



**Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance**

**Institutionalizing Civil Society Participation in Local  
Planning, Budgeting, and Monitoring:  
Cases in Antique, Iloilo, and Misamis Oriental**

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**Abstract**

Democratization has been moving towards a more direct and inclusive approach, with stakeholders gaining direct access to more areas of public governance, and demanding more results from such increase. One such area is budgeting, wherein the people, through civil society organizations (CSOs), could plan and demand projects that would directly benefit them, most especially the impoverished. Basing on the successes of participatory budgeting mechanisms in Brazil and Mexico, and acknowledging the needs of the Filipino people, then-President Benigno Aquino III and his administration introduced the Bottom-up Budgeting (BuB) Process in 2012. By 2015, BuB has covered all of the municipalities and cities in the Philippines, each of them having their own successes and challenges.

This paper looks at the experiences of CSOs in the BuB in four (4) selected localities in the Philippines: Metro Iloilo, Iloilo; Tobias Fornier, Antique; Cagayan de Oro City; and Alubijid, Misamis Oriental. The cases highlight how participation in the BuB impacted local CSOs' quality of engagement with their respective local governments, organizational capacity, and quality of participatory local governance. The cases also investigate how local CSOs have optimized BuB as a space to participate in local governance.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The demand for more direct access to governance has been the driving force of democracy and democratization across the world. Democratic governance is precisely giving the people the power to steer the country to better respond to their needs and aspirations. The actual practice for the longest time, however, is that the people delegate the powers and responsibilities of governance to a select set of representatives, assuming all the while that these representatives have the best interests of the people. But that is not usually the case, with them acting deviant from the public will, if not contrary to or even against it, and whether intentionally or accidentally. Worse, the most affective of them tend to be the most deleterious to the countries. This leads to demands for spaces where direct participation was given, among other things.

The Philippines is not exempt to these demands for greater democracy. In fact, the demand has never been this high. The country has been enjoying democratic governance for 30 years, having gained it from the toppling of the Marcos dictatorship in the 1986 People Power Revolution. True democracy, however, has always been elusive. All levels of government is still gripped by ineptitude and corruption, stemming from the combination lack of resources and a corrupt culture that aims to perpetrate itself and its adherents to power. The result is a governance system that is highly compromised in its delivery of functions, goods and services. It only worsens the country's situation since at the same time, despite recent economic growth spurts, it is still battered by poverty and inequity.

The Bottom-up Budgeting (BuB) Process was a direct participatory mechanism introduced by the Benigno Aquino III administration in 2012 under the Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cluster (HDPRC) and Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Cluster (GGACC). Primarily, this process enjoins city and municipal governments, and their local civil society organizations (CSOs), to prepare Local Poverty Reduction Action Plans (LPRAPs) that would identify anti-poverty priority projects that would be funded and implemented by national government agencies and the local governments. This reform is aimed at three things: a more responsive public budgetary process, a new democratic space, and a better local governance regime. The process does not only aims at making the budget more sensitive to the particular needs of each local government unit, but also to provide a new avenue for citizens to actually and directly participate with local governance, thus incentivizing the local governments to better themselves and their constituencies. Now, the question is, has the process achieved these aims? How the process was rolled-out after all these years? What were the gains, challenges, and lessons from this exercise? And has the process reached as many people as it should?

This paper looks at the experiences and effects of BuB on CSOs in local participatory governance in four selected localities in the Philippines: Metro Iloilo, Iloilo; Tobias Fornier, Antique; Cagayan de Oro City; and Alubijid, Misamis Oriental. With regard to the CSOs, this would focus on the effects of BuB on their engagement capacity, organization-building, and

networking. It would also reveal the different ways on which CSOs has optimized the BuB process to enhance their participatory space. The case studies will also highlight the numerous challenges faced by CSOs navigating the BuB process. Lastly, the case study provides policy and practice recommendations for local CSOs, local government units, and national government agencies to maximize the BuB as a space for institutionalizing citizens' participation in local governance.

This paper is based on the project *Institutionalizing Civil Society Organization Participation in Local Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring*, which generally aims to capacitate civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Bottom-up Budgeting Process (BuB), specifically in terms of local planning, budgeting, and monitoring. The Project is being implemented by SEAOL Foundation Inc. (SFI) and De La Salle University - Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance (DLSU-JRIG). This is supported by local academic partners Central Philippine University (CPU) and Governance and Leadership Institute - Xavier University (GLI-XU), and local CSO coordinators Iloilo CODE NGO (ICODE) and GROUP Foundation Inc. (GI).

### **Participatory Budgeting, Local Governance, and Empowerment**

The whole BuB exercise is an excellent example of a government innovating towards participatory governance, particularly in the areas of budgeting and local governance. The key element in participatory budgeting and local governance is the practically open and unhindered participation of citizens in determining and designing projects and policies that would greatly affect their lives. Without it, the citizens are reduced to hoping that their elected officials would hear, let alone listen and act upon their needs and aspirations as a community. The whole exercise of participation, then, hinges on the government creating the appropriate avenues to which the people could actually participate.

Participatory budgeting, at its core, is the relatively simple idea that the ordinary citizens of the country be allowed to directly influence, if not downright dictate, the allocation of public resources as administered by the government (Baiochhi & Ganuza, 2014: 29). It could be seen as a combination of communication and empowerment, combining representation and deliberation in its processes and outcomes through its open meetings and annual planning cycles that has to be attended by representatives of both government and civil society (Baiochhi & Ganuza, 2014). It is, likewise, an institutional reform agenda aimed at curbing the budgetary excesses and abuses of government by directly involving the people (Baiochhi & Ganuza, 2014; Akindelle & Ayeni, 2012). Significant reforms like this would result to a more transparent, accountable and disciplined budgetary system, and thus a better system of governance (Magno, 2015; Egbide & Agbude, 2012).

#### *Patterns and Issues*

The emerging general pattern in the literature is that participatory budgeting is almost always being engaged in the local level, either by the initiative of the local governments, or by the empowerment of the national governments. At Baiochhi and Ganuza's count, at least 1,500 cities around the world had or have been institutionalizing participatory budgeting, starting with Porto Alegre, Brazil in the 1990s, all the way to New York City's 49<sup>th</sup> Ward in 2009 (2014: 29). This

global proliferation is linked to the simplicity and malleability of the fundamental principles and practices, making it suitable for any context and for any civil society population (Ganuza & Baiocchi, 2012). Such proliferation was supported by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program, which lend it more power and legitimacy (Goldfrank, 2012). Furthermore, it is argued that interdependent collaborative action by the local government and the local citizenry, especially when capacitated sufficiently, would lead to the achievement of the desired social, economic and political results (Cuthill & Fien, 2005).

Likewise, much of the literature is focused on the lessons of local participatory budgeting from actual experiences. Goncalves (2013) in Brazil, and Ensor et al. (2012) in Indonesia saw that the grassroots approach in budgeting made it possible to match the budget with the needs of each local citizenry. But before anything else, the stakeholders has to be fully informed of the process and its principles for it to be effective and to be fully appreciated by the same stakeholder, as Hossain et al. (2014) in Bangladesh demonstrated. Also, Choi (2014) found in the Seoul Autonomous Districts the need to capacitate at least the key decisive stakeholders to improve the budget. Jaramillo and Wright (2015) in Peru, meanwhile, saw the strong and significant correlation between the presence of voluntary participatory forums with the rise of more active and effective policies.

The whole mechanism is not without problems. One problem in the current global practice is the fundamental ambiguities of participatory governance, particularly on the issues of conflict between participation and administration, the mechanism's necessity in the community, its general and specific purposes, and its relationship with the whole administrative system (Ganuza & Baiocchi, 2012). Another great concern is that the current global practice have emphasized communication so much, mainly through its focus on rules regarding meetings, assemblies and elections of representatives, that empowering the citizens towards social justice and transformation was almost foregone, thus diverting the people away to more important political issues (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014). Also, it is possible that the practice may only attract the usual and traditional political actors, and not those truly in the grassroots (Lener & Secondo, 2012). Furthermore, the whole system may be weakened, if not downright abolished, if its political institutionalization and social internalization was not sufficient (Melgar, 2015; 2014; Raudla & Krenjova, 2013). These issues, if unresolved, may lead to participatory budgeting as nothing more than a new tool for the government, and not a catalyst that would empower the people, thus bringing forth fundamental changes in the relationship between the government and the people.

### *Empowerment*

So then, although poverty reduction is stated as the primary goal of the BuB process, both it and the specific methodology of the process point to empowerment as its underlying principle. Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. In its broadest sense, it is the expansion of freedom of choice and action. It means increasing one's authority and control over their lives. The literature further defines empowerment as "a group-based participatory, development process through which marginalized or oppressed individuals and groups gain greater control over their lives and environment, acquire valued resources and

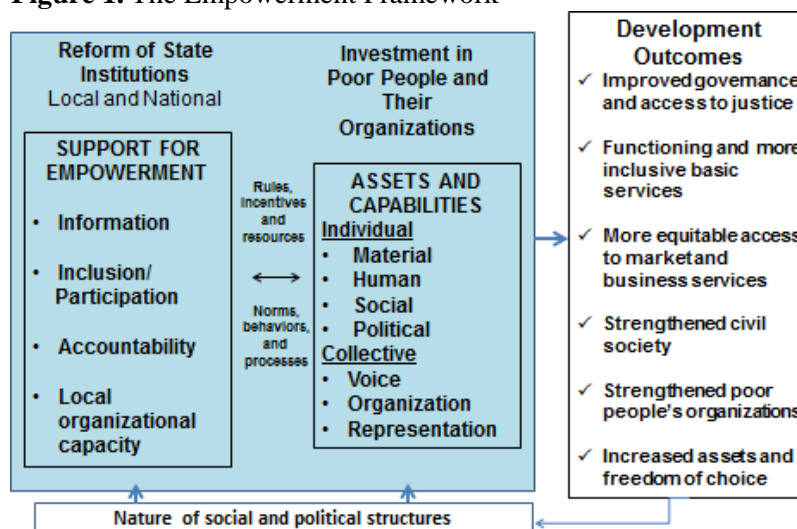
basic rights, and achieve important life goals and reduced societal marginalization”(Maton, 2008; Freire,1970).

Thus, empowerment is both a process and an outcome that may take place at three levels: individual, organization or group and community. It has four interrelated key elements as follows (Maton, 2008; Freire,1970):

1. Access to information – “two-way information flows”, e.g. government to citizen & vice versa;
2. Inclusion and participation – “Who is included? And how they are included and the role they play once included”;
3. Accountability – “ability to call public officials to account, requiring that they be answerable for their policies, actions, and use of funds”; and
4. Local organizational capacity, that is “the ability of people to work together, organize themselves, and mobilize resources to solve problems of common interest.”

Empowerment is often considered as the key for development effectiveness. The following chart, then, illustrates the relationships of the key components of empowerment as a framework:

**Figure 1.** The Empowerment Framework



Source: Maton, 2008

The primary objective of participatory governance such as under the BuB is to further enhance the capacities of individuals and organizations towards empowerment which will make possible the efforts to reform state institutions and processes, both in the national and local levels. Ultimately, by investing in people, further enhancing their assets, capabilities, collective voice and representation through an *incentivized* mechanism, such efforts could effectively lead to improved governance, especially in terms of accountability and transparency, functioning and more inclusive basic services, strengthened civil society, and other meaningful development outcomes.



## **THE BOTTOM-UP BUDGETING PROCESS**

### **General Features and Characteristics**

The BuB is implemented by four (4) National Government Agencies: the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC). This was done through their Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 1-2012 issued in March 2012, in time for the preparation of the 2013 General Appropriations Act (GAA). The policies and procedures for the process has been defined and redefined annually, according to the lessons learned from the previous years. For the preparation on the 2017 GAA, the DBM-DILG-DSWD-NAPC JMC No. 7-2015 is being used.

For the first phase of the process, 609 of the poorest municipalities were identified to be covered by the process. This was expanded to 1,233 cities and municipalities for the planning for the 2014 GAA, and then to all cities and municipalities in the country from the preparations for the 2015 GAA onwards. The process implemented this year, 2016, is for the 2017 GAA.

By JMC 07-2015, there are 12 NGAs and 2 GOCCs that would be participating for this planning cycle, which are the following:

1. Department of Agriculture (DA);
2. Department of Education (DepEd);
3. Department of Energy (DOE);
4. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR);
5. Department of Health (DOH);
6. Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG);
7. Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE);
8. Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
9. Department of Trade and Industry (DTI);
10. Department of Tourism (DOT);
11. National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP);
12. Department of Trade and Industry, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA);
13. National Electrification Administration (NEA); and
14. Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA).

Besides DBM, DILG, NAPC and DSWD, the process is being coordinated and overseen by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA),

The process is “an additional source of funding for the LGUs by essentially providing an additional grant from the national government to LGUs” (Manasan, 2014: 3). The amount to be received is equal to Php 700.00 multiplied by the number of poor people in a given local government unit (LGU), rounded to the nearest million, and must be no less than Php 15,000,000.00 and no more than Php 50,000,000.00. The number of poor people is estimated

through data from the Family Income and Expenditures Survey (FIES) and the Census. The LGUs are also required by the process to provide from its coffers a cash counterpart to the national government grant, to be formally included in the LGU's Annual Investment Plan (AIP).

Since JMC No. 4-2013, two planning modalities of the BuB are prescribed: the Regular BuB and the Enhanced BuB. The primary difference between the two modalities is that the Enhanced BuB is to be applied by those LGUs that are either current or previous participants of the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) program, known as KC areas, while the rest, the non-KC areas, would apply the Regular process. The following are the steps of the Regular BuB:

1. Conduct of Civil Society General Assembly (CSO Assembly) during which (i) the CSOs will independently elect their representatives to the Local Poverty Reduction Action Teams (LPRAT) who will then elect among themselves the CSO vice-chairman of the LPRAT and the two other CSO representatives who will be signatories<sup>6</sup> to the LPRAP, (ii) the City/Municipal Government Operations Officer (C/MLGOO) will report on the status of the BuB 2013 projects and the approved list of BuB 2014 projects, and (iii) the assembly as a whole will review, validate and analyze social and economic data of the LGU and propose solutions to identified problems and concerns (i.e., conduct a poverty situation analysis);
2. Convening of the LPRAT by the Mayor and conduct of the LPRAP workshop to be attended by the LPRAT who will identify the strategies to address poverty reduction in the LGU based on the results of the poverty situation analysis that was undertaken during the CSO assembly and then identify priority poverty reduction projects through consensus among its members;
3. Submission of the list of identified priority projects duly endorsed by the LPRAT to the DILG regional office (RO) for consolidation;
4. Validation and review of the consolidated list of LGU projects in the region by the Regional Poverty Reduction Action Teams (RPRAT) and subsequently, by the National Poverty Reduction Action Team (NPRAT) and feedback of the results of the RPRAT and NPRAT review to the LGUs;
5. Submission of the revised list of projects with the Sanggunian resolution adopting the revised list of priority projects to the DILG RO;
6. Integration of LGU projects in the budgets of the NGAs under the 2015 GAA;
7. Provision of LGU counterpart; and
8. Project implementation.

From the Regular process, Enhanced BuB replaces the first two steps with the following:

1. Participatory barangay development planning which includes: (1) conduct of barangay assemblies, (2) selection by the participants in the barangay assembly of sitio community representatives in and the barangay vice-chairperson of the expanded Barangay Development Council (BDC), (3) conduct of participatory situation analysis (PSA) to arrive at a medium-term barangay development plan (BDP) and the barangay investment plan (BIP), and (4) validation of BDP in a barangay assembly which will have to be approved by the barangay council and submitted to the City/ Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator for incorporation into the municipal development plan;
2. Conduct of City/ Municipal CSO General Assembly to be participated in by CSO leaders as in the Regular BuB process and by all the elected BDC vice-chairpersons during which (i) participants in the CSOs assembly will independently elect at least 5 representatives to sit as CSO representatives in the Enhanced LDC,<sup>9</sup> the CSO vice-chairperson of the Enhanced LDC and two other signatories (one of which is a CSO representative and the other one is a BDC vice-chair to the Local Development Investment Plan (LDIP)); (ii) the City/ Municipal Government Operations Officer (C/ MLGOO) will report on the status of the BuB 2013 projects and the approved list of BuB 2014 projects, and (iii) the assembly as a whole will review, validate and analyze social and

economic data of the LGU and propose solutions to identified problems and concerns (i.e., conduct a poverty situation analysis);

3. Convening of the Enhanced LDC10 by the Mayor to review, formulate/ update, and approve the medium-term comprehensive development plan (CDP), the Local Development Investment Plan (LDIP), the Executive-Legislative Agenda (ELA) and Annual Investment Plan (AIP), as well as the priority poverty reduction projects to be funded under the BuB and the barangay projects to be funded under KALAHI-CIDSS; and
4. Convening of the LPRAT to serve as the technical working group of the Enhanced LDC for the purpose of drafting the LPRAP and so doing identify the strategies for reducing poverty and identify the priority projects for inclusion in the LPRAP which it will then submit to the Enhanced LDC for its confirmation.

From here, the Enhanced BuB would follow the Regular BuB from the submission of the list of identified priority projects duly endorsed by the LPRAT to the DILG RO for consolidation, down to project implementation.

