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3		*Instruct client

VOICES

STORIES OF EMPOWERMENT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH THE
KALAHI-CIDSS NCDDP
GRIEVANCE REDRESS STORIES



VOICES

STORIES OF EMPOWERMENT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH THE
KALAHI-CIDSS NCDDP
GRIEVANCE REDRESS SYSTEM



Voices: Stories of Empowerment and Accountability through the Kalahi-CIDSS NCDDP Grievance Redress System is a publication of community stories that have successfully resolved grievances of their Kalahi-CIDSS projects through the community-driven development (CDD) strategy.

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DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS National Program Management Office
Department of Social Welfare and Development
IBP Road, Batasan Hills, Quezon City, Philippines 1126
ncddp.dswd.gov.ph
ncddp@dswd.gov.ph

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Message from the Secretary



For years, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) ensures graft-free and people-centered programs and services to live by its mandate of giving the best social protection interventions to poor Filipinos. Our beneficiaries – who are mostly from the vulnerable, marginalized, and disadvantaged sectors – deserve adequate and effective social services to help them have equal access to opportunities.

To do such, we partner with communities and ordinary citizens in implementing programs. We work on different safeguard mechanisms, such as the grievance redress system of the Kalahi-CIDSS program, to monitor any anomalies and corrupt practices. We provide platforms that are accessible to citizens such as text messages, letters, social media, or face-to-face conversations so they can easily report complaints or clarify details about the implementation of their community projects.

And that mechanism actually worked. Concerned and vigilant citizens bravely report suspicious actions of any staff or implementers involved in the project. They actively participate in investigations to resolve the issues and make the responsible people accountable. This partnership serves as a constant reminder that public officials like us should always be working for and with the people.

We are proud to present you in these stories some of the vigilant citizens who became our partners towards corrupt and graft-free Kalahi-CIDSS projects in the poorest communities. With them, the Department can continuously live by its core value of *serbisyong walang puwang sa katiwalian*.

Secretary Rolando Joselito D. Bautista
Department of Social Welfare and Development

Message from the Undersecretary for Operations



Among the outcomes that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) envisions for the Philippine society is the improved well-being and protected rights of poor families and vulnerable sector. DSWD KALAHI-CIDSS-NCDDP largely contributes to this goal using the Community-Driven Development (CDD) strategy, where ordinary citizens are engaged in the local development process of their communities.

Through this process, poor communities have ownership to their community projects. They keep a closer look to every transaction, from finances to purchasing of materials, to secure that every peso and centavo is going to the project and is being used to contribute in addressing their needs.

This behavior has been instilled to communities engaged with DSWD KALAHI-CIDSS NCDDP as can be read in the stories featured in this publication. We aim to influence more communities to become participative and vigilant as they are to ensure the protection and promotion of their rights towards an improved well-being and quality of lives.

Atty. Aimee S. Torrefranca-Neri
Undersecretary for Operations
Department of Social Welfare and Development



Message from the Assistant Secretary for Specialized Programs

Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte signed the Magna Carta of the Poor or Republic Act 11291 this year. This serves as the “declared policy of the State to uplift the standard of living and quality of life of the poor and provide them with sustained opportunities for growth and development.”¹

As stated in Section 10, the KALAHÍ-CIDSS program is recognized as one of the poverty alleviation programs of the Department of Social Welfare and Development that should be regularly funded and implemented by the Philippine Government. This is an indicator that the program truly serves its purpose of improving the living condition of poor communities nationwide through its community-driven development (CDD) strategy.

CDD engages the people in the planning and realizing the development of their communities that gives an empowering experience among the residents. Their local knowledge is vital in identifying interventions for their village as they know what they truly need to address poverty in their locality.

Community-driven development programs operate on the principle of transparency, participation, accountability and enhanced local capacity. Community members and stakeholders actively report anomalies through the grievance redress system of the program, which helps us make sure of a corrupt-free project.

Read through the stories of communities and learn how CDD shapes empowered citizens and helps alleviate poverty in communities.

Asec. Rhea B. Peñaflor
Assistant Secretary for Specialized Programs
Department of Social Welfare and Development



Message from the National Program Manager

Empowered people are the lifeblood of the DSWD KALAHÍ-CIDSS NCDDP. Their dedication and enthusiasm to help improve their communities are enough encouragement for us community workers to continue the service for the poor Filipino people.

For more than 15 years, DSWD KALAHÍ-CIDSS has been serving the poor, marginalized, and disadvantaged communities all over the country. Throughout those years, we have seen several communities transformed into becoming participative, transparent, and accountable when it comes to implementing projects.

