

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF SAN MIGUEL, SURIGAO DEL SUR, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract

Good governance rests upon the principles of transparency, accountability, openness and the rule of law. In Participatory governance, problems are identified and solutions are being enacted wherein all sectors and organization in the community are represented. This mutual participation is done through interaction between the governing organization and its citizens who help identify what the problem is, who is experiencing it and what appropriate solution may be addressed. This study assessed the Participatory Governance practices and the effects of participatory governance to the community by looking into the programs and projects implemented along Participatory Governance. To this end, the study employed a qualitative research design using interviews and focused group discussion to the key informants. The study revealed that Participatory Governance is an efficient and effective government strategy because it allows active participation among officials and constituents in all government affairs. With this, the principles of transparency and accountability can be exercised. Further, People's participation increases programs and projects implemented by the government because a sense of ownership is felt by the citizens and they would take care all the barangay projects.

Keyword: participatory governance, programs and projects, effects

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1.0 Introduction

Participatory Governance is the management of governmental affairs through people's participation represented by all sectors and organizations in the community where they are also involved in the planning, monitoring, implementing and evaluating of government programs and transactions. It requires active citizenship. Citizens must claim Participatory Governance and must not wait that the government will initiate or welcome it. People's participation is the key element to attaining Participatory Governance which focuses on increasing accountability of the institutions of governance towards people in general and marginalized section in particular. This study assesses the Participatory Governance practices and the effects of participatory governance to the community by looking into the programs and projects implemented along Participatory Governance.

Many studies have been conducted revealing the positive results of Participatory Governance. Dannug (2005) finds out that Participatory Governance actively fights against corruption and the use of public office for private gain. Morgan and Qualman (2009) believe that it is a critical factor in good governance for it allows the government to generate trust that allows people to work together toward national development. Nolleto (2008) opines that government officers and employees are servants of the people and their masters are the people, and so people should be kept informed of any government affairs through Participatory Governance. For this reason, it is necessary that an institutional framework that supports the social forces outside the government like the civil societies be the best way to ensure good governance (De Leon, 2005).

The cited studies adhere that Participatory Governance can be attained if there is active

participation and political will from the government leaders. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that many barangays and municipalities are still practicing the traditional processes of government affairs. However, the change from Traditional Governance to a Participatory Governance paves the community to a more transparent and productive governance since all the programs and projects of the Government will be coming from the felt needs of the people in the community. Thus, the study unfolds the Participatory Governance practice and the effects of Participatory Governance in the two barangays of San Miguel, Surigao del Sur.

Assessing the benefits of Participatory Governance is desirable from the different perspectives: (1) it may guide LGU officials to adapt this form of democratic governance for the benefits of their constituents; and (2) it may empower the constituents to participate actively in different government affairs thereby ensuring transparency, accountability, openness.

2.0 Research Methodology

The study employed descriptive qualitative research design to provide rich and holistic insights into the people's views and actions as how they occur in the natural set-up (Creswell, 2010). The interview was utilized to collect data on individual's perspective and experience on the implementation of Participatory Governance to the community. This tool provided insights on the projects and programs implemented along Participatory Governance and its effect on them. Further, Focus Group Discussion was utilized to validate the information gathered during the individual interview to the key informants in the barangays.

Among the eighteen (18) barangays in San Miguel,

Surigao del Sur, Barangay San Roque and Barangay Patong were the only barangays implementing Participatory form of governance. A total of fifty-six (56) key informants were subjected to individual interview wherein two (2) key informants represented each of the eighteen (18) puroks of San Roque and Patong and twenty (20) barangay officials. Moreover, members of the Expanded Barangay Development Council (EBDC) were considered in the FGD. Barangay Officials and representatives from Women Sector, Senior Citizen, LuponTagapamayapa, Purok President, Resident Midwife, Barangay Health Work, Barangay Nutrition Scholars, School Principal and Day Care teacher, Cooperatives and Organizations were the members of the Expanded Barangay Development Council.

