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Community-Driven Development (CDD) within and beyond the KALAHI-CIDSS

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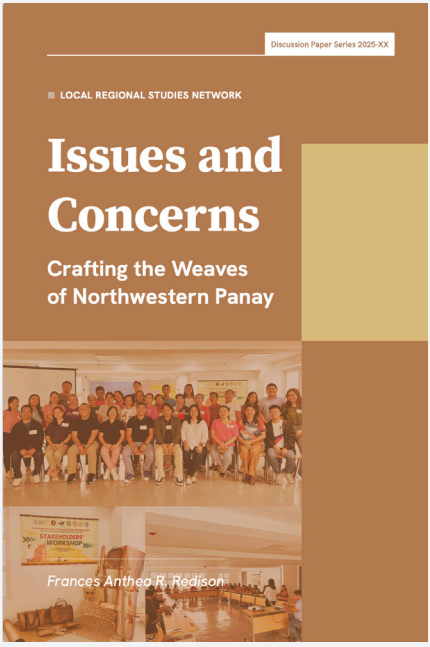

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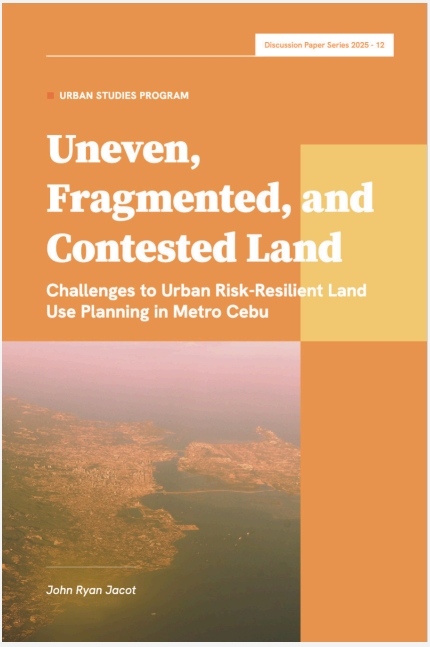

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COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT (CDD) WITHIN AND BEYOND THE KALAHI-CIDSS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper traces occasions of the community-driven development (CDD) approach within and beyond the *Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan* – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS). While CDD is typically associated with KALAHI-CIDSS, a development program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) where CDD is consciously applied, the paper argues that a similar approach has been practiced in a local community in Cebu through a people's organization which is outside the scope of the KALAHI-CIDSS. To elaborate this point, the paper first briefly reviews the history and concepts guiding CDD as a development model. It then discusses instances where CDD is consciously practiced in KALAHI-CIDSS community-partners within the provinces of Negros. This is followed by a discussion of how a people's organization in the Municipality of Aloguinsan in the Province of Cebu practiced what I contend as a CDD approach, albeit outside the scope of DSWD's program. While existing literature in the country concerning CDD talks about the need for such an approach to be institutionalized, all the interventions so far refer to CDD initiatives of the KALAHI-CIDSS. This paper further expands the discussion by not only broadening the meaning and scope of CDD but also allowing a better appreciation of organically initiated development programs of people's and other civil society organizations (CSOs).

CDD AS AN APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Community-based development (CBD) and community-driven development (CDD) approaches have already been practiced for over three decades, with the World Bank (WB) pioneering in its support towards grassroots and community empowerment development approaches. The Operations Evaluation Department of the WB in 2005 reported that since the 1990s, the WB support through lending has shifted from CBD to CDD. The WB particularly emphasized the latter as a better development model that supports empowerment of poor communities by giving them control over resources and decisions, compared to CBD which "gives communities less responsibility" (Kumar et al. 2005). Trang Pham (2018, 168) distinguished CBD from CDD, arguing that in the former "the community is consulted" while in the latter "the community is empowered." Over the years, CDD has

been a key development model for international lending institutions, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (2012), and a number of national governments, as a bottom-up approach towards poverty eradication, livelihood generation, and community empowerment.

