

Reports on Projects and Seminars

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

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This report is the product of the study conducted from May 1991 to May 1992. The study was commissioned by the Canada-Asia Partnership (CAP) program of which Ateneo de Davao University (ADDU) through the Institute of Primary Health Care of the Davao Medical School (IPHC-DMSF) is a partner institution. Two courses were offered in Participatory development: Community Organizing through Participatory Action Research (COPAR) and Enterprise.

The project team consisted of Lourdes Mamaed, a socio-economist, Eleanor May Ursos, an anthropologist sociologist and Ely Acosta, a social worker. The three are faculty members of the Social Sciences and Education Division of the Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City, Philippines. They were assisted by the project officers of the two pilot areas: Rose Ontal of IPHC-DMSF for Bagobo Village, Calinan, Davao City and Melba Laguna of the Social Involvement and Coordinating Office (SICO) and Gloria Penera of the Institute of Small Farm Industries (ISFI) for Purok Glivbext. SICO and ISFI are extension offices of the ADDU.

The team members were course planners of the CAP program. Each one of them was a module coordinator of the COPAR course which promoted community organizing with the integration of participatory action research. The mission of the study, was to identify two pilot areas: one to be organized and the other an organized community. The objectives were to:

1. experience the complete cycle of the COPAR
2. document the experience in both areas

3. assist the community in the formulation of the comprehensive plan for implementation
4. prepare and train communities to become a trainor community on COPAR

Purok Glivbext of Obrero, Davao City was the area to be organized. It was chosen on the basis of the following:

1. there was an existing project initiated by the social work department of the ADDU
2. the presence of potential leaders to be tapped for community organizing
3. no agency has entered the place for service implementation
4. The place, as a squatter area, has various problems like: presence of out-of-school youth, poor drainage and sanitation and malnutrition among others.

Bagobo Village was chosen as the second pilot area. It was a community that was organized by the IPHC through Integrated Local Development (CHILD) program. The CHILD was phased out and so the COPAR was introduced to promote better participation and more involvement among the members.

The team made an average of six visits per month to the area excluding the number of days spent for trainings. Visits were done at anytime of any day while meetings and trainings were conducted only on weekends or during the evening of weekdays.

In terms of methodology, four approaches were utilized to attain the objectives of the study. These included working with communities, process documentation, participant observation and key informant interviews.

The study team went to the area to organize and train leaders to prepare them for any undertakings that they would initiate. They followed the COPAR process step by step. Project officers of both areas came in for project implementation.

The members of the core group and local research team from both communities came and had a two-day training together at the Ateneo de Davao University. Since each community had its own problems to research on, the second training on data processing and analysis was conducted separately. The rest of the trainings were conducted in their respective communities and these were staggered. An input was usually given first after which the participants were sent to the field for actual workshop. They were asked to come back the next scheduled date to synthesize the workshop output.

After having undergone the complete cycle of the COPAR process the team documented their experiences.

The study team observed other activities initiated by the local community organizers. The focus of observation was the participation and active involvement of the members.

Persons who were knowledgeable about any of the two areas were interviewed. The necessity of such was to establish an organizing profile. Interview guides were designed to gather the following information: who were the leaders; how were they chosen; who identified the problems; what projects have been implemented; and how do they evaluate.

The basic tenet of COPAR is that knowledge leads to power. Equipped with enough knowledge, acquired skills and the proper attitudes, people's awareness is increased and better participation in development projects can be expected. Power in this context is conceptualized thus:

- people can organize their own community
- people can identify and prioritize their own problems
- people can do their own research and analyze social realities in their own communities
- people can plan and take action on the problems identified

- people can monitor and evaluate their projects
- people have the capacity to evaluate new knowledge from their experiences contributing further to the understanding of people's behavior in development

This is the step whereby the CAP researchers with the help of available baseline data went for a courtesy call to the purok leaders to present the program. This was also an initial meeting with the respondent community to get the people's commitment to the said program.

The team with the community members defined what is a leader and who can be a leader. Then they identified leaders to compose the core group or local community organizers, the counterpart of the project officers.

The elected leaders were given a training on leadership, planning, facilitating and community organizing. The end result of the training was the formulation of the mission statement and the setting of goals.

The LCO called for a general meeting to re-echo what they had learned from the training they had undergone. Then with the community members they identified problems that really affect them. In the same meeting, they also selected a group of local researchers to look more into the identified problems.

The elected local researchers were given a training on how to gather, collate and tabulate data; and how to analyze and interpret the gathered data. The result of the research was validated with the community members.

Once the research data was validated, the community again elected a team of planners. They were also given training on how to make plans and prepare project proposals. The training output was presented to the community members for approval.

The members of the implementing team were chosen from the assembly. These, then, were given the orientation on the approved plan. They were expected to come up with the implementing

guidelines to be presented to the people.

