

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

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UN Global Compact Office

2021 UN Women  
Asia-Pacific WEPs Awards  
Regional Awardee Profile



Winner

## Bayo Manila Inc.

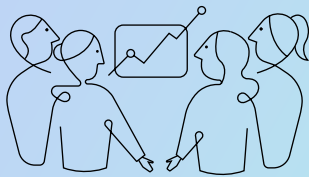


Anna Marie R. Lagon  
CEO

### Bayo Manila Inc.

**Country:** Philippines  
**Employees:** 201 – 500 employees  
**Industry:** Retail Apparel

**Website**  
[www.bayo.com.ph](http://www.bayo.com.ph)



### A Vision for Sustainable Fashion Powered by Women

Founded in 1992, Bayo is a homegrown fashion brand that is committed to raising the bar in the retail industry by harnessing circular economy practices. Bayo champions women as change agents across their value chains by generating local employment through hiring Filipino women artisans, procuring raw materials from Filipino farmers, and preserving cultural traditions in apparel designed by women handweavers. Within the marketplace, Bayo strategically identifies and supports women-owned and women-led enterprises in their production process. In fact, 90% of the vendors that Bayo collaborates with are owned and operated by women, and 100% of the weaving communities Bayo works with are led by women.

As a fashion company aware of the environmental challenge within the garment industry, Bayo believes in the importance of developing innovative and sustainable solutions that mitigate the impacts of production and ethical sourcing. Bayo recognizes the significant negative impact that sourcing raw materials has on carbon emissions and fabric waste generation. To address these issues, Bayo has transitioned to a zero-waste business model by sourcing raw materials from local suppliers in the Philippines. The bulk of their cotton supply was previously sourced globally, leading to increased carbon

emissions involved with transport and production. Today Bayo directly sources materials such as silk from silkworm farmers and cotton from local farmers. This has drastically reduced the company's carbon footprint and harnessed Filipino weaving communities' strength to design and produce their apparel. Handweaving is typically unprofitable for women weavers in the Philippines, given the challenges in accessing and competing in markets. These challenges stem from gender biases that limit women's access to the knowledge, networks, and resources needed to succeed in the marketplace. Recognizing these barriers, Bayo launched the Journey to Zero Initiative, in which a significant part of the goal is to provide equal access to resources and opportunities for Filipino women to be profitable through handweaving and farming. The Journey to Zero Initiative has also paved the way for Bayo to start a narrative in the realm of sustainability in the Philippines—continuously sharing the brand's learnings, and working with other women-led brands to support their move towards a circular economy. Through this transparency and openness of shared knowledge, Bayo aims to help uplift other brands, companies, and communities surrounding it.



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*As a womenswear fashion company, we attract and engage more women who can ally in our approach to gender-just climate action. We act as the bridge that fills the gaps of meaningful collaborations that are in silos. Some of the identified gaps are market access, lack of capacity to engage in opportunities, financial literacy, digital readiness to adapt to the current demands of the industry, and lack of representation, to name a few.*

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*- Anna R. Lagon*

## **A Journey to Zero**

The Journey to Zero Initiative launched under the Bayo Manila Foundation (BMF) drives the organization’s goal of progressing toward circular economy practices. The mission behind Journey to Zero is two-fold: to source raw materials locally and naturally while reducing waste to zero by optimizing production, designing durable apparel, and using upcycled waste; and secondly, to preserve local cultural traditions in garment making and design. Key to this initiative is increasing engagement with women weavers, women silkworm farmers, and mulberry farmers. Journey to Zero encompasses various projects that provide Filipino women with opportunities to profit through handweaving and farming, ultimately improving women’s livelihoods and empowering women’s participation in the marketplace.

Through Journey to Zero, BMF actively works with women weavers and farmers to provide capacity building and market access to scale their operations. For example, BMF provided weavers in the region of Bulacan with new looms, yarns, social insurance, and training on how to use production offcuts or fabric waste in textile making to produce zero-waste handwoven textiles. BMF has also launched a business program with Argao weavers, providing a material supply of production offcuts to weavers, purchasing their textiles, and using them to create apparel.

In a span of two years, one of the communities of weavers (from Argao, Cebu) participating in Journey to Zero grew six-fold, with almost 1577.4 kg offcuts upcycled, creating 4337.85 yards of zero-waste fabrics. Through digital marketing support that was provided by the BMF, the weavers’ customer base grew, enabling women within the weaving communities to sustain their livelihoods independently. BMF is currently working on formalizing partnerships with the Department of Trade and Industry, a local NGO, and a financial institution to sustain knowledge sharing on digital marketing and other related digital resources.

Critical to Bayo’s apparel production is the revival of the Philippine sericulture industry, which involves the production of silk by rearing silkworms. To breathe new life into the sericulture industry in Benguet province, BMF has funded eight women silkworm farmers to rear silkworms in addition to eight male mulberry tree farmers to grow and maintain mulberry trees to sustain the production of silk. According to the Philippine Fiber Development Authority (PHILFIDA), the government agency that engaged women farmers

before BMF's entry, women typically receive Php 200 (~ USD 3.55) per kilo of the highest grade of silk cocoons. BMF is currently paying the sericulture farmers the rate of Php 450 (~ USD 8) per kilo of the highest grade of silk cocoons. In this way, BMF is able to help with the economic growth of local farming communities.

## Partnerships and Measuring Success

Developing meaningful partnerships in collaboration with principled partners from the government, research institutes, and other organizations has accelerated Bayo's impact.

The silkworm initiative in Benguet was possible through a partnership with the Philippines Department of Science and Technology (DOST)-Philippine Textile and Research Institute (PTRI), and the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Kapangan. Through a partnership with the DOST-PTRI, support was given in providing the first two batches of silkworms that were delivered to the sericulture farmers. The LGU of Kapangan, through Mayor Manny Fermin, provided assistance in identifying the women sericulture farmers as well as male mulberry tree farmers for the revival of the silk industry in Kapangan.



Through these partnerships, BMF is able to sustain the purchasing of silkworms and generate meaningful employment for women in the sericulture industry. BMF sustains all other funding assistance that may be needed by the project. To expand market access for weaving communities, Bayo launched a Community Partnership Program, enabling partnerships to form between women weavers and Bayo designers. Products from weaving communities are marketed in this program using Bayo's sales platform, and 100% of the profits are given to the weaving communities. The program includes but is not limited to workshops on purposeful design development, enhancing creativity, digital readiness, quality and integrity of design, basic product costing, and other related processes to develop a brand. All these processes are shared by BMF through virtual and in-person workshops and training, where weavers are mentored and prepared to test their products in the marketplace.

## Women's Empowerment Principles



High-Level Corporate Leadership



Treat all Women and Men Fairly at Work without Discrimination



Employee Health, Well-Being and Safety



Education and Training for Career Advancement




Enterprise Development, Supply Chain and Marketing Practices







Community Initiatives and Advocacy



Measurement and Reporting

 [asiapacificwepsawards.org](http://asiapacificwepsawards.org)

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