Written consent to the Barangay Captains of San Roque and Patong were sought. Upon approval, individual interviews were scheduled and conducted to the fifty six (56) key informants. FGD was also conducted during their general assembly to ensure maximum participation among members of the EBDC.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The Participatory Governance Practices of Barangay San Roque and Barangay Patong, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur include:

A. Active Citizenship

Citizens must claim participatory governance, initiate and welcome it. Governance is about a meaningful relationship between organized civil society and government. In the case of Barangay Patong and Barangay San Roque, the implemented programs were successful for they were done according to the felt needs of the people. A public consultation was sincerely done before the approval of the Barangay Council. The sense of ownership from that process was observed in every face of the citizens. The organized civil society or organizations helped the government to pursue plans for the welfare of the majority. The Barangay Officials work was more on facilitating than doing all the tasks. Participatory governance is not about decision-making, it's about a lot of other process and negotiation. Participatory governance in these two barangays did not acquire success immediately. They worked for it so hard to win back the citizens trust to the government. They involved the citizens in the planning process, and priorities are identified and decided based on the number of clienteles to be served, the number of families affected by the problem and the urgency of the program or projects to be implemented.

B. Annual Participatory Budgeting

Annual Participatory Budgeting was an example of how people can influence budgets and resources.

Participatory budgeting allowed the citizens to participate in the allocation of budget. It aimed to increase transparency, accountability, understanding and social inclusion in local government affairs. Participatory budgeting applied to a varying amount of the local Council's budget, and the actual process was developed to suit local circumstances. As practiced in Barangay San Roque and Barangay Patong, Participatory Budgeting provided citizens with information that enables them to engage in prioritizing the needs of the citizens to propose new services and projects and set budget in a democratic and transparent way. As the process becomes embedded, it involves citizens who engage on the annual budgetary cycle of setting priorities and monitoring the delivery of projects and services.

C. Active Involvement in Decision-Making

There was a strong need for Participatory Governance and citizen involvement in the decision-making process. The annual participatory budgeting was participated in by the members of the Expanded Barangay Development Council with the presence of the Municipal Budget Officer. Each representative of the different sectors and organizations shall have their own programs and projects to be presented on the actual budgeting and this will also be prioritized based on needs and urgency following the recommended budgetary requirement. The presence of the Municipal Budget Officer is very significant to the annual budgeting. This will also ensure that all the programs and projects stipulated in their annual investment plan are approved by the municipal budget officer. Minimize the waste of resources is also one of the best factors that the Participatory annual budgeting is worth to replicate to the other barangay.

D. Mainstreaming Participatory Governance in Barangay Patong and Barangay San Roque

Mainstreaming participatory governance in Barangay Patong and Barangay San Roque was the main strategy to ensure people's participation and the practice of transparency and accountability among government and the people from the grassroots level. It was a set of processes and strategies aimed to increase people's participation and empowerment and to address and respond issues in legislations, policies, programs and projects and the institutional mechanisms of the government on a sustained basis. Constituents of Barangay Patong and Barangay San Roque, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur were the key players in mainstreaming Participatory governance. Stakeholders were the people tasked of participatory governance mainstreaming in the planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluating program and projects in the Barangay.

In mainstreaming Participatory Governance, the sponsors were the municipal officials and the elected

barangay officials whose political will played a vital role in the attainment of the program and the strategy. The mayor, vice-mayor and the sangguniangbayan, as well as the heads of agencies, were also important to sustain the said strategy of the Barangay. Their support to some of the activities was needed to increase people's participation such as technical and financial support. Financial and technical support of the Non-Government Organization was highly essential as well.

The change agent in Participatory governance were the Barangay Officials and at the same time the technical working group & committees in-charge in coordinating with the Municipal Technical Working Group of agencies that would assist the Barangay in some of the planned activities. They were critical in the success of Participatory Governance. The advocates of Participatory Governance were the individual or group of people who wanted to achieve a change in governance. People who loved transparency, accountability and empowerment among their constituents were the primary advocates of this process.

Projects & Programs Implemented through Participatory Governance

Different programs in Barangay San Roque and Barangay Patong were implemented through participatory governance. These programs were classified under health, education and livelihood. Moreover, these programs embraced many projects as reflected in the table 1.