The monitoring and evaluating team was elected by the people. This team had the responsibility of looking into the flow of the process and its evaluation. The training output of monitoring and evaluating tools was presented to the community for final approval.

Glivbext COPAR Experience

Today, more emphasis is given on the element of people's participation in the development process of their communities, the serious attention directed to participation by development planners has given way to a concept called Community Organizing through Participatory Action Research (COPAR). It is an approach that hopes to promote the formation of local organization by the people themselves, identifying their needs and problems and acting on these whenever possible.

For the past years, a lot of experimentation on the COPAR process were done to translate the concept into reality. A review of actual field experiences of various people participatory programs has revealed however, that there is much to be desired. We cannot deny the difficulties associated in bringing upliftment to the poor considering the magnitude of problems involved hence, the results have been disappointing. Although government and private initiatives have succeeded in at least forming community organizations among the poor communities, these organizations did not become viable and capable of self-determination.

This section presents the field experiences of the researchers in the implementation of COPAR project in a poor urban community, GLIVBEXT. Although the project has been in operation for only one year, the experiences may bring out insights that may be helpful in identifying factors essential in promoting people's participation and development.

Project Site

Glivbext, a purok in Agdao, is a slum area with about 129 households. It is here where most of the slum dwellers in Davao City live. Most of the households in Glivbext have a large family size. The educational status of the residents is relatively high compared to other poor communities. In spite of this, the families live in abject poverty where the income is way below the poverty threshold.

Many times, the residents experienced demolition threats from private landowners in the area since 93 percent of them did not own the lot where their houses were built. Livelihood programs of government and non-government agencies have been slow in coming to the area. Indeed the community is often described to be "sleeping". The people in Glivbext have not yet experienced disappointments from failure of development programs. There is thus an openness to take positive attitudes towards change.

The Local Community Organizers (LCO) were given training on May 25-26, 1991 with the LCO members of the BAVILCOI, Calinan, It was a two-day training held at the Ateneo de Davao University. The topics discussed were leadership, planning, facilitating and community organizing. The end result of the seminar was the definition of their role in the community and the formation of the association called NAGKAHIUSANG KATAWHAN SA PUROK GLIVBEXT, INCORPORATED that has the following objectives:

1. promoting unity in the community
2. assisting in the delivery of services with any agency who may enter the area;
3. encourage better participation of the members in any community effort that may lead to the development of the area.

The LCO called for a general assembly after the training to re-echo what they have learned. Then with the community members, they identified some problems that really affect the people. These

problems were low income, lack of unity among the residents, land problem, poor drainage and sanitation, malnutrition, and increasing number of out-of-school youth.

To validate the problems identified, a group of local researchers were elected towards the end of the meeting. These local researchers, were given two sets of training. Training I was on data gathering methods namely, focused group discussion, participant observation, process documentation, historical mapping and survey. Since this is but a newly organized community, the local researchers agreed to make a study of the community or community profile with the use of survey. The data gathering involved preparation of the research instrument, pre-testing and the actual interview with all the members of the organization. Training II included editing of forms and construction of tables and graphs, data analysis and reporting and preparation for the research validation and consultation.

After the community validated the problems presented by the survey, they elected a group of planners. The following was the outline of the topics given:

- I. What is a plan? Planning?
- II. Steps in planning:
 1. situational analysis
 2. problem identification
 3. problem analysis
 4. problem prioritization
 5. objective setting
- III. Importance and some considerations in planning
- IV. Project proposal-making
- V. Business plan

At the end of the training, they were able to come up with the first draft of the project proposal for an income generating project which will be submitted to ISFI for funding.

After the plans were presented to the people during the community assembly for approval, the same people were requested by the community members to implement the program. And so they were called for another training, with the following as inputs;

- I. People's organization: its formulation and management
- II. Project implementation in the community
- III. Other skills depending on the projects planned.

The output of the seminar was the formulation of criteria for (IGP) income generating projects beneficiaries and making of guidelines for the applicants. Again, this was presented to the people for approval.

While the implementing teams were assessing applicants to the IGP, a group of monitors and evaluators were elected during the general assembly. They were given inputs on:

- I. What is monitoring/evaluating?
- II. Why do we monitor/evaluate?
- III. Phases/steps in monitoring/evaluating

A workshop followed whose end result was the formulation of the monitoring and evaluating scheme. The scheme was presented to the members for final comment and for their approval.

The NKPGI is a ten month old organization but has achieved many things such as:

1. ten (10) members received capitalization for their income generating projects like sewing, food vending, sari-sari store, etc.

2. putting up a Project Hope with a center of their own;
3. fund-raising projects through *sayawan*;
4. conducting social action where they protested the process of terminating local leaders;
5. acting as mediator in resolving personal conflicts;
6. turning over the consumers cooperative to the LCO

The members realized that having the proper attitude and following the policies set were necessary in undertaking successful projects. Regular follow-ups done by the monitoring team were significant in finding solutions of problems encountered by project beneficiaries. Evaluation reports of project follow-ups were discussed during regular meetings of the core group and general membership.