The WB defines CDD as a "modality of project design and delivery which transfers decision-making power and, often financial and technical resources, directly to communities or group of end-users" (World Bank 2021). The aims of concentrating decision-making and management among local communities include "aligning development interventions with community needs and preferences" while at the same time "countering state weakness in service delivery by harnessing social capital" (World Bank 2021). Through CDD, local communities themselves identify and prioritize development initiatives and later develop their own sense of ownership to better encourage participation and improve social cohesion. CDD often caters to a variety of initiatives, from improving the delivery of services, to the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, public goods, and common property resources, and finally to the planning and management of community funds (World Bank 2021). The WB (2021) reported that as of June 2020, its CDD portfolio includes 327 ongoing projects in 90 countries which amounts to USD 33 billion of active financing.

In the Philippines, CDD has been used as a development strategy by the DSWD through its KALAHI-CIDSS program. KALAHI-CIDSS is among the poverty alleviation programs of the government established in 2003 and later scaled-up in 2013 by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA). The program recognizes the use of CDD as a global approach for achieving "service delivery, poverty reduction, and good governance outcomes" (DSWD n.d.). KALAHI-CIDSS is primarily funded by the WB. In its summary status of financing, the WB has committed a total of USD 730.54 million, covering two projects: one from 2014-2020 and another from 2020-2023. The WB's aim for lending such an amount is indicated in its project development objectives "to empower communities in targeted municipalities to achieve improved access to services and to participate in more inclusive local planning, budgeting, and implementation" (World Bank 2023). Data (Garcia 2022) from the DSWD in 2022 indicated the coverage of KALAHI-CIDSS, which includes 71 provinces, 976 municipalities, and 19,166 barangays.

While community empowerment through capability-building is central to CDD's objectives, various scholarly literature concerning CDD practices all over the world are not homogeneous on the matter. On the one hand, there are those that affirm CDD's empowering effects to communities, especially to the poor and vulnerable groups. For example, Muhammad Shakil Ahmad and Noraini Bt. Abu Talib (2015) investigated the level of community empowerment in Pakistan practicing CDD under the decentralization initiatives of the country. The same community empowerment was also noted by Parvaz Azharul Huq (2020) in an urban-based CDD initiative in Bangladesh which significantly contributed to community participation. In the Philippines, a WB report also suggested that community empowerment is among the top responses of KALAHI-CIDSS partner communities when asked of the program's benefits (World Bank 2013). Fermin Adriano (2016) also noted that the Asia-Pacific Policy Center validated the report of KALAHI-CIDSS concerning its positive contributions and accomplishments in community empowerment.

On the other hand, there are those who argue that certain obstacles are yet to be overcome for genuine empowerment to be realized. Jessica Carrick-Hagenbarth (2021) explained how a CDD project implemented in an agrarian settlement in Brazil failed to realize community empowerment by ignoring the power differences between technical agencies and contractors and marginalized communities. Scholars have also noted how political interference and elite control have significantly eroded community empowerment in a local community in Pakistan (Wahid et al. 2017). Even in Philippines, several studies are critical of KALAHI-CIDSS' supposed aim of community empowerment. Kidjie Saguin (2018) contended that elites continue their control specifically in village assemblies, thereby compromising genuine participation among ordinary village members. Hannah Bulloch (2017, 142) described the KALAHI-CIDSS as another neoliberal intervention that depoliticizes both the nature of "[KALAHI-CIDSS] activities and existing inequalities." There are also those who criticize CDD and claim that it is merely an instrument to advance counterinsurgency objectives resulting in token reforms (Reid 2011).

While development impacts of CDD have been notably mixed (Pham 2018), the guiding principles behind CDD are in themselves ideal. Pham (2018) explained how the uptake of CDD as a development paradigm stemmed in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly when the capability approach (CA) scholarship

of Amartya Sen (and Martha Nusbaum later) informed the discourse of participatory development. It is argued that both CDD and CA share three key elements of development intervention: (1) empowerment, (2) human agency, and (3) public deliberation (Pham 2018).

Citing Deepa Narayan, Pham (2018) explained that empowerment is about the expansion of assets especially of the poor communities to allow greater participation in the process of negotiations, influencing, control, and holding accountable of the institutions affecting their lives. He further explained that empowerment includes both relational and transformational aspects (Pham 2018). Agency is an important element of empowerment. The WB defines it as the "ability to make decisions about one's own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear" (Klugman et al. 2014). Pham expanded this definition informed by Sen's CA, arguing that agency is the "pursuit of goals and objectives that a person values," where goals and objectives can be "self-regarding or other-regarding as long as the agent happens to value those objectives." Lastly, public deliberation points to how CDD necessitates the participation and discussion of local village members in assemblies for example.

