produced two policy briefs: "*Pagrara it Kinaaram*" and "Local Governance and the *Pagrara* Heritage of Northwest Panay"; and one discussion paper: "Issues and Concerns: Crafting the Weaves of Northwestern Panay." These publications were provided to the LGUs, which can be used in policymaking related to handicraft weaving.

For the second phase, the project invited handicraft weavers from the four LGUs to come to UP Visayas, Iloilo City on 19 June 2025. The weavers displayed and sold their handicraft products in an exhibit and fair attended by visitors from Manila and Iloilo. They also demonstrated the weaving process to the Center's visitors. As gratitude to their invaluable contribution to the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Center, the weavers and LGU representatives were presented certificates of recognition. That afternoon, the project held a stakeholders' dialogue, in which the municipal tourism officers and representatives from the partner local government units (LGUs) of Ibajay and Nabas in Aklan and Libertad and Pandan in Antique, as well as members of the *Pagrara* project, participated. 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 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 stakeholders' meeting on 8 October 2025 aimed at discussing the inputs from Year 1 and initiating the plans discussed during the June 2025 stakeholders' dialogue.

Reflections from the Partners: Learning (and Unlearning) Ways

Prior to the start of the meeting, the team asked participants to share their reflections on the previous year's engagement. Ibajay Municipal Tourism Officer Lyn Ilinon remarked on the Ibayjanon weavers' gratitude for being given a platform where they could express the conditions of the weaving industry. She emphasized that the weavers did not lack materials. However, many weavers are disinterested to continue. Older generations tend not to pass the tradition on to the younger generations because they see that handicraft weaving requires much work but generates little income. Ms. Ilinon further shared that the weavers were happy that UP acknowledged them during the 50th anniversary of the CWVS. She also manifested that the LGU has a commitment to make handicraft weaving stronger in Ibajay.

For the LGU of Nabas, Municipal Tourism Officer Bryan Briones shared that during Year 1 of the project, one weaver expressed her sadness that the younger generations are less engaged in *pagrara*. Instead, they would want to pursue other profitable livelihood opportunities that they perceive as more prominent. Mr. Briones expressed his gratitude to the LGU for supporting the project and for the tourism initiatives of the LGU. He shared that in September 2025, the LGU implemented its first-ever Banig Fusion Challenge. During the event, the LGU also conducted an accessory-making training where weavers who participated in the first phase of the project joined. They were trained to utilize *bariw* not only for making *banig* and face masks but also for making other products. The LGU conducted the capacity building training to address the weavers' concern over the limited market for their products. Mr. Briones also expressed his gratitude to the project that formally connected Nabas with other LGUs with best practices in handicraft weaving. He said that they learned from the things practiced by other LGUs, which the Nabas LGU could apply in supporting handicraft weavers in the municipality.

Mr. Robert G. Nicopior, EnP, the municipal planning development coordinator of the LGU of Libertad, commented that the local government found the first year of the project's implementation beneficial to the weavers, especially because the project allotted a day to celebrate handicraft weaving in Iloilo City. He shared that the weavers themselves also felt appreciated because there are efforts to safeguard their culture. Overall, the LGU is appreciative of the efforts to preserve the weaving culture.

Honorable Gaynor Briones-Dionela, Chair of the Sangguniang Bayan (SB, Municipal Council) Committee on Tourism, Culture and the Arts, Pandan LGU, remarked that Pandan is fortunate that the project is supportive of the products of Santo Rosario.

Towards a Sustainable Policy for Handicraft Weaving

Redison encouraged participating SB members (also called councilors) to share their comments and suggestions on the proposed LGU resolution. She remarked that the project's proposal is for each LGU resolution to acknowledge that handicraft weaving is a shared heritage by municipalities in northwestern Panay so that the LGUs could eventually justify the creation of the inter-LGU alliance. She then asked the SB members to share their opinions and suggestions.

Attorney Joefritz Varon (Junior Administrative Aide IV, Panay Weaving and Culinary Heritage Program) suggested that the project needs to first define its goals. He underscored that the *Pagrara* project's objective is to highlight that weaving is a shared cultural heritage across the four LGUs and even in the two provinces. He then requested participating SB members and other invited participants to share their technical expertise in going about the creation of the inter-LGU alliance.

