

THE ARCLG: IN SEARCH OF ALTERNATIVE MODELS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Pre and post World War II Philippines has been a succession of regimes and political systems that have gone from a colonial one to a democracy, while the stubborn persistence of social and economic problems has removed throughout the people has gone through several crises and each time, a new set of reforms was introduced by the existing administration. Along with each new set of reforms came a new set of values and priorities causing more problems.

All these years, development workers, including those manning the government, have tried to look for development models which would directly address the problems of poverty and provide growth and development consistent with an equitable sharing of the burdens and fruits of progress. Then, the Filipinos who had long been deprived of economic prosperity later on came to believe that the complicated and comprehensive process of advancing their well-being could only be successfully attained through their active, free and meaningful participation in that process.

In the face of these realizations, the Philippines has had to refocus and redefine its future using a vision that

stresses programs and reforms. Finally, in 1991, a new Local Government Code was passed. The Code, which espouses people empowerment via decentralization and local autonomy, provides for citizens to be actively involved in local governance. It purveys substantial contributions to development by allowing them to exercise their right of self-determination.

Hopefully, with this new mandate, people at the community level, through an analytical process, can identify and assess their needs and problems and analyze their causes systematically, and using their local resources, can effect their own transformation into productive and progressive communities. Development, then, becomes people-centered, community-focused, and sustainable directing benefit not only to a few but to the majority.

Wanting to believe these new visions and fully convinced that sound governance is a crucial factor in the development process, a number of local government units (LGUs) of Region XI, with the financial assistance of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through the Local Government Support Program (LGSP) and under the nurturing assistance of government and non-government institutions, including the academe, have undertaken initiatives along the line of capability building. Realizing that the local governments are now the new fulcrums of development, LGU officials have become determined to enhance their knowledge and skills in the exercise of political, economic and administrative functions to enable them to manage with competence and greater effectivity .

The Setting

Mindanao to which Region XI belongs comprises one-third of the total land area of the Philippines. Blessed with agro-climatic conditions which are ideal for tropical agriculture, it is the leading producer of agricultural products in the country. In 1994 and 1995, Mindanao accounted for 44% of all agricultural products traded domestically underscoring its important role in the country's food security situation.

The creation of BIMP-EAGA in 1994 has made possible the economic take-off taking place in the area today which has attracted the attention not only of investors from the BIMP-EAGA countries but also the interest of businessmen from other ASEAN nations, Europe and the United States.

Region XI is located in the southern portion of the island of Mindanao. Its land area of 31,693 square kilometers covers the biggest portion (31.07%) of the total land area of Mindanao and represents 10.56% of the Philippine territory (Southern Mindanao Region Development Plan, 1993-1994). The region is subdivided into 5 provinces, 2 chartered cities, 66 municipalities, and 1,514 barangays. Davao City, widely known as the biggest city of the world in terms of land area, is the regional capital and serves as the trade and economic center of Southern Philippines.

The population, which numbered 4.6M in 1995, is culturally diverse and generally young with around 44% aged 0-14 years. The working-age population reaches 3.1M. Some seventy percent of the population comprises the labor force.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) in the region number about a thousand. This sector is deepening its field work at the local level in various area-based development projects in partnership with either the people's organizations (POs) or with the government.

Highly blessed with rich natural resources, a generally uniform rainfall throughout the year and vast agricultural lowlands, Southern Mindanao is not only a rich source of metallic and non-metallic materials such as gold, iron, copper, limestone and marble, but it has also proven to be competitive in the production of high value crops like coconut, grains, banana fruits, fibers and cut flowers, among others for both export and local markets. Aside from having the highest livestock and poultry stocks in the Mindanao area, the region, which has a large portion of its land located along the coastline, is likewise endowed with abundant marine and fishery resources. In addition, Southern Mindanao, especially Davao, hosts the most number of first class tourist attractions.

As measured by the gross regional domestic product (GRDP), production of goods and services in Region XI has shown a consistently increasing trend during the period 1993-1996. The agricultural sector made the greatest contribution followed by the service sector.

