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Bottom-up Budgeting FY 2015 Assessment: Camarines Sur

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Bottom-up Budgeting FY 2015 Assessment: Camarines Sur

Joyce Anne Maramot; Donald Yasay; Reinier de Guzman

Abstract:

Bottom-up Budgeting (BUB) is an adaptation of the participatory budgeting model in identifying and providing solutions to poverty at the municipal/city level. Leaders of civil society organizations engage with LGU officials in formulating a poverty alleviation plan to be considered in preparing the budget of national agencies the following fiscal year. This paper reports how the guideline was implemented in three municipalities in Camarines Sur. The study then presents suggestions and recommendations to improve future project planning and monitoring.

Keywords: Camarines Sur, Participatory Budgeting, Local Governance, Budget Reform, Poverty alleviation

1. Introduction

Bottom-up Budgeting or BUB (also called Grassroots Participatory Budgeting) is a budgetary reform introduced during the PNoy Aquino administration in 2012. The process entails creation of a local poverty reduction action team (LPRAT) composed of local government officials and civil society leaders in cities and municipalities that will plan and prioritize programs, projects and activities to be considered in preparing the budget of national agencies the following fiscal year.

This paper examines the participatory budgeting process conducted in three municipalities of the province of Camarines Sur; Libmanan, Lagonoy, and Goa. This section covers the objectives, methodology and some limitations in this study, while the next section briefly discusses the profile and development needs of the province and of the selected study sites. It will then be followed by an assessment of the BUB FY2015 implementation for the three municipalities and some recommendations.

1.1. Objective of the Study

Since the inception of BUB, the Government has commissioned two rounds of process evaluations — one for FY2013 round and the other for FY2014 round. Key findings were that the BUB process was implemented very differently in the sample sites, and that the variations in the implementation were primarily rooted in the locality's appreciation of participatory data-based planning processes and the involvement of CSOs in local governance. The Government had undertaken another process evaluation for the FY2015 round to examine how the LPRAP planning process is being implemented on the ground and what could be the possible areas for improvement for subsequent rounds. Additionally, data on the FY2013 round's sub-project implementation was captured to the extent possible to identify any bottlenecks in the implementation process.

Four provinces were selected to represent various levels of economic development and CSO engagement with the government. Two of these provinces, Agusan del Norte and Camarines Sur, were also covered by the study conducted during the FY2014 round. The continued observation aimed to capture improvements in quality and efficiency of the BUB process. Libmanan, the only municipality of Camarines Sur that is unique to this study, was selected among LGUs implementing the KALAHI-CIDSS program to capture the implementation of the enhanced BUB process.

The specific objectives of this rapid assessment are:

- To examine how the BUB (BUB) planning process and prioritization of projects are being implemented on the ground.
 - o Extent of participation
 - o LGU-CSO engagement
 - o Integration of BUB process in local planning process
 - o To identify bottlenecks in the implementation of the sub-projects identified during FY 2013 BUB process
- To provide some insights on areas for further improvement for the subsequent rounds.

1.2. Methodology

The methods of research for the BUB assessment include:

- o Observation of LPRAP Workshop
- o Key informant interviews (KIIs)
- o Focus group discussions (FGDs)
- o Informal interviews and participant observation

Below are the classifications and modality of BUB in the sample municipalities of Camarines Sur:

Table 1. Sample Municipalities for BUB 2015 Assessment			
Municipality	Classification	Number of Barangays	Mode of Grassroots Budgeting
Libmanan	Rural	75	Enhanced BUB
Goa	Urban	34	Regular BUB
Lagonoy	Rural	38	Regular BUB

While the selection of Goa and Lagonoy was predetermined, Libmanan was chosen among municipalities implementing the enhanced mode of BUB to give the study team the chance to observe their LPRAP workshop, which was conducted a few days after the LPRAT orientation in Naga City.

The selection of CSO participants for KIIs and FGDs were based on:

- lists of accredited NGOs and POs,

- attendance sheets of the CSO Assemblies,
- list of LPRAT members,
- information provided by the other key informants, and
- recommendation of LGOOs

Coordination with LGU participants was done through the help of LGOOs and other LGU personnel. Two weeks before the fieldwork started, the team sent the schedule of KIIs and FGDs to the LGOOs of the three municipalities. Key informants from the LGU side were informed beforehand while most of the key informants from CSOs were contacted by the team on the week of visit to the LGU, since most of the lists needed for the selection of the participants were provided on the first day of visit. The Local Facilitators (LFs), KALAHI-CIDSS Area Coordinator, NAPC BUB Provincial Focal Person, and the DILG BUB Regional Focal Person were contacted directly by the research team.

