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Civil Society Participation as a Building Block of Good Governance: The Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines Experience

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Abstract

In a developing country such as the Philippines, where call for change is relentless, the inclusive participation of the citizens has become vital. In 2012, the Aquino Administration launched the Bottom-up Budgeting (BUB) Program to bolster inclusive growth, grassroots empowerment, and good governance at the local level. In Cagayan de Oro City (CdeO), BUB sought to increase citizens' access to local service delivery with a demand-driven budget planning process and to strengthen government accountability in local public service provision (Openbub.gov, 2012). Using the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach, this study examined the dynamics of Civil Society Organizations' participation in BUB-funded projects that have helped the Local Government Unit (LGU) develop a more progressive perspective in governance and its replicability in other areas. There has been formal recognition by the LGU of the valuable contributions of CSOs to the City's growth, in the form of strengthened commitment towards poverty alleviation, productive partnerships, and the establishment of the City CSO Affairs Office. The interplay of the CSOs, government stakeholders, and private institutions in the City remains relevant. BUB has been anchored on strong community involvement, open government, and people's multifaceted agenda for the City, even in the face of the Duterte Administration's plan to replace BUB with a relatively similar system, the Assistance to Disadvantaged Municipalities Program (ADMP). Once institutionalized in the local bureaucracy, civil society participation will continue to keep alight the torch of cooperation in building the fourth metropolis in the country, even as we are buffeted by winds of uncertainty brought about by social and political challenges.

Keywords: Civil Society Organizations; Bottom-up Budgeting Process; Participatory Budgeting; Community Engagements, Grassroots Development

1. Introduction

The basis for Civil Society in the Philippines comes from the Filipino concepts of *pakikipagkapwa* (holistic interaction with others) and *kapwa* (shared inner self). Voluntary assistance or charity connotes for Filipinos an equal status between the provider of assistance and the recipient, which is embodied in the terms *damayan* (assistance of peers in periods of crisis) and *pagtutulungan* (mutual self-help). Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Philippines engage in a broad range of activities, the most common being in (i) education, training, and human resource development; (ii) community development; (iii) enterprise development and employment generation; (iv) health and nutrition; (v) law, advocacy, and politics; and (vi) sustainable development. There are many types of CSOs in the country, but the more important types are people's organizations, development NGOs, and cooperatives. CSOs are membership organizations representing marginalized groups and often organized based on sector, issue, or geographical area (ADB, 2007).

In 2012, the administration of President Benigno Aquino III, son of former President Corazon Aquino who helped restore democracy in the Philippines after the Marcos dictatorship, launched the Bottom-up Budgeting (BUB) Program to bolster inclusive growth,

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grassroots empowerment, and good governance at the local level. BUB sought to increase citizens' access to local service delivery through a demand-driven budget planning process and to strengthen government accountability in local public service (Official Gazette, 2012). Part of the BUB Program is the annual participatory planning process where Local Government Units (LGUs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) jointly identify priority poverty reduction projects based on local needs (Ateneo de Manila Institute of Philippine Culture, 2013).

The existence of CSOs is a sign of willingness of the public to engage in development, but their capacity in constructively doing so needs to be developed (ADB, 2013). Among the many challenges faced by CSOs in implementing their programs and projects are the lack of funding and human resources, lack of government support, and political patronage. Many CSOs are dependent on external funding and are affected by lack of staff for the successor generation and weak internal governance. Philippine CSOs secure their funding through membership dues, donations, subsidies, and revenue from income-generating activities (ADB, 2013). While it is true that many CSOs operate based on volunteerism, the more stable and capable CSOs rely on paid full-time staff to deliver their programs and services. In fact, the ability of many CSOs to keep their staff has been affected by the lack of funds. CSOs, particularly NGOs, have recently not been able to attract as many young graduates and talented youths into their field as they used to. These developments may slow down civil society's sustained constructive engagement with the government (ADB, 2013). BUB, particularly among local communities, is considered an opportunity to empower CSOs to be at the frontier of improving the lives of impoverished communities (Macasaet, 2014). BUB has helped cure the country from being the "Sick Man of Asia" after years of corruption by people in power, to being called "Asia's Rising Tiger" by World Bank.

In the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022, the City of Cagayan de Oro (CdeO) has been set to become the fourth metropolitan center in the country by 2025, joining the ranks of the National Capital Region (NCR), Davao, and Cebu, based on its projected population growth and functional role. Metropolitan centers in the Philippines serve as "hubs of growth" through innovation and advanced services, culture and tourism, education and research, transportation and trade, manufacturing, and technology development (Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022). CdeO, also known as the "City of Golden Friendship," is considered as the growth corridor of commerce, education, and government administration in Northern Mindanao. As a major city in Region 10 with a rich heritage, it has its fair share of historical highlights of the Republic of the Philippines. Figures from the City Planning and Development Office (CDPO) showed an extreme increase in her population, of which domestic migration remains a major contributory factor to the population growth. People from neighboring provinces, cities, and municipalities are coming to the city for job and income opportunities and security, among other reasons. Sprouting subdivisions in the city also attract people to live in Cagayan de Oro (CDPO, *ibid*).

As an emerging growth center, more focus must be given to priority programs in CdeO which may be achieved through participatory planning. This study explored the roles of CSOs in improving local governance through its participation in the BUB. It was conducted by the Governance and Leadership Institute (GLI) of Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan, a Jesuit-run university, and funded by SEA OIL Foundation Inc. (SFI), as part of the latter's "Journeying with Leaders and Communities towards Good Governance" Project. Since its inception in 2007, XU-GLI, as a social development unit of the University, has been helping

the national government and the local units of Northern Mindanao in capacity-building initiatives and program empowerment (About GLI, n.d.).

Drawing from the experiences in the participation of local CSOs in Cagayan de Oro City, the study sought to determine the level of participation and involvement of CSOs in the BUB-funded projects in improving local governance using the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach (Figure 1). Specifically, the objectives of the study are: (i) to describe the key steps, strategies, and tools employed by the local CSOs in the various phases of the BUB process; (ii) to delineate the lessons learned and emerging insights from the CSO-LGU-Private Sector engagements; and (iii) to formulate recommendations to improve the BUB process to promote greater grassroots participation and good governance.

