

Sustaining a Community Extension in the Most Vulnerable Community

April Faith D. Frisnedi¹, Anita D. Frisnedi², Alvin Espinas³, Leah Digo⁴

¹LPT, PhD

²LPT, EdD

³LPT, EdD

⁴LPT, PhD

Abstract: *The HEIs in the Philippines are mandated to create meaningful research papers that lead to a pathway to relevant community extension programs thru CMO 52, s.2016. Engaging with the community by conducting a needs assessment would be the best form of research. Assessing the type of community programs is the first step in providing a relevant community project until it is considered sustainable. The study used a mixed approach of conducting survey questionnaires, interviews, and a focus group discussion. A modified survey questionnaire was applied to address socioeconomic concerns of the community. The participating community is considered one of the most vulnerable communities within the city. The participants of the study are homemakers comprised of males and females. Most participants were also affected by the preventive measures during the COVID-19 outbreak. Health, Livelihood, and Education were the main factors that the participants were concerned with; skills training is also an area they want to strengthen.*

Keywords: Community Extension, Livelihood, Skills training, poverty, Solo parent, vulnerable community

1. Introduction

The changes and seamless online learning seemed not the only changes that the HEI has adopted since the pandemic. HEIs continuously strive for change to strengthen their engagement with the international and local community.

The various accrediting bodies continuously guided the direction of the private and public colleges, with the accreditation and continuous evaluation of the program offerings and the required documentation. The Community Extension is one of the areas where the HEI is expected to comply as per CMO.52, s.2016.

The study conducted a community engagement in one of the vulnerable communities in the city of Muntinlupa to assess the needs of the community members and provide a relevant and extensive development plan for the community through an effective form of the communication channel.

The class members of the research handed out survey questionnaires, individual interviews, and an FGD (Focus Group Discussion).

An additional objective of the engagement was to have first-hand experience of overcoming the barriers to building an effective communication channel (Shwom & Snyder.2016).

The output of the FGD will also reveal the needs of the members' 'a no holds bar type of discussion that does not have to include politics and religion'.

Sitio San Antonio is also considered one of the vulnerable communities in Muntinlupa, wherein the community members have to deal with the exposure of air and water pollution in the area.

2. Related Literature

The essence of volunteerism is common among students at the earliest stages of their academic life. The Source of capital for the program is an onset problem among the volunteers. The university must identify the hesitations of students in the act of volunteerism. The sustainability of the community extension program must be clearly explained and visualized by its participants. (Rubio et al.2016)

Livelihood programs have proven to improve one's way of life, said improvements can enhance the quality of life for its members. The faculty assigned to the development and sustainability of the program must establish pieces of training to develop the entrepreneurial skills of its members. Establishing partnerships with industries may also benefit the sustainability of the livelihood program. (Borbon & Ylagan.2021)

Community Extension programs are proven to empower women to nurture positivity, worthiness, environmentalism, and accountability in the individual's sustainable development, a motivating factor for the women to push for improvement in their lives. It is a factor that partnering with various sectors like the HEIs, the LGUs, and other government agencies proved to be a driving force in the sustainability of community extensions. Women are proven to be worthy of the allocation of such project development. (Montalbo et al.2021)

The working capital and market for the product remain a problem. The required training and skills in using technological advancement for the women to progress is also a matter of concern. An effective communication channel to reach out to women to help them evolve may include using electronic gadgets like cellular phones, computers, and the television. (Jaka & Shava.2018).

Urban gardening has tremendously changed as the said revitalized the cities while promoting a healthy lifestyle. New trends in urban gardening brought by the new generation of gardeners contribute to the sustainability of the environment. The said contributes to urban agriculture, thus adding to the socio-economic benefit of the community. Knowing what you have grown is a healthy way of sustaining one's good health. It is ecologically sustainable, a food source for the family and the entire community. Urban agriculture provides numerous benefits, yet it remains underdeveloped. Urban agriculture generates food sources, ways to save energy, help with climate change, store water, and allow humanity to understand its ecological contribution. (Židak & Bedenik.2019)