1.3. Limitation of the Study

Observation of actual process started during the LPRAT orientation. This limited the possibility of the researchers validating the statements of the respondents regarding prior steps against actual observations. Some respondents were purposively selected to capture certain recurring issues during the course of the study. The statuses of BUB projects collected by the team were up-to-date as of the date of fieldwork. Any updates after the fieldwork may not be captured on this assessment. Lastly, other relevant issues such as LGU-CSO relations and inter-CSO relations could not be investigated further due to time constraints.

2. Camarines Sur: Profile and its Development Needs

Camarines Sur, the largest among six provinces in the Bicol Region with land area of 5,502 square kilometers, lies across the middle of the Bicol Peninsula at the southeastern portion of Luzon. It is bounded on the North by the Pacific Ocean, on the East by Maqueda Channel, on the South by the Province of Albay, and on the West by the Ragay Gulf. It is politically subdivided into five congressional districts, one chartered city (Naga City), one component city (Iriga City), 35 municipalities and 1,063 barangays. Naga City has long been cited as one of the early birthplaces of people participation in governance here in the Philippines. The city is also the province's financial, trade and educational center.

With a poverty incidence of 41.2%, Camarines Sur is one of the most impoverished provinces in the country. Although this figure is lower than previous estimates, it is still significantly higher than the national estimate of 25.2% in 2012 (NSCB 2013).

Table 2. Identified Urgent Needs by Key Informants			
	Libmanan (KC)	Goa (urban)	Lagonoy (rural)
Poor Road Networks (FMR & bgy access roads)	X	X	X
Lack of livelihood	X	X	X
Lack of potable water system	X	X	X
Lack of sanitary toilets	X	X	X
Lack of access to health services	X		X
Lack of access to education services	X		X

Source: KIs and FGDs

Table 2 summarizes urgent developmental needs as identified by residents in the areas under study. Lack of livelihood is consistent with the high poverty rate of the province. In addition, lack of sufficient infrastructure such as farm to market roads, especially on the least accessible areas in the province, aggravates the poverty. The absence of such infrastructure increases the transportation cost not only for residents, but most especially, the community's produce. According to respondents, products of other municipalities or barangays with better road systems are much preferred because they are cheaper and with better quality.

Goa is a *quasi*-urban area in Camarines Sur, serving as the center of commerce, education, and health services in the so called *Partido district*. Looking at the differences between the sampled municipalities, it could be gleaned that Goa's advantage against the other municipalities are the presence of health and education services. Note, however, that other seemingly basic services such as potable water system and sanitary toilets are not yet fully in place. Additional staffing, material supplies, and infrastructures were stated by respondents as lacking in the other enumerated needs.

3. Assessment of the BUB Process

For the FY2015 round of BUB, municipalities participating in or graduated from KALAHI-CIDSS (or KC) program observed a different guideline in implementing the BUB. Barangay-level community participation was intended to be integrated via existing channels of KC. Libmanan, under the 2nd cycle of KC as of the time of study, represents the implementation of the enhanced BUB process for this province.

1.1. Participatory Barangay Development Planning (Libmanan)

Barangay Development Planning for KALAHI-CIDSS started early 2013. The 2nd cycle began on March 18. For integration in the BUB, assemblies were held during November, prior to the CSO assembly. Estimates of household participation in the assemblies vary, the lowest being 50% and reaching up to almost a 100%. PSAs were reported to be conducted by a barangay

for a whole day, with oversight from KALAHI-CIDSS and LGU officers. The problems in the barangay were said to be identified primarily through observations of the residents. Prioritization was reportedly done through ranking by the participants in the assembly. As for the selection of BDC vice-chairs, it is not unusual that they were appointed by the barangay officials.

A point raised regarding this stage is on the manner of selection of representatives. There have been reported difficulties in engaging barangay residents for volunteer work. The dearth in volunteers is further aggravated by the comparison between involvement in KALAHI-CIDSS planning and implementation, where labor work is given remuneration. On one hand, Sitio representatives and BDC vice-chairs were expected to attend numerous meetings and assemblies to fulfill their function in sub-project identification. They were not paid for the time they had put in since they were volunteers. On the other hand, community residents tapped for the implementation of a sub-project, e.g., road construction, were paid for their labor. This resulted in barangay officials having to resort to appointing representatives. Often, this behavior is justified by the assumption that at the barangay level, residents are aware of each one's capacity.

Another point that affected the Participatory BDP for this planning cycle is the non-synchronization of barangay level planning with the barangay election held last October. Prior assemblies for the BDP were already held before barangay level election. The process was interrupted due to change in leadership, where newly elected officials have to be briefed about the process and level with outgoing officials.

Finally, DILG personnel of municipalities with a large number of barangays, such as Libmanan, had a hard time attending, all the more for facilitating, all BDPs. This is primarily due to the late release of the JMC. Though the LGOOs were already informed on the release of the said BUB guidelines a few months before its finalization, they only received the approval of implementation on the first week of November. However, it is also attributable to the tendency to conduct activities when the deadline is near. This presented a situation wherein BDPs were simultaneously held by various barangay.

