

STRENGTHENING LGU AND CSOs PARTNERSHIP TOWARDS PARTICIPATIVE, RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*Mary 'O T. Penetrante, Dimpna C. Castigador,
Gilda G. Monsole and Lofel J. Diamante*

The study entitled Strengthening LGU and CSOs Partnership Towards Participative, Responsive and Sustainable Development is a technical assistance project that aimed to capacitate the tourism office of the City of Passi and the CSOs in the locality to effectively address the prioritized critical areas as identified in the Citizen-driven Priority Action Plan (CPAP) through a multi-stakeholder participatory approach.

Specifically the study aims to:

1. assess the current interventions or programs of the LGU tourism office to address the priority areas as identified in the CPAP;
2. present the results of the assessment to the stakeholders;
3. capacitate the stakeholders to develop the intervention/action plan that will effectively address the critical priority area identified;
4. capacitate the stakeholders to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to ensure that the action plan is implemented, corrective measures are undertaken, and;
5. assess the results/outcomes of the technical assistance provided to the tourism office of the City of Passi and CSOs including the changes (if applicable) in the Citizen Satisfaction Index System indicators.

The project used a multi-stakeholders' participatory approach and was implemented in the City of Passi, Iloilo from November 22, 2016 to March 22, 2017. It focused on assessing the service delivery performance of the local

government based on the citizen's level of knowledge, availment, and satisfaction of tourism promotion program/services of the tourism office. Sixty (60) sample respondents were selected using the multi-stage sampling technique.

The project was funded by the Department of Interior and Local government through their LRI Technical Assistance project in the amount of Two Hundred Thousand Pesos (P200,000). Its target beneficiaries include, the City of Passi local government unit (LGU) , civil society organizations (CSOs), business sectors, associations, and other groups/sectors in the local community. Key activities include conduct of desk review, conduct of face-to-face interview, processing and analyzing data, preparing reports and presentation slides, presentation of results to the stakeholders, conduct of stakeholders planning workshop, preparing report.

The following are the key findings:

Respondents' Demographic Profile. Majority of the respondents were female, age 43.88 years and married, household heads or spouses of household heads, had stayed in the household for more than 40 years, half of them attained college undergraduate or graduate education and some with high school or master education. Most of them were not attending school at the time of the study. Most of them were employed, working at least 40 hours per week within the barangay or city and receiving an average monthly income of P10,000.00.

Respondents Housing Profile. Two in every ten respondents own the house and lot where they live which were generally made of concrete materials. Majority use own flush/water-sealed toilets and bottled or deep well water for drinking. Almost all have own electrical connection and television where they source news.

The respondents' level of awareness of LGUs' Tourism Promotion Programs was very low (awareness net score of -20.67) and of the five the tourism promotion programs, the lowest was on regulation and supervision of tourism-related establishments and ecotourism program and/or natural conservation programs. Major challenges facing LGU were 1) lack of effective communication system and coordination among concerned agencies and local communities and 2) Limited human and financial resource to pursue more aggressive awareness programs.

The respondents' availment/Benefits of LGU's Tourism Promotion Programs/Services was low (availment/benefits net score of 31.21) particularly on regulation and supervision of tourism-related establishments and safety and security in tourism areas. The challenges facing the citizens were 1) limited information to complete the availment of these services and 2) high availment cost especially for residents of far flung barangays while the challenges facing the LGU were 1) lack of effective communication system and coordination among concerned agencies and local communities and 2) limited human and financial resource.

The respondents' overall assessment rating of the LGU's Tourism Promotion Programs/Services is Fair (area assessment is 56.08). This shows that LGU exhibited desired/satisfactory performance as expected and their on-going initiatives are delivering results. However low assessment rating was on the development and maintenance of tourism attractions and facilities and ecotourism program and/or natural conservation programs. The challenge is on low level of awareness and low level of availment of the government programs among the residents.

Very high importance net score (86.76) of the tourism promotion programs particularly on safety and security in tourism areas and on the development and maintenance of tourism attractions and facilities. The result

show that the respondents regard the tourism promotion services to be highly valuable in their own personal, household or business needs. It is therefore construed that there is an urgent demand for improvement in these services as mentioned above. The challenges is on addressing the issue on collaboration and commitment among individual and group's, prioritization, unintegrated implementation of programs and activities, and the almost non-existence of in-place monitoring and evaluation system for the programs/activities implemented.