These transformations are supported by mechanisms to keep the people from being active participants of the project. The DSWD KALAHÍ-CIDSS established its grievance redress system wherein it provides several accessible platforms for people to express their opinions and report irregularities observed in the implementation. We also share this strategy to our partner local government units to establish their own and practice good governance.

The stories featured in this publication will show how the grievance redress system were used in resolving different issues – giving victories to poor communities and ensuring that their need-responsive projects are duly given to them that further led to better relationship among community residents and vigilance in ensuring quality of all programs and projects implemented in their communities.

Dir. Janet P. Armas
National Program Manager
DSWD KALAHÍ-CIDSS-NCDDP

¹ Republic of the Philippines (2019). An act providing for a Magna Carta of the Poor. Metro Manila, Philippines: Author

PREFACE

Voices: Stories of empowerment and accountability through the KALAHÍ-CIDSS NCDDP Grievance Redress System highlights stories of communities that have championed transparency and accountability in implementing their Kalahi-CIDSS projects. It showcased wide-range of cases where both citizens and program implementers become equal partners in resolving issues for the good of their community. They have found the program's Grievance Redress System (GRS) useful and effective in expressing concerns and finding solutions through a participatory process.

Transparency and accountability are the most common principles attributed to GRS. The stories from Bicol region showed different ways on how these principles were practiced such as thorough investigation and informing the community of the actual implementation and status of a sub- project.

The program's GRS has also shown flexibility to harmonize with and respect existing locally-based resolution process such as the practices of Indigenous Peoples. These can be observed from the stories of Cordillera and Davao regions.

As a government program, the Kalahi-CIDSS also handles grievances about the program coursed through the Presidential Complaints Center (8888 hotline) and those reported at the local government level. Regardless to where the complaints are filed, the grievance resolution process would still be the same, following the transparency and participatory principle of the program. The stories from Central Visayas, Northern Mindanao, and SOCCSKSARGEN highlighted how the GRS responded to these systems.

The Kalahi-CIDSS program takes quick and proportional actions and ensures fairness in handling critical issues such as finance management, procurement and corruption to give communities the justice they deserve. GRS strives to provide solutions that shall keep the responsible persons accountable. The stories

from Eastern Visayas and Zamboanga Regions regions illustrated such cases.

The GRS process also aims to be facilitative and responsive to the needs of the community. The stories of Ilocos Region, Central Luzon and Caraga demonstrates that despite challenges in procurement, technical design and social safeguards, in the end, the community's needs prevail and ultimately guides implementers on how to appropriately respond and resolve the issues without sacrificing program standards. The involvement of all stakeholders to address glitches is also highlighted.

Lastly, the program also aims to strengthen its channels of communication with program stakeholders especially local government units to further help them improve on good governance. The GRS enables the local government to practice social accountability by being involved in the resolution of the issues from responding to simple clarifications of addressing sub-project implementation concerns. These were shown in the stories of MIMAROPA and Western Visayas regions.

The vast lessons and stories nationwide on participatory grievance resolution may serve as proof how community-driven development (CDD) can mobilize people to demand justice and accountability to government projects. May this practice continuously empower citizens towards a better and vigilant community.



ABOUT DSWD KALAHÍ-CIDSS

The Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS) program has been operating in the Philippines for more than 15 years in pursuit of empowering citizens for community development. It is recognized as a core poverty alleviation program of the Philippine Government as stipulated in the Magna Carta of the Poor or RA 11291.

The Kalahi-CIDSS program uses the community-driven development (CDD) approach, a globally recognized strategy in engaging local citizens to take control of decisions and resources for their community. They have the larger stake in their own development as they are in-charge of identifying and implementing projects that address the immediate needs of their locality.

To reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors nationwide, the Kalahi-CIDSS program is implemented under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) that serves as the social protection arm of the government. Since 2003, it has been reaching the poorest barangays and municipalities mostly in rural, conflict-affected, and geographically isolated areas.