The LPRAT has the primary responsibility in planning within the BuB Process, especially in the formulation of the LPRAP. Under the Regular BuB process, the LPRAT is composed of the following:

1. Local Chief Executive as chairperson;
2. One CSO representative as co-chairperson;
3. Chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the Local Sanggunian;
4. LGU department heads such as the planning officer, budget officer, agriculture officer, health officer, social welfare and development officer, etc.;
5. Representatives of NGAs such as DSWD municipal links; C/MLGOO, etc.;
6. Representatives from CSOs; and
7. A representative from a local business group or association.

Meanwhile, under the Enhanced BuB process, the LPRAT is composed of the following:

1. Local Chief Executive as chairperson;
2. One CSO representative as co-chairperson;
3. Nine government representatives;
4. 5 CSO representatives as elected during the CSO assembly; and
5. 5 BDC vice-chairs as selected by all the BDC vice-chairs from among their rank.

## **Previous Assessments**

There have been at least three major evaluations of the BuB process. Each of these assessments sampled a number of LGUs in different regions of the Philippines, generally with consideration to the presence and absence of the KALAHI-CIDSS Program, the activity of CSO engagement, and the urbanization of each LGU. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were used in all of the papers to gather the substantive data to evaluate the process, along with relevant data such as attendance rates in the CSO Assembly, and the total value of proposed projects by proponent (LGU and CSO).

In 2013, the Ateneo de Manila University's Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC, 2013) released its *Bottom-up Budgeting Process Evaluation*, which looked at the BuB planning for FY 2014 in the municipalities of Goa and Lagonoy of Camarines Sur, the city of Butuan and the municipality of Buenavista of Agusan del Norte. In this study, there were numerous issues observed in the implementation of the process. First, there was minimal preparation and

appreciation on data-sets to be collected, consolidated and used for the specific purposes of BuB, resulting to the common usage of local investment plans and local priority projects as references in building the LPRAP. Second, the pre-CSO Assembly trainings and the CSO Orientation were usually one-shot deals explaining the mechanics of the BuB and proposal making, without the necessary in-depth training on the process, such as on the preparation and use of appropriate data for planning. There were even areas who failed to implement such trainings and orientation. Without the proper preparation and use of data, the LPRAPs essentially and practically adopted the local governments' investment plans and priority projects. LGU officers, NAPC facilitator, the regional DILG representative, and the RPRAT failed to provide effective technical support for the LPRATs. And lastly, the KALAHI-CIDSS projects, again from the lack of data-based planning, were used to fill-up the remaining number of priority projects allowed in the BuB process. The sum effect of these issues was the effective disenfranchisement of the local CSOs, and thus of the local citizenry, in the BuB despite all of the good intentions and designs. The minimum recommendation, then, was the strict obedience to the mandated facilitation, training, and data preparation and usage of the process. Further recommendation included the clarification on the conduct and program of regional orientations, basic CSO pre-orientation and orientation workshops, the LRPAP workshop and minimum skills building workshops in future JMCs, and the strict adherence by the CSOs and LGUs thereof.

In 2014, Manasan (2014) and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) published the *Assessment of the Bottom-Up Budgeting Process for FY 2015*, now focusing the BuB process in 3 LGUs in each of the provinces of Agusan del Norte, Camarines Sur, Negros Occidental, and Quezon for FY 2015. In this paper, the level of inclusiveness of the CSO Assembly was found varied across the areas, resulting from the variance in the local governments' practices in mobilizing the CSOs to the Assembly. This was compounded by the socioeconomic costs and trade-offs of participation among the members of the CSOs, who most of them belong to the basic and impoverished sectors. Representation of sectors was relatively uneven across the areas. Numerous relevant datasets were presented in the CSO Assembly, but were utilized sparingly. The level of participation in, and input to the LPRAT Workshop varied significantly across the study areas, from little and miniscule, to total and absolute. There are some areas where the local government officials dominate in the identification of priority projects. Some of the projects identified were chosen due to the perceived ease of implementation, the restrictions placed upon by the menu of programs provided, or the single-minded concern of some CSOs for their respective sectors. At best, the evidence on the contribution of BuB projects to poverty alleviation in beneficiary barangays was mixed. Project implementation were generally slow, hampered by the lack of feedback from NGAs and the poor coordination among the NGAs, LGUs and CSOs. Despite these issues,

*BuB [was] valued by LGU officials and CSO leaders because of the additional funds it provides. As such, the BUB creates fiscal space on the part of the LGU allowing it to finance and implement more projects than can be accommodated from its own resources. But beyond, and perhaps, more important, the BUB process increases participation in local governance" (Manasan, 2014: 57).*

Thus, adequate preparations, CSO mapping, establishment of CSO federations, the adaption of the Enhanced BuB to the more areas, social preparation, earlier invitation dissemination, and clearer guidelines in all particularities were recommended, among other things.

In 2016, Manasan (2016) and PIDS made another assessment, entitled *Assessment of Bottom-up Budgeting: FY 2016 Cycle*, on the BuB Process in 3 LGUs in each of the provinces of Agusan del Norte, Antique, Camarines Sur, and Zamboanga del Norte. There have been notable improvements, such as having CSOs were participating in the CSO Assembly, CSO mapping becoming more prevalent and more participative and deliberative methods being employed in selecting priority projects. However, most of the critical issues persisted, and thus much of the recommendations from their assessment for the FY 2015 were reiterated. Other issues also emerged, most notably the increasing disinterest in BuB and the apparent lack of capacity of LGUs to implement the BuB projects. On a positive note, the same values attached to the process remained, thus signifying hope for reforms in the process.

All of these assessments point to significant challenges to the implementation of the BuB process, especially towards its underlying goal of empowerment. For the past three cycles, numerous factors interfered in the effective delivery of empowerment and poverty reduction, at least in much of the LGUs studied. Lack of necessary datasets for poverty situation analysis, lack of basic engagement capabilities and resources among CSOs, and systemic infirmities and ambiguities all contributed to the failure in the full realization of BuB as a new genuine platform for participation and empowerment. The question now becomes: how much has changed and improved? It is interesting to look at the current situation, especially to LGUs not yet covered by previous assessments.

## **THE CASES OF CAGAYAN DE ORO AND ALUBIJID**

*Written in Collaboration with Governance and Leadership Institute - Xavier University (GLI-XU)*

### **Background**

#### *City of Cagayan de Oro*

The city of Cagayan de Oro is considered to be the growing center of commerce, education, and government administration in Northern Mindanao; a major city of Region 10, rich in heritage which shares the historical highlights of the Republic of the Philippines.

According to the city's Planning and Development Office, the city showed an extreme increase in population. Migration is a contributory factor in population growth. People from neighboring provinces, cities, and municipalities are coming to the city for job and income opportunities. Sprouting subdivisions in the city is one attraction for the people to live in Cagayan de Oro City. Furthermore, Cagayan de Oro City is one of the highly urbanized cities in the country, comprising 80 barangays with a total population of 602,088 and a growth rate of 2.69 (NSO Census 2010). Barangay Carmen (11.44 percent) is the most populated barangay, followed by Barangay Lapasan (6.84 percent), Kauswagan (5.64 percent), Balulang (5.60 percent), and Bulua (5.24 percent). The rest of the barangays make up less than five percent each of the total population of the city.

In terms of economic features, about 34.65% of the city's total land area (56,966.6228 hectares) was devoted to agriculture in 2011, dropping to 33.27% in 2012. Of the agricultural features, 6,008.40 hectares were devoted to crops in 2011, dropping to 3,854.50 hectares in 2012. Crops produced are both food and commercial crops. Food crops include rice, corn, and vegetables while commercial crops are abaca, banana, cacao and coffee, root crops, and fruits and nuts.

The city is led by former Misamis Oriental governor and current city mayor Hon. Oscar S. Moreno. The mayor is perceptibly a supporter of the People's Participation as he is known to have engaged with local CSOs and basic sectors. This is demonstrated through the issuance of executive orders for the creation of the Oro Youth Development Council (E.O. 72-2014) and recognition of the Cagayan de Oro People's Council (E.O 97-2015), both people-led initiatives. Although there is active local participation of CSOs in the city, there are challenges in political dynamics in relation to the City Executive and City Council.

#### *Municipality of Alubijid, Misamis Oriental*

Alubijid is located west of Cagayan de Oro City, between El Salvador City and the town of Laguindingan where the new Cagayan de Oro International Airport is found. The town got its name from the Alubijid or Alubijod (*Spondiaspinnata*) tree that grew abundantly in the area, especially in Barangay Baybay, during pre-Hispanic times.

Based on the historical records of the Municipality of Alubijid, it was on April 5, 1940 that late President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines Hon. Manuel L. Quezon signed Executive Order No. 266, creating the Municipality of Alubijid from the portion of the Municipality of Cagayan, Misamis Oriental with the following barrios: Gitagum, Laguindingan, Kibaghot,

Matangad, Mauswagon, and Pangayawan. The newborn municipality was formally inaugurated on July 1, 1940 with Don Gregorio Pelaez as the Provincial Governor.

Currently, Alubijid is a fourth class municipality in the province of Misamis Oriental, Philippines. According to the 2010 census, it has a population of 26,648 people.

Like other municipalities of Misamis Oriental, Alubijid is on an agriculture-based landscape. With a total land area of 10,275 hectares comprising 16 barangays, the municipality produces a wide range of food crops including cassava, rice, corn, vegetables, coconut products, and root crops. Alubijid also offers rustic pleasures like cold and hot springs, waterfalls, mountains, lakes, and jungle trails.

The municipality has total revenue of Php 53,084,085.00, of which 87.2% goes to IRA, 12.5% to Local Source Revenue, and 0.3% to other revenues.

### *CSO Network Mobilization*

There are two main components of the BuB process as specified in the Joint Memorandum Circular No. 7-2015: the CSO assembly and LPRAP workshop. Prior to the latter, the role of the DILG-BuB Community Mobilizers is crucial. Community Mobilizers (CMs) are DILG personnel who are responsible for mobilizing CSO participation in the BuB program. They are primarily responsible for the conduct of the CSO assembly.

In mobilizing the CSOs, information dissemination is vital. In the case of Alubijid, invitation letters were delivered to the exact locations of individual associations. Some areas were difficult to reach due to road inaccessibility, lack of internet access, lack of mobile phone signal reception, and sheer distance. It was also documented that time of delivery and number of invitees per LGU was also a consideration. Community mobilizers often asked drivers of *habal-habal* (private motorcycles which take on passengers for a fee) to deliver invitations for hinterland organizations.



**Picture 1.** Signing of the Executive Order establishing the Cagayan de Oro People’s Council.

On the other hand, in Cagayan de Oro City, the mobilization of CSOs was relatively easier. With the existence of the Cagayan de Oro People’s Council (influenced by the Naga City experience), reaching CSOs was not a problem considering that the People’s Council already has an available CSO contact list. Moreover, CSOs help in information dissemination through text messaging and personal communication.

At the height of the mobilization phase, groups were federated—transport, women, youth, and other marginalized sectors. Still, lack of budget for mobilization and limited

information were major challenges during this phase. The community mobilizers, established CSOs, and the LGUs were not able to reach out to other existing CSOs in the vicinity due to a lack of access to CSO data and, at times, due to participation resistance because of political affiliations.

However, the CSOs have learned and experienced that for the first time in their respective local engagements, the local government and DILG have called them to join the BuB Process. According to Community Mobilizers, their engagement perspectives have changed from a critical one to a collaborative and constructive kind of local engagement, having an avenue wherein they may propose their projects and provide budget. In addition, the CSOs experienced a sense of convergence that was better than that which they felt during rallies.

It was recommended that during this phase there should be a CSO Mobilization on the Barangay Level. Since the BuB process is targeting the grassroots level, it was recommended that mobilization should start from the very basic unit of government. It would also be efficient in the long run since the end beneficiaries of projects are located in the communities. The mobilization would inform the CSOs and the beneficiaries with just one blast of information dissemination. Furthermore, mobilization should not only be limited during this phase. CSO mobilization should reach and engage every existing CSO within the locality. This continuing mobilization would cause increase in CSOs who would engage in the BuB process. Accordingly, massive accreditation should also be initiated by the local DILG and LGU to facilitate future CSO engagement beyond this phase.

#### *CSO Assembly and LPRAT Election*

In the earlier phase of the BuB, the invitation to the CSO assembly was on short notice prior to the assembly. There were complaints from the CSO respondents that the notice was too short, giving them little time to consult with their respective members and prepare for the assembly.

Various reasons were given by the CSOs who did not attend the assembly, such as conflict with other meetings, lack of money for transport or unavailability of transport vehicle especially those in the hinterland areas, work schedule of representatives, conflict in political affiliation, late receipt of communication, lack of interest, lack of confidence to speak, and distance of assembly venue.

During the CSO Assembly, the CSO participants of Alubijid and Cagayan de Oro underwent an orientation of the BuB Program and the role of the CSOs in Local Development Councils (LDCs) and Local Special Bodies (LSBs)—basic activities as specified in the JMCs. In Cagayan de Oro, they added points on ‘What is Poverty’ and ‘Poverty Alleviation’. Such points were added to have CSOs a deeper sense of appreciation of what they will be addressing when elected as CSO Representatives to the LPRAT. Nevertheless, CSOs of both localities have received copious information during the CSO Assembly.

CSOs were also pleased that the assembly is ‘politician-free’. As experienced by CSOs, events and activities they attended would also be attended by politicians. According to CSOs and



Community Mobilizers, the presence of political personalities tended to influence the outcome of the CSO Assembly. Genuine representation in participatory governance is sought during these assemblies; such political interference in the selection of the CSO representatives may devalue the BuB process in its entirety. Both areas have appreciated a politician-free arena wherein they can choose their sectoral representatives.

Still, in spite of the gradual increase of CSO participation during CSO Assemblies, the slots for the participants were limited. Those who were initially invited during the CSO mobilization phase had the chance to be informed of the CSO Assembly and to attend the latter. Thus, the slots, seats, and meals provided in the assembly would only reciprocate to the number of the invitees.

Also, CSO attendees were difficult to validate and qualify. During the CSO assembly, though having limited slots, the organizers did not limit the assembly only to those who were invited. The event was also open to walk-in participants. This feature added to the difficulty of authenticating the walk-in representatives, sectors, and organizations being represented. Considering that this phase of the BuB has no strict screening, it would pose a great threat to the genuine sectoral representation and grassroots-entrenched process of the BuB program, as Gonzales claimed. It was seen that such a flaw emanated from the limited preparation of the CSO assembly. Gonzales covers the municipalities and cities within Alubijid, from the west point of Misamis Oriental and Villanueva to the east.

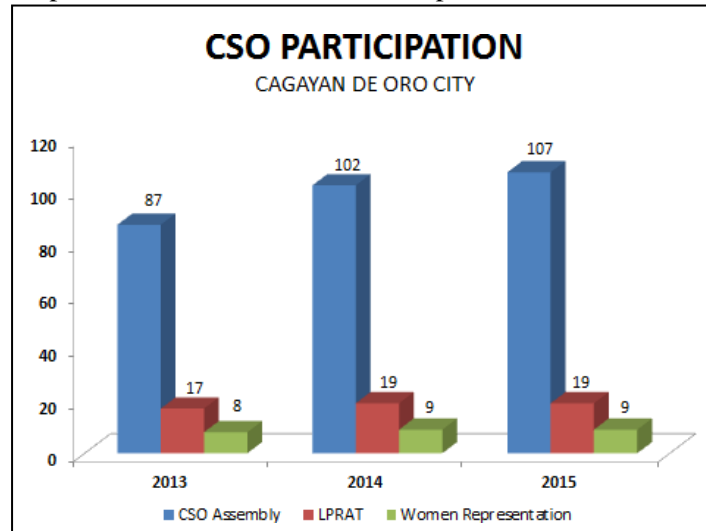
Nonetheless, CSOs see women participation during the assembly and election as potent enough to serve as a bigger voice in governance. In the LPRAT, the recent Joint Memorandum Circular No. 7 of the BuB required 40% women composition. Both localities reached the required composition; from 2013 to 2015, the localities' women composition even exceeded the required 40%. In Cagayan de Oro, a woman in the person of Queritess Queja has been leading the LPRAT as co-chair for 3 terms. With a governance system that has becoming more inclusive, democratic and non-discriminatory, the impact of women on policy increases; this may push women to succeed as politicians, gaining voice through leadership and participation (United Nations Development Programme).

Moreover, the CSO local network is now valued. CSOs that have no financial capacity to fund their projects are experiencing a significant involvement in the community. In addition, the CSOs gained a setting in which information, expertise, and services can be easily shared within their flock.

