Emerging Roles of Non-Government and Community-Based Organizations in Social Development: Some Case Studies Focusing on Children

Editha Venus-Maslang, PhD

This paper describes and analyzes the specific roles and contributions of selected NGOs in the Philippines to social development and how they are able to ensure sustainability of the gains from their efforts and interventions. Starting off with a theoretical discussion on social development, the paper revolves around how the interplay of socio-cultural, economic, political and environment factors has impinged upon the outcomes of interventions of these NGOs. Social development is focused on two major elements: a) access to resources and opportunities, and b) strengthened capacities for sustained participation and empowerment. Three brief case studies are presented to narrow the discussions to the experiences of some selected members of the National Council of Social Development (NCSD) that cater primarily to the children sector.

Using desk review and case study methods, the data revealed the following: a) increased participation of women in community development work as leaders or active volunteers; b) creation and implementation of some alternative models of practice - mobile school, street peer education, and mobilizing peace builders among children; c) strengthened capacities of CBO leaders in governance and partnership building; d) presence of community-based structures, mechanisms and processes that facilitate the project development processes; e) introduction of cost-efficient and culturally appropriate technologies such as backyard gardening and community-based savings and mobilization scheme that effectively sustained the interest and participation of the members; f) the presence of second-line leaders; and, g) formalized partnerships with the local government units and other key partners.

On the other hand, the following are needed capacities to effectively sustain the project initiatives and gains of the organizations: further advocacy for stronger and sustained support to the NGO projects/activities from among their local partners and key stakeholders; strengthening of capacities on resource mobilization, financial management and stewardship, and network and alliance building; and, the preparation and implementation of a sustainability plan at the onset of project implementation.

Keywords: social development, roles of non-government organizations and community – based organizations

Introduction

Non-government organizations (NGOs) are intermediary organizations that bridge the state and the citizens. Many NGOs either work with, or provide assistance to people's organizations (Abella & Dimalanta, 2003). NGOs are private, non-stock, non-profit voluntary organizations that work with different sectors and communities to promote their general welfare and development, and provide a wide range of services for people's organizations. Their mission is to bring about social change (Association of Foundations, 2001).

NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) continue to play a critical role in the development of communities and societies. Individual and network NGOs and CBOs have actively lobbied with concerned government entities for the passage of legislation and policies that promote the people's development agenda. The 1987 Philippine Constitution encourages the formation of NGOs, CBOs or sectoral organizations that promote the welfare of the nation as follows:

Article II. Declaration of Principles and State Policies, Section 23: "The State shall encourage non-governmental, community-based, or sectoral organizations that promote the welfare of the nation".

Article XIII. Role and Rights of People's Organizations, Section 15. "The State shall respect the role of independent people's organizations to enable the people to pursue and protect, within the democratic

framework, their legitimate and collective interest and aspirations through peaceful and lawful means. People's organizations are bona fide associations of citizens with demonstrated capacity to promote the public interest and with identifiable leadership, membership and structure".

The 1991 Local Government Code provides for the empowerment of the people through their direct participation in local governance, and by performing certain acts that used to be the domain of public officials, to wit:

Section II C. It is likewise the policy of the State to require all national agencies and offices to conduct periodic consultations with appropriate local government units, non-governmental and people's organizations, and other concerned sectors of community before any project or program is implemented in their respective jurisdictions.

But even before the government's formal recognition of their roles, NGOs already existed as early as the Spanish era but more prominently during the mid-1940s when there was an urgent need to rebuild and rehabilitate the nation from the devastating effects of the war. One of the pioneering networks established was the Council for the Welfare of Agencies in the Philippines, Inc. (CWAFPI) or now called the National Council of Social Development (NCSD). Its original members were non-government and charitable organizations focusing on relief and welfare programs. Over the years, the roles of the NGOs have evolved as they adjusted their program interventions to meet the emerging needs and situations of people in communities.

This paper describes and analyzes the specific roles and contributions of selected NGOs to social development and how they are able to ensure the sustainable gains from their efforts and interventions. It should be noted that the paper does not intend to evaluate the contributions of NCSD as it would be ambitious for the purposes of this article. Rather, the intent is to highlight some experiences to understand the roles and factors that influence the performance of some NGOs as they continue to pursue the aims of social development. The focus

of this paper therefore is on some member organizations of the NCSD and not the entire Council.

The main methods of data collection used were review of program-related documents of selected NGOs that have links with community-based organizations (CBOs) or people's organizations (POs). These case studies were drawn from the author's evaluations of development programs of some NGOs in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao from the latter part of 2012 to the early part of 2013. Each evaluation used a combination of methods such as group and individual interviews, documents review, and validation workshops. The three case studies were selected as they represent the three major regions of the country.

The paper is divided into the following main sections: the first part presents some perspectives on social development, including its elements and approaches; the second part discusses the Philippine NGO features, history and contributions to social development; and the third section presents three case studies of selected NGOs focusing on their program strategies, and the facilitating and hindering factors to effective project implementation. The fourth part tackles the internal and external factors that influence the achievement of social development aims and the last section presents the conclusions and recommendations.

Perspectives on Social Development

In the late 1990s, social development was described as the increasing utilization of human potential and the presence of organizational mechanisms that express and apply knowledge or learning to achieve social and economic goals (Jacobs & Cleveland, 1999).

Sen (1999) offered a more comprehensive approach to development by conceiving it as the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. In order to operationalize these "freedoms", Sen (1999) used the concept of human capability, which relates to the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance their substantive choices. The basic assumption

here is that the expansion of human capabilities adds to the quality of people's lives. The capabilities approach contrasts with narrower views of development that are largely, if not uniquely, restricted to income indicators (for example, gross national product per head) and material growth. His understanding of development includes elements such as social well-being, poverty alleviation, gender equality and universal access to primary education, health care and meaningful employment (Sen, 1999).