CDD is informed by these development intervention principles. Any development initiative that allows empowerment, reinforces agency, and is anchored on public deliberation may be considered as following the model of CDD. This paper traces these principles of CDD both within the initiatives of the KALAHI-CIDSS projects and outside the scope of the program, through civil society-led community development initiatives. Susan Wong and Scott Gugenheim (2018) explained that CDD is "by itself hardly new," referring to earlier initiatives by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) following the participatory development paradigm "long before the World Bank started thinking about its first community development program." The only difference between governmental and non-governmental initiatives is that in the latter, CDD is embedded in a national government's "range of political decisions, bureaucratic functions, and normative relationships between social actors" (Wong and Guggenheim 2018), which allows the scale it already has today. KALAHI-CIDSS is an example of a governmental CDD initiative, described as the National Community Driven Development Program (NCDDP).

But what are often left out, if not totally ignored by existing scholarship, are the non-governmental CDD initiatives, especially in the context of a developing country such as the Philippines. Recent scholarship regarding the institutionalization of CDD are all informed by the initiatives of the KALAHI-CIDSS. While the program should be commended for mainstreaming CDD as a development model in the Philippines, an equally important task is accounting and understanding organically initiated CDD programs of civil society organizations outside the scope of the government program. Its significance is twofold. First, it broadens the conceptual horizon of CDD by considering practices of civil society organizations, in which are not commonly empowered in Philippine society. Second, it advances relevant policy recommendations on how non-governmental CDD initiatives can be sustained and defended, as will be elaborated below in a specific case in Cebu.

This paper uses a thematic analysis of data derived from focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). The FGDs and KIIs aim to capture the realization of the core CDD principles of empowerment, agency, and public deliberation in different community development programs. Two sets of data are specifically gathered: one representative of CDD under governmental jurisdiction – that is, through the KALAHI-CIDSS of the DSWD – and another representative of CDD under non-governmental jurisdiction – that is, through the combined efforts of civil society organizations.

In the case of the former, data is derived from the experiences of communities under the KALAHI-CIDSS projects in the municipalities of Zamboanguita and Santa Catalina of Negros Oriental. KALAHI-CIDSS facilitators and volunteers were invited to join a public forum, where both an FGD and KIIs took place. In the case of the latter, data is derived from the experience of a community in Brgy. Bonbon, in the municipality of Aloguinsan, Cebu. In this community, a development project was implemented through the combined efforts of a people's organization (PO), the San Roque Farmers' Association (SRFA), and an NGO, the Farmers' Development Center (FARDEC). SRFA members and officers were invited to two separate FGDs and the former executive director of FARDEC to a KII.

EMPOWERMENT, AGENCY, AND PUBLIC DELIBERATION IN KALAHI-CIDSS INITIATIVES IN NEGROS ORIENTAL

Zamboanguita and Santa Catalina are municipalities of Negros Oriental which have a long history of implementing KALAHI-CIDSS projects. Zamboanguita has 10 barangays with a reported 65 completed KALAHI-CIDSS sub-projects, while Santa Catalina has 22 barangays with a reported 83 completed KALAHI-CIDSS sub-projects. Both municipalities are assured of Local Counterpart Contributions (LCCs) from their respective local government units (LGUs) and funding from the DSWD through the download of grants. Table 1 details the total cost of KALAHI-CIDSS sub-projects from both municipalities.

TABLE 1: TOTAL LCC AND GRANTS DOWNLOADED OF ZAMBOANGUITA AND SANTA CATALINA

MUNICIPALITY	LCC	GRANTS DOWNLOADED	TOTAL
Zamboanguita	Php 29.984 million	Php 84.106 million	Php 114.090 million
Santa Catalina	Php 30.323 million	Php 93.043 million	Php 123.367 million
Total	**Php 60.307 million**	**Php 177.149 million**	**Php 237.456 million**

The top sub-project for both municipalities is roads, with 76 (55 percent) out of the total 139 of the top 10 sub-projects.[1]

There were 14 respondents from both municipalities. Zamboanguita had 7 respondents where 3 are volunteers, while Santa Catalina had 7 where 1 is a volunteer. The first four questions of the FGDs aim to capture the respondents' knowledge of CDD, its importance in positively pushing development in the communities, its effectivity in solving community problems, and the respondents' awareness of the programs of the KALAHI-CIDSS. All the 14 respondents positively responded to these questions, suggesting not only