The CSOs recommend that there should be a CSO Assembly on the barangay level. Such an assembly should cover all the barangays in the locality and surgically reach CSOs thereat. The issue on limited information would be alleviated. Furthermore, validation of CSOs will be galvanized on the grassroots level; this was suggested as an initial screening effort during the Cagayan de Oro CSO Capacity Development. To counter unauthorized and unauthentic CSO sectoral representation, it was also recommended that a Validation and Qualification Scheme be realized during the CSO assembly or specified in future JMCs. Specified by the CSOs during the focus group discussion, an official document should be presented to the secretariats of the CSO

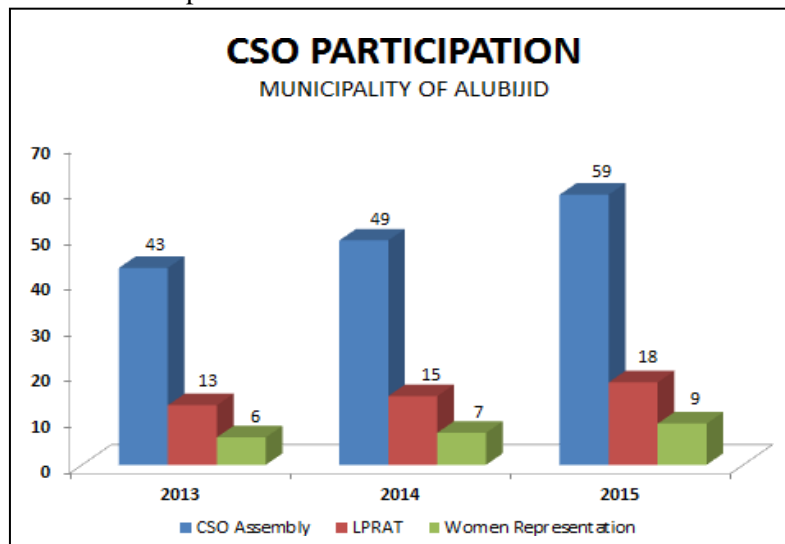
assembly by the CSO participants. Most importantly, the budget of this BuB phase should be increased to cover walk-in participants and invited CSOs.

**Figure 3.** Cagayan de Oro City CSO Participation, attendance during the CSO Assembly, and Elected CSO Representatives and Women Participation in the LPRAT



The graph at Figure 3 shows an increasing attendance during CSO Assemblies from the year 2013 to 2015. CSO representation to the LPRAT gained a number of 19 representatives in 2014 from 17 representatives in 2013, and retained the number in 2015. Women representation in the LPRAT exceeded the 40% representation requirement since 2013.

**Figure 4.** Municipality of Alubijid CSO Participation, attendance during the CSO Assembly, and Elected CSO Representatives and Women Participation in the LPRAT



At Figure 4, it could be seen that there is a rise in the attendance during the CSO Assemblies from the year 2013 to 2015. CSO representation to the LPRAT elected a number of 13

representatives in 2013, and consecutively increased from 2014 to 2015. Women representation in the LPRAT exceeded the 40% representation requirement, data of 2013–2015.

### *BuB LPRAP Formulation and Workshop*

In Alubijid and Cagayan de Oro, the LPRAT, in attendance of the LGU and CSO representatives negotiated in setting their identified priority projects. There was a high consideration of ‘common priorities’ among the parties. In Alubijid, for example, CSOs observed that there is the need for a paved road to accommodate food-related activities, deliveries, and agricultural support, which the municipal government has also seen as a priority. During the first term of the LPRAT in 2013, the Calatcat-Talaba-Sampatulog Farm-to-Market Road was proposed.



**Picture 2.** Meeting between CSOs and the Appropriations Committee

The CSOs also experienced a non-patronage approach of persons-in-power. Patronage can be an intricate subject to understand as it works in diverse ways, and in many cases it is against the law. In the context of BuB, years of patronage politics and mendicancy obligated LCEs to travel all the way to Manila to solicit funds, and people in the local setting were at the mercy of the local government to have their projects funded. Now, the CSOs of Cagayan de Oro and Alubijid claim that they worry less about such dynamics, political patronage, and nepotism; they can directly propose projects to the LGU and have funds for its implementation without interference.

Furthermore, with the participation of the vulnerable sectors (women, PWDs, victims of calamity and disaster), the workshops were seen as streaming the voices of the marginalized. As indicated by ADD International, the consensus on the need to focus more directly on inequalities in order to achieve sustainable development that benefits all stems from the broad recognition that the poorest and most marginalized have not benefited equitably from development efforts within the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework; this entails highlighting the importance of bringing the ‘lived experience’ into the analysis and policymaking process.

But the CSOs were unprepared; there were no prior consultations from the communities and pre-identified beneficiaries, so no data were prepared to serve as reference and factors for consideration during the workshop. In addition, the CSOs were given too many instructions, guidelines, and requirements at once, all presented within the day of the workshop. There was information overload—such varied, detailed, and wordy materials were difficult to absorb.

Adding to the despoilment of the quality of the workshop, some CSOs—according to this study’s respondents—were only representing a sector yet not representing a communal interest. Prevalence of conflicting interests may prevent an impartial and unbiased workshop output.

Even so, the CSOs have learned that an openhanded attitude in ranking or considering priority projects may enrich the relationship among CSOs and sectors. Thus, such an attitude is the root for Cross-Sectoral projects, projects that may conform to the needs of sectors in its integrated sense. Likewise, the CSOs learned that grassroots consultation is deemed essential to the defining of the quality of the outputs during the LPRAP workshop. Correspondingly, there is a need to incline to more suitable and stress-free means of steering the workshop; retooling has been sought.

During this phase, it was recommended that there should be beneficiary consultation prior to the conduct of the workshop. It was known that beneficiary consultation was not stated in the JMCs. The absence of such an element led the CSOs to make the initiative of consulting the communities or proposed beneficiaries. Preparatory workshops should also be given so that the CSOs will not be overwhelmed by the load of information and activities given during the LPRAP formulation workshop. Furthermore, in the conduct of the workshop, the guidelines should be simplified to level off with the CSOs.

### **Most Significant Changes of BuB Beneficiaries**

In both sites, especially in Cagayan de Oro, the BuB process itself symbolized the most significant change that has happened within the period of engagement. Particularly, the process addressed the basic needs like water for their locality through the BuB program and with the help of the LPRAT. The story of Ms. Jerlyn Punay (See

#### **Box 1. The Story of Ms. Punay**

Jerlyn T. Punay, a representative of the Victims of Calamities and Disaster Sector 2012-2013, was involved in the BuB when former DILG Cagayan de Oro City Director Emil Rana invited her to represent and serve as voice of the 'Sendong survivors'. Her current involvement now is in the monitoring team of the LPRAT for the ongoing implementation of a water system project.

After Tropical Storm *Sendong* wreaked havoc, Punay's family was relocated to Calaanan's Tent City on January 2012. They stayed there for four months before they were transferred to a concrete shelter unit within Sitio Calaanan, Barangay Canitoan, shared by Sendong survivors from six barangays. Punay said that during the earlier days of the relocation, the area was not at peace, with theft and deaths due to high blood pressure prevalent. Although there was electricity, water was hard to come by, being rationed from the few available water outlets in the area, as well as fire trucks. Even with the aid of the City DILG Office, led by then-City Director Emil Rana, and the CDO Water District, the rations were not enough to address the problem. Punay thought that if only the community had readily available water, their struggles would somehow be lessened.

Punay noted that the most significant change that took place in the community with the BuB was that their struggles with water supply were minimized. In Phase 3 of the Calaanan Sendong Relocation Site, potable water was delivered to the area. However, some of the beneficiaries were not active in keeping the project unharmed, as when children were allowed to step on the pipe. Punay also felt that there was a minimal sense of ownership of the project in the area. A neighbor once told her that the project was a 'display of support' from Mayor Moreno because it was election season, even though the beneficiaries were properly informed by the barangay and the homeowners association that the project was from the BuB program. Punay was led to ponder that if CSOs were highlighted instead as the identifier of the project, the beneficiaries might be encouraged to think otherwise and act accordingly.

"The story is significant for me because I am part of the successful building process. Although significant people were not recognized, it gave me liberty from the usual 'Politician Savior Scenario'. It gave me pride and fulfillment as a layman," said Punay.

Punay experienced difficulty in handling workshop outputs during the LPRAP workshop but Assistant Director Cynthia Rosales of the Philippine Commission on Urban Poor (PCUP) lent her a hand in the polishing of the output, going so far as to bring her to the City Water District and asked a water district official to assist her in the technical aspect of the proposal, thus rendering AD Rosales as the coordinator-facilitator of the project. Rosales also introduced Punay to Quette Queja, current LPRAT Co-Chair. Queja supported Punay's project by making sure that sectoral concerns were discussed during LPRAT meetings. Queja also volunteered to follow up the agencies concerned.

"If given a chance to continue my engagement with the LPRAT, my personal mission would be to address other needs of other disaster survivors, for I know how it feels like to be one. For this to be realized, I will exert effort to gain information on BuB-CSO Assembly and attend assemblies to have a chance to be elected. I would also inform our barangay and homeowners association about the BuB program, by any means possible," said Punay.

Box 1) indicated the potency of BuB to address basic concerns

Of course, the innovation in the community was not possible without the aid of significant individuals. Besides the LPRAT, the facilitators and coordinators helped a lot in bringing out the confidence of the CSO proponents through information, empowerment, and capacity development. The facilitators and partners assisted the sector in bringing up concerns during LPRAT meetings. Furthermore, the facilitators accompanied them on follow-ups with respective agency partners.

## **Conclusion**

The Philippines' Participatory Budgeting initiative is running on its fourth year since its launching in 2012. It has visibly empowered civil society organizations and basic sector organizations to engage, directly or indirectly, in local governance and national government for people-centered and needs-responsive efforts and projects. This initiative is ultimately appropriate; not only does it provide an additional avenue for CSOs to engage in local projects and activities, but it also opens up opportunities for reaching towards more transparent and accountable local governance. The additional funds that the program provides, the use of which may be planned by laymen, can lead to the improvement of the relationship between the CSO and LGU due to the time this planning phase provides for engagement exposure.

However, in spite of having improved significantly in terms of CSO participation and inclusivity in local planning and budgeting, the BuB process still has issues and concerns in need of consideration and action by local and national counterparts of the BuB program before the institutionalization of this process.

### *CSO Participation*

Cagayan de Oro City and the Municipality of Alubijid have shown a steady increase in CSO participation since the launching of the BuB program. Such an increase in CSO participation requires a method wherein all existing CSOs in the locality are reached and well informed. Both necessities led this study to a single point of recommendation for a "CSO Gathering," a congregation prior to the BuB CSO Assembly. In this "CSO Gathering," the participating CSOs may showcase their services and activities, serving as an ideal hub for "CSO numbers count" for BuB Community Mobilizers to take part in. Furthermore, the gathering is deemed to function as a point of information dissemination to the public in terms of CSO and LGU affairs. Thus, such an event may boost the information coverage, consequently leading to an increase in CSO participation. This would also mean a boost in competition among CSOs. With this possibility, a mechanism should be employed to guarantee impartiality; a "formal registration process" may be required to ensure that the CSO is representative of the local population.

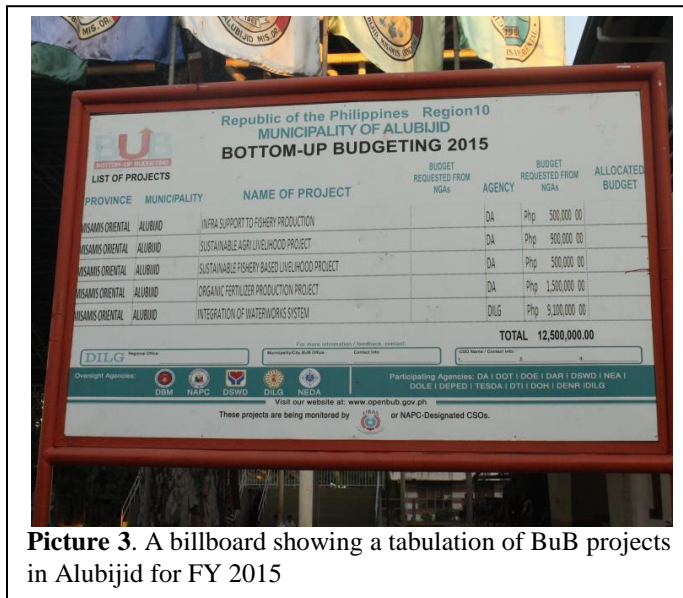
In Cagayan de Oro City, apart from the CDO People's Council initiative to serve as an umbrella organization for CSOs, there is also a move from the CSOs suggesting that the mayor put up a "Civil Society Affairs Office" to cater to CSO issues and concerns. This may also facilitate CSOs when BuB matters such as CSO Assembly announcements and other BuB-related concerns arise.

Moreover, it is also recommended that the LGU bank on “existing suggestive mechanisms” to facilitate CSO and other voluntary efforts, like activation of The Volunteer and Citizenship Program or setting up a Volunteer Help Desk (DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2013-27). One of the program’s purposes is to contribute to the enhancement of relationships and partnerships of the voluntary and civil society sector with local governments and other sectors of the society. The LGU, together with the CSOs, may fix tailor-fit enhancements to address CSO participation and BuB-related concerns.

Eventually, political interference may be experienced. So it is further recommended that the facilitator or personnel of the CSO Affairs Office should not be associated with the LGU.

Most importantly, CSOs should be capacitated on leadership and communication skills, technical skills in project proposal development, and evaluation and monitoring tools. They should also be oriented on how LGUs operate and be accredited for a healthier engagement with the LGU and other CSOs.

*On Target: Projects for Sustained Poverty Reduction*



**Picture 3.** A billboard showing a tabulation of BuB projects in Alubijid for FY 2015

Most identified projects are based on commonly felt needs of the CSOs, and in most cases, are envisioned as long-term projects. Yet their life spans are dependent on the end beneficiaries and monitoring of the LPRAT or CSO proponent. It is seen that project beneficiaries have a great role in the projects’ sustainability, but most beneficiaries show little to no interest or ownership, or appreciation at the very least, of the project being implemented. Project identification and consultation from the grassroots level (the end beneficiaries) should be considered. Such identification should be backed by available data from the barangay and city

LGUs for the project appropriateness and sense of inclusive sustainable development to be realized.

Considering that there are different planning and development visions among the CSOs, barangay and city LGUs, there is an understood challenge of parallelism of development agenda in the locality in general. Therefore, consultation with the community or the LGUs should be done before the crafting of the project proposal. Moreover, to ensure project acceptability and feasibility, there should be a site visit prior to the finalization of project prioritization. It would entail added expenses and efforts, with a possibility of prolonging the process; however, it may also contribute to the improvement of the project’s quality as well as align it to expected

outcomes that are in line with the BuB program's overall goals. Furthermore, although there is a chance of the process to be prolonged, future endeavors will be more or less facilitated from the gains of a pioneering effort.

Given that consultations are done on the community and barangay level, there is still a loophole within the process that is in need of troubleshooting: the menu of BuB projects was found to be restrictive. Some identified priority projects were not found on the menu; LPRATs had to settle with projects available in the menu. To counter this limitation, the presentation of the menu should be given prior to the orientation of stakeholders at the regional level. The menu of programs should be readily available at a centralized office within the LGU or uploaded online for convenience. It is also recommended that the menu of programs and its guidelines should be continuously updated as per consultation with the CSOs.

### *Service Delivery*

Service delivery should be given importance and focus as it defines the project stakeholders' trust and contributes to the quality of participation in future local planning and budgeting. Furthermore, there should be an inclusive mechanism for project implementation and monitoring.

In a more inclusive local setting, CSO involvement in the political affairs of the community opens up a better relationship with the LGU. Poverty mitigation programs and projects are an integral part of the BuB program, but empowerment of the marginalized sectors through the participatory feature of the program is a vital component for poverty reduction to become sustainable.

Fundamentally, the current local participatory budgeting's impact goes beyond the financial assistance it gives to the LGUs. Its lasting impact is indicated by how conscious and participative the people are with regard to how public resources are used and how LGUs treat their participation in local processes.

## **THE CASES OF METRO ILOILO**

*Written in Collaboration with the Central Philippine University (CPU)*

### **Background**

#### *Iloilo City*

One of the most accessible cities in the country, Iloilo City is located at the southern portion of the Province of Iloilo. It is about 55 minutes from Manila by plane and 18 hours by ship. Four (4) hours from Boracay by car. Iloilo City, officially the City of Iloilo, is a highly urbanized city on Panay Island and has been a chartered city since 1937. The capital city of the province of Iloilo, and is also the regional center of the Western Visayas region as well as the center of the Iloilo-Guimaras Metropolitan Area. In the 2010 census, Iloilo City had a population of 424,619 with a 1.8% population annual growth rate. For the metropolitan area, the total population is 878,621.

The city is a conglomeration of former towns, which are now the geographical districts consisting of: Jaro (an independent city-before), Molo, La Paz, Mandurriao, Villa Arevalo, and Iloilo City Proper. The district of Lapuz, a former part of La Paz, was declared a separate district in 2008. These six districts made up the 180 barangays of the city.

Metro Iloilo has been integrated into the Metro Iloilo-Guimaras Economic Development Council (MIGEDC) which include Iloilo City and Leganes, Pavia, Sta. Barbara, Cabatuan, San Miguel, Oton & Guimaras Province (with 5 municipalities - Sibunag, San Lorenzo, Nueva Valencia, Buenavista and Jordan). It ranked sixth in terms of population among the twelve metropolitan areas in the Philippines and it ranked fifth in terms of land area. It is the only officially recognized metropolitan area in Western Visayas as per Presidential Executive Order No. 559 duly signed by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on August 28, 2006.

Iloilo City was awarded by the DILG with the Seal of Good Housekeeping in 2011 along with the Municipality of Pavia. Despite the relative developments, the City of Iloilo ranked first in the list of top 10 cities with the most number of poor households. The 2013 data of DSWD-6 showed that Iloilo City in terms of the magnitude of poor households has the highest number with 13,621 (DSWD Region VI).

