# Development of a comprehensive economic enterprise development program in the Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to design a sustainable and comprehensive economic enterprise development program for communities in Cabanatuan City through an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach. The concept consists of two phases: capacity building and company development. Community capacity building focuses on enabling all community members to acquire the skills and competencies they need to take more responsibility for their own lives and contribute to inclusive local development. The key components of the capacity development phase are community planning, community organization, community need assessment, gap analysis, project programming, project execution, project monitoring, and evaluation. Community planning involves choosing the most viable community business ventures based on six economic factors: market, capital, raw materials, service providers, support infrastructure, and appropriate technology. Enterprise development is a low-cost, straightforward training strategy for aiding entrepreneurs and microbusiness owners with business planning and expansion. This component is further subdivided into enterprise growth, local government assistance, developing industry connections, enterprise marketing and promotion, enterprise performance monitoring and evaluation, and impact assessment. Acquiring economic aptitude is essential for the survival of Cabanatuan City's citizens and provides them with a sense of self-worth and communal pride.

**Contribution/Originality:** The findings of this research revealed a more comprehensive strategy for designing a community's economic development program. Several countries may use this as a model for their own initiatives if they so wish.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Micro and small enterprises play a crucial part in the economic growth of the Asia-Pacific region, since they account for up to 96% of all businesses and 95% of domestic employment. Access to entrepreneurship and self-employment via the micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) sector may provide effective coping techniques for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in order to better their lives and generate new prospects for decent work.

Therefore, there is a need for training programs that can help businesses to overcome obstacles encountered in low-resource/poor-capacity environments when inadequate business development services are provided. Using current knowledge and experience, such an approach should enable quick and targeted solutions to social and

economic risk. However, experts in rural and community development recommend that community initiatives should be needs-based.

Despite the increasing popularity and proof of the efficacy of ABCD programs, the needs-based approach to community development remains widespread. Researchers in the social sciences, as well as foundations and non-governmental organizations, often conduct "needs assessments" in order to satisfy organizational and financing objectives. The result of tackling problems with this negative mentality is that it can have a devastating effect on a community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mathie, 2009).

A needs assessment is a methodical investigation of a population or community to determine the existing level of resources, such as knowledge, talents, interests, and methods, that are relevant to the concern, desire, or purpose being assessed. Assessing the requirements of a local community aids in the successful execution of a project and ultimately results in a more sustainable community extension program. Evaluating the demands of local communities is a component of community development as it helps to enhance their quality of life. In addition, Green, Moore, and O'Brien (2006) argued that community development requires a thorough evaluation to raise the ability of the host community to enhance the quality of life. In addition, it advocates future community-engaged activities and workforce development, which are crucial for responding to the growing need for community needs assessments.

Agriculture is the primary source of earnings for the municipality under examination. Poultry and cow farming are prevalent sources of income within the municipality. This investigation examines economic, health, social, and environmental needs. According to the Department of Interior and Local Government's (DILG) evaluation, the municipality passed in the areas of fiscal responsibility, disaster readiness, social protection, business friendliness and competitiveness, law and order, and environmental management.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

The study aims to develop a comprehensive community-based economic enterprise as a flagship program of the university for economic enterprise extension programs. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Determine the resources and needs of the community through an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach. This involves:
   - Community problems and needs mapping.
   - Community assets mapping.
2. Develop a framework for a sustainable economic enterprise development program.

## 2. METHOD AND DESIGN

This study uses the descriptive method to assess the needs of the community in Cabanatuan City as a basis for the development of a sustainable economic enterprise program. The study was conducted in three barangays/districts of Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija. The respondents are key officials in the barangays and representatives from the target groups.

The city of Cabanatuan has a total land area of 282,75 square kilometers, or 109.17 square miles. This constitutes 4.97% of the province of Nuevo Ecija's total land area. According to the results of the 2020 census, there were 327,325 inhabitants. This represented 14.17% of Nueva Ecija's total population and 2.64% of Central Luzon's total population. From these numbers, it can be concluded that the population density is 1,158 people per square kilometer, or 2,998 people per square mile.

