

## **Developing Multi-impact Project Design for Urban Agriculture in EPM and PPPUE Context**

The Cagayan de Oro City allotment  
garden project experience  
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JULIUS N. BONA EMS 1  
Cagayan de Oro City

*The manner and style this case study was written is a complete departure from the standard scientific way of presentation. Thus, the writer is asking the indulgence of the readers for that matter. However, due to time constraint rushing this response to the issues raised, this is the only way this writer saw fit for the readers to capture, in a first person account, the historical essence in the development of the case project: the Cagayan de Oro allotment gardens.*

Dear Colleagues:

I would like to make some more enlightenment regarding problems in allotment gardens of Cagayan de Oro City. It was mentioned by Dr. Robert Holmer that "We are not sure yet about all the root causes of the problems in the first pilot area...With our present status of knowledge, the problems encountered can be related to the following:"

- Poor social preparation
- Poor community organizing
- Lack of managerial skills

As a project staff from the City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office (CLENRO) an agency representing Cagayan de Oro City the local government unit (LGU) partner in the project, I can provide some insights based on my interactions with key project implementers of the project on the following issues raised during previous sessions:

### *Poor social preparation*

In the project inception, as a member of the Local Environment Planning and Management (LEPM) Project Unit of CLENRO who facilitated the preceding ISWM demo project in Barangay Bugo, I was given responsibility for the initial working arrangement

with the prospective ground-level partners (GLP)<sup>1</sup>. The LEPM team was responsible for the project advocacy. It was not difficult for us because the proposed CDO Asia-Urbs project was considered by the local participants as an up-scaling follow-up to the 3-year LEPM ISWM Demo Project. In fact, all the three ISWM Barangays for the AU projects were former GLPs of the said LEPM project. Before the AU project was approved in the first quarter of 2002, we have been doing ground works already since early November 2001. In the proposal project working dynamics the CDO was the main responsible for field implementations, while Xavier University is main responsible for the administrative and technology).

At the onset the original approach was to involved the barangay as an active partner through the proposed Barangay Steering Committee. A Barangay Steering committee and the Barangay Technical Working Committee were formed (but failed to be officially launched because of the forthcoming Barangay elections). There was a lengthy discussions among the Barangay Councilors then but they finally agreed on the criteria for selecting the prospective GLPs ( I was also assigned by the council to make the initial draft of the criteria). In the selection there was a contending argument and delinma on the question of defining poverty. Finally the ad hoc committees agreed on the persons to be the initial GLPs. There were several proposed allotment garden areas but the site offered by the Villa Trinitas was selected by the committee. In the spirit of participatory and bottom-up process of EPM, the committee gave the privilege to the prospective group to select among themselves (to avoid jealousy). The initial 8 families to work on the gardens were submitted and everything were done with transparency (in accordance to the principles of SCP/EPM).

As I can remember, poverty qualification was not an issue based on their household income. However, one of the added value in selecting this group was their level of work experiences attained as retirees of Del Monte Philippines Inc. Being aware of the anticipated replication of the ISWM model, the council put premium in capability to relate and share experiences. This consideration was proven effective as thousands of local guest from all sectors (academic, government, and NGOs) have visited the project site since the establishment of the project.

For more historical background please read Julius N. Bona. *A perspective on urban agriculture in the Philippines* (Appropriate Methods for Urban Agriculture -E-conference by ETC and SIUPA 4-16 February 2002).

However, along the course of project implementation. Internal reorganizations were made with the rest of the partnership. Many experts from other partners joined the AG group however, the persons who were involved and knowledgeable of the original understanding were not able to became participants of the Allotment Gardening Working Group.

The high rate of transparency aggravated the problem as three of the AG technical staff resigned in matter of only about a year (during the first year of project implementations).

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<sup>1</sup> The description ground-level partners (G-LPs) was coined and used in this presentation to replace the term *beneficiaries* commonly used to refer to 'the final receiver of end-benefits of the project'. This was made in response 'in the spirit of EPM process of development', and to the idea suggested that 'these people at the ground-level are not merely beneficiaries, they are partners in development'.

When the last set of AG staff joined the team, it was apparent the original working arrangements were not integrated and applied in the final process and strategies. The experience somehow showed that part of a successful social preparation is a thorough assessment of existing or previous understandings which evolved and became part of local 'social values'.

There was a survey done to assess the awareness of the community towards the ISWM project. In a plenary discussion the result showed the people are not well aware of the project. However, it was mentioned during that meeting that the IEC activities were still on the process when the survey was being conducted.