1 All the aforementioned data were shared by project fellow Aneni Codilla, a former evaluation and monitoring specialist of DSWD 7, through their Program Briefer (Monitoring and Evaluation Unit DSWD 7 2024)

their familiarity with CDD and the programs of the KALAHI-CIDSS but also the commendable efforts of the DSWD in ensuring education and information campaigns. These campaigns allow grassroots communities to both participate in the development processes and understand the principles that drive these processes.

The understanding of CDD principles is crucial in ensuring empowerment, agency, and deliberation. Education is a crucial component where raising community awareness is seen as a requisite that ensures these development principles. One community volunteer from Santa Catalina described a process of orientation where they were made to understand CDD and its principles. She acknowledged how she learned from this orientation organized by their community facilitator.

The respondents were conscious of how an understanding of CDD and its principles is requisite for initiating and sustaining development projects. One community volunteer from Zamboanguita underscored education as necessary and connected this to the concept of empowerment. She explained: "*Kaning KALAHI-CIDSS, gi-empower ang komunidad, ang community volunteers*" (KALAHI-CIDSS empowers the community, the community volunteers). She continued that "*Usah mahatagan og proyekto, ang una gyu'ng proyekto kay pag edukar sa komunidad dayon usah na ang kalsada ba o building…*" (Before a project is granted, the first project is the education of the community then come the roads or buildings). The close relation between education and empowerment was affirmed by a community facilitator from Santa Catalina who acknowledged that the meaning of KALAHI-CIDSS is "to empower and educate."

The empowering effect of CDD is recognized both by volunteers and facilitators. A barangay volunteer from Zamboanguita observed how a particular road project not only allowed the opening of new routes and entry of new commodities, but also perceived the improvement of their livelihood which she believes has an empowering effect. One community volunteer in Zamboanguita also saw what was discussed earlier as the self-regarding and other-regarding pursuit of goals (Pham 2018). She mentioned that "*Dili pud nato lantawon ang kaugalingon kun di atong tanawon ang pangkinatibuk-an para sa kalambuan sa atong komunidad ug para ma empower ang atong ginsakpan*" (We must not look to ourselves but we must seek the whole for the development

of our community and to empower our members). A facilitator from Zamboanguita saw how residents were transformed from being previously passive with their village affairs to voicing their opinions, noting that one was even empowered enough to run for and win a seat in the village council. He mentioned that "*Kay empowering, yano ra kang lumulupyo sa community pero once nga ma belong ka as a volunteer kay naa na kay tingog sa inyong barangay… which is kung dili ka member sa barangay council wala kay opportunity to have that…*" (Because of the empowerment, a mere resident in the community who starts to belong as a volunteer assumes a voice in the barangay… which if you are not a member of the barangay council you do not have that opportunity).

Respondents, especially community volunteers, likewise affirmed how the CDD model allows for agency, that is, the ability to make decisions especially in terms of pursuing objectives that the community values (Pham 2018). However, limitations were also encountered, preventing its full realization. A volunteer from Santa Catalina recognized how the community itself identified problems and corresponding programs that are most valuable. She expressed that "*Ang CDD, isip usa ka lumulopyo sa maong barangay, kami mismo ang kahibalo sa kung unsay problema nga dapat hatagan og kasulbaran pinaagi sa CDD*" (The CDD, being a resident in our barangay, we ourselves know what the problem is that requires a solution through CDD). A community volunteer from Zamboanguita gave a more detailed account of the decision-making process, and narrated that

> *"Naa man mi volunteer per sitio per barangay so didto makita kung unsa ang problema per barangay… So amo gisusi didto ang mga main problem sa ilahang mga sitio so pinaagi sa mga volunteers then after anah among gitan-aw unsa ang pinaka bug-at nga problema then amo s'ya giresolve"* (We have volunteers per sitio per barangay, so through them the problem per barangay becomes visible… So we investigate the main problems in their sitios through the volunteers, after which we evaluate the most pressing problem then we resolve it).