To gather relevant and reliable data, the participants underwent an asset-based community development (ABCD) needs assessment. The first stage in implementing ABCD is to examine the community's resources by compiling an inventory of its individual capabilities. This may be accomplished by creating a map of the neighborhood's resources. By holding discussions with community members, we can determine the abilities and experiences that have the

potential to benefit the community. A focus group discussion was conducted with representatives from relevant offices and agencies.
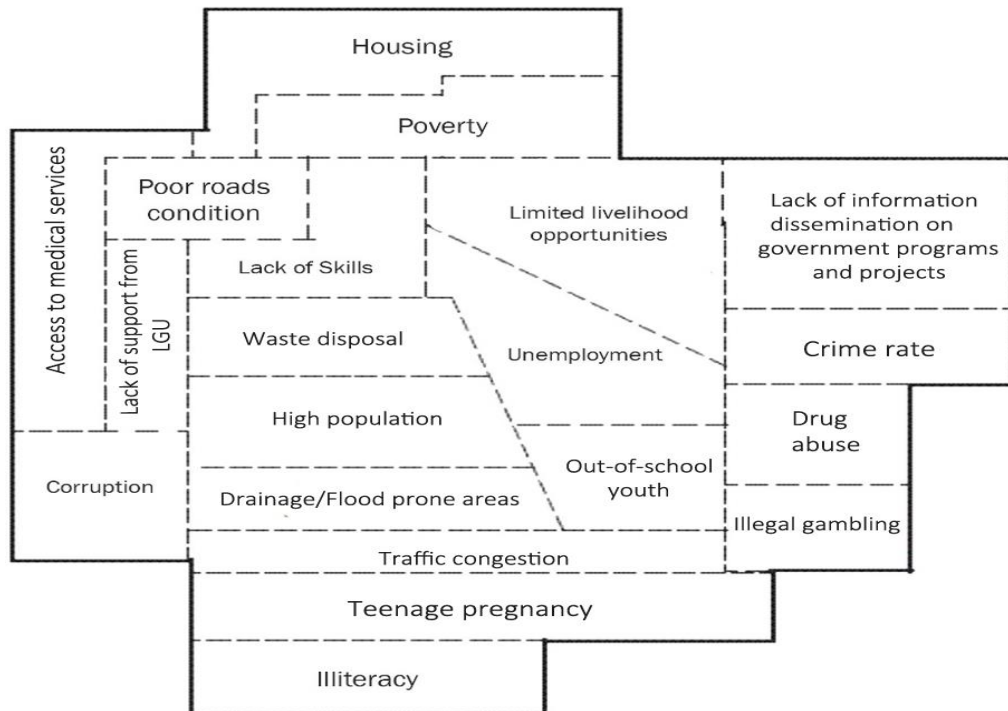


**Figure 1.** Community needs and problems mapping in Cabanatuan City.

Figure 1 shows the community needs and problems in Cabanatuan City. These were identified through a participative appraisal of the participants' actual experiences. The problems identified are housing, poverty, access to medical services, poor road conditions, lack of support from the local government unit (LGU), lack of skills, limited livelihood opportunities, unemployment, high population, waste disposal, out-of-school youth, drug abuse, crime rate, illegal gambling, teenage pregnancy, traffic congestion, illiteracy, and corruption.

In the twenty-first century, research possibilities, methods, and surroundings are in constant motion, and the same is true for ethical dilemmas. Thus, privacy and secrecy issues have been studied beyond what is necessary by law. In compliance with the Code of Ethics, it was ensured that all data gathered from respondents were obtained with their complete, informed permission. Consequently, successful and credible research results may be obtained by valuing the respondents' viewpoints and recording their suggestions on the issues.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Resources and Needs of the Community Through an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach

### 3.1.1. Community Needs and Problems Mapping

Figure 2 contains the identified community needs and issues map, which was created during the ABCD needs assessment. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) provided the basis for the framework. During the needs assessment, the vast majority of participants reached a consensus that the most widespread issue in their respective barangays is a shortage of viable work options, which contributes to a high unemployment rate. They went on to say that it became tough for them to build their own company and remain competitive as a result of the high population and the huge commercial companies in the area. Some people brought up the fact that there is information on accessible government projects and programs; however, the responsible authorities failed to communicate enough information on the execution of these projects and programs. Poverty, drug addiction, the crime rate, a lack of livelihood skills, bad road