Mr. Sashah Dioso (Technical Staff Level 3, Panay Weaving and Culinary Heritage Program) inquired about the existing legislation or institutionalized support in relation to handicraft weaving in each municipality. In Libertad, the celebration of the Banigan Festival was institutionalized through an executive order. In Nabas, Engineer Nielle Sijera (Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator-in-Charge) shared that the *Bariw* Festival is celebrated, but it is not legislated or institutionalized yet. The Nabas LGU has also applied for its weaving industry to be registered in the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

With the insights from the partners, Redison clarified with the participants whether there is no existing resolution on handicraft weaving across the four LGUs. Representatives from the partner LGUs responded yes. Redison suggested that the agenda of the meeting—to propose and draft legislation for each municipality—is important. The general content of the proposed

resolution alone is significant because it can already be used for budget utilization and for the justification of the celebration of different festivals related to weaving. While an executive order is contingent on the sitting local chief executive's term and could be revoked, a legislative resolution is more binding because, regardless of who the incumbent local chief executive is, it could sustainably protect handicraft weaving. This is where policy is important because it could institutionalize handicraft weaving as an important cultural heritage. Redison then requested the participants to suggest a title for the resolution.

Rather than proposing resolution titles, Varon inquired from MPDO representatives as to what the ideal legislation would be—a resolution or an ordinance. He emphasized that a resolution is just a general sentiment of the Sangguniang Bayan; thus, it might not have a binding effect. However, an ordinance is a very strong statement from the LGU on its commitment to preserve and promote weaving as a shared cultural heritage. Varon further inquired what the focus would be if an ordinance were to be drafted. He requested Mr. Nicopior from the Libertad LGU to share his thoughts based on his experience working in the MPDO.

Mr. Nicopior responded to the earlier question about the drafting of a resolution, saying that Libertad should focus on the problems the LGU identified before in their CLUP. These include the lack of appreciation of and engagement in weaving among the youth; the lack of diversification from banig; the low supply of raw materials in Libertad, such that weavers import these from Nabas, Aklan; and problems in market linkage (selling from Libertad to other LGUs and other markets). Thus, if an ordinance or resolution is drafted, Mr. Nicopor suggests focusing on the preservation of handicraft weaving and addressing the problems of insufficient supply of *bariw*, the need to diversify from banig and improve its quality, and the need to link producers to markets.

Varon further asked if the LGUs were to legislate weaving, what aspect they would specifically address. Redison responded, "That's why we want to start small with a resolution."

The Proposed LGU Resolutions: Negotiations among the Stakeholders

Redison moved that in the resolution, each LGU will recognize that handicraft weaving is an important intangible cultural heritage in each of the municipalities. The justifications for the resolution should account for the specific contexts of each LGU. These include the presence of weavers who utilize specific materials (*nito* and *abaca* in Ibajay, *bariw* in Libertad, etc.); the existence of associations or cooperatives composed of different weavers; the availability of native fibers; the finding of a study by the *Pagrara* project that handicraft weaving is a shared heritage across northwestern Panay and that weaving communities in northwestern Panay experience similar challenges; and the finding of the Cultural Mapping of Panay and Guimaras project that weaving is a significant intangible cultural heritage.

Redison underscored that a resolution preserving weaving heritage is already a proactive measure. She said that an ordinance is heavier in the sense that it has penalties and financial aspects. However, if the legislation drafts a resolution, the LGU should first issue an agreement that handicraft weaving is an important cultural heritage. It would depend on the SB of each LGU whether it would proceed to further legislate an ordinance. She asked to hear insights from the participants.

Ms. Ilinon of the Ibajay LGU shared that in the proposed resolution, the SB could only recognize the weavers if the LGU had profiled them first. This profiling in the LGU's Socio-Economic Profile includes their exact number, their socioeconomic status, etc. Mr. Briones responded that in the case of Nabas, the LGU had partnered with DTI to profile the town's handicraft weavers. He suggested that each LGU may be able to access their weavers' profiles from the DTI. Ms. Meriam Lababit (Public Schools District Supervisor, DepEd Libertad) proposed two titles for resolutions: "A Resolution Promoting Sustainable Development in the Handicraft Weaving Industry" and "A Resolution for the Protection, Promotion, and Sustainability of Indigenous Handicraft Weaving."

