

Assessment to Action: a Needs Based Approach to Developing Sustainable Criminology Extension Program

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Needs Assessment, Human Rights, Gender Sensitivity, Disaster Preparedness

Received : 15, March

Revised : 17, April

Accepted: 19, May

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ABSTRACT

The Philippine College Foundation (PCF), through its School of Criminology, upholds its commitment to providing relevant and responsive extension services. A needs assessment was conducted in Barangay Batangan, Valencia City, Bukidnon to identify the key challenges faced by the local population. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study gathered data through validated surveys and key informant interviews to evaluate the community's understanding and awareness of basic rights, gender sensitivity, and public safety. The findings revealed a strong need for capacity-building initiatives to improve knowledge on human rights protection, promote gender-sensitive practices, and enhance disaster preparedness. The results of the assessment served as the foundation for designing the RIGHTS (Raising Initiatives for Gender and Human Tolerance and Safety) program.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a vital role in driving community development, particularly in addressing social justice, public safety, and human rights issues that are crucial for societal advancement (UNESCO, 2020). The CHED Memorandum Order No. 52, s. 2016 emphasizes that community engagement is an essential component of academic programs, particularly in the social sciences and public service fields. Through extension programs, HEIs are positioned to actively contribute to the empowerment of communities by sharing institutional expertise and promoting inclusive, sustainable development. Academic departments, particularly those rooted in the social sciences, such as criminology, are uniquely equipped to implement initiatives that foster civic responsibility, peace, and public awareness (Cerna, 2021). This directive supports the idea that criminology education should not be confined within classroom walls but should extend to real-world issues affecting marginalized communities (CHED, 2016; CHED, 2019).

Philippine College Foundation (PCF) upholds its commitment to service learning and social advocacy by developing community extension programs that are responsive to local concerns (Garcia & Uy, 2025). Extension initiatives require a thorough needs assessment to effectively identify gaps in community knowledge, practices, and access to resources (Wang & Burris, 2018). To this end, the School of Criminology identified community located at Barangay Batangan, Valencia City, Bukidnon. Based on the records and initial interviews of the residents, there is no extension program that was conducted by any HEIs within the city. This prompted the extension implementers to conduct needs assessment focusing on residents' understanding of human rights, gender-related concerns, and local safety practices.

The collected data served as the foundation for designing a responsive extension project that promotes public safety, legal awareness, and resilience. In alignment with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) framework, which recognizes HEIs as critical stakeholders in national development through community engagement (CHED, 2016), the School of Criminology will launch the Project RIGHTS Raising Initiatives for Gender and Human Tolerance Safety. By addressing human rights and community safety concerns, this initiative allows both faculty and students to apply criminological knowledge in a meaningful, socially responsible manner. The extension project not only strengthens the institution's role in community empowerment but also provides future law enforcement professionals with a grounded understanding of the societal dynamics they are expected to serve.

Objective Of The Study

This study aims to assess the needs of residents in Barangay Batangan, Valencia City, Bukidnon to inform the development and implementation of a criminology-based extension program. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Determine the demographic profile of the residents in the selected community.
2. Assess the level of knowledge and practices of residents concerning human rights, gender equality, and disaster risk preparedness.
3. Develop a targeted extension program based on the identified needs that will promote legal literacy, safety awareness, and inclusive community development.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

This study employed a descriptive research design to assess the needs of residents in Barangay Batangan, Valencia City, Bukidnon, in relation to human rights awareness, gender sensitivity, and public safety. The area was selected based on initial field observations and consultations with local stakeholders, which revealed pressing concerns on social justice, safety, and gender-related issues. The barangay is home to a culturally diverse population, including various indigenous and migrant groups, contributing to its dynamic but complex social landscape.

The researchers developed a structured survey questionnaire to gather data on the community's perceived needs. The researcher made instrument undergone thorough validation from the three (3) experts of language, research, and extension. The instrument was divided into two sections: the first gathered demographic information (age, educational attainment, occupation, etc.), while the second section used a five-point Likert scale to assess the community's perceived needs in relation to human rights education, gender equality, disaster preparedness, and community safety. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to analyze the demographic profile of the respondents, while the weighted mean was employed to interpret the perceived needs based on the Likert scale. Each item was rated from "Highly Needed" to "Not Needed", with the following scale and interpretation:

