



Sustainable livelihood and entrepreneurship among differently abled women in partner communities

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Abstract

This study is about the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program for differently abled beneficiaries. Forty (40) physically challenged women, affected by a massive flooding in 2020, were selected by SPUP Community Development Center Foundation, Inc. (SPUP-CDCFI) from the University's partner communities as recipients of the program. SPUP-CDCFI responded to their unique situation and crafted a special program relevant to their conditions and needs by promoting and developing their entrepreneurial skills towards quality of life and sustainable living. In a 10-month period, the recipients were provided with capacity building and empowerment activities. Through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), a start-up capital was also provided to each of the recipients. At present, the program beneficiaries are already engaged in sustainable livelihood through income generating activities ranging from culinary activities, weaving and handicraft making, ornamental, fruit and vegetable gardening, animal raising, and ambulant vending. The program has provided the recipients with livelihood that sustains their everyday life and welfare of their respective family. Moreover, the program developed their entrepreneurial skills and ushered in improvement in their socio-economic conditions through sustainable livelihood. It has also advanced their social skills and has fostered in them a positive outlook, and quality of life. This is one of the contributions of St. Paul University Philippines (SPUP) in empowering the differently abled persons in Cagayan to engage in self-employment activities and contribute to economic and social progress.

Keywords: differently abled women, St. Paul university Philippines, entrepreneurship, sustainable livelihood

Introduction

In November 2020, massive flooding occurred in the Philippines, particularly in the Island of Luzon. The deluge was caused by Typhoon Vamco (Local Name: Ulysses). The devastation affected more than three million people located in the 5,594 barangays or villages in several provinces of Luzon. (ReliefWeb, 2022) ^[13] In the occurrences of such disasters and emergencies, the vulnerable sectors in the society such as women, children, and persons with disabilities are heavily affected. While immediate relief, such as food, water and medical needs is provided, it is also essential to give attention to preserve household assets and provide economic interventions for households to persons with disabilities to recover. Persons with disabilities remain to be among the most marginalized sectors in the society despite their inclusion in the global agenda for sustainable development. (Marella, 2016; United Nations, 2007) ^[8, 17]

Living up to its mission to "help uplift the quality of life and to effect social transformation," St. Paul University Philippines (SPUP) was one of the institutions in the province of Cagayan to conduct post disaster assessment to its partner communities as its initial response to the aftermath of the calamities. This effort has been recognized by various agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Provincial Government of Cagayan (PGC). Focusing on the vulnerable and marginalized members of the society, SPUP's preliminary survey showed that five hundred (500) women, composed of solo-parents, young mothers, battered wives, domestic workers, and elderly were affected. Further

beneficiary assessment revealed that among the 500 vulnerable women, forty (40) of them have disabilities, who are in dire need of attention and assistance. The group comprised of women with physical disabilities, visual impairment, speech impediment, and hearing disability.

Among SPUP's engagement to its partner communities through its Community Development Center Foundation, Inc. (SPUP-CDCFI) is women empowerment and social inclusion. With the identification of the differently abled women, SPUP-CDCFI responded to their unique situation and crafted a special program relevant to their conditions and needs. As an accredited Non-Government Organization and Civil Society Organization (www.spup.edu.ph, 2022) SPUP-CDCFI provides services such as psychosocial counselling, business and financial management, basic accounting, and bookkeeping among others. The SPUP-CDCFI community mobilizers documented the processes and accounted for the success of SPUP's Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program among the differently abled women beneficiaries.

Statement of Purpose

This study aimed to determine the value and impact of the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program of SPUP-Community Development Center Foundation, Inc. among the differently abled women in the University's partner communities.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. What are the conditions of the beneficiaries prior to the program implementation?
2. What are the sustainable livelihood and entrepreneurship program instituted by SPUP-CDCFI?
3. What are the benefits and impact of SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program?

Methodology

The study made use of the qualitative approach to research, with the phenomenological case study as the research design. (Emiliussen, *et al*, 2021) [3] Through the phenomenological method, the participants’ experiences are probed. Through the case study method, the participants’ experiences before, during and after the interventional activities embedded in the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program are examined.

With forty (40) differently abled women beneficiaries as participants, a validated focus-group discussion (FGD) and interview guide were used to collect primary data. Moreover, document review was also endeavored to obtain secondary data such as beneficiary information, case

assessment, case recordings, and project related documents such as activity designs and progress/monitoring reports.