Table 1. Projects and programs implemented along participatory governance

Programs	Projects	Year Implemented
Health	1. Annual Health Budgeting	2000
	2. Provision of Trainings and Seminars	2001
	3. Annual Medical & Dental Mission	2003
	4. Health Care Financing Scheme	2005
	5. Installation of Botikang Barangay	2007
	6. Construction of Level 3 Water System	2008
	7. Construction of Elevated Health Center	2011
Education	1. Educational Support to 50 Children	2000
	2. Financial Support to Teachers' Trainings and Seminars	2000
	3. Provision of School Materials and Monthly Honorarium of Barangay Paid Teachers	2002
	4. Construction of 2 Day Care Building	2007
Livelihood	1. Pig and Carabao Dispersal	1997
	2. Provision of Livelihood Trainings and Seminars	2001
	3. Provision of Agricultural Support Loan	2001
	4. Provision of Pre and Post-Harvest Facilities	2005

A. Health Program

Many projects were implemented along Health Program. First was the Participatory Annual Health Budgeting which had the greatest impact on health programs for they were able to identify and prioritized some programs and projects that needed budget based on the health needs of the people. Second was the provision of Trainings and Seminars The health providers who were the resident Midwife, the Barangay Health Worker, the Barangay Nutrition Scholar conducted some trainings and seminars to the community members like the seminars on Responsible Parenthood, Nutrition and Sanitation seminars, etc. Third was the Annual Medical and Dental mission that provided health services to the community member especially the children. Annual medical check-up, dental check-up and tooth extraction were done. They also conducted the "Operation Tuli," especially during summer. The fourth was the "Health Care Financing Scheme" or HCF. Health Care Financing Program was not compulsory to all community members. A potential member needed to fill up the form and pay Php. 50.00 as registration fee with a monthly contribution of P 10.00. Each member of the Health Care Financing Program can avail of an emergency loan of at least Php. 1,500.00 during health emergency cases only and they can also avail or borrow medicines from the Botikang Barangay in a very lowest price. Fifth was the Botikang Barangay. It catered to the constituents who had the minor illness that needs over the counter medicines. The Botikang Barangay was also accredited by the Bureau of Foods and Drugs and was able to avail medicines for free in this agency. Medicines given by BFAD were being sold the same price of medicines in the BnB store. The construction of level 3 water system is a joint project of the barangay with the Kalahi-Cidds. They also constructed an elevated Health Center that caters health problem, related problems of the constituents in the barangay.

B. Education Program

One project implemented was the Support to 50 School Children in every barangay. There were only 2 barangays in San Miguel who had the educational support to school age children. They were provided with school supplies, bag, uniform, shoes and tuition fees for they were able to link with an NGO that supports the program in sending their indigent children to go school. They gave priority to education and even provide the fund for the Barangay Paid teacher to teach in the Elementary school and gave a computer set and office supplies to elementary teachers. The construction of the Daycare building inspired the parents to send their toddlers to school and increase their loyalty and trust to the government officials.

C. Livelihood Program

One project was the Pig and Carabao Dispersal, which was a joint project from the Department of Agriculture. The trainings and seminars given to the community helped them to initiate another source of income aside from farming. The agricultural loan was initiated by the people where each member organized themselves to form a Cooperative that handles the money for agricultural support loan payable during harvest time. They also had the Pre and Post-Harvest Facilities that were used during land preparation and harvest time.

Effects of Participatory Governance in the Community

Participatory Governance in Barangay Patong and Barangay San Roque yielded positive results. It had undergone congruently to people who were optimistic about changes. The major effects were the following:

A. Better use of Public Resources due to Citizens Monitoring of Programs

It was one of the essences of Participatory Governance that empowered to monitor some of the programs and projects of the government. Feed backing during the annual evaluation of program helped the government realize that they were being monitored. These two barangays had installed a Barangay Monitoring Team that would constantly monitor some of the programs in the government if they were working in accordance to what had been planned and in accordance by the law. The citizens were at the same time the watchdogs of the government.

B. Citizen Inputs on Defining Public Priorities

The purpose of involving the citizens in defining public priorities was to provide practical assistance to everyone engaged in doing the prioritization. It had to undergo a community needs assessment to be able to identify the felt needs of the people. There would be better use of resources if the citizens were involved in the decision-making processes where there was a sense of ownership. A more productive role for citizens in providing solutions and solving problems because they were part of the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the programs. Too much time and energy had been devoted analyzing the problems and not enough to developing practical solutions that connect with real lives.

C. Government Plays more of a Facilitation Role rather than Playing all the Roles

The role of the government in this type of governance was more on facilitation wherein the government helped the citizens to understand their common objectives and assists them to plan to achieve them without taking a particular position in the discussion. The government tried to assist the group in achieving a consensus on

any disagreement that pre-exists or emerges in the meeting or discussion so that it had a strong basis for future action. The government supported everyone to do their best through involving them in community projects and other matter about community practices. The government encouraged full participation, promoted mutual understanding and cultivated shared responsibility by supporting everyone to do their best thinking, (Kaner, 2007). The citizens were the ones who would identify a problem and even find its solution.