Table.1 Survey Questionnaire

Scale	Range	Descriptive Interpretation	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Needed
4	3.51-4.50	Agree	Needed
3	2.51-3.50	Neutral	Moderately Needed
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Not Needed
1	1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Highly Not Needed

The data collection process began with the distribution of survey questionnaires to a representative group consisting of household heads participating in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). Once the surveys were completed, a random selection of key informants was invited to join focus group discussions (FGDs) to gain deeper insights and support the validation of the quantitative data. All participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any point without any consequences, and the measures implemented to ensure their privacy and confidentiality. Informed consent was given to each participant, confirming their voluntary participation. Since all respondents were 18 years old or older, their consent was appropriately documented. The study strictly followed ethical guidelines designed to safeguard participants' rights and personal information. Identities were anonymized to maintain confidentiality, and all collected data was securely stored. After the study concluded, the results were shared with the community, in line with the principle of knowledge sharing, so that community members could benefit from the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table presents the demographic profile of the respondents, it was found that the majority of respondents fall within the 25–44 age range, with both the 25–34 and 35–44 groups making up 32.5% of the sample each. This suggests that middle-aged adults are the most engaged or represented in the study. Meanwhile, those aged 45–54 also make up a significant portion at 25%, indicating a continuing presence of older working-age individuals. The representation drops noticeably in the 55 and above category, with only 5% each for the 55–64 and 65+ groups, and no respondents in the 18–24 category. This implies that the topic is more relevant to older age groups.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Respondent's Demographic Profile

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-24 years old	0	0%
25-34 years old	13	32.5%
35-44 years old	13	32.5%
45-54 years old	10	25%
55-64 years old	2	5%
65 above	2	5%
Educational Attainment		
Elementary Level	11	27.5%
Elementary Graduates	5	12.5%
High School Level	8	20%
High School Graduate	10	25%
College Level	5	12.5%
College Graduate	1	2.5%
Occupation		
Employed	2	5%
Hired Labor	2	5%

Self- Employed	4	10%
Unemployed	32	80%
<hr/>		
Shelter/Residence		
Barangay Batangan	40	100%
Other Barangay	0	0
<hr/>		
Toilet		
Yes	40	100%
No	0	0

The table shows that most respondents have not completed higher education. The largest portion, 27.5%, are at the elementary level, followed by high school graduates at 25%. A combined 40% of respondents are either currently in high school or have not completed it, suggesting that secondary education is the most common attainment level among participants. Only 12.5% reached the college level, and a mere 2.5% graduated from college, highlighting a low rate of tertiary education completion within the group. This distribution could reflect broader socio-economic or accessibility challenges in the community related to continuing education.

The occupational data shows a significant imbalance, with 80% of respondents identified as unemployed. This high unemployment rate may point to a lack of job opportunities, economic challenges, or barriers to employment such as limited education or training (Morre & Uy, 2025; Uy et al., 2023). Only 5% each are in formal employment or working as hired labor, while a small portion (10%) are self-employed, possibly indicating informal or small-scale entrepreneurial efforts. All 40 respondents, representing 100%, reside in Barangay Batangan, indicating that the study is focused exclusively on this community. Additionally, all respondents reported having access to a toilet, showing full coverage of basic sanitation facilities among the population surveyed. This suggests a level of infrastructure development in the area, at least in terms of shelter location and access to sanitation.

Table 2 highlights the community's needs concerning gender equality and human tolerance. The results reveal a considerable demand for programs in this area, with an overall mean score of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 1.048. According to the interpretation of the indicators, this mean suggests that the community is in clear need of initiatives that promote gender equality and foster human tolerance. These findings underscore the importance of implementing targeted interventions to address social inclusion and equality within the community. One participant answered when asked, "What are the programs or activity that you believe would most benefit your community in relation to Navigating Gender Equality and Human Tolerance?" the respondent said "*Seminar about gender equality that promotes open dialogues and discussion*".

The item “To have clear and enforceable policies on harassment and discrimination in ensuring respect and safety for all individuals” received a high mean score of 4.52, indicating it is highly needed within the community. This aligns with the sentiment of one respondent, who noted, “Without firm policies, people are left vulnerable clear rules are essential for everyone to feel safe and respected.” This finding is supported by international frameworks such as the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2019), which emphasizes that robust anti-discrimination policies are critical to promoting safe, inclusive, and equitable environments across all sectors.