Honorable Briones-Dionela also proposed a title for the resolution: "A Resolution Instituting the Support and Preservation of Traditional Handicraft Weaving in the Municipality of Pandan." She specified the resolution to institutionalize the celebration of an annual weaving heritage week or month, showcasing local craftsmanship and the integration of cultural weaving education in local schools and community programs.

Mr. Nicopior from the Libertad LGU suggested that instead of writing specific LGUs in the resolution, the resolution must generalize the location to "northwestern Panay." However, Redison reminded that "northwestern Panay" essentially crosses provincial boundaries. She negotiated, instead, that the drafted resolution of every LGU must first acknowledge the importance of handicraft weaving as an intangible cultural heritage in their municipality. Redison emphasized that each LGU could choose to draft two resolutions. The first resolution would be on acknowledging the importance of handicraft weaving in every municipality, while the second resolution would be on acknowledging the shared heritage in northwestern Panay. This second resolution, she added, could be written and revised by each SB according to their LGU's specific context.

Action Point

Varon moved for two resolutions to be drafted and therefore for two outputs to be furnished by each LGU:

- Output 1: "A Resolution Recognizing Handicraft Weaving as a Significant Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in the Municipality of _____."

- Output 2 (Discretionary): "A Resolution Promoting the Sustainability of Handicraft Weaving in the Municipality of _____" or "A Resolution Acknowledging Handicraft Weaving as a Shared Intangible Cultural Heritage in Northwestern Panay"

In the first resolution, the "whereas" clauses could be left to the discretion of the sponsor SB member, who can also utilize the results of the *Pagrara* studies.

All representatives from the partner LGUs agreed to adopt this resolution title and provide their own "whereas" clauses. Additionally, SB Ebon of the Libertad LGU signified his commitment to author two resolutions, namely Output 1 and another resolution authorizing the municipal mayor to enter an MOU with other LGUs. He committed to present his authored resolution during the 15 October 2025 session of SB Libertad. Meanwhile, SB Dela Torre and SB Zaldivar committed to prepare and present the resolution to SB Nabas around 22 to 29 October 2025.

Mr. Briones from the Nabas LGU raised that if two of the municipalities in one province recognize weaving as an important cultural heritage, why not

lobby for the province to recognize weaving as an important cultural heritage of Aklan and Antique, respectively? Mr. Algene Sabay (Secretariat of the Nabas Culture and the Arts Council) also raised that in Nabas, there are many weavers, but many of them slowly stop weaving because of low income. How then can weavers be encouraged to weave and to improve the quality of the woven products? He emphasized that addressing this should also be part of the resolution. Redison underscored that it is important to start with a resolution that acknowledges the importance of handicraft weaving because the existing document could then be used by the LGU to establish programs addressing specific problems related to handicraft weaving.

Memorandum of Understanding for the Establishment of an Inter-LGU Alliance on Weaving Heritage

Redison presented the project's proposal for the four LGUs in Aklan and Antique to come up with an agreement, or at least an understanding, about handicraft weaving. She brought up Mr. Briones' suggestion about working towards the two provinces' recognition of the LGU resolutions. This provincial recognition could also be an entry point for the inter-LGU alliance. She asked Varon if an MOU or an MOA is applicable for the proposed alliance. Varon responded that an MOU is applicable. Redison agreed and said that the different responsibilities of the parties could be detailed in the memorandum. She then asked the participants what they could commit to on behalf of their LGUs. She said that the MOU should already recognize that handicraft weaving is a shared intangible cultural heritage among the four municipalities. Responding to Redison's question regarding the commitment of the LGUs, SB Briones-Dionela said that each LGU could maybe commit to marketing assistance and training of weavers. Redison responded that these could be framed as "support initiatives."

Dr. Generosa C. Condez (Public Schools District Supervisor, DepEd Pandan) inquired how an MOU could be forged involving Pandan if the only community in the municipality that is engaged in weaving is Santo Rosario. She said that other communities do not even have access to raw materials. Some buy raw materials in Nabas, while others do not weave. She also mentioned that maybe a profiling of weavers in Pandan must be done first.