Agency also expressed itself in the community developing a sense of ownership in the projects implemented. Another community volunteer from Zamboanguita narrated that

> "*Kita mismo maoy motrabaho, sa ato pa duna gyud tay gugma sa atong gibuhat, naa tay pag amping… sa atong gikuan… nga sense of ownership, sa ato pa, ato s'yang ampingan para dili lang para nato pero sa umaabot pa unya natong henerasyon nga unta sila makapahimulos pa sa maong proyekto…*" (We ourselves are the ones who work, which means there is love in what we do, we put care… in what we consider… as a sense of ownership, which means, we take care not only for us but also for the next generation so that they will also take advantage of the same project).

The term *ampingan* here is derived from the term *amping*, which means "to treat with care," and is usually associated with something or someone valued or loved. In this case, what is regarded with value and taken care of is that which was once granted as a project external to the community but now regarded as their own.

While agency can be traced in the practices of CDD initiatives of the localities studied, there were also obstacles which hindered its full realization. This is important to point out since agency is a crucial component of empowerment (Pham 2018), and identifying these limitations could allow for better conceptualization and realization of agency and empowerment in the future. These limitations largely result from the lack of funds. A community facilitator from Santa Catalina expressed how the lack of LCCs in their LGU made it impossible to realize what supposedly was the top priority of one of the barangays she was working with, which was a water system that could provide potable water. She narrated that in this specific barangay, "*Ganahan kaayo sila sa water system, pero kay galing… ang budget for counterpart dili kaya so… gihimo nalang s'yang perimeter fence for the evacuation area…*" (They really want the water system, but because… the budget for counterpart is not enough … a perimeter fence was built for the evacuation area instead).

A similar case was also noted by a community volunteer in Zamboanguita where the community's top priority was a flood control system because of the barangay's geographic location. She recounted that "*Sa ilaha nga area sa ubos dapit, flood control, tungod sa kakuwang sa funds dili namo siya maendorso… Sa umaabot unta nga mga proseso nga madungagan unta ang mga budget kay para katong mga project nga i-endorse nila, katong nanginahanglan og mas dako nga fund, so mahatagan sila og pagtagad tungod kay importante pud kaayo na nga mga proyekto…*" (In their lowland area, flood control [is the priority project],

because of the lack of funds, we cannot endorse it... Hopefully in the next process, budget will be augmented so that those projects that they [the community] endorse, those that need more funding, will be given proper attention because these projects are very important).

Public deliberation is perhaps the most tangible expression of empowerment and agency taking place in a community-driven model. An interesting insight derived from what the respondents shared, is their association, or perhaps even reduction of public deliberation with barangay assemblies. In this regard, public deliberation is seen as integrated within the bureaucratic process of governmental decision making, especially in its lowest level in the village (Wong and Gugenheim 2018).

A key weakness with this understanding of public deliberation is its limited concept of deliberation to the bureaucratic governmental process, which could allow it to be subjected to asymmetrical relations of power common with patronage politics. The danger of an elite capture is suggested by a recent study, which explained that "the ability of the local government to adapt and accommodate KALAHI could be construed as a case of elite control perpetuating patronage politics," where barangay leaders and even executives get the credit and claim being champions of CDD (Aceron 2022). Despite the advances that could be credited to KALAHI-CIDSS, "the long-term sustainability of these bureaucratic improvements and power-shifts remain in doubt given that the program did not address national and local pre-existing power asymmetries" (Aceron 2022). An earlier World Bank paper has seen how CBD/CDD projects are "dominated by elites" and that the "targeting of poor communities as well as project quality tend to be markedly worse in more unequal communities" (Mansuri and Rao 2024). The value of this paper should not only be seen as a report but also a warning of how and when CDDs are most effective, especially given the context of inequalities and continued patronage politics.

WATER AND LAND AS SPRINGS OF EMPOWERMENT

As explained above, CDD initiatives do not necessarily need to be under governmental jurisdiction. Instances of CDD-inspired projects could take place even outside of and prior to the formal conceptualization and implementation of CDD as a development model. Wong and Gugenheim (2018) already suggested this years ago. However, existing literature concerning CDD in the Philippines mostly associate CDD with the KALAHI-CIDSS. One just simply needs to search for "community-driven development in the Philippines" in Google Scholar and observe that the top 10 items (Labonne and Chase 2011; 2009; Araral and Holmemo 2007; Reid 2011; Conforti and Pica-Ciamarra 2007; Pagel 2022; Roger and Permejo 2021; Wong 2012; Casey 2018; Allen 2003) on the list all refer to KALAHI-CIDSS except for one by Piero Conforti and Ugo Pica-Ciamarra's (2007), which studied how CDD was deployed in rice production in the Philippines.