This study utilized key informant interviews (KIIs), focused-group discussions (FGDs), and desk review of documents. The MSC technique, as developed by Rick Davies and Jess Dart (2005), is “a participatory form of monitoring and evaluation, which provides a way to measure intangible qualitative indicators like ‘empowerment’ through the systematic collection and analysis of stories provided by program participants and stakeholders.” It was used to collect stories of change brought about by the BUB program and systematically analyzing them for their significance. Stories are pulled together from the field with the most significant stories being filtered up the organization (Davies and Dart, 2005; Toolfordev.org, 2014) as shown in the illustration below as applied in this study:

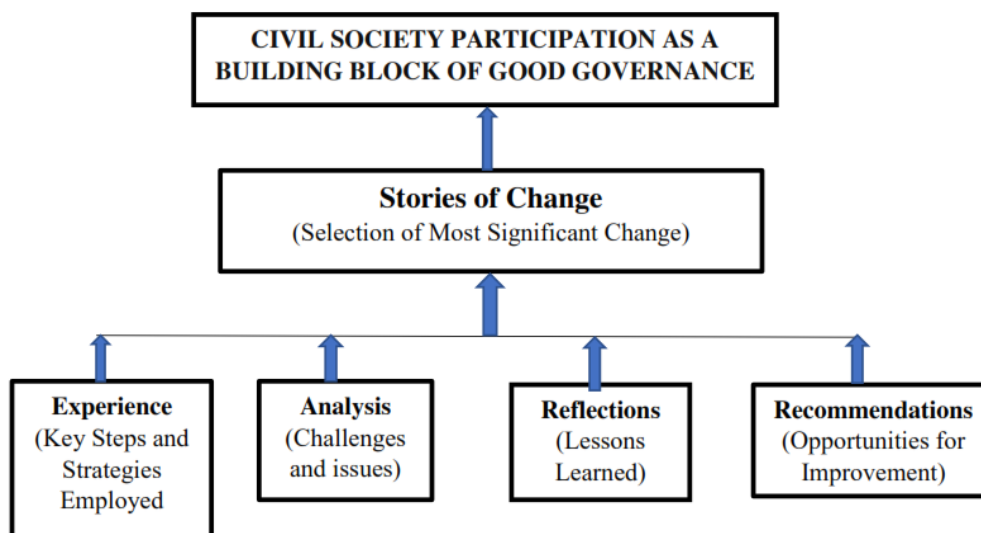


Fig. 1 Theoretical Framework - Most Significant Change (MSC)

2. Methods

2.1. Exploratory case analysis

This study is exploratory case analysis given the rarity of studies done on the practice of BUB. Shuttleworth (2008) defined a case study as “an in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey and it is a method used to narrow down a broad field into one easily researchable topic.” This research design also tests whether scientific theories and models work in the real application. Guided by the Most Significant Change

(MSC) framework, this case study utilized key informant interviews (KIIs), focused group discussions (FGDs), and desk review of documents (Writing@CSU, 2014). MSC serves as a focusing and bounding tool that remained flexible throughout the course of the study (Davies and Dart, 2005). The research questions were derived from the conceptual framework used to make sampling decisions, namely in four areas: Experience (key steps and strategies employed in the BUB practice), Analysis (the challenges and issues), Reflections (the lessons learned), and Recommendations (opportunities for improvement). KIIs, FGDs, and secondary document collection were included in the methods to generate individual and collated data (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). Interpretations of the analyses were made thereafter.

The participants in this case study were selected using the purposive sampling method, specifically involving the CSOs in operation in Cagayan de Oro City in Region 10 - Northern Mindanao. Key informants of participating CSOs were among those who answered the invitation of the study and actively participated in the different phases of the research. Primary data were collected through KIIs and FGDs and desk review for secondary sources. The KIIs involved qualitative in-depth interviews with the people who have firsthand knowledge about the BUB process. The key informants, with their particular experience and understanding, have provided insights into the nature of the challenges in the BUB process and also gave recommendations on how to improve the practice. An interview schedule containing a set of questions was developed as a guide during the interview. The questions were categorized according to the components as iterated in the research framework.

2.2. Data collection and processing

The BUB process was designed to have various components that ensure there is sufficient data and technical assistance to guarantee anti-poverty projects proposed are genuinely responsive to the poverty situation of the marginalized in a community. It was also designed to involve the CSO community of a locality in the planning of effective programs because they will be able to articulate the reality of poverty in the localities (Ateneo de Manila Institute of Philippine Culture, 2013). There were three stages of data collection in this study. The first involved gathering of documents on CSO participation in the BUB process, in general, and about the projects studied, in particular. This part included the profile of the case study subjects to paint a picture of what kind of organizations they are. Documents about the projects and others related to the BUB activities were also collected. The second stage consisted of interviews and focused-group discussions. For face-to face interviews, participants who gave their consent were shown the questionnaire beforehand to give them time to organize their responses. By allowing them to prepare their answers, it was hoped that richer data could be solicited, and meaningful exchanges could take place during the interview. This part involved freewheeling discussions on the profile of the CSO, history of the partnership with the LGU, and perspectives on their BUB engagements, among others. Spontaneous replies were also welcomed by asking clarifying questions. The third stage of data collection was consultation and elaboration with the participants to validate their answers and for the analysis of the results.

The data gathered were subjected to qualitative methods for processing. Guided by the conceptual framework, patterns and themes were identified from the results of the desk review and key informant interviews. Validation followed to analyze the findings. Thematic analysis is “a practice in qualitative research which involves searching through data to

identify patterns and trends. A theme is a cluster of linked categories conveying similar meanings” (Subvista, n.d.) and emerges through the inductive analytic process which characterizes the qualitative paradigm.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Cagayan de Oro City's CSOs' BUB Experience

As one of the Highly Urbanized Cities (HUCs), CdeO is comprised of 80 barangays with a total population of 697,408 as of 2016 Census of Population. A barangay, formerly referred to as barrio, is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines and is the native Filipino term for a village, district, or ward (Oxford University Press, n.d.). In Cagayan de Oro, Carmen is the most populated barangay (11.44%), followed by Lapasan (6.84%), Kauswagan (5.64%), Balulang (5.60%), and Bulua (5.24%). Each of the remaining barangays is accounted for less than 5% of the total population of the city (National Statistics Office Census). Concerning the City's economic features, about 34.65% of CdeO's total land area of 56,966.63 hectares was dedicated to agriculture in 2011 and 33.27% in 2012. Around 6,008.40 hectares of the agricultural lands were devoted to crops in 2011 and 3,854.50 in 2012. Crops produced are both food and commercial yields. Food crops include rice, corn, and vegetables, while commercial crops are abaca, banana, cacao, coffee, root crops, fruits, and various nuts (CDPO, 2012).