Redison responded that the challenges in terms of the limited number of weavers and other issues have been acknowledged and documented by the project in Year 1 of its implementation. Hence, moving forward, the goal is to address the issues and concerns of each LGU through their collaboration. The resolution drafted is about recognizing handicraft weaving as a significant ICH in each municipality. It does not specifically talk about the number of weavers but the indigenous knowledge of the community. Thus, the assumption is that the issues and concerns of every LGU are usually tackled only at the LGU level. Redison said that the project's suggestion, however, is for these LGUs to work together because they share weaving as their heritage.

One way to move forward and utilize stakeholders' resources for every LGU and every community is through an MOU. Redison emphasized that the MOU will not solve the documented problems outright, but it is a significant step toward addressing them. This collaboration is a consequential step; thus, the project inquires about the support initiatives that LGUs could commit to. Redison clarified that these support initiatives are not automatically just the responsibilities of the LGUs. Support can mean external assistance, for instance, from government agencies and national legislators. Furthermore, it can also mean providing rooms and facilities, and human resources. Since the memorandum is just an MOU, it does not force the parties to provide this assistance, only what they can provide voluntarily.

Mr. Nicopior clarified that interprovincial partnerships are not entirely new among Libertad, Pandan, and Nabas because they have already worked together on the Northwest Panay Peninsula Natural Park. However, the memorandum is a good way to improve partnerships in terms of how these municipalities can work together in conserving and preserving northwestern Panay cultural heritage. He said that on the Libertad LGU's part, they envision the MOU to create an alliance in northwestern Panay, but the difference from previous partnerships is that this time the subject is on cultural heritage. Mr. Nicopior also suggested that having a model (like that of the Peninsula Natural Park) would help the creation of the inter-LGU alliance among four municipalities and two provinces. He further said that when it comes to roles in the alliance, the Libertad LGU could help form or communicate policies on preservation and improvement. Later, in marketing, the LGUs would have different directions. However, there could be a baseline in the alliance where they could share data, knowledge, borrow resources, or raw materials. Again, in marketing later, there will be competition among the four municipalities. Competition cannot be avoided. Maybe much later, there can be a unified mark on the products coming from northwestern Panay.

Redison noted that in drafting the MOU, it should appear that the project and its participants are not imposing the responsibilities on the LGUs. Rather, part of the commitment is at least to communicate with one another. The commitment among the LGUs should generally be about collaboration, which could be in terms of the support initiatives already discussed. Also, since UPV and LGUs have been partners through the project, the products of weaving communities in the other municipalities could also be sold in the UPV Pandan showcase room, aside from Pandan products.

Action Point

Redison moved for the drafting of the MOU, which serves as Output 3 of the meeting:

- Output 3: "MOU on Recognizing Handicraft Weaving Heritage as a Shared Intangible Cultural Heritage in Northwestern Panay"
- Responsibilities:
  - Commit to communicating and collaborating with each other
  - Support initiatives such as, but not limited to, skills training, provision of facilities and human resources for partner LGUs, marketing assistance, etc.
  - Share best practices on crafting policies on preservation, promotion, and improvement
- Unify product marks (longer-term responsibility)
- Signatories: UPV, CWVS, Governor of Aklan, Governor of Antique, Local Chief Executives of Pandan, Nabas, Ibajay, and Libertad
- First Draft: 13 October 2025

Redison encouraged the participants to help one another and work together for the MOU to be drafted and signed by the local chief executives. She also said that the project will attempt to lobby for the provincial governors to sign the MOU. This would be a big win not only for the LGUs but especially for the weavers who will have institutional support. The MOU signing would give the

community a positive outlook and create interest in handicraft weaving. While the ceremonial signing is optics, she argued that it is important. Varon will help draft the MOU for the review of the legal offices of every LGU. Another resolution would focus on allowing the mayors to sign the MOU. The project and the participants should also lobby for the recognition by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (SP, Provincial Council) of Aklan and Antique of the resolutions signed by the respective LGUs. Redison reminds the participants, however, that the project is not limiting the number of resolutions the SB could sign in relation to handicraft weaving.