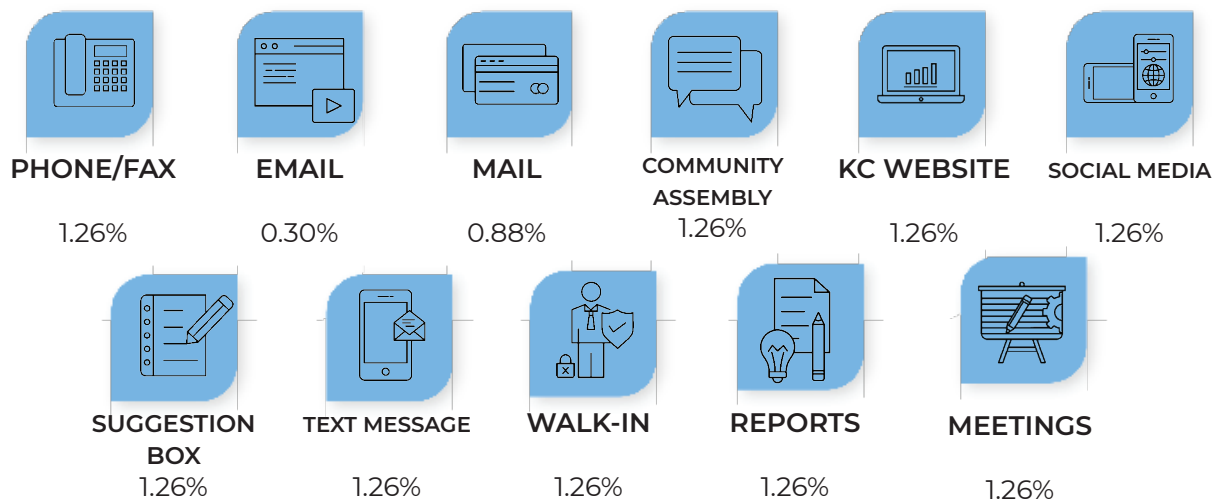
THE DSWD KALAHI-CIDSS GRIEVANCE REDRESS SYSTEM (GRS)

Following the community-driven development (CDD) approach, the Kalahi-CIDSS program aims to capacitate the citizens to demand and seek accountability from their local leaders. One of the mechanisms established is the Grievance Redress System (GRS), a locally-based platform where residents can express their feedbacks or complaints about the operations and actively take part in the resolution of their issues and concerns.

In Kalahi-CIDSS, a grievance is defined as a person's expression of concern or complaint that may have negative impact on the program operations caused by someone else's activity. It may include simple inquiry or clarifications to as complex as corruption issues or violations of processes and guidelines.

Residents form grievance committee in communities during project implementation as a way of check and balance to safeguard the process and ensure that it is free from abuse and corruption. For long-term impact, Kalahi-CIDSS hopes that the formed committees stay in communities to continuously practice transparency and accountability in future community projects led by their local government or other stakeholders.

MODE OF FILING



Types of grievances

Grievances are classified according to its nature for easier monitoring and investigation by the Kalahi-CIDSS staff in the local, regional, or national level.

Type A – Non-contentious queries, comments, and suggestions.

This type is non-contentious and merely requests for information/updates, seeks clarification or a response and suggestions to enhance the project design, improve operations and facilitate administrative/logistical support to the project.

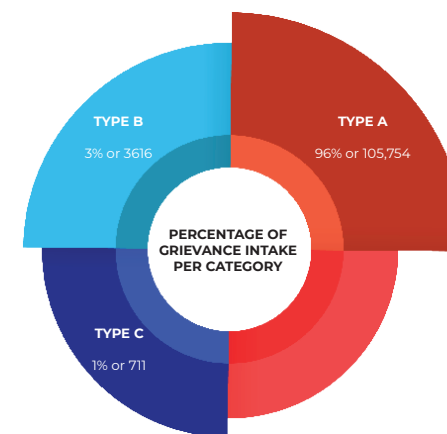
Type B - Compliance with project processes, Memorandum of Agreement and other KC-NCDDP implementation arrangements.

This type of grievance results from the non-performance of obligation of any of the parties involved to project processes and documents. Primarily addressed by the Barangay Assembly (BA) and/or the Municipal Inter-barangay Forum (MIBF) at the community level.

Type C - Conformance with KC-NCDDP procurement and finance guidelines.

This includes grievances or offenses pertaining to conformance with KC-NCDDP government procurement and finance guidelines.

The cases are handled depending on the type of grievance and the number of barangays concerned. In all levels of grievance handling, the program ensures transparency by involving the concerned communities, parties and individuals.



BUILDING TRUST

PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GRIEVANCE RESOLUTIONS



ANINAW: KASIYAHAN SA KATOTOHANAN

Kwento mula sa DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Rehiyon 5

Words by Ranelle Anne Sertan
Contributor, Marly Ayson

Bulusan, Sorsogon – Ramdan ang katahimikan sa bulubunduking bahagi ng Bulusan dulot ng mga punong nagyayakapan na nagdadala rin ng malamig na simoy ng hangin. Sa gitna ng katahimikang ito, kapansin-pansin ang silakbo ng kasiyahan sa mga mata ng mga taga-San Isidro.