The City is led by former Misamis Oriental governor, now mayor, Oscar S. Moreno. The mayor is perceptibly a staunch supporter of *Peoples Participation* as he is known to have engaged with local civil society organizations and the marginalized sectors for many years now. He demonstrated his support 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 Peoples Council (E.O. 97-2015), both people-led initiatives. Amid the active local participation of CSOs in the city, challenges exist in the political dynamics between the City Executive and the City Council, stemming from their differences in political parties. It is worth noting that political activism takes on a larger role for Filipino CSOs than elsewhere. Indeed, CSOs played major roles in achieving Filipino independence from the Spanish and the Americans, in toppling the Marcos regime, and in ending the administration of President Joseph Estrada (ADB, 2007).

The victory of Moreno as mayor in 2013 against a well-entrenched politician was an expression of the change the people wanted. Local governance needed to be participatory. However, faced with an opposition City Council (2013-2016; 2016-2019) that blocked most of the projects and programs, the Mayor called on the civil society to be City Hall's partner in its vital aspects of running the city. In response, the CSOs organized the *Cagayan de Oro Peoples Council* and came up with peoples' agenda in five areas of engagement: food security, health, environment, peace, and good governance. These areas matched well with Moreno's 8-point program of governance, popularly known as "PRIMEHAT" which stands for Poverty Alleviation and Peace and Order; Revenue Generation and Resettlement; Infrastructure and Investment; Metropolization; Education and Environment; Health and Hospital Services; Agriculture; and Tourism and Traffic.

BUB was launched in 2012 as the flagship antipoverty program of the Aquino administration through its Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cluster (HDPRC) and Good Governance and Anti-Corruption Cluster (GCACC). BUB was initially aimed at the poorest municipalities and cities in the Philippines, but later expanded to cover all LGUs

(Cabacungan, 2013). At present, it continues to serve as a platform for engagements between the CSOs representing the voices of marginalized sectors and the government in a participatory planning process and implementation. The program is guided by three (3) principles: convergence, participation, and empowerment. These have encouraged citizens and CSOs to take active roles in the community by articulating their needs to the government and determining what projects are urgent and responsive to their needs (Rey, 2016). The result of all the local planning and budgeting is the convergence of plans. The priority projects are harmonized at the national level by NGAs in their programs and budget for implementation. Dubbed as “participatory governance in action,” it has the potential to strengthen LGU-CSO relations towards local development (Ong, 2013).

The Joint Memoranda Circulars issued by the Department of Budget (DBM), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), said that the BUB process targets “to come up with effective antipoverty plans that are genuinely responsive to the local situation because they are based on all available and relevant data” (ADMU Institute of Philippine Culture, 2013). NAPC reported that for the Fiscal Year 2013 round, the HDPRC has identified 609 municipalities/cities for the initial phase of BUB of which 595 responded and submitted Local Poverty Reduction Action Plans (LPRAPs). For the FY2014 round, the exercise was expanded to cover 1,233 municipalities/cities. For the FY2015 round, BUB was expanded throughout the country. BUB is also expected to aid in achieving the Philippine Development Plan’s goal of inclusive growth and poverty reduction and promoting good governance at the local level (Miraflor, 2016). The policy implementation of BUB is presently handled by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and NAPC (DBM-DILG-DSWD-NAPC Joint Memorandum Circular No. 7, 2015).

In the first two years of the program, funding for the implementation of projects under the BUB was provided through annual budget appropriations of more than a dozen of the participating sector National Government Agencies (NGAs). In an effort to accelerate the implementation of BUB sub-projects, the BUB Executive Committee decided to pilot in the FY2015 a direct budget transfer from the DBM Central Office to the LGUs. DBM allocated over PhP2.8 billion to the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) in the 2015 General Appropriations Act, primarily to finance local roads sub-projects that were identified in the approved 2015 LPRATs. The allocation to the LGSF for the BUB program accounted for 13.5 percent of the total program funding in 2015, with the remaining money for the program maintained through the appropriation of funds to the annual budgets of participating sector NGAs (World Bank, 2016).

The BUB was an opportunity in Cagayan de Oro for CSOs to work with the local bureaucracy in thematic areas towards social good and inclusive development. It continues to be one of the strongest instruments for social accountability, which is one of the building blocks for governance. Policy-oriented or policy-aligned programs were pursued as these are responsive to the needs of the locality (ANSA-EAP et al., 2013).

Table 1. BUB Projects Status of Implementation

Year	Projects Not Started	Ongoing Projects	Completed Projects	Total Number of Projects	Total Budget per Year (In Philippine Peso)
2014	0	7	10	17	62.02M
2015	7	10	2	19	49.96M
2016	25	0	0	25	70M

Source: LPRAP-BUB Approved Project Lists (2014-2016) as of March 2016

The BUB process has ignited the participation of civil society organizations in local governance and development in Cagayan de Oro City. Figure 1 shows an increasing attendance during CSO Assemblies from 2013 to 2015. Women representation in the LPRAT also exceeded the 40% representation requirement since 2013. This goes in line The Magna Carta of Women, which was signed into law in 2009 with support from the United Nations. It is a historic step forward in upholding women's rights, promoting gender equality and ensuring the elimination of discrimination against women. The law grants women, especially those in the marginalized sectors, the full enjoyment of their rights (UNDP, 2010). This measure also ensures parity between the LGU and CSO representatives, in terms of women representation.

Table 2. CSO Participation in Cagayan de Oro City

Year	Total Participants in CSO Assembly	Number of LPRAT Members in CSO Assembly	Number of Women in LPRAT	Percentage of Women Representation in LPRAT
2013	87	17	8	47.06%
2014	102	19	9	47.37%
2015	107	19	9	47.37%

3.1.1. Preparations and Input to Planning

There are two main components of the BUB process as specified in the JMC No. 7-2015, the CSO Assembly and LPRAP Workshop. Prior to two components, the role of the DILG-BUB Community Mobilizers (CMs) is crucial. CMs are DILG personnel who are responsible for facilitating CSO participation in the BUB program, particularly to conduct the CSO Assembly. In CdeO, mobilization of CSOs was at ease. With the existence of the Cagayan de Oro Peoples Council (influenced by the Naga City experience), reaching out to CSOs was not a problem considering that the CdeO Peoples Council already has an available CSO directory. Fellow CSOs also helped in information dissemination through text messaging, email blast, and personal communication. At the height of the mobilization phase, groups were federated – transport, women, youth, and other sectors, among others.

