

# **BUILDING THE ROAD WHILE WALKING: An Evaluation of an OD Capacity Development Project**

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*In recent years, Organization Development (OD) has emerged as a field of interest in development practice. While still considered a tool of the corporate world, the new interest on OD is in response to the growing complexity and unpredictability of global and local changes affecting the social development sector. From 2004 to 2007, the CBNRM Learning Center implemented a capacity development project on Organization Development designed for NGOs and community-based organizations working on CBCRM.*

*This article examines the outcomes, issues and lessons to be learned from an evaluation of the OD project. Using a combination of evaluative research methods, results of the review indicate that OD capacities have been developed at the individual and organizational levels. The review also identified gaps and challenges that limited the OD project's effectiveness and impact. The article concludes by drawing a close connection between OD and the creation of learning organizations.*



## **Introduction**

The Philippines lies in a region known for its highest marine biodiversity. Fisheries and coastal resources are important economic resources that provide employment, income, food and other benefits to the population and the entire economy. However, a complex set of issues has put the state of our fisheries in peril. The de facto open access and state policies promoting privatization of fisheries and coastal resources has led to unequal access to resources and distribution of property rights in favor of large commercial interests to the detriment of marginalized fishers and coastal communities (Tambuyog, n.d.). Various studies (Green, White, Flores, Carreon & Sia, 2003; Tambuyog, 2008) have already established that most coastal ecosystems in the country are seriously degraded and coastal and fisheries resources are being depleted at an alarming pace. Environmental degradation is closely associated with severe poverty and marginalization in coastal communities. Poverty incidence among fishing households has been estimated to be between 60 percent (DA-BFAR, 2005) to as high as 80 percent (Israel, 2004).

Over the last few decades, various models of resources management have been tested and developed as a response to the deepening crisis facing our fisheries sector and the grave socio-economic impacts that these could bring to coastal communities and the entire nation. One such approach is Community Based Coastal Resources Management (CBCRM), an approach pioneered in the 80s by civil society organizations in partnership with coastal communities.

CBCRM started not as a coastal management intervention but emerged from the social justice movement in the 70s and shaped further by the environmental movement that rose in the 80s. Guided by the principles of popular participation and people empowerment, CBCRM put premium



on the direct involvement of the community based on the philosophy of 'resource users-as-managers'. The main tenet of CBCRM is the recognition that communities, by whatever definition the term is used, are potentially the best resource managers since they have the biggest stake in the sustainability of the coastal resources. Hence, decision making about access, use, and conservation of coastal resources, conflict resolution and sharing of responsibilities and benefits, is the exclusive right of the community members. This implies active participation of the community members and an equitable sharing of rights and responsibilities. CBCRM is basically seen as community empowerment for resource productivity, sustainability and equity and is seen as an important strategy in poverty alleviation. It is inherently holistic and integrated, process oriented, participatory and context-specific (Ferrer, Polotan-delaCruz & Cabaces, 2004; Newkirk & Rivera, 1996).

After more than two decades, CBCRM theory and practice has evolved. From working initially with the disempowered sectors organised into People's Organizations (POs), the notion of "community" has expanded to include other stakeholders in coastal resources management. From operating initially in small geographic units known as *barangays* (villages), CBCRM has grown to influence several contiguous communities and local government units in the management of larger common pool of resources.

In a national gathering of CBCRM advocates and practitioners in 2003, the conference participants (composed of fisher POs, NGOs, government and academe) affirmed that the continued empowerment and growing confidence of community members in the management of their coastal resources through the organizing and capability building process stands out as one of the most significant achievements of CBCRM programs and the movement as a whole (Polotan-dela Cruz & Ferrer, 2004). The conference also acknowledged the following gains of the CBCRM movement:



- the implementation of various resource management projects for the protection and rehabilitation of fishery resources;
- the development of supplemental livelihood projects to increase household income, thereby enabling time to be spent for addressing community management issues;
- the active involvement of fishers through their organization in crafting local legislations/ordinances governing fishery management;
- the commitment of practitioners to take advantage of learning opportunities provided through capacity building initiatives and the willingness to share local experiences whenever possible;
- the increased participation/representation and negotiation for power within local institutional structures responsible for decision making in resources management; and
- integrating gender into environmental management, with substantial achievements in building awareness of gender issues, women's rights, the role of women in environmental management, as well as an increase in development of women's organizations and committees to address women's needs more specifically.

CBCRM practitioners and advocates have further noted that from being facilitated by intermediary non-government organizations (NGO), the past decade has seen an increasing number of people's organizations (POs) taking over the responsibility in implementing programs and in managing their own resources including their finances (Vera, Balderrama & Cleofe,



2004). The increasing autonomy of POs from their erstwhile NGO partners has signaled the need to redefine partnership roles and relationships in the common task of development. It also underscores the need for more responsive and adaptive capacity development support that would spur this new development further.

### **CBCRM and the Need for Organization Development**

Despite these significant advances, however, there remain critical challenges in the practice of CBCRM. Among these are the following: (1) continuing and systematic investigation and analyses of the nature and extent of poverty among coastal populations; (2) translating the gains of resources management into tangible economic benefits and improved well being enjoyed by poor households; (3) developing an array of property rights models; (4) addressing threats posed by liberalized fisheries and investments; and (5) addressing other community entitlements, especially women's property rights to coastal and fisheries resources.

All these underscore the need for new approaches to development practice and increased effectiveness of organizations espousing to be vital agents of social change. The growing complexity and emergent patterns of social change amplifies the need for increased capacity in **organization development** (OD) and a culture of learning which allow organizations to simultaneously deal with emerging opportunities and problems as they happen.

OD has been defined as "a disciplined exercise using a variety of processes and practices to enable an organization to develop better understanding of the 'whole picture' of the organization, in its



environment and how it works; implement necessary changes in whole and complex systems; become more effective in working and managing change through development of an appropriate and effective organizational practice and culture; and develop a continuing capacity for learning and deepening understanding through its practice” (Hardin, in Felizco, et al., 2004, p.32).