Given these data on the region's vast human and natural resources and its increasing investment potentials, the opportunities for growth and sustained development are relatively great. With efficient administrative management, the current development initiatives in these parts of the country - which are geared to address concerns on poverty,

environmental degradation, inadequate social services and infrastructure facilities, development administration and public order and security - can indeed transform the dreams of Southern Mindanaoans into reality.

The Political Context of the Present Development Model

In the Philippines, local government administration had, for centuries, been characterized by centralism. It was the consequence of almost 400 years of colonization by Spain and the United States. Until lately, local governments were heavily dependent on the central government in Manila especially with regards to their financial needs. Because of such a system, most of them, if not all, were delivering sub-standard services to their constituents.

After the drafting of the 1935 Constitution and its revision in 1972, local governments were given more leeway in the management of some of their affairs. But even then, it was still the President of the country who is based in the national capital, who was bestowed the power of general supervision over local governments. "*The extent of control and supervision by the President depended to large extent upon the executive style and personality of whoever the president was*" (Padilla, 1992). Hence, while local units performed services on behalf of the community, they acted more as agents of national government, administering its major governmental services and implementing its policies. It was the central government that did the planning for the local units; it was the central government that determined what programs/projects were to be implemented at the local level; and worst of all, it was upon the central government

that the local governments had to depend for subsidies and grants. It was not, then, surprising that the local governments still failed to deliver the basic services expected from them by the people.

A ray of hope came with the enactment of the 1983 Local Government Code as provided for by the 1973 Constitution. However, largely because the central government was not yet ready to decentralize department powers and functions and because local government officials lacked the high level capability to assume more complex responsibilities, the 1983 Code "did not have a chance to be fully implemented and be made a cornerstone of an accountable democratic local administration." (Sosmena, 1991)

The passage and subsequent approval of R.A. 7160, known as the Local Government Code of 1991, is considered a great step towards a truly meaningful decentralization and substantial local autonomy. Aside from liberalizing the percentage of the Internal Revenue Allotment, the new Code embodies several enabling provisions allowing local government units to attain development as self-reliant communities thru a more responsive and accountable government structure. One approach of the current decentralization scheme is devolution - the transfer of power/ authority and resources from the central government to the local government units. Another is deconcentration which involves the transfer of administrative functions, responsibility and authority from national government agencies to their appropriate offices at the local level. All these mean for the local government officials not only immense power, but also additional roles as planners,

strategists, and area managers who set the direction for local development in consonance with various NGOs' initiatives and actions.

The process of planning, fund sourcing, strategy formulation, and efficient implementation of program/projects requires strong technical capability on the part of the LGUs. In an article by Felipe V. Ouamar et al, "Decentralization and Administrative Capability of Local Governments (1992), the authors pointed out that one critical but relevant issue which had been persistently posed in relation to the national policy and nationwide effort to translate decentralization and local autonomy to substantial action was whether local authorities were sufficiently prepared to assume a significant bulk of the highly intricate powers, functions, and responsibilities of government.

Top central government officials, likewise, had often articulated their doubts about the local governments' capability to exercise the power and administer the functions that were devolved to them. This is one of the main reasons why some central government sectors initially were disinclined toward decentralization and local autonomy. In other words, while the national government had decided and expressed willingness to share its major powers and responsibilities with the LGUs, there was much apprehension and hesitation to devolve authority, functions, and services due to those nagging questions and doubts.

In response to the development challenges posed by the Local Government Code of 1991, the Ateneo Resource Center for Local Governance, with its expertise on research,

training delivery and management, community organizing and participatory development strategies, decided to commit itself to the task of strengthening/developing the capability of the LGUs in Region XI to competently operationalize the new Code. They did this in the hope that the people in the southern part of the country would get to see the day of their liberation from the age-old socio-economic problems which have chained them to almost sub-human existence for decades.