This section traces another instance of CDD outside governmental jurisdiction, initiated by CSOs, particularly a people's organization called the San Roque Farmers Association (SRFA), and a non-government association called the Farmers Development Center (FARDEC). While members of the SRFA claim that their organization has been existing prior to the 1990s, they all acknowledge its founding in 1993 when they started to collectively assert for the contested 168-hectare plot of agricultural land in Brgy. Bonbon. They celebrated its 32nd anniversary in January 2025. On the other hand, FARDEC was established by a group of religious and lay persons in 1989, to serve as regional support mechanism for farmers in Central Visayas. This section specifically focuses on how the SRFA and FARDEC collaborated to implement and sustain a water system that supplies potable drinking water in Brgy. Bonbon, in the municipality of Aloguinsan, Cebu. The said water system began construction in 2007 and became operational by 2008. Like the previous section, themes that depict the development principles of empowerment, agency, and public deliberation are traced and analyzed in the narratives of respondents, showing that theirs is also an instance of CDD.

■ The tank that stores water for the water system in Brgy. Bonbon, Aloguinsan

Unlike the communities under the jurisdiction of KALAHI-CIDSS, the development initiatives of the SRFA and FARDEC in Brgy. Bonbon are not consciously informed by CDD, at least with how it is currently popularized by KALAHI-CIDSS and the WB. However, both the PO and NGO recognize that all their initiatives are primarily driven by the community. In a KII with the former FARDEC executive director, Estrella Catarata explained the criteria on how they support a project, citing responsiveness to the community and manageability/sustainability. She mentioned that their support for a specific project should be "out of the expressed need" of the community and "based on their capacity to manage and sustain." An SRFA officer and members also confirmed how they themselves were the ones who determined what projects they need to be implemented in their community.

Empowerment is expressed in the processes of construction, management, capability enhancement, and the alleviation of the community's economic situation. First, recognizing the lack of funds for the procurement of labor, the community, through the SRFA, decided to render their own labor for free for the construction of the project, supervised by a water engineer. An SRFA officer narrated "*Ang mga nagtrabaho, walay sweldo, miyembro lang gihapon*

peru nagtinabangay mi tanan diri para mamugna na ang proyekto" (Those who worked are members who did not receive compensation, but we all worked together in order to finally construct the project).

Second, the community collectively decided on how to manage the said project. They cited two mechanisms to ensure proper management. On the one hand, they formulated a set of policies that would regulate both the operation and income generation of the said project. An SRFA officer shared that "*Gibuhatan namo'g palisiya og unsaon ang pamaagi namo sa pagdumala sa water system*" (We formulated a policy on how we should manage the water system). Members confirmed the collective nature of how they approved the policy, the process of which will be explained below under public deliberation. On the other hand, a committee was set up tasked to oversee the overall operations of the water system. While the said committee performs important functions, their involvement is pushed more by voluntarism than by monetary rewards. As recounted by an SRFA officer, these committee members receive an honorarium of Php 50, however "*Malipay ra pud sila kay isip mga miyembro, makatabang sad sila... wala sila'y gimulo nga 'grabe naman ning gamaya*" (They enjoy doing their work because as members [of SRFA], they are able to help... they never complain about how cheap the honorarium was).

Third, given some technical aspects of the project, expertise also has to be ensured in order to sustain its operations. Ms. Catarata mentioned how during the initial stage of the project, a German water engineer went to the area and worked closely with the community. There were capability enhancement trainings that equipped select members of the SRFA with the technical knowledge of running machines, pumps, tanks, and other technologies which form part of the entire water system. An officer of the SRFA confirmed these capability enhancement trainings and further added how they sustained the transfer of knowledge. He narrated how this transfer of capabilities is ensured in an intergenerational manner, where the older members of the community pass their knowledge and skill to the younger ones, and allow the latter to assume committee positions should a member of the former decide to retire from doing technical work.