Lack of budget for mobilization and limited information were found as the main challenges during this phase. Other impediments included the lack of access to knowledge resources and resistance to participate due to their political affiliation. However, the CSOs have learned and experienced that for the first time in their respective local engagements, the local government and the DILG had called for them to join the BUB process. Their engagement perspectives had changed from a top-down setup to a collaborative, bottom-up,

and constructive kind of local engagement – having an avenue wherein they can propose their projects and budget may have triggered this change. CSOs experienced a sense of convergence, unlike before when they only drew together whenever there were rallies.

It was recommended that during this phase there should be CSO Mobilization at the barangay level. Since the BUB process is targeting the grassroots level, mobilization should start from the smallest unit of government. It would also be advantageous and cost-effective in the long run since the end-beneficiaries of projects are located thereat. The mobilization would inform the CSOs and the beneficiaries with just one blast of information dissemination. Furthermore, mobilization should not be limited only during this phase. Instead, CSO mobilization should engage with every existing CSO within the locality to encourage more CSOs to participate in the BUB process. Credible accreditation should also be initiated by the DILG and LGU to facilitate future CSO engagements and build integrity.

3.1.2. CSO Assembly and LPRAT Election

The CSO Assembly is a meeting of all CSOs in a city or municipality held at least once a year, during which CSO representatives to the LPRAT would be elected (Philippine Information Agency, 2016). During the election years, CSO representatives to the Local Development Council (LDC) and other Local Special Bodies (LSBs) shall also be elected during this assembly (JMC DBM-DILG-DSWD-NAPC No. 7, 2015). It shall be facilitated by the DILG Community Mobilizer and may be supported by the NAPC Provincial Focal Person and DSWD Personnel.

In the earlier time of the BUB, the invitation to the CSO Assembly was on a short notice prior to the event itself. There were complaints from the CSO respondents that the notice was too short and only gave them a little time to consult with their respective members. Other reasons included conflict with other meetings, lack of money for transport or unavailability of transport vehicle especially for those coming from the hinterland areas, incompatibility of the work schedule of their representatives, differences in political affiliation; late receipt of communication, lack of interest, lack of confidence to speak, and the distance of the assembly venue from their respective offices. During the CSO Assembly, the participants of CdeO underwent an orientation on the BUB Program, the role of the CSOs in the LDCs and LSBs – activities specified in the JMCs. In CdeO they added points on “What is Poverty” and “Poverty Alleviation”, which were added to inculcate among the CSOs a deeper sense of appreciation of what they will be addressing when elected as CSO Representatives to the LPRAT.

CSOs were also pleased that the assembly was “politician-free.” As experienced by most CSOs before, the events they attended were also attended by politicians. According to the respondents, the presence of these personalities may influence the outcome of the CSO Assembly. Genuine representation in participatory governance is sought during these assemblies, such that political interference in the selection of the CSO representatives may devalue the BUB process in its entirety. CdeO’s CSOs appreciated a politician-free arena wherein they can choose their sectoral representatives with confidence.

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 may have attended the latter. Thus, the slots, seats, and meals provided in the assembly only reciprocated to the number of invitees. CSO attendees were also difficult to validate. During the CSO Assembly, though

having limited slots, the organizers did not limit the assembly to those who were invited only. The event was also open to walk-in participants. This feature added to the difficulty of authenticating the walk-in representatives and the sector or organization to which they belong. Considering this phase of the BUB has no strict screening feature during the conduct of the assembly, it would pose a threat to the sectoral representation in the BUB program. It was seen that such flaw emanated from the limited preparation for the CSO Assembly.

CSOs see women participation during the assembly and election as potent to serve as a bigger voice in governance. In the LPRAT, the recent JMC No. 7 of the BUB required 40% women composition. CdeO reached the requirement; from 2013 to 2015, the women composition even exceeded the obligatory 40%. A woman in the person of Ms. Queritess Queja is leading the LPRAT as co-chair for three (3) terms now. With a governance system that has become more inclusive, democratic, and nondiscriminatory, the impact of women on policymaking has increased. This may push women to succeed as politicians, gaining voice through leadership and participation (UNDP, 2010).

Moreover, the CSO local network is now being valued. CSOs that have no financial capacity to fund their projects are experiencing a significant involvement in the community. The CSOs gained a part in a setting in which information is easily shared within their flock. Sharing of expertise and services also reached those CSOs who were deeply in need of such, in partnerships with the private sector.

3.1.3. BUB LPRAP Formulation and Workshop

After the conduct of the CSO Assembly and LPRAT Election, the local chief executive issued an order to reconstitute the LPRAT. The order identified the composition of the LPRAT and their functions, and budget allocation and indicated the CSO representatives, the Co-chair, and CSO signatories of the LPRAP who were elected during the CSO Assembly.

In CdeO, the LPRAT, in attendance of the LGU and CSO representatives, have met halfway in setting their identified priority projects. There was a high consideration of “common priorities” among the parties.

The CSOs also experienced a non-patronage approach of persons-in-power. Patronage can be a sensitive subject to understand as it works in diverse ways, and in many cases, it is against the law. Years of patronage politics and mendicancy obligated LCEs to travel all the way to Manila to solicit for funds, while the CSOs are at the mercy of the local government to have their projects funded. This unfortunate series may come to an end with innovations in the budgeting process with the implementation of BUB. The CSOs of CdeO claimed that they worry less of such dynamics, including political patronage and nepotism. They can now directly propose projects to the LGU and have funds for its implementation without politicians’ interference or traditional politicking.

With the participation of the vulnerable sectors (PWD, victims of disasters, senior citizens, etc.), the workshops were seen as “streaming the voices of the marginalized.” As indicated by ADD International (n.d.), “the consensus on the need to focus more directly on inequalities in order to achieve sustainable development which benefits all stems from the broad recognition that the poorest and most marginalized have not benefitted equitably from development efforts within the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework.” It entails highlighting the importance of bringing the “lived experience” into the analysis and policymaking process.

However, the CSOs were unprepared; there was no prior consultation with the vulnerable communities and pre-identified beneficiaries. No data were prepared to serve as reference and as factors for consideration during the workshop. The instructions, guidelines, and requirements were all presented on the day of the workshop which caused an information overload as the varied, detailed, and wordy materials were difficult to absorb. According to this study's respondents, some participants were only representing their group, not the shared interests of the civil society. Prevalence of conflict of interests may also prevent an impartial and unbiased workshop output.