Social development likewise implies change in social institutions. Progress toward an inclusive society, for example, implies that individuals treat each other more fairly in their daily lives, whether in the family, workplace, or public office. Social cohesion is enhanced by the creation of peaceful and safe environment within neighborhoods and communities. Social accountability exists to the extent that citizens' voices are expressed, and heard by the authorities. Formal institutional reforms, such as the provision of legally enshrined rights, better law enforcement, or more participatory governance, are part of the processes by which institutional change is achieved. Changing the way people relate to one another is an equally important aspect (Institute of Social Studies, 2013).

On a similar vein, several international funding agencies have equated social development with poverty reduction, social inclusion, equitable access to services, resources and opportunities, and community empowerment, among others. This indicates the need to balance the power relations or structures within societies. Among these organizations is the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). It has prioritized, among others, improving civil society capacity to engage government in constructive partnerships for reform, enhancing government capacity to pursue organizational and institutional change, working with civil society to improve the accountability and transparency of government operations, and incorporating gender-equitable and disability-inclusive development approaches in its programming (AusAID, 2012).

Based on the foregoing discussions, the author has identified some common elements of social development as follows: development of human capital and potentials, especially of the poor, vulnerable and marginalized sectors, that contribute to social and economic growth; application of approaches and processes toward achieving high levels of qualitative results, including social change and transformation; and, sustainability of positive initiatives and gains that propel and mobilize social action and community/sector participation.

Institutional change is essential to social development. The role of organizations is critical in improving the social conditions of the development participants particularly through improved utilization of available resources (human and material) and the strengthened capacities for their sustained participation and empowerment. These in turn are influenced by the interplay of socio-cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors.

Based on the author's syntheses of the reviewed literature coupled with her own evaluation experiences, socio-cultural factors refer to the attitude, norms and behavior of people that could either facilitate or hinder development progress in communities, e.g., how people view their own role and participation in their own development. Economic factors pertain to the resources and the livelihood or income earning opportunities available and which could be tapped to help improve the living conditions especially of the marginalized groups. Political factors refer to the nature and amount of support of political leaders, and how they influence the creation and delivery of policies, programs and services. Environment-related factors could be natural or man-made, which can destroy lives and properties (See Fig. 1).
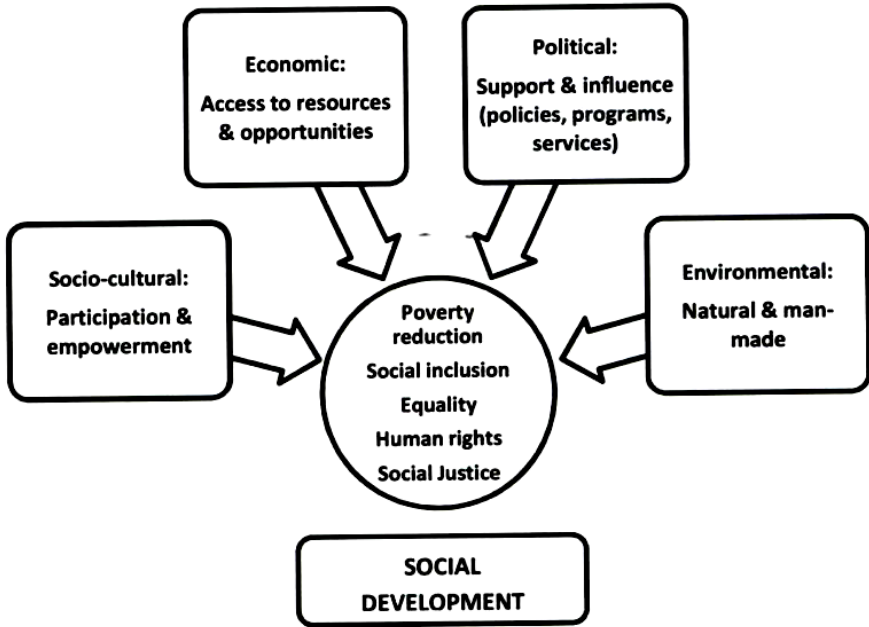
Figure 1. The elements and the interplay of factors influencing social development[1]

The aforementioned concepts can be translated into measurements shown on Table 1:

Table 1: Some operational definitions of key concepts of social development as used in the case studies

Key concept	Sub-concept	Measurement
Socio-cultural	*Participation*	Type of project-related activities participated in by community partners
	Empowerment	Participation in decision-making; ability to influence decisions
Economic	*Access to resources & opportunities*	Having an equal chance or opportunity to freely access social and economic services (free from discrimination owing to gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.)
Political	*Support & influence*	Nature and degree of support extended by local leaders to the project (policy, resources, recognition, etc.) Nature and degree of influence exerted by the NGOs/ CBOs on political leaders and vice-versa
Environmental	*Natural and man-made hazards*	Occurrences and effects of natural disasters Presence of conflict

Non-government organization: Features, History and Contributions to Social Development

This section discusses the features, history and contributions of the NGOs to social development, derived mainly from the review of existing documents and literature on the experiences of Philippine NGOs.