The Aquaponic System helps with fish and vegetable production using minimal water and no soil and fertilizer. Aquaculture and hydroponics fit well in urbanized locations while helping the environment. (Akte et al.2018)

Technological and livelihood education supports the learner with the practical skills to survive. However, it will require rigorous support from the government and TESDA (Technical Education And Skills Development Authority). Skills' training is not a one-time thing since it requires continuous learning. (S. Villaruz.2018)

Community Extension can help on how its members improve their lifestyle. Such programs may improve their attitude towards life, saving money, the importance and value for the family. Educating the community can also help them value health and serve nutritious meals for the family. Women are also likely to help out in engaging in micro enterprising. (Llenares & Deocar.2018)

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to temporary shutdowns in industries which created a potential restoration of the global environment. Pollution in terms of water and air due to overcrowding was less, but waste from disposable materials to prevent the spread of the virus was enormous. The lockdown has caused limited movement that drove the loss of livelihood. (Macandog et al.2021)

Authentic learning is something that displays an effective way of educating individual learners. (Cortes.2020)

3. Results and Discussion

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Limited Means, Mother, and child with PWD

Participant refused to disclose her marital status and stated that she would prefer to focus on the current problem that she is experiencing by providing food on the table. The participant has two kids, one child with a disability. Her family struggled to manage how to get by and comply with the module requirements of the public school. The participant stated that they do not have proper lighting and they consider the walkway unsafe. Getting in and out of the community is a challenge as the tricycle fee would cost twenty-five pesos. She does not feel the presence of the local

barangay in the community. The participant stated that she only sees politicians in their community during the election season. *"It is also tiring to be used all the time for publicity, politicians take our pictures and then give as false promises of owning our house in the future, but in reality, it is just an empty promise."*

Case Study 2

Solo Parent

The participant stated that she was married and then abandoned by her husband. She landed in Sitio San Antonio as some family members have encouraged her to stay there as renting elsewhere in Muntinlupa is costly. She is currently working and managing just fine. She can provide for her children but not to the point that they have weekends at the mall. Her children are just happy to have food on the table and get by with their day-to-day needs. The participant stated that she considers herself lucky as she has obedient and responsible children. *"Life is already hard and keeping a grudge towards the father of my children does not help. I am just glad that God has given me obedient and responsible children"*. The participant stated that if there is anything that she could hope for, she wants to have a place of her own, where she does not have to worry about getting evicted. The participant thinks that she is an illegal settler in Sitio San Antonio and she fears that she could get evicted at any time.

Case Study 3

The faction in the community

The participant stated that the community is sometimes ununited. She thinks that most of them living near the creek are participate, while that living in the upper area does not participate. Those with family members working in the call center are not as eager as the residents near the creek. Not knowing when you will have your next meal is troublesome for the participant and her family, the breadwinner of the family is a construction worker. *"I never had a role model as far as I can remember, I never had the interest to go back to school, I wanted to learn to speak in English to apply in a call center. I am just afraid that I will immediately fail."* The participant said that there are times they will experience pieces of training for livelihood, but likely not to use it again, like soap making and stuff like that. There is just no consistency in the livelihood project and no sustainability of the community extension program.

Case Study 4

The Kitchenette

The participant is just a new resident in Sitio San Antonio, though a resident for almost six years now. She said that she has no recollection of being invited to participate in any community-related activity. The participant was not receiving any benefit from the local barangay. She never complained about it being new in the community. She expressed her intention of helping the community. *"I want a cleaner place of operation as most of the time there are dogs and cat litter in the walkway, the insects are a constant problem in the food preparation. I also want to learn how to*

promote my diner, but cleanliness is an issue in my working area.”

