

Environmental Capacity and Decentralized Governance in the Philippines

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Introduction

Over the last decade, a number of countries in Asia including the Philippines made significant strides in decentralization. The passage of the Local Government Code in 1991 provided the enabling policy environment for the transfer of key environmental responsibilities to sub-national units in the Philippines. Among the functions given to local government units (LGUs) include the enforcement of environmental laws and the implementation of resource management programs.

In the past, local environmental activities were undertaken without LGU support. The literature indicates that local communities are capable of managing natural resources in a sustainable manner (Berkes 1989; Ostrom 1990; Baland and Platteau 1996). Nevertheless, the exclusive focus on self-managing communities tends to overlook the potential benefits from cooperation between local governments and communities in environmental governance.

The pursuit of decentralization can yield positive gains but will require an assessment of capacity gaps given the altered roles and authority structures at the local level. In this regard, it is important to evaluate the social capacity of key stakeholders and their interactions. The factors of social capacity would involve three main areas: (1) policy mechanisms, (2) human and organizational resources, and (3) knowledge and technology systems (Matsuoka, et al. 2005).

The Philippines is an adequate place to test the prospects of democratic governance through decentralization because of its advanced statutory provisions in this field. The Local Government Code of 1991

offers broad possibilities for strengthening community governance through the institutionalization of civil society participation. The role of local government units (LGUs) has been altered from that of a traditional bureaucratic authority to a community-oriented enabler (Legaspi 2001). For instance, the Code mandates the constitution of participatory mechanisms, such as local development councils, local health boards, local school boards, and local peace and order councils. With their engagement in participatory local governance (PLG), citizens can exercise claim-making rights to community resources through access to participation in policy-making, development planning, budget allocation, and program monitoring and implementation.

Many individual local governments especially in developing countries lack the human and physical resources to be effective governors by themselves. The degree of connectivity between the actors in a municipal governance system helps explain why some systems may be more effective than others. More communication between the core municipal actors is associated with better governance outcomes. Participatory governance relies on fluid communications not just for acquiring information about local conditions but also for developing trusting relationships between actors (Andersson 2004).

Previous studies indicate that institutions matter for development (Williamson 2000; Pande and Udry 2005). In low-income countries, more capacity is needed to generate credible strategies, policies and programs to transform higher aid levels into positive development outcomes. The transparency and efficiency of budget systems, patterns of public expenditure, the degree of decentralization of resources and responsibilities, and mechanisms to define policy priorities and accountability systems to make governments answerable are but a few examples of institutional and policy factors that can determine a country's performance in generating positive policy outcomes. In many countries, such systems may not be adequate to absorb large increases in available resources without increasing wastage or fueling leakage and corruption. A deeper understanding of the political economy factors driving countries' development strategy choices, including the incentives created by domestic politics and by the aid relationship, could help shed light on the shortcomings of current donor interventions, and identify better entry points for assisting in the nurturing of development-oriented states (De Renzio 2005).

The shift to decentralization in many developing countries creates opportunities for reform but do not guarantee improved participation or better public services. The democratic logic holds that local governments are expected to be more responsive to community needs since they have more access to local information and can be subject to local accountability pressures. However, when participatory institutions are weak, the move to devolve power to sub-national authorities may support rather than erode the political base of local oligarchs. In this regard, local governments become vulnerable to capture by local elites who can maneuver to receive a disproportionate share of spending on public goods (Bardhan 2002).

Fostering democratic governance is required to steer decentralization into an enabling tool for social inclusion and prevent it from being an elite-driven process. Earlier efforts at decentralization were mainly initiatives in public administration. Locating decentralization within the context of democratic governance serves to underline a process of devolving authority to local units of governance that are accessible and accountable to citizens who enjoy full political rights (Blair 2000).

The empowerment and democratization of local administrative bodies seems to be the first step in promoting participation in decision-making particularly among groups that are traditionally marginalized by local

political processes (Johnson 2001). The introduction of laws on participation provides an enabling condition for citizen engagement. Nevertheless, local democracy comes to life when participatory strategies are pursued through the synergistic actions of citizens and governments.

In democratic governance, the government plays a crucial role by providing leadership, resources, tools and rules. On the other hand, citizens are considered not simply as voters, volunteers and consumers; they are seen as problem solvers and co-producers of public goods (Boyte 2005). This active notion of citizenship links to rights-based approaches since it helps to establish participation as a political right that can be claimed by excluded sections of society. Participation is located within the formation of a social contract between citizens and government in particular political communities (Hickey and Mohan 2005).

However, only a minority of LGUs is actively complying with the law. Indeed, it was observed that participation in local governance may have reached a plateau considering that these local special bodies have not been convening regularly (Brillantes 1999). The poor record on local participation can be attributed precisely to the dominant perspective that sees decentralization as an administrative measure rather than a tool for democratic governance. In this view, citizens and civil society are at best observers looking from the outside instead of being recognized as legitimate participants inside the halls of decision-making.

There is a need to reframe the discourse from decentralized administration to decentralized governance. In this regard, the appropriate unit of analysis would be the local governance system rather than the local government. Despite its limited scope, democratic governance is taking root in a few but growing number of local governance systems. Experiments are being made to use decentralization and participatory tools in fostering democratic governance to enhance development outcomes.

Recent debates about governance, poverty and environmental sustainability have emphasized a rights-based approach in which equitable development is strongly associated with individual and communal rights (Pradnja 2004). The ability to claim and benefit from community rights was highly dependent on the influence that communities could bring to bear on the political system, and on other actors who would challenge or undermine this influence. The ability to demand and obtain information about government performance, and the rights to which one is entitled, can have far reaching effects on local empowerment and government accountability (Johnson and Forsyth 2002).

This paper will consider how capacity building in local participation affects democratic governance and how these interventions contribute to effective environmental management. The key cases to be examined involve the synergistic cooperation of local governments and citizens as well as the application of PLG tools, including barangay (village) development planning through participatory rural appraisal (BDP-PRA), participatory resource tenure, and multi-stakeholder resource governance boards, to improve environmental management.

