

Social Mobilization Through Environment and Disaster Risk Management Advocacy for Climate Change Adaptation¹

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ABSTRACT

The growing demand for environmental education is grounded on the recommendation of majority of both national and international environmental experts as the issue on climate change became a global concern. This project went a long way of conceptualization for as early as 1993 by Dr. Mani after conducting a study on the environmental status of Romblon uncovering issues such as forest denudation, degradation of coral colonies, solid waste management, pollution, and poverty. These problems have been attributed to the poor implementation of environmental laws, massive poverty, and ignorance of the people on environmental protection and preservation. The project evolved from a research study that would establish the validity and acceptability of the 6-module Instructional Materials (IM) for Environmental Education (2004) involving 550 persons coming from members of the Local Government Unit, Parent-Teacher-Community Association officers/representatives, and Graduate students to an extension project that allowed multi-sectoral, inter-agency convergence in educating the 2,500 BLGUs, LGUs, and other sectoral representatives of the 17 Municipalities of Romblon using the validated IMs with Romblon State University as the lead agency. The project used the Community In Vitro and In Vivo Development Approach in managing a resource-limited research involving multi-sectors, agencies, institutions, and stakeholders. The project's fund grew from P500, 000.00- granted by Local Government Academy (LGA) after winning the Search for Best Project to P1.5 M counterparts of participating agencies. The project is now on Phase I with the Local Government Units and Heads of National Agencies as their partner agencies. The Phase II of the project would target to educate women and youth sectors of Romblon.

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change is the world's major concern today. Its manifestation has a direct impact on a highly complex system consisting of five interacting components: the atmosphere (air), the hydrosphere (water), the lithosphere (land), the cryosphere (frozen part of the earth) and the biosphere (part of the earth where life exist).

Changes in the world's climate are not new. In fact, human have been able to cope and adapt to these changes. It is one factor which has influenced the course of human history and human evolution. It refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity (anthropogenic causes). It can also result from the interaction of the atmosphere and ocean. But the United Nations Frameworks Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) put more emphasis on human activities which cause climate change.

World leaders of 192 countries recognized that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can be affected by industrial and other emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Their main goal is the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic human induced interference with the climate system.

The Philippines, although a minor contributor in greenhouse gas emissions, poses vulnerability to some climate change impact like sea level rise because of its archipelagic geography. Agricultural and marine resources are also at high risk of being damaged due to prolong rain or dry season and increase of sea temperature.

Romblon is not excluded from these creeping effects of climate change being an island province composed of 7 major islands and islets, it is highly vulnerable to risk and disasters. As a third class province it belongs to the top 20 poorest provinces in the country. The political leadership is striving towards maturity. Development is elusive due to its geographic location. More so, the economic activity of the people revolves around farming, fishing, mining, etc which are all dependent on the richness of its natural resources. There is a high risk that the natural resources of the province will come to exhaustion that would increase its vulnerability to the effects of climate change and natural calamities. The Romblon State

University (RSU) as a Higher Education Institution commits to conduct a massive information and education campaign to collaborate collectively in developing doable and sustainable climate change adaptation and mitigation plans in every municipality of Romblon. Each barangay, being the nucleus of society have important roles in efforts towards climate change mitigation and adaptation activities.

The study of Mani in 2004 unearthed the following environmental issues in Romblon such as: forest denudation, degradation of coral colonies, solid waste management, pollution and poverty. These problems have been attributed to the poor implementation of environmental laws, massive poverty, and ignorance of the people on environmental protection and preservation. Her recommendations were to immediately address the environmental issues and for local authorities to prepare for the inevitable.

Grounded on this concern, Mani in 2007 came up with a study on the Validation of a Learning Package for Environmental Education. The validation exhibited a high acceptability of the modules. With the two related studies she was competent to transform its results to extension programs. In 2009 when the Local Government Academy through the provincial DILG units made an open invitation for grant competition, the author made her way for the grant through the proposal entitled "Environment and Disaster Risk management Advocacy for Climate Change Adaptation" hence this project was born.

This project is a two-day seminar-workshop for Local Government Officials and other stakeholders in the whole province of Romblon. It is intended to address the urgent demand for education in ecological responsibility as recommended by Earth Summit in the Agenda 21 which aims to foster Environmental Education and reiterated by UNEP, WHO, and NEPC. This demand is grounded on the recommendation of majority of environmental experts (both national and international) based on the observations and research findings that the "breakdown of the system of environmental awareness and conservation has significant relationship to the problems of knowledge and attitudes at the values level."

The DILG Romblon in coordination with the Romblon state University-Research, Extension and Production Center (RSU-REP) designed the program suited to local setting considering the environmental issues to be addressed, appropriate environment-friendly technology/lifestyle and practical solid waste management strategies to be transferred, as well as sustainable agri-economic program, to be initiated that would help attain food sufficiency without jeopardizing the environment.

