

Resilient on Economic Fluctuation through Alternative Livelihood and Good Governance Adaptability (R.E.A.L. Good): A Strategic Project for Community Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

This study implemented a two-month seminar-workshop aimed at enhancing the capacities of 45 local stakeholders, including barangay officials and members of women's and farmer associations. Guided by a multidisciplinary framework, the program addressed key domains such as leadership, financial management, environmental sustainability, policy formulation, tourism, digital literacy, business development and gender responsiveness. A notable innovation was the integration of Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Gender and Development (GAD) principles critical yet often underrepresented components in local governance training. Delivered by subject-matter experts using participatory and experiential approaches, the initiative promoted inclusive governance, ethical leadership, and mental health awareness. It significantly strengthened decision-making competencies and empowered local leaders as agents of resilience and sustainable development. The model offers a scalable and replicable approach to holistic, community-based governance capacity-building.

INTRODUCTION

Project REAL GOOD (Resilient on Economic Fluctuation through Alternative Livelihood and Good Governance Adaptability) was a strategic extension initiative developed by Southern Leyte State University-Maasin City Campus (SLSU-MCC). The project aimed to strengthen the capacities of the Women's Association, and Barangay Officials of Barangay Mabini, Macrohon, Southern Leyte in building resilience against economic disruptions caused by natural or human-induced disasters. Following a comprehensive need-based assessment, conducted through a self-constructed evaluation instrument and participatory community forum, the project was conceptualized to address the specific challenges and vulnerabilities identified in the locality.

REAL GOOD emphasized the importance of how rural communities, particularly women & farmer leaders and members, and local officials, perceive changes in their socio-economic environment and adjust their behaviors through social learning and application of acquired knowledge. The project promoted economic resiliency through the implementation of alternative livelihood strategies and the integration of good governance practices. Key components included entrepreneurial policy formulation, environmental conservation, mental and emotional well-being, disaster preparedness, and skills development.

This initiative was aligned with the vision, mission, goals and objectives of SLSU-MCC and was anchored in the university's extension service agenda. It directly contributed to the realization of key Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 5 (Gender Equality), by fostering a gender-responsive community, SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), by supporting food and livelihood security, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), through diverse livelihood and skills training; SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities), through adaptation and implementation of sustainable tourism; SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and Production), through climate adaptation and sustainable practices; and SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals). Experts from SLSU-MCC, alongside professionals from other university campuses, collaborated to deliver targeted training and capacity-building activities. The project also ensures the active participation of students and community stakeholders in planning and implementation. A continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanism was employed to ensure responsiveness, re-planning facilities, and support the sustainability and impact of the initiative.

The primary objective of the Project REAL GOOD is to build the leadership capacity of barangay officials, comprising 8 females and 16 males, along with 19 members of the local women's association and 2 farmer leaders. By equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values, the project aims to enhance their effectiveness in fulfilling their respective roles and responsibilities within the community. In addition, the initiative seeks to foster economic resilience among these stakeholders by introducing the supporting alternative and diversified livelihood programs. These programs are designed not only to provide sustainable income sources but also to promote self-reliance and adaptability amidst socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, the capacity-building interventions are intended to empower both barangay officials and

members of the women's association with the tools needed to engage in participatory governance and inclusive development efforts, thereby contributing to the overall well-being and progress of their communities.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The implementation of the project REAL GOOD utilized a variety of materials and resources to support its training sessions and community-based activities. Instructional materials such as training modules, printed handouts, and information-education-communication (IEC) materials were developed and distributed to guide participants through each session. Multimedia tools, including laptops, projectors, and audio systems, were used to facilitate engaging presentations and interactive discussions. Office supplies such as pens, paper, folders, and flipcharts supported workshop logistics and participants' documentation. Equipment necessary for digital and entrepreneurial skills development, such as internet-enabled devices and cameras, was also utilized. Additionally, materials were prepared for livelihood training activities, which included business plan and business proposal templates, sample marketing tools, and design guides for creating Facebook and tourism-related web pages. These resources were carefully selected and developed to enhance the learning experiences of the participants and ensure practical application of the concepts introduced throughout the project.

The extension project REAL GOOD adopted a participatory and experiential learning methodology (Kolb, 2019), aimed at empowering barangay officials, selected members of the women and farmers association through inclusive planning, capacity-building, and local economic development initiatives. The project combined training sessions, workshops, mentoring, and hands-on applications to strengthen governance adaptability and diversity livelihood strategies in response to economic challenges.

