

ASSESSING COMMUNITY HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS: A CASE STUDY OF SITIO TAGALEB, IBA, ZAMBALES

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ABSTRACT: Limited access to healthcare in rural and indigenous communities, such as Sitio Tagaleb, Barangay Bangantalinga, Iba, Zambales, significantly contributes to health disparities and exacerbates socioeconomic inequalities. This study explores the healthcare and other development needs of Sitio Tagaleb, a newly adopted community of President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU), to propose extension programs through a community-university partnership. Using a case study design, data were gathered through focus group discussions with 60 heads of families and 20 barangay officials. Thematic analysis revealed several urgent needs, including healthcare support, improved access to medical supplies, basic first aid training, family planning education, livelihood opportunities, clean water, alternative energy sources, and infrastructure development. The findings underscored the necessity of a holistic, multi-sectoral approach to community extension services, where PRMSU's College of Nursing could address health-related needs, while other colleges could support agricultural development, infrastructure projects, and renewable energy initiatives. The study recommends the establishment of targeted extension programs, collaboration with government agencies, and continuous community engagement to ensure sustainable impact. Future studies may benefit from incorporating quantitative methods for a broader assessment of community needs.

KEYWORDS: *Community needs-assessment, extension program,*

I. INTRODUCTION

Limited access to healthcare is a significant contributor to health disparities. Some communities lack local healthcare facilities, leading to a shortage of medical experts and resources. These disparities can undermine individual health and exacerbate broader systemic inequalities (Okolo et al., 2024). One effective strategy to reduce healthcare disparities is through community engagement. In this approach, healthcare managers develop programs that foster open dialogue, collaboration, and partnerships with local communities. This helps to identify specific health needs, address concerns, and design healthcare services that are sensitive to the community's cultural and social contexts. Enhancing accessibility is crucial, and strategies may include implementing telehealth solutions, establishing community-based clinics, and ensuring that healthcare facilities are both geographically and economically accessible (Okolo et al., 2024). The President Ramon Magsaysay State University offers College of Nursing and its students and faculty members can play a vital role in addressing healthcare concerns of partner communities.

The government through the Commission on Higher Education mandates all higher education institutions (HEIs) to organize extension programs as part of their core functions. RA 7722 emphasizes the role of universities as key drivers of economic growth, making it essential for Philippine HEIs to serve as platforms for research, development, innovation, and extension in the pursuit of inclusive social and economic progress. Extension is broadly defined as the systematic transfer of technology, innovation, or knowledge generated by HEIs and their partners to address specific developmental concerns. It is a targeted, purpose-driven approach that utilizes the best available data, science, and evidence across disciplines to create solutions for community development. HEIs, such as President Ramon Magsaysay State University (PRMSU), are expected to collaborate with communities to facilitate the transfer of knowledge or technology in areas that directly impact the well-being of individuals, families, and communities (CMO 52, s. 2016). Extension services are an inherent function of higher education institutions, aiming to initiate, catalyze, and sustain community development through the use of their expertise and available resources. It involves communicating and transferring knowledge and technology to specific sectors and target groups to improve production, enhance community

institutions, and elevate quality of life, while simultaneously enriching the academic and research programs of HEIs (CMO No. 8, s. 2008). At PRMSU, all colleges are required to implement extension programs not only to comply with CHED directives but also to fulfill the University's mission to provide advanced professional, technical, and specialized instruction; to conduct research and extension activities; and to initiate income-generating programs for the sustainable development of Zambales, the region, and the country (Garson et al., 2022).

The most effective extension programs or services are the ones having a long term impact on the community. Aside from benefitting the community, extension services of a University may also provide a meaningful educational experiences for its students, providing opportunities to develop their skills. In planning for programs, community needs assessment play a very crucial role, so that the extension programs are participatory in nature. Through community assessment, health problems can be diagnosed and health programs can be evaluated (Emeagwali, 2017). Extension programs also promote value of citizenship among the students (Soska and Butterfield, 2013). Community needs assessment is an evaluation of the current situation of the partner community. It is performed before any community extension programs or intervention (Butterfoss, 2007).