### *Social preparation and 'Learning by doing'*

There was a time when we were initiating the project our outlook of social preparations was 'learning-by-doing' as 'setting up a group of participants to accept change'. Social preparation for this allotment garden project as an issue 'must be felt at ground-level'. Does it need the formal or 'academic' process of applying its methodologies? If we refer social preparation to the latter. Obviously the participants and the implementers have to learn the dynamics without the privilege of undergoing 'formal classroom' or 'academic' processes of social preparation. What the participants have by that time particularly with some of the barangay council and G-LPs was a long exposure to the EPM process (since 1999) The rest particularly most of prospective G-LPs was a series of project briefings we conducted way back 2001. The community households G-LPs have not undertaken formal social preparations at all. As a demo project this parameter provided an opportunity to assess which social preparation development process is the most effective. One way to appreciate social preparation is the acceptance of the community to the new ideas or processes introduced. During the project inception there were five(5) prevailing assumptions for social preparations being considered;

- 1.) The project being a follow-through of the previous LEPM ISWM demo project the allotment gardeners were already oriented to the projects concepts as former stakeholders of the SCP/EPM process in the area. In this case. The process of selection of membership and site, undergo the basic participatory consultative process. The need for social preparation for the allotment gardeners was assumed not critical;
- 2.) the social preparation for allotment garden is an uphill struggle considering the concept involves a pioneering setup in the community. To promote extensive practise of household-based urban agriculture within a social parameter of history of unsustained community gardening campaign ('Green Revolution') launched during years of martial-law, the social acceptability was facing a high risk of failure;
- 3.) the acceptability of the ISWM segregation among households is backed by RA9003 as policy support. The law mandated all LGUs entire country to implement segregation at source at the barangay level. The formal social preparation for segregation was not critical and has minimal level of risk;
- 4.) the acceptability of the ISWM segregation among households holds a critical level of risk as this activity is revolutionary. It is contrary to the age-old practices of the residents in disposing household garbage;

- 5.) conducting a social survey to validate the qualification or performance prospective gardening participants after passing a lengthy process of negotiations, understanding (even since EPM period), and selection done by the barangay committees concerned, in the context of Philippine culture, may be misunderstood as casting shadow of doubts to the integrity of prospective G-LPs. This will put the process of social acceptability even more risky.

At the hindsight, after about two years, the assumptions (1), (3) and (5) showed to have prevailed. The manifestations such as:

- a.) commitment of PAGA members to pursue the allotment gardening activities despite of delays in the delivery of operation support (as of late October 2003 one allotment gardener has been producing vegetables without the benefit of a bucket-type irrigation system), to the point of using their personal resources;
- b.) the decision and initiatives of the officers of allotment gardeners and friends to organize to establish partnership and assist the barangay council through sourcing for local corporate resources to support the sustainability of SWM segregation activities of the garbage pickers cooperative, proven otherwise to the generic statement of 'poor social preparation';
- c.) The reunification of two opposing groups under the leadership of there original group through the intervention of the Barangay Council and the eventual success in exercise of segregation by the consistent house-to-house advocacy combined with the mandate of law similarly corroborated to the third presumption (3) that the issue on social preparation was moderately manageable.
- d.) The high magnitude of community participation manifested positive responses to formal social preparation. The experienced effectiveness showed the utmost importance of formal social preparation for new participants (from households);

In the argument between tradition and law, the law prevailed. On the argument formal social preparation processes versus common knowledge (through participatory and consultative process), the latter showed to have worked.

This was a very interesting development. Considering the popular concern; 'many laws were not effectively implemented in the country' (according to discussions during city consultations in December, 1999). the project was able to demonstrate that the implementation of law in SW segregation was very practical down to barangay level and it has prevailed over the traditional way. These experiences simplify to a basic idea that; 'the fundamental determinant for social commitment is the relevance of a idea advocated (project concept) to address social needs. Relatively, the legal and policy platforms and formal social preparations were basically support processes only'. As indigenous knowledge of the community showed to be primordial, it must be given utmost appreciation and importance in introducing new ideas. This concept would further strengthen the feeling of ownership among the G-LPs.

### *Poor community organizing*

One of the main themes of the project was capability building. This refers (in our EPM point of view) not only to the project staff but to the whole participants including the community involved. Indeed, in development projects particularly those designed to bring social change or change in social values, community organizing is a difficult process. The fact that the partnership with the original G-LPs in Barangay Bugo (PAGA and the original group of scavengers (Garbage Pickers Association)) has just been severed due to some irreconcilable issues, confirms the crucial need for the project to develop capacities to address 'the challenge for the community organizer to harness these energies for the benefit of the whole group' (as quoted). This capability to build social change is the 'spirit' of social development advocated by the United Nations. Currently the original group (PAGA) are being replaced.