Iloilo City has been a participant of the BuB since 2014 and has accredited more than forty (40) non-government and people's organizations operating within the city and province. There were around 21 CSOs which actively participated in the initial stages of the BuB process especially during the CSO assembly. But after the election of CSO representatives to the LPRAT (they elected around 20), fewer representatives turned up during the succeeding LPRAT meetings. As the former LPRAT co-chair puts it: *"they were active at the start; but as the LPRAT meetings proceeded, some of them only sent their representatives who do not even have an idea why they were there in the first place; others simply 'fade away' and cannot even be contacted anymore"*.

It was also observed that most of the NGOs which are represented in the LPRAT, particularly the ones which regularly attended the meetings, are considered to be the 'affluent' ones, i.e., Lion's Club, Paraw Regatta, Iloilo Business Club and Iloilo Dinagyang Foundations, with perhaps the



exception of the Iloilo CODE (Iloilo Caucus of Development NGOs), which is composed of pro-poor organizations representing the transport, farmers and women sectors.

For the 2014 BuB process, Iloilo City through the LPRAP has identified six (6) priority projects in different areas and are in the process of bidding for some infrastructure projects and implementation for others. In terms of their participation, the CSOs representatives in the LPRAT acted as observers in the bidding and awarding of the BuB-funded projects through the City government's Bids and Awards Committee (BAC). Moreover, CSO representatives took part in the monitoring and evaluation of the implemented projects under the BuB.

### *Municipality of Pavia*

Located just about 10 kilometers (6.2 mi.) north of Iloilo City, the Municipality of Pavia is a second-class municipality in the Province of Iloilo. The municipality is the Regional Agro-Industrial Center for Western Visayas. With a population of 43,614 (2010 Census), it is regarded as the smallest municipality in the province with only 18 barangays making up the geographical unit. With an area of 27.15 km<sup>2</sup>, it has a population density of 1,600/km<sup>2</sup> (4,200/sq.mi.), the area being the site of most residential subdivisions, commercial complex and relocations of urban poor families from Iloilo City. However, the poverty incidence stands at around 14 percent.

The municipality participated in the BuB process in 2014 and is currently implementing seven (7) priority development projects for the identified target beneficiaries. Prior to the BuB, the municipality has accredited a number of CSOs, now with the advent of the BuB, that number has increased to around 31 non-governmental and people's organizations representing the basic sector, cooperatives and DSWD-affiliated organizations, i.e., KALAHICIDSS, KALIPI and 4Ps. As a result of the BuB, the CSOs are now organized into the Pavia Federation of Civil Society Organizations (Pavia-FCSOs).

In terms of their engagement with the LGU, the CSOs have been very active and able partner in the planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of BuB-funded projects. For instance, 2 out of the 7 projects that the LPRAT has identified and approved can be considered as 'pet' projects of the CSOs. These are the Water Supply Provision under the Salintubig Project of the DILG and the CSO Capability-Building Training, also under the DILG. In fact, only Pavia among the 42 LGUs in Iloilo Province submitted a project proposal for the capacity-building of CSOs. The CSOs representatives in the LPRAT took responsibility in preparing the project briefs, detailed engineering design (DED) and feasibility study (SFS) for Salintubig and project briefs for the Capacity-Building training. The Salintubig Project is now being implemented with the assistance of the Pavia Water Cooperative (PWC) an active member of the LPRAT. The CSO representatives were also active in the monitoring of the BuB projects.

## **Tracing the Engagement and Implementation Process**

### *CSO Network Mobilization*

The CSOs in Metro Iloilo (Iloilo City & Pavia) responded to the invitation (months of July-August) of the DILG Community Mobilizer (CM) and C/MLGOO to apply for accreditation and

submit documents to the *Sanggunian Panglunsod/Bayan*, respectively, as accredited CSO/NGO. The invitation was coursed through the different CSOs/NGOs operating in the city/municipal and barangay levels representing various sectors – cooperative farmers, water, transport, PWD, youth, faith-based organizations, etc.

In Iloilo City, there were more than two dozen CSOs (around 21) in Iloilo City - from urban poor, vendors association, women, youth, PWDs, business, professional and civic groups, to faith-based organizations - responded to the invitation to participate in the BuB. The most active ones are those representing the civic sector, i.e., Lions Club, and Iloilo CODE-NGOs, a multi-sectoral group.

In the Municipality of Pavia, more than thirty (30) CSOs representing various sectors positively responded to the invitation. Aside from the ‘regular’ CSOs which have representations in the local special bodies, e.g. local development council, local health board, etc., the BuB process was able ‘attract’ the attention of small and newly-organized non-governmental and people’s organizations to be accredited in the local *sanggunian*. For instance, the Pavia Entrepreneur’s Multi-purpose Cooperative (PEMPC) along with the Parish Pastoral Council, and local cooperatives, found a new ‘ally’ in the newly accredited CSOs such as the Pal-agon Waterworks (now Pavia Water Cooperative) which represent the water sector, among the basic sectors.

Although the *Sanggunian Panlungsod* Secretariat in Iloilo City and the *Sanggunian Bayan* in Pavia had an existing directory of accredited CSOs especially those which were already represented in local special bodies, a new directory was made available to include the newly accredited NGOs and POs in the LGU. A significant result is the expanded sectoral representation of CSOs and the increased number of accredited CSOs in local development council.

In Pavia, in particular, the newly-accredited CSOs decided (also upon the encouragement of the former MLGOO) to organize a federation of CSOs in the municipality which represents the various sectors in the CSO assembly, and even those which were not able to take part in the BuB for failing to get accreditation before the local council.

To maximize their participation in the BuB Assembly, the CSOs in Metro Iloilo should be able to hurdle the requirements for accreditation set by the local legislative council. Thus, the CSOs especially the community-based people’s organizations (POs) need basic knowledge and skills to formulate their organization’s vision/mission, constitution and by-laws to comply with the requirements for registration to achieve legal status.

Although, the BuB guidelines (JMC No. 7, Nov. 3, 2015) seem to be silent about the requisites for accreditation, yet JMC No. 7 explicitly states that the “*CSO assembly is an inclusive meeting of all CSOs in the city or municipality...*”, which means that any NGO or PO does not to be registered under the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), or Cooperative Development Agency (CDA) in order to take part in the BuB process as long as they are operating within the city or municipality. However, some CSOs, especially newly-formed community-based organizations, i.e., pedicab drivers’ associations,

vendors and youth groups, hesitated to join the assembly and eventually backed out even before the conduct of the CSO Assembly and LPRAT election.

It must be noted further that as provided for by JMC No. 7, “*Any CSO that is not accredited by or whose application for accreditation is not acted upon by the local Sanggunian may file a complaint to the BuB RPRAT Grievance Redress Committee. Failure to justify non-accreditation of a CSO or inaction on its application for accreditation may result in the disqualification of the LGU from participating in BuB.*” However, it seems that CSOs are not aware of the existence of this guideline.

In terms of capacities needed by NGOs/POs in engaging with the BuB in the early stage of the process, the need to have competent leadership, communication (rapport) and negotiation skills, in both individual and organizational levels, to attract the support of other CSO participants as well as earn the respect of other BuB stakeholders, e.g. representatives of NGAs and more importantly, its LGU-partner. It has been observed in both areas, that even before the CSO Assembly and the conduct of the LPRAT election, CSOs which have been recognized by the LGU as members of the local special bodies were quite ‘at ease’ and have ‘tacitly’ assumed leadership role in the gathering of CSOs, being perceived by ‘neophyte’ CSOs as in ‘better position’ (compared to them) due to having more experience in engaging with the LGU, available resources at its disposal, and network of support.

The study found out that in both areas, transportation and representation allowance (RATA) for CSO leaders attending the meetings and workshops within and outside of the municipality or city remain to be a major concern for most NGOs/POs which took part in the BuB process. Except for professional, civic-oriented CSOs and cooperatives, the lack of financial and technical resources, e.g. transportation and representation allowances for CSO leaders and processing fees for registration documents, ‘know-how’ to fill-up legal documents have constrained the optimum participation of some well-meaning NGOs and POs.

There are two major issues which can be considered as challenges, and to some extent, problematic, that confront the CSOs while engaging in the particular stage of the BuB. One particular issue is the insufficient and untimely dissemination of information about the BuB to the CSOs as stakeholders of the process. This has been intimated on several occasions by CSO representatives in Iloilo City – the lack of access to accurate information particularly on what exactly is the role of CSOs in the various aspects of the BuB process.

Except for the brief orientation about the BuB and the role of CSOs in local governance which were given by the CM and C/MLGOO during the early stages of the BuB process, no in-depth discussion followed. The lack of access to and insufficiency of information, further aggravated by its untimely dissemination, could be a major factor why several CSOs, both in Iloilo and Pavia were not able to respond accordingly and many remained confused on how exactly they should contribute to the BuB process, and to what extent. Perhaps, this explains why some CSOs in the Iloilo City simply ‘fade away’ in the ensuing BuB process. In Pavia, it was more focused on the issue of ‘accreditation’ by the *Sanggunian Bayan* as ‘prerequisite’ to participate.

Finally, the dynamics, or what one key informant refers to as ‘intramurals’ among CSOs brought about by personal, ideological, attitudinal problems (e.g. ‘vested’ interest of some CSO leaders) when it comes to sectoral representation in the BuB. Some CSOs leaders perceived (or perhaps, misperceived) that the BuB is a venue to advance their organization’s interest rather than all stakeholders in the process as one, integrated sector.

One important lesson learned by CSOs engaging in the BuB, is that through the process, CSO stakeholders (as well as the LGUs) realized the crucial role that they play in local governance (esp. in the community and barangay levels) in promoting transparency and accountability. As one CSO leader put it, “*the BuB made us realized that we have a responsibility in the roles that we play as CSO partners of the LGU; we thought before that we were just there to represent only our own sector, but now it’s different; we have to represent also other stakeholders in the BuB.*”

Thus, the idea of cooperation, enhanced linkages (both personal & organizational) and personal empowerment through capacity building, is another important realization by the CSO participants in the BuB. As can be inferred from the interviews and direct observations, this has been the case of CSOs in the Municipality of Pavia. Early on, in the process, the CSO leaders realized (especially during the assembly and election) that opening up lines of communication with other CSOs, keeping an ‘open-mind’ on the issues they confront, and finally, finding a ‘common ground’ on how to resolve issues and push for their ‘integrated’ sectoral agenda, enhances and strengthens their position vis-à-vis their LGU counterpart in the LPRAT.

In this early stage of the BuB process, and based on the initial findings, the case study puts forward two key recommendations to improve BuB process, namely: *first*, there should be continuous education among CSOs, either initial by the CSOs themselves, or the LGU, in terms of their role in local governance especially about the BuB process as well as their roles in local special bodies; *second*, a review of the accreditation requirements for BuB participants especially what is provided under JMC No. 7, and to reconcile these with the requirements set by the local *Sanggunian* to accommodate newly-formed CSOs, thus making participation more inclusive. Moreover, an updated inventory of existing CSOs in the LGU should be made in order to maximize participation not only in the BuB in particular, but in local governance in general.

#### *CSO Assembly and LPRAT Election*

The call for the CSO Assembly came on September through the C/MLGOO by the DILG Community Mobilizer (CM). The invitation was directed to the leaders of all CSOs operating within Iloilo City and the Municipality of Pavia. Except for the few which had difficulty in meeting the requirements for accreditation, the great majority of those first invited responded positively. As already mentioned, all accredited CSOs in Metro Iloilo (Iloilo City & Pavia) positively responded to the call of DILG CM.

The C/MLGOO and CM gave an orientation regarding the role of CSOs under the Local Government Code (LGC) and the Grassroots Participatory Budgeting Process (later called BuB), the LPRAT & the LPRAP. The assembly identified the various sectors (around 14) and proceeded to elect the representatives from each sector to sit in the LPRAT. The number complements (50 percent) the LGU representatives (department heads) in the LPRAT.

From the sector representatives, three (3) representatives were elected as signatories to the LPRAP (one to sit as co-chair, the other is LDC representative, and the third member is the 4Ps parent-leader as mandated by JMC 7).

In Iloilo City, the elections of CSO representatives to the LPRAT since 2014 have been orderly and quite exciting, especially the election for LPRAT co-chair. Since 2014 the procedure for voting is based on secret balloting. But for BuB 2016, the position for co-chair was contested by two CSO representatives (one from the Lion's Club and the other, from ICODE) who ended up in a tie vote. Thus, the new co-chair (from ICODE) won via a 'toss coin' as agreed by the parties and facilitated by DILG. The CSO assembly and the LPRAT election, however, did not result to the formation of an alliance or federation of CSOs that could have further bolster the position of CSOs in the city vis-à-vis their LGU counterpart. As this case study would later note in other BuB processes, this situation has resulted to the 'weakening' of the CSO position in the LPRAT especially in its role as a 'watchdog' since the newly-elected co-chair has quite many commitments, and would often missed the LPRAT meetings.

In the case of Pavia, elections to the LPRAT are quite less contested since the same CSO representatives were chosen by the assembly from 2014 BuB to the present. One factor for the 'continuity' of CSO leadership in the LPRAT was the creation of a federation of CSOs representing 31 accredited CSOs in Pavia, now known as Pavia FCSOs, a clear manifestation of the CSO recognition of the value of collaboration and networking. Of particular note, was the unequivocal support of the young Pavia local chief executive (elected in 2013), who even suggested, during the LPRAT election for BuB 2015, that the current co-chair should just simply be retained as co-chair, implying that there was no need to call for elections.<sup>1</sup>Perhaps, at the back of the young mayor's mind, is also continuity of leadership.

For CSOs stakeholders in Iloilo City and Pavia to successfully obtain representation not only for their sectors, to advance their interest, as well as get support for their development agenda, the newly-accredited CSOs need to 'network' with 'established' CSOs to improve internal organizational capacity and constructive engagement. It cannot be denied that community-based NGOs/POs are not well-oriented on the nuances of constructive engagement, and lobbying techniques, thus often end up 'marginalized' and 'voiceless' in negotiating with government agencies and fellow CSOs as well.



Picture 4. CSO Assembly in the Municipality of Pavia.

<sup>1</sup>During the CSO Assembly and LPRAT election for BuB 2015, in a brief conversation between the LCE, SB chair of the Committee on Appropriations, DILG CM, and some CSO leaders: the Mayor said: Sir (referring to the LPRAT co-chair), "I think you should just remain as CSO co-chair, it would be good for the LPRAT. The CSO leader's response was: It's still 'vox populi' Mayor; the majority gets to decide."

For small and newly- recognized CSOs, the BuB is not just an ‘avenue’ for CSOs to truly engage with the LGUs by identifying key development projects that will benefit their sector, but an opportunity for them to improve their leadership, communication, negotiation and conflict-resolution skills.

Issues, challenges and problems the CSOs faced in engaging in this particular stage of the BuB remains to be the lack of enabling environment (e.g. strict requirements for accreditation) preventing maximize participation among ‘emerging’ and small CSOs. As already noted in this paper, part of the reason is the limited understanding of CSOs especially the new-formed ones, of the BuB guidelines. Another crucial factor, as one key informant in Pavia has noted, “is the lack LGU support and enthusiasm towards CSO participation in local governance.” In other words, if the LGU is open and supportive to the idea of ‘partnership’ with the CSOs in the local governance, the latter can thrive and will even consider that as a ‘window’ of opportunity to contribute to the development efforts of the former.

However, it must be noted here that in Iloilo City and the Municipality of Pavia, the local chief executives, leading members of the local *Sanggunian*, heads of departments, and DILG personnel have been supportive of CSO participation in the BuB process in their respective localities.

For the CSOs in Iloilo City and Pavia, an important lesson that they have learned by engaging in the BuB in this stage of the process is the appreciation of the concept of volunteerism, commitment and willingness to participate in BuB activities and LPRAT meetings, and not expecting any monetary rewards.

Although there are CSOs, particularly in Iloilo City, whose representatives are practicing professionals, and thus, were not financially constraint to attend meetings for fear of any ‘loss of opportunity’, many CSO leaders in Pavia, similar to other CSOs in other areas, despite of financial limitations as well as loss of job opportunities (e.g. to attend an assembly for a day means loss of day’s income) were still enthusiastic to take part in the process. Perhaps, this is because they understood the value of their participation, and the long-term benefit that their sector may derive from the BuB process.

In so far as this stage of the BuB process is concerned, the study, as can be inferred from informal discussions and interviews with key CSO leaders in Iloilo City and the Municipality of Pavia, highlights the need to improve information dissemination, time management, community facilitation, and feedback system between the CSO participants and the LGU, as well as the offices of the national government agencies, i.e., DILG, DBM, NAPC operating within the LGU whose functions are vital to the success of the BuB activities.

Maintaining an open channel of communication between the LGU and CSOs and LGU and NGAs, as well as networking among CSOs apart from the provision of accurate information and its timely dissemination (e.g. notice of meetings should be given around a week before the schedule date, not just a matter of one or two days) will surely improve not only the BuB process but any other governance processes, in similar nature, in the future.