While OD traces its roots to a number of influences including the corporate management world, development NGOs and POs nowadays are themselves confronting the difficult challenges of having to live with the implications of change and complexity not only in the external environment but also within their organizations. This has made OD Practice an emerging field of interest among social development practitioners and development managers.

Through effective OD, development organizations learn to balance complex demands such as between learning and delivering, between strategic and operational management, between empowering processes and efficiency-oriented approaches, and between enabling relationships and achieving results. There is a need to further strengthen and locate OD not only as a tool for increasing effectiveness but more for building learning, adaptive, resilient and accountable organizations. An effective OD process must therefore be participatory, empowering, gender responsive, sustainable and must build a learning culture.

### **The OD Capacity Development Project**

Cognizant of this changing context, the Community-Based Natural Resource Management Learning Center<sup>1</sup> (CBNRM LC), implemented a project entitled “Imagining New Relationships among



Civil Society Actors towards CBCRM Movement Building”. With funding support from Oxfam Hong Kong, the three-year OD capacity development project sought to increase the effectiveness of non-government organizations (NGOs) and people’s organizations (POs) as CBNRM actors by building on their OD practice in order to advance the gains of the CBNRM movement in the Philippines. The project had the following specific objectives:

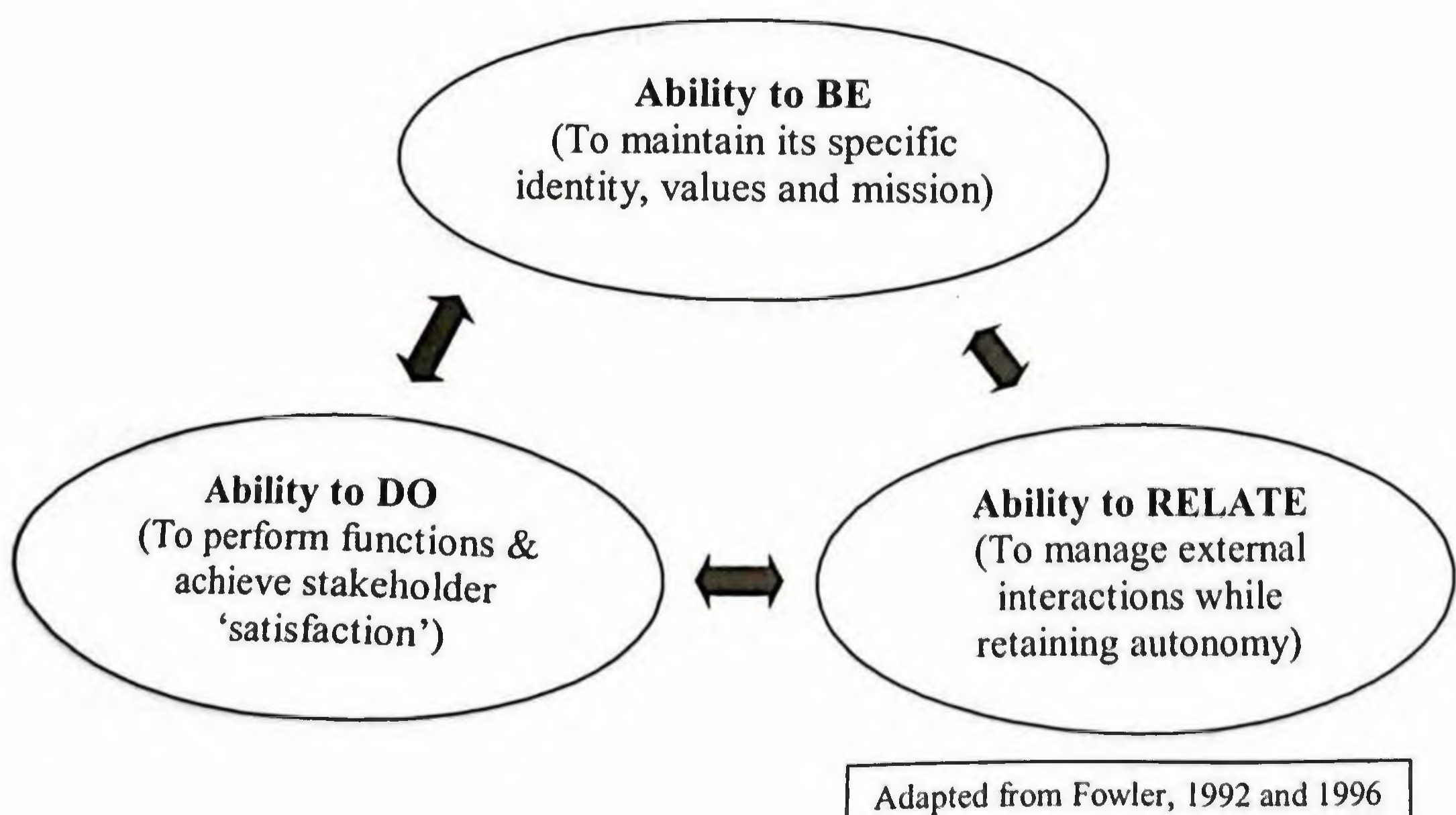
- Share experiences in the application/adaptation of OD interventions among CBNRM actors and provide a venue for further theoretical discussions and debates on OD issues;
- Review and build on the gains of the OD and learning experiences of the CBNRM actors in the last ten years towards addressing the changing roles and relationships among NGOs, POs and other support groups;
- Develop a pool of OD and learning facilitators to assist in capability building activities;
- Generate learning materials and resources on participatory and empowering OD as it is applied in a variety of settings;
- Develop processes and tools that enhance organizational capacity to adequately and creatively respond to changing times;
- Develop appropriate OD approaches for POs and community-based organizations (i.e. fisher groups); and
- Build a library of OD and learning materials and provide access to OD practitioners.