However, if one should take a second look to this issue, these people showed to be very supportive to the LEPM activities since year 2000. They even have willingly employed their own resources just to continue the urban gardening activities during delays in the delivery of support, and until this present. Currently the PAGA group is continuing efforts to support the ISWM activities in Barangay Bugo in partnership with the Barangay Council. There result of this severance of partnership, the GP is totally handling composting of the collected garbage.

'Biases' we experienced in community development as an issue is not an adversary but a friend. Biased perceptions are considered unacademic, 'unbalanced understanding', and unscientific. However, we must always remember that *genuine agreements are born out of true appreciation of individuals biases.*

### *Lack of managerial skills*

The project has adapted a line-and -staff structure. In my personal understanding, the practice of having both the project director and project manager directly involved in Allotment Garden Working Group has something to do with the problem. This collaborative relationship has likewise broken or 'short-circuited' some important management principles - job delineation and functional roles. Allowing the higher authority to directly interact into the lower functions. (this is a very interesting case for development project management ). In the past 3-year LEPM project the demo team adapted the Function Matrix Structure which did not provide middle positions such as the project manager. The working interactions although not absolutely perfect provided capability to team members to response to emerging problems with sense of responsibility , identity, and creativity.

This experience somehow showed the crucial need of an appropriate operations and organisational management design for every type of development project established.

### *"Dole-out" mentality*

Barangay Bugo by virtue of policy support such as the Solidwaste Management act (RA900), and City Ordinance recognized the need to support the ISWM by allocating

Php 40,000. Parallel to this development, local residents are organising local support mechanism (external to the AU Project activities) to support the ISWM activities in partnership with the barangay.

The national government will implement later through the DILG GO-FAR Project the national replication of the LEPM process (which the case project was patterned) to all the LGUs in the country. This matter was discussed already in the Global Meeting 2003 held at Alexandria, Egypt. This concern of addressing the dole-out mentality will be integrated to the process.

### *Organisational polarization*

On the issue of the consequence, where some staff sided with one of the groups, which aggravated the situation, this situation arose because these concerned staff recognize their previous understanding with the said group (PAGA) on matters involving project implementations.

### *Rejection of technology*

This problem is an indication the project concepts were not totally understood by the G-LPs, or that there was no thorough participatory process and consultations regarding indigenous and the recommended technologies. Experience showed EPM participatory and consultative process was particularly effective in addressing this problem. This was not supposedly a problem when 'our umbilical cord with EPM process' was not cut..

At any rate as Dr. Holmer mentioned we are anticipating some focus group activities on this issues.

To share some insights on our experiences with Conflict Management in about 14 environmental management based development projects in the city (which includes the case project) showed some potential sources of problems:

1. **Conflict in interest (Financial and Resource Allocation).** Poor manifestation of budgetary transparency was one of the complaints of the project G-LPs.
2. **Broken expectations.** The technical preparation and training of the people from one partner was EPM process-oriented. Confusion set-in in the group dynamics when during a meeting the staff was ordered to 'cut umbilical cord with the LEPM'.
3. **Management style and methods**– the difference in views of the partners on the project as they would look into and anticipate its implementation activities, interactions, and impacts would finally percolate into the project formulation of work packages and budget preparation.
4. **Cultural diversity.** During the process of project implementation, reactions of partners to current situations being dynamic, highly vary because of cultural differences or orientations.
5. **Contrasting Interests.** Different work strategies and perceptions give impressions to other partners that some partnership agreement where

simply grounded on 'lip-service'. Some partners perceived arrangements willingly agreed during preparations (based on TORs) were side-lined later.