The 45 respondents of the project were selected using a combination of complete enumeration and purposive sampling. 24 (appointed & elected) barangay officials of Barangay Mabini were included through complete enumeration, recognizing their vital role in local leadership and governance. Meanwhile, purposive sampling was applied to select 19 members of Women and 2 from the Farmers Association.

The project was implemented in Barangay Mabini, Macrohon, Southern Leyte, a locality characterized by its rural communities, reliance on agriculture, emerging tourism potential, and active community-based organizations. The selected barangays within the municipality were chosen based on their economic vulnerability, governance challenges, and expressed interest in capacity-building support. The local context played a crucial role in shaping the project content and ensured that interventions were locally appropriate, relevant, and sustainable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The seminar workshops were conducted for the participants across seven activities, including impact analysis through focused discussions. The seminar lasted for two months, with each session addressing a major learning area. The delivery of content varied among presenters and depended on the nature of each learning area. However, it was ensured that resource persons prepared informative IEC materials.

Leadership and Decision Making

This played a crucial role in the development and transformation of the community. According to Northouse (2021), effective leadership within the barangay was essential as it influenced the welfare of its constituents, promoted peace and order, supported the implementation of laws, and aligned with national agendas. The first topic, "Importance of leadership Training" equipped barangay officials with the necessary skills to govern effectively. It helped them understand their roles and responsibilities. The second topic, "Types of Leadership Style" (Chong, et al, 2019; Liden, et al, 2019, Collin, et al, 2020, Grashow, et al, 2019) helped officials understand their own leadership approach and preferences, communication methods, and how to adapt to different situations, challenges, or team dynamics. The third topic, "Code of Conduct in the Organization," requires officials to conduct themselves with integrity, honesty, and transparency, fostering trust among community members and promoting ethical behavior in governance. By following the established guidelines, officials mitigated legal risk, avoided conflicts of interest, and upheld the rule of law. The fourth topic, "Importance of the Organizational Structure," helped the officials understand their specific roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships within the barangay. Lastly, the fifth topic, "The Conflict of Management," emphasized how proactively managing conflicts allowed officials to prevent tensions from escalating and to mitigate the negative impact on the community.

Financial Management

The training ensured that the resources available to barangay were allocated efficiently and in line with community needs. The first topic, "Basic Accounting Laws and Rules in Government Expenditure" ensured financial accountability within the barangay. By following established guidelines, barangay officials tracked expenditures accurately, maintained transparent financial records, and remained accountable for the management of public funds. The second topic, "PD 1445 Government Auditing" emphasized that barangay officials needed to be knowledgeable about the Government Auditing Code of the Philippines, for reasons such as legal compliance, accountability, financial integrity, fraud prevention, efficient resource management, enhanced governance, and legal responsibility. The third topic, "Steps in Budget Proposal", helped officials allocate resources efficiently and prioritize funding for essential programs, projects, and services within the barangay.



Figure 1. Documentation Seminar-Workshop

Seminar-Workshop on Strategic Local Government Policy-making Process Towards Good Local Governance

The “Seminar-Workshop on Strategic Local Government Policy-making Process Towards Good Local Governance” aimed to equip local legislators or barangay officials and leaders with the essential knowledge and skills to effectively fulfill their primary role in creating strategic policies that drive their locality toward sustainable development. Participants delved into the complexities of the policy-making process, gaining a deep understanding of the various stages involved, from identifying local needs to drafting, evaluating, and implementing policies. The workshop bridged the gap between national and local policies, allowing participants to align their local initiatives with broader governmental objectives. By the end of the seminar, barangay officials and leaders were prepared to craft informed, strategic, and impactful policies that promote good governance and improve the quality of life within their communities. (RA.No. 11292, Medina-Guce, C., & Sanders, R. Jr. ,(2024,Dizon, et al, (2019).

Revisiting Environmental Management Policies and Practices: A Seminar Workshop

The seminar-workshop provided barangay officials and leaders with essential knowledge and skill to implement and enforce environmental laws and ordinances effectively. By focusing on the Environmental Awareness and Education Act, Climate Change Act, Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, and the Revisiting of Local Ordinance, the workshop aimed to strengthen environmental governance at the grassroots level. This comprehensive approach not only enhances environmental protection but also promoted community resilience, sustainable development, and a more informed and active citizenry in environmental conservation efforts. (RA No 9512, RA No. 9729, RA No. 9003).



