

Livelihood Restoration, and Decent Work Promotion of St. Paul University Philippines Among Cagayan Communities: An Impact Study

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ABSTRACT: *This study is about the Resilient Livelihoods and Recovery Project of St. Paul University Philippines for the severely affected families in the Province of Cagayan, Cagayan Valley, Northern Philippines. Five hundred (500) vulnerable women, and persons with disabilities were qualified as recipients of the Resilient Livelihoods and Recovery Project, aimed to assist them to recover from economic loss, and devastation due to the massive flooding caused by Typhoon Vamco in November 2020. The SPUP-CDCFI partnered with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to implement the Resilient Livelihoods and Recovery Project through series of capability building and livelihood training skills, with micro-financing component to help them re-start a home-based small business. Six months after the onslaught of Typhoon Vamco, women and persons with disabilities were already engage in marketable handicraft, selling native delicacies, vegetables and fruits, duck-raising, small store and eatery, soap making, and sidewalk vending. It is hoped that their success stories and scalable models of home-based business will spread and continue to inspire other women and persons with disabilities to engage in income generating activities and contribute in the economic development, and promotion of decent work of peoples and communities.*

KEYWORDS: *Decent work, disability, economic development, persons with disabilities, resilient livelihoods*

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I. INTRODUCTION

St. Paul University Philippines (SPUP), an autonomous university situated in Tuguegarao City, Philippines (St. Paul University Philippines, n.d.), is committed to help uplift the quality of life and to effect social transformation. The said dedication extends to peoples and communities located in Tuguegarao City and the municipalities in the province of Cagayan, Cagayan Valley Region (CV), and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), especially to the vulnerable, and marginalized groups, of which among them are the persons with disabilities (PWDs) and the women sector. SPUP's community development program highlights inclusivity and social value creation emphasizing that all sectors of its partner communities are provided with relevant skills and values formation towards quality of life and decent living.

In 1989, SPUP established the Community Development Center (CDC) now the SPUPCDCFI and started to serve as the social service arm of the university mandated to organize, train, empower and work closely with the small-scale farmers, women, children, families and respond to the needs of disaster victims and survivors, to recover and build back better. Since then, SPUPCDC has catered to the needs of its clientele; individuals, groups, families, and communities especially those who are frequently and severely affected by calamities and natural disasters. Today, SPUP-CDCFI, is duly licensed, registered and granted accreditation by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Standards Bureau as a Social Welfare Development Agency (SWDA). The SPUP-CDCFI's programs and projects are aimed to promote the integral human development of the people who are poor and marginalized, especially the rural poor and the indigenous people, in order to alleviate their causes through trainings, education and formation programs (SPUPCDCFI, n.d.).

SPUPCDC has been responding to the needs of the times by intervening appropriately to challenging situations caused by disasters such as typhoons, massive flooding and at present, the Covid19 crisis, elevating these conditions and promoting better quality of life and well-being of its beneficiaries. SPUPCDC has been in the forefront implementing emergency response, rehabilitation efforts, livelihood restoration and recovery interventions done in cooperation and partnership with other like-minded organizations. Emergency response and re-building livelihoods is among their interventions during post disaster as it addresses the socio-economic concerns of the people in the community by providing opportunities for capacity building, livelihood training, skills enhancement, and livelihood creation. These interventions have been conceptualized

to mobilize the community to maximize their potentials, utilizing existing community resources, and supporting them increase earning and family income, financial independence, and better management of resources.

The UNDP's resilient livelihood restoration and recovery project for Cagayan Province implemented by the SPUPCDCFI was aimed to support priority most-affected households to restart their livelihoods. The project targeted five hundred women micro-entrepreneurs and persons-with-disabilities. During project implementation, SPUPCDC has worked with the provincial government of Cagayan through the Provincial Office for People Empowerment (POPE) and the affected local government units (LGUs) on livelihood restoration and recovery, and provided interventional support in addressing the immediate, medium, and long-term initiatives towards economic resiliency.