Case Study 5

Education

The participant stated she wanted to pursue further education but cannot do so as she needs to watch over her children and online learning is quite difficult with her limited means for the needed gadget and internet connection. The participant also stated the fear of going through senior high since she is not a part of the K12. *“I went to the local university near my home, but I was turned down as they are requiring me to have my senior high diploma. I don’t have that. I wanted to have a career in the future and finish a college program, but I have limited means”.*

Questionnaire

1) How the community is perceived by its community. Overall the participants disagree with the level of how they see their community.

a) My Community/Aking komunidad [Has adequate lighting in public spaces/May sapat na ilaw sa mga pampublikong espasyo]

The majority of the community members disagree.

b) My Community/Aking komunidad [Has recreational paths and walking trails/May mga recreational path at walking trail]

The participants are unsure of the benefits of recreational activities.

c) My Community/Aking komunidad [Is pedestrian-friendly/Ay pedestrian-friendly]

The majority of the community members disagree.

d) I am able to/Kaya ko [Easily travel by bicycle in my community (bicycle trails, bike lanes) /Madaling maglakbay gamit ang bisikleta sa aking komunidad (mga daanan ng bisikleta)]

The majority of the members are just not interested in having any bike lanes.

e) I am able to/Kaya ko [Easily travel by car in my community (paved roads, road maintenance) /Madaling maglakbay sakay ng kotse sa aking komunidad (mga sementadong kalsada, pagpapanatili ng kalsada)]

The majority of the community members disagree.

f) I am able to/Kaya ko [Access my downtown/commercial area by my transportation of choice/I-access ang aking downtown/komersyal na lugar sa pamamagitan ng aking napiling transportasyon]

The majority of the community members disagree.

2) Perceived Condition of the Community. Overall the participants are neutral with the condition of the community.

a) Housing in my community.../Ang aking komunidad ay may... [Is in good condition/Nasa mabuting kalagayan]

The majority of the members are just unsure of how to state the community’s condition.

b) Housing in my community.../Ang aking komunidad ay may... [Offers options that suit a variety of lifestyles and needs/Nag-aalok ng mga opsyon na angkop sa iba’t ibang uri ng pamumuhay at pangangailangan]

The majority of the members disagree.

c) Housing in my community.../Ang aking komunidad ay may... [Is affordable to households making a variety of incomes/Abot-kaya sa mga sambahayan na gumagawa ng iba’t ibang kita]

The majority of the members disagree.

d) Housing in my community.../Ang aking komunidad ay may... [Is available for the elderly/Available para sa mga matatanda]

The majority of the members agree.

3) Availability of Government Services. Overall recreation does not affect the community with a general response of neutral.

a) Recreational Center in the Community/Recreational Center sa Komunidad [There are enough public places for the community (parks, community rooms, squares) /May sapat na mga pampublikong lugar para sa komunidad (mga parke, mga silid ng komunidad, mga sukot)]

The majority of the members disagree.

b) Recreational Center in the Community/Recreational Center sa Komunidad [The cleanliness of downtown is adequate/Ang kalinisan ng downtown ay sapat]

The majority of the members disagree.

c) My community has.../Ang aking komunidad ay may... [A variety of employment opportunities that provide wages that enable employees to live in the community if they choose/Iba’t ibang oportunidad sa trabaho na nagbibigay ng sahod na paganahin ang mga empleyado na mamuhay sa komunidad kung pipiliin nila]

The majority of the members disagree.

d) My community has.../Ang aking komunidad ay may... [Legal services available/Available ang mga legal na serbisyo]

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

e) My community has.../Ang aking komunidad ay may... [Adequate financial services (banking) /Sapat na serbisyo sa pananalapi (pagbabangko)]

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

f) I am able to/Kaya ko [Run the majority of my daily errands without leaving my community/Patakbuhan ang karamihan ng aking mga pang-araw-araw na gawain nang hindi umaalis sa aking komunidad]

The majority of the members agree.

4) Employment, Education, Health, and Source of Livelihood. The Education and Health system is something in between among the participants. With a neutral decision among the members.

a) There are opportunities and services that meet the needs of my community for.../May mga pagkakataon at serbisyo na nakakatugonang mga

pangangailangan ng aking komunidad para sa. . . [K-12 education/Edukasyon ng pang Kinder to Grade 12]

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

- b) There are opportunities and services that meet the needs of my community for.../May mga pagkakataon at serbisyo na nakakatugonang mga pangangailangan ng aking komunidad para sa. . . [Post-secondary education (community college) /Post-secondary education (kolehiyo ng komunidad)]

The majority of the members disagree.