Project Outcome

The beneficiary of the projects are the LGU and its tourism office and employees, CSOs, business sectors, associations, other sectors in the locality.

The project provided the opportunity for LGU Passi, particularly its tourism office to determine the citizens' level of awareness, availment/benefits, satisfaction, and the perceived relevance and importance of tourism promotion programs in their personal, households and business needs, thus a more informed plan of actions and interventions was developed. It is expected that these planned acts/interventions result to a more responsive public service.

The LGU, CSOs, business sectors, and other various groups who participated in this project were provided with opportunity to discuss together the critical issues related to tourism promotion programs and to identify interventions that can address these issues. As a result, more active participation of these sectors in public governance was achieved.

The stakeholders were provided with the avenue to share their experiences, thoughts and ideas and to learn from others experiences that informed their decision-making

process in identifying workable interventions to address the challenges they are or will be experiencing.

The project was able to capacitate the LGU and CSOs and other groups of stakeholders to come-up with an action plan that laid-out the agreed interventions to address the critical issues in their locality.

Capacitated the LGU and CSOs and other groups of stakeholders to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan that they will be using in ensuring that their planned activities are properly implemented.

Promoted increased learning opportunities among individuals and/or groups of stakeholders and capacitated the LGU and CSOs with tested model in conducting similar participatory workshops among their constituents.

Establishment of linkages among project partners and beneficiaries that encourages collaborations and cooperation among them.

Provided the LGU and CSOs and other stakeholders a venue to clarify some issues that had kept them from working together. As a result, stakeholders were more open to share their resources and to collaborate with each other.

For the project team, it has provided an opportunity to learn from the experiences of the LGU and CSOs and to develop new ways on how to effectively assist local communities towards better public governance.

Central Philippine University as the Local Research Institute and its faculty involved in this project were benefited as well from this project. The university and faculty have performed their mission of capacitating local communities to pursue development programs that promotes whole person education inside and outside the university.

The national government will benefit from the results of this project. It will inform their decisions on what programs to pursue and how to management using the experiences and results from this project.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Very low area awareness net score of Tourism Promotion Programs. The area awareness net score of the respondents was very low (-20.67). Of the five (5) tourism promotion programs, the development and maintenance of tourism attractions and facilities and tourism marketing and promotion assistance program have the highest percentage of aware respondents. On the other hand, regulation and supervision of tourism-related establishments and eco-tourism program and/or natural conservation programs have the lowest proportions of aware respondents.

Key Issues. It was discussed that the low level of awareness could results to low level of availment of services which in turn could result to low level of participation in public governance. The challenges identified in addressing this critical priority issue were: 1) lack of effective communication system and coordination among concerned agencies and local communities; 2) Limited human and financial resource to pursue more aggressive awareness programs.

Recommendations. The participants recommended the following: 1) more financial and physical support from the government; 2) strengthen the initiatives in promoting the tourism promotion programs (e.g. regular updating of tourism promotion collaterals, massive implementation of localized school curriculum in all levels in the city, use of tri and social media in promoting tourism promotion programs; and because of limited resources 3) encourage active participation from local residents.

Low availment/benefits net score from Tourism Promotion Programs. The area availment/ benefit net score is low (31.21). The program with highest proportion of respondents to have benefited were ecotourism and/or natural conservation programs and the development and maintenance of tourism attraction and facilities while the program with lowest proportion of respondents to have benefited were safety and security in tourism areas.

Key Issues. On the side of the LGU, the 1) lack of effective communication system and coordination among concerned agencies and local communities and 2) limited human and financial resource were identified as the perennial challenges. Likewise, these challenges constrained the residents due to their limited resources and effective communication system and coordination to avail/comply with the requirements to maximize the availment/benefits from these programs.

Recommendations. The recommendations for assessment result 1 were carried over, viz: 1) more financial and physical support from the government; 2) strengthen the initiatives in promoting the tourism promotion programs (e.g. regular updating of tourism promotion collaterals, massive information dissemination through tri and social media in promoting tourism promotion programs; and 3) transparency and accountability in delivering public service. These recommendations are the same recommendations from the interview respondents (refer to Table 6 above).