### *Areas for Capacity Development in OD*

The OD project sought to address what Fowler referred to as three key issues in NGO self-development (Fowler, in Felizco, et al., 2004, p.21). The **Ability to BE** is defined as an organization's capacity to have a strategic perspective, or a clear organizational vision, sense of purpose and strategy. This is expressed through the organization's embedded development framework or theory of social change, as well as its explicit organizational values. The **Ability to DO** refers to a range of capabilities that an organization must develop (e.g., technical, organizational and structural) in pursuit of its broad aims and achieve the satisfaction of one's stakeholders. Finally, the **Ability to RELATE** pertains to an organization's capacity to initiate and maintain partnerships and processes essential to meeting one's mandate or sense of purpose in ways that reflect the organization's development principles and values.

**Figure 1. Key Areas in OD Capacity Development**





### *Strategies for OD Capacity Development*

The OD project employed a combination of strategies to meet the capacity development objectives. A brief description of each is provided below:

Development of OD Fellows System. The OD Fellows was an informal, flexible multi-disciplinary team whose members came from the NGOs, POs, the academic community and other development practitioners. The OD Fellows served as the CBNRM LC's partner in project development and implementation. They contributed significantly as resource persons, participants and mentors in OD learning events. OD fellows engaged in dialogues and served as feedback mechanism for developing, advancing and testing new ideas in OD capacity building.

Research. To have a better appreciation of the existing practices of Organization Development among Philippine civil society organizations, the project conducted a review of literature on OD theory and practice in the country. A follow-up research looked into the dynamics of accountability between NGOs, POs and donor agencies. Case studies on the application of OD were also developed under this component.

OD Trainings & Workshops. To respond to the capacity development needs of CBNRM organizations and practitioners, the provision of trainings, workshops and other mentoring support became a vital strategy of the OD project. Trainings were organized for OD Fellows, PO leaders and senior management staff of NGOs who were part of the CBNRM LC's network and partners. The trainings and workshops provided a venue for OD practitioners and development workers to reflect on and share experiences in the application of OD interventions and engage in animated conversations on the relevance of OD and OD issues among development organizations.



OD courses were conducted on the following themes: Basic OD for NGOs; Basic OD for POs; Appreciative Inquiry; Development Partnerships; Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation; Leadership in OD; Learning Organizations; and Gender in OD. Prior to each course, a process of learning needs analysis was undertaken to determine the specific OD experiences or practice of participants and develop a deeper appreciation of their learning needs and expectations from the workshops. Results of the process served as the bases for formulating the course designs. Each course culminated in the participants' preparation of their personal vision as OD practitioners and leaders, as well as individual and collective plans for making progress towards this vision.

OD Support Services. The project also provided OD support services to NGO and PO partner organizations who requested for such assistance. These included support in organization diagnosis, strategic planning, organizational change management and leadership development. Designed as a follow through to the OD trainings and workshops, the OD support services became an opportunity for mentoring graduates on specific OD activities within their own NGOs and POs.

Documentation/Publication/Library. The project believed that knowledge sharing can be broadened if experiences can be documented and lessons shared to others. Case studies and research reports, workshop proceedings and learning materials were thus developed (in a form appropriate to the intended audience), published and disseminated to project participants and the broader public. Reports were also posted in the website of CBNRM LC. To be more relevant to POs and local organizations, OD learning materials written in the local language (in Filipino and Cebuano) were produced and disseminated to workshop participants and partner organizations.



Events and Celebration. Social movements are not only economic and political in character but are cultural endeavors as well. Celebratory events were organized and undertaken with participating organizations to mark their successes and development in order to build confidence and get re-energized. The OD project culminated in the “OD Dialogues: Learning from the Emergent Future”, a national conference convened in November 2007 to glean and share lessons gained from the three year OD project. The conference featured a combination of cultural activities and conceptual discussions.

**Figure 2. Strategies to Meet OD Capacity Development**





## **Evaluating OD Capacity Development**

Towards the end of the OD Capacity Development project in 2006, the CBNRM LC conducted an evaluation to determine, describe and critically examine the outcomes, issues and lessons learned from the experience and to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement of OD capacity development programs.

### ***Methodology***

The evaluation was designed as a participatory and learning exercise involving participants from the CBNRM LC, OD fellows and ‘beneficiaries’ of the OD project. As envisioned, the CBNRM LC saw the evaluation to be an opportunity for self-assessment and thoughtfully designed a process that would allow different partners/stakeholders to express their views and perspectives vis-à-vis how they experienced the OD capacity development project.

A purposive sample of respondents was identified using the following criteria: (a) geographical spread (participants should come from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao); (b) gender equity; (c) diversity of program beneficiaries (relative proportional representation of POs, NGOs, and OD Fellows; and (d) representation of positions within the organization (e.g., leaders vis-à-vis members).

The study benefited from the points of view of a total of 64 respondents chosen on the basis of their involvement in the OD project. In summary, there were 18 OD Fellows, 12 graduates of the OD courses and workshops, 29 members of People’s Organizations and five staff of the CBNRM LC who served as sources of data for the study. Of the total number of research participants, 32 were males and 32 were females. Sixty one percent



of the respondents were from POs, while 39 percent were from NGOs. (Refer to Table 1)

The evaluation study was primarily descriptive and qualitative. Guide questions were developed to explore the following themes: (1) most important community and organizational issues/problems; (2) perceptions of the most significant changes at the personal, organizational and community levels brought about by their participation in the OD project; (3) negative and unanticipated changes, perceived weaknesses; and (4) areas for further improvement in the future.

In the absence of baseline data, the first theme was meant to provide a starting point from which to assess what changes have occurred. The next three themes were used as indicative measures of programme outcomes and impact at different levels.

The evaluation utilized a combination of methods and tools for data collection. It started with a Tracer Study designed as an electronic survey instrument to gather initial information from OD fellows and graduates on the outcomes and impact of the capacity development project. The results of the Tracer Study were then used to design the succeeding data collection methods which included Key Informant Interview, Focus Group Discussion and Case Study Analysis.