- c) There are opportunities and services that meet the needs of my community for.../May mga pagkakataon at serbisyo na nakakatugonang mga pangangailangan ng aking komunidad para sa. . . [Vocational training and education/Bokasyonal na pagsasanay at edukasyon]

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

- d) There are opportunities and services that meet the needs of my community for.../May mga pagkakataon at serbisyo na nakakatugon ang mga pangangailangan ng aking komunidad para sa. . . [Job training and education/Pagsasanay sa trabaho at edukasyon (TESDA)]

The majority of the members disagree.

- e) There are opportunities and services that meet the needs of my community for.../May mga pagkakataon at serbisyo na nakakatugonang mga pangangailangan ng aking komunidad para sa. . . [Health services (hospitals or clinics) /Mga serbisyonang pangkalusugan (mga ospital o klinika)]

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

- f) There are opportunities and services that meet the needs of my community for.../May mga pagkakataon at serbisyo na nakakatugonang mga pangangailangan ng aking komunidad para sa. . . [Pharmacy care and services/Pangangalaga at serbisyo ng parmasya (botika)]

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

- g) There are opportunities and services that meet the needs of my community for.../May mga pagkakataon at serbisyo na nakakatugonang mga pangangailangan ng aking komunidad para sa. . . [Adequate childcare options/Sapat na mga opsyon sa pangangalaga ng bata]

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

- 5) The Commitment of the Community Members. The participants are uncertain as some of the members of the community are uncertain of what contribution can they possibly offer, with a general decision of neutral.

- a) My community.../Ang aking komunidad... [Makes plans with its residents' best interests in mind/Gumagawa ng mga plano na nasa isip ang pinakamabuting interes ng mga residente nito]

The majority of the members disagree.

- b) My community.../Ang aking komunidad... [Works with local business owners to improve public and shared spaces to create a sense of community/Nakikipagtulungan sa mga lokal na may-ari ng negosyo upang mapabuti ang publiko at mga shared space upang lumikha ng isang pakiramdam ng komunidad]

The majority of the members disagree.

- c) My community.../Ang aking komunidad... [Is working to create a positive future for the downtown area/Nagsusumikap upang lumikha ng isang positibong kinabukasan para sa downtown area]

The majority of the members disagree.

- d) When it comes to my community, I am.../Pagdating sa aking komunidad, ako ay... [Excited by the changes and plans I feel are happening/Nasasabik ako sa mga pagbabago at planong nararamdaman kong nangyayari]

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

- e) When it comes to my community, I am.../Pagdating sa aking komunidad, ako ay... [Aware of opportunities to engage with my community leaders (public or town hall meetings) /Alam ang mga pagkakataong makipag-ugnayan sa aking mga pinuno ng komunidad (mga pulong sa publiko o bulwagan ng bayan)]

The majority of the members agree.

- f) When it comes to my community, I am.../Pagdating sa aking komunidad, ako ay... [Interested in the opportunity to provide feedback to my community's leaders regarding local issues/Interesado sa pagkakataong magbigay ng feedback sa aking mga pinuno ng komunidad tungkol sa mga lokal na isyu]

The majority of the members agree.

- 6) Home Opportunity and Household Income. The majority of the participants agree that creating a livelihood should be given focus in the community extension.

- a) Do you think there is need for more housing opportunities for residents in your community?/ Sa palagay mo ba ay kailangan ng mas maraming pagkakataon sa pabahay para sa mga residente sa iyong komunidad?

The majority of the members agree.

- b) Is the household income enough? Sapat ba ang kita ng sambahayan?

The majority of the members are uncertain about how to respond.

- 7) FGD

- 1) Please describe any new development, if any, that you believe would most benefit your community: (Pakilarawan ang anumang bagong pag-unlad, kung mayroon man, na pinaniniwalaan mong higit na makikinabang sa iyong komunidad:)

The majority of the participants agreed that the bridge is much better than before. They all agreed every member of the community is more responsible for the cleanliness of their area. A green and clean environment is something that they also want to experience. They

also wish to find a way to make the creek cleaner as they have children who play near the creek.