The ARCLG

The Ateneo Resource Center for Local Governance was established in 1992 with the purpose of carrying out programs that would support the LGUs' efforts at efficacious implementation of the government's decentralization program. Among its goals are the professional development of LGUs officials and personnel and the enhancement of NGOs and POs participation in local governance. The workplan that has evolved stems from the Center's philosophy that while the challenges of true human development are great and complex, they are, nevertheless, attainable.

Drawing on the expertise of its staff and pool of resource persons, the ARCLG works with the local governments and other client organizations to strengthen capabilities for effective and meaningful implementation of the 1991 Code and to develop skills in designing sustainable development policies and in adopting innovative/alternative development approaches or strategies which can fast-track the development process.

Capability-Building Programs and Projects

A concern for people is at the heart of most development programs. Human resource development in literacy, skills trainings and adult education are given fundamental importance because they do not only shape the behavior of people, but also help develop the human capabilities most essential and crucial to democratic life and political stability.

Decentralization of local governance makes it imperative to raise the banner of greater decentralization of power through community empowerment. The process must advance within the community itself; it must be felt and be operative not only on the provincial and municipal levels but also in the smallest political unit which is the barangay, permeating even into the different puroks within the barangay. For this reason, the Center offers new alternatives to development-oriented organizations and to LGUs desirous of reaching higher levels of functioning via training and seminar/workshops believing that such interventions are the basic tools for capability development. Each year, a variety of trainings and seminar/workshops is lined up to respond to the requests of different LGUs based on their particular needs. The various interventions which have been delivered to different local units these past four years were customized to allow more LGUs officials and personnel, as well as NGOs/POs, to participate at minimal costs. For each training or seminar/workshops, the participants are required to produce outputs that develop their skills thru the hands-on approach. These outputs have proven to be useful in their work at the LGU level. The Center, meanwhile continues to give technical assistance to the participants even after the training intervention is completed.

A Modular Graduate Program

The graduate program is a pioneering venture of the Center with the support of the Graduate School of the University. It was conceptualized as a strategy to professionalize the administration and management of local government units. With new ideas learned, a change in attitudes, a reorientation of values and enhanced skills LGU officials and personnel are now better able to bring into full fruition genuine autonomy and independence and an efficient delivery of basic services which are the real essence of local governance towards sustainable human development.

The 2-year masteral program is designed to meet the professional needs which have arisen as a result of the new trend towards decentralization. It aims primarily at promoting democratic participation, social equity and poverty alleviation thru skillful administration and management of the local governments. The course, which consists of 10 modules, is 50% theory and 50% praxis. To suit it to the reality of the LGUs' working environment, culture, responsibilities and functions, the program is equipped with the following innovative features:

- a. It is modular. Upon enrollment, the student is given the modules of the subjects he has enrolled in. After a three day orientation for each module, he goes back to the LGU, goes through the modules by himself and accomplishes the modules' requirements. With this scheme, the student does not need to attend the university-based classes and thus doesn't have to leave his work or his family.

b. It gives credits to trainings/ seminars previously attended by the student. Certificates of attendance for and the contents of the trainings/ seminars attended are to be submitted for evaluation after which a matching is made by a panel that includes the instructor of the concerned module. The student is given 50% accomplishment ratings if the trainings/seminars match with the contents of the module. The remaining 50% is to be earned by the student from the practicum required by the module and is given after he submits a written report. The practicum is work-related and LGU-based. The student still has to go through the portions of the module not covered during the trainings/seminars for the examinations that are given at the middle and end of the semester.

c. Mobile faculty. The mobile faculty teams up with the subject instructor in monitoring the progress of the student. In some instances, the instructor himself also acts as mobile faculty. The mobile faculty visits the LGU where the student is based to follow up on his (student's) accomplishments and to thresh out the problems he may encounter in relation to the module.

d. Tapping of on-site experts (OSE). The OSE is a local consultant based at the LGU and nominated by the local chief executive, following the criteria set by the ARCLG. This is an innovation adopted by the program to coach/ mentor the student during the practicum part and, thus, facilitate the praxis component of the module.