The Bagobo Community (BAVILCOI)

Calinan is a promising district of Davao City. In this district is situated a community whose name has been derived from the owner of the land, a mestizo Bagobo, Jose Lee. It is perhaps through this brief historical background that the community was named Bagobo although the residents in the area are largely migrants and not ethnically of Bagobo origin. Majority are Cebuanos (85%), Boholanos (10%) and Ilongos (5%). Residents are engaged in subsistence farming and contract labor in nearby plantations and pineapple cannery and small-scale business.

The Bagobo community is otherwise known as purok 27 of Calinan district. The area is 27 kilometers from Davao City and can be easily reached (about 40 minutes to 1 hour) by public utility vehicles. The community occupies around two (2) hectares of the land owned by Lee. The village residents are tenants of the land.

The lot rental ranges from P30.00 to 150.00 a month depending on the size the family occupies. There were more or less 102 households with a total population of 675 individuals.

The birth of Bagobo Village Community Organization Incorporated (BAVILCOI) can be traced in the later part of 1989 when the Institute of Primary Health Care of the Davao Medical School Foundation (IPHC-DMSF) entered the area armed with the program on Community Health through Integrated Local Development (CHILD). The program focused on child health the objective of which was to reduce mortality rate of children from 0 - 6 years.

As a child beneficiary, it was here that the community was exposed to the concepts and processes of community organization and development. Education — basic health education, capability building, leadership training, simple bookkeeping, food preservation and other ideas were taught through short term seminars and trainings. The objective was to create an individual willingness and eagerness on the part of the people to try new methods and to develop new patterns of living.

In 1990, the CHILD project was phased out. In a sense, although the Bagobo community showed some degree of capability to go on with their organizational activities and projects, some kind of intervention for sustainability was needed as felt by the people themselves.

The implementation of the COPAR process in Bagobo Village, Calinan started on May, 1991. They were chosen as the organized area for COPAR on the basis that they have been using participatory approaches in the past through the implementation of the CHILD project by the IPHC.

The Ateneo project team with the help of the former project officer of the CHILD visited the place and did some ocular survey purposely for the following reasons:

1. To see and get acquainted with the physical and social conditions of the community
2. To pay a courtesy call and talk to the organization leaders to inform them of the project that the CAP--ADDU project team will undertake

3. To get acquainted with the BAVILCOI leaders and reactivate the former leaders
4. To know of the people's cultural orientation and beliefs

A membership assembly was soon called by the BAVILCOI officers to explain the CAP program and what is expected of them. This consultation meeting resulted into an acceptance of the program by the membership who further committed themselves to learn and implement the COPAR process.

From the same assembly, ten members were elected to compose the core group, majority of which are also officers of the organization. They were chosen based on the principle of shared leadership and one who has the time, talent and potential and most of all one who will commit himself to the said project. These core group members are otherwise known as local community organizers, the counterpart of the agency's project officer. They were given training on leadership skills, communication, facilitation and community organizing together with the Glivbext group. It was conducted in Ateneo last May 25-26, 1991. The output of the training was the formulation of their vision and mission statement and the setting of goals.

After the training, the LCO's called for another general assembly wherein they re-echoed what they have learned. By using skills acquired from the training and with the collaboration of the members, several problems were identified and were narrowed down to four major concerns:

1. low income
2. lack of water supply in their farm site which consequently will be converted into a residential area
3. lack of road facilities from farm to the center
4. lack of power supply

To validate the problems identified, another group was elected to compose the local researchers. This team was trained under CAP supervision. The first set of training was on data gathering. They joined the Glivbext group for the input which was held in

Ateneo, but since their research topic was specific on problems, the second training on data analysis was conducted in the area. The result of this research were reverted to the community for consultation and validation. From these social realities, they identified the problems, prioritized them and saw the need for action. In addition, the local researchers were also able to make a historical map of their organization.

Once the problems presented were properly validated by the community, another group was elected—the planners. The group likewise underwent a training on the concepts and principles of planning. The elected local planners had a workshop on planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The low income problem was not tackled by the group anymore because they already have their communal farming. The planning team divided themselves into three sub-teams, each composed of two members. The sub-teams then proceeded to tackle the water supply plan, the road access problem and the electricity problem. Each team came up with a planning scheme on how to solve the problem.

The plans laid down by the planning team were again reported to the general assembly for approval. By the unanimous consensus, the same people were requested to implement the program they devised. Since the organization was already experienced in implementing projects, the group decided to skip the implementing training. Instead the project manager who at the same time was an LCO member, asked the general membership as to what project will they go into first. The members agreed to tackle the road problem before the others.