1.2. CSO Assembly

CSO Assemblies were held on November 2013. There were no master list of all existing CSOs in the observed municipalities. Thus, invitation was limited to groups registered to their respective Sangguniang Bayan. The LGOOs stated that they also invited groups with pending accreditation and other recognized organizations in their municipalities. On the contrary, other key informants insisted that only accredited organizations were invited to and attended the assembly.

The CSO leaders were invited through formal letters addressed to them, with the LGOO as the letter signatory for all of their respective municipality. Most of the invitations were received two to three days before the assembly; hence, there was not enough time for CSO

representatives to consult with their members prior to the assembly. However, there were no indications from interviewed CSO representatives that a consultation would have taken place if the invitations were received earlier.

The difficulty faced by the LGOOs in convening the CSO Assembly may be attributed to the delayed issuance of the JMC. The LGOOs expressed that the short time period was not enough to ensure the engagement of all CSOs in their areas. The Local Facilitators who were expected to assist on the participation of all CSOs acknowledged that the short timeframe hampered their capacity to monitor the invitation of CSOs on the 37 LGUs of Camarines Sur.

Municipality	Date of CSO Assembly	Number of CSO Representatives Attended	Number of Organizations Attended
Libmanan	Nov. 21	35	32
Goa	Nov. 28	17	12
Lagonoy	Nov. 27	28	18

Attendance to the assemblies is summarized in table 3. Most attendees were accredited NGOs and POs, with most groups having a single representative. Some groups sent two or more representatives. Some participants viewed this as an undue advantage to the better represented group, given that quantity can affect the outcome of the prioritization process and election of LPRAT members.

Type of CSO	Libmanan	Goa	Lagonoy
NGOs	X	X	
Agriculture	X	X	
Fisheries		X	
PWD	X	X	
Senior Citizen		X	X
Youth	X		X
Women	X	X	X
Cooperative	X	X	X
Transport	X	X	X
Health workers	X		X

Daycare workers	X		X
Overseas workers			X
Other workers group (professionals, informal)	X		
Peace and Order			X
Environment	X		
Faith-based	X	X	X
Business			X

The groups represented in the CSO Assemblies in all three sample municipalities were cooperatives, transport, women's, and Faith-based. Cooperatives and transport groups (i.e., TODA) are usually formed for their commercial and legal personalities. Women's group, however, seems to be under the stigma of usually being dummies of political actors in supposedly non-political arenas. International NGOs with local operations, assisting in basic services provision, were not involved in the whole budgeting process. Note that it is in Goa, the supposedly urban municipality, where the basic sectors were well represented, and where workers were not represented. For Lagonoy, instead, no agriculture and fisheries group were in attendance, which were usually based on far flung barangays. The better represented segment was labor organizations engaged by the LGU (i.e., health and daycare workers). Although not among the most marginalized members of the community, they are valid trade associations recognized as CSOs. Thus, proximity and affinity with the municipal government seems to be an effective proxy to an organization's willingness to participate in LGU activities.

Table 5. Reasons for Absence in the CSO Assembly

Reasons	Libmanan	Goa	Lagonoy
Conflict with other meetings		X	
Logistical concerns(no money for transport esp. for upland areas)	X	X	X
Conflict in political affiliation			X
Need to earn income	X		X
No communication received	X	X	
Lack of interest in LGU matters/no purpose or direction of meeting	X		X

Table 5 shows some of the main reasons why CSO leaders were not able to attend the assembly. Transportation cost was the most cited hindrance to participation. Also, opportunity cost was mentioned, especially by representatives from agriculture and fisheries sectors.

Abstention could also be a decision made by the CSOs. Active non-participation was usually the recourse of CSOs distrustful of the current local administration or of the government as a whole. Groups with past negative experience in LGU transactions usually choose to do away with engaging with their respective LGUs. In effect, while the budgeting process encouraged the creation, or at least the accreditation, of local groups, it is yet to change the perspectives of CSOs with bad impressions of the government.

As for the conduct of the assembly proper, the prescribed guideline for the CSO assembly was reportedly adhered to in all of the sample municipalities. Still, some incidence of non-conformance were reported. These were the campaigning by a LGU employee for a certain CSO leader in Libmanan, and the replacement of an elected signatory in Lagonoy. A possible interpretation of these deviances would be institutional inertia; wherein local officials were used to having control, whether direct or indirect, of budgetary planning.

Below is the final list of prioritized projects formulated during the CSO Assembly.