Mayroong 507 pamilya na may populasyong 1,016 na kalalakihan at 1,222 na kababaihan ang naninirahan sa Brgy. San Isidro. Mula sa sentro ng Bulusan, mararating ang nasabing pamayanan sa pamamagitan ng jeep, tricycle, o habal-habal.

Pangunahing ikinabubuhay ng mga residente ang pagtanim ng mga gulay, pag-aalaga ng mga baboy, at iba't ibang produksyon ng niyog. Samantala, paggawa naman ng handicrafts ang pinagkakakitaan ng mga kababaihan.

Tahimik at simple ang kanilang pamumuhay dito na marahil ay dahilan ng kapansin-pansing kasiyahan. Kamakailan ay may bagong karanasan ang barangay na siyang nagbigkis pa lalo sa mga taga-San Isidro. Sa dulong parte ng komunidad, buong galak na ipinakita ni Adelfa Gabrillo, 51 anyos, ang kanilang isinagawang water system noong 2016 sa ilalim ng DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS na may halagang PhP1.22 milyon. Si Gabrillo ay isa sa mga community volunteer sa lugar.

Aniya, naging problema ng mga residente ang kakulangan ng suplay ng tubig kaya napagpasiyahan nilang ayusin ang kasalukuyang water system. Ito ay naging simbolo ng kanilang pagtutulungan at ng pagiging bukas sa komunidad sa anumang



transaksyon na may kaugnayan sa proyekto. “Malaki ang naging pagbabago sa amin dahil naaabot na ng tubig ang mga gripo ng bahay-bahay, maski anumang oras,” sabi ni Gabrillo.

Gayunpaman, hindi maiiwasan na makaranas ng pagsubok sa pagsasagawa ng proyekto sa komunidad. Isa na rito ang ulat na ipinaabot sa DSWD Central Office ng hindi nagpakilalang residente noong Hulyo 28, 2016 gamit ang Grievance Redress System (GRS) ng DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS. Ayon sa nagpaabot ng hinaing, naideklara nang kumpleto ang proyekto subalit hindi

pa nila ito napakikinabangan. Nagsimula ang pagsasagawa ng proyekto noong Setyembre 8, 2015 at inasahan sanang matapos noong Nobyembre 8, 2015.

Pagbibigay linaw

Upang maliwanagan tungkol sa natanggap na ulat mula sa residente, ang mga DSWD staff sa Rehiyon 5 ay bumisita sa Brgy. San Isidro para makakuha ng impormasyon at alamin ang pangyayari.

Nakipagtalakayan ang mga staff sa Sangguniang Barangay at mga residente.

GRS TIDBIT

Ang DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS ay bumubuo ng Fact Finding Committee na siyang namumuno sa imbestigasyon ng mga reklamang natatanggap ng programa. Sinisiguro na ang nasabing komite ay walang interes o kinalaman sa inaaral na kaso upang mapanatili ang makatarungang pagdedesisyon.



Ininspeksyon din nila ang proyekto kasama ang nakatalagang inhinyero ng DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS sa komunidad. Nakumpirma nila na tapos na ang proyekto base sa naipasang plano sa ahensiya ngunit hindi pa ito napakikinabangan dahil may karagdagan pang isasagawa sa proyekto. May kailangan pang ayusin sa chlorinator na siyang magpapanatili ng kalinisan ng tubig. Subalit, hindi pa napo-proseso ang mga dokumentong pinansyal dahil may sakit ang ingat-yaman ng barangay

Matapos malaman ito, napagpasiyahan ng komunidad na tapusin muna ang mga karagdagang patrabaho bago gamitin ang proyekto. Napagkasunduan din na magtalaga ng pansamantalang ingat-yaman para masimulan na ang pag-aasikaso ng mga dokumento at pagbili ng mga materyales. Kailangan ay patuloy rin ang pakikipag-ugnayan ng DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff sa Sangguniang Barangay at mga residente upang masiguro na maisakatutuparan ang mga napagkasunduan.

Nagpatawag ng asembliya ang barangay para maiparating sa mga residente ang lahat ng impormasyon at napagkasunduan tungkol sa proyekto. Bahagi rin ito ng pagbibigay tugon sa nagpadala ng ulat.

Nang dahil sa karanasang ito, natutunan ng mamamayan ang kahalagahan na maresolba ang anumang problema, maliit man o malaki, para maiwasan ang mga agam-agam. “Malaking bagay ang partisipasyon at pangingialam ng residente sa proyekto. Iyon ang magandang nangyari rito,” sabi ng punong barangay ng San Isidro. Nagustuhan rin ng Sangguniang Barangay ang proseso ng programa kung saan ang mamamayan ang nagpasiya kung paano mapapaunlad ang pamayanan. “Kasi hindi naman habambuhay punong barangay ang mga kapitan, kahit hindi man ako ang punong barangay, may boses rin ako dahil sa proseso ng Kalahi,” dagdag ni Abrillo.

