

Participatory Planning and Budgeting*

This project is one of the three projects under the “Enhancing the Impact of Citizen-Led Transparency Initiatives for Good Governance Project” of the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP) with the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) and Coalition Against Corruption-Makati Business Club (CAC-MBC). It was implemented by the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG) through its institutional member, the DWCB Young Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (DWCB-YCCAGG), in the nine barangays of Penarrubia, Abra. The DWCB-YCCAGG is an organization of students of the Divine Word College of Bangued. The project was intended to be implemented for one year which started in February 2013 and should have been completed in January 2014 but due to unavoidable circumstances, the implementers had to request for the extension of its implementation. Actually, the project will continue until the beneficiaries who are the barangay officials and residents through the formed CSOs can already do by themselves “participating in the barangay planning and budgeting”.

Capacity Building

As part of the preparation of the project, representatives of the group attended the “Proposal Development Workshop” that was held in Dagupan City where they learned some inputs to improve their project proposal. From the lectures given by the organizers of the workshop and the sharing of workshop outputs by the participants coming from *KARSA and*

*Final report on the Participatory Planning and Budgeting project implemented in Penarrubia, Abra by the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG).

RECITE, the CCAGG representatives have gained more knowledge on Local Government Participatory Planning and Budgeting that helped them in the implementation of their project.

Before the trainings in the barangays were started an inception meeting was conducted by PTF, ANSA-EAP, and MBC-CAC at SODEC, Galicia, Pidigan, Abra which was attended by representatives of the DWCB-YCCAGG. After the meeting, the YCCAGG representatives re-echoed what they learned to their members and officers. Schedules of the different activities for the projects and tasking were also done.

To better prepare the implementers of the project, Trainors' Trainings on Participatory Planning and Budgeting, and Local Government Monitoring were conducted. These were held at the Divine Word College of Bangued on February 25, March 3 and 10, 2013. Speakers were invited for the seminar-workshops while the advisers of the DWCB-YCCAGG were the facilitators in the small group discussions and workshops. After the trainors' trainings the YCCAGG members and officers felt that they were not ready yet to conduct the trainings in the barangays by themselves thus, they decided that they will attend the first barangay trainings to be conducted. They, however, appreciated their exposure and being able to do something for their provincemates. They had so many things to do in school but they tried to make time for sharing their knowledge on how the people in the barangays can participate in the affairs of the government. They did the work on weekends and during their free time. They enjoyed so much working as a group with the barangay officials and residents. They said that the experience is quite different from the monitoring of government infrastructure projects that they used to do.

A week before the scheduled trainings in each barangay, designated members of the YCCAGG started to contact the prospective participants. They visited again the barangay captains/chairmen with whom they had initial talks, to finalize the date, venue and participants of

the trainings. The identified participants were: the Barangay Chairman, members of the Barangay Council, Secretary, Treasurer and 31 residents of each barangay. The assigned YCCAGG members went around the barangays to invite the identified participants. They also requested the Barangay Chairman to invite them to make sure that they attend. They have to tell them that they do not worry about their food during the trainings because they will be provided two snacks and lunch each day. This was necessary because they knew that many of them will not be able to come for the reason that they have no “decent meal” to bring with them to the trainings, or they have no time to attend because they have to look for something to cook for their next meal. Some mothers also had to bring with them their small children to the trainings because no one takes care of them if they were left at home. Knowing the kind of life in the barangays, the project implementers anticipated this, thus they had to prepare additional food for them. Like in any social gatherings in the barangays where serving food is a part, RSVP does not work or is not applicable. There will always be people who are invited by the invited participants, or not even invited at all who attend the gatherings. This was one learning of some of the YCCAGG from the implementation of the project.

The Seminar-Workshops on Participatory Planning and Budgeting, and LGU Monitoring for the officials and residents of Poblacion and Dumayco were conducted at the Botanical Garden, Dumayco, Penarrubia on April 3, 8 and 20, 2013. The same trainings were conducted for the officials and residents of Lusuac on June 16 and 23, 2014; at Riang on August 16-17, 2013; at Tattawa on September 28-29, 2013; at Patiao on October 5-6, 2013; at Malamsit on November 17 and 24, and December 8, 2013; at Sta. Rosa on November 24 and December 1, 2013; and at Namarabar on December 1 and 14, 2013.

The participants learned how to use the score card to monitor the implementation of their barangay development plan and budget. They found it easy and more simple to use.

The officials and residents of each of the nine barangays attended/participated in the trainings together. This was purposely done by the trainers so that they will have common understanding of the topics –Participatory Planning and Budgeting, and LGU Monitoring. This was also a good start for them to work as partners in their barangay planning and budgeting. During the workshops it was really good looking at them working together for the formulation of their barangay vision, mission and goals, identifying their needs and problems, offering and discussing the solutions to their problems.

After the trainings in the first two barangays the trainers noticed that many of the trainees had difficulties of understanding the topics discussed. They found it too academic. A training needs assessment was conducted to improve the learning activities. As a result, the trainers re-designed the training modules to make them more learner-oriented. More learning activities were also done to encourage the participants to speak out and be more active in the different sessions of the trainings.