This study is anchored on Lawrence Green and Phil Rabonowitz' PRECEDE (Predisposing, Reinforcing, and Enabling Constructs in Educational Diagnostic and Evaluation)- PROCEED (Policy, Regulatory and Organizational constructs in Educational and Environmental Development) model that provides a comprehensive structure for assessing health and quality of life needs and for designing, implementing and evaluating health promotion and other public health programs to meet healthcare needs. PRECEDE stage involves a diagnostic planning process to assist in the development of targeted and focused public health programs. PROCEED concerns the implementation and evaluation of the programs designed using PRECEDE. This research is focused on the PRECEDE stage as it aims to identify the needs of the partner community (Dolan, 2001) Although the needs assessment is not just focused on health care needs but it also aims to unveil other needs of the community which can be addressed by other colleges and units. In addition, Community Health Needs Assessment through community-university partnership is important for identifying, evaluating and addressing the health needs of communities. It enables the community to empower themselves and engage in the decision making process, and engaging the community members towards positive health outcomes (Zakar, et al., 2024). Community health needs assessment also explores the social and environmental factors which contribute to healthcare concerns of the community. Through these, the health challenges they are facing can be fully understood and a holistic intervention can be planned.

In the study of Llamedo, et al. (2024), their community health needs assessment resulted to three themes: a) dearth of medical supplies, b) health promotion seminar, c) free consultations for senior citizens. They have problems on the availability of over the counter medicines, and first aid kits. The participants requested for health promotion seminar to enable them to learn how to manage their health properly. They also requested for free consultations for senior citizens since the elderly are vulnerable to chronic health conditions.

Sitio Tagaleb, Brgy. Bangantalinga, Iba, Zambales is a newly adopted community of President Ramon Magsaysay State University. This community has not yet established any partnerships with community extension workers. Most of the residents of this village are Aetas, indigenous group of people rooted in Zambales. To be able to conduct an extension program which could have a great impact on the community, community needs assessment was conducted by the College of Nursing. The assessment also was not limited to health care needs of the village. This research aims to answer the following questions;

1. What are the present needs of the community?
2. What available resources does the community have?
3. What extension program can be proposed in the community?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a case study research design to determine the community needs of Brgy. Tagaleb, Bangantalinga, Iba, Zambales. According to Yin (1984), case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident and multiple sources of evidences are used. The study was conducted at Sitio Tagaleb, Brgy. Bangantalinga, Iba, Zambales, an adopted community of PRMSU College of Nursing. Focus group discussions were facilitated by the researchers and extensionists. The researchers obtained permission from the Barangay officials of Brgy. Bangantalinga. FGD involves male and female heads of the families and male and female barangay officials. After gathering the data, thematic analysis was done. It is an appropriate method for analyzing and understanding experiences, thoughts and behaviors (Kiger and Varpio, 2020) According to Clarke and Braun (2006), thematic analysis involves the following steps a) becoming familiar with the entire data set through repeated and active reading, b) taking down notes on potential data items of interest, questions, connections between data items and preliminary ideas, c) coding process which will result to codes, d) examination of codes to produce potential themes of broader significance, d) review of themes which involves

a two level analytical process, and e) writing the final analysis and description of findings.

The participants of the study are 60 male and female heads of the family and 20 male and female barangay officials and barangay health workers. Informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to their inclusion in the study. They were provided with detailed information about the study, the nature of their involvement, potential risks and benefits of participation, the measures implemented to protect their confidentiality and privacy.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Heads of the families identified needs in terms of healthcare, farming, basic necessities, alternative energy source and infrastructures. In terms of healthcare, the community needs assistance in medical check ups, medicine supplies, basic training on responses to medical emergencies and reproductive health awareness. Sitio Tagaleb is 30 minute away far from the town proper, with unpaved right of way, thus they do not have easy access to medical facilities and medical supply resources. This limits their opportunity to have regular check ups for both adults and children. They look into the possibility of having medical personnel visit them and conduct regular check ups with them. As participant mentioned: “Kailangan po namin sana ng tulong medical, lalo na po may bibisita samin na doctor para matignan ang mga nagkakasakit na bata lalo na po sa ubo at pagtatae.” (*We need medical assistancy, particularly having doctors visit us to conduct consultation among children who suffer from cough and diarrhea*) Other participant added “Hindi namin alam kung kami ay may karamdaman o sakit sa puso o mataas na presyon at saka diabetes na kami” (*We do not know if we already have sickness, such as heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes*) The community also have limited medical supply resources particularly medicines. The barangay has a health center however this is not accessible to the village of Tagaleb. It is approximately 30 minute-drive away from the village, therefore it is difficult for them to get medicines in case of emergencies. The following are some of the responses of the participants: “Nanganagilangan din kami ng mga gamot lalo na kapag may dumating na karamdaman.” (*We also need medicines, especially when we are sick*) Another participant added “Sana po magkaroon ng halamang gamot ditto sa sition namin para po kahit papano may gamot na kaagad na iinum.” (*We also hope to have herbal medicines in the area, so that we can readily use them when in need.*) Residents are considering growing herbal medicines as substitute for clinically tested medicines. As mentioned above, hospitals and health clinics are not accessible from the place, therefore they also identified having basic knowledge on emergency responses is needed. A participant narrated: “Kung maaari po turuan din kami paano o anong gagawin kung may emergency dito sa amin kasi malayo pa ang hospital samin.” (*If possible, we can also be taught of emergency responses especially because we are far from the hospitals.*) Therefore, aside from conducting regular check-up, referral of their medical supply needs to Rural health unit, the college can also offer trainings on the following: blood pressure checking, temperature checking, wound cleaning and dressing, splinting of suspected fractures, first aid trainings on choking and drowning and cardio pulmonary resuscitation. The residents also identified that they need to learn more about family planning. The community is observed to have big families, because they are not aware about family planning. A resident mentioned, “May mga pamilya po dito na sunod sunod po ang nanganganak, kailangan po naming matutunan paano hindi mabuntis agad.” (*There are families here who do not have enough birth spacing, we also need to learn family planning*). Aside from discussions about family planning, seminar on reproductive health can also be included in the extension program of the college. Zakar, et al. (2024) found out in their community health needs assessment in a community in Pakistanx that family planning is a major maternal health concern. 56.9 % of the women have three or more children and 43.1 % reported that they are unaware of any family planning methods.