Proposal to Apply for Competency Certification for Handicraft Weaving

It is proposed that a competency certification such as NC II under TESDA for handicraft weaving can contribute to address issues and concerns raised during the Phase 1 of the project. Sashah Dioso facilitated the discussion on this part. Dioso clarified that the dialogue does not just involve representatives from the DepEd but also solicits insights from the representatives of the LGUs. He noted that support from the LGUs is imperative for the success of the discussion. He mentioned Ms. Ilinon's earlier sharing about the challenge seen in Ibajay—that few members of the community engage in weaving. He also mentioned the findings of the focus group discussions conducted in Year 1 of the project, that a few members of the younger generation know how to weave (maghabul or magrara). Hence, one recommendation of the project in addressing these challenges is for DepEd secondary schools in the four municipalities to facilitate applying for NC II for handicraft weaving. The question now is how the application could be started in the TESDA. However, he clarified that this is still an exploratory initiative. In case the initiative pushes through, the project could invite TESDA to introduce the mechanism to project participants.

Dioso underscored that the NC II offering could entice students to enroll in handicraft weaving in basketry. Consequently, the limitations in terms of the number of weavers could be addressed. In the FGD, participants perceived pagrara as an indication of poverty. Because of this, they do not want their children to weave. Other weavers work hard in their craft, so they can provide for their children's education. They saw that their children's education could give them better opportunities and a way out of weaving. The proposal for the technical-vocational livelihood (TVL) program in DepEd could address this. If the DepEd is on board, then the project can explore the possibility of

applying for an NC II. Dioso asked for the participating teachers' inputs and experiences.

Dr. Condez said that acquiring the NC II is not only for secondary schools (senior high schools) but also for any organization or community that needs a particular skill and can request TESDA for a training program. Once the need is established, TESDA will then organize a training program. The first step is to create the need or demand. Like in their schools in Pandan, TESDA offers various trainings with their chosen pool of trainers. She clarified that TESDA offers NC I and NC II, but the agency in Pandan does not yet offer weaving. If the program pushes through, it would be the first to offer weaving. If a need for training in weaving is created by the Pagrara project—that there is a need for students to acquire the capabilities in relation to weaving—perhaps the program can be created.

Dioso shared a case in Mindanao, where backstrap loom weaving was introduced to the youth. They were enticed to learn to weave. The role of DepEd was very significant, given that they had a captured set of participants—the students—and their teachers were trained. If DepEd Antique and Aklan are okay with the creation of the training program, Mr. Dioso believes that the Pagrara project can facilitate the program.

Ms. Lababit said that weaving is no longer part of the TVL track in the secondary school's curriculum. She recalled when she was a high school student, handicraft making was part of the curriculum in Libertad National Vocational School. If the plan is to revive it, then the application can be done. Furthermore, it is ideal for TESDA to offer handicraft weaving training to teachers, including the alternative learning system (ALS) learners, for livelihood. Hence, if the weaving training program pushes through, the ALS learners could be the program's recipients. Lababit, however, said that in the regular secondary school curriculum, there is no institutionalized livelihood offering. Therefore, if the NC II program pushes through, only the ALS learners could be tapped as beneficiaries.

Condez mentioned that it is the DepEd Regional Director (RD) who approves of applications to open new tracks in senior high schools. Commenting on Lababit, Condez said that if LNVS were able to offer weaving, then it would be more plausible to revive the program. While hesitant about the prospect of the NC II program, now Condez sees that the prospect could create a livelihood for the students. Drawing from experience, Condez emphasized that students often feel motivated when they can earn something from what they do. Most

of the youth do not engage in weaving and creating banig because it is difficult and time-consuming. Given the prospect of the NC II certification program, she realized that there are other ways by which the youth could appreciate, especially if they could earn from it. This new approach offered by the project could inspire the younger generation in the communities to engage in weaving. What is important is to first create the need and excitement about handicraft weaving among the young people, because it may not be inviting to them today. This could be started in the secondary schools. This is possible because the DepEd regional office even opened a new track in the middle of the year after it saw that there was a need among the students. If UP can lead this, and there would be schools to lobby the need for a weaving track in the secondary schools, then maybe DepEd can facilitate this. Given that weaving was offered in Libertad before, part of the lobbying process is to emphasize that it was already part of the curriculum before.

Mr. Nicopior added that one policy recommendation indicated in the CLUP of the Libertad LGU is to include weaving not only in the high school but also in the elementary school curriculum. For example, field trips in the elementary schools could be conducted in weaving centers. In this way, elementary students could already be exposed to the weaving heritage. When they become high school students, the weaving track is a viable option given that they were already exposed to their municipality's weaving heritage. Nicopior also added that LGU-Libertad has experience where it crafted an NC III approved by TESDA. He said that TESDA should really be invited and be the one to develop or draft the competencies. Then, they would approve the application. Thus, the LGU could probably help in linking DepEd to TESDA.