Natapos ang proyekto ayon sa mga napagkasunduan at ginanap ang pagpapasinaya nito noong Setyembre 19, 2016. Sa kasalukuyan, patuloy ang ningning ng kasiyahan ng mga taga-San Isidro lalo na’t mayroon silang maipagmamalaking proyekto na nagbibigay ng malinis na inuming tubig sa mamamayan.

GRS TIDBIT

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VALUING RESPECT

HARMONIZING GRS PROCESS TO
INDIGENOUS DISPUTE RESOLUTIONS





Tongtongan Brings Water for All

A story from DSWD KALAHI-CIDSS CAR

Words by Jasmin P. Kiaso

Contributors, Jun Balao & Florence Batawang

The traditional practices and beliefs in Cordillera region have a strong influence to conflict resolution within the community. They believe that disputes may negatively affect their environment and may lead to depletion of natural resources, hence they aim to live harmoniously with each other.

As an Indigenous Peoples (IP)-dominated region, the natives have their own way of resolving conflicts through Tongtongan or the democratic discussion of disputes led by IP leaders. Agreements made are honored as set in stone during Tongtongan.

These beliefs and practices have guided the resolution of a dispute on water source ownership in Bauko, Mountain Province, particularly in the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS implementation of a village water system in Brgy. Mabaay.

On May 2017, while implementing the project, some local officials of Brgy. Monamon Norte, a neighboring barangay, opposed the construction of the project from the water source at Mt. Bulayok. They claimed that the water from Mt. Bulayok is used by residents of [Sitio] Bansa, one of their sitios, for drinking and farm irrigation.

A resident of Sitio Bansa also shared that the pipes currently installed in the water source is for the water supply of the elementary school located in the sitio. He added that installing other water pipes might affect the sufficiency of supply to the school.

Tongtongan: conversational resolution of conflict

Mt. Bulayok is situated in Brgy. Sadsadan located between Brgys. Monamon Norte and Mabaay. Brgy. Sadsadan waived their rights over the water source to give equal access to the neighboring barangays. Having no conflict of interest, the said barangay became the host village for Tongtongan.

In the series of Tongtongan, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS area coordinator in the locality served as the mediator while the municipal mayor, the IP Municipal Representative (IPMR), and IP representatives from the two conflicting barangays served as technical advisers. Barangay officials were also present in the resolution activities.

The first Tongtongan was conducted on May 23, 2017 where

representatives from Brgy. Mabaay showed a certification from the Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU) declaring that the water source is a public land as validated by the Municipal Assessor's Office. They then presented a water permit dated October 1981 and an agreement between the elders of Brgys. Mabaay and Monamon Norte in 1988. The agreement states that "an intake tank shall be constructed at the water source and shall have two (2) outlets equally leveled. One shall be used by Mabaay and the other shall be used by Monamon Norte while their irrigation system is being constructed."

After studying the documents presented, representatives from Brgy. Monamon Norte admitted that they were not aware of such agreements although they know the people who signed the documents. They proposed to refer the matter to the heirs of the signatories and to the farmers who will possibly be affected by the project, which Brgy. Mabaay agreed upon.

An ocular visit was conducted by both parties at the water source. The consulted farmers shared that they will not be in favor to the project if additional pipes will be installed as

it may affect the sufficiency of water for irrigation.

Two days after, a second Tongtongan should have taken place but the key persons were not present. Both barangays decided to discuss the issues with their constituents first before the final meeting.

'Water for all'

On May 29, 2017, the third and final meeting was conducted. One of the heirs of the elders validated that the agreement made on 1988 was true and that the water source is meant to be shared.

Clarified, both parties agreed that everyone has the right to access potable water. Concerns on insufficiency of water supply were also pushed aside after realizing that whatever available natural resource is a blessing from the Creator for everyone to use.

They also decided which areas are prioritized per water outlet. The left outlet will be for Monamon Norte High School and Elementary School while the right shall be for the two barangays. They also committed to protect and

preserve the water source and tanks.

Both barangays relayed the successful resolution to their constituents. On the other hand, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff provided technical assistance by changing the design of the project to accommodate the agreements made between the two barangays.