The study heavily relied on interviews and FGDs with a selected set of key informants. This was supplemented by the review of existing documents and reports on the OD project. Key informant interviews were conducted with OD Fellows and NGO graduates. Three separate FGDs were conducted involving PO representatives from the provinces of Zambales, Romblon and



Misamis Occidental who have received OD support services and mentoring support from the project. As part of the FGDs, Mind Mapping (Buzan & Buzan, 1994) was used to identify the range of changes/outcomes at the organizational level. Mind mapping proved to be a useful participatory tool as it provided the respondents with a visual aid to organize their thoughts and see the links and relationships of their responses.

Some OD Fellows were asked to prepare Case Studies to document in-depth individual and organizational learnings and applications of the capacities developed in OD. Using the evaluation objectives as guide, the evaluation team organized the information gathered into themes and categories.

**Table 1. Distribution of Evaluation Participants per Data Gathering Method**

Method	Nature of Respondents	Number of Participants/ Respondents
Tracer Study	OD fellows and NGO graduates	9
	PO graduates	10
	Total	19
Interviews	OD fellows	9
	OD graduates	2
	Total	11
FGD (3x)	PO members and leaders	29
Internal Assessments	Staff of CBNRM LC	5



The Evaluation was conducted by a three-person team from the CBNRM LC who administered the interviews, FGDs and tracer study. The team was supported by staff of partner NGOs and POs who helped organize the logistics of the data gathering field visits. Fieldwork for data gathering was conducted from March to August 2007. Other members of the CBNRM LC contributed in the design, analysis and writing of the evaluation report.

### **Significant Changes in OD Capacities**

The following sections present the key findings of the evaluation following the objectives set in the evaluation design. The section begins with a description of the most significant outcomes and results of the OD capacity development interventions followed by an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the capacity development strategies employed in the project.

In summary, respondents from NGOs and POs who were interviewed for the review cited significant contributions and achievements at two levels, namely personal development of NGO and PO leaders and organizational development of NGOs and POs. It is important to stress that these significant outcomes are principally a result of the partners' collaborative efforts and by no means is there an attempt to attribute such achievements to the CBNRM LC's efforts alone. In contrast, significant changes at the community level were more difficult to attribute directly to project interventions.



## *Significant Contributions to Personal Development of NGO and PO Leaders*

### *OD Fellows*

One of the most notable accomplishments of the OD capacity building project is the formation and nurturance of what is now referred to as the 'OD Fellows' – a pool of individuals coming from NGOs and POs who identify themselves as 'OD practitioners' and are committed to advancing Organization Development as part of their social development orientation.

The OD Fellows function as a Community of Practice (Sharp, 1997; Wenger, 1998) where members share a purposeful concern for the theory and practice of OD as lived by social change organizations. Majority of the OD Fellows are senior NGO/PO managers and leaders who are concerned with the application, adaptation and development of OD processes that strengthen learning, accountability and effectiveness of their own NGOs and POs.

According to the respondents of this evaluation, they regard the OD fellows system as a venue for members to come together and exchange experiences, problems and draw lessons from their OD practice in their respective organizations. One of the perceived benefits of these interactions is the promotion of learning especially since a particular characteristic of the system is that it is composed of people coming from different organizational contexts and fields of development practice. This diversity helped to stimulate individual and collective learning not only in OD but also in other development issues or fields.



Another achievement is the creation of spaces for cooperative engagement among the fellows to work together towards a common goal or project. For example, the OD project's capacity development strategies such as research and publications, trainings and other mentoring services were strongly anchored on the active involvement and leadership of the OD fellows. Given the fellows' different expertise and levels of capacities, this arrangement encouraged the formation of mutually supportive partnerships, as well as coaching and mentoring relationships between 'senior' and 'junior' fellows.

As commonly observed, NGO leaders and managers have a tendency to completely immerse themselves with the day to day concerns of program management and implementation. Respondents shared that their participation in the OD fellows' activities (e.g. preparing for and conducting an OD workshop) allowed them much needed time off to pause and reflect on their own organizational experience and development practice. It also provided a venue for "looking at oneself", challenging one's mindset and developing self-awareness as organizational leaders and managers. This reflective process enabled them to develop deeper awareness and understanding of their own organizations and how they function.

In addition, respondents observed that the OD Fellows system afforded them the opportunity for self development as OD "practitioners" and as development workers. Their participation in the OD workshops whether as resource persons or participants enabled them to sharpen their understanding of OD concepts, learn about new approaches and gain concrete handles on OD-related issues or difficulties faced by their organizations. As one evaluation participant observed: "In the course of reviewing and preparing for specific OD workshops, one gets a better understanding of how OD is done. Even during the workshop design phase, working with the other OD fellows as part of the preparatory committee



facilitated the deepening of my understanding of what OD is all about.” Finally, the team of OD Fellows also serves as a support system to members. Because membership is *informal* and *voluntary*, members are more capable to relate as equals. And because members face common issues as senior leaders and managers of their organizations, they are able to relate on a personal level and create an atmosphere of openness. This openness promotes sharing of problems and experiences, even of a sensitive nature. It also affords an objective view of one’s organization.

### OD Graduates

Aside from the OD Fellows, the OD capacity building project also provided training and mentoring support to other NGO and PO leaders. ‘Graduates’ of the OD workshops/courses cited a number of outcomes at the individual/personal level such as broadening their perspectives on leadership and gaining self-confidence as a leader, ‘increased appreciation of the importance of learning in our CBCRM work’ and ‘learning to better appreciate our organization’s accomplishments rather than focusing on our problems’.

In addition, participants also cited gaining increased self-knowledge/awareness which translated to increased ability to exercise self-control, getting affirmation and deepening dedication to their organization’s purpose and mandate, and renewal of alignment between personal and organizational values and beliefs.

Another common theme that emerged especially among PO graduates is enhanced leadership abilities as manifested in the following changes cited by the respondents: they became less timid or shy; enhanced skills in relating with people; developed openness to listen to opinions with



and greater understanding of others; and greater appreciation of the value and role of members in their organization.