## BuB LPRAP Formulation Workshop



**Picture 5.** Pavia LPRAT Meeting, dated 3 December 2014.

The LPRAP workshop which was led by the NAPC & DILG-CM allowed the various sectors to identify their sector's needs and proposed programs under the given BuB menu for LPRAT action and approval. The various sectors “haggled and struggled” to include their “pet” project(s) in the priority list only to be stricken out later when found out to be in the ‘negative list’.

In Iloilo City, around twenty-two (22) CSO representatives to the LPRAT with their counterpart (heads of department) met between the months of October to

December to come up with a ‘consolidated’ Local Poverty Reduction Action Plan (LPRAP) guided by the list of development projects identified by the CSO assembly. The six priority projects, amounting to a total of Php 32,000,000.00, that were identified in the LPRAP depicted the ‘mixed’ interest and priorities of city government and their CSO counterpart. The biggest allocation (Php 15,000,000.00; Php 5,000,000.00 was the city’s counterpart) went to the construction of an evacuation facility while “*Gulayan sa Paaralan*” project of the DepEd has the smallest allocation of Php 630,000.00.

Although the CSO leaders have other projects in mind, their agenda gave way to the Mayor’s “request” to give priority to the construction of the DRMM-related infrastructure. According to a key informant, the department heads in the LPRAT emphasized at the start that the infrastructure project was the LCE ‘pet’ project and must be given priority. The CSO leaders felt ‘obligated’, and did not anymore attempt to insist on their sector’s agenda considering that the instructions directly came from the Mayor.

In the case of Pavia LPRAT, the priority projects that have been identified by the different sectors during the CSO assembly were prioritized based on the urgent development needs of community and the extent of its impact on these sectors. There were seven (7) priority projects with a total cost of 12.5 million pesos that were finally approved by the LPRAT. Two (2) of these pro-poor projects were “CSO-proposed projects”, namely: provision for water supply under the DILG *Salintubig* program and the capacity-building training for CSOs with a budgetary allocation of Php 2,000,000.00 and Php 600,000.00, respectively. The largest allocation was for the local core road with a total project cost of Php 5,000,000.00.

A point of interest during the LPRAP workshop is that the CSO leaders and their LGU counterparts, first, took off in defining the vision/mission and goals of the Plan including the development strategy before deciding on the various poverty reduction projects. The MPRAT

agreed that “urgency, need and immediate sound impact” on the sectors concerned should be the governing principle in determining BuB projects in the municipality.

In general, as the study found out that in Metro Iloilo, the dynamics of CSO and LGU interaction have been smooth, and can be characterized by consensus through compromise, and eventually, cooperation. The ‘haggle and struggle’ in determining priority pro-poor projects indeed took place in a more or less “subtle” and very “civil” manner. Perhaps, this is because the CSO leaders and their LGU counterpart in Iloilo City and Pavia have already established strong rapport and working relations, due also to their long engagement with the each other, and to some extent, personal friendships, which further facilitated trust and reciprocity.

An important skill that CSOs needed to engage in this stage of the BuB process is the technical capacity to prepare project briefs, proposals and feasibility studies required for approval for funding of the various projects that have been included in the LPRAP. Based on the exchanges with the CSO leaders, and likewise LGU officials, the study found out that (except perhaps, in the Iloilo City) CSO and their LGU counterpart, lack the capacity for the preparation of these types of documents. It must be noted here, that under the BuB, each participating agency has its own documentary requirements to be complied with before funds could be approved and released to the LGU.

As such, it is imperative for CSOs and also LGUs like the Municipality of Pavia to develop collaborative partnerships with academic institutions, i.e., local universities and ‘think-tanks’ to tap these institutions technical expertise, and facilitate ‘knowledge-transfer’ to LGUs.

In the case of Pavia, where the participating CSOs identified and assisted the LGU in the preparation of two (2) BuB projects, i.e., Salintubig and CSO Capacity-Building, they had to spend their own organizational funds to pay for the professional services of engineers and architects especially in the preparation of the DED (Detailed Engineering Design) and other technical documents. Individually, CSO leaders also have to defray personal travel expenses, i.e., fare and miscellaneous expenses, i.e., printing and photocopy of materials and documents especially that during this stage of the BuB process, LPRAT meetings were quite frequent.

As can be inferred from the interviews, one crucial issue in the LPRAP formulation and workshop is indeed the lack of technical capacity among CSOs, and even their LGU counterpart in the preparation of the needed documents and requirements for the approval of the project for funding by the concerned agency. Anent to this, is also the lack of time for LGU personnel (department heads) in preparing the documents to meet the national government agency’s deadlines.

It has also been noted, based on the interactions with LGU department heads, that the BuB projects, although were very much welcomed, but the program’s documentary requirements were “quite tasking” for them considering that these are added to their daily line functions and responsibilities.

An important lesson learned by CSO leaders in engaging with their LGU counterpart in the stage of the BuB process is that they were able to gain more knowledge, confidence and self-respect



especially on how to engage in planning and budgeting. In Pavia, for instance, CSO leaders who came from newly-formed organization felt that their engagement especially in the LPRAP workshop and meetings, gave them an opportunity to be exposed to the ‘nitty-gritty’ and ‘nuances’ of project identification, plan formulation and budgeting.

Foremost way to enhance the BuB process is for the MPRAT to improve data banking and data gathering as useful tools in planning, budgeting and eventually, monitoring. A key ingredient of a successful LPRAP is sufficient and accuracy of the baseline data to guide CSO and LGU leaders in identifying priority poverty – reduction projects. In doing so, equitable and efficient appropriation of BuB-funded projects can be achieved.

In addition, the LGU and CSOs should develop partnership with local universities for technical expertise in project development management.

### *LPRAP Submission and Signing*

The LPRATs in Iloilo City and the Municipality of Pavia, after several meetings following the LPRAP workshop, further refined and finalized the LPRAP. In both areas the LCE, and sometimes the CSO co-chair (around 2-3 sessions since 2014) presided over the LPRAT meetings. After the LPRAT has finally approved the priority projects, the three CSO signatories, and the LCE, together with the MLGOO and CM, affixed their signatures on the LPRAP before it was to be submitted to the DILG-RO.

In the 2014 BuB, both Iloilo City and Pavia had to “amend” their respective LPRAPs because of the reduction of the budgetary allocation by the national government by 2.5 million pesos. Thus, the LPRAT in both areas, convened in a special meeting to approve the changes in the budgetary requirements of the projects already identified. In the case of Pavia, the change was effected to the local core road project as the LPRAT saw that to be more practical. The “amended” LPRAP was again signed by the signatories and re-submitted to the DILG-RO.

In this phase of the BuB process, CSO signatories manifested their skills to scrutinize not only the approved priority projects by the LPRAT but also the attached project briefs, and more importantly, the budgetary allocation before affixing their signatures.

For instance, in the case of the Municipality of Pavia, one CSO signatory called up the LPRAT co-chair, on one occasion, protesting that she won’t sign the ‘amended’ LPRAP because a meeting was not called by the LPRAT chair to introduce the minor changes in the LPRAP (the change was a result of the reduction of the BuB allocation). Thus, the Co-chair decided to call a meeting in order to ‘accommodate’ the objections of the CSO leader, which was in fact, also the proper thing to do.

As already noted, a key challenge for CSOs represented in this stage of the BuB process is to remain ‘vigilant’ in so far as their project proposals to the LPRAP are concerned; if indeed, these proposals were really the one’s included in the approved LPRAP. But to be ‘vigilant’ also means that CSO leaders should possess the technical know-how especially in looking at documents, i.e.,

project briefs, proposals, and most importantly, the budget. In most cases, CSO leaders are not so ‘keen’ at scrutinizing financial documents.

In the case of Iloilo City and Pavia, however, CSO leaders exhibited this ‘vigilant’ attitude when it comes to budgetary allocation of priority projects under the BuB. In fact, the CSO representative in Iloilo City has been complaining about the lack of access to accurate and adequate information with respect to ‘how much should really be allocated to a particular project’.

An important lesson learned by the CSO leaders in this phase of the BuB process was, as one CSO leader in Pavia succinctly noted: ‘to stand for what you think is the right thing to do’ and ‘what is good for all’. But the same CSO leader also added that ‘it should be asserted in the spirit of cooperation and compromise.’

In this stage of the BuB process, a key recommendation is that the lines of communication between CSO and LGU leaders should remain open coupled with free access to information so that misconceptions and distrust could be avoided.

#### *Priority Projects Implementation*

The CSO representatives in the LPRAT cooperated with the LGU counterpart in complying with additional documents, specifically required, by the NGA in whose menu the project belongs. In the Municipality of Pavia, the CSO Co-chair assisted the LGU in complying with the documents, e.g. *Salintubig* Project, CSO Capacity Building Seminar that were needed for the release of funds. One CSO signatory also participated in the bidding of several BuB projects as an observer. Moreover, the Pavia Water Cooperative (also known as Pal-agon Waterworks) actively assisted the LGU in implementing the *Salintubig* Project to benefit two barangays in the municipality.

In Iloilo City, the CSO Co-chair participated in the BAC bidding as an observer. On several occasions, the CSO leader ‘protested’ that there was a discrepancy in the project cost of the proposed evacuation center – the project cost open for bidding was less than the actual amount allocated in the LPRAP. He tried to register his observations to the chairman of the BAC, but it seems that he was not satisfied with their explanation why the money being subject to the bidding was only half of the amount that has been allocated to the project. So, the CSO leader decided to directly ask the LCE in one occasion why that was so. The mayor told him that he will look into it.

In Metro Iloilo, particularly in Iloilo City, what the CSOs needed, in terms of skills and resources, was the ability to follow through with the process of project implementation (simply put, monitoring during implementation) that is, from the bidding to procurement up to implementation. The CSO leaders must sometimes utilized their personal finances for travel, meetings, etc. just to keep themselves updated with the entire process. For example, in the Municipality of Pavia, the LCE decided to get the services of a former MPDC to act as consultant especially in following-up the progress of implementation.

While CSOs might have limited technical know-how regarding implementation of infrastructure projects, i.e., Salintubig, they can always ‘network’ with government and private agencies, in case of Pavia, the Provincial Government of Iloilo (which has an existing project on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation) to provide the technical assistance in project implementation.

One particular challenge of project implementation under the BuB is the delay in the release of funds due to the failure of the LGU to comply with the documentary requirements, i.e., DED, program of works, etc. which were quite specific to each of these projects. Thus, it is important for the CSO leaders in the LPRAT to closely coordinate with their LGU counterpart, e.g. the municipal engineer, MPDC and the DILG so that whatever additional requirements are needed, these can be addressed right away.

In the Municipality of Pavia, CSO leaders in the LPRAT would often inquire with the department heads, and sometimes, the LCE regarding the status of project implementation. On one occasion, when there seems to be a ‘delay’ in the implementation of their proposed water supply provision project due to local elections, the CSO co-chair decided to pay a visit to the LCE reminding him of the delayed bidding of the project. Within the day, the municipal engineer called up the CSO leader (who was the one who prepare the project brief, feasibility, DED, etc.) asking for the basic documents to be sold as “bid docs” to potential bidders. Indeed, the challenge is on how the CSO leaders and their organizations can establish a strong rapport and effective communication with their LGU counterparts especially the LCE.

In hindsight, it cannot be helped but to compare the CSO-LGU dynamics in Pavia and Iloilo City, where in the latter, the lack of access to information and absence of effective channel of communication could have been avoided if rapport and trust between the two stakeholders have been strongly established, in the first place.

Of particular note as to what important lesson have been learned, was that CSO leaders in the LPRAT have recognized the value of partnership and trust apart from the fact that they (CSO leaders) should have at least some technical know-how, in implementing local development projects.

Project implementation, being one of the most crucial aspects of project development, requires not only technical knowledge on project execution but also free access to adequate and accurate information. For CSO leaders represented in the LPRAT, a key ingredient for them to effectively carry their role as development partners of government is to have adequate bases in making sound decisions, i.e., having accurate facts about the project. Corollary to this, LGU leaders should also learn to recognize their ‘limitations’ in terms of technical know-how, and should not ‘hesitate’ to solicit the assistance of CSO leaders in the LPRAT who might have the technical capacity and resources, and also willing to extend their assistance in implementation of the project. In Pavia, for instance, the LGU members of the LPRAT have manifested a high sense of cooperative spirit and openness toward CSOs especially acknowledging their significant contribution to the success of project implementation.

### *Monitoring and Evaluation of Projects*

The CSO-LPRAT members in Metro Iloilo (Iloilo City and Pavia) were actively involved in the monitoring of priority projects under the 2015 BuB. In Iloilo City, the CSO LPRAT signatories together with other CSO representatives participated in the monitoring - for one day - of several priority projects, i.e., the *Gulayan sa Paaralan*, Technical Vocation Training/ Community-Based Training. The city government provided a service vehicle and allowance to CSO LPRAT members.

Similarly, the CSO LPRAT members of the Municipality of Pavia also actively took part in the monitoring of the implemented projects for BuB 2015. Around 10 CSO LPRAT members together with the NAPC provincial focal person toured the various sites of the priority projects, i.e., *Yaman Pinoy* Capacity Building Training, *Salintubig* and other infrastructure support projects some of which has just barely started, e.g. birthing center. The CSO leaders interviewed the beneficiaries of the projects as well as the barangay officials of the areas where these projects are located. The Municipality of Pavia provided a service vehicle and *per diem* for CSO leaders who participated in the monitoring activities.

In the monitoring of BuB projects, CSO LPRAT members needed the capacity/know-how to examine technical documents, i.e., project briefs, program of works, progress reports, to fill-up monitoring forms and write summative reports on the results of the monitoring.

Due to their exposures to various trainings and workshops on monitoring especially joint monitoring and assessment of local development projects, e.g. CSOs in Pavia have collaborated with DLSU and CPU in capacity development for joint monitoring, while CSOs in Iloilo City being mostly dominated by professional organizations, are similarly adept when it comes to M & E activities, the CSO LPRAT members were at ease with the use of the BuB monitoring tool which was made available by the DILG. Although the ‘citizen monitors’ were not involved in the formulation of the M&E tool, they were given an orientation on how to use the tool, i.e., conduct of face-to-face interviews.

In addition, the participation of CSO LPRAT members in monitoring also requires financial resources and time. In the case of Metro Iloilo, some CSO LPRAT members have to strike a balance between work schedules and time to devote to monitoring activities.

Among the challenges and problems that confront CSO LPRAT members both in Iloilo City and Pavia is the limited capacity of some CSO LPRAT members to understand and properly use the monitoring tool. Another is the lack of interest, time and conflict of schedules for some CSO members who are practicing professionals to actively in monitoring activities. The limited financial resources for some CSO LPRAT members, especially those belonging to small and newly-established civil society organizations was also a major challenge for CSOs in Metro Iloilo.

Through the BuB, CSOs as well as the LGU have recognized the value of project monitoring especially that it was included as an integral part of project development. CSOs learned the intricacies of project implementation, what factors hinder efficient and effective implementation.

As citizen monitors under the BuB, CSO members have learned to appreciate their role as important stakeholders, and felt a sense of ownership. In Metro Iloilo, for instance, the CSO LPRAT members felt that monitoring is an ‘opportunity’ to ‘correct’ some shortcomings during project implementation. As one CSO leader in Iloilo City intimated that once he started asking questions about budgetary allocation of particular projects implemented under the BuB, his LGU counterparts felt ‘jittery’ and ‘uncomfortable’ and began disappearing if not annoyed.

A key recommendation for a successful and effective monitoring of BuB projects is to capacitate the CSO LPRAT members and their LGU counterpart with the skills to conduct monitoring especially citizen monitoring. Anent this, CSO leaders should also be oriented (and trained) to report the results of the monitoring, that is, to write reports.

### **Most Significant Change**

As can be inferred from the findings established in this case study, there are interrelated changes that have the most significant impact on the extent to which the BuB process has advanced the empowerment of participating CSOs in terms of voice and collective action, and to a certain extent, organizational capacity.

In addition, in spite of the quite brief period (around 2-3 years) of the CSO engagement with the LGU under the BuB, there has also been a substantial change in terms of the relationship and attitude of LGUs (including the LCE and local officials) towards CSOs and vice-versa as well as the dynamics between CSOs operating in the local level.

In Iloilo City, the results of the CSO engagement with the LGU under the BuB can be, at best, characterized as mixed. Although the accredited CSOs have been operating for a quite a long time in the city, and are made up mostly of well-funded NGO networks, e.g. Iloilo Caucus for Development NGOs (ICODE), Iloilo Business Club, and professional organizations, i.e., Lion’s Club and Rotaract, many of these organizations remained ‘marginalized’ and quite ‘frustrated’ when it comes to their capacity to influence LGU agenda setting, policy formulation and project implementation under BuB process, thereby effectively reducing their organizational capacity and collective voice. A lingering issue which has been pointed out by the CSO representatives in the LPRAT was the lack or limited access to pertinent information that are crucial to the implementation of the priority development projects identified by the LPRAT. Unfortunately, despite of the ‘assertive’ character of the CSO LPRAT co-chair (who even brought up the matter, for instance, about the ‘anomalous’ bidding, to the city mayor), many of these issues were not clarified and nor addressed squarely by the concerned LGU officials.