- 2) What type (s) of commercial development do you believe would benefit your community?/Anong (mga) uri ng komersyal na pag-unlad ang pinaniniwalaan mong makikinabang sa iyong komunidad?

The participants agreed that the electrical and wiring of their Meralco post needs fixing. They also believe that a mini-market and other public services like a health center nearby are beneficial to the community. Or anything that can help them put up a small business. The participants suggested pieces of training on haircuts and barbershops, they said that services would be the best form of livelihood for them. The participants all agreed that goods are quite harder to sell while home services are now in demand.

- 3) How do you learn about things happening in your community? Please select all that applies. Paano mo natutunan ang mga bagay na nangyayari sa iyong komunidad? Mangyaring piliin ang lahat ng naaangkop.

The participants all agreed that the use of Social Media is beneficial for communication, though a few still depend on word of mouth.

- 4) Would you like to have a Livelihood Program in the community?

The majority of the participants agreed, while only one stated that she is not interested in participating in a livelihood program, she would prefer a call center job. The participants of the FGD expressed that any form of livelihood is beneficial, urban farming, fishing, tailoring, and services like haircut, massage services, and other skilled-based services. They don't think that soap making and other forms of production that would involve selling are beneficial for them.

4. Summary of Findings

The participants all agreed that they do not have good lighting in the community, which unanimously agreed that this is something that the Barangay can help them with. The walkway is also unsafe as the motorcycles are using the small passage, it is unsafe for children, and accidents are likely to happen.

Since the walkway is narrow there is not even a pedestrian crossing within the walkways. Commuting is also problematic as the community members find the tricycle fee quite expensive. There is also no passage going thru the university campus.

The community members all wanted to be trained in providing haircuts; they think that there is a big market for home service. The participants believe that grooming is an essential part of any human being, and therefore people who are afraid of going to the barbershop and salons would prefer to have home service.

The community members also stated that some pieces of training have been offered but were not sustained, like soap making as the common denominator and they consider it impractical.

The majority of the participants also agreed that a greener environment would be a nice thing to see in the community. They have also heard about urban gardening and making the creek a clean one.

Conceptual Paradigm and Preposition of the Study

Proposed Solution on Health Care Services

Health is one of the areas that the community is vulnerable to and exposed to the evolving COVID-19. The Barangay Health Center may have a roving health mobile to visit the community. A once a month visit to the vulnerable communities may be an option. RA 6111 aims to strengthen the health services offered in the Philippines, and this should be evident in the objectives of the health care services of any LGU as per. The current Duterte Administration also promotes The Philippine Health Facility Development Plan (PHFDP) 2020-2040, which aims to strengthen its commitment to health services for the marginalized.

The use of mobility in pharmacies and telepharmacy is considered an effective means of reaching out to the public. The said modality has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Online consultation is the fastest way of getting in touch with the patient in need of medical care. (Unni et al.2021)

Proposed Solution on Education

Government Institutions may not have the flexibility for single and working parents. The private institutions may offer the kind of education that most solo parents and working individuals may need.

There is flexible learning that is community-based being offered at some private institutions like the Lyceum of Alabang, wherein learners have the option of the offline and online modality of learning.

The practice of Blended-Learning is up to the HEI, where several options of BL modality can be offered and are not limited to a certain degree. The BL considers the teacher, learner, and administration in the execution. (Anthony et al.2020)

Proposed Solution on Livelihood

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is beneficial to the community members as they fit the profile in terms of skills training.

TESDA and the private sectors offering their facility and expertise may execute the training needed by the community members.

Skills' training is an area where HEIs are limited to and therefore must consider the agencies that can accommodate the proposed training and development of the community members.

5. Conclusion and Limitations of the Study

- The paper has revealed a gap between the HEIs and their objective of successfully executing CMO 52, s.2016.
- The study has revealed that health, education, and a sustainable livelihood are the main concerns of the community members.
- The proposed solution is already within reach to execute the program and successfully bridge the ever-growing gap between the community and the HEI.
- The study is limited to some point and area (time and participants). The study stands to a pragmatist point-of-view.

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