In terms of livelihood, the residents engage in farming, charcoal making, animal husbandry and basket making. However, they identified that they need additional resources for farming such as seedlings, carabaos which can help in plowing and farming tools. For basket making they have rich resources of “silag” and bamboo. These findings are same with that of Llamedo, et al. (2024), they found out that the community lacks medical resources such as over the counter medicines and first aid kits. They also lack trainings and seminar on health consciousness. They also do not have regular free check ups especially for their senior citizens.

The residents also have identified basic needs such as clean sources of water such as deep well water pumps. A resident mentioned: “Ang pangangailangan namin ay tubig na malinis at malinis na inumin katulad ng bumba.” (*We also need clean source of water such as deep well pump*) The village is situated near river and their main source of water for drinking, cooking, bathing, washing clothes is the river. They had to collect water from the river and store water in their households for a whole day supply of water. They mentioned that they only boil water if they have infants at home.

The residents also identified the need for electrical energy supply. A resident mentioned: “Ang pinakamabigat na pangangailangan ay ang pagkakaroon ng kuryente and bawat isa sa aming tahanan.” (*The much needed resource in our village is electrical energy source for every home*). Therefore, possible renewable sources of electrical energy can be explored in the barangay. Solar energy source and hydropower may be possible since the village is located near river and dam. There are infrastructure projects which are also needed such as clean

restrooms, since each house do not have a clean toilet system. As a resident said” “Wala rin po kaming pinagkukuhanan ng tubig at karamihan po ditto ay naghuhukay lang ng dumi at wala rin pong mga CR.” (*We also do not have water source, most of the residents use open pit toilets*). The unhygienic practice of disposing their bowels could be a source of contamination and disease. Another infrastructure need of the community is a road from the community to the schools. A resident shared when asked what the community needs: “Ang maayos po ang daanan para sa mga batang pumapasok sa paaralan para po hindi sila mahirapan.”(*We also need a paved road from the village to schools, because students are having difficulties going to school*). Barangay officials also participated in focus group discussions and identified needs of the village in terms of Education, Agriculture, Fisheries, Infrastructure and facilities, Health and Hygiene, alternative energy resource and transport vehicles. In terms of health, malnutrition is identified as their problem. According to one of the barangay officials: “Kalusugan po mahalaga sa sitio Tagaleb dahil minsan nagkakaroon ng discrimination sa kanila sila sa mapapayat at sakitin na ayaw naming mangyari sa kanila.”(*Health and nutrition is important, because being malnourish is oftentimes a source of discrimination.*) Malnutrition can even result to discrimination. Aside from malnutrition they also identified that oral personal hygiene is a need. Others also identified family planning as one of the trainings needed by the residents. Same as the residents, barangay officials also identified needs in terms of Agriculture. They mentioned that the village needs supplies such as farming machineries, seeds/seedlings fertilizers, planting materials and also seminars on farming techniques. The residents have not considered the possibilities of having livelihood along with fisheries. According to some of the barangay officials, the village is near river and dam therefore there could be additional livelihood such as tilapia and hito production. Therefore, they will also be needing fish cage net, fingerling and feeds. A barangay official mentioned when asked what does the village need: “Malapit sila sa dam, free seminar ng BFAR(Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic resources) for tilapia and hito production. Fish cage net, fingerling and feeds.” (*We are near dams, free seminar about tilapia and hito production from Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources*). In terms of infrastructure, they also identified the need for proper source of water and toilets. It has been observed by the barangay officials that the current toilet system of the village is the open pit. They do not have proper toilets and septic tanks. The community also has a problem in terms of education, learners are slow and there is also a need for awareness campaign. A barangay official discussed: “Kailangan ng matindi at malawakang pag-aaral para sa mga resident po ditto. Ang isang araw ay hindi sapat upang matuto po sila. Sa madaling salita ilan sa mga residente ay mahina ang kalinawagan at matagal ang pagkatuto.” (*We also need comprehensive and continuous lectures for residents, since one day would not be sufficient for them to learn.*) Therefore, if seminars or awareness campaigns are to be implemented in the village, we have to ensure that it is not a one day training, but a continuous seminar or training which could really have an impact on the residents. Subsequent hands-on trainings may also be needed and continuous monitoring of how they applied what they learned is also needed.