6. **Decision-making approaches** - Some project officials would decide on things traditionally, deciding and formulating plans on a top-down basis, while the lower key staff wanted to do things in a broad-based consultative participatory and bottom up manner.
7. **Appreciation of project impacts**. Some project officials view the project impacts in terms of physical or tangible results, while other partners put more value on the context or the 'process of change' that may be brought in by the project into the social mainstream.
8. **Work Orientation**. The implementing partners are have highly opposing interests during project preparation and development. One partner would look deeper into the tangible outcome, the other gave emphasis in the delivery context.
9. **Poverty factor**. There were two reasons identified with poverty that adversely affected the implementation of projects activities; 1.) *Inadequacy of education*. 2.) *Poor control of time due to poverty*.
10. **High rate of personnel turnover**. Three of the technical staff from the Allotment garden group resigned in a period of approximately a 1 year.
11. **Change in political leadership**. The political term of our elected government officials are limited to 3 terms of 3-year service only.
12. **Inadequate job delineation**. Some members of the team resisted some ideas or actions contrary to their project development experiences and ideals. Some officers perceived their tasks were side-lined without consulting them'. In brief, there was a 'breach in the practice' of participatory process.
13. **Concept on sustainable agriculture**. Technologies being introduced were sometimes rejected by the G-LPs 'not simply because of resistance or ignorance, but also due to apprehension on being 'untested', and in some cases the project implementers themselves failed to assess and validate the existing local technology, or that the needed change (being introduced) was not 'demand driven' and part of the identified issues in the community.
14. **Insufficient mass information campaign**. Although IEC has been done intensively on target sites and relevant audiences during the project implementation, such efforts were considered insufficient as the information on the importance of the project were not able to cover wide audiences. So far what was experienced as effective is the house-to-house sorties campaigning the SW M dynamics.

With regards to the issue of two groups or homeowners associations, this issue was already resolved by the Barangay Council. The Barangay recognized the original group which composed the PAGA group as the official representatives. Indeed the utmost importance of role played by the barangay government in controlling conflicts was emphasized by Dr. Holmer in settling personal conflicts that may emerge sporadically making the project continue smoothly. This strategy was basis in the proposed formation of the Barangay Steering Committee which was not realized at the onset..

### *Environmental Economics*

The problem affecting the garbage pickers due to downscaling volumes of recyclable waste is strongly being urgently felt at present. The urgency to help them was already initiated as we in the CLENRO LEPM unit has already made some understanding in principle with some NGOs on the possibility of linkaging with another academic institution to assist the GPs in terms of capacity buildup, and related resources.

For the meantime the composting of biodegradable waste of households in Bugo was being done by both the GP and the PAGA. During a meeting there was a management contention on this issue because during a management meeting held at the office one suggested that all the composting activities will be done by the allotment gardeners. Our contention in the LEPM staff was that the bulk of BDW in excess to the requirements of the allotment gardeners, must be done by the GP. This strategy will provide the approximately 400 families of GPs a fall-back position in the event of economic dislocation. Although the main idea floated in that meeting was; 'there is no money in garbage', the present outcome of the ISWM activities proved otherwise. The households realised the value of recyclables after they started to practice segregation at home. The latest rate of recovery of recyclable waste collected by the GPs is at the vicinity of 4%.

Currently the Barangay Council is extending transitory financial assistance to them while their activities are being expanded by the help of the locals (PAGA).

With the severance of partnership with the PAGA, the composting of bio-degradable are totally done by the GPs. Lately an allotment gardener was buying composted materials from the GPs at the price of Php 30.00 per sack. This was a good indication of economic feasibility of this ISWM model. This amount is many times lower than the price of commercial fertilizers. (This development is very promising but must be confronted with delicate care. This is one important issue in environmental economics because of its potential impact to the fertilizer industry which reminded me of the same economic dilemma presented by representatives of India during a panel discussion in Global Meeting 2003 at Alexandria Egypt (United Nations Human Settlements Programme).

Savings of those who gained from the ISWM activities are still savings. The household are not yet paying for garbage collection. This was a traditional policy that needed yet to be addressed. However, plans are being formulated in the city where people shall remain to be unburdened by the cost to promote SW segregation, yet the activities, economic infrastructure, and social role of the urban farmers and garbage pickers are sustained. Inasmuch as we want, we cannot just apply the ideals of SWM European models in our community, at present economic conditions, otherwise 'you are inviting a revolution!'

The garbage are still bring collected at point of source. With few introduced modifications now. In Barangay Bugo the SW is segregated and composted by garbage pickers. The residual waste collected by the City Public Services Office truck at no cost to the households owners. Perhaps they will someday, bring their waste at the MRFs. But that remained to be seen yet. There as some indicators of social modifications; garbage bags are now seen being sold at the supermarkets.

### *The role SCP/EPM process*

The basic feature of SCP/EPM process in relation to project management is the practise of bottom-up, participatory and consultative decision-making. Most of the problems that emerged during the project implementation were rooted from the need to integrate the SCP/EPM process. The experiences with the problems that emerged was one great value of this project. They simply showed the **magnitude** of the importance of applying SCP/EPM process to attain smooth project implementation and success. To us - staff from CLENRO, the problems experienced were the 'total knowledge value' of the project Investment of the sponsoring institution.