The CSOs have learned that an openhanded attitude in ranking or considering priority projects may enrich the relationship among CSOs and various sectors. CSOs find this significant in formulating cross-sectoral projects that may conform to the needs of communities in an integrated sense. Grassroots consultation is deemed essential in defining the quality of the outputs during the LPRAP workshop. Subsequently, there is a need to incline to more suitable and stress-free means of steering the activity. Retooling has been sought to improve this part.

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 element led the CSOs to make the initiative of consulting the communities or proposed beneficiaries. Preparatory activities should also be conducted so that the CSOs will not be overwhelmed by the loads of information during the LPRAP formulation workshop. In its conduct, the guidelines should be simplified to level-off with the CSOs, especially to the ranks of farmers and other marginalized sectors.

3.1.4. LPRAP Submission, Signing, and Tracking

After the LPRAP workshop, the list of priority poverty reduction projects, duly endorsed by the LPRAT, would then be submitted to the Regional Poverty Reduction Action Team (RPRAT) through the DILG Regional Office. Included in the submission is a cover letter signed by the local chief executive and a project brief per prioritized project. In addition to the LPRAP submission, the CMs and C/MLGOOs are required to pass prescribed forms to the DILG Provincial Office as proof of compliance with the BUB participatory process.

DILG will consolidate the submitted LPRAPs, and the DILG Regional Director or the Assistant Director will call the RPRAT Technical Working Committee (TWG) to review and validate the proposed projects. When a project is not accepted by the RPRAT, the latter will inform the concerned LPRAT representatives and the CSO LPRAT signatories. Most projects that were returned to the LPRAT were "Out of the Menu" projects. Such projects were advised to be aligned with the national budget priority areas – Basic Education, Public Health, Social Protection, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, and Job Generation and Livelihood. To facilitate out-of-the-menu projects, the RPRAT is tasked to form an inter-agency committee which will then create criteria for approving the said projects.

A particular BUB project was demanded clarification in terms of its details and budget by the Sanggunian Committee Chair on Appropriation, an ally of the mayor's political rival during the 2013 local elections. During the summoned meeting, with due consideration of political dynamics of the LCE and the Sanggunian, the CSOs did the lobbying on behalf of the local chief executive. The CSOs presented the projects during that meeting and explained to the Committee Chair that the projects are under the BUB program. The BUB process and the projects were then explained thoroughly by the CSOs for clarification as the Committee Chair

has not attended the series of LPRAT meetings. The Sanggunian Member who is the chairperson of the Committee on Appropriation is one of the members of the LPRAT as stated in the JMC.

Although there may be a limitation in the support of the Sanggunian, the CSOs of CdeO have the support of their LCE. As specified by Ms. Queritess Queja, LPRAT Co-chair of the City, the support of Mayor Moreno was “engaging and inspiring.” Moreno was present during LPRAT meetings only when it is necessary. His presence was considered a key in the harmonious conduct of a politically-diverse convergence, such as the LPRAT. It was further shared that the city mayor has been facilitative in terms of providing the venue and technical support to the CSOs.

In following-up the offices, CSO proponents are most likely to check more often if their projects are right on track and are relayed to the RPRAT. If there is something to revise in the documents, the LPRAT should act and inform the CSOs the soonest possible. Reliance on non-personal means of acquiring information about the project and its progress may cause delay and misunderstanding. The CSOs also observed that the local bureaucracy has other tasks to handle aside from the BUB. They have to engage with offices or persons who have varied degrees of responsibilities, which may lead to undermining other assignments such as BUB projects.

However, in this phase, the CSOs served the bridging role in the locality. For instance, if there are differing political dynamics (LGU-LGU; LGU-CSO), they serve as catalysts for dialogue or consolidation. They chose to be at the middle ground when political dynamics are in motion. Before, CSOs said to be not minding each other’s business. Now, they are working as one to serve in their communities. On an organizational note, CSOs differ in obligations, visions, and missions, yet when the BUB process started, they have established a collective commitment among themselves. The only competitions they have seen in the BUB are in the LPRAT elections and in project prioritization. When something is decided by the body, they mostly support each other. There has been a commonality, a deeper appreciation of the local governance process and dynamics that promulgate the executive, legislative, and bureaucratic bodies. They have also learned to work closely and constructively to achieve a common goal towards transparency and participatory governance.

The CSOs recommended that there should be continuing LGU-CSO dialogues to level-off the priorities of the locality and interests of the CSOs. Dialogues should encompass the timeline of the BUB process as to regularly update on issues and concerns to be targeted in the next regular cycle. These dialogues would serve as venues for the LGU and CSOs to share on their poverty-reduction plans and other related strategies.

3.1.5. Priority Projects Implementation

As provided by JMC 7, LGU may submit a revised detail, design, specifications, and location as proposed in their LPRAP and project briefs, under the following conditions: (1) The LPRAT submitted a letter signed by the LCE and the 3 CSO signatories to the implementing agency requesting for the revision of the detail, design, specifications, and location of the project; (2) The implementing agency has determined that there is a necessity for the revision of such details, design, and specifications for the project to be implemented within the fiscal year. LPRAT must communicate in writing the approval of such revision.

On the CSO level, the LPRAT of Cagayan de Oro devised a strategy to facilitate the projects. They have initiated a “Project Clustering” wherein projects that will fall to a cluster will then be treated accordingly by CSOs tasked to facilitate the process. The Project Clustering strategy is as follows:

1. After the identification and prioritization of the BUB projects, the projects will be categorized into four clusters: (1) Economic, (2) Social, (3) Infrastructure, and (4) Environment;
2. The LPRAT will then call for volunteers, from the same body, to be sent to focus on one or multiple clusters (expertise and/or interest may be considered in the cluster assignment); and
3. The members will then be oriented on how to deal with the projects inside the cluster. Each will act as a body that will track the implementation and other concerns of the project/s within it.

It was understood that with or without the said strategy, the CSOs experienced that the implemented projects have an immediate impact on poverty alleviation within the community. As indicated by the Economic and Research Development Policy Brief Series of Asian Development Bank, almost 70% of infrastructure investment in developing countries is financed by governments or public utilities from their resources or from non-concessional borrowings, 3% from aid, and the balance from the private sector (DFID, 2002).

In 2015, Region 10’s approved projects of the BUB amounted to PhP1.33 billion, some of which are now at the implementation stage, while a few were delayed due to incomplete required documents. The BUB projects have delivered social services. While an immediate impact may not be rotating around the project, BUB directly affects participation among the CSOs to be responsive in their respective communities.

Additionally, some projects were delayed given the usual circumstances – bureaucratic processes and the like. CSOs experienced running in the loop of waiting and preparing for their projects. Previous projects, prepared beforehand, were still being expected to be realized until now. CSOs refer to this phase as agonizing on their part. Some CSOs longed for immediate results but had their expectations spoiled in the process.