In the end, the value of sharing natural resources and living in harmony with neighbors guided by the indigenous beliefs and practices became the basis of resolution of the dispute. The level II village water system in Brgy. Mabaay was completed on October 31, 2017 and is now serving 270 households.

GRS TIDBIT

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS harmonizes its grievance redress system to the traditional practice of dispute resolutions of Indigenous Peoples (IPs). This is to recognize that IPs have earlier established an effective system of resolving conflicts in their community.





Jose Abad Santos, Davao Occidental – In the coastal barangay of Marabatuan where 980 Manobo and B'laan families reside, the traditional practices of Indigenous Peoples (IP) are still evident despite the changing times. These are still practiced for community-building, specifically on addressing issues and protecting the rights of the IPs in the barangay.

One IP elder filed a report against the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS for damaging his coffee and abaca crops during the construction of the community access road. The community volunteers working on the project had a hard time keeping off the elder's field because of the difficult terrain. They accidentally damaged the crops while transporting the construction materials.

“Pag sugod sa proyekto, ang akong mga pananom sama sa kape ug abaca nahulugan ug bato, mao akong gidala ang maong reklamo sa opisina sa Kalahi-CIDSS sa munisipyo ug akong gipapabot sa Grievance Redress Hotline sa Regional Office (When the project implementation started, stones rolled over my coffee and abaca crops and damaged it. I complained to the municipal office of DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS and also called the grievance hotline of the regional office),” he shared.

Based on the elder's assessment, the damage cost was PhP50,000.00. Since he only depends on his farm as source of living, he demanded to be paid for the damages.

He also added that he felt disappointed for not being informed about the project construction nor the schedule of community meetings and assemblies.

“Unta mapananghiran ta, ma respeto ang katungod, hilabi na sa mga IP (They should have asked permission from us, as a gesture of respect to our rights, especially of the IPs),” he said in dismay.

Balu-balu and DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS grievance redress system

All local government units are mandated to have an Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) for their IP constituents. The IPMR leads in protecting the rights of the IPs and ensures that they are involved in the local development process.

In resolving the IP elder's complaint, DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS sought the assistance of Gregorio Day, the IPMR of Jose Abad Santos

town, in respect to the tribe's tradition of resolving conflict. IPMR Day and the elder had balu-balu or their traditional discussion of laying down issues, demands, and resolutions as IPs.

On the other hand, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS proceeded to its grievance-handling process and created a validating team that conducted site inspections and interviews to concerned persons.

The validating team was composed of DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS staff from the field office as requested by the IP elder. He asserted that barangay officials should not be part of the validating team to avoid political interference, which the team respectfully followed.

The municipal local government of Jose Abad Santos was also involved in the grievance resolution process. According to Jennifer Leila Salvador, the town's internal auditor, the local government offered to conduct the ocular survey to the area to verify and assess the worth of damage. The ocular survey was conducted by the municipal assessor and Tribal Chieftain Datu Raymundo Lacadue.

Based on the assessment, the worth of the damaged crops was PhP10,000.00. But considering the IP elder's investment and effort in planting the crops as discussed during the balu-balu, it was decided that he will be paid with PhP30,000.00.

The harmony of traditional and modern conflict resolution

To date, the Manobo and B'laan tribes in Brgy. Marabatuan enjoy the 120 linear meter-access road worth PhP3.04 Million they implemented under DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS. The residents' collective effort has helped ease their travel within and outside the barangay.

On the other hand, the IP elder was already paid for the damage caused to his crops. It may not be a good experience but for him, he gained something worthwhile from it.

“Nagpasalamat ko kay natubag ug naayos ang maong problema sa akong luna. Ang maong problema ang isa sa nakapalig-on sa relasyon sa mga kaubanan sa barangay. Ang mga problema, angay na paghigugutan aron matagaan kini ug sulusyon (I'm grateful that my grievance was properly processed. In fact, this problem has brought me closer to the community and made me feel like I wasn't alone in this),” the IP elder shared.

IPMR Day added that the involvement of different stakeholders in the grievance resolution process showed the program's value and respect for the IPs.

“Sa pag implementar sa maong programa, kinahanglan dili gyud maligisan ang kulturanghigugutan katungod sa mga kaigsuunang IP. Isa sa rason na nasulbad ang maong problema tungod sa pag respeto sa among mga balaod. (The program implementation should consider the rights of the IPs. One of the reasons why the grievance was resolved is because of respect for the cultural practice),” he said.

Traditional practices of IPs should be recognized and not taken for granted as it can actually harmonize with the program process. should be responsive to the needs of the people.

GRS TIDBIT

In DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS' grievance redress system, the community may suggest on how they wish to proceed with the case. This helps people to establish trust on the process and to ensure a fair resolution of issues and complaints.