D. Improvement in the Quality of Services

Participatory Governance improved the quality of services to their citizens due to constant monitoring of programs and projects based on the plan. The formation of the Barangay Monitoring Team helped the government to be extra careful in doing unlawful activities. Quality services were improved due to the awareness of the people of all the programs and projects implemented.

E. Better Relations between Government and People

Governance problems in the Philippines found their roots in deeply embedded political and social issues such as the structure of government, the quality of leadership, and the capacity of civil society to hold government accountable. These root causes were not easily addressed by outsiders. Governance was so fundamental to the development process that development agencies had a responsibility to assist. The options available to them were relatively limited, however, given that sustained change can only occur if driven from within. They did not necessarily need substantial amounts of funding. But they needed persistent and continuing effort, support and substantial change. Building citizenry awareness and increasing participation in the process of local self-governance led to sustainable governance where government and the people work together to achieve their common purpose.

Legal Basis of Participatory Governance

Participatory Governance especially in Barangay Patong started in the year 2000. The adoption of the governance system is done through the General Assembly where citizens approve it. The traditional way of governance was changed. The traditional Barangay Development Council was changed to Expanded Barangay Development Council wherein members come from the different organized sectors of the Barangay. Series of Planning and re-structuring were conducted which include the Formulation of the Five Year Development Plan and the Annual Investment Plan where People's Participation increases. People's participation was backed up with the Legal bases of Participatory Governance like Republic Act. 7160, Chapter 1, Sec. 41 & 384 of the 1991 Local Government Code that states the Role of the Barangay

as a basic Political Unit, the sectoral representation. R.A. 7160 Chapter 6, the Composition of meetings in the Barangay (Dannug, 2005).

Article 3, Section 7 of the 1987 constitution supports the awareness of the people that increases their participation in all government transaction because their right to information on matters of public concern was responded through Participatory Governance, (De Leon, 2002).

Problems Encountered in the Good Governance of Barangay Patong

As in the case of any other programs/projects of either in private and public institutions, at the start of its implementation of the "Participatory Governance in Barangay Patong, San Miguel, Surigao del Sur", has met issues and problems specifically in attaining the goals and objectives of the programs.

Like other governance tools, participatory governance comes with benefits and risks that must be carefully weighed before being applied. The selection and implementation of a participatory governance initiative almost always implies a trade-off between the underlying risks and expected benefits and its operational viability must be considered within the social, political and financial realities of a given locality.

The implementation of the program has dealt with difficulties to overcome their fear to participate in the government, hence moving away from the rhetorical realm into practices surpassing few fundamental challenges for governments when they seek to involve actively citizens in decision making.

The need to reshape accountability is shared between government and other players. The citizens are used to exercise the traditional way. Thus it became difficult to change its style due to their perspective. Political will is an important mechanism to oblige citizens to participate in the newly initiated governance system by aligning governmental structures to the issues and context at hand. The government should design strategies and structures that would fit to participatory governance system which in turn, helps people come closer to the government. The government must evaluate the best strategies to use to win back people's trust to the government officials.

Community People are hesitant to participate in any Barangay activity due to bad experience from the past where programs and projects promised by politicians were not realized. Some of the sectors are not organized and is not accredited by the Barangay Development Council. The Government finds it hard to organize them to participate in the government despite the mandate stated in the local government Code of 1991 where sectoral representation in the council should be recognized.

Citizen's participation is not visible especially during General Assembly and other community-related

meetings that resulted to Non- regular conduct of General Assembly and Purok meetings in the area. Programs and plans were being done by the government officials itself and no community consultation. The Barangay does not have a Five Year Development Plan as mandated by the constitution due to lack of people's participation. The five-Year Plan is the basis of the Barangay Annual Planning that only the Barangay Officials is doing.

4.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that Participatory Governance is an efficient and effective government strategy because it allows active participation among officials and constituents in all government affairs. With this, the principles of transparency and accountability can truly be exercised. Further, People's participation increases programs and projects implemented by the government because a sense of ownership will be felt by the citizens and they would take care all the barangay projects

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