Table 6. Prioritized Projects in the CSO Assembly		
Libmanan	Goa	Lagonoy
1. Sustainable livelihood projects	1. Organic hog raising (household based)	1. Public market
2. Capacity development/skills training	2. Goat raising project (household based for mountain barangays)	2. Capacity development
3. Potable drinking water	3. Food processing project (provision of trainings, equipment)	3. Sustainable livelihood
4. Irrigation facilities	4. Supplemental feeding program (34 barangays)	4. Industry Clustering Development Program
5. Pathways	5. Bio-intensive gardening (backyard)	5. Road opening/pathway
6. Evacuation centers	6. Enhancement program for infirmary of Goa	6. Irrigation facility
	7. Technical/vocational skills training for OSY (34 barangays)	7. Post-harvest facility
	8. Skills enhancement training for women and DAP/PWD	8. Farm inputs and implements
	9. Scholarship program for indigent studies (secondary and tertiary)	9. Reforestation/National Greening Program
	10. Enhancement of irrigation system (Matacla)	
	11. Provision of mechanical dryer, hand tractor	
	12. Concreting of access road (Digdigon, Lamon, Taytay)	
	13. Capacity building program for CSOs of Goa	
	14. Free-range chicken raising	
	15. Development of agri-eco-tourism farm	
	16. Enhancement of Goa Dairy Farming	

Though the central role given to CSOs in the BUB process is recognized, below are the common issues mentioned by the key informants regarding CSO participation:

- The projects usually provided to them are short lived or unsustainable. One CSO leader emphasized that this is due to the weak assistance given to the CSOs. For example, ruminant dispersal does not usually prosper usually because the beneficiaries were not trained on how to develop this into a simple source of livelihood.
- CSOs have a short lifespan. Usually, an organization's lifetime is tied to the longevity of a livelihood program awarded to it.
- CSOs are self-serving. They will only participate if there is a guarantee that they will benefit in return to their attendance. In line of the BUB prioritization, some CSOs have the tendency to focus on their organization's wellness only and not on the broader needs of the constituents of their municipalities.
- CSOs, especially those from basic sectors, usually require monetary support for transportation, accommodation, etc., so a representative could attend.

To ensure the full participation of the grassroots in the process, organizing the basic sectors and strengthening their capacity to join such affairs must be implemented on the ground or at the barangay/community level. Key informants emphasized that this initiative must come from the LGU with the help of the NGAs through the Sector Heads. Capacity building of the CSOs must include skills trainings, moral recovery programs, and values formation. Respondents stressed that these are essential for the success of CSOs. According to key informants, there is still a huge need for the CSO capacity buildings and information campaign about BUB, especially on the most remote areas where there is lower information and appreciation of participatory budgeting.

Below are other measures to promote the participation of CSOs in BUB:

- Creation of a list of CSOs accredited not only by the Sangguniang Bayan but also by various government agencies (e.g. DOLE);
- A parallel CSO capacity building program to raise their ability to take part in government activities;
- Information campaign about BUB, to clarify the process, its expected outcomes, its limitations, and its specific role within the context of other government functions and activities;
- Updated and non-jargon cluttered statistics so the community could verify if their experience is consistent with the numbers presented; and
- Possibility of a stipend, especially from representatives coming from far barangays.

1.3. Local Poverty Reduction Action Team

Representatives of CSOs to the LPRAT were elected among themselves, with the enhanced process having counterpart representatives from the BDC vice-chairs. The only discrepancy observed is in the LGU representatives of Goa outnumbering those representing CSOs.

Table 7. LPRAT Composition

	Libmanan	Goa	Lagonoy
Number of LPRAT members	20	24	26
LGU	10	13	13
Male	6	8	7
Female	4	5	6
CSO/BDC Vice-chair	10	11	13
Male	6	6	7
Female	4	5	6

While the selection of CSO LPRAT members underwent election, the selection on the LGU side was questioned by some of the respondents. There is no specific guideline provided on the selection of LPRAT members in LGU. Some key informants from the LGU shared that their exclusion from the LPRAT or other BUB related activities may be due to their weak relationship or cooperation with the LCE. Local sector heads who were not involved in the planning process expressed their disappointment on being excluded in BUB, with no clear reason for the selection of LGU participants.

Among the recommendations given by various stakeholders was the institutionalization of the LPRAT chair in the local government. This is to facilitate the coordination of updates on sub-project implementation to the CSOs. However, this simply creates a new elected official with no accountability to the municipal constituents other than his or her organization. This also runs the risk of having these individuals “use their access to government officials to promote their own interests” (Wempler 2007, p. 28). Conversely, politicians could control such individuals to further their own political agenda.

It was also suggested that elected CSO representatives undergo trainings in various capacities needed to fully enforce their mandate. Moreover, full incorporation of the LPRAT into the LDC was not yet achieved, with their work limited only to BUB sub-project matters only.

1.4. LPRAT Orientation

All LPRAT members in Camarines Sur were invited to attend the LPRAT Orientation at Villa Caceres, Naga City on January 21 (Districts 1 – 3, except Pili) and January 22 (Districts 4 – 5 and Pili). NGA representatives presented a status update regarding sub-project implementation for the FY2013 round. The JMC was discussed, elaborating on the introduction of the enhanced process for KC areas. NGA program menus were also presented.