The end-beneficiaries’ sense of project ownership was not achieved because there was no prior consultation on the grassroots level. In which case, the beneficiaries tend not to value the project delivered to them. Other CSOs had difficulties on following the procurement process, which requires prime technical understanding. Disappointments of the CSOs were marked by the delayed implementation of the projects –delays brought about by political dynamics in the case of CdeO and the bureaucratic flow of the BUB process itself, from the central power to the local level.

On the contrary, the CSOs claimed that their negotiations skills improved while facing the above difficulties and challenges. Improvements on the participation of CSOs were also observed. The public value of the CSOs also improved, regardless of the sense of ownership to the projects among the beneficiaries.

The CSOs suggested an amendment of the law on procurement so they can participate and comment, instead of simply observer. They also called for a role during the implementation phase – the process was not parallel with their enthusiasm, a CdeO CSO shared. Furthermore, BUB project promotion should not be in the usual “LGU format” to be distinguished apart from the (non-BUB) projects of the city.

3.1.6. *Monitoring and Evaluation*

The monitoring phase is as detailed in the 7th JMC: The LCE assigns a BUB Focal Person from among the LGU personnel. Yet, the C/MLGOO cannot serve as the BUB Focal Person. The LPRAT will then meet quarterly to discuss the progress of BUB projects and is presided by the chair (LCE) or by his representative. In case an LCE has not designated a representative, the CSO vice-chair shall preside the meeting.

The LGU-BUB Focal Person, C/MPDC, and C/MLGOO are mandated to provide Secretariat support to the LPRAT. They may be assisted by volunteer CSO leaders and staff designated by the CSO members of the LPRAT. Moreover, the LGU shall provide resources necessary for the functions of the project monitoring committee. The reviews of the LPRATs of their BUB projects will be presented in the OpenBuB portal, www.openbub.gov.ph.

CSOs shared that their experiences during this stage were on initiating the evaluation of the projects with minimal support from the LGU and/or implementing agencies. CSOs claimed that if one does not volunteer, then it may be contributory to future delays or stagnation of their engagement in the process. One CSO appealed that it takes a sacrifice to push the development forward in the locality. One has to reach to his own pockets or spend for one's own food when monitoring the projects. One respondent noted that the BUB process should not be spoon-feeding the community, but rather as a program for the people and by the people.

There may be instances that the CSOs depend on the LGU to monitor efforts like hitching a ride with them when they have a monitoring appointment to attend. But prior to LGU dependency, it requires an earlier attempt to know the schedule of the monitoring. Volunteerism and doing more than what has been stated in the JMC and guidelines should be sustained.

The process was empowering as the plurality of CSOs declared. Though there were grey areas which need to be clarified, CSOs also see them as windows of improvement. Some issues and concerns include:

1. Result of Monitoring – It was not clear as to where and how are the results will be used;
2. Cost of Monitoring – How much should the LGU or the CSOs spend in support of initiatives in this phase?
3. Technical Expertise – During the monitoring, what tools and strategies should be employed to find the right variables and indicators to be monitored?

The great challenge of the BUB was how to translate the process to be transparent as how it was designed. Being truthful is a non-negotiable matter among the CSOs and throughout their engagements in the locality. To safeguard the transparent and truthful sense of the process, CSOs have learned to be vigilant (Coronel, 2012) not only in the planning phase but in all stages of the BUB process.

The CSOs highly recommended that a technical capacitation for effective monitoring should be conducted, alongside with preparatory activities and evaluation guidelines. Public education is also necessary to inform them of what the BUB process is all about and what projects are being monitored in the communities. In due course, local experts from academic institutions aid in the monitoring and evaluation as well as to cushion any imminent failure the effort might meet.

3.2. Outcome and Impacts of BUB Projects

The participation of the CSOs in BUB/GPBP-funded projects has helped the LGU develop a more progressive perspective. There is a formal recognition on the part of the LGU of CdeO of the contribution of CSOs. In CdeO, consultations and dialogues are in place where CSOs can raise their ideas.

3.2.1. Successes and gains delivered to the people

In the LPRAP BUB Accomplishment Report (March 2016) submitted by the secretariat of CPRAT, the following outputs of projects were enumerated:

Table 3. LPRAP BUB Accomplishment Report (March 2016)

Name of Project	Implementing Agency	Total Project Cost	Cdeo LGU Counterpart	Outputs
<i>Bigasan sa Barangay</i>	DOLE	3,200,000.00	960,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of recipients of sacks of rice were 66 barangays or 72 groups Rice distributed to 12 hinterland barangays on December 8, 2014, at Barangay Lumbia. Rice distributed to 60 groups from urban barangays of CdeO on December 9, 2014. Over 144 participants were trained on Simple Bookkeeping on December 2-5, 2014.
Indigenous People and Cultural Community Dressmaking and Tailoring Project	DOLE	6,640,000.00	1,092,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project beneficiaries: Two tribal communities in barangays Cugman and Pagalungan Each group received a sewing machine, overlock and bar tacker, embroidery machine, cutters, stitching materials, and eyelet button hollers.
Cash for Work Program for Youth and Students	DSWD	1,000,000.00	300,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Around 430 youth and students were given educational assistance because of this project.
Social Pension for Senior Citizens	DSWD	144,040.00	36,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project was able to serve 24 indigent senior citizens.
Sustainable Livelihood for PWDs	DSWD	4,200,000.00	1,260,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 PWD associations in CdeO for their share of the budget to fund their various livelihood programs, such as sari-sari store on wheels.