Figure 2. Dokumentation A Seminar Workshop

Tourism Towards Economic Development

The seminar provided the participants with a thorough understanding of sustainable tourism, encompassing its environmental, social, and economic aspects, while emphasizing responsible tourism development. It also equipped participants with the skills and knowledge needed to create and sustain livelihood opportunities within the tourism industry. Additionally, the seminar encouraged the exchange of ideas, best practices, and the formation of partnerships, and it enhanced participants' marketing and promotion skills to effectively promote sustainable tourism products and services.



Figure 3. Documentation of Seminar Participants

Formulation of Business Proposal and Facebook Web Page

The seminar-workshop equipped the participants with practical skills in web page, Instagram, and Facebook page creation, and they built a strong understanding of how to formulate compelling business or project proposals. These competencies empowered them to establish a robust online presence, engage effectively with their target audience, and present a well-structured proposal that can attract funding or support for their initiatives.

Social Development

Respondents were well-prepared to address gender-related issues and provided immediate psychological support in their communities. They possessed the knowledge and skills necessary to advocate for gender equality, integrate Gender and Development (GAD) principles into various aspects of their work, and offer compassionate and effective Psychological First Aid to those in need.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The seminar workshops provided a holistic and transformative learning experience for barangay officials and community leaders, enhancing their competencies in key areas essential to good governance and sustainable development. Through a series of targeted sessions covering leadership and decision-making, financial management, strategic policymaking, environmental governance, tourism development, business proposal formulation, and social development, participants acquired both theoretical foundations and practical tools to improve their performance and community impact. The leadership training enabled participants to recognize their governance roles, adopt appropriate leadership styles, and uphold ethical standards, thereby fostering transparency and trust within the barangay. Financial management sessions emphasized accountability, legal compliance, and resource optimization in public expenditures. Strategic local governance training bridged the policy gap between national and local levels, equipping officials with skills to formulate responsive and sustainable policies.

Environmental management workshops highlighted the importance of compliance with national environmental laws while revisiting local ordinances, promoting grassroots-level resilience. The tourism and entrepreneurship components empowered participants to explore economic opportunities through sustainable tourism and digital entrepreneurship. Finally, the social development module prepared the attendees to address gender-related concerns and administer Psychological First Aid, promoting inclusive and compassionate community support systems. The high level of engagement and active participation in these seminars affirm the relevance and effectiveness of the interventions. These capacity-building efforts serve as a strong foundation for continued development, proactive governance, and strategic leadership at the barangay level.

Based on the results of the seminar-workshops conducted across various thematic areas, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the capacity and performance of barangay officials and community:

1. **Sustain Leadership and Governance Capacity-Building Programs**
Regular training on leadership styles, ethical governance, organizational structure, and conflict management should be institutionalized to continuously equip barangay officials with the skills needed for effective governance and responsive public service delivery.
2. **Enhance Financial Management Literacy**
Barangay officials should undergo periodic refresher courses on basic accounting laws, government auditing procedures (PD 1445), and budget preparation to ensure transparency, accountability, and sound financial practices in barangay governance.
3. **Institutionalize strategic Policy-Making Workshops**
To align local governance with national development plans, barangay leaders must be encouraged to participate in workshops that guide them in crafting evidence-based and strategic policies responsive to local needs and sustainable development goals.
4. **Strengthen Environmental Governance Initiatives**
Barangays should revisit, update, and enforce local environment ordinances in accordance with national laws such as the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and the Climate Change Act. Capacity-building programs focused on environmental awareness and compliance monitoring should be conducted regularly.
5. **Promote Sustainable Tourism for Local Economic Development**
Training programs on sustainable tourism development, marketing strategies, and partnership-building should be offered to empower barangays to develop tourism-based livelihoods while preserving cultural and environmental assets.

6. Encourage Digital Literacy and Entrepreneurship
Continued training in digital entrepreneurship, including social media marketing, webpage development, and business proposal writing, is recommended to help communities leverage technology for economic empowerment and innovation.
7. Mainstream Gender and Development (GAD) and Psychological First Aid (PFA)
A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism should be developed to assess the effectiveness of the seminars and workshops, ensuring that learning is translated into improved governance practices at the barangay level.

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