NGO Features

NGOs are classified by different levels of organization as shown on Table 2:

Table 2: Classification of Non-Government Organizations

Primary	*Individual* NGOs: They work directly at the grassroots level. They do community organizing, direct service delivery, and provide assistance to POs.
Secondary	*Network* of NGOs: Their roles are to build the membership's capacities, broker resources or source funds and projects for the members, and push for collective advocacy work. Their direct implementation of projects is often limited to 'pilot-testing' of particular strategies or trailblazing interventions, which are later shared with members.
Tertiary	*Association* of NGO networks: Their main purpose is to advocate for policy reforms and to create opportunities to discuss and build consensus on national issues and concerns. Their activities usually consist of convening dialogues, reviewing national programs and development strategies, and providing opportunities for civil society groups to interface with high ranking government officials, the donor community, and others. On critical issues, they mobilize collective opinion and public pressure nationwide in order to get the state to listen to and heed the citizen's sentiments.

Source: Abella & Dimalanta, 2003

Individual NGOs may be classified according to the following:

- *Organizational function and program thrust*: social development, economic development, environment, governance, gender, etc.
- *Program strategies:* community organizing, cooperative development, micro-finance, education, etc.

- *Target partners or benecifiaries:* children youth, women, older persons, indigenous people, farmers, etc.
- *Specific issues:* infdormal settlers, human rights, ancestral land, agrarian reform, etc.

Examples of NGO members of NCSD that have established CBOs are World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF) and the Educational Research and Development (ERDA) Foundation. WVDF is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and their communities to reach their full potentials by addressing the causes of poverty and injustice. ERDA on the other hand seeks to empower socially and economically disadvantaged children, youth, women, families and communities to participate in initiatives and efforts towards ensuring access to quality basic education, and to organize and develop functional children's and people's organizations for them to effectively manage and sustain their own programs and projects, among others.

NCSD is an example of a network of NGOs in the Philippines. As a network, it has a secretariat that coordinates activities of its member organizations. Network activities include holding a general assembly, dissemination of relevant information on project and membership updates, and joint service delivery particularly in areas of capacity building, educational assistance and livelihood projects. Another example is the Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRA), a network of more than 70 NGOs, most of which operate in rural areas. It provides technical inputs on project development, monitoring and evaluation to its member organizations.

The Philippine Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) exemplifies the third category of NGOs. Organized in 1990 by ten of the largest networks in the country (including the NCSD), it promotes professionalism, expands the NGO outreach, and increases the effectiveness of NGO and PO work in the country. One of its main strategic thrusts is capacity and institution building to raise the standards of work of NGOs in development.

NGOs are required to obtain a legal personality through registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or other relevant government agencies e.g., Cooperative Development Authority, Department of Social Welfare and Development, for them to be eligible to open bank accounts, enter into contracts, and raise funds.

History of Philippine NGOs

This section discusses the historical development of NGOs in the Philippines. Table 3 shows the dominant thrusts of NGOs in the Philippines over the years.

Table 3: Dominant Program Thrusts and Strengths of Philippine NGOs Over the Years

	Spanish colonial period (17th - 19th century)	American period (early 20th century)	Post- colonial period (1946-1972)	Martial rule (1972-1985)	Post-EDSA revolution (1986 to present)
Focus/Thrust	Church-inspired, class-based mutual aid & welfare	Growth of professional & managerial class; focus on education & professionalism	Rural reconstruction Growth of cooperative movements Political activism Collective business philanthropy	Social action New areas of concern: labor education, preventive health care, disaster relief, environment and gender issues Social conscience for the public sector	Democratization Government's increasing recognition of vital role of NGOs NGO participation in social, political and economic reforms Organizational and program sustainability Social inclusion Sustainable development & environment
Approaches and Strategies	Maintaining orphanage, asylums, hospitals Promoting arts & crafts	Trade or profession-based organizing Formation of 'artist' organizations with the rise of culture and entertainment industries	Welfare & civic organization Sector-based organizing Human rights & grassroots organizing Resettlement of rebel returnees Parish-based credit unions	Continuation of organizing work Policy advocacy Alternative structure to government in service delivery	NGO representation & participation in social policy reform Broader national alliances, coalition-building & networking

Source: Author's synthesis of the reviewed literature

The succeeding discussions provide a synthesis of the dominant changes in the program foci or thrusts and approaches of the Philippine NGOs as expounded by several authors (Abella & Dimalanta, 2003; Asian Development Bank, 1999; Cariño, 2000; Co & Alegre, 1996; Liamzon, 1990).

NGOs were formally organized after the Second World War although their features were already evident during the Spanish and American colonization eras. Their primary thrusts then were rural reconstruction, urban poverty alleviation, and social welfare.

Towards the 1950s, insurgency was on the rise particularly in the countryside. Thus, initial community organizing efforts by the State were evident through setting up of cooperatives to thwart the growing protest and insurgency movements, among other reasons. Some NGOs also catered to the welfare and resettlement of rebel returnees.

Since the 1950s, Philippine NGOs have evolved from social service and welfare to social action and mobilization and from state-initiated to private-initiated organizations. Social activists actively adopted the community organizing (CO) approach in facilitating resolution of issues which impinged on the lives of the marginalized sectors; thus, the emergence of networks, alliances, and coalitions.

The failure of development strategies and the upsurge of liberation movements led to the influx of progressive ideas into traditional institutions. Church leaders decided to shift their program strategies from traditional welfare (e.g., orphanages, home for the aged) to social action (e.g., self-help projects, community development, cooperatives). In 1970, the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) was organized by some business leaders to undertake poverty alleviation programs and to fund a foundation. PBSP, one of the founding members of the CODE-NGO, until now continues to cater to the needs of specific poverty groups.

Towards the mid-70s, NGOs employed a more radical approach to social change as a response to human rights repression and violation, which characterized

the Martial Rule regime. Church-based organizations and social action movements formed sector-based organizations and alliances. They established partnerships with other progressive cause-oriented organizations in the collective pursuit of justice, freedom, and human rights.