*Management of the Delivery of
Basic Services (MDBS) Project*

The project, which runs for 3 years and 7 months, is funded by CIDA thru LGSP- Region XI. It is participated in by nine municipalities and a total of 204 barangays belonging to five provinces in Southern Mindanao. Its primary objective is to enhance the capabilities of local units and the NGOs/ POs in managing the delivery of basic services in the areas of economic, social, infrastructure, and general administrative sectors. Its ultimate goal is to enable the LGUs to develop a dynamic integrated basic services delivery system responsive to the local community's needs. The project uses as development strategies Community Organizing and Participatory Research or CO-PAR and the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) which the Ramos administration uses in the implementation of its Social Reform Agenda (SRA).

There are seven phases in the project and for each phase, different outputs are expected from the participants. Two trainings are given to the LGUs:

- a. CO-PAR Training. This is a 6-day instructional and experiential activity which seeks to develop the participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in community organizing and participatory research as tools to facilitate and make the delivery of basic services truly productive. It also seeks to reorient their values with regards to community service and active participation in the development process.
- b. Training on Program Planning. Another 6-day instructional and experiential activity, it seeks to

develop the participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in problem identification, in the prioritization of programs and projects, and in the formulation of the project implementation plan and the development action plan, and, ultimately, the barangay service delivery plan.

The project is now into its second year and the first 4 phases have already been completed. Presently, the 204 participating barangays are occupied with formulating their barangay service delivery plans using actual data gathered by their respective research teams. These BSDPs, later on, are to be incorporated into the Municipal Integrated Service Delivery Plan which will become the workplan of the LGU for the next 3 to 5 years.

Institutional Strengthening of Communities through Participatory Planning (ISCOPP) Project

This is a joint project between the Philippine Rural Institutional Strengthening Program (PRISP) and a consortium of Training Institutions, namely: the Ateneo Resource Center for Local Governance (ARCLG), the Development Academy of the Philippines in Mindanao (DAPM), the Institute for Primary Health Care (IPHC), and the Surigao Sur Organization for Human Development (SSOFHDEV). It is funded by the European Union (EU). The project aims to train and develop the staff of the municipal local government units (LGUs), including the staff of municipal line agencies (LAs) in improving the living standards of the rural population in poorer provinces by contributing to the improvement of the delivery of rural development programs, projects and services to the areas through Participatory Development Planning. To

achieve its goal, the project seeks to enhance the capability of the Municipal Planning Team in the pilot municipalities to carry out participatory planning at the barangay level.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- a. to organize and orient a Municipal Planning Team (MPT) composed of department heads or staff of the LGU and municipal-based LAs, selected members of the Sangguniang Bayan (Municipal Council) and selected members of the Barangay Development Council (BDC) of the identified pilot barangays;
- b. to select and organize the Municipal Core Facilitators (MCF) from among the MPTs. This MCF team is tasked to implement participatory planning at the barangay level.

The project's learning approach is a combination of Theory and Praxis. Thus, each training phase is followed by a practicum in the pilot barangays. The training phases are as follows:

Training A:	Step 1.	Community Mobilization and Orientation
B:	Steps 2 & 3.	Mapping and Situational Analysis
C:	Steps 4,5 & 6.	Identification of Potential Areas of Growth (IPAG), Prioritization and Ranking,

and Formulation of
Development Vision,
Mission, Goals and
Strategies

D: Steps 7 & 8. Operational Planning,
Monitoring and Evaluation

E: Step 9. Resource Mobilization
and Fund Sourcing

There are three municipalities in Davao Oriental and two municipalities in Surigao del Sur which are considered pilot areas for the Participatory Planning Training. In each of the municipalities, three barangays are selected by the barangays and municipalities involved.

The Ateneo Resource Center for Local Governance has focused on the Municipality of Lupon, Davao Oriental in the implementation of this nine-month project which started last September 1996 and will end this May 1997.

Initial Impact of the Capability-building Interventions

Ninety eight of the original 99 enrollees in the program will be graduating this May 1997. Three of them are municipal mayors and one is a vice-mayor. From the evaluation made by the students, it can be gathered that while the program has its shortcomings, it has done much to improve their performance as public servants and the quality of services they render to their constituents.