The LGUs, NGOs, and other People's Organizations were the target participants of this project because the proponent believed that it is everyone's duty to preserve and protect mother earth. The LGUs play a tremendous role in saving what is left for the future generation, because they are the law makers and enforcers. Other sectors should move in unison if we are to mend the damaged environment. This project expects to develop an empowered community lead by the LGU from the barangay to the provincial level, ready to mitigate and adapt to the short term and long term effects of climate change particularly disasters due to extreme weather conditions by promoting balance of the ecosystem through environment friendly lifestyle.

METHODOLOGY

The conduct of information and education campaign on climate change awareness and understanding the risks posed by the increase of global temperature was made through interactive seminar-workshops per municipality. A long-term engagement and partnership was encouraged to conduct follow-up, and ensure sustained efforts in monitoring and evaluation.

Implementation Activities

Planning and Clustering

Series of consultation meetings with partner and cooperating agencies were made to lay down all activities needed in the conduct of seminar-workshops, the expected output, and the continuing activities that will be integrated in the municipal plan and will be implemented at the barangay level.

Each municipality was divided per cluster. Each college was assigned to lead the conduct of the seminar-workshop as part of their extension activities. Local experts per topic were identified and pool of speakers was established. Each college had formed a team of facilitators, moderators, and documenters to sit per group in thematic sessions. A dry run was conducted to test time allotment per topic, pacing, and schedule of activities.

Coordination and Communication

Coordination with Local Government Unit regarding the conduct of seminar-workshops was made by the project proponent with the assistance of College deans. Schedule of activities, number and

composition of participants, and solicited counterparts were agreed and finalized. Barangay officials of each municipality were the target priority to actively participate in the workshop. Expected output and action plan after the workshop was emphasized.

The Romblon State University's (RSU) Convergence Web Framework (Fig. 1), a novelty output of the previous research conducted by RSU was used consistently in the project implementation as an approach to establish partnership, cooperation and ownership among stakeholders; LGU, line government agencies, academe, church, and non-government organizations.

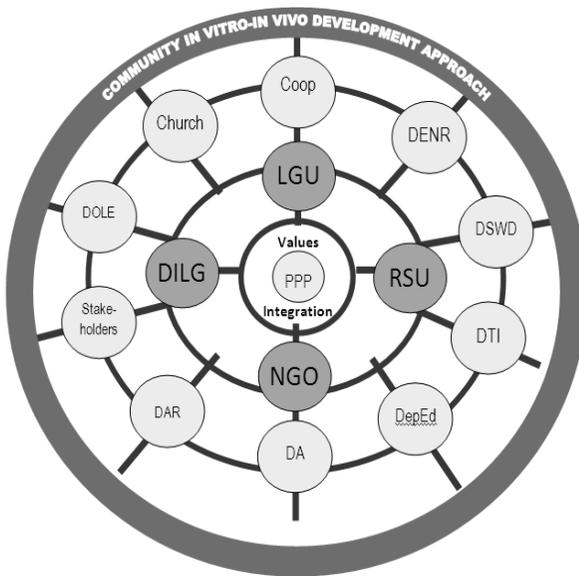


Fig.1. The RSU Convergence Web Framework

Plenary Session

Selected resource speakers have been invited to talk on assigned topic to be delivered in a plenary. Topics presented in the plenary sessions were as follows: Understanding and Appreciating Creation; Inner Ecology; Impact of Climate Change; Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture; Solid Waste Management; Disaster Risk Management and Synthesis.

Parallel Thematic Learning Sessions

Participants were divided into five groups. Five parallel thematic sessions were held to discuss the following topics: Ecosystem Health,

Sustainable Agriculture, Coastal Resource management, Zero Waste Management and Disaster Risk Management. These parallel sessions served as an avenue for the resource speakers and participants to discuss within a smaller group specific issues and concerns about climate change mitigation and disaster risk management.

Focus Group Discussion

In the same grouping, a team of facilitators/moderators and documenters were assigned to guide and record the discussion which focused on specific questions.

Action Planning

From the issues and concerns identified in the FGD, an action plan to mitigate identified problems, the participants were asked to develop a doable action plan.

Panel Evaluation

In the plenary, the action plans made in thematic sessions were presented for other team comments, suggestions and evaluation. These were consolidated as a municipal action plan on environment and disaster risk management. The team of experts who evaluates the action plan are the provincial directors of DOST, DTI, DOLE, TESDA, DA and DENR.

Election of EDRM Technical Working Committee

A technical working committee for Environment and Disaster Risk Management was elected. The Barangay Captain and one Kagawad per barangay were automatically appointed as member of this committee. The formed committee will be in-charge of the monitoring of the implementation of the action plan of every barangay.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the ten (10) municipalities where the seminar-workshop was already conducted, 72% of the total participants were Barangay officials, 13% came from different NGOs, 8% from Local Government Units composing of Sangguniang Bayan Members and Department Heads and 7% from DepEd personnel.