One important output of the trainings was the formation of organizations of the residents in each barangay which are the following:

People's Association for Social Accountability (PASA) – Poblacion

People's Association for Social Accountability (PASA) – Dumayco

Lusuac Association for Social Accountability (LASA) – Lusuac

Riang Sunrise Association for Social Accountability (RSASA) – Riang

Tattawa Association for Social Accountability (TASA) – Tattawa

Patiao Organization for Social Accountability (POSA) – Patiao

People's Association for Social Accountability (PASA) – Malamsit

People's Association for Social Accountability (PASA) – Sta. Rosa

People's Association for Social Accountability (PASA) – Namarabar

The officers of each PO were elected and inducted immediately by their Barangay Chairman. They also formulated their Constitution and By-Laws with the assistance of the YCCAGG. They submitted these to their Barangay Council for accreditation so that they could be considered for membership in the Barangay Development Council which is tasked of preparing the Barangay Development Plan.

The new POs in the nine barangays are intended to be consolidated into a federation of POs for social accountability. This will strengthen the barangay POs. They could share each others experience that others can adopt. As federation, they will be unified when dealing with higher LGUs, government agencies and other similar organizations. This may also help them sustain the activities that they have started.

Problems/Difficulties Encountered

Conducting the trainings was not as easy as the DWCB-YCCAGG perceived when they were preparing the project proposal. Some difficulties were experienced by the group even before conducting the trainings. Before the trainings in Lusuac, mobilization activities were done with the help of a member of the Barangay Council of the place who is working at DWCB. A letter was sent to the Barangay Chairman through the mentioned Barangay Kagawad, to inform him of the proposed schedule of the trainings. With his positive response, the group immediately went to see him to finalize the schedule and venue of the trainings. He was also requested to remind his fellow barangay officials, and the identified residents-participants of the trainings. The group expected him to be in the trainings but he never attended. He only came when he was

requested to administer the Oath of Office of the newly elected officers of the Lusuaac Association for Social Accountability. It was however, in his house where the training participants and the organizers took their lunch. His wife and other barangay officials were also there to welcome the group. After the trainings, they learned that the Barangay chairman was no longer interested to run for re-election. They thought that this was the reason why he did not participate in the trainings. The Barangay Kagawad, Treasurer and Secretary who participated in the trainings were re-elected or reappointed during the barangay election last October 2013. With them and the members and officers of LASA, the group hopes that the project in the barangay will continue.

In the Operational Plan for the project, all of the trainings in the nine barangays should have been finished at the end of the fourth month of the one-year project. The group encountered some problems that caused the delay of the trainings and activities that were to be done after the trainings. Before the elections in May 2013 and October 2013 it was very difficult to coordinate with the barangay officials. Although they were so eager to have the trainings when the project was initially presented to them, the group had a hard time meeting them. It is either they could not be found or they do not reply to communications- letters, and text calls through their cellphones. If they were lucky to see them, they said they were busy and the residents were also busy in their farms so no one can go to the trainings. The group learned later from residents that the Barangay Chairmen were instructed by somebody not to welcome the CCAGG if ever they go to their barangays. They believed that this was because of the “Restoring Electoral Integrity in Abra” project that was piloted by the CCAGG in Penarrubia which primary purpose was to end vote-buying. To be able to continue the project, the YCCAGG officers and advisers agreed to reengage the mayor of Penarrubia to explain to her that this project is different from the election

project. They sent her a letter requesting for an appointment. The request was granted and so they had a meeting with her in her office. She promised the group that she will talk to the barangay chairmen during their meeting. This was done after the barangay election in October 2013.

Initial talks with the barangay captain of Riang were done but every time the designated YCCAGG adviser goes to him to finalize arrangements for the trainings in his barangay he is always out of town. Very often he goes to Manila where his family is residing. To be sure that anyone of the YCCAGG members or advisers will see him when he comes home the coordinator of this project asked one of his neighbors to inform her through text so that she would meet him immediately.

One learning experience of the group is to meet personally the barangay chairman when they are making arrangements for the conduct of the trainings. They learned this when one group of the YCCAGG members sent a letter to the barangay captain of their assigned barangay informing him about the trainings. They asked a classmate who is from the barangay and who is not a member of the YCCAGG to deliver the letter. According to their classmate the barangay chairman does not allow them to conduct the trainings in his barangay because he received an instruction from the town mayor not to allow the CCAGG to conduct seminar. If only they were there then they would have explained to the barangay chairman that their project is different from what the mayor was referring to. They should have informed him that the trainings were already conducted in three barangays of the town. They should have also a dialogue with him to explain the importance of the trainings. On August 3, 2013 the group visited him and presented the project. He said that the project is very good but there was no schedule fixed for the trainings. He told the group that he will call the project director when they are ready for the trainings for

they were so busy implementing road projects at that time. The trainings in the barangay were conducted after the barangay election when he was no longer the barangay chairman. The new barangay chairman who retired from the military service supports citizen participation and is very cooperative.