To answer the research question about the available resources within the community, thematic analysis was done. The community has identified agricultural resources such as “silag”, a reed which is used for livelihood programs such as craft making. According to them this material has been gaining attention right now. And they can develop their livelihood program which makes use of silag. A resident explained, “Ang kalakasan at yamang bayan na maaaring makatulong sap ag unlad ay ang silag dahil ito ang kabuhayan namin ngayon.” (*The available resources which can help develop the village is the “silag” because we have been using this for our livelihood*) Other resources are bamboo and “buho”. Though they are rich with these resources, according to them, they have not maximized the use of these materials. “Ang hindi nagagamit na yaman ditto ay ang buho at kawayan.” (*We are not able to maximize buho and bamboos*) Therefore, a livelihood program can also be proposed to maximize the use of silag, buho and bamboo. Llamedo et al. (2024) found out that their partner community has high incidence of poverty and people are needing help from Higher education institution to provide them with livelihood opportunities. They also identified having rich soil in the community which is suitable for farming vegetables and other crops. However, they lack agricultural resources such as seeds, seedlings and fertilizers. Another intangible resource of the community is the sense of cooperation. According to one resident, “pagsasama ng mga residente ng Tagaleb upang maisakatuparan ang pagtatanim o pangkabuhayan.” (*The cooperation of residents in livelihood and farming*) According to Brgy. Officials another resource of the village is the availability of External organization support. Some organization such as the police department conduct feeding programs and offer assistance to the community.

From the identified needs of the village, a holistic extension program can be proposed. For the case of the College of Nursing, they can immediately give support to healthcare needs of the village. One of the identified problem is about the population and lack of knowledge on family planning, therefore, the college can conduct seminars on family planning and may provide contraceptive materials through the help of Rural Health Unit or Population Commission. Because of the proximity of the village to the Rural health unit or Brgy. Clinic, the college can also conduct regular check ups within the village. Doctors from the municipality may also be invited to conduct check ups. Through partnerships with other agencies, the college may also supply basic medicines, vitamins needed by the village. They also need knowledge and training on emergency responses.

Therefore, the college can offer training on the following: blood pressure checking, temperature checking, wound cleaning and dressing, splinting of suspected fractures, first aid trainings on choking and drowning and cardio pulmonary resuscitation.

Other colleges may also be tapped to provide extension programs related to livelihood and agriculture, and infrastructure projects. The college of Nursing may work together with the College of Business, Accountancy and Public Administration for their livelihood projects and the College of Agriculture for their agricultural needs. In addition, College of Engineering may be tapped for alternative energy sources and other infrastructure projects.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of the study revealed that the community needs are healthcare support, livelihood opportunities, basic necessities such as clean water, alternative energy source and infrastructures. Heads of the families identified needs in terms of healthcare, farming, basic necessities, alternative energy source and infrastructures. The College of Nursing can propose extension programs to support the health care needs of the village. Seminars or trainings on family planning, and emergency responses can be conducted. Through partnerships with other agencies, the college may also supply basic medicines, and vitamins needed by the residents. Conducts of free medical check ups can also be facilitated by the college. Moreover, other colleges can be tapped for extension programs related to livelihood, agriculture and infrastructure projects. This research only utilized qualitative approach in data gathering, future researches who would like to conduct community needs assessment may also incorporate quantitative methods of data collection.

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