Barangay Governance

As the most basic political unit in the country, the barangay is a key arena of democratic engagement. The introduction of participatory governance at the barangay level helps to challenge a traditional political culture of dependence on political officials, and consolidates a culture and practice of democracy. For citizens, it

concretizes the gains that can be achieved through a participatory and democratic ethic, in terms of actual improvements in the quality of life that can be observed, measured and sustained within the community. In short, participatory processes of local governance are perceived to lead to concrete impacts in enhancing democratic processes and improving development outcomes.

However, establishing participatory mechanisms in local governance requires a change in perspective from one that is leader-focused and town-centered, to one that recognizes the contributions of multiple stakeholders at the community level. Likewise, it requires developing and strengthening the capabilities of both citizens and community leaders. Training efforts therefore become crucial in exposing citizens to the potential gains of participatory governance, establishing effective and appropriate participatory structures and processes, articulating and consolidating different views and perspectives, and managing local projects and activities within a participatory framework.

The powers and functions of the barangay are articulated in the Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991 or Republic Act 7160. Although recognized as the basic unit of government since the time of colonization, it was not until 1991 that barangays enjoyed more than administrative powers in governing their respective territories. The Local Government Code recognizes the barangay as the basic political unit that will handle project planning and implementation and raise funds for such purposes. This fiscal autonomy of the barangays after the passage of the LGC distinguishes it from previous decentralization efforts. The Local Government Code likewise recognized the importance of non-government organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs) as important stakeholders in barangay governance.

Participatory mechanisms in the barangay have been institutionalized through the requirement for NGO and PO participation in various development and monitoring bodies. Among these is the Barangay Development Council (BDC), which is required to have not less than 4 NGO-PO representatives. The Pre-qualification, Bids, and Awards Committee shall have 2 NGO representatives from the BDC. Other bodies include the local school board (which require representation from the Sangguniang Kabataan, the parent-teacher association (PTA), and academic organizations), the local health board, and the local peace and order council.

Granting the people the power of recall and the power of initiative and referendum also institutionalizes people empowerment. The power of recall provides that a petition by 25 percent of registered voters declaring their loss of confidence on a particular official is enough to begin the process of removing the elected official from office. The mechanism for initiative and referendum on the other hand offers the residents the power to petition the amendment or rejection of a certain ordinance, and propose barangay resolutions.

It is likewise mandatory for the government and any other institution to consult the barangay, NGOs and POs before undertaking any project affecting the barangay, indigenous community and local residents. This participation is extended to cover direct involvement at all stages of project planning and implementation if it poses harm to the environment and the livelihood of the people. Examples of legislation that require people's participation are the Indigenous People's Rights Act, the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act, and the National Integrated Protected Areas Act, among others.

There are about 42,000 barangays spread across the Philippine archipelago, and continue to increase as the process of decentralization continues. The barangay serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of

government policies, plans, programs, projects and activities in the community. It also serves as a venue for the expression, gathering and articulation of the views of its residents and has the authority to resolve conflicts through the barangay justice system. It is composed of an elected barangay chairperson/captain and seven elected councilors or “kagawads” which comprise the barangay council, an appointed treasurer and secretary, and an elected Sangguniang Kabataan Chairperson that sits as the eighth member of the barangay council. Seven other young members of the community are elected as councilors in a separate but parallel Sangguniang Kabataan. The barangay chairperson and kagawads serve for six years and can be elected only for three consecutive terms.

Like other local government units, the barangay has a corporate nature whereby it can sue and be sued, maintain a corporate name, and enter into contracts with both public and private entities like other corporations. To support its operations, the barangays receive 20 percent of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) from national taxes, 50 percent of the collected community tax, and 30 percent of real property taxes, which are distributed among the barangays. Aside from these traditional sources of barangay funds, it also has the power to raise taxes and fees on its residents and businesses, enter into contracts, and receive development aid from both local and foreign sources. This fiscal autonomy is a marked improvement from previous decentralization efforts. Historically the formation of the barangay (or barrios during the pre-martial law period) served to establish state control over its territories by giving local government units administrative powers but not fiscal autonomy. The heavy reliance on the central government’s funds for development projects placed the barangay in a patrimonial type of relationship with the central state.

Barangay-Bayan Capacity Building Program

In 1996, the Barangay Training and Management (Batman) Project was undertaken by a consortium of non-government organizations (NGOs) called the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium (BBGC). The consortium developed a Barangay Administration Manual that serves as a guide for the NGOs to undertake participatory local governance projects in the barangay. It was first published as a book in 1998, with versions both in English and Filipino. At present the consortium has divided into two groups: the BBGC and the Local Governance Citizens Network (LGC-Net).