MGA students claim to have acquired a clear understanding of their role and functions relative to the decentralization process. This implies that with their enlightenment, there is better chance of a successful implementation of R.A. 7160.

New knowledge and techniques acquired by the students have likewise made them more enthusiastic and confident in pursuing the vision, mission, and goals set by their municipal comprehensive development plans. The newly acquired zeal they have shown in their work has not passed unnoticed by their superiors who have shown their appreciation by the support they give the students all throughout their study. The same zeal and enthusiasm have diffused to their co-workers resulting to a more efficient system.

Moreover, a better understanding and a deeper assessment of the organizational system and the working environment which results from the practicum work they have to do in one of the modules have empowered them to take bold steps in introducing long-needed changes in the organizational and management set-up as well as in the system of the day to day operations in their respective LGUs. such changes have greatly improved working conditions resulting to greater efficiency with which services are delivered to clients.

In the course of their study, the students have, manifested dedication and commitment, spending time after office hours and the weekends to complete their course requirements, most of which are praxis related to their actual work and which affect LGU's plans and programs. In the process, they have become creative, innovative, resourceful

and a lot more patient. Such positive attitudes and values if translated to the work that they do at their LGUs can mean more progressive governance.

Furthermore, the plan formulation process which the students went through, e.g. SWOT Analysis, resource inventory, prioritization of economic enterprises, etc. has made them realize the potentials and limitations of their municipalities. They have now become more aware of their resources and they have learned to value and manage such resources properly so as to maximize their utilization to achieve better results. For some, it has led to their LGUs' forming alliances with other municipalities to strengthen their capacities.

LGU-based Interventions

The various trainings have helped the participants broaden their perspectives and skills as they take their proper places in the community or in their organization and get more meaning and satisfaction in the kind of work they do. It has provided the LGUs the useful tools and skills needed to build the structures or install the systems that can reduce their dependency on outside help or dole-out. The proper formulation of tax ordinances and the development of a tax map by the LGUs, for example, bring about considerable changes in tax collection, resulting in an observable increase in revenues.

The training interventions integrate new knowledge/skills/attitudes (KSAs) so that participants in their back-home situation are able to demonstrate the knowledge they have learned and apply the new skills they have acquired in:

1. understanding the community and doing community diagnosis;
2. installing better systems in revenue collection;
3. preparing correct and relevant legislations and developing the political will to implement approved legislations;
4. the conduct and facilitation of meetings and even resolution of conflicts;
5. the formulation of franchising and taxation manuals;
6. formulating environmental plan (coastal and upland);
7. developing economic enterprise studies;
8. formulating correct budget preparations in accordance with Commission on Audit (COA) regulations; and
9. accessing and finding opportunities to strengthen tie-ups with NGOs, POs, and other agencies as well.

The monitoring team of the Center has observed a profound change in both attitudes and actions in the LGU in terms of greater enthusiasm for local autonomy thru a more effective code implementation resulting in taking up more initiatives to work out problems at the local level.

An enhanced sense of voluntarism among trained personnel in the LGUs has also been observed. This is due to a reawakening of subdued passions in the countryside so that local government entities are right now more open to the involvement of the populace. Another affirming consequence of the LGU-based intervention is an increasing show of confidence and assertiveness among LGU officials personnel in taking actions in what they perceive is right, legitimate, and just, and demonstrating the trust that is expected of them as public servants.

Managing the Delivery of Basic Services

The CO-PAR training afforded participants a broader understanding of the meaning of community and the elements to be considered in the understanding of the community. With the conduct of the Barangay Survey, communities have developed the technical skills in the formulation of survey questionnaires, the making of a sampling design and on data gathering, organizing and analysis. They have learned to use actual data in their problem identification, in project prioritization and planning, and in decision-making. More important is that communities have realized that they need to learn how to conduct self-evaluation of their own needs, options and resources.

The conducting of consultative meetings and assemblies which are an integral part of the project, has provided opportunities for them to demonstrate and enhance their skills in leadership, in community organizing, and in facilitating and coordinating barangay activities.