In the mid-80s, collective efforts toppled the Marcos regime and catapulted Corazon Aquino into the seat of power. During her term, democratization was substantially accelerated. The role of NGOs was officially recognized by the state as an extension of 'people power'. This recognition was eventually enshrined in the various provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution that encourage the formation and participation of NGOs in promoting national welfare and development.

In the 1990s, coalitions, conglomerations, and consortia were organized among large NGO networks, people's organizations (POs), government, and sometimes private enterprises. Different development paradigms were developed. Professionalism through training and education was prominent. As previously mentioned, CODE NGO, organized in 1990 by ten of the largest networks in the country, including NCSD, sought to promote professionalism, expand outreach, and increase effectiveness of NGO and PO work in the country (CODE-NGO, 2002).

To promote accountability of NGOs and regulate the proliferation of pseudo-NGOs, the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) was organized by six national NGO networks in partnership with the Department of Finance and the Bureau of Internal Revenue. Through the certification, local donors are given tax incentives when they provide assistance and/or largess to donee institutions.

PCNC still exists to date. The certification process requires compliance with documentary requirements, scheduling of visit of volunteer peer evaluators, conduct of assessment visit using standards and indicators devised by PCNC, and preparation of evaluation report which could lead to compliance with urgent

recommendations and submission for Board Deliberation (CODE-NGO, 2011). However, not all NGOs submit a letter of intent nor seek certification for eligibility for tax incentives from the PCNC thus explaining why some bogus NGOs exist.

NGOs, through their network, are able to define a collective vision for development, and adopt uniform standards for responsive and effective development work. The dominant thrusts of many NGOs and POs have been program sustainability, institutional strengthening, and broader impact reach.

NGOs have facilitated the creation of the PO structure at the community level to assume the key tasks of managing and operating community-based programs or projects. POs are initially dependent on the NGOs for most of the required technical expertise and logistics. They are envisioned at some point to take on the major functions of program or project designing and management, including mobilizing resources and other forms of support to sustain the gains from the various project initiatives.

NGOs' Contributions to Social Development: Focus on the NCSD

A pioneering network of NGOs in the Philippines is the National Council of Social Development (NCSD) Foundation of the Philippines, Inc., established in 1949. It serves as the Secretariat for 201 NGOs and POs spread throughout the country with around 90% coming from Luzon particularly Metro Manila. Around 85% of the NCSD members are primarily implementing programs in the fields of social welfare and social development, mostly catering to the children's sector.

Membership to NCSD may be through referral, voluntary application, or invitation by the NCSD officers or members. An NGO applicant must be duly registered with the SEC (or any relevant government agency) and must be implementing social welfare and development programs. NCSD has formed geographic clusters, e.g., Manila, Quezon City, and Metro South, to institutionalize capability building programs and enhance networking among its member organizations. Each cluster operates as an autonomous local network under the

leadership of elected officers. The clusters have actively participated in the development and implementation of programs particularly for street children through advocacy, program development, resource mobilization, networking and alliance building, capacity building, and research and documentation.

Among the network members of the CODE-NGO, NCSD is one that focuses on the vulnerable sectors such as children and women. The author being a social work educator and mainly engaged in evaluation of social development programs found it relevant to give focus on NCSD, one of the oldest networks involved in social welfare and development.

The succeeding discussions, including the three case studies, were drawn from the experiences of selected NCSD member organizations.

Why focus on children?

The population of children aged 17 years and below grew to 38.2 million or 43.3 percent of the country's total population in 2007, from 28.7 million in 1990. Although the situation of children generally improved since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) about two decades ago, it still lagged behind in terms of promoting children's development and protection rights. Despite economic growth in the past years, children from poor families and households are predisposed to various social risks and vulnerabilities that could result to reduced food consumption, sickness and disease, and school drop-outs (Council for the Welfare of Children, 2010, p. 26).

Further, poverty incidence among children was 34.8 percent in 2006. Child poverty[2] has three determinants as follows: children living in poor families; deprivations of basic amenities such as electricity, potable water and sanitary toilet facilities; and, a child development index which is a composite of health, education and quality of life indicators. The child development index fell from 0.779 in 2003 to 0.729 in 2006. Child poverty and malnutrition underscore the effects of highly unequal incomes among households, large family sizes, inadequate public

health delivery system, and poor health and nutrition-seeking practices. These factors undermine the participation and quality of the school-age population and their learning outcomes, new entrants to the labour force and women entering reproductive age (Council for the Welfare of Children, 2010, pp. 31-32).

What have been the responses to children's issues?

NCSD shares the same perspectives of social development, with social interactions manifested in terms of a vision for a just and humane society. This is concretized through the following strategies: sharing of information, resources, experiences, and expertise among organization members to improve their social service delivery and impact in the communities; research-based innovative approaches and alternative development strategies for pilot-testing and replication; widening access and improvement of financial resources of member organizations; and the promotion, implementation and provision of support for proactive and sustained advocacy on key social welfare and development issues, legislation and implementation of laws, policies, and regulations on children, women, men, families and communities.

NCSD member organizations implement programs related to education, health and nutrition and shelter, organizational capacity development, and values (or spiritual) formation or strengthening. NCSD has yet to conduct an extensive evaluation of its contributions and impact to its targeted sectors in particular and to the nation in general. Nonetheless, individual member NGOs have initiated their own program evaluations such as the case studies presented herein.