The situation could have been further aggravated by the fact that the CSOs represented in the LPRAT seems to have ‘no consensus’ on what position to take as CSO representatives on critical issues related to project implementation. It must be noted here that unlike in Pavia where the CSO leaders after the CSO Assembly decided to organize into an alliance or federation, a clear realization that by ‘pooling’ their resources together, they can effectively enhanced their positions vis-à-vis their LGU partner, the CSO LPRAT leaders in Iloilo City seem too ‘proud’ and ‘independent-minded’ to come to terms that there is really a need for them to work in a collaborative spirit to improve their organizational capacity for collective action. Moreover, the

change of leadership in the CSO rank (especially that of the CSO LPRAT Co-chair) after the first BuB cycle; the new Co-chair won via a toss coin) could have affected the internal dynamics of the CSO leaders in the LPRAT. The new co-chair was quite a busy person, and thus missed LPRAT meetings; oftentimes cannot be contacted also by the other key signatories when there are important issues that need a concerted effort on the part of CSO LPRAT leaders.

In the case of CSOs in Pavia, the most significant result of the engagement in the BuB process was that the CSOs were given the opportunity to further deepen their engagement with the LGU, providing them a venue to explore various aspects of representation not just confined to the local special bodies mandated by the local government code, i.e., Municipal Development Council, local health board, etc., giving their leaders a chance to truly act as ‘partners’ of the LGU. As one CSO leader put it, “the BuB process which is really a budget reform mechanism, has given CSO participation in local governance a new ‘lease of life.’” A key factor for this is the responsibility given to CSOs and their LGU partners in the LPRAT to identify, plan and allocate money for development projects which they believe could best address poverty in the local level. This innovative process gave the CSOs represented in the CSO assembly and the LPRAT a ‘sense of responsibility’ and ‘ownership’ (which perhaps, they have never experienced before since they were requested to simply ‘sit’ and ‘observe’ as ‘watchdog’ in local special bodies) when it comes to plan formulation, budgeting and project implementation.

As this case study has established, CSO leaders in Pavia, apart from actively participating in the planning, budgeting and project implementation, they have been very active as ‘citizen monitors’ of local project and services delivery, not just under the BuB but other local development endeavors as well. In fact, CSO leaders have met with the LCE for a couple of times asking that an LDC local monitoring committee where CSOs will be represented be institutionalized. In the last concluded elections, the CSOs especially led by the farmers, cooperative and water sectors, initiated and successfully conducted a Candidates’ Forum for candidates running for the local municipal council, the first –ever CSO –led forum in Pavia or arguably, Iloilo Province.

Moreover, for the BuB alone, the CSO leaders (especially with connected with the academe, professional groups and microfinance sectors) in the LPRAT provided their LGU counterparts with technical assistance in the preparation of project briefs, feasibility studies, detailed engineering designs (DED) and other documentary requirements. As already mentioned in the previous sections of this case study, two of the development projects identified by the LPRAT for BuB 2015 and 2016, have been implemented with the assistance of a CSO representing the basic sector - Pavia Water Cooperative. This unique arrangement is not just a cognition by the LGU of the crucial role that CSOs play in local governance as ‘watchdogs’ but also as ‘development partners’ capable of ‘filling the gaps’ in areas where the local government may be constrained by lack technical knowledge and expertise.

Thus, it can be argued, especially in the case of Pavia that the CSOs and their leaders experienced some form of transformation through the BuB process resulting to further enhancement of their organizational capacity and collective voice. By closely working with the LGU through the LPRAT, the CSOs gained not only practical knowledge of the ‘nitty-gritty’ of local governance but the confidence to share their respective organization’s resources and networks to advance their sector’s, as well as the LGU’s development agenda.

## Conclusions

There are three important lessons that can be drawn from this investigation which can perhaps, further enlighten the stakeholders – implementers and beneficiaries - of the BuB program in view of improving the entire process towards a more effective and efficient implementation.

First, the lack of ‘social’ preparation for the CSOs which were invited to participate in the BuB process, that is in terms of local organizational capacity for collective action. The conspicuous absence of some CSO leaders’ commitment (i.e., Iloilo City) on LPRAT activities could have been due to the lack of a stronger grasp of the entire BuB, its context, their role in the process, how to effectively play this role(s), and to what extent. What could have been done by the implementers, was to go beyond ‘mere orientation’ of CSO participants through capacity building trainings and workshops, especially focusing on planning, budgeting, project implementation and monitoring, even before the start of the BuB activities. In so doing, CSO participation and commitment could have been maximized, and the lack of knowledge on the technical aspects of the program could have been minimized.

Second, as the implementer of development programs financed by the national government agencies, but determined by the LGUs, and their partner CSOs in the LPRAT, the LGUs were already burdened with line functions especially in implementing their regular local programs and activities. The BuB program, being an inter-agency program, indeed, requires quite a number of documentation that also requires time and technical expertise to prepare and comply. As disclosed by the informants of the current investigation, the LGU department heads, despite the available funds (from the NGAs) as an ‘incentive’ both for them and their CSO partners in the LPRAT, the LGU itself, still find it challenging to meet these documentary requirements. As such, some projects (which have easier documentary requirements, e.g. DED, feasibility studies) were ‘prioritized’ in favor of those projects that the LGU are more familiar with, e.g., core roads, drainage systems and other support infrastructures, and whose documentation is least burdensome to prepare and comply.

Finally, an important lesson that can be drawn from the whole BuB process is that the lack or limited participation of the academe. In Iloilo City and Pavia there were some development projects identified by the LPRAT require technical expertise, which can be provided by people from the academe for efficient implementation. It was perhaps fortunate for Metro Iloilo LPRATs to have CSO members in their rank who were able to provide assistance on some technical matters which were required by the projects. Thus, an important recommendation which this case study advances is that the academe (it is also a CSO) should be tapped by LGUs and other CSOs as development partners if development innovations such as the BuB is to succeed.

## **THE CASE OF TOBIAS FORNIER**

*Written in Collaboration with the Central Philippine University (CPU)*

### **Background: the Municipality of Tobias Fornier, Antique**

Tobias Fornier is a fourth class municipality in the province of Antique. It has a population of 30,669 (2010) and a population density of 270/km<sup>2</sup> with an area of 112.1 km<sup>2</sup>. The municipality is made up of 50 barangays almost half of these are located in the mountainous portion of the municipality. Current data indicate that the town's poverty incidence of 44 percent which is relatively high within the Province of Antique and Region VI.

Mayor Jose Maria Fornier is the incumbent local chief executive. Tobias Fornier has been a participant of the Bottom-Up Budgeting (BuB) process since 2014. It has forty-eight (48) accredited civil society organizations (CSOs) representing various sectors: farmers, fisherfolks, indigenous peoples (IPs), OFWs (which they referred to as informal sector), women, youth, and faith-based organizations.

Among the many municipalities in the province of Antique, Tobias Fornier was one of the first selected by NAPC to participate in the first round of the BUB process. With the assistance of the Antique Federation of NGOs (AFON) and ICODE-WEVNET, the CSOs especially faith-based organizations, responded positively when the call for participation in the BuB came. In fact, many CSOs thought that the BuB allocation, (originally P15 million later reduced to 12.5 million pesos) was 'intended for them', which means that they are free to decide what projects should be prioritized, budgeted and implemented. This is the reason why in the first round of the BuB process, (as can be inferred from the Table 1 for BUB 2014), the total number of projects was 25 with some projects having a budgetary allocation as low as 60 thousand (P60,000) pesos. Many of these projects include skills training for livelihood (e.g. soap making and tea-making), microcredit (patterned after DSWDs SEA-K), hog fattening, cattle dispersal, livelihood assistance for fisherfolks, among others. Almost 85 percent of these prioritized projects have already been implemented.

Thus, in the next cycle of the BuB process (2015 and 2016), as shown in Table 2 and 3, respectively, the number of projects the MPRAT identified was effectively reduced to around 8–9. Perhaps, the CSOs in Tobias Fornier came to realize (as they themselves admitted during the interviews) the difficulty of completing the documentary requirements for each of these projects (no matter how small the allocation) before they can be implemented. They also intimated that at first they thought that their LGU counterparts in the MPRAT were simply giving them a 'hard time' (because they feel that they are having a thesis defense!) during the presentation of their proposals, but eventually realized later that the 'objections' on projects with small allocations still required a lot of documentary requirements. Pertinent sections of the case study further provide details of the issue.



## Tracing the Engagement and Implementation Process

### *CSO Network Mobilization*

The CSOs in Municipality of Tobias Fornier positively responded to the invitation coursed through the DILG Community Mobilizer (CM)/MLGOO, and NAPC Focal Person to apply for accreditation and submit documents to the *Sanggunian Bayan*, respectively, as accredited CSO/NGO. The invitation was coursed through the different CSOs/NGOs operating in the municipal and barangay levels representing various sectors – farmers, fisherfolks, persons with disabilities (PWD), overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), indigenous people’s (IPs), faith-based organizations, and cooperatives, etc. There were around thirty (30) CSOs, made up of non-governmental, and community-based people’s organizations operating within the municipality responded to the invitation to participate in the BUB. Among the most active groups are those representing the alliance of faith-based organizations, SEEDS-Antique (an alliance of organizations operating in the various communities in Tobias Fornier and Antique Province.

According to the CSO leaders, many NGOs and POs in Tobias Fornier were excited to join the BuB because they heard that funds will be allocated to them. The CSO leaders really thought that the various groups which will participate would have the discretion to utilize BuB funds for the projects that they have identified in the assembly.

Similar to other areas in the Province, a significant result of the BuB process was the expanded sectoral representation of CSOs, and the increased number of accredited CSOs in local development council in spite of the fact that some people’s organizations shied away from the process due to failure to comply with accreditation requirements. For instance, SEEDS-Antique (an alliance dominated by faith-based organizations) emerged after the first round of the BuB process.

Meeting the challenge of accreditation (e.g., documents, legal status, etc.) needs to be hurdled by the CSOs in Tobias Fornier first, to be able to participate in the BuB process. As such, the CSOs especially the community-based people’s organizations (POs) need basic knowledge and skills to formulate their organization’s vision/mission, constitution and by-laws to comply with the requirements for registration to achieve legal status. This is especially true for small and newly-formed community-based organizations, e.g. IPs, fisherfolks. However, with the assistance of large NGO networks operating in Antique, i.e., AFON, these organizations were able to organize and participate.

Although, the BUB guidelines (JMC No. 7, Nov. 3, 2015) seem to be silent about the requisites for accreditation, yet JMC No. 7 explicitly states that the “*CSO assembly is an inclusive meeting of all CSOs in the city or municipality...*”, which means that any NGO or PO does not to be registered under the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) or Cooperative Development Agency (CDA) in order to take part in the BUB process as long as they are operating within the city or municipality. It must be noted further that as provided for by JMC No. 7, “*Any CSO that is not accredited by or whose application for accreditation is not acted upon by the local Sanggunian may file a complaint to the BuB RPRAT Grievance Redress Committee. Failure to justify non-accreditation of a CSO or*

*inaction on its application for accreditation may result in the disqualification of the LGU from participating in BuB.”*

In terms of capacities needed by NGOs/POs in engaging with the BUB in the early stage of the process, the need to have legal status, adequate financial and technical resources as well as competent leadership, communication (rapport) and negotiation skills, in both individual and organizational levels, to gain recognition from its partners in the LGU, the NGA representatives and other CSO stakeholders. The study found out that in Tobias Fornier, CSOs which has established linkages with large NGO networks, e.g. AFON and ICODE-WEVNET and were also represented in the local special bodies, seemed to be in better position than newly-formed groups due to their experience in engaging with the LGU and available resources at their disposal

Considering the distance that community-based NGOs have to travel to reach the poblacion (town proper) in Tobias Fornier, the cost of transportation, food and other incidental expenses remain to be a major concern for CSO leaders who represented their organizations in the BUB process. In Tobias Fornier, many barangays especially in the mountainous part of the municipality are accessible only using a single motorcycle, which is quite costly per ride. Thus, the prohibitive cost of transportation and loss of job opportunity discourages many small community-based organizations to participate in the BUB process.

Unlike in Metro Iloilo where some CSO leaders belong to professional, civic-oriented CSOs and cooperatives, the CSOs in Tobias Fornier as they were mostly made up of community-based organizations, oftentimes with ‘faith-based’ orientation, lack of financial, e.g. processing fees for registration documents, and technical resources, e.g. ‘know-how’ to fill-up legal documents, have constrained the optimum participation of some well-meaning NGOs and POs.

There are two major issues which can be considered as challenges, and to some extent, problematic, that confront the CSOs while engaging in the particular stage of the BuB.

On one hand, was the lack of adequate and accurate information on the BuB process especially pertaining to the process itself, the role of the participating CSOs vis-à-vis the LGU and the NGAs. Except for the brief orientation about the BUB and the role of CSOs in local governance which were given by the CM and MLGOO during the early stages of the BUB process, no in-depth discussion followed. Thus, many prospective CSO participants in Tobias Fornier hesitated to join the process because they thought that meeting the requirements for accreditation set by the *Sanggunian Bayan* (similar to CSO representation in local special bodies) was a ‘prerequisite’ to participation in the BUB process.

On the other hand, there was also the misconception especially from participating CSOs that the BuB process especially the funding was really intended solely for the NGOs with the LGUs as simply overseers of the process, meaning that the CSOs have the discretion on project identification, implementation, monitoring and fund allocation.<sup>2</sup> Anent this, there were also CSO leaders who perceived (or perhaps, misperceived) the BUB process as a venue to advance their organization’s interest rather than all stakeholders in the process as one, integrated sector.

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<sup>2</sup>Interview with key CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier especially those representing SEED (Sustainable Employment for Economic Development, Inc.) –Antique.

One important lesson learned by CSOs engaging in the BuB, is that through the process, CSO stakeholders (as well as the LGUs) realized the crucial role that they play in local governance(esp. in the community and barangay levels) in promoting transparency and accountability. In fact, as already mentioned at the outset, the CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier who were invited to join the BuB initially thought that the process should be ‘dominated’ by them. Perhaps, this was because the LGU representatives (department heads) were not present during the initial meetings about the BuB as many of them were not also ‘aware’ of the very nature of the process.<sup>3</sup>

In this early stage of the BUB process, and based on the initial findings, the case study puts forward two key recommendations to improve BuB process, namely:*first*, there should be continuous, in-depth education(not just an orientation) among CSOs, either initially by the CSOs themselves, or the LGU, in terms of clarifying their roles in local governance especially about the BUB process as well as their roles in local special bodies; *second*, a review of the accreditation requirements for BUB participants especially what is provided under JMC No. 7, and to reconcile these with the requirements set by the local *Sangguniano* to accommodate newly-formed CSOs, thus making participation more inclusive. Moreover, an updated inventory of existing CSOs in the LGU should be made in order to maximize participation not only in the BUB in particular, but in local governance in general.

#### *CSO Assembly and LPRAT Election*

When the call for the CSO Assembly came (this was coursed through BuB Focal Person in Tobias Fornier), the great majority of the CSOs operating in the Municipality positively responded. More than 30 CSOs responded to the invitation. Although there were some CSOs which had difficulty in meeting the requirements for accreditation, the majority of those first invited responded positively. The BuB Focal Person (from NAPC), MLGOO and CM gave an orientation regarding the role of CSOs under the Local Government Code (LGC) and the Grassroots Participatory Budgeting Process (later called BUB), the LPRAT & the LPRAP. The assembly identified the various sectors (around 14) and proceeded to elect the representatives from each sector to sit in the LPRAT. The number complements (50 percent) the LGU representatives (department heads) in the LPRAT. From the sector representatives, three (3) representatives were elected as signatories to the LPRAP (one to sit as co-chair, the other is LDC representative, and the third member is the 4Ps parent-leader as mandated by JMC 7).

In Tobias Fornier, the study found out that there was continuity in CSO leadership in the LPRAT since the first set of CSO representatives (a co-chair and around 14 LPRAT representatives) who were chosen by the assembly in the 2014 BUB were the same set of representatives who currently sit in the LPRAT for 2016 BuB. A key factor behind this was the organization of a federation of CSOs in Tobias Fornier, facilitated by an alliance of faith-based organizations – Sustainable Employment for Economic Development (SEED), Inc. - Antique, which maintains a network of alliances with other CSOs.

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<sup>3</sup>Interview with several LGU representatives to the LPRAT – the Municipal Treasurer, Budget Officer and Focal Person.

As can be inferred from the foregoing discussions, it was obvious that the CSO stakeholders in Tobias Fornier successfully sustained their representation (not only for their sectors) to advance their interest, as well as get support for their development agenda, because they were able to ‘network’ with ‘established’ CSOs in the Province of Antique (e.g. AFON, ICODE-WEVNET), to improve internal organizational capacity and constructive engagement. It cannot be denied that community-based NGOs/POs are not well-oriented on the nuances of constructive engagement, and lobbying techniques, thus often end up ‘marginalized’ and ‘voiceless’ in negotiating with government agencies and fellow CSOs as well.

For small and newly- recognized CSOs, the BUB is not just an ‘avenue’ for CSOs to truly engage with the LGUs by identifying key development projects that will benefit their sector, but an opportunity for them to improved their leadership, communication, negotiation and conflict-resolution skills.