conditions, flood-prone regions, a lack of assistance from the local government units (LGUs), traffic congestion, and housing are some of the other key challenges that have been noted.
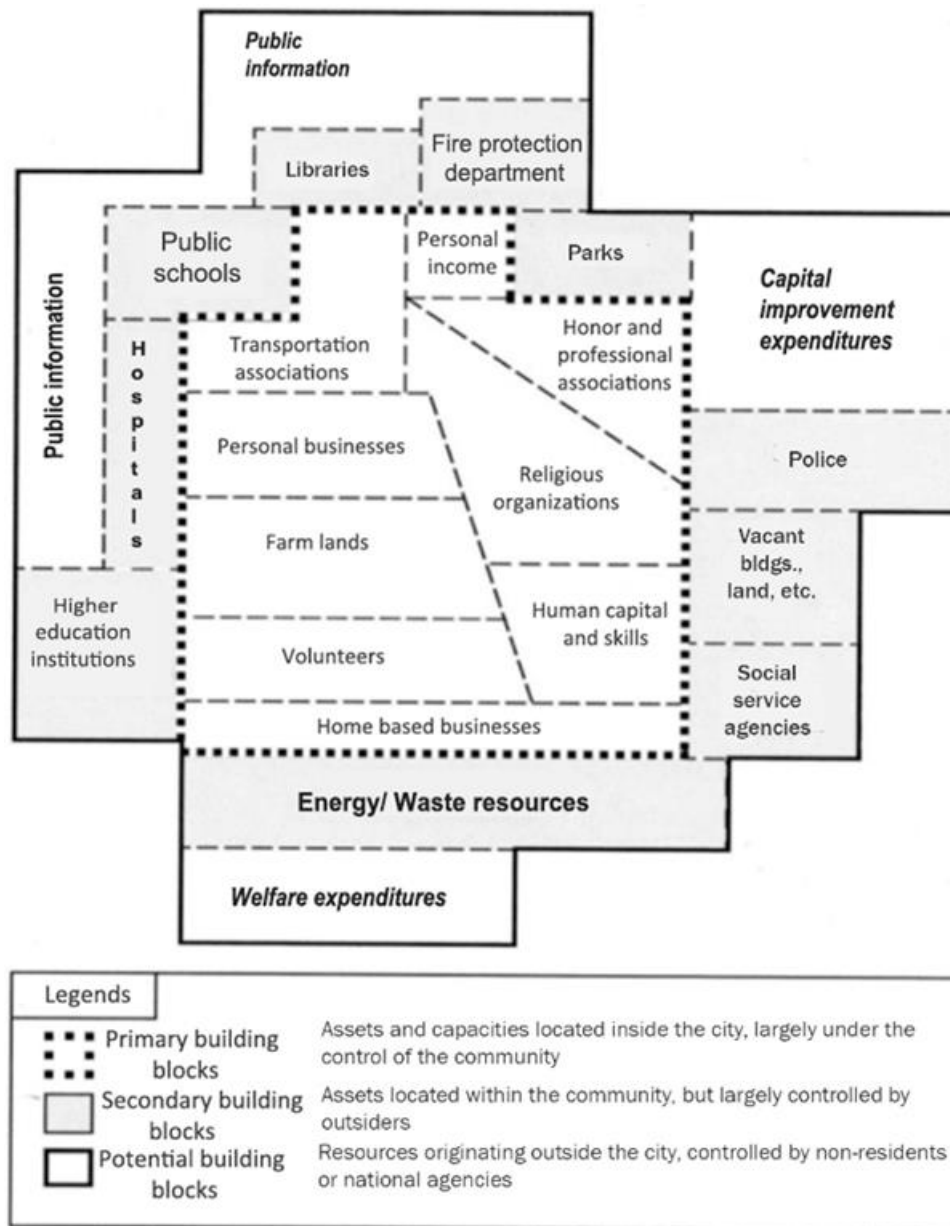


**Figure 2.** Community assets mapping in Cabanatuan City.

Figure 2 describes the community assets mapping conducted in Cabanatuan City. It identifies the resources present in the community which are classified into primary building blocks, secondary building blocks, and potential building blocks. Personal income, honor and professional associations, transportation associations, personal businesses, religious organizations, farm land, volunteers, human capital and skills, and home based businesses are identified as the primary building blocks. The secondary building blocks are public services such as public schools, police, fire stations, social services agencies, energy and waste resources, hospitals, and higher educational institutions. Lastly, there are also resources that can be potential building blocks, such as public information, welfare expenditures, and capital improvement expenditures.