Fair assessment net score of the Tourism Promotion Programs. The assessment net score is fair (56.08). Of those who were benefited said they were generally “satisfied” of the tourism promotion programs of the LGU. Among the five (5) programs, safety and security in tourism areas and tourism marketing and promotion assistance program had the highest “definitely satisfied” rating while development and maintenance was the only program with “definitely dissatisfied” rating.

Key issues. It was highlighted in the discussions that the low level of awareness among the residents could have caused their low level of availment of the government programs and for those who were aware and availed of the services, have fair overall assessment of the delivery of these services. It is therefore important to address the awareness issue to address the availment issue. Moreover, the overall assessment issue can be addressed by strengthening/improving the on-going activities and/or additional efforts toward improvement is necessary.

Recommendations. The participants recommended that the interventions identified to address critical issues on awareness and availment/benefits as mentioned above should be pursued in addition/enhancement to the on-going activities being implemented in the city. In addition, they recommended that there is a need to improve and maintain the ecotourism-caves, the facilities and amenities of establishments or centers in eco-tourism sites, the road networks to/from these tourism sites, the transportation services to/from these tourism sites, and the security and safety regulations/policy/ordinances supporting tourism related programs. Other recommendations include financial and technical assistance on livelihood for local residents in support of tourism-related activities/programs in the locality. These recommendations are the same recommendations from the interview respondents (refer to Table 6 above).

Very high Importance of Tourism Promotion Services. The area importance net score is “very high” (86.76). Of the five programs, safety and security in tourism areas had the highest number of respondents who rated it “very important” followed by development and maintenance of tourism attractions and facilities. On the other hand, regulation and supervision of tourism-related establishments had the highest number of respondents who rated it “undecided”.

Key Issues. The interlocking challenges facing the LGU, CSOs, business sector, non-government and other sectors in the community require strong collaboration and commitment to address the critical priority issues. A failure of one sector has ripple effect to the other sectors. However, collaboration and commitment among these sectors are constrained by individual or group's short term interest and priorities, unintegrated implementation of programs and activities, and the almost non-existence of in-place monitoring and evaluation system for the programs/activities implemented. As a result, most of the programs and activities start on a high note but fail to sustain it.

Recommendations. The participants recommended that first, there is a need to organize the various groups/associations/agencies involve in promoting tourism initiatives in the city and together find ways on how each groups/associations/agencies initiatives can be integrated in the city's tourism promotion programs. A multi-stakeholder's participatory forum can be organized to provide avenue to discuss and prioritize the concerns of each group and to come-up with a workable plan. This plan will be used to guide each sector as they pursue the planned activities in respect to their roles and functions. A monitoring and evaluation system should be in-place so that the stakeholders and all sectors concerned are informed of what is going on in the community.

Future Plans (this part may also include future endeavors and/or partnerships that resulted from the project's outcome and the project team's collaboration with different stakeholders, i.e. CSOs, LGUs and other organizations)

The stakeholder's recommended action and monitoring and evaluation plan was submitted to the LGU for consideration during their strategic planning in February. Once approved, the tourism office will implement the

planned actions in collaboration with the concerned agencies identified during the workshop.

One of the activities identified in the CPAP of the tourism office is the development of their Tourism development plan. This activity is still on-going and currently the LGU is in need of consultants to help them develop this plan. It was agreed during the workshop that the Tourism office will formally ask assistance from CPU and take the opportunity to enroll this activity under the university's outreach program to minimize cost.

The LGU also needs assistance in developing and enhancing their tourism promotion collaterals. A possibility of a partnership between LGU Passi tourism office and College of computer Studies is being explored to address this need.

During the workshop, some business owners mentioned that they need technical assistance in terms of developing their product packaging. The College of Packaging Engineering of the university is offering these services to local SMES for free through its students immersion and research program. There are several business owners who have started exploring these opportunities.

It was recommended in this study that a follow-up assessment will be done to ensure continuous process improvement and enhancement of tourism promotion programs. A partnership between a local academe and the LGU will be beneficial as each would be able to achieve their common goal of economic and social development for local communities.