The composition of participants by sector who attended was proportional to what was projected in the proposal submitted to each municipality. The high participation of each invited sector could be attributed to the established rapport with these sectors as well as the strong collaboration with the different Municipal LGUs prior to the actual 2-day seminar-workshop.

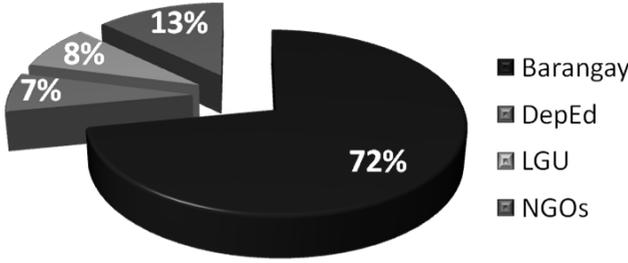


Fig.2. Percentage of attendance per sector from the 10 municipalities in Romblon

Figure 3 shows the high turnout of participants that were able to complete the two-day seminar workshop. This could be attributed to the orientation given to the participants during the opening program that there will be cash incentives to be given to those participating Barangays and agencies who could maintain their attendance, punctuality in coming to the venue and in submitting the required output, would observe discipline, cooperation, and participation on the entire duration of the seminar-workshop.

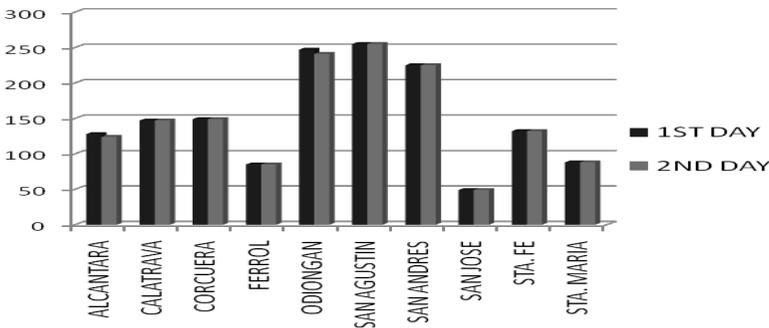


Fig.3. Attendance by municipality in the 2-day seminar-workshop

The objective of mobilizing the whole province of Romblon towards environmental and disaster risk management entails funds that would cover for the different expenses that would be incurred in conducting the seminar-

workshops in the 17 the Municipalities. Figure 4 shows that almost three fourth of the funds was sourced-out from the Municipal LGUs, NGOs and LGA and only one fourth of the funds came from the lead implementer.

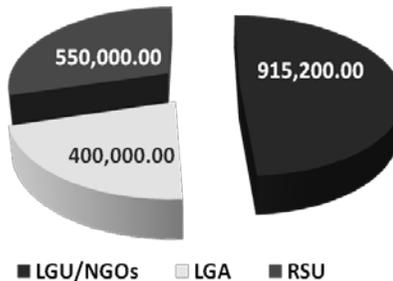


Fig.4. Sources of funds used in the whole project

CONCLUSION

The conduct of the 2-day seminar workshop in environmental and disaster risk management for climate change adaptation was not difficult to sell to every municipality since the effects of climate change have undeniably affected everyone. Mainstreaming of ideas using multi-level collaboration involving different sectors, agencies, institutions, and stakeholders during core group meetings, parallel sessions, focus group discussions, and action planning was found effective in empowering the grassroots level of society. Ownership of the program was smoothly internalized by the participating agencies as the bottom-up approach in planning, implementing and monitoring their own mitigating plans in the barangay and municipal level was adapted. The use of cash incentives also contributed to the high turnout of sustained participation among stakeholders. Feedback and post evaluation from the participants were found beneficial in improving the conduct of the seminar-workshop. It can also be noted that a limited-resource program can be sustained if all sectors of society will be involved and committed to the realization of the program's objectives by investing financial resources and/or by sharing their field of expertise.

At the end, the problem posed by climate change paved the way for all sectors of society regardless of religious and political affiliations to the awareness of their inner ecology and unite towards fulfilling differentiated responsibilities to our environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the seminar-workshops conducted and evaluated in the Province of Romblon, the authors have arrived on the following recommendations:

1. The program should also be introduced to the women and youth sectors since they belong to large sectors of the society.
2. The lead agency would have to apply for accreditation to LGA for institutionalizing the program to the National Level.
3. Creating database of the participants' profile could well serve as a rich source of information for follow-up programs
4. Strong documentation on the best practices, lessons learned, and findings derived from the program could well serve as a guide for related programs to be conducted in the future.
5. Impact assessment of the program could be conducted using the consolidated municipal action plans vis-à-vis the implemented programs.