Table 3. Community Needs in terms of Gender Equality and Human Tolerance

Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Interpretation
1. To have clear and enforceable policies on harassment and discrimination in ensuring respect and safety for all individuals. <i>(Mapatuman nga mga palisiya sa harasment ug diskriminasyon sa pagsiguro sa pagtahod ug kaluwasan sa tanang indibidwal).</i>	4.52	0.614	Highly Needed
2. Support and resources for individuals who experience discrimination or harassment based on gender or identity. <i>(Suporta ug mga kapanguhaan alang sa mga indibidwal nga nakasinati og diskriminasyon o harasment base sa gender o pagkatawo).</i>	4.24	0.847	Highly Needed
3. Increasing public awareness about gender equality and human tolerance in our barangay. <i>(Pagdugang sa kahibalo sa publiko bahin sa pagkaparehas sa gender ug pagtugot sa tawo sa among barangay).</i>	3.72	1.179	Needed
4. Implement comprehensive training programs on gender equality and human tolerance in our community or organization. <i>(Ipatuman ang komprehensibo nga mga programa sa pagbansay sa pagkaparehas sa gender ug</i>	3.42	1.553	Needed

<i>pagtugot sa tawo sa among komunidad o organisasyon).</i>			
Overall Mean	3.98	1.048	Needed

Table 3 highlights the community's strong recognition of the need to enhance human rights protections, as evidenced by the high mean scores across all indicators. The highest-rated indicator, with a mean of 4.42, emphasizes the necessity of fostering cooperation and commitment to upholding the rights of children, women, and men. One respondent shared, when asked, "What are the programs or activities that you believe would most benefit your community in relation to human rights?" the respondent said, "Conduct a seminar on anti-violence for women and their children."

Table 4. Community needs in terms of Human Rights

Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Interpretation
1. Enhance cooperation and commitment to upholding and protecting the rights of children, women and men in the community. <i>(Kooperasyon ug pasalig sa pagsuporta ug pagpanalipod sa katungod sa mga bata, kababainhan, og kalalakihan sa komunidad).</i>	4.42	0.906	Highly Needed
2. Establish and enforce comprehensive regulations that protect human rights, such as privacy and freedom of expression, in the digital space <i>(Pagtukod ug pagpatuman sa komprehensibo nga mga regulasyon nga nanalipod sa tawhanong katungod, sama sa pribasiya ug kagawasan sa pagpahayag, sa digital nga wanang).</i>	4.36	0.875	Highly Needed
3. Integration of human rights protections into the corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies and practices of organizations within the community. <i>(I-integrate ang mga proteksyon sa tawhanong katungod ngadto sa corporate social responsibility (CSR) nga mga polisiya ug gawi sa mga oraganisasyon sa koomunidad).</i>	4.34	0.917	Highly Needed
4. Incorporate an intersectional perspective in human rights advocacy to address the complex and overlapping forms of discrimination faced by individuals	4.08	0.922	Needed

with multiple marginalized identities.
(Ilakip ang intersectional perspective sa adbokasiya sa tawhanong katungod aron matubag ang komplikado ug nagsapaw-sapaw nga mga porma sa diskriminasyon nga giatubang sa mga indibidwal nga adunay daghang marginalized nga mga identidad).

Overall Mean	4.30	0.905	Highly Needed
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Table 4 indicates that there is a strong perceived need for community-based initiatives that integrate environmental awareness with disaster risk reduction strategies, as reflected in the overall mean of 4.42, categorized as *Highly Needed*. The highest-rated indicator, with a mean of 4.68 and the lowest standard deviation (0.551), emphasizes the importance of educating residents about the connections between environmental issues and disaster risks. This highlights a widely shared belief that community knowledge is foundational to resilience, in line with findings from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2022), which stresses that public education is a key pillar of effective disaster preparedness.