Ms. Perlyn Atienza (SHS Teacher II, Libertad National Vocational School) emphasized that the revival of weaving education as part of the curriculum would be possible, but this would need collective effort between the community and the LGU. Ms. Atienza saw that the NC accreditation had a lot of requirements. However, she believes that this is doable because it was once implemented as part of the curriculum. She underscored the help of the LGU in terms of preparing the requirements. Once the competencies are established, it will be easier to implement the curriculum. Ms. Atienza said that the problem is how to start the process. This is where the LGU could also help craft the competency design. She emphasized that the LGU, other agencies, and even the community must create the need in order for the certification program to be created. She said that the hype for weaving should be created.

Redison responded to Ms. Atienza, saying that creating this "hype" is what the proposed MOU is all about. She said that the certification program needs institutional support and policies. That is why the process starts with drafting the resolution and the collective MOU across two provinces. The resolution and the MOU serve as support for the revival of weaving as part of the curriculum because these documents are enough indication that the communities themselves want weaving to be promoted and revived. She highlighted that collaboration among stakeholders is very important. In implementing programs, collaboration is usually the missing link. She also agreed with Ms. Atienza that the "hype" should be highlighted because "at the end of the day, if our heritage is not profitable, it will die." She likewise agreed with Condez's comment that weaving should be made exciting to secondary students in a way that they could make a profit from it.

Condez added that sustainability is important in the creation of the program. She also mentioned marketing as an important component of promoting sustainability. Given this, she suggested that the proposed NC II certification program should have an industry partner in terms of the marketing of the woven handicrafts created by students. If the industry partners are already part of the planning, then the program would be more successful. She illustrated that the industry partners should know the vision of the program and how many products the program wants to create and sell. This would entail commitment from the industry partners. She also added that if the community does not see any return in terms of income, then it would be hard to encourage them.

Dioso reiterated that the NC II program for handicraft weaving is a holistic endeavor involving local government, education, and community stakeholders. For instance, at the local-government level, the LGU could probably design a policy where materials used for things like banners in government-related events are products crafted by weaving students. This way, local governments could link production to the market. Dioso inquired if the DepEd would be willing to support this proposal, and if yes, then the project would gather the significant stakeholders for another meeting.

Condez emphasized that if the endeavor is something that the communities will find financially beneficial for themselves, then it could be done. Moreover, she said that the DepEd will support this, given that the department has been opening its doors for TVL. Also, if the program is in accordance with the department's regulations and requirements, DepEd will support it.

Briones shared that in Nabas, weaving is part of the curriculum in one Indigenous peoples (IP) school. Also, he shared that one of the efforts done by the Nabas LGU to entice the younger generation to engage in weaving was the Banig Fusion Challenge, a contest that entailed creating artwork out of banig as canvas. Mr. Briones also shared that every time the LGU holds contests and when they have guests or visitors, the tokens given are always made of banig. Banig products are integrated into the activities of the LGU. The LGU has also partnered with the DTI to conduct training for women and the youth from Nabas. In fact, one of the training sessions they organized was held in Pandan, Antique because the resource person was a weaver from Santo Rosario in Pandan. Another training they organized was accessories making, where, aside from the typical mats made of banig, the products made from banig were earrings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.

SB Briones-Dionela suggested that one way to encourage the youth, especially out-of-school youth, to engage in handicraft weaving is to provide starter kits that would allow them to earn from weaving. She said that capital assistance for small weaving enterprises should be provided after the different training conducted for the youth. Maybe an industry partner could provide the starter kits for out-of-school youth. Ms. Ilinon also shared that in the case of Ibajay, some high school students were encouraged to take the agriculture track in senior high school because of international linkage opportunities related to silkworm production. She said a few students from Ibajay were sent to Japan to learn about silkworm production. She also shared that one of the products by abaca weavers in Barangay Aparicio had passed the quality control of Rustan's. These weavers were trained by the DTI in dyeing, so they could include more colors and designs in their products. However, Ms. Ilinon further shared that the weavers did not agree to Rustan's purchase order (PO) because their limited number could not meet Rustan's demand despite raw materials being available.