Having a menu was not fully welcomed by the CSO representatives. They typically saw it as a restriction to their freedom to craft their own tailor-fitted anti-poverty programs. However, it could also be seen as pre-made technical assistance from the line agencies. The administrative strain in accommodating unstructured programs should also be explained to participants. For certain needs that are truly unmet by the offered programs, a list of popular proposals outside the menu should be compiled and studied for possibly inclusion to subsequent rounds of budgeting.

Clarifications were sought regarding sub-projects rejected or returned for revisions. Common reasons for non-approval were submissions of projects outside the menu, incomplete requirements, and duplication of NGAs' regular programs. The orientation was generally seen as helpful in leveling the participants regarding BUB process' requirements and mechanics. Missteps and bottlenecks encountered during previous rounds were discussed to avoid committing those again.

Communication between municipal and provincial teams was identified as the area with the greatest space for improvement. Certain documents reportedly took 6 months before going back to an LGU. Meanwhile, the full commitment of CSOs were sought by requesting them to actively monitor sub-project status.

1.5. LPRAP Workshop

Table 8 summarizes the details of the LPRAP workshops conducted by Libmanan, Goa, and Lagonoy:

Table 8. LPRAP Workshop Summary			
	Libmanan	Goa	Lagonoy
Date of workshop	January 24	January 29	January 29
Host/presenters/facilitators	MPDC LGOO LF	MPDC LGOO	MPDC LGOO
	KC Area Coordinator		
LPRAT Attendance			
o LGU	7	6	8
o CSO	4	9	8
o BDC Vice-chair	3	-	-

Table 8. LPRAP Workshop Summary

	Libmanan	Goa	Lagonoy
Other invited participants	Other E-LDC members Municipal Sector Heads	None	Other SB members Municipal Administrator
Provincial or regional representatives	DILG-PMO Focal Person	None	DILG-PMO Focal Person
Data presented	Consolidated Poverty Situation Analysis	None	CBMS 2012
Presenter of prioritized projects in CSO Assembly	None	MPDC	None
Prioritization process	E-LDC members and additional CSO representatives participated in the workshop. Participants were to be randomly assigned to 4 groups but they insisted in joining their preferred group. The infrastructure group was the one with the most members. All in all, 76 projects were proposed. Each groups then came up with rankings of all projects. The average ranking was used for the final prioritization. Budget was allocated to all sub-projects it could accommodate starting from the highest prioritized.	The workshop was an open discussion revolving around the prioritized projects in the CSO assembly, with an idea to focus on projects that will affect the more depressed barangays. The mayor joined the discussion to promote his pet project, which was eventually included in the submitted list.	Participants were divided in two groups, each having CSO and LGU representatives. Each group came up with problem and solution tree analyses. Then, programs from the menus were selected to correspond to identified solutions.
Issues on the prioritization	Most of the PBs joined the Infrastructure group, the group with the most members and proposals.	The municipal mayor insisted on the inclusion of a water system project.	The MPDC dominated the discussion.

There was RPRAT representation on all of the LPRAP workshops in the municipalities under review. However, the regional office of DILG admitted that it do not have the capacity to observe all CSO Assembly/LPRAP Workshop because they also have to attend to their other

regular work on hand. Personnel capacity should therefore be considered when guidelines for the budgeting process are being furnished.

To varying degrees, the influence of LGU officials was observed on all of the LPRAP workshops. In Libmanan, because the LPRAP prioritization process combined the supposedly separate functions of the LPRAT and eLDC, the involvement of CSO representatives was overshadowed by the larger presence of 75 PBs and more or less similar number of BDC Vice-chairs. Moreover, as was commonly observed, votes of the BDC Vice-chairs were merely duplication of the barangay heads' votes. It might be the result of having a similar perspective, coming from the same locality. However, there were some respondents who felt that most BDC Vice-chairs had the tendency to side with the PBs since they were just merely appointed by the latter. Meanwhile in Goa, a large project on waterworks system was insisted by the LCE. This project covers two fiscal years (2015 and 2016), comprising more than 60% of the allocated BUB budget for the municipality. CSO representatives present during the workshop admitted that they are usually helpless once the mayor becomes insistent. In Lagonoy, the CSO LPRAT members were found to have strong affiliation with the LGU and supports the priority projects of the administration. The MPDC, who is also a member of the LPRAT, served as the main host and coached the CSO representatives during project identification and estimation. Her domination and influence during the workshop was observed.

Data were presented in the workshops, but were outdated. Moreover, the data presentation ended up merely as compliance, with no evident utilization in the project proposal and prioritization phase. Relevant and timely statistics need to be the foundation of analyses done during workshops. A poverty statistic resonant to the experiences of the participants would allow LGU policy-makers and program implementers to have a common language with the community represented by the CSO leaders. In the same vein, data should also be presented in a way that CSO representatives could understand and validate. Heads of heavily involved sectors, such as DA and DSWD, should also be represented at the LGU and at the regional level if possible, since they can offer their technical expertise to facilitate the sub-committee deliberations during workshops. Venue and duration of the workshop were also stated as factors that could be improved.