Table 5. Community needs in terms of Environmental Justice

Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Interpretation
1. Educate residents about the links between environmental issues and disaster risk reduction. <i>(Tudloi ang mga residente bahin sa mga kalambigitan tali sa mga isyu sa kinaiyahan ug pagkunhod sa peligro sa katalagman).</i>	4.68	.551	Highly Needed
2. Incorporate environmental management practices into local risk reduction strategies to enhance community resilience. <i>(Iapil ang mga pamaagi sa pagdumala sa kalikopan sa lokal nga mga estratehiya sa pagkunhod sa peligro aron mapalambo ang kalig-on sa komunidad).</i>	4.48	.735	Highly Needed
3. Develop and implement community-based programs that address both environmental sustainability and disaster risk management. <i>(Pagpalambo ug pagpatuman sa mga programa nga nakabase sa komunidad nga nagtubag sa pagpadayon sa kinaiyahan ug pagdumala sa peligro sa katalagman).</i>	4.42	.860	Highly Needed

4. Address environmental hazards as part of your community's disaster preparedness and risk reduction plans <i>(Tubagon ang mga peligro sa kalikopan isip kabahin sa pagpangandam sa kalamidad ug mga plano sa pagpamenos sa risgo sa imong komunidad).</i>	4.26	1.026	Highly Needed
5. Involve local stakeholders in planning and executing initiatives that combine environmental protection with risk reduction efforts. <i>(Iapil ang mga lokal nga hingtungdan sa pagplano ug pagpatuman sa mga inisyatibo nga naghiusa sa pagpanalipod sa kinaiyahan uban sa mga paningkamot sa pagpamenos sa risgo).</i>	4.24	.847	Highly Needed
Overall Mean	4.42	.804	Highly Needed

Table 5 reflects a strong consensus on the critical importance of community workshops focused on self-defense and basic life support (BLS), as shown by an overall mean of 4.39, categorized as *Highly Needed*. The highest-rated indicator, with a mean of 4.48 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.735, emphasizes the value of regularly conducting community workshops on both self-defense and basic life support to keep skills updated and accessible to all residents. This suggests a collective recognition of the need to equip community members with essential, life-saving knowledge. The second item, focused specifically on BLS training, further reinforces the perceived necessity of medical emergency preparedness at the grassroots level. This aligns with findings from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), which stresses the importance of first response capacity in improving community resilience and reducing preventable mortality during emergencies.

Table 6. Community needs in terms of Basic Life Support

Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Interpretation
1. Community workshops on self-defense and basic life support to keep skills current and accessible to all residents. <i>(Workshop sa komunidad bahin sa pagdependa sa kaugalingon ug batakang suporta sa kinabuhi aron mapadayon ang mga kahanas nga bag-o ug magamit sa tanan nga mga residente).</i>	4.48	.735	Highly Needed
2. Basic life support (BLS) training in community workshops to ensure that	4.40	.833	Highly Needed

residents can respond effectively to medical emergencies.

(Pagbansay sa batakang suporta sa kinabuhi (BLS) sa mga workshop sa komunidad aron masiguro nga ang mga residente epektibo nga makatubag sa mga emerhensya nga medical).

3.	Workshops on self-defense and basic life support to be tailored to address the specific needs and concerns of different age groups and demographics within the community. <i>(Workshop sa pagdepensa sa kaugalingon ug batakang suporta sa kinabuhi nga ipahiangay aron matubag ang piho nga mga panginahanglan ug mga kabalaka sa lainlaing mga grupo sa edad ug demograpiko sa sulod sa komunidad).</i>	4.34	.798	Highly Needed
4.	Workshops on self-defense to improve personal safety and empowerment in your community. <i>(Mga workshop sa pagdepensa sa kaugalingon aron mapalambo ang personal nga kaluwasan ug paghatag gahum sa imong komunidad).</i>	4.32	.913	Highly Needed
Overall Mean		4.39	.820	Highly Needed

The third indicator, calling for workshops that are tailored to the unique needs of different age groups and demographics, received a mean of 4.34, reflecting the community's awareness that a one-size-fits-all approach may be less effective. Tailoring content to specific groups increases the relevance, effectiveness, and inclusivity of training—principles supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2022), which encourages age-appropriate preparedness education. Lastly, the fourth item on conducting self-defense workshops to improve personal safety and empowerment garnered a mean of 4.32, indicating strong support for initiatives that foster not just physical safety but also psychological empowerment, especially among vulnerable populations. Overall, the consistently high ratings across all indicators point to a community-wide demand for accessible, inclusive, and practical training that strengthens both emergency response capacity and individual empowerment. These initiatives contribute significantly to building safer and more resilient communities, where residents are equipped to handle personal threats and public emergencies alike.

Table 6 presents the developed extension project, RIGHTS (Raising Initiatives for Gender and Human Tolerance and Safety). This program aims to

promote gender equality, human tolerance, and personal safety within the community. RIGHTS focuses on educating individuals about their rights, fostering respect for diversity, and equipping participants with the knowledge and tools to prevent and address gender-based violence. The program seeks to empower community members to create a more inclusive, respectful, and safe environment for all.