IP and Cultural Community Water System	DSWD	4,000,000.00	1,200,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The water systems of barangays Pagalungan and Malasag were officially set up.
IP and Cultural Community Water System	DSWD	13,400,000.00	940,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2km road from Barangay Pagalungan to Taglimao was concretized through this project.
Mobile School for Street Children by The Alternative Learning System	DepEd	870,000.00	261,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10% increased participation rate of learners in Basic Education (City Street Kids)
<i>Gulayan sa Paaralan</i> (Vegetable Gardening in Schools)	DepEd	420,000.00	126,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The feeding and 24 vegetable gardening projects benefited 29 public elementary schools and 12 secondary schools in CdeO.
Renovation of Classrooms and Water Sanitation	DepEd	900,000.00	270,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classrooms were renovated in seven elementary schools and three high schools. Water sanitation facilities were installed in 29 elementary schools and 21 secondary schools.
School Renovations	DepEd	7,000,000.00	2,100,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 public elementary schools and 5 high schools were renovated.
FMR (Lumbia to Crossing Pagalungan to Barangay Tagpangi)	DA	7,623,000.00	762,300.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.21 km road concreting at Lumbia to Crossing Pagalungan to Barangay Tagpangi
Food terminal of Urban Poor Communities		1,200,000.00	360,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food terminal established at the final site location in Barangay Bonbon
Expansion of Level III Water Supply System For CDORSHP1 – Phase 3, Calaanan, Canitoan	DILG	7,000,000.00	2,100,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct supply household connections installed to residents of CDORSHP1-Phase 3, Calaanan, Canitoan
Mangrove Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Project in CdeO	DENR	1,858,818.00	428,958.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mangrove reforestation (10has): at Bonbon (6has), Bulua (3has), and Cugman (1ha). Watershed rehabilitation – 95 has of falcata at Barangay Mambuaya, and 65 has bamboo at Barangay Bayanga

Food Packaging and Labelling Facilities	DTI	6,825,000.00	2,047,500.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procured labeling facilities and equipment • Conducted training sessions on innovative food packaging and labeling
Community Health Team Mobilization	DOH	1,947,000.00	584,100.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 families per navigator (920 Health Navigators)

Source: LPRAP BUB Accomplishment Report (March 2016)

3.2.2. *Created a supply of and demand for good governance and fostered in the community a sense of shared responsibility for a shared resource*

BUB acted on both the supply side of governance, which is the responsiveness of the LGUs and implementing agencies to act on the projects and the demand side, which refers to the efforts of the CSOs and communities to address their local needs. Both supply and demand nurture good governance.

LGU-CdeO developed smooth working collaboration among its offices from organizing, (APO, for agri-base), to training (Community Improvement Office, CID) to sustainable support (CSWD), and become real enabling agents for development to these beneficiaries. Attendance of sectoral representations to barangay meetings increased, and new directions were then carried to the city level for budgetary support through constant communications with the executive branch. Wednesday meetings are being done to provide open space for discussions.

NGAs like Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and Department of Agriculture (DA) are now actively present in the program implementation cycle, thus, opening more windows of opportunities for our local entrepreneurs.

3.2.3. *Increased awareness and interest of citizens to demand good governance through the delivery of quality projects and policies*

The creation of the *CdeO Peoples Council* through Executive Order 97-2015 was the way to handle the political bottleneck between the City's executive branch, the administration led by Mayor Oscar S. Moreno, and the legislative body, the City Council members (2013-2016, 2016-2019) who were loyal to former Mayor Vicente Emano. This *CdeO Peoples Council* brought the voice of the populace to the City's political arena. People's participation became more pronounced and concrete. Besides the membership of CSOs to LSBs as mandated by the law, they have undergone capacity-building training programs in partnership with educational institutions of the city to hone their knowledge on local governance and improve the quality of their engagement with the LGU.

In terms of policies created, this interplay of CSOs and LGU has led into three (3) landmark executive orders, namely: the creation of the CdeO Youth Council, CdeO Cooperative Development Council, and the CdeO Disability Council. The Transport Council has also served in the deputization of the local Road and Traffic Authority (RTA), thus making effective changes in the city's traffic management. The *Peoples Development Agenda* were integrated into the Annual Investment Plan (AIP) of 2016.

These LGU-CSOs engagements have resulted in increased number of micro and medium-sized enterprises in the city, augmentation in capitalization, and the creation of cooperatives.

The City Treasurer's Office created a special desk to serve the informal vendors of the city, which aims to address their concern and ensure the protection of their rights.

In post-disaster management, academe and church-based CSOs were instrumental in pacifying the rivalry and scruples of political factions in the city and encouraged them to work together to rebuild the lives of TS Sendong survivors. Xavier Ecoville, the Xavier University-led resettlement area in Barangay Lumbia, stands as a living testament to the intermediation and collaboration that transpired among various CSOs, local and international NGOs, corporate partners, student bodies, and volunteers.

CPRAT identified nine (9) priority barangays that have become model barangays actively involved in the project implementation especially in the procurement aspect. The project identification and prioritization are uniquely CSO-led with no interference by the local chief executive. DOLE downloaded the program funds directly to the barangays. LGU Barangays' overall procurement process and administration improved. The revenue-generating capacity of the barangays increased through the collection of community taxes mostly coming from their livelihood projects. The barangay councils also entered into MOUs with the entrepreneurs providing spaces and other available facilities for the establishment of locally-led economic enterprises.

3.2.4. Strengthened ties between the CSO and the implementing agencies

Even if there were cases when access to information from LGUs became arduous, this served to strengthen the resolve and commitment of CSOs to engage and support the LGUs in the advocacy for good governance. Both CSOs and LGUs were able to gain institutional experience, new technologies, and track record by participating in the BUB process. For the CSOs, the experience has enabled them to foster credibility and integrity with LGU/NGAs, more so with the community they have empowered.

3.2.5. Official documents in support of the partnership

Documents like the Memorandum of Understanding proved substantial in formalizing and grounding the engagement with the LGUs. There were many instances when the CSOs found it difficult to coax the LGU personnel to produce the data being requested without a document showing the consent of the LCEs. Getting things in writing is of paramount importance. A memorandum of understanding shows good will on the part of both parties and helps them keep track of their agreements and responsibilities.

3.2.6. Strengthened poverty alleviation measures through partnerships

An active supporter and partner of the CSOs and the LGU, Xavier University facilitated numerous discussions and forums among CSOs, private groups, and public officers in what they need through sectoral dialogues. Xavier Ateneo's Research and Social Outreach (RSO) cluster facilitated the formation of the *Cagayan de Oro Peoples Council*. The organization was done through a Multi-Sectoral Workshop on CdeO Peoples Development Agenda in September 2014. The creation of the said Council was an initiative of the project funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB) called "Providing Social Accountability Interventions to Foster Constructive Engagement of Stakeholders in Local Government Affairs of Cagayan de Oro."

The *CdeO Peoples Agenda* were aimed at addressing the gaps, both in the development efforts and participation in governance through low-lying fruits like the BUB and the

Moreno administration's reconstitution of local special bodies and sought direct affirmative action. One concrete manifestation of this collective power was when the CdeO Peoples Council filed Writ of Kalikasan in the aftermath of Sendong.