According to Kunstler (1996), who is a pioneer in the movement known as new urbanism, the way in which we cultivate and define our communities not only gives us a sense of who we are, but it also gives us a space where we can interact with one another. When the majority of a community's resources come from outside sources, there is

certain to be some level of dissatisfaction. In addition, communities that act more like consumers than producers grow dependent on their position as customers rather than as active citizens, while financial institutions and organizations that provide social services continue to be stakeholders in the community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

### 3.2. Community Assets Mapping

The first thing that has to be accomplished in order to implement ABCD is to conduct an assessment of the community's resources and create an inventory of its various capacities. Creating a map of the resources available in the community is one way to achieve this goal. It is possible that we will be able to discover skills and experiences that are potentially beneficial to the community if we can facilitate contact between members of the community.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) listed some skills that might be gathered through a survey or interviews with community leaders. This list can be found in both of their books. The next step is to survey locals to find out what kinds of community improvements they would like to see. Next, the residents and the leaders of the community need to evaluate how the summary of skills may be used to achieve the goals and objectives that have been set for the community.

The individuals, citizen groups, and public and private institutions that make up a community are referred to as the community's fundamental actors when it comes to mapping its assets. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), the first step in the ABCD strategic process is the identification of the community's assets and the development of current resources. This step is followed by the development of current resources. "Asset-based" emphasizes the importance of local definitions, investment, creativity, hope, and control while also putting an emphasis on its own problem-solving skills. ABCD has a strong emphasis on a "relationship-driven" strategy, which focuses on developing and mending links inside as well as across different community groups, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable individuals and underrepresented groups (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

### 3.3. Development of a Sustainable Economic Enterprise Development Program
### 3.3.1. Goals of the Sustainable Economic Enterprise Development Program

Based on the information that was collected, the researchers came up with certain objectives and methods for the CEED program, which are detailed in Table 1. The program seeks to address five objectives – poverty, lack of skills, lack of possibilities for sustaining an adequate standard of living, employment, and waste disposal. The primary objectives are to bring the unemployment rate down, stabilize the economy, and raise everyone's quality of living beyond its current level. The development of a labor force that is both highly competent and adaptable is the second aim. The third objective is to put more of an emphasis on maintaining and growing the local enterprises that already exist. The upkeep and expansion of the city's role as the commercial hub of the province are the primary focuses of the fourth objective. The last objective is to promote growth that takes into account the surrounding environment.

After the comprehensive asset-based community needs assessment, a sustainable framework was finalized for economic enterprise development, as shown in Figure 3. Community capacity building focuses on enabling all community members, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged, to acquire the skills and competencies they need to accept more responsibility for their own lives and contribute to local development. Communities will not just be more cohesive; they will also be more resilient and better equipped to deal with economic and social problems. National and local governments, as well as the capacity that communities have established in the past, may foster and support meaningful and effective community capacity development, so that power becomes more anchored within them (OECD, Noya, & Clarence, 2009). The model is composed of two major phases – capacity building and enterprise development. The capacity building phase is composed of major subcomponents, namely community planning, community organizing, community needs assessment, gap analysis, project programming, project implementation, and project monitoring and evaluation. One of the most critical components is community planning. This element will select the most feasible community business initiatives based on six economic criteria: market, capital, raw

materials, service providers, support infrastructure, and suitable technology. Given the limits and possibilities, the target groups or beneficiaries imagine a community business that can thrive within their setting.