Results and Discussion

This section describes the conditions and situations of the recipients prior to the implementation of SPUP’s sustainable livelihood and entrepreneurship program. It accounts for their location, description of their disabilities, and livelihood activities. This is followed by the strategies employed by SPUP-CDCFI, including the empowerment and capacity building activities participated in by the beneficiaries. Lastly, highlighting the benefits and impact of the program, it contains a narrative of the current entrepreneurial engagement of the beneficiaries.

The Conditions of the Beneficiaries Prior to Program Implementation

1. Location of the Beneficiaries

This enumerates the number of differently abled women vis-à-vis SPUP’s partner communities.

Table 1: Differently Abled Women in SPUP’s Partner Communities

Municipality/City	Barangay	Number of Differently Abled Women	Percentage
Tuguegarao City	Balzain East	1	2.50
	Balzain West	2	5.00
	Capatan	4	10.00
	Gosi Norte	2	5.00
	<i>Sub-Total</i>	9	22.50
Amulung	Abolo	1	2.50
	Unag	3	7.50
	Pacac Grande	2	5.00
	<i>Sub-Total</i>	6	15.00
Solana	Dassun	1	2.50
	Malacabibi	4	10.00
	<i>Sub-Total</i>	5	12.5
Enrile	Villa Maria	4	10.00
	San Roque	10	25.00
	Barangay IV	6	15.00
	<i>Sub-Total</i>	20	50.00
	Overall Total	40	100.00

Table 1 shows the municipalities and the city, namely Amulung, Solana, Enrile, and Tuguegarao City in the province of Cagayan, where the SPUP-CDCFI implemented its Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program. It also identifies the barangays (villages) that SPUP regards as partner communities. Moreover, from each of the University’s partner community, the number of differently abled women were identified as recipients of the program.

The municipality of Enrile has the highest number of beneficiaries, with 20 or 50%. Barangay San Roque and Barangay IV from the same municipality are the two topmost villages with the number of recipients having 10 and six, respectively. The City of Tuguegarao registers nine or 22.50% recipients from SPUP’s partner communities. The town of Amulung has six or 15% beneficiaries, while Solana has five or 12.50%. These localities are predominantly agricultural, and they are in low lying areas prone to flooding. (Ravago, *et al*, 2020) [16]

2. Disabilities of the Beneficiaries:

This indicates the conditions of the beneficiaries prior to the implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program.

Table 2: The Disabilities of the Program Beneficiaries

Disability	Frequency	Percentage
Physical Disability	20	50.00
Visual Impairment	10	25.00
Speech Disability	6	15.00
Hearing Impairment	4	10.00
Total	40	100.00

Table 2 presents the different forms of disabilities of the recipients. Of the identified beneficiaries, 50% have physical disability which include lame, limping, and hand deformity. 25% are suffering from visual impairment like having triangular eyelid, glaucoma, cortical blindness, and cataracts. 15% have speech disability such as nasal twang, slurred speech, and mumbling and 10% have hearing impairment.

Prior to the program implementation, the women beneficiaries were resistant, lacking confidence, and have limited aspirations as they see their disabilities as deterrent. (Schneider & Mercer, 2012) [14] This implies that persons with disabilities remain to be among the most marginalized sectors in the society. (Mitra, *et al*, 2019) [9] According to

the participants, they are discriminated and excluded in economic activities due to their physical limitations, affecting also their social and psychological dispositions. (Jandayan, *et al.*, 2019) ^[6]

3. Livelihood Activities of the Beneficiaries

This illustrates the different livelihood activities of the differently abled women to sustain their living before the realization of SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program.

Table 3: The Livelihood of the Beneficiaries

Livelihood	Frequency	Percentage
Domestic Helper	12	30.00
Laundry Women	10	25.00
Errand-Ambulant Vendor	8	20.00
Dish Washer	6	15.00
Garbage Collector	4	10.00
Total	40	100.00

Table 3 reveals the various livelihood engagement of the recipients in their respective locality. 30% are domestic helpers to well-off families in their areas. They render services from household chores to being nannies of children. 25% are laundry women, who only work every Saturday or once a week. The errand-ambulant vendors, comprising of 20%, are selling goods on behalf of business-owners. The dish washers (15%) work on small eateries near schools in their towns. The garbage collectors (10%) are only gathering junks that they could immediately sell.