Since most if not all member NGOs of the NCSD have derived their funding mainly from external sources, their service delivery is characterized primarily by direct material provision and often dictated by donors' program priority thrusts. Although material support provision has its merits particularly in terms of meeting some basic and survival needs, it should only serve as an entry point for more developmental and empowering forms of intervention. However, based on the program evaluations conducted by the author with various NGOs, this form of

support has been extended for several years thereby reinforcing dependency rather than self-reliance and self-sufficiency among the targeted groups or communities.

Nonetheless, there have been few exceptions wherein alternative models of practice were introduced and have yielded positive impact. Program ownership and financial stewardship were promoted through a series of capability-building and values formation activities. For instance, the Center for Community Transformation, also a member of NCSD, fuses social development initiatives (in the fight against poverty and social injustice) and evangelical mission. This it does by enriching the spirituality of a person alongside meeting her/his material needs through micro-finance, cooperative, and community store (Maslang & Paraiso, 2009).

NCSD had invited its member organizations to document and showcase their models. Seventeen NGO members submitted articles reflecting their own organizational experiences. While categorized as good models of practice, these experiences may not necessarily be unique to these organizations but they have produced remarkable results and impact on the targeted individuals and groups. 'Good models' are those that provide alternative learning opportunities and practices (with minimal cost but high returns or benefits), which could be replicated by other organizations similarly involved in same programs and target sectors.

Some good models of practice in terms of effectively mobilizing support and participation of the key stakeholders and partners are shown as follows:

Mobile school: The Educational Research and Development Assistance (ERDA) Foundation conceptualized and implemented a mobile (use of truck or vehicle) school as a 'catch-up' program mechanism, intended to contribute to the education and withdrawal of children from the worst forms of child labor. It used the literature-based approach to learning, using story-telling as the main strategy to teach children. ERDA, together with partners and volunteers from covered communities, participated in the project by serving as class and session facilitators and monitors. The increase in cost of gasoline far outweighs the qualitative benefits of the project to the children served.

Street education: The Kanlungan sa Er-Ma mobilized and trained street educators to achieve the aims of protecting children in the streets, bridging access to shelter services, and addressing needs identified in the course of the helping relationship with street children. It uses the 'barkadahan' or peer group approach, which provides a venue for peer teaching, encouragement and monitoring of children's activities. Through creative strategies like theater arts and dance groups combined with awareness-raising and capability building as well as spiritual enhancement and values reorientation, street children gained self-confidence and developed coping skills and positive outlook in life.

Children as peace builders: World Vision initiated a project titled 'empowering children as peace-builders' (ECaP), which aims to break the cycle of discrimination brought about by differences in ethnicity, tradition or religion by developing children as peace advocates in their families and communities. Children themselves developed appropriate modules and tools and were trained to embody the principles of diversity, gender sensitivity, non-violent involvement and transforming relationships with the active support of parents, community organizations, and interfaith groups.

Some Case Studies

The author has done several evaluations of child-focused programs of different NGOs in the country. Part of the methodology was a case study. This article does not present the full-blown results of the evaluations but rather focuses on the limited case studies of selected NGO members of the National Council of Social Development. The NGOs primarily cater to the children sector. These case studies were selected as they represent the typical experiences of child-focused NGOs and CBOs/POs based on the results of evaluations conducted by the author herself. As these are case studies, only the acronyms of the organizations are presented.

Case #1: SSI is located in the province of Misamis Oriental at the northern coast of Mindanao. It works with families of subsistence farmers and fisherfolk as well as marginalized workers. Projects implemented focused on the education and

health of children, which later evolved to include community capacity development, livelihood and spiritual development.

SSI has set up a sustainability mechanism that is characterized by the presence of functional and responsive organizational structures with several volunteers mobilized to monitor community projects and core groups formed to facilitate achievement of project targets. Examples include the community-based audit system, village agents for livelihood project monitoring, and child monitors to track children's progress in areas of education, health, and protection. Community monitors are identified by the designated area leaders themselves. They conduct school and home visits of sponsored children to get updates on their education and health status. Child protection issues are unraveled mainly through referrals.

As an active member of local health, social services and economic committees, SSI was also able to establish a strong network and partnerships with local government agencies and non-government organizations. Leadership capacities in resource generation, financial management, and networking were strengthened.

The most sustainable strategy that was introduced and implemented was the community-managed savings and credit associations that instill the value of thriftiness, savings and discipline among adult and youth savers. It has generated not only individual savings but also millions for a social fund that provides financial support for families in emergency situation. Another of its replicable practices is the interfaith dialogues that involved adherents of different religious faiths (Mulisms, Catholics and non-Christians) in the spiritual nurture activities of families in order to facilitate understanding and forge unity in diversity.

Projects or activities that have been successful include spiritual nurture, education, economic, sponsorship, and organizational development. Success is measured in terms of the degree of achievement of the project outcomes and how they have been able to contribute to the transformations in the lives of children, families and communities. A child who benefitted from the project shares

the transformations that transpired in his life owing to his participation in the project:

> *I am now more contented in life than I was 3-5 years ago. I have developed self-confidence unlike before when I was shy to relate with other people. I would decline invitations from friends to join groups. I would rather stay at home and paint than join friends doing nothing. Now, I am no longer shy, and I refrain from saying bad words. My relationships with God, self, family and classmates have become stronger. Before, I was a selfish boy but through the spiritual nurture activities (e.g. Bible studies) that I was actively involved in, my attitude positively changed. Another aspect of my life that changed was my academic performance. When I was in the elementary, I used to obtain low grades. But now, I became more responsible with my studies because of my participation in the NGO/CBO-organized trainings and sponsorship project. I want to finish my studies and be able to work and support my family.*

The internal factors that facilitated successful project implementation include the following: good working relationships among the Board of Trustees, staff and the community leaders; capacity building on financial and human resource management, leadership, facilitation and governance; the established communication, information and monitoring systems especially at the community level; the availability of funds for project implementation; increased local funds from collection of membership fees and loan payment collections from economic/livelihood projects; and the strong coordination and collaboration between the NGO/CBO and its government and non-government partners. The external factors are the provision of counterpart share by participating partners, and the generally positive response of registered families to the NGO's program shift from direct service benefit to shared benefit.