**Table 1.** Goals and strategies for a comprehensive economic enterprise development program.

| Goal | Strategies | Problems/Issues to address |
|---|---|---|
| Goal 1: Reduce unemployment, achieve economic stability, and increase the standard of living for all citizens | 1.1. Maintain a broad community consensus regarding the direction of economic development efforts<br>1.2. Promote diversification of the commercial/industrial base<br>1.3. Encourage access to economic incentives for quality job creation and/or tax-based enhancement<br>1.4. Continue to use a unified economic development team, with public/private sector involvement, to achieve the city's economic development goals<br>1.5. Reduce barriers to economic growth while recognizing regulatory functions<br>1.6. Identify additional resources to aid in economic development | Poverty |
| Goal 2: Build a highly-skilled, flexible workforce | 2.1. Conduct skills training to meet the needs of local employers<br>2.2. Reduce barriers to obtaining or upgrading necessary job skills<br>2.3. Utilize the talents and experience of mature workers who bring special skills and knowledge to the workforce<br>2.4. Maintain an informational clearinghouse that coordinates job training, placement, and skills development<br>2.5. Develop and deliver educational programming over the widest array of media | Lack of skills |
| Goal 3: Concentrate on retaining and expanding existing local businesses | 3.1. Cooperate with businesses, educational institutions, community organizations, and government to provide information to local businesses<br>3.2. Assist local firms in finding appropriate development sites for expansion<br>3.3. Encourage existing neighborhood employers to grow "in place," keeping jobs close to where people live<br>3.4. Retain existing manufacturing firms and facilitate their expansion<br>3.5. Maintain and strengthen the city's position as a retail center in the trade area<br>3.6. Maintain and expand the tourism industry's share of the regional market<br>3.7. Retain and expand the base of service industry employment<br>3.8. Encourage downtown revitalization and neighborhood business development<br>3.9. Encourage diversified retail shopping | Poverty, lack of livelihood opportunities |
| Goal 4: Maintain and strengthen the city's position as a business center in the province | 4.1. Promote existing attractions<br>4.2. Promote a variety of additional year-round business enterprises<br>4.3. Focus resources on future enterprise development initiatives, including those identified in the community visioning process<br>4.4. Foster enhanced recreational access to local attractions as an economic development strategy | Poverty, lack of livelihood opportunities, employment |
| Goal 5: Encourage development that is environmentally sensitive | 5.1. Target environmentally sensitive businesses and industries in recruitment efforts<br>5.2. Promote the development of businesses and industries that are committed to enhancing the quality of local environments<br>5.3. Promote and encourage sound environment practices with existing businesses and industries<br>5.4. Promote and encourage the use of alternative and/or renewable fuel and energy sources for vehicle fleets, building operations, and manufacturing processors<br>5.5. Encourage green architecture or similar concepts in building design for new and existing facilities | Waste disposal |

### 3.3.1.1. Framework of the Comprehensive Economic Enterprise Development (CEED) Program
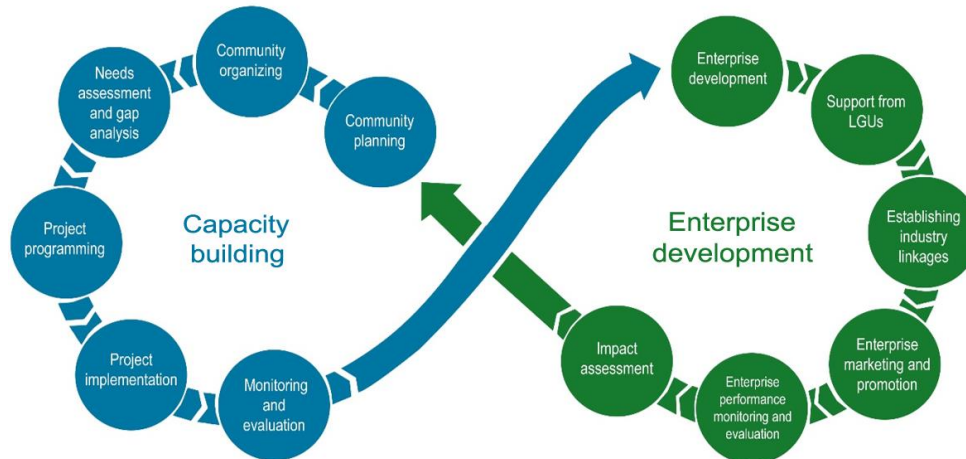


**Figure 3.** Infinity framework for the comprehensive economic enterprise development (CEED) program.

The second major component is enterprise development. Community-based enterprise development is a low-cost, simple-to-implement training method for assisting entrepreneurs and microbusiness owners with business planning and growth. Executed without external trainers or resources, it is well suited for use in impoverished, disadvantaged, and marginalized groups when funds and capabilities are limited or in places that are difficult to reach because of social or geographical isolation. This component is divided into the following sub-components: enterprise development, support from LGUs, establishing industry links, enterprise marketing and promotion, enterprise performance monitoring and evaluation, and impact assessment.

All barangays inside the city were in need of a means of subsistence, although their motives varied. For the residents of Cabanatuan City, acquiring economic capability was not only essential for their survival, but also gave them a feeling of self-worth and collective pride.

Although generally supported, the notion that poverty should be assessed beyond economics is challenging to operationalize (see, for example, Du Toit (2005); Martinetti (2000)). On the other hand, the World Bank's methodology, although quantifiable, has proved insufficient in its approach to reducing poverty, as shown in the Asia-Pacific region during the last two decades (see, for example, Birdsall & Londoño (1997)). The evidence of increasing economic capability in the emerging global south, which validates the positive effects of trickle-down economic development practice, is difficult to dispute. However, data indicate that this notion is not totally accurate.