The implementation of Project RIGHTS (Raising Initiatives for Gender and Human Tolerance and Safety) in Barangay Batangan exemplifies a comprehensive, multi-year strategy aimed at fostering awareness, engagement, and resilience in areas such as gender equality, human rights, environmental justice, and community safety. By integrating targeted workshops, seminars, community mapping, safety training, and continuous monitoring, the initiative seeks to empower residents through education and active participation. The project's inclusive approach engaging barangay officials, residents, faculty, and students ensures a collaborative framework that is both sustainable and community-driven, a principle echoed in the work of Visco et al. (2022), who emphasized the role of academic institutions in grassroots community organizing in the Philippines.

Table 7. Extension Project Development Plan Project RIGHTS (Raising Initiatives for Gender and Human Tolerance and Safety)

Key Result Areas	Specific Objectives	Project Activities	Persons Responsible	Timetable (Year)
Navigating Gender Equality and Human Tolerance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise the level of awareness and attitudes of community members in toward gender equality and human tolerance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Equality and Tolerance Workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barangay Officials Community Leaders and Residents Extension Coordinator Faculty and Staff Students Volunteers 	2025-2028
Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the level of understanding and perception of towards human rights among residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Rights Awareness Seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barangay Officials Community Leaders and Residents Extension Coordinator Faculty and Staff 	2025-2028

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Volunteers 	
Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To train residents about practices that could help protect and preserve the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Environmental Mapping • Clean-Up Drive and Awareness Campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barangay Officials • Community Leaders and Residents • Extension Coordinator • Faculty and Staff • Students • Volunteers 	2025-2028
Self-defense and Basic Life Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To equip participants with essential self-defense techniques and basic life support (BLS) skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-defense and Basic Life Support workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barangay Officials • Community Leaders and Residents • Extension Coordinator • Faculty and Staff • Students • Volunteers 	2025-2028
Monitoring and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and assess the program's effectiveness and the impact on participants' knowledge in gender equality, human tolerance, and personal safety within 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct pre- and post-program surveys • Schedule follow-up visits to assess progress and provide additional guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barangay Officials • Community Leaders and Residents • Extension Coordinator • Faculty and Staff • Students • Volunteers 	2025-2028

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While early outcomes are anticipated to reflect enhanced knowledge and attitudes toward social justice issues, potential challenges include cultural resistance, inconsistent participation, and resource limitations barriers also noted by Batliwala (2007) in her study of women’s empowerment in South Asia. Furthermore, the environmental justice component of Project RIGHTS supports Taylor (2014) findings that marginalized populations, especially women, are often disproportionately affected by environmental issues and require targeted, inclusive policy responses. Finally, the emphasis on empowerment through education and advocacy is mirrored in Laro (2022) study of the AWE (Advocacy on Women’s Education and Empowerment) Project, which demonstrated that localized, community-based programs significantly enhance leadership and rights awareness among women.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The data reveal a clear and consistent demand across the community for initiatives that promote gender equality, human rights, environmental justice, and basic life support. High mean scores in all areas indicate that residents recognize the urgency of addressing discrimination, strengthening human rights protections, enhancing environmental awareness, and equipping themselves with life-saving skills. The findings suggest that the community values inclusive policies, targeted education, and active participation to create a safer, more equitable, and resilient environment for all. Respondents emphasized the need for practical, engaging programs such as seminars on gender equality and human rights, community-based environmental campaigns, and age-appropriate workshops on BLS and self-defense.

Given these findings, it is recommended that local leaders and stakeholders implement comprehensive, community-centered programs that integrate policy enforcement, education, and empowerment. Prioritizing anti-discrimination policies, digital rights protection, environmental education linked to disaster risk reduction, and accessible life support training can significantly uplift community well-being. Programs should be inclusive, participatory, and tailored to various groups within the community to maximize impact and sustainability. These initiatives will not only address immediate needs but also foster long-term resilience and unity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers extend their gratitude to the residents and local government unit of Barangay Batangan, Valencia City, Bukidnon for the approval to conduct the needs assessment. Also, the faculty, staff and students from the department for the effort in conducting surveys and in-depth interviews. To Philippine College Foundation through the Community Extension Services office which paved the way for the success of this study.

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