On the other hand, some of the hindering factors are as follows: reduction in budgetary allocation for some projects/activities; fast turn-over of BOT and

staff members; strong weather disturbances that impeded timely delivery and completion of project outputs; inaccessible location of some communities; the lack of financial resources of some beneficiaries to produce needed counterpart; and, the conflict in training and work schedules.

Case #2: GVS is located in the province of Sorsogon, South Luzon. From their program implementation, several transformations have taken place in the areas of *education* (children are able to read, write and count, and complete elementary education), *social relationships* (children are able to relate well with peers and family), *spiritual nurture* (children have a deepened knowledge and experience in loving God), and *participation* (children's decisions being respected by adults).

Among families, there are high levels of expressions of transformation in *spiritual nurture* (through Bible reflection, daily prayers and conversations, acceptance of other faiths*), family relationships* (threshing out problems with more ease, deciding on what matters most to family), *roles in community* (contributing to solution of community problems, to the growth of Christian community in churches, and to community improvement), and *family values* (hard work, perseverance and belief in children's participation in decisions that directly affect them). In communities, notable transformations are in the areas of participation in local church activities, degree of caring for people in need, ability to express hope for the future, reduced incidence of conflict in the community, and participation of women in the community.

The foregoing changes or transformations are attributed to the successful implementation of a community savings and mobilization scheme, backyard vegetable gardening, educational assistance, and spiritual nurture. However, the transformations have been impeded by the challenges of ensuring the spread of genuine awareness on children's welfare and enforcement of the protection of children as well as of preparing children, families and communities for natural disasters and involving them in combating environmental threats such illegal fishing, illegal logging, and other forms of destruction to the natural environment.

In sum, there is a need to drum up awareness on children's rights and ensure the enforcement of the protection of children as well as the adequate readiness of families and communities to respond to environmental hazards.

As an organization, GVS has evolved through time. Through continuous exposure to training and workshops, GVS leaders in particular have been equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage their organization. However, it is not clear if they are able to share these gains with people in their own served communities. The growth of projects and the corresponding responsibility to manage them have posed a challenge to the GVS leaders. Should the GVS leaders manage the projects on their own (without external funding and technical support), they need to be adequately equipped to manage the technical aspects of the projects, and be able to establish partnerships and networks to mobilize resources to sustain the project initiatives.

The facilitating factors include the following: the program's broader reach with shift from direct service to community-based approach; spiritual nurture being integrated in project activities; community savings and mobilization scheme; backyard vegetable gardening and animal dispersal; involvement of parents in the monitoring of their children's school progress; NGO/CBO's good partnership with the local government units and the local churches; sustained commitment of leaders; capacity building and exposure that developed confidence in leaders; good motivational approach, team work and interpersonal skills; good sense of project ownership; adoption of environment-friendly farming technology (organic farming); and, generation of resources and capital build up.

Participants in the group discussions point to the cooperation and steady support of the members as factors that could help strengthen the NGO projects in their community. As one participant says, *"We should not depend on GVS for life. We should work hard"*. Further, the participants consider the active participation of people in community activities as critical to the success of any program intervention.

On the other hand, the hindering factors to effective project implementation include: the inability to sustain the environment project due to human resource constraint; loan repayment issues; and the under-utilization of budgets (huge budget variance) for economic, health, and nutrition activities; and, sponsorship management.

Case #3: HGDI is located in the northern part of Cebu. The participants to HGDI projects or activities are predominantly women. This shows the increasing role of women in community development as more women than men have become leaders and active volunteers in community-based organizations. On the other hand, children's participation in the project development processes is very minimal. Although a child representative sits in the board of trustees' meetings, her/his contribution to decision-making process is not evident as s/he could only be available during summer or when there were no classes. More adults than children are involved in the different projects or activities of HGDI.

Following is an account of a CBO leader on how she was transformed as a result of her involvement with the organization:

> *Through my work with the CBO, my personality has developed. Before my involvement, I was fully dependent on my husband and merely stayed at home. As I did volunteer work, I developed a positive self-esteem. My exposures to spiritual nurture activities have deepened my faith in and relationship with God. I recognized that I have been a part of the people's development – as they developed, I became part of their development. One of my important learnings was that not everything is a bed of roses. For every burden there is a blessing, and with every challenge comes new learning. I have been equipped not only materially but also spiritually.*

The inter-links between and among projects could be observed. For instance, infrastructure support (e.g., construction or repair of school buildings, day care centers, and water systems) and various forms of services (e.g., educational

assistance, health and nutrition, training) have brought about combined improvements in the health, education and protection needs of children. The installation of a water system not only protects the children from illnesses but also contributes to their personal hygiene and improved school performance. Since they no longer had to fetch water a long distance away from their residence, they could spend more time for studies. Through a group savings and mobilization scheme, families have learned the value of saving money, which they could use for health emergencies or school projects.

A good strategy for sustainability is the mobilization of leaders per community to undertake fund sourcing on a periodic basis. Some signs that the CBO can sustain its organizational processes include the presence of second liners equipped to take on the leadership role, shared leadership being embodied in the constitution and by-laws, strong partnership with the local government units, and presence of community monitors and community contextualized monitoring tools.