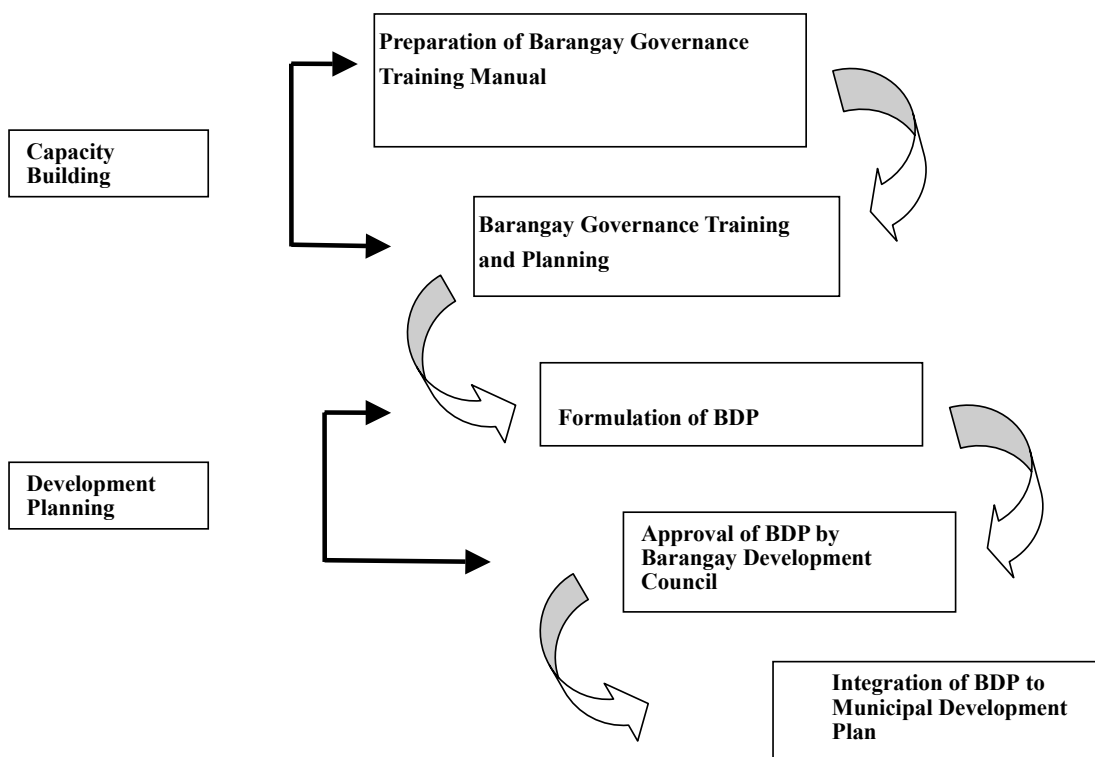
The development of the manual and the subsequent trainers’ training for the NGO members of the consortium that will undertake the participatory local governance interventions was conducted in 1998. It should be noted that many of these NGOs have historically been involved in barangay governance. However, the formation of the consortium served to unify these NGOs in using a common framework for conducting barangay governance training on pilot barangays in their respective localities. This comprised the first stage of the intervention: the conduct of a barangay governance training that will serve to educate the community leaders, POs, barangay officials and planners on barangay governance and participatory local governance processes.

The next stage focused on the application of the skills and knowledge gained from the training to formulate the Barangay Development Plan (BDP). This was undertaken by the barangay officials and POs with the assistance of the NGO. It is during this stage that consultative meetings and forums with various sectors of the barangay are conducted to gather inputs for the BDP. The general tool utilized for this purpose is the participatory rapid appraisal (PRA), supplemented by other mechanisms like the community-based information system (CBIS), economic mapping, and others. Afterwards, a general assembly will be convened where the BDP

can be further discussed and ratified. This often overlaps with the third part of the intervention where the BDP will be approved by the BDC and legislated by the barangay council.

There are four levels of intervention identified by the BBGC, and illustrated in Figure 1. These are: (1) Conduct of a Basic Orientation on Barangay Governance (BOBG) or its equivalent; (2) Creation of a packaged Barangay Development Plan (BDP); (3) Approval and legislation of the BDP by the Barangay Development Council (BDC); and (4) Integration of the BDP to the Municipal Development Plan (MDP).

Figure 1. Participatory Local Governance Cycle



* This flowchart was constructed to depict the capacity-building process pursued by the Barangay-Bayan Consortium (see Villarin, Castillo, Perpetua, and Chavez. 2002).

Cases

Participatory Coastal Resource Management in Governor Generoso, Davao Oriental

Governor Generoso is a 4th class municipality located in the eastern tip of Davao Gulf. It has an area of around 30,000 hectares and around 90,000 hectares of municipal waters. Of the 20 barangays constituting the town, 14 are coastal villages. Fishing is a major source of livelihood for its 45,000 residents. A major problem facing the town is resource depletion reflected in the decline of forest and fish resources.

A review of the 47 community-based coastal resource management programs in the country from 1984 to 1994 shows a very low success rate. This can be attributed to early problems of how to implement these programs, limited local government support and misunderstanding about program and project objectives and strategies on the part of beneficiaries. Community members may not take responsibility for resource management if it is not clear how they can benefit and be effective in their roles as managers (Pomeroy and Carlos 1997).

The participatory coastal resource management program in Governor Generoso is anchored on active people's participation through the BDP-PRA. All twenty barangays conducted their respective BDP-PRA. This resulted in the mobilization of barangay-level POs for the payaw fishing method. The payaw system utilizes a double-layer bamboo raft built and deployed at several layers of boundaries within municipal waters to be used by the marginal fisherfolks' hook and line fishing, gill netting and other types of non-destructive fishing gear (Villarin 2005).

In the early 1990s rampant illegal logging led to increased social mobilization to arrest the threat of environmental degradation. A civil society coalition called Barug Governor Generoso, consisting of organizations of the church, farmers, women, and fishers was formed. In 1998, the church-NGO-PO alliance participated but lost in the local elections. In 2001, a more consolidated alliance successfully elected a mayor whose platform of governance focused on coastal resource management.

PLG enabled the pursuit of development and environmental reforms. The barangay development councils were organized with active PO-NGO participation. The barangay FARMCs were organized by paralegals for bantay-dagat activities. Marine sanctuaries were identified. Barangay level POs were networked and federated at the municipal level. There was an active interface of NGOs and POs in municipal and barangay level governance.

Marine resources are being regenerated. Fish catch has increased. Small fishers have increased access and exclusive use of municipal waters. Residents have access to fresh, cheap supply of fish. There has been a drastic reduction in commercial fishing operations in municipal waters. Coastal residents have become highly conscious of sustainable fishing techniques and practices.

An enabling factor is the presence of a social reform base through the POs and the barangays. There is active NGO-PO participation in local governance. There is external support from networks and political alliances. Community-based organizing work was undertaken. The strong partnership between the LGU and civil society was an enabling factor. Municipal level participatory resource mobilization also generated 47 million pesos worth

of pledges.

A limiting factor is the inadequate municipal resources to sustain the reform program. Increased household income has not been fully established. There is also a need for a strong information and knowledge base to monitor the progress of reforms. However, social reforms have antagonized traditional political and economic elites such as the big commercial fishing operators, middlemen in fish trading, and loggers. Consequently, the local elite opposition poured money in trying to wrest control of municipal power.