The formation and training of the local research and PIME teams in each barangay provides a venue for the LGUs to widen people's participation in planning, project identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It demonstrates that a harmonious working relationship can be achieved even among people belonging to **different sectors**, with **different cultural orientations**, as long as they have a **common vision** and goal. LGUs/communities have thus, learned to perceive their development as an integrated, interactive whole, not limited to sectoral disciplines. The project has also made the LGU realize that for an action to be effective and successful, it must grow from a combination of both bottom-up and top-down programming and that

decision making and planning need to be based on a three-way inclusive dialogue involving:

- the whole community
- the government and other agency officials
- the academe and experts

The LGUs have become more open to learn new knowledge and develop new skills from the visits they had conducted to POs or other communities which have used the CO-PAR approach and have become successful in their development efforts. The experience has challenged and motivated them to work harder and with more commitment towards the realization of their dreams.

This was manifested in their show of dedication, commitment and enthusiasm in accomplishing their work- data collection and analysis during which they developed creativity and resourcefulness in getting necessary information.

What is most inspiring is the fact that the LGUs that have participated in the project are now more aware that they have a choice. They now make conscious efforts to have whatever plans they make directed towards their LGU's vision and to ensure that such plans address the needs of their community. The knowledge that they are stakeholders to any project/program planned and implemented has empowered the people to pursue their goal of a genuinely developed self-reliant LGU.

Institutional Strengthening of Communities through Participatory Planning

Twenty (20) members of the Municipal Core Facilitators have been organized and trained on Participatory

Planning (PP). Of the 20, 5 are members of the local Sanggunian (SB), 6 are representatives from the barangays, 5 are heads/staff of municipal line agencies, 2 are representatives of NGOs and 2 are staff of the LGUs. These facilitators have gone through the four training phases (which covers the 8 steps of the PP process). They have acquired new knowledge and skills on community mobilization and orientation; mapping and situational analysis; identification of potential areas of growth, prioritization and ranking; formulation of development vision, mission, and goals; and preparation, monitoring and evaluation of plans. These knowledge and skills have been further enhanced through their facilitating actual participatory planning at the barangay level. The team work and cohesiveness they have developed facilitate the conduct of participatory planning in the barangay.

As a result of the trainings and practicum conducted, twenty-seven (27) Barangay Planners have been organized and mobilized in Barangay Limbahan, thirty-five (35) in Barangay Macangao and twenty-seven (27) in Barangay Tagboa. To date, the following are the accomplishments of the Barangay Planners in the three barangays:

- preparation and finalization of the three maps necessary for the barangay profile;
- conduct of actual survey (tabulated and analyzed) of all households in the barangay;
- identification, prioritization, and ranking of the potential areas of growth; and
- formulation of their development vision, mission and goals.

The MCFs who have just finished the Training D are about to facilitate and assist the barangays in translating their development vision, mission and goals into plans.

Concluding Remarks

Total human development is the most important challenge developing nations, like the Philippines, are facing today. As the 20th century draws to a close and a new millenium approaches, it is importune to study and analyze what has worked in the past in order to focus on future actions.

The experience of the Ateneo de Davao University, has once more demonstrated the important role of the academe in the development process. Its support to the struggle of Local Government Units and the community in general to concretize sound governance which is supportive of sustainable human development cannot be overemphasized. The academe can spell THE DIFFERENCE when it commits its expertise to provide people and LGUs not only with useful skills but with scientific-based information which they can utilize in their planning, decision-making, and for strategy and policy formulation. It can likewise do a lot in strengthening the public-private sector partnership, enabling LGUs to efficiently and effectively deliver basic services and promote the general welfare within an area-based participatory framework.

Not to be relegated to the backseat, however, is the crucial role of the academe and other outside experts as watchdogs for equity and justice. They should always be there to warn the community of intrusions by the powerful and the mighty whose economic and political power has not been completely shattered and whose greed can significantly impede the realization of our people's aspirations for a life liberated from poverty and oppression.