In general, majority of participants found the OD workshops to be highly thought-provoking, enriching and inspiring. Some expressed initial difficulty in grappling with the shift in paradigm for viewing their organizations (i.e., from looking at organizations as machines to understanding organizations as living systems) and in the implications of such shift to OD processes and interventions. Participants appreciated the fact that they were able to share and articulate diverse views on concepts and principles that have now been taken for granted by social change agents (e.g. community-based approach, accountability, participatory monitoring and evaluation, leadership and leadership development). Moreover, participants were able to share and deepen their understanding of how complex development principles, contexts and strategies have changed and how these changes affect the individuals, the organizations and the communities.

OD Fellows and graduates observed that one of the most significant change brought about by the capacity development project is that it has demystified OD. From an initial view of “OD as something that experts and external facilitators do”, they realized that OD is a role inherent to being a leader and development practitioner. However, not everyone is fully conscious of this role and is therefore less mindful of how they can develop their OD competencies. The manner in which the OD capacity development project was conducted allowed the participants to recognize their organic OD practice and instinct as NGO and PO leaders. According to participants, the OD workshops provided them much-needed space to take stock of their learnings from their decades of development practice and relate these with emerging concepts, principles and tools in the application of OD among organizations committed to social change. As NGO and PO



leaders, they have become more appreciative of OD processes such as organizational learning, negotiation and conflict management, human resources development and performance management and accountability mechanisms.

The participants highly valued the relatively flexible schedules which characterized the workshops. They recognized that the flexibility allowed each participant to share and learn from others. PO participants considered as empowering this unhurried process to recognize, label and express one's experiences and opinions. Although there was clamor to increase the number of workshop participants, it was also recognized that a large number of participants would make it impossible for everyone to engage meaningfully in workshops.

### *Significant Contributions at the Organization Level*

OD fellows whose NGOs were undergoing OD processes such as strategic planning during the time of the interviews observed that the concepts and tools from the OD capacity-building activities proved to be immediately useful. An example cited was the adoption of change and complexity perspectives in one NGO's contingency planning as part of its disaster risk management program.

From the Tracer Study conducted as part of this evaluation, the following were identified by the respondents as significant learnings from capacity-building activities of the OD project:



<b>Learnings in OD</b>	<b>Applications in the Organization</b>
Organizational assessment	Informed strategic planning
Individual, team and system-wide OD interventions	Adoption of comprehensive staff development plan
Appreciative inquiry	New perspectives in organizational assessment
Change Management	Addressing transitions and changes in Leadership
PME	Program assessments

But even as respondents found the introduction of new tools and frameworks useful, majority considered the changes that have occurred in their perspectives and attitudes on organizations and organization development to be the more significant gains. As explained by one NGO respondent: *“Tools are useful to have but have to be treated only as templates. I consider learning about the participatory OD process (learning/looking at the whys) more important. What it actually takes to design, develop and undertake OD and what values are really important. I also realized the importance of developing partners within who could sustain the change efforts because we as leaders will not be there at all times.”*

According to respondents, they found immediate opportunities for applying their learnings on OD such as OD fellows who applied their learnings to urgent organizational concerns such as the conduct of organizational assessments and the development of local OD teams/trainers that are tasked with mentoring other organizations. This is pronounced in organizations that planned OD-related activities after the OD workshops. In this sense a multiplier effect is put in motion; from a limited group of individuals who have attended the OD capacity development activities, more OD “practitioners” have been developed on the ground. A re-echoing of



learnings served as the primary mechanism for sharing OD learnings such as conducting similar OD trainings at the PO level.

Participants also cited several areas where specific OD initiatives were undertaken to effect organization-level changes among community-based organizations and/or NGOs. These included review of organizational systems, conduct of strategic planning to develop longer-term institutional plans, review of staff development programs, and strengthening of governance mechanisms which included regularization of board meetings.

From these actions, respondents observed significant changes in their organizations' practices. For some, this translates to developing institutional thinking in assessment and planning processes, e.g., thinking beyond specific projects or programs. This represents a significant change in terms of organizational thinking given the emerging trend of changing donor priorities which in turn translates to dwindling external support and limited funding opportunities for smaller NGOs and POs. Confronted with these new trends, NGOs and POs were challenged to develop further a culture of deliberate or conscious learning in order to recognize and take advantage of new opportunities, overcome threats and maintain organizational effectiveness in meeting their development goals.

A heightened awareness of organizational dynamics/relationships is cited as a result of learnings from the OD project. This is seen as a significant departure from dominant output-oriented approaches to NGO management. The Appreciative Inquiry approach to understanding organizations was cited as useful in conducting organizational assessments and in dealing with relationship issues (i.e., looking at the strengths of staff instead of focusing on their weaknesses).



Comments from SIKAT and PARASAMAZA:

As part of the OD project, the CBNRM LC participated in the strategic planning workshop conducted by SIKAT, a service NGO for PARASAMAZA (Pampangisdaang Adhikain para sa Reporma ng mga Mangingisda ng Zambales), its partner provincial fisherfolk federation in Zambales. The workshop was facilitated by the OD Team of PARASAMAZA, some of whom were graduates of the OD workshops. The strategic planning came at a critical point, with the impending phase-out of SIKAT from their areas in Zambales. OD was previously regarded as a highly technical process, *“mga NGO lang ang gumagawa”*. With this experience, SIKAT came to realize that even the POs can do it themselves (*“Kaya pala ng PO”*).

The strategic plan continues to guide the PARASAMAZA federation in its work. In the words of the SIKAT staff, *“... there is always a plan that you can refer to which addresses the sustainability of the organization”* (*“mayroong binabalikang plano na ina-address ang sustainability ng samahan”*).