Participatory Governance and Rural Empowerment Support in Palawan and Northern Samar

The key problem addressed by the Programme on Governance and Rural Empowerment Support Services (PROGRESS) of Helvetas Philippines Swiss Association for International Cooperation. This development assistance revolves around the environmental threats to sources of livelihood arising from destructive and illegal methods of resource acquisition. Livelihood is seen as the best way to mobilize communities to protect the environment. PROGRESS funds projects that encourage collaboration between civil society groups and LGUs towards the promotion of participatory and good governance focusing on natural resource management and delivery of basic social services in the provinces of Northern Samar and Palawan. Through these joint projects, civil society and government are given the opportunity to explore areas of collaboration of cooperation and realize common development projects which encourage mutual trust and set up structures for joint planning, management and implementation.

For the program period covering 2002 to 2006, project proposals were accepted from LGUs and CSOs that undertake project partnerships in natural resource management, livelihood, basic health, agricultural development, and water and sanitation. The proposed projects were collectively conceived, planned, and implemented by LGUs and CSOs. The project should be completed within a year and should not cost more than one million pesos with a 20 to 30 percent counterpart fund from LGUs. Projects conceived through the BDP-PRA process were given top priority.

There is a Pre-Selection and Monitoring Board that selects and approves the projects. The Board is composed of representatives from the provincial chapters of the League of Municipalities and League of Barangays, provincial planning and development officer, local CSO networks and the Institute of Politics and Governance. The major consideration for project approval is the presence of community organizing initiatives.

The intervention resulted in the activation of the FARMC and the establishment of a Bantay-Dagat program. Through the resource management projects, artificial reefs were installed. Areas have been designated for marine sanctuary. Dynamite fishing was eliminated and other forms of illegal fishing were drastically reduced. Instead of these destructive systems, traditional fishing methods have been revived such as the payaw. New aquaculture techniques have also been introduced. As a result, a rise in fish catch occurred. Offshore livelihood activities were supported through grants and soft loans.

Among the limiting factors is the lack of tradition of cooperation between LGUs and civil society in implementing resource management. Most civil society groups are reliant on donor funding and most LGUs have barely sufficient funds generated locally and from their share of national revenue, to support natural resource

management programs. However, new opportunities are emerging with the institution of participatory governance offered by local autonomy and decentralization policies.

As part of the partnership effort, the LGU and civil society organization prepares a memorandum of agreement that creates a trust fund. The amount of the LGU counterpart is specified in the agreement, including the fund releases from the LGU and Helvetas. The funds are released only with the joint approval and signatures of the LGU and civil society representative who are members of the local Project Management Committee.

The LGU-civil society partnership is sustained through the maintenance of functional municipal and barangay development councils and other participatory mechanisms. Replication can be pursued through the adoption of the PROGRESS project selection and funding mechanism by provinces and municipalities in the utilization of the 20 percent development funds of the LGU.

Key PLG Interventions

The BATMAN trainers' training for a core group of facilitators and municipal technical working group for BDP-PRA was undertaken. Basic orientation training on barangay governance for partner barangays and municipal-based facilitators were conducted. Other seminars include paralegal formation. After the 2001 elections, a new local government in Governor Generoso led by Mayor Jerry de la Cerna partnered with NGOs in a community organizing program that set up fishing cooperatives in each barangay. The mayor initiated a livelihood program in coordination with the Fisheries Resources Management Council (FARMC), NGOs and fishers' organizations.

A series of barangay development planning sessions was held through the conduct of BDP-PRA training sessions in partnership with NGOs like the People's Alternative Development Center (PADC) and the Sustainable Integrated Area Development Initiatives in Mindanao-Convergence for Asset Reform and Regional Development (SIMCARRD). Regarded as the secretariat of the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium in Mindanao, SIMCARRD started work in the town in late 2003. Its local partner is PADC (Villarin 2005).

These participatory planning mechanisms highlight the importance of involving people at the earliest stage. The first step for government reformers looking to construct co-governance for accountability should be to trust and actively involve societal actors from the very beginning of the process. The earlier societal actors are involved in the design process the more effective participatory measures tend to be. There are three different levels at which participatory mechanisms can be institutionalized. First, participatory mechanisms can be built into the strategic plans of government agencies. Second, new agencies can be created whose goal is to assure societal participation in government activities. Third, participatory mechanisms can be inscribed in law (Ackerman 2004).

The new governance involves not simply tools but also practices and processes for citizens to participate in the work of government. Public managers ought to facilitate greater citizen engagement in government. New governance processes require analogous skills from public administrators, including convening, conflict assessment, negotiation, active listening and reframing, facilitation and consensus building (Bingham, Nabatchi and O'Leary 2005).

In the PROGRESS approach, every project is pursued through the application of participatory tools such as the BDP-PRA and participatory project monitoring and evaluation (PPME). Each project is managed and implemented by a Project Management Committee (PMC) composed of representatives from the municipal and barangay governments as well as NGOs and people's organizations. The project should be completed within a year and should not cost more than one million pesos with a 20 to 30 percent counterpart fund from LGUs. Projects conceived through the BDP-PRA process are given top priority.

Participation focused on the social expenditure side of the budget may neglect the revenue side. This might miss opportunities to strengthen the sustainability of pro-poor spending as well as accountability. Citizens who understand the link between revenue generation and spending can better hold their governments to account (Bräutigam 2004).

The partnership between LGUs and civil society reflect the importance of synergy in governance. Synergy usually consists of a combination of complementarity and embeddedness. Active citizens are hamstrung unless their governments supply them with inputs that they cannot produce on their own. These range from lumpy tangible products such as dams to essential intangibles such as the rule of law. Citizens contribute local knowledge and experience that would be prohibitively costly for outsiders to acquire. Most examples of synergy involve concrete ties connecting state and society that make it possible to exploit complementarities. People working in public agencies are closely embedded in the communities they work with, creating social capital that spans the public-private divide (Evans 1996).