Balu-Balu Hears Voice of Marginalized

Words by Julie Ace Brandon Ramos
Contributor, Jackie Lou Ruta



OPENING PLATFORM

SIMPLE AND ACCESSIBLE WAYS OF FILING
COMPLAINTS

Rising From the Storm

Words by Venice Morre-Polancos
Contributor, Paulo Frangelyco Magallon

The municipality of La Libertad in Negros Oriental is one of the towns heavily devastated by Typhoon Yolanda, the most powerful storm that hit the Philippines in 2013. It made serious damage to the communities' access to basic services and ultimately, to the lives of the locals.

In 2014, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS focused its operations to poor, typhoon-affected municipalities to engage people in identifying, planning, and implementing need-responsive projects for their communities. The residents of La Libertad mostly proposed infrastructure projects to help rehabilitate their community.

One big project of the residents in 2017 was the Pacuan spillway, a joint project of three barangays – Bagtic, Kansumandig, and Pacuan – worth PhP6.6 million. The spillway traverses on two rivers in Brgy. Pacuan and serves as an access route for the residents of Brgys. Bagtic and Kansumandig going to the town proper.

However, there were delays in constructing the multi-million project. This stirred doubts to some residents until one local filed a report to the Philippine Government's 8888 Citizen's Complaint Hotline.

Exercising transparency

On January 2018, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 7 office received the complaint from a resident in Brgy. Pacuan about misuse of funds on the spillway project. According to the resident, the project design was not followed so the cost increased than projected. With the increased cost, funds became insufficient until the project was left unfinished.

The regional office was aware of the changes in the project design. Both the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS and the municipal local government reviewed and approved the necessary adjustments which came during the actual construction.

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff assigned in the area with the BSPMC also clarified that the project was not left unfinished. There were only delays because of late delivery of construction materials and inclement weather condition.

This explanation was sent to the complainant and to the Office of the President through a letter. The regional office also assured that a contingency fund shall cover the remaining expenses for the project.



Also part of the program's grievance resolution is to transparently inform the residents on the status of the complaint. The field staff assigned in the area conducted special barangay assemblies and community meetings and helped the BSMPC chair to inform the residents. Regular updates were also posted to inform the residents of the upcoming construction schedule.

On March 2018, the Pacuan spillway was finally completed. The community volunteers held an inauguration ceremony to celebrate the success of the project, which benefits more than 600 families from the three barangays.

Community as the best witness

A DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff consulted the complainant and found that he was not satisfied with the received explanation. He argued that the new project design is not safe for residents and that the municipal local government did not even join in monitoring the implementation.

He also stated that the procurement of construction materials was manipulated and insisted that there was fund mismanagement. He wanted an explanation directly from the municipal engineer since the local government invested a fair share of counterpart for the project worth PhP268,875.00.

Granting the request, the municipal engineer sent a letter explaining the engineering plan of the project. He shared that boulders were placed near the spillway to mitigate strong gush of river. This will keep the project sturdy and secure the safety of the residents. He also attached a copy of certification from the engineering office to verify that the project was reviewed and approved by the municipal local government and the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS regional office.

The municipal engineer also stated that he participated in the community planning and workshops of the project, which the complainant also attended as a resident, to keep track of the implementation of the spillway.

As to procurement issues, the community volunteers and other residents testified that they were present during the procurement activities and ensured everything was done according to process.

The community volunteers even expressed their gratitude to the program and to the local government for involving them in the whole project implementation. They felt empowered after volunteering for the rehabilitation of their community

For the residents, the Pacuan spillway project symbolizes their rising from the storm. Their collective action has helped rebuild their community and that experience is the best memory they wanted to relive on.

GRS TIDBIT

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS grievance redress system advocates the same principle with the national government's 8888 Citizen's Complaint Hotline. It both promotes transparency and accountability where individuals can conveniently report issues and concerns on government transactions or staff.





A mayor's resolve: Sagay and DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Journey

Words by Shaun Alejandrae Uy
Contributor, Gemima Lopez

“Our [DSWD] Kalahi-CIDSS implementation in Sagay is not all bed of roses,” remarked Mayor Joseph Uayan as he remembers the past five years of their town’s engagement to the government program.

Mayor Uayan is the local chief executive of Sagay town, a fifth-class municipality in the island province of Camiguin. The town is one of the targeted areas of DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS in 2014 to provide improved delivery of social services to its people for a better quality of life.