Considering the build-back better principle (Fernandez, 2019) to early recovery interventions, the project activities carried out served as building blocks for long-term sustainable economic recovery, as the over-all goal of the build-back better principle is to put in place safer, adaptive, and resilient communities through sustainable and resilient local economies. In selecting the type and kind of livelihoods activities, the five hundred women and persons with disabilities were oriented and capacitated to observe the guiding principles as follows, a) market/demand-driven; b) resource-based; c) ecological soundness; d) empowerment at all levels (individual and community-level enterprises); e) inclusivity and gender sensitivity; and f) consideration to climate and risk reduction elements (AMCDRR, 2018). Further consideration in selecting the kind of livelihood activities is that the activity should be demanded by the local or provincial markets based on the feasibility study.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This study is aimed to determine the value and impact of the recently concluded resilient livelihood restoration and recovery project for women and persons with disabilities that was implemented in seventeen villages in the three municipalities and one city in Cagayan Province who were severely affected by Typhoon Vamco in November 2020. The project was funded by the United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the SPUP Community Development Center Foundation, Inc. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the conditions of the beneficiaries prior to the project implementation?
2. What are the programs of the SPUPCDC in response to the needs of the vulnerable women in the partner communities?
3. What is the perceived impact, and benefits of the project to the beneficiaries?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of the qualitative approach to research, with the phenomenological case study as the research design. Through the phenomenological method, the researcher probed into the participants' experiences as outlined in their statements. Through the case study method, the researcher examined the participants' experiences before, during and after availing the interventional activities of the resilient livelihood restoration and recovery project.

Participants consisted of forty purposively sampled project beneficiaries consisting of vulnerable women and or women with disabilities. A validated focus-group discussion (FGD) and interview guide was used to collect the primary data, and a semi-structured FGD was employed during the face to face interview. Document review was also conducted to obtain the secondary data such as case assessment reports of individual beneficiaries, case recordings, and project related documents such as activity designs, progress/monitoring reports, and accomplishment reports.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through qualitative content analysis (QCA), and document review, the researcher explored the primary and secondary data in evaluating the value of the Resilient Livelihood Restoration and Recovery Project in Cagayan Province along the six evaluation criteria formulated by the OECD consisting of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. To better understand the utilization of the six criteria, the researcher used them in consideration of how it supports the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly, SDG 8, decent work, and economic growth. Furthermore, the results were also based on the data gathered during monitoring visits, FGDs, and interviews with the project beneficiaries, and yielded the following results:

Cagayan is known to be an agricultural province in the Philippines which is frequently affected by natural calamities as it is located along the natural path of typhoons. Cagayan is highly exposed to hydro-meteorological hazards (Mohammad Aminur RahmanShah, 2020). Over the years Cagayan is frequently hit by tropical cyclones. Recurrence of most tropical cyclones usually comes during the months of August, September and October was registered for the observed period.

In the recent 2020 Census Cagayan registered a total population of 1,268,603. This represented 34.42% of the total population of the Cagayan Valley region, and 2.04% of the overall population of the Luzon Island group, or 1.16% of the entire population of the Philippines. Cagayan consists of 28 municipalities and 1 city with a total of 820 barangays. SPUP Community Development Center is present in 3 municipalities namely Amulung, Solana, Enrile, and Tuguegarao City, where the resilient livelihoods and recovery project was implemented.

<i>Municipality/City</i>	<i>Amulung</i>	<i>Solana</i>	<i>Enrile</i>	<i>Tuguegarao City</i>
<i>Villages</i>	Abolo, Unag, Dafunganay, Pacac Grande, Palayag	Iraga, Dassun, Malacabibi	Villa Maria, San Roque, Barangay IV	Balzain East, Balzain West, Capatan, Annafunan East, Gosi Norte, Linao East
Total	150	100	100	150



Table 1: List of covered municipalities and villages in Cagayan for the resilient livelihoods and recovery project.

Fig. 1. Luzon Map where the project is located.

The project supported five hundred vulnerable women in three municipalities and city in Cagayan. The Municipality of Amulung has 150 beneficiaries, 150 for Tuguegarao City, 100 in Solana, and 100 for Enrile. Majority of the beneficiaries belong to the age bracket of 31-40 and 56-60 respectively. It is also noted that of the 500 beneficiaries, 40 are women with disability. Table 2 presents the number of beneficiaries in each municipality/city and the corresponding number of persons disabilities in each of the municipalities.

<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Barangay</i>	<i># of vulnerable women beneficiaries</i>	<i>Total # Persons with Disabilities</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Tuguegarao City	Balzain East	25	1	2.5
	Balzain West	25	2	5
	Capatan	20	4	10
	Gosi Norte	20	2	5
Amulung	Abolo	30	1	2.5
	Unag	30	3	7.5
	Pacac Grande	30	2	5
Solana	Dassun	30	1	2.5
	Malacabibi	30	4	10
Enrile	Villa Maria	30	4	10
	San Roque	30	10	25
Total	Barangay IV	40	6	15
		500	40	100

Table 2: Number of women with disability in each of the covered municipalities

Among the five hundred vulnerable women beneficiaries, forty of them have disabilities. Their disability varies from speech impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, among others. Table 3 present the kinds of disability of the forty beneficiaries.