Scholars and practitioners need to guard against the view that synergies naturally emerge just because rural poverty reduction and renewable natural resources conservation are each appealing goals with common drivers and some intrinsic inter-linkage. The ability to achieve synergistic outcomes depends in large measure on the institutional arrangements that shape the incentives and constraints faced by human agents in rural areas (Barrett, Lee and McPeak 2005).

The installation of participatory project monitoring and evaluation (PPME) mechanisms is a key PLG activity. The PMC submits regular reports to Helvetas and the Program Steering and Monitoring Board (PSMB). On the other hand, PSMB periodically conducts monitoring visits and assessment. Participatory resource appraisal and rapid biophysical surveys are also done by the community with the help of technical advisors. The information gathered serve as inputs in barangay development planning.

Fostering Democratic Governance

Accountability is promoted through participatory project monitoring and evaluation systems. The development of genuine forms of accountability and participation at the local level is a challenge to power structures that can easily snuff them out if they remain isolated. As recent studies of the democratization process have shown, democratization, perhaps especially at the local level, is unlikely to succeed where the institutions of social and economic domination substantially overlap with or correspond to those of the power structure or political institutions (Crook and Manor 1998).

In general it is necessary to distinguish between different institutional modalities of accountability – through the

legal process, through internal administrative investigation and audit, through the interplay of plural institutions, through electoral sanctions, through independent mass media, through international scrutiny, through the monitoring of policy networks, through the activities of civil society, and through feedback from liberalized markets. Each may require its own institutional design (Whitehead 2002).

People participate if taught to believe it matters, if helped to acquire verbal and other skills of citizenship, if indoctrinated with aspirations and expectations that stimulate rather than paralyze, and if taught to see themselves as members of the political community. Inequalities of information, education, and socialization converge. People differ greatly in their personal capacities to understand politics, in their belief that they can influence it, and in their effectiveness at it (Lindblom and Woodhouse 1993).

There are political processes that determine, guarantee, and contest people's entitlements. Sustainable poverty reduction has to do with the way in which people are represented in these processes. Anti-poverty interventions are a political process in their own right, which must simultaneously build upon existing social arrangements and call them into question. Local political arrangements are central to the reduction and reproduction of poverty (Bastiaensen, De Herdt and D'Exelle 2005).

The task of evaluation is not simply to identify and measure the effects of a policy or program and assess whether it has achieved its objectives and intended effects but rather to seek to understand how the effects have been produced and how well the program has worked in relation to both its intended beneficiaries and its broader socio-economic impact. Evaluation of policies and programs to address social exclusion are designed and executed with a clear understanding of the political context and implications (Sanderson 2001).

The effectiveness of local resource management relies heavily on the kind of civil society existing in specific communities. Local communities with dense networks of voluntary organizations, high levels of trust, and strong social cohesiveness have better social preparation in mobilizing people to undertake forest protection compared to communities with weak civil society formations (Magno 2001).

The rule of law in Governor Generoso was facilitated by the barangay FARMCs that were organized by paralegals for Bantay-Dagat activities. Effective public management is pursued. The PROGRESS approach not only promotes LGU-CSO partnership but also ensures that collaboration is based on programmatic and rational decision making rather than patronage politics. Community governance relies on dispersed private information often unavailable to states, employers, banks, and other large formal organizations to apply rewards and punishments to members according to their conformity with or deviation from social norms.

An effective community monitors the behavior of its members, rendering them accountable for their actions. In contrast with states and markets, communities more effectively foster and utilize the incentives that people have traditionally deployed to regulate their common activity: trust, solidarity, reciprocity, reputation, personal pride, respect, vengeance and retribution among others. Communities overcome free-rider problems by its members directly punishing anti-social actions of others. Monitoring and punishment by peers in work teams, credit associations, partnerships, and residential neighborhoods is often an effective means of attenuating incentive problems that arise where individual actions are not subject to enforceable contracts (Bowles and Gintis 2002).

There has been the utilization of a participatory information system to guide development planning. Participatory resource appraisal and rapid biophysical surveys are also done by the community with the help of technical advisors. For instance, a watershed planning study and scoping exercise is undertaken to prioritize issues and develop issue-based interventions. The convergence of information, knowledge, skills and resources was facilitated through participatory processes. Consensus-based decision making mechanisms were used to manage resource conflicts.

The role of participatory governance in poverty reduction is threefold: to base policies on better information, to ensure that policy makers and their administration are more committed than they tend to be in non-participatory governance settings, and to make the implementation of policies more effective and efficient. The trilogy of empowerment, accountability and capacity building offers the building blocks of participatory governance (Schneider 1999).

PLG is seen as enabling improvements in the quality of life and promoting effective public and environmental management. Indeed, the transformative potential of participatory governance reforms is well recognized (Gaventa 2004). In the cases on coastal resource management, the use of PLG tools have led to better environmental and livelihood outcomes. Marine resources are being regenerated. Fish catch has increased. Small fishers have increased community access and exclusive use of municipal waters. Residents have access to fresh, cheap supply of fish. There has been a drastic reduction in commercial fishing operations in municipal waters. Coastal residents are now highly conscious of sustainable fishing techniques and practices.

Policy and Institutional Issues

There is a need to institutionalize the coastal resource management program and requires adequate funding support. Under the 1998 Fisheries Code, all fishery activities in municipal waters, as defined in the 1998 Fisheries Code, shall be utilized by municipal fisherfolk and their cooperatives and organizations that are listed in the municipal registry. The municipal fisheries and aquatic resource management council shall assist in the preparation of the municipal fishery development plan submitted to the municipal development council. It also recommends municipal fishery ordinances and assists in the enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters. The members include the municipal planning officer, chairperson of the agricultural/fishery committee of the sangguniang bayan, representative of the municipal development council, NGO representative, private sector representative, Department of Agriculture representative, and at least seven fishers' representatives. LGUs may create the Barangay Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils whenever necessary. What the municipality of Governor Generoso did was to strengthen implementation mechanisms at the local level by providing for a municipal ordinance for sustainable coastal resource management that protects the interests of the municipal fishers and the environment at the same time.