The foremost among the issues, challenges and problems the CSOs faced in engaging in the particular stages of the BuB remains to be the lack of enabling environment (e.g. strict requirements for accreditation) preventing maximize participation among ‘emerging’ and small CSOs. As already noted in this paper, part of the reason is the limited understanding of CSOs especially the new-formed ones, of the BUB guidelines. Another crucial factor, as CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier had emphasized, was the lack of LGU understanding (in the initial stages) of the BuB process, their own role, and the role that should play as stakeholders as well. It can be argued that they also ‘misconceived’ the role to be played by the CSOs. Thus, initially (in BuB 2014), LGU support and enthusiasm towards CSO participation in local governance was quite, at best, lukewarm. In other words, if the LGU is open and supportive to the idea of ‘partnership’ with the CSOs in the local governance, the latter can thrive and will even consider that as a ‘window’ of opportunity to contribute to the former’s development efforts.

For the CSOs in Tobias Fornier, one important lesson that they have learned by engaging in the BuB in this stage of the process is the appreciation of the concept of volunteerism, commitment and willingness to participate in BUB activities and LPRAT meetings, and not expecting any monetary rewards. It can be denied that although CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier were financially constraint to attend meetings for fear of any ‘loss of opportunity’, (e.g. to attend an assembly for a day means loss of day’s income), they were still enthusiastic to take part in the process. Perhaps, this was because they understood the value of their participation, and the long-term benefit that their sector may derive from the BUB process. Finally, the CSO leaders appreciated the value of building alliances and networking with large and established NGO networks, providing them with some sort of ‘leverage’ in constructively engaging with their LGU counterpart.

As already noted in the foregoing discussions, and inferred from informal discussions and interviews with key CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier, there is a need to improve information dissemination, community facilitation, and feedback system between the CSO participants and the LGU, as well as the offices of the national government agencies, i.e., DILG, DBM, NAPC operating within the LGU whose functions are vital to the success of the BUB activities.

Maintaining an open channel of communication between the LGU and CSOs and LGU and NGAs, as well as networking among CSOs apart from the provision of accurate information and its timely dissemination (e.g. notice of meetings should be given around a week before the schedule data, not just a matter of one or two days) will surely improve not only the BUB process but any other governance processes, in similar nature, in the future.

### *BuB LPRAP Formulation Workshop*

The LPRAP workshop which was led by the NAPC & DILG-CM allowed the various sectors to identify their sector's needs and proposed programs under the given BUB menu for LPRAT action and approval. The various sectors “haggled and struggled” to include their “pet” project(s) in the priority list only to be stricken out later when found out to be in the ‘negative list’. During the first round of the BuB (2014), the CSOs in Tobias Fornier had somewhat a ‘field day’ since their LGU counterparts were not quite ‘familiar’ with process (what exactly was their role and their CSO counterpart). Thus, the CSOs assumed that they have ‘full discretion’ and went on to identify almost 2 dozens of projects, some of which have very minimal funding (e.g. as low as P60 thousand pesos!) but have almost the same documentary



**Picture 6.** LPRAT Workshop in the Municipality of Tobias Fornier.

requirements as those with big budgetary allocations. As a result, in the second round of the BuB process, the CSO leaders found themselves to be ‘at odds’ with their LGU counterparts (who had now realized the difficulty of meeting the documentary requirements for each project) who imposed strictly the BuB guidelines especially in the identification of the projects based on the menu. The CSO leaders felt that in this round of the BuB, they seem to be defending a ‘thesis’ for the projects they have identified and wanted to implement.

An important skill that CSOs needed to engage in this stage of the BuB process is the technical capacity to prepare project briefs, proposals and feasibility studies required for approval for funding of the various projects that have been included in the LPRAP. Based on the exchanges with the CSO leaders, and likewise LGU officials, the study found out that the CSOs and their LGU counterpart, lack the capacity for the preparation of these types of documents. It must be noted here, that under the BUB, each participating agency has its own documentary requirements to be complied with before funds could be approved and released to the LGU.

As such, it is imperative for CSOs and also LGUs like the Municipality of Tobias Fornier to develop collaborative partnerships with academic institutions, i.e., local universities and ‘think-tanks’ to tap these institutions technical expertise, and facilitate ‘knowledge-transfer’ to LGUs. Although, some CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier, indeed provided assistance to the LGU in the preparation of projects briefs, proposals and feasibility studies. According to the CSO co-chair (also the chairperson of SEED-Antique), despite their limited technical know-how on these matters, especially in the preparation of DED (Detailed Engineering Design) for infrastructure projects, they tried their best to assist their LGU partners. On several occasions, the CSO leader personally undertook to follow-up papers and documentary requirements with national agencies, e.g., DA, DTI regarding their ‘pet’ projects.

As can be inferred from the interviews, one crucial issue in the LPRAP formulation and workshop is indeed the lack of technical capacity among CSOs, and even their LGU counterpart in the preparation of the needed documents and requirements for the approval of the project for funding by the concerned agency. Anent to this, is also the lack of time for LGU personnel (department heads) in preparing the documents to meet the national government agency’s deadlines.

It has also been noted, based on the interactions with LGU department heads, that the BUB projects, although were very much welcomed, but the program’s documentary requirements were “quite taxing” for them considering that these are added to their daily line functions and responsibilities. In Tobias Fornier, the first cycle of the BuB (2014) where the CSOs through the LPRAT, identified almost two dozens of projects, was the indeed taxing for the LGU since every project, no matter how small, have to meet the documents required by the concerned NGA.

An important lesson learned by CSO leaders in engaging with their LGU counterpart in the stage of the BUB process is that they were able to gain more knowledge, confidence and self-respect especially on how to engage in planning and budgeting. In Tobias Fornier, CSO leaders who came from newly-formed organization felt that their engagement especially in the LPRAP workshop and meetings, gave them an opportunity to be exposed to the ‘nitty-gritty’ and ‘nuances’ of project identification, plan formulation and budgeting.

C6. Foremost way to enhance the BuB process is for the MPRAT to improve data banking and data gathering as useful tools in planning, budgeting and eventually, monitoring. A key ingredient of a successful LPRAP is sufficient and accuracy of the baseline data to guide CSO and LGU leaders in identifying priority poverty – reduction projects. In doing so, equitable and efficient appropriation of BUB-funded projects can be achieved.

In addition, the LGU and CSOs should develop partnership with local universities for technical expertise in project development management.

#### *LPRAP Submission and Signing*

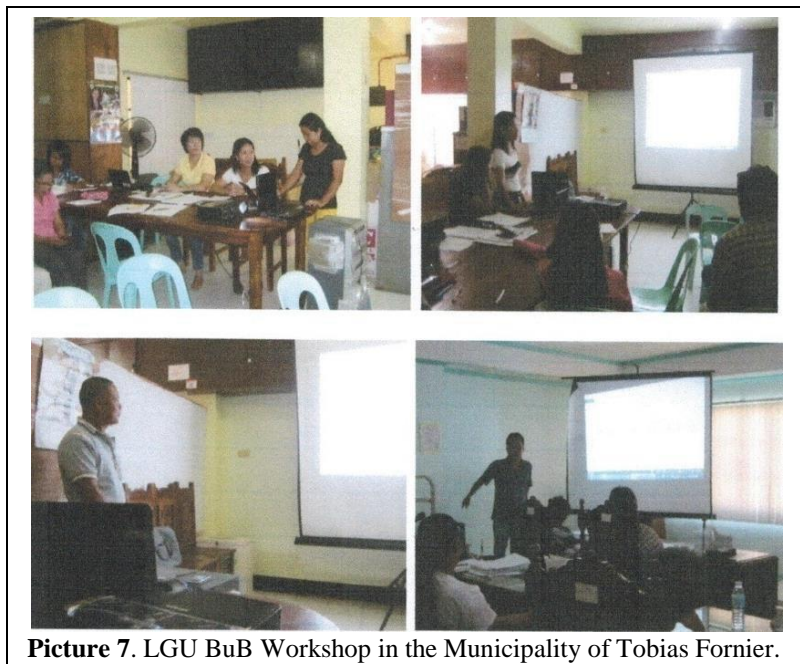
The CSO leaders and their LGU partners in the Municipality of Tobias Fornier, held several meetings after the conclusion of the LPRAP workshop, to further refine and finalize the LPRAP. Unlike in other areas, the LCE was often represented by the MPDC or the Focal Person who presided over the LPRAT meetings. After the LPRAT has finally approved the priority projects,

the three CSO signatories, and the LCE, together with the MLGOO and CM, affixed their signatures on the LPRAP before it was submitted to the DILG-RO.

The LPRAT in Tobias Fornier has to amend their LPRAP for the 2014 BuB because of the reduction of the budgetary allocation by the national government by 2.5 million pesos. The LPRAT convened in a special meeting to approve the changes in the budgetary requirements of the projects already identified. But there was no reduction in the number of projects that the LPRAT identified and approved under the 2014 BuB. The “amended” LPRAP was again signed by the signatories and re-submitted to the DILG-RO.

In this phase of the BUB process, CSO signatories manifested their skills to scrutinize not only the approved priority projects by the LPRAT but also the attached project briefs, and more importantly, the budgetary allocation before affixing their signatures.

As intimated by the CSO co-chair to the LPRAT, the CSOs in Tobias Fornier, due to their exposures and participation in the training-workshops on local participatory governance, project planning, implementation, and monitoring conducted by the Antique Federation of NGOs (AFON) and Iloilo Caucus of Development NGOs- Western Visayas Network (ICODE-WEVNET), the LPRAT planning workshops and meetings provided them with a new venue to put into practice what they have learned from these capacity-building workshops. In fact, the CSO representatives were very ‘vigilant’ and ‘critical’ when it comes to the process of approving their own output.



Picture 7. LGU BuB Workshop in the Municipality of Tobias Fornier.

As already noted, a key challenge for CSOs represented in this stage of the BUB process is to remain ‘vigilant’ in so far as their project proposals to the LPRAP are concerned; if indeed, these proposals were really the one’s included in the approved LPRAP. But to be ‘vigilant’ also means that CSO leaders should possess the technical know-how especially in looking at documents, i.e., project briefs, proposals, and most importantly, the budget. In most cases, CSO leaders are not so ‘keen’ at scrutinizing financial documents.

For instance, in determining what should be and should not be included in the LPRAP based on the ‘Menu’ set by the national government agencies, the CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier were insistent, especially, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the BuB process where the number of projects

proposed by the CSOs through the LPRAT was reduced. However, the CSO leaders eventually conceded when they realized the reasons why their LGU counterpart decided to strictly observe the menu.

For the CSOs in Tobias Fornier, an important lesson learned in this phase of the BUB process was that as CSO representatives, the leaders are expected to assert and advance the interest of their sectors. However, they also conceded that their sector's interest has to be balanced with that of the LGU, if they are truly partners in development. Although some CSO leaders felt (as they intimated during the interview) that the LGU seems to be objecting to their policy positions, they still believe that the latter is not a competitor but a development partner.

In this stage of the BUB process, a key recommendation is that the lines of communication between CSO and LGU leaders should remain open coupled with free access to information so that misconceptions and distrust could be avoided.

### *Priority Projects Implementation*

The CSO representatives in the LPRAT cooperated with the LGU counterpart in complying with additional documents, specifically required, by the NGA in whose menu the project belongs. In Tobias Fornier, the CSO Co-chair assisted the LGU in complying with the documents, especially in the projects related to economic enterprise, livelihood and agriculture. The CSO co-chair, being the head of the largest CSO alliance – SEED-Antique, was very active in helping the LGU follow up documentary requirements (e.g. DA and DTI, NIA) so that the release of the funds from these agencies to the LGU could be expedited. In fact, as the CSO chair disclosed, that he was even spending his personal funds and sacrificing time devoted for work, just simply to follow-up the papers in the regional offices of the concerned national agencies.<sup>4</sup> Several members of the CSOs who are also members of the LPRAT participated in the BAC bidding of the approved projects as observers

In terms of skills and resources, the CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier, needed to have the competence and ability to follow through with the process of project implementation from the bidding to procurement up to implementation, and monitoring. The CSO leaders must sometimes utilized their personal finances for travel, meetings, etc. just to keep themselves updated with the entire process. The CSOs in Tobias Fornier were fortunate to have received the assistance and guidance of large NGO networks operating in Antique in terms of project planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring.

One particular challenge of project implementation under the BUB is the delay in the release of funds due to the failure of the LGU to comply with the documentary requirements, i.e., DED, program of works, etc. which were quite specific to each of these projects. Thus, it is important for the CSO leaders in the LPRAT to closely coordinate with their LGU counterpart, e.g. the municipal engineer, MPDC and the DILG so that whatever additional requirements are needed, these can be addressed right away.

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<sup>4</sup>Interview with the CSO co-chair who is also president of SEED, Inc. - Antique.



Quite similar to the strategies employed by the CSOs in Metro Iloilo, the CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier, would often inquire with the department heads in the LGU, and sometimes, the NGA regional office regarding the status of project implementation.

An important lesson learned, was that CSO leaders in the LPRAT have recognized the value of partnership and trust apart from the fact that they (CSO leaders) should have at least some technical know-how, in implementing local development projects. For CSOs in Tobias Fornier, the importance of knowing the value of the project to the target beneficiaries was one crucial motivator for CSO leaders to commit themselves in working and cooperating with the LGU to successfully implement the identified development projects.

Project implementation, being one of the most crucial aspects of project development, requires not only technical knowledge on project execution but also free access to adequate and accurate information. For CSO leaders represented in the LPRAT, a key ingredient for them to effectively carry their role as development partners of government is to have adequate bases in making sound decisions, i.e., having accurate facts about the project. Corollary to this, LGU leaders should also learn to recognize their 'limitations' in terms of technical know-how, and should not 'hesitate' to solicit the assistance of CSO leaders in the LPRAT who might have the technical capacity and resources, and also willing to extend their assistance in implementation of the project. In the case of Tobias Fornier, it was the obvious that during the first round of the BuB process, the LGU (based on the account of the CSOs) were not quite aware of the nature of the BuB process, hence allowed the CSOs to 'dominate' the content of the LPRAP. Thus, it can also be averred that the LGU, being the implementing agency, should also be capacitated, especially on the technical aspects of project implementation (whatever is the project or program introduced by the NGAs) if the desire is to have an efficient and effective implementation.

#### *Monitoring and Evaluation of Projects*

The CSO-LPRAT members in Tobias Fornier were actively involved in the monitoring of priority projects since the 2014 BuB until the present. Benefitting from the training-workshops conducted by the AFON and I-CODE WEVNET, the CSO leaders participated in several monitoring activities facilitated by the BuB focal person and the NAPC.

Using the monitoring tool provided by the DILG, and likewise tools provided by their CSO network organizations, e.g. Citizen Monitoring tool, the CSO leaders moved around the municipality to monitor the status of the BuB implemented projects. The LGU also provided assistance in terms of transportation and allowance.

In the monitoring of BuB projects, CSO LPRAT members needed the capacity/know-how to examine technical documents, i.e., project briefs, program of works, progress reports, to fill-up monitoring forms and write summative reports on the results of the monitoring. As already mentioned, the CSO leaders in Tobias Fornier's exposure to various capacity-building programs by other NGOs in Antique Province, the CSO LPRAT members were at ease with the use of the BuB monitoring tool which was made available by the DILG.

In terms of monitoring, one important challenge is the limited capacity of CSOs in Tobias Fornier to develop their own monitoring tool to be used in monitoring BuB projects. Indeed, if the ultimate goal of the process is empowerment, then citizen monitoring should be primary consideration. Another key challenge is how to improve the capacity of CSO leaders to record, consolidate and report the results of the monitoring.

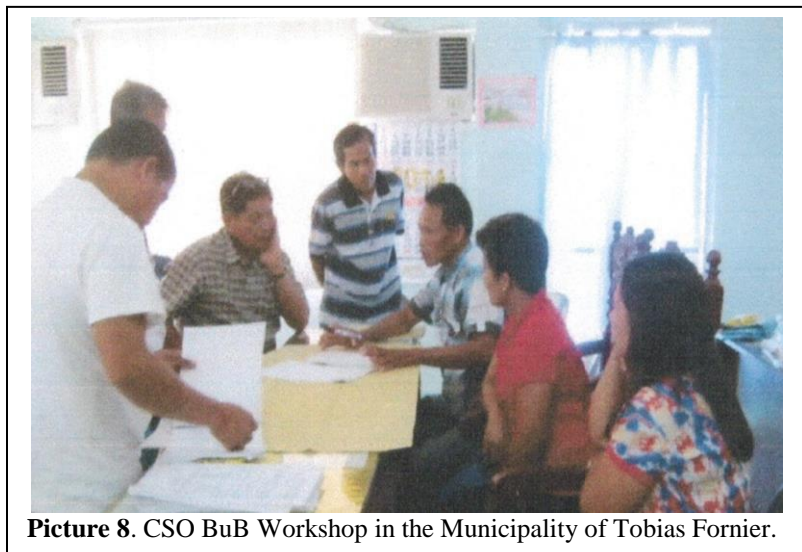
Through the BuB, CSOs as well as the LGU have recognized the value of project monitoring especially that it was included as an integral part of project development

CSOs learned the intricacies of project implementation, what factors hinder efficient and effective implementation. As citizen monitors under the BuB, CSO members have learned to appreciate their role as important stakeholders, and felt a sense of ownership. Finally, the CSOs in Tobias Fornier have learned

that no matter how they disagreed with their LGU partner, they cannot deny the necessity of collaborating with the latter, if they ultimate desire to benefit from the process.