Based on the responses of PO representatives, new learnings gained on OD were translated to changes in attitudes and perspectives of members and leaders, and improved organizational practices such as:

- Stimulating openness among PO leaders to their right in relating with other NGOs, the barangay and local government units (*“Binuksan ang kaisipan naming mga lider na may karapatan pala kaming lumapit sa ibang NGO, sa barangay, sa LGU”*);
- Looking beyond the self, the organization and community to explore other possibilities to what we can still contribute (*“Hindi lang panloob ng organisasyon ang titingnan natin kung hindi pati sa labas kung ano ang pwede nating gawin”*);



- Openness and broadening of views of leaders (*“Nabuksan at napalawak ang kaisipan ng mga lider”*);
- The importance of planning in an organization and how to develop project proposals by putting together good organizational plans (*“Paano gumawa ng plano, at pwede rin palang gumawa ng isang proposal kung pag-isahin ang mga plano”*);
- Greater appreciation of members of their role in the organization (*“Pagpapahalaga ng mga kasapi sa kanilang tungkulin sa samahan”*);
- Instilling initiative among leaders (*“Pagpapalalim ng sariling kusa bilang mga lider”*);
- Importance of developing the core competencies that are required based on the organization’s mandate (*“Kahalagahan na maging epektibo sa mga nakatakdang gawin ng samahan gaya ng sa resource management at alternatibong kabuhayan*); and
- Importance of periodic assessment and review of projects and programs vis-à-vis one’s strategic plan (*“Kahalagahan ng pana-panahong pagbabalik-tanaw sa mga gawain at programa batay sa pangkabuuang layunin ng samahan”*).

Among POs, the significant changes in organizational practices appear to be in the areas of reaffirmation of their organizational mandate and developing strategic leadership, and valuing internal OD processes and preparing POs for eventual autonomy.



Reaffirming mandate and strategic leadership. POs cited the reaffirmation of their organizational mandate as one of the most significant gains of their OD activities. This is expressed in terms of developing a heightened sense of responsibility among leaders and members which is reinforced with the affirmation of rights and responsibilities as citizens.

POs observed that their OD related processes stimulated much-needed reflection and review of their organization, the work it is doing and its future directions. These reflections served to clarify organizational direction and strategy. This has led some organizations to either expand or prioritize their work. In the case of KAPAMILYA (*Karagatan Aalagaan ng Pederasyon ng Alyansa ng Mangingisda na Itataguyod ang Likas Yaman at Agrikultura*), a fisher feredation in Romblon, their strategic planning process convinced them to expand their work from an initial focus on CRM advocacy to including community livelihood services such as provision of technical support for enterprise development. Expanding organizational strategies is important for POs to address issues of sustaining the organization in the context of partner NGOs phasing out of their communities. On the other hand, SAMAPP (*Samahan ng Maliliit na Mangingisda ng Puerto Prinsesa*), a PO federation in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, had a different experience. The review of their organization's vision, mission and goals (VMG) that was conducted as part of their strategic planning prompted the decision to re-focus on advocacy for resource management and let go of their other programs such as livelihood development. Such decision was reached to ensure organizational effectiveness.

But whether they decide to expand or re-focus, POs have to deal with the eventuality of having to make it on their own, with or without their partner NGOs. In facing this challenge, OD becomes useful in helping organizations look for emerging trends and patterns in its external



environment, assess its core competencies, and identify the most appropriate ways of organizing its people, system, structure and programs vis-à-vis its strategic purpose or intent as an organization.

Valuing OD within the organization and preparing for PO Autonomy.

POs were confronted with having to take on new and often unfamiliar roles as a result of their NGO partners either totally phasing out or gradually reducing operations in their communities. One of the more tangible results of OD activities conducted with POs is the development of an internalized culture that values OD and the formation of local OD teams. For PARASAMAZA, these OD teams assist member POs to resolve organizational problems (i.e., structure and functioning of officers) or serve as conduits to the federation leadership. In Romblon, KAPAMILYA's OD teams function as "evaluators" of member PO organizations to identify capacity development needs of their member POs. In the context of changing relations brought about by the phase out of NGOs or reducing operational support to POs, this could indicate the growing importance placed on OD to prepare organizations to stand on their own. Notably, PARASAMAZA's OD activities contributed to developing a perspective of looking at other options/ways to pursue its mandate given current limitations in resources.

*Impact on CBNRM at the Community Level*

One of the evaluation questions was whether the OD capacity development has direct impacts on CBNRM practices and policies at the community level. However, this proved to be more difficult to ascertain given the nature of the OD project itself and the multiple actors and development initiatives involved in CBNRM work in general.



However, respondents recognized that the OD capacities they have built contributed significantly to strengthening their organizations' effectiveness in pursuing CBNRM. Most notable perhaps is the increased appreciation of the importance of actively engaging with the local government units (LGUs) which led to improved relationship with the LGU officials in their communities. In addition, they also cited other significant accomplishments of their organizations. These include mobilizing residents in fisheries resource management activities (e.g. in participatory resource assessment, resource management planning, establishment of Marine Protected Areas, mangrove reforestation and evaluation of activities), creation of supplementary livelihoods, networking, regular patrolling of local volunteer fish wardens, disaster management planning, lobbying and other advocacy work. These in turn contributed to better fish catch, resurgence of fish species and more responsive local policies.

Undoubtedly, these impacts cannot be solely attributed to OD capacity development project alone and instead should be recognised as a result of collaborative and complementary efforts among various organizations, projects and individuals at different levels.

### **Enhancing OD Capacity Development through Monitoring and Evaluation Practice**

An important feature of the OD Capacity Development project is the internal participatory monitoring and evaluation (PME) system developed from the very beginning of the project design. This PME system included, among others, the consistent use of participants' needs assessments to aid



the design of trainings and other learning events, the conduct of formative assessments and evaluations at the end of each training or workshop, the frequent and periodic reviews of activities by the project staff, and the conduct of annual review and reporting to donors and other project stakeholders to take stock of achievements, analyze and synthesize issues and lessons relevant to the project's effectiveness, learning and accountability.

The project's PME system helped the CBNRM LC to identify and address major areas for change and innovation in order to make the capacity development project more effective in meeting the needs and conditions of the project participants. These internal formative assessments were able to address necessary changes in three important areas – direction, content and process.

The OD research confirmed the fact that current OD frameworks and perspectives are highly influenced by literature, ideas and methods from developed countries and from corporate or international organizations. More importantly, there was a culture built wherein OD was expert-driven, formal, and heavily resource dependent. To address this, CBNRM LC took serious efforts to adapt these materials to fit the local context of NGOs and POs, as well as to develop materials on OD experiences of local organizations. To address the language barrier, materials were translated to Cebuano and Filipino to make them more accessible to non-English speaking practitioners.