There should be sustained capacity-building programs for civil society and LGUs on PLG tools. The essential elements needed for local governments to manage resources effectively are capacity, incentive, and long-term commitment. Capacity includes the necessary financial and human technical resources which are largely available only in the wealthier urban municipalities. Incentives may include the possibility of increasing municipal income: pressure from NGOs, aid from donors, or the need to solve a pressing problem. There should also be a commitment to the long-term sustainable use or protection of resources (Larson 2002).

There is still a great deal to be done to build up the capacities of the LGUs. Specific assistance is desirable to encourage and enable local governments to develop partnerships with the private sector, civil society, and international organizations. Enhancing their entrepreneurial abilities and developing their corporate powers should be a key part of the capacity-building process. The LGU power of taxation gives them a specific share of the revenues generated in their area from natural resources such as fisheries and forestry (MacAndrews, Brillantes and Siamwalla 2001).

Given that most formal democratic systems do not represent poor people's interests, it is essential to deepen democracy through investment at the local level, particularly in poor people's organizations. Organizations of poor people and civil society intermediaries that are accountable to poor people are essential for effective participation in local governance structures. Participatory processes can offer a way forward for navigating complex and changing local institutional landscapes, but even these tools will fail if vulnerable groups lack effective means to channel their aspirations and provide quick feedback when actions go awry. Rapid qualitative studies grounded in participatory techniques can foster shared learning among local people and agencies about risks and opportunities. They can also reveal the most trusted and effective local institutions for reducing these risks and helping poor people protect their assets (Narayan and Petesch 2002).

There is need for adequate budget support from the national government especially for poor municipalities. Alternative uses of marine and natural resources such as seaweed farming and eco-tourism can be developed. PLG tools, mechanisms and processes can be adopted by LGUs in disbursing their local development funds. There is a need for state policies that facilitate easy replication and mainstreaming. Relevant institutions should get accreditation for mainstreaming purposes. Local development councils should be strengthened as engines of local development. Donor assisted projects can make use of the barangay development council as the project management structure at the community level. The successful decentralization of natural resource management requires a state that is willing to create and respect basic rights of social organization (Ostrom 1990). For example, participatory watershed governance boards can be replicated in other watersheds through central state support. Local arrangements with LGUs can be made for the application of all or selected components of watershed management.

Impact Indicators

Impacts on local democracy and local development are measured through the use of three main evaluation criteria: good governance at the barangay level, empowerment of barangay leaders and members, and improvements in the quality of life (see Uphoff 2003). Good barangay governance necessitates establishing and strengthening mechanisms and processes that allow for greater inclusiveness in decision-making and that promote the responsiveness of local public action. Four concepts are important in determining the quality of barangay governance: transparency, accountability, participation, and conflict management.

The empowerment of Community Leaders and Members means an increase in the capacity to act collectively. Within the barangays, empowerment requires that citizen participation, especially through collective action, would result in the formulation of public policies and programs that are responsive to their needs and concerns. In terms of community-town (barangay-bayan) relationships, empowerment means that barangay officials and leaders become more capable of pushing for their interests and needs in decision-making bodies outside of the

barangay. The key interest is thus the degree to which actual outputs are reflective of desired outputs. Four aspects of empowerment are included in the research: policymaking, resource mobilization, project implementation, and social capital formation.

Participatory local governance aims to contribute to improvements in the quality of life of citizens. As outcomes of governance and development interventions, the minimum basic needs of citizens must be adequately addressed. The key interest is to ensure that citizens reduce their dependence on clientelistic relationships with the government or with specific political officials by creating the necessary conditions for citizens to be able to meet these needs themselves. However, it may still be necessary for government to provide important basic services to ensure that a minimum standard in the quality of life is maintained in the community. Five components of the quality of life are considered: income, infrastructure, resource tenure improvement, basic social services, and environmental and resource management.

Transparency and Accountability

There is a high valuation on the importance of non-government organizations and people's organizations in ensuring the success and sustainability of the projects implemented in the barangay. The restructuring of the BDC in Brgy. Tabon, Aklan, as part of the PLG intervention has resulted in the inclusion of local NGOs and POs as official members of the BDC. Although the barangay officials in Tabon, Aklan have displayed openness in dealing with the people of the barangay, the PLG intervention made possible the transfer of participatory skills to the officials. In barangay Concepcion, Malabon City, a village councilor confessed that previous to the PLG interventions, only a few officials would write the BDP, often copying from previous versions. The PLG interventions opened their minds to a more participatory process of development planning. Participants in the FGDs in Brgy. Concepcion agreed that the BDP resulting from the PLG intervention is not only more comprehensive but also more feasible, for it involves local NGOs and POs in project implementation.

The frequency and quality of these mechanisms create familiarity among the residents about the formal and informal organizations within the barangay. The principle of partnership was enhanced in the PLG barangays. For example, prior to the intervention in Brgy. Calacja II, Antique, the barangay chairperson was regarded as master of all governmental affairs and the councilors served only as assistants focusing on infrastructure projects. The intervention created an emphasis on the principle of partnership by involving different organizations in the barangay.

The provision of mechanisms that promote transparency in the PLG barangays vary from the use of both formal and informal means of informing the citizens of barangay activities and decisions. Others like Brgy. Binitayan in Daraga, Albay and Brgy. Tabon, Batan, Aklan post their budgets and financial reports outside the barangay hall. Others rely mostly on the conduct of the barangay assembly held twice a year to inform the public of community projects, expenditures and plans. Another formal mechanism utilized by the barangay is the conduct of purok/sitio or zonal meetings once a month to relay to the people the agreements reached during the barangay council meetings.