1.6. BUB Implementation

Libmanan and Goa are BUB-implementing LGUs, though all but one of the BUB projects in Goa are implemented by NGAs due to unliquidated cash advances. Lagonoy does not have a SGH so projects were implemented by NGAs on their behalf. Below is the summary of sub-projects, costs, and implementing agencies for the approved BUB projects in FY2013. Only five NGAs were involved during that round. DA got the most number of projects for all of the municipalities and was followed by the DSWD.

Table 9. BUB 2013 Projects and Concerned NGAs			
Concerned NGAs	Number of projects and total cost requirement LPRAP FY 2013		
	Libmanan (KC)	Goa (Urban)	Lagonoy (Rural)
DA	10 projects P28,500,000	8 projects P7,003,860	
DENR			2 projects P1,574,600
DOH		1 project (with DPWH) P3,000,000	
DOLE			1 project P500,000
DSWD	2 projects P1,500,000		2 projects P8,500,000
TOTAL	12 projects P30,000,000	10 projects P10,003,860	5 projects P10,574,600

Most of the FY2013 projects were already being implemented as of March 2014, while some were awaiting download of funds within the second quarter of the year. DepEd was noticeably the least involved implementing agency in BUB for the sampled municipalities. Below is the summary of status of projects for BUB 2013 by NGA.

Table 10. Status of Implementation of BUB 2013 Projects: March 2014			
Status	Lagonoy (7)	Goa (10)	Libmanan (12)
Being implemented	1 (DSWD) 1 (DOLE) 2 (DENR)	1 (DOH) 8 (DA)	3(DA) 1 (DSWD)
Funds downloaded but implementation not yet started			1 (DSWD)
Waiting for download of fund	1 (DSWD)		6 (DA)
Unfunded	1 (DA)		
No information	1 (DepEd)	1 (DepEd)	
For revision			1 (DA)

There are NGAs that did not inform LGUs on the status of project implementation. DSWD and DA were the most commended NGAs when it comes to information sharing and being facilitative. By way of contrast, DepEd received significant complaints on the implementation of BUB projects in Goa and Lagonoy. They did not have information on why certain projects in Lagonoy were unfunded, and no feedback were given to the government of Goa.

Table 11. NGAs Rating for Info sharing/Coordination/Consultations: BUB 2013		
Concerned Line Agency	Info sharing/Coordination/Consultations	Average Rating of Respondents (Scale of 1 to 10)
DOH (Goa)	Coordinates and communicates well.	9.0
DSWD (Libmanan, Lagonoy)	Easy to reach and coordinates well. Representatives are present in the implementation.	8.1
DA (Libmanan, Goa, Lagonoy)	Communicates well and provides recommendations, but does not give progress report.	7.3
DOLE (Lagonoy)	Good in facilitating.	7.0
DepEd (Goa, Lagonoy)	Always hard to reach. Did not communicate and explain the unfunded project. The only NGA that did not call for an orientation.	4.7
DENR (Lagonoy)	Implemented projects without informing LGU. Monitoring status was only provided when pursued by the MPDC.	4.3

Generally, CSOs directly benefitting from sub-projects are active in monitoring progress of project implementation. However, CSO representatives, both those in the CSO assembly and those part of the LPRAT, have varying degrees of knowledge regarding status of sub-project implementation. This suggests a lack of a centralized way to provide updates to key stakeholders, or a failure to implement such. For each municipality, LGUs have different strategies and plans for the monitoring process on the project implementation involving the LPRAT members and Sector heads. It would be useful to note that since the FY2013 round of the then called BUB, it is the duty of the LCE to ensure that quarterly meetings of the LPRAT are held to assess implementation status of sub-projects (JMC 2). On their part, NAPC hired third party bodies to monitor the implementation of BUB 2013 projects. The Caritas Diocese of Libmanan and the Young Alliance of Professionals were tapped to do the monitoring at Libmanan and Lagonoy, respectively. Their participation on this part of BUB is expected to start on the second quarter of year 2014. For sub-projects under DSWD, people participation

at the barangay level was engaged following their usual process for project implementation under KALAHI-CIDSS.

For FY2014 sub-projects, communication from the DILG office to the LCEs were received in March. Libmanan was informed that their proposed Ragay Gulf Coastal Resource Management Project is ineligible. All of Lagonoy's proposed projects were allowed after a disallowed project was replaced. No disallowance was noted in Goa's proposal.

Below is the summary of projects, cost, and implementing agencies for the proposed BUB projects in FY2014 where six NGAs were involved. DA still got the most number of projects for all of the municipalities and was closely followed by the DSWD.