The research also revealed the marginalization of organizations based outside Metro Manila in terms of access to OD services. The lack of OD practitioners from the regions led to the concentration of OD services in Manila. Hence, the project deliberately targeted organizations based in Visayas and Mindanao by conducting a regional workshop and by conscientiously recruiting Cebuano-speaking OD Fellows.



In terms of the OD workshops, from an initial design of holding mixed-workshops, POs were separated from NGOs in the succeeding workshops to address their needs and expectations better. PO workshops were designed heavily around practical concerns (i.e. know-whats and know-hows). On the other hand, NGO workshops focused more on the know-whys.

Instead of promoting specific OD tools, the workshops focused on generating insights and in critiquing the appropriateness of these tools. While this resonated soundly with the needs of graduates, there was also a clamor for practical OD tools. For example, a learning activity was done on the LOGFRAME (Logical Framework), a common OD tool imposed by funding agencies and subscribed to by NGOs and POs. Hence, a menu of tools was provided in the training kits and learning materials. The OD support services allowed PO participants to be mentored by OD Fellows not only on the use but also in the designing of OD tools. Despite this, graduates still saw the need to further incorporate the discussions on specific tools in the designs.

### **Weaknesses and Areas for Improvement**

The evaluation also identified the following gaps and challenges that need to be taken into consideration in order to improve further its effectiveness and impact.

*OD Fellows.* While the respondents confirmed the relevance of the OD fellows, the loose and informal nature of its membership have some negative impact on its effectiveness and sustainability.

As mentioned above, membership and participation in the OD fellows system is voluntary and driven by the individual desire for



learning and in recognition of individual fellows' capacities, skills, knowledge and experience. This has impact on the fellows' conception of how they are accountable to the CBNRM LC and the Fellows pool. The OD Fellows have different perspectives on this issue. Some fellows prefer to emphasize the absence of formal mechanisms to exact accountability and consider this a weakness. Other fellows hold the view that in lieu of formal systems and mechanisms, accountability is motivated by moral commitment and a sense of obligation on the part of the fellows. Thus, as one fellow puts it, it is not for the CBNRM LC to demand fellows to be active, it is for the fellows to be sensitive and live up to their moral obligation.

The voluntary nature of the fellows and the perceived lack of clear plans in turn have impact on the performance of the fellows system. To some, the full potential of the fellows system as a Community of Practice (CoP) is yet to be realized. This unrealized potential is attributed to the observation that presently, the venues for interaction are still limited and occur mainly in specific activities such as during OD trainings. Thus a regularity of interaction, seen crucial in a CoP, is lacking.

The irregularity and lack of venues for interaction and lack of clear plans also impact on the continuity of learning, both for the fellows and their implicit "clients". This brings to the fore the question as to the workability of the objective of mentoring and coaching as follow-up/ complementary activities of trainings.

It has also been observed that so far, there is a "shallow bench" or limited number of fellows who participate in OD activities. They would like to see more fellows being tapped as resource persons and mentors, not only to "spread the work" but also to make OD more accessible especially to organizations outside of Metro Manila.



While capable of transcending time and geographic limitations, the e-group/electronic media, intended as a venue for regular, albeit virtual interaction still also needs to be maximized and appreciated. This stems from the observation that interactions in the e-group has so far only served as a virtual bulletin board and that exchange is intermittent and slow. The limited content and slow exchange is in turn attributed to the issues of access to internet and equipment, time and to cultural factors. While virtual exchange can be useful and efficient in certain situations, fellows hypothesize that people still prefer personal interactions.

Need for Follow-up Trainings. Some POs like PARASAMAZA in Zambales have already set up mechanisms to “institutionalize” OD, such as setting up local OD teams which are venues for the OD graduates to apply their learning. While local OD capacity-building activities were designed by the PO and their partner NGO to develop more OD practitioners on the ground, the level of internalization and appreciation of the participants still vary. All the PO respondents to this evaluation point to the need for follow-up activities done at the local level, in order to develop more OD “practitioners” among their ranks. This could actually be an opportunity to address the observation that there are limited opportunities to practice OD skills. As such, mentoring could come in the form of fellows assisting fellows from other organizations in their OD work.

OD Fellows Participation. While the fellows’ contribution to OD support is commendable, in some cases, participants noted a “mismatch” between resource persons and the needs of the requesting PO. This issue is pronounced in cases where the fellow/resource person comes from a different sector than the PO. While this may be an isolated case, this can be connected to the “shallow bench” (i.e. too few fellows to respond to the increasing number of requests for OD support). As such the need to develop more OD fellows to respond to the needs of POs is highlighted.



Fellows (and CBNRM LC staff as well) should also be better prepared for such engagements in terms of getting a grasp of the organization and its context beforehand. Participants also suggest having a mix of local resource persons/facilitators and “outsiders” in order to have new learnings and at the same time ensure that the facilitation is “grounded” on the realities of the organization.

Learning Materials. The project has developed a modular series of materials on OD called the *Tuklas Dunong* series which POs and NGOs find immediately useful in the conduct of local OD trainings. However, copies are limited. It may be worthwhile to note that POs are requesting for more copies so as to have reference material readily available.

Balancing spread and focus. The difficulty in tracking the project’s impact or end-of the-chain changes can be due in part to the strategy of targeting a wide range of individuals and organizations instead of concentrating on a few. This can be seen as appropriate during the initial stage since there was a need to demystify OD and increase the level of appreciation of OD among many development practitioners as possible.

In the future, however, a follow-up to the project could be to target specific organizations for OD capacity development. Aside from being able to customize the capacity development program to each organization and tracking the development and impact of the program, such a strategy will build a “critical mass” of learning-oriented OD thinkers and practitioners in the organization. It would be expected that such a “critical mass” would more effectively facilitate change management within organizations and with their partner institutions.



## Reflections on the Evaluation Process

The use of multiple methods in this evaluation study can be considered as a strength in itself. Since each method has its unique strength and limitation, the combination of methods complemented and supplemented each other. That the OD project had a functional PME system was also an advantage to the evaluation since it provided on-time tracking of the progress of the project.