Transparency was promoted through the use of informal mechanisms in the barangay. Examples of these include house-to-house visits, the use of zonal leaders and barangay councilors as channels for information dissemination,

word of mouth, and through a “bandillo” or a roving public address system. However, the people’s perception on the importance of transparency in barangay governance is slowly and only recently and slowly being realized. For barangays Anei and Sangalan in Misamis Oriental, focus group discussions with residents reveal that they are just starting to be aware of the importance of being informed about barangay operations. In fact, because of the culture of transparency fostered during the BDP-PRA and the barangay assembly, it has become common for the residents to ask questions about the barangay’s income and finances. For others, attendance at barangay council meetings, requests for official documents, and knowledge of the contents of the BDP is still quite low, and limited to barangay leaders and PO members. Reliance on informal mechanisms to disseminate information about barangay activities characterizes most of the non-PLG barangays. Others could not produce their BDPs and have not held any barangay assembly.

In general, the PLG interventions transferred to the barangay leaders the importance of the concept of transparency. As the PLG barangays increasingly provide access to public documents such as development plans, ordinances, and financial reports, the culture of transparency and openness has encouraged many organized groups in the community to increasingly participate in barangay governance. Slowly, this is being transferred to the wider public as well.

The provision of mechanisms and processes that allow openness in barangay operations, as well as the inclusion of other actors in the process of planning and implementation, promoted the responsiveness of local public officials. The same formal and informal mechanisms identified in the promotion of transparency are used to press the officials to perform and deliver on their promises, and to inform the officials of citizen grievances. One of the concrete gains of the intervention is that wider public participation was encouraged through the increased level of awareness and acceptance of their roles and responsibilities as members of the community. The conduct of the BDP-PRA and the general assembly, as well as the improved culture of transparency, led positively towards increasing the level of accountability of the barangay officials, and to recognition of the important contribution of residents in barangay governance. In Brgy. Villavert-Jimenez, Antique, the PLG intervention and the leveling of expectations among the officials and residents placed more pressure on the barangay officials to perform better and deliver outputs.

The low utilization of these same mechanisms in the non-PLG barangays promotes a culture of indifference in the barangay’s activities. There is also fear of reprisal from the officials when one questions the decisions of the barangay. Although the officials can be approached for personal matters and friendly conversation, there seems to be a gap created between the leaders and non-leaders when it comes to deciding on or critiquing barangay activities.

However, much still need to be accomplished in the area of accountability. A measure of accountability is the ability of the barangay officials to perform their mandated role. Although the Local Government Code states that the primary role of the barangay council is to legislate local concerns, in all of the PLG barangays and the non-PLG barangays, the perception both by the residents and the officials themselves is that of having multiple functions. This oftentimes leads to relationships of patronage, as the officials are regarded as problem-solvers, mediators, implementors of projects, and as individuals from whom one can borrow money, among others.

Service Delivery

The type and number of projects identified for inclusion in the BDPs of the PLG barangay covered a wider set of concerns. Aside from beautification projects and basic infrastructure, other areas include environmental protection, data banking, livelihood assistance, and technical and personnel development training, and capability for policy formulation and law enforcement. As a direct result of consultation with the residents, there is now an effort on the part of PLG barangays to prioritize projects that were not given attention in the past. In one particular barangay (Brgy. Villavert Jimenez, Antique), the barangay captain even had to beg the residents for approval of his pet project, roofing for the basketball court, since it failed to get a high rating during the prioritization of projects.

Projects that are eventually prioritized and implemented are generally considered by the PLG barangay residents as necessary in the advancement of their economic well being. In Brgy. Villavert-Jimenez, the multi-sectoral representation in the BDP-PRA even encouraged the formation of the barangay fisheries and aquatic resources management council (BFARMC) and the BFARMC plan, as well as a senior citizens organization.

In many barangays which depend on government funds for the implementation of major infrastructure projects, delays in the release of funds serve as the major constraint in the timely completion of the projects. Even the PLG barangays are not spared from this problem. For instance, Brgy. Tabon and Brgy. Angas have experienced delays in project implementation because of this reason. There is still a need to further strengthen mechanisms for monitoring project implementation. In Brgy. Calacja II, Antique, the non-involvement of proponents in the succeeding phases of the projects caused delays and even the termination of the projects.

Participatory Budgeting and Resource Mobilization

An important contribution of the PLG intervention is the transfer of skills in participatory development planning and budgeting to the barangay officials and people's organizations. These same skills were utilized in the conduct of barangay assembly meetings, barangay council meetings, and BDC meetings. The inclusive nature of these processes and the nature by which they are conducted ensure that inputs from the residents are reflected in important documents and outputs such as the barangay development plan and resolutions and ordinances. This is an important reflection on the degree to which citizens feel empowered to affect local decision-making processes.

Many examples illustrate enhanced participation in local policymaking of residents in PLG barangays. In Brgy. Villavert-Jimenez, Antique, the willingness of the sanggunian barangay and the clamor of the public led to the revision of four ordinances that were adopted before the PLG interventions took place. In Brgy. Tabon, Aklan, the women's association holds meetings twice a month to discuss issues concerning the women in the community. These issues were then presented in the barangay council meetings and the barangay assembly where the barangay officials asked for their opinions, comments and suggestions. In Brgy. Sangalan and Ane-I, both in Misamis Oriental, the task of developing major policies and projects for the barangay falls under the BDC where the different POs and local NGOs are well-represented. In the urban poor community of Brgy. North Bay Boulevard-North, Navotas, local residents led by the barangay officials and POs successfully delayed the implementation of government-mandated eviction and relocation. These local organizations are now discussing with government officials different alternatives to address the housing situation in the community.

These efforts and initiatives are not as evident in the non-PLG barangays. In many of the non-PLG barangays, the BDCs are either not functioning or meet at irregular schedules. The comprehensive nature of the BDP in the PLG barangay as an output of the intervention also differs significantly. In the non-PLG barangay in Malabon, for instance, there exists consultative mechanisms for project implementation. However, the BDP remains a mere run-down of infrastructure projects, costs and target dates of implementation, rather than a genuine reflection of priority community needs surfacing from participatory planning processes.