Finally, a group of monitoring and evaluation teams were elected to follow-up and evaluate the plans. They were given a one-day input on what is monitoring and evaluation, its importance and the steps involved. Then they went into a workshop. As an output, they came up with monitoring and evaluating schemes. This was presented to the community members for approval.

The BAVILCOI today stands as an example of a people's organization which has undergone the process of growth and achieved a measurable degree of development through participatory action. This is apparent in the members' sense of

worth and belonging, realized through the discovery of their individual capabilities and potentials exercised in unity and cooperation. Now they are being asked to talk as resource persons in the organization of other communities or are asked to give an input on specific topics. The community is fully aware that it is only through participatory process whereby they can achieve their vision of a happy, healthy and progressive community.

Of late, community organizing has come to be accepted as a means for community participation in development activities. Through organizing, communities are made aware of their potential for collective action to improve their lot and are mobilized and trained to realize this potential through the conduct of cooperative endeavors

In the case of the CO-PAR project in Glivbext, the organizing was handled by the CAP team who received training in CO-PAR. As organizers, the team created the opportunities and mechanisms for the community members to participate in various project activities. This participation became the basis for developing and enhancing further the members capability for undertaking research, collective planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects.

In the case of Calinan, the team simply gave the training workshop on how to use the process. The organizing effort was handled by the project officers from IPHC and the project manager of the BAVILCOI with the assistance of the board of directors.

Finding out the possibilities for participatory research among poor communities needs a longer period of time of working with the people. However, the experience for one year in Glivbext and Bagobo Villages indicated some positive factors and gaps in the undertaking.

1. People in poor communities are keenly interested in studying their own situation particularly in cases pertaining to livelihood and other community problems. By objectifying, measuring and pinpointing their problems they became more aware about their life situation and are more ready to respond to their problems.

2. Local leaders and even ordinary community residents can be effective persons in facilitating community-based research. Research skills can be translated, at their levels, through trainings.
3. In contrast to researches done by outside agencies, participatory research is seen as the community's own undertaking. Results are immediately given back to the people; interviewers are known by the local residents; the language of local research is ordinarily in the vernacular and the questions raised are then brought to the people in the community for consultation.
4. The data gathered may be more reliable and accurate if only because both the interviewer and respondents know and trust each other.
5. Local researchers have to be given more training and supervision on data processing and analysis, and the making of research reports.
6. There is a danger that the biases of local researches may limit the applicability of their findings and conclusions.
7. Community residents if properly motivated, become active members by volunteering their time, money, effort to achieve their goal.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The COPAR process is applicable at any level of community organizing. Whether the community is already organized or not, application of COPAR always starts with the identification of the leaders or local community organizers who proceeded with the identification the research problem and so on. It is therefore recommended that the COPAR process be repeated in the communities of Glivbext and Bagobo Village for the local leaders to really master and value the participatory process. Doing so will really prepare them to become a trainor community of the CAP course participants. Specifically, recommendations for the two areas are:

A. Calinan

1. That the IPHC, DMSF, continue assisting the BAVILCOI until such time that they are financially stable.

The organization at present is concentrating on paying back the IPHC the amount loaned to them for the purchasing of the communal farm. Ultimately, this farm will be converted into a housing program. They would need further assistance for the processing of the lot title and for the initial construction of their houses. Some would even need capitalization for an income generating project to augment their income.

2. That value formation sessions be continued for the people to really appreciate two major values: participation and social responsibility. Some members are not active in helping out in the communal farm. They prefer to give money instead of working together with the rest of the members. Some members counted their effort and compared themselves with others. Community development can better be achieved if all the members received proper orientation on the importance of the unification of all efforts and the understanding of the responsibility of each member to give his share for the attainment of the organization's objectives.

B. Obrero

1. That more trainings/workshops be given to strengthen the organization. At present, the organization is still dependent on the organizers for some activities that they want to undertake.
2. That the ISFI and SICO continue to extend technical and financial assistance to the community. The cooperative has not started yet due to lack of a common orientation and the knowledge how it is to be run. Some members are waiting for their turn to be the recipient of the IGP.
3. That a value formation session be conducted. The members need this for the redirection of their values from personal to societal. At the moment some members are a little bit competitive. The spirit of concern and a sense of responsibility to the group are still lacking.

Along the objective of preparing the people to become a trainer community there is a need to repeat the complete cycle of the process in both pilot communities for the people to value and understand the meaning of PAR.

In Obrero, the whole process is very clear but the research team has limited experience. Their research work emphasizes so much on the community profile. They should acquire the knowledge and develop skills of studying the problems identified. In the Calinan community, the workers tend to confuse the process because the original group who received training during the CHILD days has the tendency to compare what they learned previously with that of CO-PAR, hence they resist the latter.