With most of them trying ways to support their families, they expressed having a hard time, as they witnessed the devastating effect of the typhoons and flooding to their properties and sources of livelihoods. Moreover, relevant to livelihood, the beneficiaries expressed difficulties in starting up business activities due to limited personal financial resources and lack of accessible information on sources of grants and loans. (Mizunoya & Mitra, 2018) ^[10]. They also lack interest, as they do not have access to appropriate business support services because their conditions are regarded as risk. (Groce, 2020) Furthermore, their condition was aggravated due to the COVID - 19 pandemic. (Molina, 2020) ^[11] However, with constant presence and assurance, SPUP-CDCFI community mobilizers explained to them thoroughly the process and the benefits they will gain from program.

The Implementation of SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Program:

1. Program Strategies and Approaches

In the implementation of the SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Program, the project team considered an integrated, and holistic approaches and methodologies. The following approaches and strategies were instituted:

- a. Coordination and partnership building with partner municipal and barangay government units and resource partners,
- b. Identification of and establishing rapport among the program beneficiaries,
- c. Conduct of empowerment and capacity training for both direct beneficiary and one productive family member,
- d. Follow-up and regular monitoring of program beneficiaries.

The program was relevant, and timely as it was responsive to the situation and needs of the differently abled women beneficiaries. It was conducted and customized along the disability of the recipients. As it is intended as a recovery program, it was implemented after the onslaught of Typhoon Vamco, where the survivors are still in the process of recovering from the loss and damages caused by the calamity. Indeed, the project hastened livelihood recovery, as set activities are appropriate and responsive to the needs, and in consideration of their knowledge, skills, and capacities. (Elwan, 2019) ^[2]

2. Program Activities and Livelihood Ventures

SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program promotes innovation, creativity, and motivation among differently abled women towards entrepreneurship by imparting business concepts and livelihood enterprises. Conducted in 10 months, the program provided a unique opportunity for the beneficiaries to learn and acquire business initiatives and skills through its two-pronged engagement:

Table 4. The Two-pronged Engagement and Activities

Program Engagement	Activities
Empowerment Activities	Psychosocial Support Personality Development Values Formation
Capacity Building Activities	Business Management Entrepreneurial Skills Training Financial assistance (start-up capital)

Table 4 highlights the provision of relevant skills (capacity building activities) and ethics (empowerment activities) as interventional activities for the program beneficiaries. These endeavors foster developmental activities for the recipients to choose from the different livelihood ventures in the program. While activities were conducted, SPUP-CDCFI further partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Region 02 and referred the beneficiaries to DSWD Livelihood Assistance Grant (LAG) for the provision of start-up capital for the beneficiaries.

Table 5: Livelihood Ventures of the Program Beneficiaries

Livelihood Activities	Number of Beneficiaries
Culinary Activities	4 with Speech Impairment 1 with Hearing Impairment
<i>Sub-Total/Percentage</i>	<i>5 or 12.50</i>
Basket Weaving and Handicraft	4 with Physical Disability 1 with Visual Impairment
<i>Sub-Total/Percentage</i>	<i>5 or 12.50</i>
Ornamental Plant Growing and Selling	2 with Speech Impediment 4 with Physical Disability

	3 with Visual Impairment
<i>Sub-Total /Percentage</i>	<i>9 or 22.50</i>
Variety Store (fruit, grocery store)	4 with Physical Disability
<i>Sub-Total /Percentage</i>	<i>4 or 10.00</i>
Ambulant Selling	3 with Visual Impairment
<i>Sub-Total /Percentage</i>	<i>3 or 7.50</i>
Small Ruminants Raising	5 with Physical Disability
<i>Sub-Total /Percentage</i>	<i>5 or 12.50</i>
Pig, Chicken and Duck Raising/Selling	3 with Physical Disability 3 with Visual Impairment
<i>Sub-Total /Percentage</i>	<i>6 or 15.00</i>
Home Gardening (vegetables and crops)	3 with Hearing Impairment
<i>Sub-Total /Percentage</i>	<i>3 or 7.50</i>
Overall Total/Percentage	40 or 100

Table 5 exhibits the livelihood ventures of the 40 differently abled women beneficiaries of SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Program. While the beneficiaries participated in all empowerment and capacity building activities, they are given the choice to engage in the different livelihood ventures provided to them.