Expanded membership to local boards through Executive Orders provided delegated powers to CSOs to drive the projects they proposed to be implemented. The bureaucracy merely acted as a strong support and monitored these activities to be technically within the legal bounds. CSOs are now empowered to engage with the department heads and submitted project proposals for inclusion on its operational budget. They remain as an independent group from the different branches of the government bringing with them the *CdeO Peoples Agenda*, acting as catalysts for change and development.

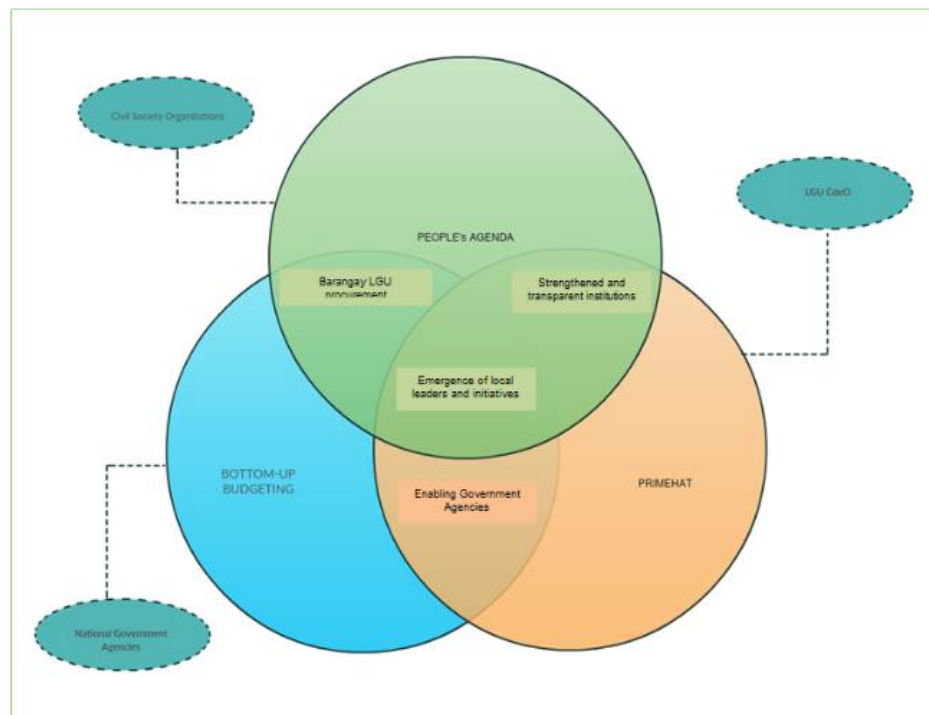


Fig 2. Cagayan de Oro's formula of poverty alleviation maximizing all resources through the mechanism of BUB

Source: Local Government of Cagayan de Oro City (2014)

4. Conclusion

With inclusive participation as its primary factor, BUB works in a process where members of a civil society organization in a community initially identify the problems concerning their locality and address them by coming up with homegrown solutions. It differs from the usual top-down budgeting – the process which is ubiquitous in corrupt governance as proven by the system of funding in the past administrations before the BUB.

The Philippines' Participatory Budgeting initiative is now in its 4th year run since its launching in 2012. It has empowered CSOs to engage, directly or indirectly, in local governance and national government for people-centered and needs-responsive efforts. This initiative is ultimately appropriate, not only it provides an additional avenue for CSOs to engage in local projects and activities but also it can open opportunities towards a more transparent and accountable local governance (Ragonjan, 2010). The additional funds the

program provided, which ordinary people may plan for its use, could lead to the improvement of the relationship between the CSO and LGU. The length of time this process provides for engagement exposure and imminently contributes to intensifying CSO engagement and political efficacy.

In CdeO, apart from the *Peoples Council* initiative serving as an umbrella organization for CSOs, the City Mayor has put up a “Civil Society Affairs Office” to facilitate, address, and cater to CSO issues and concerns. In a more inclusive local setting, CSO involvement in the political affairs of the community opens a better relationship with the LGU. Poverty mitigation programs and projects are the integral parts of the BUB program, but the 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 communities. Its lasting impact is indicated by how conscious and participative the people are regarding how public resources are used, and how CSOs treat their participation in local processes (Soliman, 2014).

The Annual Investment Plan (AIP), which came to life with the integration of the *CdeO Peoples Agenda*, is reflective of the sectoral needs that came from the grassroots level, which other LGUs in the country can easily replicate. In spite of having significant improvements in CSO participation, inclusivity in local planning, and responsive budgeting, there are still issues in need of consideration and action by the local and national counterparts of the BUB Program and the CSOs themselves before proceeding to the full institutionalization of this process. Not only is inclusive participation one of BUB’s major advantages, it also allows people to value their right to empowerment through their ideas and efforts, thereby uplifting their roles from being governed to symbolically governing their communities and not for their personal interests, but for the common good.

4.1. Recommendations

Using the mechanisms of BUB, the execution of the programs, projects, and activities propelled by the CdeO Peoples Agenda can be a real vehicle for grassroots development. Proper sectoral representation provides relevant targets of the program that serves as the guiding framework. Moreover, focused development objectives of the LGU provide financial, legal, and structural support to achieve these goals. Furthermore, available NGAs funding and technical inputs open more doors of market opportunities for CSOs to flourish and to become strong drivers of the economic development of our city, if not the country (UNDP, 2003).

For sustainability, all CSOs in the City must be federated; assigning a physical office for the CSOs at the city hall compound and building on the legislation to legalize participation within the bureaucracy. The interplay of the CSOs, LGU, NGAs, and other institutions in CdeO continues to be relevant as it has been anchored on strong community participation, participatory governance, and genuine love for the city.

As a rule, civil society organizations could cater to their beneficiaries in the long term if the system of funding that is reliant to the BUB process will not be hindered by conflict in politics. While the passion to serve, lead, and mark a legacy in a community is available among CSO leaders and members, these would only be compromised when politics that would prove to be detrimental in the democratic system will be given more credit than the effective solutions. It must be noted, however, that though democracy works when power is

bestowed upon the people, politicizing the government may be unavoidable even to the point when the nation is put at risk.

Thus, more cities could learn from the experience of CdeO. Cagayan de Oro City serves as an inspiring prototype by which other LGUs can efficiently and successfully manage the active participation of the civil society groups toward a transparent government and an adaptable community. Good intentions such as engagement, transparency, and commitment can only pave the way to sustainable development; there ought to be a common drive among the agents of change, one that impels them to keep their community's best interests at heart. Institutionalizing civil society participation ensures that positive change does not remain an abstraction in this era of metamorphosis.

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