Since the 1980s, the "bottom billion" has deviated from development by 2% per year (Collier, 2007). According to Easterly (2006), who is a professor of economics at New York University, the most successful nations in terms of economic growth are those that received much less foreign help and spent the least amount of time participating in International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan repayment programs. This indicator will not only have an impact on the impoverished in global south nations, but it may also have repercussions in global north nations where the poverty gap continues to grow (Lindenberg & Bryant, 2001).

In recent years, the World Bank has been addressing vulnerability and powerlessness, with a focus on capacity, empowerment, and security. While the European Union's goal is to address social exclusion as part of their poverty-fighting policy (Lindenberg & Bryant, 2001), the reality is that such goals can be difficult to measure and, therefore, difficult to implement—not by NGOs, but by funders who insist on bringing such issues to the fore.

Despite advances, the question of power in the economic, social, and political realms remains challenging. Without the lobbying of NGOs, access to services outside of Cabanatuan City remains difficult. Therefore, until the plight of the poor is acknowledged, NGOs must assume the role of social mediators for disadvantaged groups as a top priority.

Evidence of successful empowerment programs in the Philippines involving NGOs led to the ultimate transfer of authority to locals. However, long-term success needed funders' flexibility, support, and the desire to see initiatives through to completion (Edwards, 1999).

According to the paradigm of the World Bank, which focuses on possession, poverty can be erased. The issue with assessing poverty in economic terms is the removal of underlying reasons, namely the fact that the poor have stayed in a framework of systemic poverty that will be passed on to their children and the next generation. Over the last several decades, although aid to the needy has brought relief, it has also encouraged aid recipients to become dependent on support. And despite the charity from richer nations, recipients of assistance have become more disgruntled and resentful of those who feed them.

In the last 50 years, development practices have expanded. However, the development paradox prompts more discussion on the future roles, duties, and accountability for the trillions of dollars in assistance and the few benefits. The rationale for an ABCD strategy is that change is successful when it originates from inside an organization (Easterly, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Lindenberg & Bryant, 2001).

The ABCD technique may have astounding impacts on a community when paired with participatory frameworks. ABCD is essential for a healthy civil society because it develops social capital, not just for solidarity among the poor, but also for enhanced dialogue between the poor and the non-poor, the clients, and the donors. And when projects and programs are led locally, the power balance between donors and recipients starts to shift. As their capacity to contribute to society is recognized and encouraged, communities become less dependent on external resources. The advantage of an ABCD approach is that it is multidimensional, encompassing a broad spectrum of humanity from which structural poverty solutions may be developed.

### 3.4. Model Workplan for Comprehensive Economic Enterprise Development (CEED) Program

Table 2 below shows the Comprehensive Economic Enterprise Development Program's recommended workplan, which can be used and adapted for future research.

The workplan is made up of two primary areas of focus: the creation of economic enterprises and the enhancement of existing capacities. Community planning, community organizing, project programming, project execution, and monitoring and evaluation are the primary outcome areas for capacity development. On the other hand, the areas that fall under the umbrella of enterprise development include business development, assistance from local government units, the establishment of connections and partnerships, marketing and promotion, enterprise performance monitoring and evaluation, and impact assessment.