In addition, HGDI has effectively partnered with different government agencies at municipal and barangay levels. Forms of partnership include training, resource and information sharing, and referral. It had turned over its coastal resource management project to the LGU but owing to the latter's limited resources it was unable to maintain the project well. Unfortunately, HGDI could no longer provide resources to the LGU as the fund support for the project had already ceased.

Facilitating factors for the effective implementation of HGDI projects include the following: strong and formalized relationships with the LGUs (national, municipal and barangay) and other organizations; integration of spiritual nurture into all organizational activities; the organization's track record and high trust in and credibility of the leaders; and the community counterpart that promotes shared ownership and accountability.

On the other hand, the following hinder the effective implementation of the CBO projects: the multi-tasking of first-line leaders and their inability to fully tap the second-liners; the absence of a more systematic and sustainable resource

mobilization strategy; the varying degrees of commitment and motivations of leaders (some were driven by personal agenda); the lack of political support to some projects of the CBO; and negative attitudes of some families; e.g., 'wait and see', and the strong feeling of entitlement that reinforces dependency.

Factors Influencing Social Development

This section identifies the factors influencing social development based on the case studies and the experiences of some NGO members of the NCSD.

The preceding data have shown the attempts, through some interventions, to address key issues related to social development - economic or livelihood projects (poverty reduction), women's participation (social inclusion and equality), and the emphasis on children's rights. The focus on social justice was not evident as compared to the other elements of social development. Among the economic projects, the community-based savings and mobilization scheme was found to be effective as it strengthens community spirit, requires very little cost, and reinforces the values of saving, sense of responsibility, and self-help.

Based on the data, the factors shown on Table 4 were found to influence social development:

Table 4: Specific Factors Influencing Social Development

Socio-cultural	Working relationships between NGO/CBO leaders and community leaders & members Sense of project ownership and shared accountability Credibility of community leaders Attitude towards the project (e.g., towards loan repayment)
Economic	Resource availability; Resource generation Resource sharing by partners/stakeholders
Political	Nature and degree of coordination between the NGO/CBO and the government and non-government partners
Environmental	Weather condition, peace and order situation Environment-related practices; Location of communities
Technical	Available capacities on financial and human resource management, leadership, monitoring, communication, resource mobilization Integration/Complementation of different types of projects Context-specific planning and targeting

In the factors listed under Figure 1, the technical aspect was not included but may cut across the different elements of social development. The data reveal the importance of having the required capacities to address the issues that prevent the full attainment of social development aims. The data show that most of the factors are institutional in nature, which means that they are within the control and capability of the NGOs to address. Specifically, these include the following:

Program link to national development goals: NCSD considers the links of the programs of its member organizations to the country's millennium development goals (MDGs) as a facilitating factor to social development. For instance, their vision-mission-goal (VMG) statements relate to the MD goals on education and health. They consider themselves as contributing to nation building, which is the essence of the NGOs' existence.

Establishment of community-based organizations: *S*everal NGOs have organized CBOs to facilitate delivery of services and achieve the desired results among their partner communities. In many cases, these CBOs have been operating with substantial funding support from the NGOs for several years (some even for 20-30 years), as revealed in several evaluations conducted by the author. However, the problem with continued financial assistance from the NGOs is that CBOs tend to depend on the former for most of their program management and operation needs. Sustainability remains a challenge after the NGO funding support for the CBOs has ceased. Hence, efforts towards raising their own funds should be done by the CBOs as they continue to partner with NGOs.

Organizational capacity strengthening: Key community leaders have been equipped with knowledge, skills and attitude to be able to effectively manage and implement their programs and projects. These include capability building on leadership and governance, financial management, and partnership building and networking. These same capacities need to be continually strengthened.

Partnership and network building and strengthening: A notable strength of the NGOs is their ability to establish good partnerships with other organizations

operating in their served communities. However, the partnership was often circumscribed to communication and technical expertise exchanges, with very minimal counterpart sharing of funds. In most cases, the NGO that is perceived as having more resources gets to foot the bills for joint project ventures with partners.

Some NGOs find the bureaucratic procedures and requirements of the local government units (e.g. on accreditation, approval of proposals, etc.) as cumbersome. In addition, the constant change in the leadership of government agencies has made it difficult to sustain some projects; for example, the unsustained political support to the coastal resource management project.

Organizational credibility and track record: Organizations that have high degrees of transparency and accountability are assured of continued support from donors and partners, and even from their served communities. Some financial mismanagement issues could trigger withdrawal of support from any of the NGO supporters. Their reliability in delivering promised results also promotes sustained partnership and support.

Predominance of survival needs: In the experiences of many NGOs, programs were difficult to sustain because many families have been preoccupied with meeting their survival needs; although some of them were able to participate in a community savings and mobilization scheme. With meager resources, many poor families are unable to sustain their participation in community development activities because they have to earn a living to provide food and other basic needs of their families. They are unable to repay loans because of need to meet more urgent family needs; for example, pay for the medical expenses of a sick family member, reconstruct their house that was destroyed by a typhoon, and pay for some school fees, among others.

In a sense, a confluence of factors has hindered the participation of community members in the activities and affairs of the organization. Income insufficiency (economic) has constrained community participation (socio-cultural and political). The lack of livelihood and income earning opportunities also stemmed

from the lack of access to programs and services, which both the government and the non-government organizations had intended, but so far unable, to fully deliver.

Conclusions and Implications

Development NGOs have been instrumental in community development, particularly in the areas of service delivery, partnership building, and capacity strengthening. However, as earlier discussed, they have been challenged by external factors - socio-cultural (people's attitude), economic (lack of resources), political (varying degrees of support from political leaders), and environment (natural disasters, armed conflict) - that made it difficult for them to break the barriers of poverty, social exclusion, inequality, violation of human rights, and social injustice.