Immediately after the trainings in the three barangays, the officials and officers of PASA/LASA with the assistance of the YCCAGG started to prepare their Barangay Development Plans. Surveys were conducted using an eight-page tool for the barangay profiles which were used as bases for their planning. This activity required so much time of the enumerators especially so because the respondents were not home when they visit them to do the survey. They are busy working in their farms or elsewhere. Some of the questions are not also easy to answer or can not be answered immediately by the respondents without looking at some documents. For example, the area of farm that they are tilling/owned; their monthly income (for one who does not have a regular income, this is not easy to answer), etc. Because of these, the group thought that they may not be able to get the true profile of the barangays. They tried to explore other tools for the barangay profiling and came up with a simpler one. They also went to the Municipal Planning Officer of Penarrubia to gather data for the preparation of the Development Plans of the barangays.

During the trainings on Participatory Planning the group learned from the officials of each barangay that they have their formulated vision and mission. But when they were asked to explain them they could hardly do it because they said somebody did it for them. The speaker/facilitator explained what their vision and mission mean. They were also asked if their vision is what they really want for their barangay and they answered yes. They were told that

these will be part of their Barangay Development Plan as these will be the bases of all their plans (for their barangay).

From the trainings conducted, the group has confirmed their initial findings that the barangay officials have limited knowledge on planning and budgeting and that the residents are not aware that they should participate in the making of plans and budget of their barangay. They thought that these should be done only by their officials. All the participants expressed their willingness to participate in the affairs of their barangay government but most often they lack the time and they do not know how. The same was true with the trainors/project implementers who are students and teachers. They can only be with them on weekends and sometimes they can not even make it (on weekends) especially when there were also activities in school or when they prepared for exams or they have to be with their families. To be able to do what should be done each group prepared their schedule of activities and tried to follow strictly which the assigned advisers monitored.

Another problem of the project implementers was their limited logistical support. They had only one LCD projector and sometimes there was no available laptop that they can use for the conduct of trainings.

During the Knowledge Sharing Meeting held on December 3, 2013 at the Astoria Plaza Hotel in Pasig City the project implementers requested PTF, ANSA-EAP and MBC-CAC that they will focus on the two most cooperative barangays, Dumayco and Namarabar for the remaining duration of the project which was about two months. They explained that it would be impossible for them to have the Barangay Development Plans of the nine barangays completed because of the problems they encountered during the implementation of the project such as:

limited time of the YCCAGG volunteers, difficulty of coordinating with barangay officials who do not have the political will to implement participatory mechanisms, lack of support from higher LGU; lack of funds/logistics, among others. The request was approved.

The preparation of the Barangay Development Plan of the two barangays was discussed with the respective barangay chairmen and barangay council. Additional inputs for the draft of the barangay profiles, problems, issues, needs that were needed for the plan were provided by them during meetings. In one of the meetings it was reiterated to them what was said during their trainings that it is not only the Barangay Council but the Barangay Development Council that prepares the development plan of the barangay. They were reminded then to form their Barangay Development Council which is composed of the following as provided under the Local Government Code of 1991: barangay chairman or punong barangay as head of the barangay development council; members of the barangay council or sangguniang barangay; representatives of non-governmental organizations operating in the barangay who shall constitute not less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the members of the fully organized council; and a representative of the congressman.

The formation of the barangay development councils of the two barangays caused more delays for completing the project thus, it was only last April 2014 when the prepared Barangay Development Plans were presented to the barangay people for their approval, and for their adoption. The Plans are for the years 2014 to 2016 which is the term of the barangay officials. It was suggested that they should have a five or six-year plan but they preferred to plan only for their current term.

The work of the YCCAGG in the nine barangays of Penarrubia which they started with this project will continue even for the years to come. It has been approved by the Community Extension Office of DWCB as one of the community extension or outreach activities of the school. They intend to have the two barangays – Dumayco and Namarabar be the models for participatory planning and budgeting not only for the other seven barangays of Penarrubia but for all of the barangays of the province of Abra.

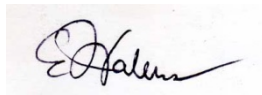
Lessons Learned

From the experiences of the project implementers in the implementation of the project they learned the following lessons:

1. Community immersion makes the work of the CSO easier. Meeting with local officials and leaders directly is necessary for smooth coordination for the conduct of activities.
2. It is easier to work with local officials and leaders who have the political will to work with and for the people, and who remain non-partisan. It is really difficult working on a project that requires both officials and residents to work together but one of them is not willing to. The YCCAGG has encountered this in most of the nine barangays but they did not stop. It pays sometimes to become “makulit”. They kept on going to them until they were able to conduct the trainings. This happened because the people/residents were on their side. Patience is needed for the transformation of people.
3. Local officials and residents participating in trainings together could end up good partners in governance. In barangays Dumayco and Namarabar most if not all of the barangay chairmen and barangay council members participated in the trainings. It was also their barangay chairmen who were very eager to have their development plans completed. The residents of the two barangays are likewise very cooperative.

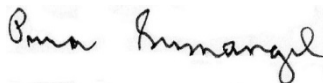
4. Commitment and knowledge on planning and budgeting of both officials and residents/people are necessary to make participatory planning and budgeting work.

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