Fourth, the SRFA confirmed how the water system brought development to their community. On the one hand, through its direct effect of providing potable water to the community. They shared past experiences when they

used to walk long distances just to fetch potable water; a case which they no longer experienced the moment the water system began its operations. On the other hand, it also had indirect effects of raising the economic capacity of the SRFA through the income generated by the project. Members confirm a monthly water billing of around Php 110 and a Php 20 penalty for delayed fees. This penalty policy was collectively decided on and formed part of what they formulated back then as the water system operations policy. The number of households supplied with water rose, from an initial count of around 60 to around 80 households today. The members narrated how through the income generated, they can access emergency funds for medical, education, or burial assistance, among other forms of assistance. Their gatherings are also shouldered by the income generated by the project. A community member described the water system as *tubod* (a spring or source), where not only water springs, but also a better life for their community.

The decision behind the selection of the water system is revealing of community agency. It can be said that the notion of choice was absent in the initial phase of conceptualizing which project to implement. This is not because the community members were denied of such a choice, but that the objective conditions – i.e., the absence of potable water – made the water system a necessity out from which the community members must choose. If for Pham (2018) agency is the pursuit of valuable self-regarding and other-regarding objectives, objective necessity immediately provided that which is the most valuable for the community, yet freely pursued and committed to this objective afterwards. The members confirmed that they collectively, unanimously, and freely agreed that they built a water system to respond to the pressing need of providing potable water to the community. An SRFA member narrated that "*Importante ang tubig sa katawhan diri, gamit gyud kaayo siya hilabi na kanang maghuwaw, mao man nay among gamiton para bisbis among tinanom*" (Water is important for the people, it is very useful especially during droughts, we use it to water our crops).

The intersection between freedom and necessity became the initial site of agency, later opening them to more questions, with the most fundamental one concerning funding. To resolve this issue, the SRFA decided to solicit funding, which came from three sources: the mayor, a partylist organization, and FARDEC. The municipal mayor then contributed Php 60,000 to the project, while *Bayan Muna* provided funding for the procurement of a

submersible pump. It was FARDEC that brought in more funding from their partner German funding institution. FARDEC's decision to support the SRFA's initiative was again based on what Ms. Catarata explained as their criteria of responsiveness and sustainability. The water system being responsive to the community's need, according to Ms. Catarata was obvious enough. On the other hand, they consulted with the community and had to be assured by the SRFA that the latter not only needs the project but also commits itself to sustaining it.

Despite the combined funding, it was unable procure the necessary labor. This again demanded a choice from the community where, as mentioned earlier, those skilled enough rendered free labor for the construction of the system. One sees how agency is exercised, gradually curbing necessity point by point and inversely realizing potentialities and agencies of a community, both individual and collective.

Unlike the KALAHI-CIDSS CDD initiatives, public deliberation in this CSO-initiated development program is outside the bureaucratic processes of the government. The SRFA members shared that they publicly deliberate decisions in general assemblies and in their regular meetings. An SRFA officer recounted how, for example, the policy governing the water system was initially drafted by the officers and later deliberated and approved in the larger general assembly of members. He also shared how they resolve concerns and issues in the regular meetings.

Public deliberations characteristic under the SRFA's initiatives are more organic, as it is literally initiated and driven by the organization itself, unfettered by bureaucratic requirements and far from elite capture and control. Policies and decisions organically spring from the organization concerned and are less likely to be alienating on the part of the members since they consider these their very own.

Another feature that distinguishes the CDD model of the SRFA and FARDEC is their consciousness of the political nature of development, anchoring it on the larger need to confront societal inequalities and power asymmetries. One major criticism of the KALAHI-CIDSS is how it sees itself as a neutral technology to be deployed for the purpose of development. In its knowledge and resource center site, DSWD envisioned "to advance CDD as a technology."

Bulloch (2017) elaborated this criticism and opined that "utilizing 'social technology,' the project appears neutral, objectively observing, and responding to the mechanical workings of society." She continued that "reference to 'tool kits,' common in KALAHI and participatory development more generally, suggests that with the proper application of expert knowledge and the right instruments, 'defective' communities can be repaired and rectified."