**Table 2.** Model workplan for CEED program.

| Key Result Areas | Objectives | | Project/Activities | Strategy/Methodology | Responsible Persons |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capacity Building | 1. Community planning | 1. Prepare the project proponents and inform the LGU key officials of the details of the program<br>2. Determine the existing programs and LGU support for the target participants | 1. Meet with LGU key officials, representatives from organized groups, youth leaders, etc. | Meetings, focus group discussions | LGU key officials, project proponents |
| | 2. Community organizing | 1. Conduct initial meeting with the target participants<br>2. Group the participants based on their socio-economic profiles<br>3. Conduct an environmental analysis | 1. Carry out a gap analysis<br>2. Participatory rural appraisal<br>3. Focus group discussions<br>4. Needs assessment | Meetings, focus group discussions, surveys, interviews | Project proponents, representatives of the target participants |
| | 3. Needs assessment and gap analysis | 1. Determine the needs of the target participants<br>2. Identify the gap between the needs and existing programs in the locality<br>3. Prepare an needs assessment and gap analysis report | 1. Develop a program specifically for the identified needs | Meetings, focus group discussions, surveys, interviews | Project proponents, representatives of the target participants |
| | 4. Project programming | 1. Develop a program to identify needs and gaps<br>2. Determine different skills training for the participants<br>3. Identify monitoring and evaluation strategies and techniques | 1. Identify different capacity building interventions based on the identified needs and gaps | Meetings, focus group discussions | Project proponents, representatives of the target participants |
| | 5. Project implementation | 1. Conduct skills training to meet the needs of local employers<br>2. Reduce barriers to obtaining or upgrading the necessary job skills<br>3. Utilize the talents and experience of mature workers who bring special skills and knowledge to the work force | 1. Conduct capacity building trainings<br>2. Offer mentoring | Training, workshops, mentoring | LGU counterpart, project proponents, trainers |
| | 6. Monitoring and evaluation | 1. Determine the status of the project activities<br>2. Evaluate project training and activities | 1. Monitor the scheduled training and activities<br>2. Complete the standard monitoring and evaluation form | Site visitations, surveys | Project proponents |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Enterprise Development | 7. Enterprise development | 1. Promote diversification of the commercial/industrial base<br>2. Continue to use a unified economic development team, with public/private sector involvement, to tackle the city's economic development goals<br>3. Reduce barriers to economic growth while recognizing regulatory functions | 1. Meet with the participants<br>2. Prepare the registration requirements<br>3. Submit the requirements<br>4. Prepare the other pre-operating requirements | Meetings and consultations | Project proponents, beneficiaries |
| | 8. Enterprise support from LGUs | 1. Encourage access to economic incentives for quality job creation and/or tax base enhancement<br>2. Identify additional resources to aid in economic development | 1. Meet with the LGU regarding possible assistance for the beneficiaries | Meetings and consultations | LGU counterpart, project proponents, enterprises |
| | 9. Establishing links and partnerships | 1. Establish a strong industry link for promotion of the enterprise's products and services<br>2. Establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with the stakeholders | 1. Meet with business associations and other private organizations for partnerships | Meetings and consultations | LGU counterpart, project proponents, enterprises |
| | 10. Enterprise marketing and promotion | 1. Design and create a marketing plan for the enterprises<br>2. Produce marketing materials and paraphernalia | 1. Organize trade fairs<br>2. Social media marketing | Meetings and consultations | LGU counterpart, project proponents, enterprises |
| | 11. Enterprise performance monitoring and evaluation | 1. Monitor the financial performance of the established enterprises (e.g., ROI, payback period) | 1. Carry out periodic monitoring of the financial performance of the established enterprises | Surveys and interviews | Project proponents, LGU counterpart |
| | 12. Impact assessment | 1. Conduct an impact assessment of the overall project implementation for further improvement | 1. Conduct impact assessments of the program | Surveys and interviews | Project proponents |

## 4. CONCLUSION

Large aid donors and social service organizations are starting to understand the benefits of internally driven programs and initiatives, but the expense and time involved may make needs-based techniques more appealing to finance. Organizations must perceive the long-term financial and service quality advantages overcome this barrier. Thus, best-practice models may be useful. However, the question remains regarding whether donors or benefactors should prolong their aid. Further theoretical research is needed, as ABCD encourages people to develop their own initiatives and requires external groups to cooperate. External organizations that support internal, community-driven initiatives should consider the duration of their commitment and an exit strategy if necessary.

Many assistance groups are now funding community-driven initiatives directly (Edwards, 1999). As villages become self-sufficient, NGOs face a dilemma as many of these interactions may empower and disempower. NGOs must now evaluate their role in development, shifting from "modernizer," "rescuer," and "provider" duties. Should NGOs be "facilitators," "advocates," "allies," or "catalysts" for ideas, and in what contexts are they most effective? ABCD relies on community empowerment, yet external partner organizations are essential for development. Initiatives and programs must be community-driven, foster leadership within communities, and be participatory, inclusive and representational of a community's profile.

NGOs' views on power, knowledge of power, and use of power in their work are also important. Power is also important in establishing communities. Self-sufficient communities will establish structures with roles and their significance. Thus, abuse of power may still exist because power may affect participation, so people pursuing social and environmental justice must carefully explore the motives of any group.

Organizational culture drives many of these consequences. An organization's capacity to adapt and communicate new ideas to power holders might affect its longevity and quality of service. Encouraging a culture of learning may help many organizations find long-term, meaningful solutions where donors and recipients work together as citizens.

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