Experience showed management style is deep rooted from personal attitude and capability to learn. What showed to have emerged as determinant to sustainable development of local communities is *indigenous knowledge*. Educational attainment or qualifications showed to be 'externalities' only in development. We LEPM staff from CLENRO are professionally in harmony and opined in our discussions we had have more than enough of the experiences and management style that brought forth the above-mentioned project management issues. We need a fresh start. That is the point were the forthcoming GO-FAR project comes in.

Policy support is one pillar of SCP/EPM process. The local ordinance on ISWM past just yesterday 17Nov 2003 (implementing the RA9003 a national policy mandating the LGUs to implement solidwaste segregation) is an excellent tool for a sustainable development of ISWM as well as UA in the city. This policy is a very solid platform for developing urban agriculture as a integral part of SWM process. The legal provision giving window of opportunity for local NGOs to participate in the whole process will help boosts the momentum needed. This is one of the 'dramatic legacies' of the current city political leadership. This drafting of the proposal was 'greatly influenced' by our experiences with the SCP/EPM process.

### *Project design*

The above problems were just some of the many problems the project encountered. Having an array of the above problems does not necessarily mean the project is a failure. Actually the beauty of this case project was the fact- 'there were many more things than meets the eye'. There was once a time in 2001 when Ms. Joyce Lago complain; 'have you not noticed there seemed a lot of weakness in the project?' (she was referring to the dynamics in the partnership framework) I replied; 'Yes, but leave them as they are. If we design a perfect project we will never learn how people from different institutions behave in a complex development partnership like this. Don't mind the potential inequitable physical advantages, the most valuable result is the knowledge on how people from other sectors (NGOs, and academic institutions) behave, how their minds operate!' As a collaborator in the project proposal my role was to lay-out the LEPM SWM model into the original proposal of DR. Holmer. His first proposal needed to be reformulated. My sole priority that time was the integration of the EPM process in the project. We are anticipating the prospect of national replication as part of the SCP/EPM process, This is first time in history our LGU was involved in a multi-lateral demonstration community development project. And we have to do more of this type of development process nationwide in the near future. In brief we wanted to

know as much as possible the critical elements and dynamics in building up successful Public-Private Partnership in Urban Environment (PPPUE). As observed, the presentation of this case project was focused mainly on its urban agriculture activities. In the interest of our city our highest goal is the sustainable urbanization and good urban governance through environmental management process. As I said before this case project have 'much more things than what meets the eyes'. Our very rich learning experience from this case project made our preparations in CLENRO for the forthcoming national replication under the GO-FAR Project more exciting. To many of us Filipinos in Cagayan de Oro City, this allotment garden project is one of best legacies brought us by the European Union.

So far, the main source of encouragement we have in this case project aside from faith in the Divine Providence, is the goal of the Asia Urbs program *to forge wider city-to-city links which is the main goal of decentralized cooperation, and the general support extended by the city government and the rest of the European partners to the effort.*

The above-mentioned issues and problems encountered were hard-earned lessons manifesting the intricacies of developing multi-impact project design. Particularly on the aspect of anticipating its projected results and the varied assessments the project would be viewed. It is a very alarming possibility that valuable experiences and impacts of projects may have been lost because we were able to look only at their nominal impacts. The project experiences we gained highlighted the necessity of understanding and applying the SCP/EPM process at all stages and levels of development.

Having these obstacles, and confronting these problems and issues does not necessarily mean the project ended unsuccessfully; particularly when a wealth of learning experiences were gained, necessary adjustment measures were applied, and the planned facilities and component activities were delivered in accordance to the 'project contract'. These are the *nitty gritty*s and realities of contextual development and implementations project design and community development. As for me personally and as conformed by some colleagues, these latest project experiences were the best we ever have had so far.

#### *Disclaimer and Credits*

*This document was based on personal encounters, learning experiences, and insights of a project documenter on the reactions and testimonies of people in conflict. The observations were personal impressions of one-on-one interviews, informal group discussions, assembly meetings, working group meetings, and plenary discussions. Considering these are a personal encounters and insights they are basically 'biased' and they do not represent official policies of the institutions, agencies, and organisations mentioned however, this person can be contacted to validate or elucidate further on these experiences; Edwin I. Dael (eduepm.yahoo.com).*

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Best regards:

JULIUS N.BONA  
<jnbona@yahoo.com>