Table 12. BUB 2014 Projects and Concerned NGAs			
Concerned NGAs	Number of projects and total cost requirement LPRAP FY 2014		
	Libmanan (KC)	Goa (Urban)	Lagonoy (Rural)
DA	12 projects P18,673,530		2 projects (with BFAR) P4,000,000
DepEd	1 project P1,000,000		
DOH	1 project P1,700,000		
DILG	1 project P5,000,000	17 projects P17,000,000	
DSWD	9 projects P11,450,000		3 projects P15,705,882.40
DTI	2 projects P1,000,000		
TOTAL	26 projects NGA: P 33,000,000 LGU: P5,823,530	17 projects NGA: P 17,000,000 LGU: P 4,250,000	5 projects NGA:P17,000,000 LGU:P2,705,882.40

All of the BUB 2015 projects submitted by Goa and Lagonoy were approved by the RPRAT. One project in Libmanan was asked to be renamed.

Some key informants shared their desire to have detailed guidelines for the monitoring of projects, from approval to implementation. While some LGU officials and CSOs are active on following-up, oftentimes, they are confused on whom to communicate with and how can they be updated on the status of BUB projects. Most of the NGAs called for orientations on project monitoring while some did not. There is no standardized procedure for monitoring, with each NGA have their own processes for project implementation.

1.7. Usefulness of BUB

Of the development needs cited by the key informants, only two or three of those were addressed by the BUB FY2015 projects. Potable water projects were common for all municipalities. On the contrary, health and sanitation seemed to be the least prioritized during the LPRAP workshop for all municipalities. Table 13 shows the proposed projects for 2015 versus the perceived development needs in the areas.

Table 13. Identified Urgent Needs and BUB 2015 Projects			
Development Needs	Libmanan (KC)	Goa (urban)	Lagonoy (rural)
Poor Road Networks (FMR & barangay access roads)			Concreting of Roads
Lack of livelihood	Livelihood Projects (handicrafts)	Integrated Community Food Production	
Lack of potable water system	Potable Water (2 projects)	Establishment of Water Work Systems	Upgrading of Level II WS System, Project Management
Lack of access to health services			
Lack of access to education services			Provision of ECCD learning materials for DCCs
Lack of sanitary toilets			

**Blue cells are the identified development needs by the key informants*

Of the three municipalities observed, two of these had LPRAP proposals not reflecting projects identified during their CSO Assembly. Only two projects proposed by the assembly of Lagonoy made it to the LPRAP proposal. In Goa, five projects proposed by the assembly were amalgamated into a single project proposal at the LPRAP. For Libmanan, policy approaches identified in the assembly were non-specific, providing a lot of leeway for categorizing LPRAP projects.

1.8. Overall BUB Assessment

The primary benefit of BUB that participants pointed out was the additional budget for the municipality. Respondents also pointed out how the process empowered the community in

LGU engagement. This position is usually seen in the context of the prevailing regime, wherein lawmakers provide funding to favored barangays, organizations, or sectors that support them.

The institutionalized system for community representation, through NGO representation in the LGUs' Development Councils, was also seen as inadequate in voicing out the community's needs. Often, selected NGO representatives merely provides rubber stamping duties to decisions made by the local officials. However, this mindset is carried over to the BUB process. On one hand, CSO participants typically sees LGU representatives, be they sector heads or barangay officials, as competitors in the allocated budget. On the other hand, LGU officials tend to automatically discount the capabilities of CSO representatives in formulating meaningful programs.

But at the same time, BUB was seen as contributing to the increase in the numbers of groups willing to participate in LGU activities. Awareness of such an avenue to take part in budget planning served as a catalyst for community organization. Specifically, visible and tangible outcomes encourages further community participation. However, past experiences of other countries could serve as a warning for the BUB on the possibility of CSOs participating only to "secure specific resources" (Wampler 2007, p. 46).

Another issue would be the poverty alleviation aspect of the program. Given that no recent update on the poverty statistics has taken place after the enactment of BUB, no quantitative claims could yet be made on the efficacy of BUB in reducing poverty. However, literature suggests that even an effective participatory budgeting process does not automatically reduce poverty dramatically (Shah 2007). In addition, the structure of BUB, although it solicits the participation of the community, does not necessarily ensure the active and meaningful participation of the marginalized members. Certain practices automatically puts at a disadvantage the marginalized groups, e.g., assemblies and workshops being held in the poblacion while most of the poor communities are in far-flung barangays. Although it could be argued that the possible gain they could achieve from participating in the budgeting process is great, a single day of work and income is already a big opportunity cost for the marginalized.

4. Conclusion

Going back to the stated intent of the rapid assessment, implementation at the municipal level could be described as variable, being highly dependent to the prior existing culture of community participation. The FY2015 round experienced an increase in CSO participants, but quality of participation could not be definitively ascertained. Request for capability trainings suggests a gap in CSO capacity to engage, but no baseline was established to verify improvement or deterioration.