One major gain of the PLG interventions is the increase in capacity of the barangay to source out funds to support the implementation of major projects. In Brgy. Sangalan, Misamis Oriental, the holding of a stakeholders' forum generated P10.5 million worth of pledges and assistance to the community. The PLG barangay was also provided training on the development of project proposals. Likewise, the BDP of the PLG barangay went beyond the traditional internal revenue allotment as a possible source of funds, and identified other possible sources of income for the barangay.

Brgy. Concepcion, for instance, utilized its legislative power to designate a side street where vendors congregate as a flea market under the supervision of the barangay. After consulting with the vendors and their association, an agreement was reached to convert the street into a flea market. The barangay was tasked to ensure the sanitation of the area in exchange for a rental fee remitted to the barangay.

Adequate consultation with NGOs and POs and their participation in project implementation ensure sustainability and the increased number of projects implemented in the barangay. In part, this emerges from the sharing of resources between the barangay and the partner NGOs and POs. Although there are also NGOs and POs in the non-PLG barangays, they are not as well-integrated in barangay governance processes. In the PLG barangays, the active involvement and engagement of different groups in decision-making and project implementation generate a sense of ownership over these projects. However, while most barangays exert much effort to generate funds to support its programs, these are still insufficient to implement major projects such as farm to market roads and potable water systems.

Conflict Management

Among the conflict management tools being pursued at the barangay level is the Paralegal Education Skills Advancement and Networking Technology (PEASANTech). The key implementers are SALIGAN, KAISAHAN, and BALAOD-Mindanao. This effort seeks to address the lack of access to justice by poor communities who suffer from insecure tenure to land and other resources. It also seeks to strengthen the claim-making rights of marginalized residents for resource tenure improvement (RTI) in the face of insufficient local policies that address these issues as well as the weakness of the barangay justice system.

In the PEASANTech strategy, paralegal clinics are used as avenues to identify strategies and tactics that local paralegals can apply in addressing RTI issues. Through the PRA-BDP process, community advocates aim to integrate RTI and other justice issues into local development plans. The intervention also seeks to strengthen justice and peace seeking structures in the barangay (e.g. Lupon Tagapamayapa, barangay agrarian reform council) through rights-based settlement of conflicts. In this regard, barangay justice is not be limited within the confines of the Katarungang Pambarangay.

The organization over the years was able to source funding from MISERIOR, the German Catholic Church's overseas development agency, the United Nations, national agencies and more importantly the local governments.

Conclusion

Participatory local governance enables citizens to take greater control over political processes, hold public officials accountable for their actions, and ensure that public policies and programs are responsive to their needs and concerns. Furthermore, it contributes to altering citizens' perceptions about their role in politics and governance, and ensures that decision-making processes become inclusive of various stakeholders and interests.

Through their participation in local policy deliberating bodies, civil society leaders acquire new skills and confidence in policy negotiations. The encounters between civil society and governments also resulted in the transcending of public-private barriers. Where these are operative, local officials begin to see civil society groups not as potential competitors for voters but as legitimate partners in governance.

Civil society engagement in governance has given voluntary groups a greater voice in decision-making processes. They have become an important interlocutor and mediator of local power relations. The breakdown of patronage linkages arising from traditional economic power could lead to more competitive and democratic electoral contests.

While the interventions have opened the doors towards greater participation of residents, it was observed in many of the case studies that the communities have not yet reached the level of active and critical participation. Oftentimes the issue of non-involvement in monitoring project implementation is very evident. This low level of civic participation poses challenges on the sustainability of the gains made by the PLG intervention, and emphasized the need to continue with the interventions until participatory processes are fully institutionalized and citizens begin to demand greater participation.

There is also a need to transfer skills and participatory processes to second-line leaders to ensure continuity after changes in political leadership. Among the case studies, for instance, two barangay chairpersons subsequently ran and won seats in the municipal level. In these instances, successor leaders need to continue participatory processes that have just begun to take shape in the communities.

More importantly, educating the non-PO members on civic participation is also crucial to ensure the sustainability of PLG interventions. The succeeding interventions should be packaged to be more holistic and cover project planning and development, implementation, project monitoring and evaluation, and civic education.

The PRA-BDP processes focus on the identification and prioritization of projects that the barangay, as a level of government, shall undertake for the succeeding three to five years. Thus, the focus of the BDP is on the use of government funds for government projects in the barangay.

However, what is common in many of the PLG barangays is the existence of NGOs and POs that have traditionally operated independent of the barangay. Many of these NGOS and POs undertake projects in the community on their own. The PLG intervention can be strengthened to ensure that existing and planned

NGO-PO projects, and those that the community as a whole can initiate, are properly integrated in the BDP to minimize duplication in projects, maximize resources, and build social capital.

The fourth stage of the intervention covers the integration of the BDP to the MDP. In order for this stage to be realized, the training design of the PLG intervention should include a multi-level approach to include the city/municipality. The initiative to integrate the BDPs of every barangay to the MDP emanates from the municipal leadership, particularly the municipal planning office. Issues of political rivalry and differing party affiliation have hampered the realization of this objective. The PLG training should invite civil servants from the municipal planning office to ensure the integration of the BDPs and MDPs regardless of political affiliation.

In the past, citizens and civil society are viewed as observers looking from the outside instead of being recognized as legitimate participants inside the halls of decision-making. However, experiments are being made to use decentralization and participatory tools in fostering democratic governance to enhance development outcomes.

The enabling factors in fostering democratic governance are the presence of an organized civil society, reform-oriented local chief executives, and continuous capacity-building activities. The challenge is to develop more participatory tools that are appropriate at the local level. There is a need to invest in the development of partnerships between LGUs and civil society in the pursuit of sound environmental management within the context of a democratic local governance system. The key cases examined in this paper indicate that the synergistic cooperation of local governments and citizens as well as the application of PLG tools, including barangay development planning through participatory rural appraisal (BDP-PRA), participatory resource tenure, and multi-stakeholder resource governance boards, are needed to improve environmental management.

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