Projects that require no or less investment cost and not dependent on the presence of external technical person (e.g. community-based savings and mobilization, backyard gardening) were found to be effective and sustainable. However, income from these sources is not sufficient to raise the living conditions of families above the poverty threshold. Given that the vulnerable and economically poor sectors have been identified to benefit from most NGO projects, and the seasonal nature of their jobs (predominantly farming and fishing), incomes remain low while the cost of living remains high.

Further, the support of political leaders in the maintenance of projects initiated by the NGOs is critical for sustainability. Many NGOs involved in the children's sector have promoted child rights and participation, and to some extent, gender equality in terms of access to education and health services. Their success, however, is determined by how the adults perceive the roles and participation of, and provide opportunities for children to make decisions and act on matters that directly affect their lives.

Both facilitating and hindering factors relate to meeting the capacity requirements for leaders and members, the nature and amount of support to the organization by different groups or institutions, and the presence of community-

based structures, systems and processes that will eventually take over the functions and tasks of the NGOs. These include strengthening the capacities of CBO leaders in project monitoring, financial management, network and alliance building, and resource mobilization, among others.

Development work is constantly beset with the challenge of poverty and its concomitant effects. It may not be the culture of dependence that is solely to be blamed for the failure of social development programs. But what brought about this dependence should have been addressed instead. Values formation and spiritual strengthening are not enough to appease hungry stomachs. Thus a combination of strategies and interventions should be developed and implemented that both address the survival and developmental needs of individuals, families and communities.

Relating to the social development framework, it may be construed that providing access to resources without combining it with participation and empowerment strategies is not enough to realize social development. As the experiences of the NGOs have shown, direct material support has not been able to achieve the desired aim of strengthened capacity for self-reliance and empowerment.

Regular avenues for individual, group and community participation in the critical stages of development work - from situation analysis, planning, implementation, to monitoring and evaluation - should be built in into the whole organizational system. People should be involved in the reflection and analysis of their own situation and contribution, which could either facilitate or hinder their own development.

A sustainability plan should be developed at the onset of project implementation (not towards end of project). Past evaluations show that many NGOs have been complacent during the early and mid-term implementation phases of the program as resources were more than sufficient for their organizational and program needs. It is only at the later phase that they recognized the necessity of 'thinking much earlier' about how to sustain their programs; thus, fast-tracking systems and mechanisms without corresponding attention being given to the physical, intellectual, social and emotional readiness of the key participants in the development process.

References

Abella, C.T. and Dimalanta, M.A.L. (2003). Philippines. In APPC (Ed.). *Background papers for the Asia Pacific philanthropy consortium, conference on governance, organizational effectiveness, and the nonprofit sector.* Makati City.

Asian Development Bank. (1999). *A study of NGOs: Philippines.* Retrieved from http://www.adb.org/ngos/docs/ngophilippines.pdf

Association of Foundations. (2001). *Philippine NGOs: A resource book of social development NGOs.* Quezon City: Association of Foundations.

Australian Agency for International Development. (2012). *AusAID civil society engagement framework: Working with civil society organisations to help people overcome poverty.* Retrieved from eliefweb.int/report/world/ausaid-civil-society-engagement-framework-working-civil-society-organisations-help

Cariño, L. V. (2000). *Defining the non-profit sector: The Philippines.* Occasional Paper No. 2000-03. Ugnayan ng Pahinungod and Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies: Philippine Nonprofit Sector Project.

Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) History. (2002). Retrieved from www.codengo.org.

CODE-NGO. (2011). Retrieved from http://code-ngo.org/home/images/stories/pdf/LTAWorskhop_Mla_Dec2011_PCNC_Philippines.pdf

Co, E. & Alegre, A.G. (1996). NGO relations with the government. In A.G. Alegre (Ed.), *Trends and traditions, challenges and choices.* Quezon City: Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs.

Council for the Welfare of Children. (2010). *2ⁿᵈ Philippine national plan of action for children 2011-2016*. Quezon City: CWC.

Institute of Social Studies (2013).*Indices of social development*. Retrieved from http://www.indsocdev.org/defining-social-development.html

Jacobs, G. & Cleveland, H. (1999). *Social development theory*. Retrieved from http://www.icpd.org/development_theory/SocialDevTheory.htm

Liamzon, C.M. (1990). *Philippine NGOs in the 1990s: Six trends PCD Forum Column #1* Retrieved from http://livingeconomiesforum.org/1990/01liamzon

Maslang, E, V. & Paraiso, C. (2009). *Learning from past gains: Successful models of practice in the Philippines*. Manila: National Council of Social Development.

Philippine Council for NGO Certification. (2012). *The Role of Philippine NGOs*. Retrieved from http://www.pcnc.com.ph/pcnc-rationale.php

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Endnotes

[1] Based on the author's synthesis of the reviewed literature

[2] Special computations of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NCSB) Technical Staff based on the Refined-Official Poverty Estimation Methodology approved on 1 February 2011 using the results of the merged Family Income and Expenditure Survey and the January Round of the Labor Force Survey of the National Statistics Office.

Dr. Editha Venus-Maslang currently serves as Professorial Lecturer with the Department of Social Work at the UP College of Social Work and Community Development. She graduated with degrees in Bachelor of Science in Social Work, and Master and Doctor in Public Administration from the University of the Philippines. She has had an extensive professional background in social research and organizational development, and monitoring and evaluation, with focus on sustainability and participatory development approaches.