The electronic tracer study was useful in providing baseline data on the whereabouts of the participants to the different OD activities, what they have learned and how they have applied those learnings. Although the number of respondents in the tracer study was far from the ideal number, the electronic tracer study was an inexpensive means to gather preliminary information from the project participants who are mostly based outside Metro Manila. However, the tracer study included too many questions, which in hindsight, went beyond the intended objective of just conducting a scoping exercise. While some of the responses already provided key insights on the outcomes of the OD project, the length of the questionnaire may have also discouraged the other respondents to answer.

The case studies provided more in-depth understanding of the context and changes in capacities of individuals and organizations. Changes in individuals and organizations became more evident with the highly personal nature of the case studies used. In addition, the case studies facilitated the reflection and self-evaluation process of case study writers. Because learning was a principle shared in the preparation of the case studies, the OD fellows were observed to be more open and comfortable in sharing sensitive realities and changes in perspectives and attitudes. This allowed the case studies to provide



a more “human face” and a more nuanced view of the actual OD experiences.

The flexible execution of the face to face open-ended interviews allowed space for the interviewers to ask follow-up questions. It also allowed the interviewees to tell their stories in a relaxed and non-threatening manner.

The use of mind mapping as part of the FGDs facilitated participation as it helped organize the thoughts of the participants and capture non-linear and complex group analysis. This in a way aided in identifying non-linear changes in individuals and organizations. From experience, mind mapping was more effective when used with smaller groups.

### **The Importance of Learning Organizations**

From the evaluation, it is evident that the OD project can be described as a relevant and effective project that has demonstrated significant outcomes at different levels. These achievements gain more prominence given the relatively short project duration of three years. The active engagement of a diverse set of NGO and PO partners, the flexibility and diversity of capacity development strategies utilized and the highly collaborative approach to project implementation can be considered as key contributory factors to its significant achievements.

Over-all, what can be considered as the OD project’s most significant contribution is the promotion of NGOs and POs as learning organizations. Taylor (1998) defines the learning



organization in this manner: “the organization which builds and improves its own practice by consciously and continually devising and developing the means to draw learning from its own (and other’s) experience”. This definition underscores four critical elements, namely: (1) conscious intent and commitment to the process of learning; (2) the purpose of learning is to improve practice; (3) learning has to happen continuously; and (4) emphasis on experience as the source of learning (Taylor, 1998, pp.1-2). At the core of the learning organization is the individual – the basic unit of learning in the organization. Organizations learn through individuals who learn.

This concept of ‘learning organization’ is particularly important to NGOs and POs given their unique social aims, the absence of reliable ‘blueprints’ to follow and the growing trend of dynamic complexity around the world. Being perennially faced with limited and declining resources, NGOs and POs now more than ever are challenged to generate truly creative and innovative learning in order to address societal problems, improve its impact and exert influence on a broader movement for social change.

Individuals within learning organizations such as NGOs and POs are learning all the time from a variety of sources and using a variety of ways. However, learning may often take place at an unconscious level and may not be captured and shared more consciously to improve future practice. The OD project has demonstrated that the recognition of existing practices of where and how learning takes place and the promotion of foundational attitudes and dispositions for learning within organizations need to be supported. Important attitudes and dispositions include the following:



- Taking personal responsibility and individual accountability for one's learning, growth and development;
- Sense of purpose – being connected to something higher and that there is meaning and purpose larger than oneself;
- Humility – awareness of one's ignorance, incompetence and disabilities;
- Capacity to ask fundamental “why/why not” questions;
- Courage – to say the ‘unsayable’, to challenge the ‘art’ of not knowing;
- Taking comfort with discomfort, discontent and self-doubt;
- Independence - Ability to stand against the crowd and maintain one's own convictions; and
- Tenacity or the ability to thrive creatively in tensions and conflicts.

## **Conclusion**

This final section tries to highlight important insights derived from taking part in the implementation of the OD project and looking at the evaluation results.



**On the Nature of OD.** Organization Development is like a pane of glass that is both a **window** and a **mirror**. As a window, OD forces our organizations to look out to the external world and keeps us constantly grounded within that evolving world. As a mirror, OD shows us a reflection of our own world and our interaction with the outside world. It allows us to draw images that relate these two worlds.

**OD is more than the sum of its parts.** Development organizations, the external world that it is a part of and development practitioners and leaders are in themselves complex and dynamic. The interaction of these elements in the process called OD makes the whole even more complex and dynamic.

**OD as 'lived' experience.** OD thrives in multiple realities and holds many contradictions and tensions. While there may be models or tools, each OD experience is unique. Our own store of past experience, many failures and disappointments, and inspiring successes need to be recognized as repositories of knowledge and materials for learning on OD. We have seen the merits of carefully choosing wholistic OD approaches or strategies that address multiple realities and tensions. Similarly, wholistic and integrated organizational assessment is key to coming up with appropriate OD interventions.

**The primacy of learning and self-transformation.** As facilitators within organizations, OD practitioners need to engage in relentless self-critical reflection, connect with others, and make our language and meaning accessible and useful to our communities. We need to continually **broaden our spheres of influence** – within our organizations, with communities, other NGOs, within alliances, with governance institutions and other important stakeholders.



**OD and Development Practice.** Every OD effort should itself contribute to the capacity development and ultimately to increasing learning, effectiveness, accountability and performance of development organizations and professionals. The practice of OD needs to be grounded on our development principles, values and vision. The ultimate role of development-oriented NGOs and POs is to transform unequal power relations and work against the forces that increasingly marginalize, exclude and impoverish vast members of our global community. Participation, diversity, negotiation, responsibility and responsible well-being need to guide and inspire both our development and OD practices.

Note:

<sup>1</sup> Established in 1995 as the CBCRM Resource Center, the CBNRM LC's thrust is to facilitate the development of a learning community of development workers, researchers, practitioners and advocates in order to continuously evolve and promote the theory and practice of CBCRM in the Philippines and Southeast Asia.



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