The whole BUB process, although successful in soliciting the involvement of CSOs, failed to institutionalize community participation. The budgeting process was seen by participants to be an activity that is disconnected to other regular LGU activities. There have been no observed integration of the LPRAT into the LDC, beyond fulfilling BUB related tasks. There is

thus a perceived need for a clearer guideline regarding BUB's assimilation into the MDC, especially on its role in participating in the creation, or approving, LGU plans. As for hindrances in implementation, the foremost bottleneck in BUB sub-project implementation appears to be in the communication between local and regional offices.

The greater share of recommendations were focused not in introducing new steps, but were instead focused on clarifying existing guidelines and minimizing room for variation in implementation.

Of primary importance would be the dominance of community engagement instead of poverty alleviation aspect in this program. Although the process focus on projects that try to alleviate poverty, other more effective poverty targeting program could be conceived. Thus, poverty reduction should not be the primary concern when implementing this but transparency and greater government accountability.

Additionally, social preparation was deemed as one of the key practice of KC that made it successful. Therefore, community preparation, not only for the CSOs, but also for the LGU representatives, should be given importance. Also, role of certain pivotal actors such as the LGOOs and the local facilitators should be drafted while taking into consideration their absorptive capacities.

Another area to flesh out would be on how future JMCs' will interact with, and enhance, local operations defined in the Local Government Code. Possible areas of contention, e.g., NGO participants in MDC vis LPRAT, should be well defined to prevent any legal ramifications.

There are also practical recommendations on the conduct of activities. First, would be an inventory of all active CSOs in the municipality. This should include not only those accredited by the Sangguniang Bayan, but also by the other accrediting line agencies such as DA and DOLE, and by coalitions of CSOs/NGOs. Second, preferential treatment should be given to the real marginalized in order to make participation to such activities the default option for them. Lastly, more quality hours in the conduct of assemblies and workshops should be given. This could be achieved by conducting the activities for a longer time period or by ensuring that the participants are well prepared and not burdened by other outside obligations.

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ANNEX A – BUB Projects for FY 2015, Location, Proponent, and Cost

Priority Poverty Reduction Projects for FY 2015: Libmanan, Camarines Sur

Name of Project	Location (Identify Barangay/s and Sitios)	Proponent (CSO-/LGU identified)	Total Project Cost (PhP)
DILG			
Handiong Expedition Wharves	5 riverside barangays	Punong Barangay	9,600,000
Construction of Evacuation Center	Malbogon	Punong Barangay	2,400,000
Potable Water Supply	Malinao	Punong Barangay	3,600,000
Construction of Evacuation Center	Ibid	Punong Barangay	2,400,000
Potable Water Supply	Malansad Nuevo	BDC Vice-chair	2,400,000
Construction of Evacuation Center	Potot	Punong Barangay	2,400,000
Construction of Evacuation Center	Tampuhan	Punong Barangay	2,400,000
Construction of Evacuation Center	Inalahan	Punong Barangay	2,400,000
Construction of Evacuation Center	Mambalite	Punong Barangay	2,400,000
DA			
Farm Implements & Tools	Municipal-wide	CSO	6,000,000
Small Irrigation Facility	8 irrigation systems	CSO	2,600,000
DTI			
Livelihood Projects	Bikal and Potot	CSO	1,000,000

Priority Poverty Reduction Projects for FY 2015: Goa, Camarines Sur

Name of Project	Location (Identify Barangay/s and Sitios)	Proponent (CSO-/LGU identified)	Total Project Cost (PhP)
NAPC			

Integrated Community Food Production	10 HHs / bgy @ Php30,000.00/HH	CSO	6,716,471
DILG			
Establishment Of Water Works System	9 Units	LGU	12,313,529

Priority Poverty Reduction Projects for FY 2015: Lagonoy, Camarines Sur

Name of Project	Location (Identify Barangay/s and Sitios)	Proponent (CSO-/LGU identified)	Total Project Cost (PhP)
DILG			
Level II Water Supply System	Sipaco	CSO	2,826,470
Road Concreting	San Rafael Pinamihagan Sitio Tabog, Burabod Amoguis Agosais Rd. Sec.	CSO	7,348,900
Procurement of Rescue Boat with Equipment: 2 units rescue boats	Balaton	CSO	1,209,730
Construction of flood control structures – Seawall/Revetment/Riprap/D rainage	Del Carmen Sta. Maria Loho Malabog Creek, San Isidro Sur Acayabon Creek, Camagong, Agcata	CSO	6,783,600
DepEd			
Gulayan sa Paaralan	33 Elementary Schools	CSO	373,100
DSWD			
Provision of ECCD learning materials for DCCs: all barangays in Lagonoy	40 Barangay Daycare Centers	CSO	678,200

**CSO reps identified the poverty interventions/solutions while MPDC coached on the project identification and specifications and prepared all the project briefs.*