Redison synthesized that the issue raised could be solved by what Dr. Condez raised about creating the need and excitement to engage in weaving. In the case of Ibajay, there was a willing industry partner, but the community was not willing to work with them because of the limited human resources. This issue could possibly be solved by the creation of the NC II program that could encourage the younger generations to see the economic viability of weaving. Given this, she underscored that addressing the issues related to sustainable weaving heritage should not just focus on industry partners alone or weavers alone. Sustainability would be facilitated if a certification program were

created in the secondary schools. It also follows that the certification program facilitated by DepEd could not be done without the support of the LGU. She therefore said that the inter-LGU alliance MOU is important to the success of community programs related to handicraft weaving. With this, she hoped that the stakeholders present in the meeting could see the significance of policy and that "we cannot move on without the policies." Even if it could be said that members of the community could not appreciate the policies because they could not feel their effects, the policies will compel the local governments to support the projects and programs on weaving. At the same time, the policies would be a backbone when lobbying for the revival of weaving as part of the secondary school curriculum.

Redison further emphasized that despite all stakeholders acknowledging the significance of handicraft weaving, there is no resolution to institutionalize this. She said that the effort should not stop at recognition. Rather, actions must be taken to go beyond recognizing handicraft weaving as a significant ICH. These actions include incorporating weaving into the secondary school curriculum. However, students would not be enticed to choose weaving as part of their secondary education if they could not find economically viable livelihood opportunities from weaving. Redison, therefore, said that "it's all about the chain here." This chain, composed of the stakeholders, must be strengthened.

Dr. Condez reiterated that the schools are not the only venues for conducting NC II certification. Communities in need may request TESDA to conduct training sessions. They can also request NC III certification in assessors' and managers' training. This contrasts with NC I and NC II, which are hands-on skills development training programs.

In relation to the proposed inter-LGU MOU, Mr. Nicopior raised concerns about the structure of the inter-LGU alliance. He asked who would bind the structure and suggested that there should be an independent body that would bind it. In the meantime, UPV could bind the four LGUs, but as the alliance progresses later, there should be an independent body, agreed upon by the municipalities, that would manage and follow up on the activities of the alliance.

Redison acknowledged the need for this secretariat body. She said that in the meantime, UPV will serve as the neutral/intermediary body to regulate the alliance, that is, the secretariat. However, members of the secretariat will not

come from the Center for West Visayan Studies alone. They may also bring in other faculty members or experts from the university. Eventually, when the alliance progresses and it becomes more institutionalized, it could come up with its own agreed-upon secretariat. She also mentioned that to contribute to the sustainability of the partnership and future alliance, there could be an annual meeting attended by the partner stakeholders. She said that the incoming third year of the Pagrara project would focus on the NC II program, where more stakeholders would also be brought into the conversation. Eventually, after Year 3, the project would try its best to find more funding support for the stakeholders' meeting to continue.

Dioso added that the project is hoping to gather industry stakeholders, the TESDA, and the LGUs, and discuss more concrete details in the creation of the NC II program. He said that the prospect is promising, given that weaving was already offered before in Libertad National Vocational School and that there are teachers who have been trained in handicraft weaving. However, Ms. Atienza reminded that many of those teachers have already retired from service; therefore, there is a need to train the present cohort of TLE teachers in handicraft weaving.

Redison said that the NC II program would start in selected LGUs. The pilot areas would be Libertad and Pandan given that weaving was once part of the curriculum in secondary schools in the areas. Mrs. Lababit and Ms. Atienza would be the point persons of the project in Libertad. Dioso said that eventually, Nabas and Ibajay would also be included in the program, should the DepEd divisions there support the endeavor. According to Redison, Nabas and Ibajay would have to benchmark from Libertad and Pandan's programs. For example, since modules would already be published in Libertad and Pandan, DepEd Nabas and Ibajay could just adapt these modules on weaving according to these areas' context.

Redison thanked the participants for their generous insights—much of which the project would not have been able to come up. She ended the meeting saying that the efforts made are not for the sake of the participants but for the younger generation. Ultimately, she hoped that the collaboration among the partner stakeholders would continue.

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