A key recommendation for a successful and effective monitoring of BuB projects is to capacitate the CSO LPRAT members and their LGU counterpart with the skills to conduct monitoring especially citizen monitoring. Anent this,

CSO leaders should also be oriented (and trained) to report the results of the monitoring, that is, to write reports. In the case of Tobias Fornier, this is one important skill that needs to be harness by the CSO themselves, with the assistance of other CSOs, or more effectively, with local research universities.



**Picture 8.** CSO BuB Workshop in the Municipality of Tobias Fornier.

### **Most Significant Change**

In terms of empowerment, voice, collective action, and organizational capacity, there are two important changes on the character and quality of CSO participation in Tobias Fornier that could be attributed to the BuB process. First, as can be inferred from the findings of the case study, the CSOs in Tobias Fornier since their participation in the BuB process in 2014 have learned the value and strength of networking with other CSOs to ventilate, assert and promote their interest as part of the civil society sector.

One significant manifestation is the establishment of a federation or alliance of CSO (community, people's and faith-based organizations) –SEED- Antique, representing different sectors, which was able to act as the 'spokesperson' and 'liaison' of the small and newly-formed organizations. Indeed, the succeeding BuB process in Tobias Fornier was 'dominated' by SEED- Antique. As a result, the LGU partner seems to be suggesting that other sectors, e.g. Dao

Multipurpose Cooperative should be encouraged to participate in the BuB process. Perhaps, the intention was to provide a ‘counterbalance’ into the seemingly strong presence of SEED-Antique in the LPRAT.

This case study, however, argues that this is a positive development – that is, the LGUs recognition of the vital role and perhaps, the capacity of the CSOs to act as a development partner of the LGU, at least in terms of making the LGU ‘feel’ that CSOs especially representing people’s and community-based organization of poor people can be a ‘small but effective voice’ capable of challenging its development role and even priorities, in the pursuit of local development. Put another way, the LGU have perhaps felt that the CSOs are a force to reckoned with, in terms of accountability and transparency.

This brings us to our second point, that the quite brief period (around 2-3 years) of the CSO engagement with the LGU under the BuB, there has also been a substantial change in terms of the relationship and attitude of LGUs (including the LCE and local officials) towards CSOs and vice-versa as well as the dynamics between CSOs operating in the local level. The BuB process can be uniquely viewed as a ‘remarkable arrangement’ where the CSOs have been given an opportunity to level up their participation in local governance not simply as ‘watchdogs’ (its old tag-line) but as important ‘development partners’ capable of ‘filling the gaps’ in areas where the local government may be constrained by limited resources and technical knowledge.

Should the BuB process be allowed to continue under the present dispensation, the process of transforming LGU and CSO relations from simply ‘cat-mouse’ relationship into a collaborative, engaging and constructive development partnership would become a reality rather than simply a ‘state of mind.’

## **Conclusions**

There are three important lessons that can be drawn from this investigation which can perhaps, further enlighten the stakeholders – implementers and beneficiaries - of the BuB program in view of improving the entire process towards a more effective and efficient implementation.

First, the lack of ‘social’ preparation for the CSOs which were invited to participate in the BuB process, that is in terms of local organizational capacity for collective action. Although there many CSOs which responded positively to the call for participation, many were still constrained to join due to failure to acquire accreditation. The main culprit was the lack in-depth understanding of the BuB process especially with regard to accreditation. What could have been done by the implementers, was to go beyond ‘mere orientation’ of CSO participants through capacity building trainings and workshops, especially focusing on planning, budgeting, project implementation and monitoring, even before the start of the BuB activities. In so doing, CSO participation and commitment could have been maximized, and the lack of knowledge on the technical aspects of the program could have been minimized.

Second, as the implementer of development programs financed by the national government agencies, but determined by the LGUs, and their partner CSOs in the LPRAT, the LGUs were already burdened with line functions especially in implementing their regular local programs and

activities. The BuB program, being an inter-agency program, indeed, requires quite a number of documentation that also requires time and technical expertise to prepare and comply. As disclosed by the informants of the current investigation, the LGU department heads, despite the available funds (from the NGAs) as an ‘incentive’ both for them and their CSO partners in the LPRAT, the LGU itself, still find it challenging to meet these documentary requirements. As such, some projects (which have easier documentary requirements, e.g. DED, feasibility studies) were ‘prioritized’ in favor of those projects that the LGU are more familiar with, e.g., core roads, drainage systems and other support infrastructures, and whose documentation is least burdensome to prepare and comply.

Finally, an important lesson that can be drawn from the whole BuB process is that the lack or limited participation of the academe. Similar to the case of Metro Iloilo, where some development projects identified by the LPRAT require technical expertise, and which can be provided by people from the academe, for efficient implementation, the same can be said of Tobias Fornier’s case. Thus, an important recommendation which this case study advances is that the academe (it is also a CSO) should be tapped by LGUs and other CSOs as development partners if development innovations such as the BuB is to succeed.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The foregoing cases raised some general observations with regards to the capability of BuB, as implemented in the study areas, to empower CSOs through its participatory budgeting mechanism. Surely, the gains and achievements were accrued through and by the process which would positively affect the CSOs. However, several challenges previously identified by the earlier assessments remained. What would they be?

### **Gains and Achievements**

The cases studied here point to some achievements by the process in creating a more open and more empowering environment for the CSOs of the localities. First and foremost, the system has opened genuine participation for more CSOs than ever before. By numbers alone, BuB has increased participating CSOs in local governance. Women in the sectors also saw increases in their participation. More importantly, though, the local government officials refrained as much as possible from interfering the independence of the CSOs. The CSO Assemblies were let alone in the entirety of their sessions, and their collective decisions were not clouded by patronage. At this point, the process could be argued to have succeeded in opening itself as a powerful new mechanism to empower local CSOs.

Also, the process created opportunities the local civil societies and the national and local government officials to build good relationships between them, and strengthen them once established. It was already evident with the independence of the CSO Assemblies, demonstrating an understanding of the need to free the civil society from unnecessary political burdens. The conduct of the LPRAT workshops, however, could be seen as the apex of these opportunities. Within those workshops, rapport based on consensus through compromise was established, understanding each side of their respective agendas, and agreeing on common terms and, most importantly, projects. This made for a sense of convergence among the CSO, LGU, and NGA representatives. This is important in terms of empowerment for a number of reasons. First, such kind of relationship, especially when established and strengthened, affirms the effort by the national and local governments to actually harness voice and representation of CSOs in local governance, important assets of CSOs towards their empowerment. Second, the relationships fostered thereof open for them greater access to support resources from the governments, especially the local ones.

Furthermore, BuB became an opportunity for CSOs to accrue gains for themselves and the community. The CSOs were given chances to build valuable networks, federations even, with each other, especially the new participants. The Assemblies and the LPRAT Workshops, meanwhile, became forums where they could practice their relational and negotiation skills, among others. Most importantly, and quite as expected, there were indeed projects approved and implemented throughout the 4-year run of the process. These gains contribute to the assets and capabilities of the CSOs. For instance, the networks may provide all three collective assets for the organizations: voice, organization, and representation.

## Issues and Challenges

Despite the numerous achievements, however, some of the same issues and challenges identified by the previous assessments persisted, resulting to the process remaining hampered from fully empowering the CSOs. In the very first place, despite already having 4 years of activity and experience in the process, the CSOs remain lacking in both resources for mobilization such as finances and manpower. Part of this, of course, comes from the actual poverty of almost all of the members of most CSOs. This has all sorts of ramifications to the capability of the CSOs to participate in the process. The most important of these regards to their actual individual and organizational ability and willingness to personally participate in BuB activities, from the CSO Assembly, right down to the monitoring and evaluation of the priority projects. They will have to forego a day or two of work, and thus wages, for each activity at best, and their entire livelihood at worst. They must also contribute time, money and other resources as much as possible to their respective organizations, which would also significantly decrease those resources that could have been allocated in supporting their own lives and families. These considerations also lead to the tight resources for the organization. But they still pushed on participating, with some able to balance those considerations, knowing that process would alleviate their poverty in the long run with their participation, the precise spirit of the process. And yet, it seems that there is not a single entity, whether from the government or the more affluent sectors of the civil society, that had contributed significantly and effectively into the resources of the CSOs. There is not enough support and incentives for CSO members to participate in BuB without worrying about their day-to-day socioeconomic concerns. It is not surprising then that participation is lower than expected.

Compounding to the issues on critical resources is the lack of technical know-how to plan, participate and monitor both the priority projects and the BuB process itself both among the CSOs and the local governments. Despite having gone through multiple cycles of the process, they still lack critical knowledge and skills in even the most basic of the substantive tasks in BuB. They are still unable to use relevant data to decide on priority projects, create technically correct and sound plans and budgets for those identified projects, implement these projects smoothly and efficiently, and professionally document processes and observations in various stages of the projects, among others. The lack of resources from both parties and the corollary lack of effective support from the local governments resulted such lack of capacity. Also, for some reason or another, there is some hesitation among CSOs to seek help from the local and national governments, and to other sectors and institutions such as the academe. The academe, in particular, could provide the much needed technical capabilities the CSOs need to participate effectively in the process. Lastly, this lack of capacity is further worsened by the information overload with regards to the mechanics and technicalities of the process. So much guidelines, instructions and requirements were presented in the orientations and workshops in such tight and untimely manner that they could not make sense of the BuB. This leads to a further disinterest in the process, especially from the CSOs.

Speaking of information, neither the local and national governments were able to accurately update their relevant socioeconomic datasets regarding the poverty situation of their respective communities, nor did they and the CSOs made efforts to actually consult the end beneficiaries of the projects. Without a clear updated picture of the poverty situation in their localities, the CSO

Assemblies and LPRATs would find themselves unable to make projects that were most suitable and most effective to their respective communities based not only on their perceived needs but also on the actual situation on the ground. Furthermore, the lack of consultation on the community would raise questions on the social ownership of the projects, thus placing doubts on the process itself.

At this point, it is obvious that despite BuB being practiced for years now, both the CSOs and the local governments remained more or less unprepared for the process. Of course, there some that had been more capable and prepared, such as those in Pavia, but for the most part, capacities and resources remain relatively low. All of these shortcomings combined to produce LPRAPs that have easier projects that may or may not be aligned with the actual needs of the communities.

More technical factors has also affected the practice of BuB. A major sticking point is the issue of accreditation. There remains a misconception among new CSOs that accreditation is a prerequisite in attending the CSO Assemblies and other activities within the process in some capacity. This is further reinforced by the tendency for most local governments and community mobilizers to rely on the existing list of accredited CSOs to invite CSO at the Assemblies, and the ambiguities on the requirements for accreditation. Once in the Assembly, attending CSOs were difficult to validate and qualify in terms of their sectoral representation, especially when the Assembly is opened to walk-in participants as well.

Another problematic technical aspect of the process is the seemingly restrictive menu of projects as approved through the JMCs. But perhaps the problem is not so much the list itself, but rather the CSOs and LGUs' knowledge of it and its underpinning principles. Simply put, they may not be as aware of the list and its rationale than they are supposed to be.

Lastly, some political dynamics have played deleterious roles in the full realization of the empowering role of BuB. There are CSOs accused of being single-minded in pushing their group or sectoral agendas solely without any consideration to the other sectors. There are also CSOs who avoided participating in BuB due to political conflicts. Finally, there are instances where the local government officials have exercised greater influence in the LPRAT than they ought to have, though it might be justified if their wishes might actually be the most urgent.

### **Valuation of the Process**

Despite the numerous pitfalls, the same positive general valuation of the BuB that was seen by the previous assessments from the CSOs was also observed in the cases, especially in terms of its participation enabling capabilities. For the CSOs, it has given, at least in theory, a new avenue for their participation in local governance that is much wider than the pre-existing ones. They could directly inform the LGUs and NGAs of their most immediate needs and almost readily transform them into actual projects. They could connect to fellow CSOs, to their respective LGUs, and the NGAs as never before, and demand to them greater transparency and accountability in every endeavor they jointly venture to, not just the BuB process. All of these contribute to the sense of empowerment, or at least the demand for empowerment, the CSOs have every time they actually participate in BuB.

## Conclusions

To summarize the foregoing discussion, there had been numerous gains and achievements the BuB process and the originating agencies could be proud of. The opening of a new avenue for greater participation, the relative independence of the CSOs, the good rapport and working relationship between local civil society and government, and the accrual of both symbolic and physical gains for the CSOs are among these significant achievements, gained easier, if not possible, than in other modes of participation made available by the government. However, numerous challenges persisted. Lack of resources and technical capabilities on both CSOs and LGUs, lack of sufficient technical support for all BuB activities, lack of up-to-date information, technical ambiguities and restrictions, and problematic political dynamics all combined to hinder all of the participants, especially the CSOs and the LGUs, for fulfilling their BuB roles effectively. Despite these challenges, however, the CSOs look at the process as having opened to them a new way to participate in local governance more than ever before.

The analysis thusly suggests that the process has yet to achieve its full potential to be a new, greater avenue for CSO empowerment. To be sure, the gains of the process gave much help to the CSOs and the community, signifying that development outcomes were indeed present. In some cases, such outcomes were significant to all pertinent stakeholders. However, the deficiencies are significantly debilitating as well, with these directly and adversely affective of both the civil society's assets and capabilities, and the state institutions' support for empowerment. Insufficiencies to these much needed aspects entailed compromised, if not minimized, outcomes, which is the case with the study areas. Although there is this general feeling of empowerment among CSOs, there is still a gap between how much empowerment they have now and how much they ought to have.

People empowerment is the hallmark of democracy. The ability of the state and its mechanisms, processes, policies and programs to allow the people to have as much direct control over them is the very essence, the very ideal of democratic governance. But, as the cases herein would suggest, these ideals could not be achieved if all of the key stakeholders would be found lacking in much of their assets, capabilities, and support for such governance. At best, such deficits would result to a flawed system of governance. Although the country's system is far from total collapse, it is heavily flawed, and BuB is seen as a corrective step to such flaws. By allowing direct access to the national budget, the government ensures the people that good governance is upheld.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Having considered all of the achievements and challenges met by the BuB process at the present, it is not surprising that the cases produced numerous recommendations to further empower the civil society not only in the areas under study, but also throughout the Philippines. The foregoing case studies and the previous assessments have already enumerated some of the suggestions, but there is a need to reiterate these, as the progress in improving the system seemed slow.

The largest disincentive for the CSOs to participate is their lack of individual and capabilities and resources for such endeavor. The best first step is giving capacity building trainings and workshops for CSOs at least before a new BuB cycle. Two significant sets of capacities have to be built in this case. First is the set focusing on project planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, i.e. the technical aspects of the BuB process. Without these technical capabilities, CSO participation would be limited to motherhood ideals and general plans. Secondly are leadership and communication skills. These skills, when honed, would enable them to take stand and initiative, and build greater rapport among their fellow stakeholders, especially the key agents of the local and national governments. In this regard, it is best for the academe, enjoined and supported by the NGAs and LGUs, to administer these capacity building activities, as they have both the necessary knowledge and the capabilities to effectively relay such knowledge. The corporate sector, meanwhile, may be called upon for further support.

Meanwhile, the government, in both local and national levels, has to contribute its support for the empowerment process. First, efficient and effective information dissemination, time management, community facilitation, and feedback mechanisms connecting and coordinating all involved stakeholders must be established and supported, such as the creation of a BuB one-stop shop or *Civil Society Affairs Desk*. Second, the government, with the help of the academe, must create a better system for data collection, storage and analysis, and use this system to accurately depict both the poverty situation of each and every locality for the purposes of selecting and planning the priority projects, and the status and outcomes of these projects once they are being implemented. Third, barangay and grassroots consultation must be done and institutionalized so as to affirm and refine the poverty situation. They must enjoin the CSOs to join them in these consultations as both participants and observers. Clarifications on the JMCs must also be made with regards to the requirements and processes of the BuB, both through seminars and on-demand consultations. Lastly, there should be an aggressive campaign for the accreditation of CSOs through information dissemination and, more importantly, simplification of the accreditation requirements and processes.

Finally, it must be reminded that these activities are not without costs not only to the organizing institutions, but also to the CSOs and their individual members and representatives. For the short term, the activities should be coupled with actual material incentives such as *per diem*, free meals, transportation allowances and the like for the CSO representatives so as to ease substantially, if not completely, the socioeconomic trade-offs they usually face in attending and participating in BuB activities. A long term solution on the issue, however, is micro-entrepreneurship, which would not only help fill the coffers of their organizations, but also their individual daily needs. Sponsorship by the corporate sector must be enjoined as well.

Surely, there is a great deal of work for all the relevant stakeholders involved. But the recent developments may seemingly put all the recommendations above to waste. The recently-inaugurated Rodrigo Duterte administration indicated its intent to do away with the BuB process (Tupaz, 2016). However, much of the recommendations may actually be applied outside BuB. If implemented correctly, these steps would still empower CSOs, but perhaps in a different way and magnitude compared to them being under BuB. Besides, the underlying aim of both the BuB process and the recommendations above is to empower the people. It is now hoped that the suggestions herewith would reenergize the path to empowerment not only for the civil societies within the study areas, but also for those throughout the country. Besides, democracy would only thrive when the people are truly empowered.

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