<i>Disability</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Physical Disability</i>	20	50
<i>Visual Impairment</i>	10	25
<i>Speech Impairment</i>	6	15
<i>Hearing Impairment</i>	1	2.5
<i>Others</i>	3	7.5
Total	40	100

Table 3. Kind, and number of Disability of the forty beneficiaries.

Prior to the project implementation, the women particularly, those with disabilities were resistant, lacking confidence and have limited aspirations as they see their disabilities as barrier, a deterrent to their participation in work, however because of the series of dialogues, meetings, and small talks, they became accepting and willing to participate and avail of the program activities, and were already willing to help themselves. Access to start-up capital was also a major concern among them, especially during the Covid 19 Crisis, this further aggravated their already vulnerable conditions. Beneficiaries expressed difficulty in financing their small business activities due to limited personal financial resources (savings, home ownership) and lack of accessible information on sources of grants and loans, moreover, they lack interest, as they do not have access to appropriate business support services because of their conditions, support for their entrepreneurship engagement maybe regarded as risk.

The Resilient Livelihoods and Recovery Project, Approaches and Strategies

In the implementation of the Resilient Livelihoods and Recovery Project, the project team considered an integrated, and holistic approaches and methodologies. The following approaches and strategies were utilize: 1) Coordination and partnership building with partner municipal local government units and barangay local government units, 2) Community-Based Enterprise Development Approach designed by the International Labor Organization (ILO), as they see it as suitable in the local context, 3) Conducting short-term skills training for both direct beneficiary and one productive family member, 3) Formation of self-help groups (SHeG) as sustainability mechanism.

In utilizing the approaches and strategies, the beneficiaries themselves were involved in all phases of project implementation from needs assessment to the preparation of their simple feasibility study, skills inventory, and project monitoring including evaluation. The project was relevant, and timely as it was responsive to the situation and needs of the beneficiaries. The project was implemented a few months after the onslaught of Typhoon Vamco, where the survivors are still in the process of recovering from the loss and damages caused by the calamity. Indeed, the project hastened livelihood recovery, as set activities are appropriate and responsive to the needs, and in consideration of their knowledge, skills and capacities.

The project was effective and efficient. It achieved its objective in supporting the severely affected individuals, particularly, women to restart their entrepreneurial activities. Notably, a total of five hundred (500) women from seventeen villages in 3 municipalities and one (1) city were provided support within the project duration. The output and potential impact exceeded the set objectives. The persons with disabilities through their family members were given the same opportunity as with the other project beneficiaries. The project was economically efficient because it was able to maximize resources to meet the intended results. Furthermore, operation is efficient as the management observe good financial management as the project implementers adhered to the work and financial plan. Despite the challenges experienced due to the Covid19 Health Protocols, the project implementers the project was completely executed with minimal constraints and risk.

The project demonstrated coherence in both internal and external aspects, as the project goal and objectives are aligned with UNDP and SPUPs vision and mission to “help uplift the quality of life and effect social transformation”. The implementation of the project is a convergence of committed passion and dedicated work of the external stakeholders and the SPUP academic community. SPUPCDC has established working goals aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly (SDG 8) on Decent Work and Economic Growth and emphasized on human-centric and value-based approach for human development for a productive and meaningful life.

Impact and Benefits of the Project to the Beneficiaries

The perceived impact of the resilient livelihoods and recovery project to the beneficiaries is positive. They are grateful for the financial support they received because they already have funds to use as start-up capital and can already re-start their small business activities. Beneficiaries are also thankful for capacity building activities and skills trainings that have been completed. SPUP’s community development program highlights inclusivity and social value creation emphasizing that all sectors of its partner communities are

provided with relevant skills (technical know-how) and ethics (values formation) towards quality of life and sustainable living. Moreover, the participants learned to save and protect their lives and properties during calamities.