With an array of livelihood activities, 22.50% of beneficiaries opted to engage in ornamental plant growing and selling while 15% preferred herd and poultry raising and selling. Furthermore, the following are also undertaken by the recipients: Culinary activities (12.50%), basket weaving and handicraft, (12.50%) and small ruminants raising (12.50%), respectively. Moreover, there are also those who have chosen to embark on variety store and online selling (10.00%), ambulant selling (7.50%) and home gardening (7.50%). These enable the differently abled women to earn and sustain their livelihoods independently and contribute to the well-being of their family and

community. Moreover, these activities also create a sense of importance, belonging, and independence. (Beisland & Mersland, 2018) ^[1]

The Benefits and Impact of SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Program:

1. Entrepreneurial Engagement:
The recipients of SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Program are in unison in asserting that the program has brought positive change in their lives. The empowerment activities of the program fostered a mindset that regardless of their condition, their life and livelihood must flourish. The capacity building activities provided them with skills as they engage in various livelihood ventures. They are grateful for the financial support as a start-up capital to manage their chosen entrepreneurial activity.

Table 6: Current Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Engagement of the Differently Abled Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries	Livelihood	Current Entrepreneurial Engagement
4 (Speech Impairment) 1 (Hearing Impairment)	Culinary Activities	They are now engaged in cooking native delicacies and established their stall near the schools in their respective barangays.
4 (Physical Disability) 1 (Visual Impairment)	Basket Weaving and Handicraft	They are tapped as partners of their local government for the promotion (marketing and selling) of their product through the “One Town, One Product” (OTOP) program.
2 (Speech Impediment) 4 (Physical Disability) 3 (Visual Impairment)	Ornamental Plant Growing and Selling	They conduct business in their respective homes. They promote and sell their products through online selling.
4 (Physical Disability)	Variety Store (fruit, grocery store)	They have converted an ample space in their homes and started their own variety store.
3 (Visual Impairment)	Ambulant Selling	They trade in public areas in their localities (by using bicycle with a sidecar) and are assisted by an abled member of their respective family.
5 (Physical Disability)	Small Ruminants Raising	They coordinated with their local government for the provision of a space in their local market for them to display and sell their products.
3 (Physical Disability) 3 (Visual Impairment)	Pig, Chicken and Duck Raising/Selling	
3 (Hearing Impairment)	Home Gardening (vegetables and crops)	They are working with their respective village by growing and providing assistance in their Barangay Plant Nurseries.

Table 5 displays the current entrepreneurial engagement of the 40 differently abled women beneficiaries of SPUP’s Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Program. As they are provided with empowerment and capacity building activities, they are now all engaged in a sustainable livelihood and entrepreneurship. At present, they are constantly monitored for development by SPUP-CDCFI, and they also provide feedback on their progress, experiences, and encountered challenges.

From their discussions and exchanges, the program implemented by SPUP-CDCF fostered entrepreneurial mindset and self-empowerment. Accordingly, the entrepreneurial engagement that match their capacities is also beneficial to their well-being and their family members as well (Sue, 2019) Furthermore, they also emphasized that through the project, they have learned flexibility to work around their disability status and work-life. (Mulubiran, 2021) The beneficiaries also considered the program as a great help in improving their resilience to disasters, social

and economic status, as they already improved in earning capacity and work skills. They recognized that they experienced change in their work orientation and practices, openness to learning, social aspirations, and positive outlook in life despite hardships. (Kaplan, 2020) ^[7]

Conclusion

From the series of dialogues and discussions among the differently abled women beneficiaries, it is concluded that the implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Program of the University, through the SPUP-CDCFI, is promising. The program has provided the recipients with livelihood that sustains their everyday life and welfare of their respective family. Moreover, the program developed their entrepreneurial skills and ushered in improvement in their economic conditions through sustainable livelihood. It has also advanced their social skills and has fostered in them a positive outlook and quality of life. The program has also allowed the beneficiaries to contribute to economic progress and social development. Consequently, it also reflects the commitment of SPUP to foster inclusivity and social value creation along the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 8) on Decent Work and Economic Growth by emphasizing human-centric and value-based approach for human development towards a productive and meaningful life.

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