The SRFA members were explicit of the political nature of development especially on how they see the relation between water (generated by the technical system) and the land they are tilling. They recounted a land dispute in 2011, where 39 persons, including student activists and supporters from the University of the Philippines Cebu, were arrested. The dispute was triggered by the fencing of the 168-hectare land by a private family asserting ownership of what has been known as the Hacienda Gantuanco (Booc et al. 2011). The farmers saw the incident as an act of land grabbing, something which is not totally new to them.[2]

The farmers linked their struggle for access to potable water with their collective fight for land. Ms. Catarata explained how land was a fundamental problem for the farmers. She asserted how the struggle for water is also the struggle for land. Even members of the SRFA saw the need to continually defend their land, not only because of the water, but also because of the life that springs from it. They believe that their victories in collectively realizing a water system for their own consumption would be put to waste if the land they collectively till will be grabbed from them.

Because of the SRFA's resistance to what they deemed as land grabbing, the community has been constantly subjected to militarization. In an FGD conducted in the area, villagers pointed to where military elements just recently installed their barracks and recounted instances of harassment, community monitoring, and terror-tagging. While Cebu has been declared insurgency-free since 2010 (Romero 2010) and was recently recognized for sustaining the supposed peace and order (Sugbo News 2024), militarization

2 For a more detailed history of the land in Brgy. Bonbon and the issue of landgrabbing and resistance, see Lenny Ocasiones (2018) article "You can't have our Land."

continues especially in areas characterized by a high level of peasant empowerment and resistance, including Brgy. Bonbon.

PATH TOWARDS THE STRENGTHENING OF CDD

As has been discussed above, development principles of empowerment, agency, and public deliberation are shared both by governmental and non-governmental CDD initiatives, at least as depicted by the SRFA and FARDEC. However, the two are distinguished in three respects: their institutional character, their organizational forms, and their understanding of development. First, although varying in degrees of institutionalization, governmental CDD initiatives are assured of LCCs especially in municipalities that have passed CDD ordinances. The institutionalization characteristic of governmental CDD initiatives is absent in non-governmental CDD initiatives such as those of the SRFA and FARDEC. This does not suggest that the latter be included or integrated in the institutionalized framework of the former. On the contrary, it will be best for the governmental and CSO-led development initiatives to be separated yet coordinated, with the former extending its resources for the strengthening of the capabilities of the latter. This separation reinforces a key constitutional provision under state policies, where the state encourages "non-governmental, community-based, or sectoral organizations that promote the welfare of the nation." Here, CSO-led initiatives preserve their autonomy and assume a function vital for a democratic society, where development initiatives are driven both by state and non-state actors.

Second, the organizations where communities exercise empowerment differ, with governmental CDD initiatives through barangay assemblies and non-governmental initiatives through POs. This is understandable given how the former is institutionally embedded in governmental bureaucracy and functions. In this regard, CDD could be further strengthened if CSOs are not only shared with the state's resources but also allowed further empowerment. However, CSOs in the Philippines, especially the highly politicized ones, are in constant danger of harassment, terror-tagging, and attacks under a militarist counterinsurgency campaign. This even prompted the International Labor Organization to conduct a mission to investigate reported attacks (Gupta 2024). If non-governmental CDD is to be strengthened, the current model of counterinsurgency spearheaded by the National Task Force to End Local Community Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) has to be revised altogether. It must

be noted that despite recommendations of United Nations Special Rapporteurs Irene Khan and Ian Fry to abolish the NTF-ELCAC, the said agency continues to be funded by the present administration. Under the present militarist counterinsurgency program, CSOs continue to face mortal danger which consequently constrains their CDD initiatives.

Third is their understanding of development, where governmental CDD initiatives tend to view development initiatives as neutral and depoliticized, while that of the SRFA and FARDEC links underdevelopment with inequalities and power asymmetries. Current governmental CDD initiatives are criticized not only because of how they are securitized and used under the government's counterinsurgency program, but also of the token reforms that result from these initiatives (Reid 2011). Theoretically, there is a need to better understand the link between CDD initiatives and the larger systemic reforms required to reverse centuries old problems of landlessness, underdevelopment, patronage politics, and elite democracy, among many others. It is not enough that academic interventions are critical of the current depoliticized character of the current governmental CDD. Critiques must soon provide visions on how to address the gap between the micro and the macro scales, or between community-based initiatives and the larger systemic issues that require socio-economic and political reforms. Perhaps CSO-led CDD initiatives, organically from the very organizations expressive of the interests of the people, can offer alternative visions that address this gap.

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