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Impact/benefit of the project on them	Plan for Sustainability
1	M. Macarubbo	52	F	<i>I am now helping my husband earn for the family. We can already provide the school needs of our children. I am now more than willing to work hard to be able to sustain my existing income generating and ready to be productive.</i>	<i>I will carefully manage the start-up capital so that it will double, and will use it to expand my home-cooked food business. I will ensure to attend and participate actively in the next seminars, to gain more knowledge on how to manage my business.</i>
2	H. Adduru	47	F	<i>Thank you for the financial and psychosocial support. It really helped a lot. I already started selling vegetables and fruits. I learned to be accountable in my chosen income generating project. I am very much eager to learn new strategies how to become a successful entrepreneur/manager.</i>	<i>I will continue to attend to more seminars and trainings, because only this way I will learn. I will expand my small business</i>
3	B. Ferrer	45	F	<i>I realize, that I can be productive even if I stay at home. My physical disability is not a hindrance after all. I want to learn more knowledge and technique on how to manage my business. Thank you to all of you. I became more responsible and value my time and resources.</i>	<i>I plan to attend in the next seminars so that I can use as basis and guide on how to manage my own business.</i>
4	N. Binayug	45	F	<i>The project was of big help to me and my family, the financial support is helpful. I need more trainings. I want to become more productive. I learned how to value my customers.</i>	<i>I will grow my small business. I will save money. Attend more seminars and trainings to enhance my capacity.</i>
5	R. Liban	42	F	<i>As a Beginner, I like my business, and I will work hard to sustain it. I learned a lot of strategies and techniques specially the attitudes and skills in business. It broadens my understanding on how to deal with customers properly.</i>	<i>I will attend seminars and engage more in skills trainings to hasten my skills and ability in the business world.</i>

Table 4. Select responses on the impact and benefit of the project and their plans for sustainability.

The project was significant because it is responsive to the unique situations of vulnerable women especially the physically challenged. Through SPUPCDC's supportive environment, entrepreneurial activities for physically challenged persons is that self-employment increases the self-empowerment of those individuals. Working on their own in a suitable work environment that can accommodate their needs is beneficial to their well-being. At the same time, the project emphasized that they have the flexibility to work around their disability status and work-life, which they can tailor around their needs for their social and labor market participation.

Enablers of Project Implementation

The main enabler of the project is St. Paul University Philippines. The project is an initiative of St. Paul University Philippines (SPUP) through its Community Development Center (CDC). The SPUPCDC dedicates its projects to disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups and pursues the following goals, among others: improving the income situation of vulnerable households, access to education for marginalised and poor population groups, health promotion, child protection, disaster management and environmental sustainability. With this, the project aims to empower the individuals and communities by promoting and developing their entrepreneurial skills towards quality of life and sustainable living. These are fostered because of SPUP's

supportive environment advancing self-employment and self-empowerment among the vulnerable women and physically challenged sectors of its partner communities. With the success of the program, both public and private organizations sought collaborative partnership with SPUP to benchmark on its best practices in the development of the entrepreneurial skills as a way of empowering the women sector of the community.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is another enabler of the project. It provided not only financial support for the implementation of the resilient livelihood and recovery project, but also provided start-up capital for 500 beneficiaries. Likewise, the local chief executives (LCEs), and the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officers (MSWDOs) of the three municipalities and City of Tuguegarao who willingly extended invaluable assistance.

The challenges encountered by the program staff include the following: a) social mobility, as the government strictly implemented Covid 19 Health Protocols which restricted the conduct of community gatherings and face to face assemblies, resulting to delay of, and disruption of planned activities, 2) The lack of confidence and limited aspirations among the PWD beneficiaries, 3) Access to start-up capital, beneficiaries expressed difficulties in financing their small business activities due to limited personal financial resources (savings, home ownership) and lack of accessible information on sources of grants and loans, and 4) Lack of appropriate business support services because of their conditions, support for their entrepreneurship engagement maybe regarded as risk.

For each of the abovementioned challenges, the project management responded appropriately, and staff strategize and used technology enabled devices in the conduct of capacity building activities. Interestingly, the use of google meet, zoom and MS teams facilitated the delivery of the lectures and trainings, redesigning and re-scheduling of community visits and project monitoring activities, and engaging other productive members of the family of the PWD beneficiaries in the capacity building and skills training. The project team, on the other hand, have considered the experiences as great contributor for personal growth. At first, project activities are seen as big challenges and they were afraid that the goals will not be met because of the Covid19 restrictions. However, the SPUP-CDCFI have duly managed and guided the staff which led to the success of the project.

In a way, the beneficiaries considered the project as a great help in improving their resilience to disasters, social and economic status, as they already have improved in earning capacity and work skills. Although the participants are still considered as materially poor, but there is change and transformation in their work orientation and practices, openness to learning, and social aspirations, and positive outlooks in life despite hardships.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Resilient Livelihoods and Recovery Project was efficiently implemented, and its impact has been positive. The project was responsive to the needs and concerns of the severely affected families and women with disabilities. It is highly extensive in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability both in the observed changes and the perspective of the beneficiaries. It was effective because it achieved its intended goal and objectives, as the results reflected its set of objectives. Further, it is efficient because the resources allotted for the project were maximized to produce equitable results.

Despite the challenges and difficulties, the project team of implementers were able to drive the project through its completion, they were able to manage the difficulties brought by the Covid 19 Pandemic through their inherent desire and commitment to reach and serve the most vulnerable communities.

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