In the first few years, Mayor Uayan admitted being indifferent to the program after his proposed project was turned down. He was informed that public officials are not allowed to identify projects because the program uses the community-driven development approach, a strategy wherein residents are in-charge of decision-making.

So, instead of proposing his own projects, he keenly monitored all the projects implemented in the barangays to make sure that his constituents are getting the quality service they deserve.

The thorns in the bed of roses

In 2016, all projects were implemented smoothly in Sagay except the water system project in Brgy. Bacnit. There was an issue on the project’s functionality, which Mayor Uayan reported to the national office of DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS.

Mayor Uayan reported that there was a miscalculation on the elevation of the water reservoir that affects the water distribution in the community. However, the project still pushed through despite knowing that 33 households will not be serviced with water. He also stated that the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff did not inform nor consult the community for a decision either.

This prompted the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS to create a fact finding team composed of staff from the national and regional offices. They went to Brgy. Bacnit and conducted site inspection and separate meetings with Mayor Uayan, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff, and the community residents.

The truth

The team found out that the reservoir was originally designed to be placed in Upper Poblacion where the 33 households reside. However, upon testing, the pressure from the water source was too weak to reach the reservoir. Hence, the original design was not feasible. Revisions on the project design were made and the reservoir was transferred to a lower area. This resolved most of the problem as the project already serves 201 households from Sitios Bul-os and Lower Poblacion.

A second tank (receiver tank) was said to be built in Upper Poblacion to serve the remaining 33 households. However, after series of tests, the water pressure is still not strong enough to reach the area. The second tank was never built.

The residents said that they were informed about the plan of building a second tank. But they were never advised on the results of the tests. They did not know that the second tank was still not feasible.

A future blossom

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff admitted the gaps in informing the community about the project status. On the other hand, Mayor Uayan understood the limitations of the project and committed to improve the water system instead to serve all the households of Brgy. Bacnit.

A special barangay assembly was organized in Bacnit which Mayor Uayan attended to personally explain the details behind the reported water system. The residents of Upper Poblacion were also informed that there are two tap stands near their area, approximately 300 meters away, where they could fetch potable water. During the assembly, he also assured the community that the municipal local government is finding ways to install additional pipelines to bring the water closer to the residents.

The journey continues

Mayor Uayan was satisfied with the grievance resolution process. He also noted that residents are forming community-based organizations to oversee the operations and maintenance of their implemented projects, which promoted a sense of ownership to community projects.

“More than half of the implemented projects in town are water system. The water users organized themselves into associations and all have opened up bank accounts to deposit their collections,” he shared in detail. He was also inspired seeing his constituents transform into active citizens. This, for him, makes it easy to practice participatory governance for a more inclusive development in Sagay town.

“Of course, the Kalahi-CIDSS implementation in Sagay is not all bed of roses but, all in all, Kalahi-CIDSS was a shining moment for me as a Local Chief Executive,” Mayor Uayan concluded.

Volunteers' Integrity Shines Though

A story from DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 12

Words by Hilbert Estacion
Contributor, Nolisa Fagini Lidasan



Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat – During daytime, Brgy. Didtaras is a vibrant community of 556 households just like other villages in town. Surrounded by vast farmland, residents till their land, socialize with their neighbors, and do alternative activities to earn more income.

But as the dark begins to engulf the place, villagers have to hurry on their way home rather than linger after sunset. They run away from the risk of any violence that may happen at night.

Eddie Balaba, 55, and the rest of Didtaras villagers are determined to change the situation.

“Takot kaming lumabas sa gabi. Madilim ang buong lugar na naka-eenganyo sa masasamang elemento na gumawa ng hindi maganda. (We are afraid to go out at night. The darkness seems to lure other people to commit violent acts),” Balaba said.

They have been longing to walk at night without fear and let it also be a time for the residents to gather.

Didtaras villagers proposed for 40 units solar-powered streetlights project worth PhP1.86 Million through DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS. Their proposal was one of the prioritized projects for funding and implementation in 2016 after presenting it to the inter-barangay forum in town.

“Masaya kami dahil sa wakas, masosolusyunan na ang aming matagal na problema,” (We are happy that finally, our all-time problem will be addressed.) said Balaba, who was also elected as chairperson of the Barangay Sub-Project Management Committee (BSPMC), the community group tasked to manage the project implementation up to its completion.

However, before the eventual lighting of the whole place, their determination to fight for their long-awaited project was put in hard test. One of the interested suppliers accused Balaba and the rest of the BSPMC of suspicious transactions. “Bago pa man nagsimula ang proyekto, inakusahan kami na nanghihingi ng pera sa mga supplier para ma-award ang proyekto. (We were accused of asking money from suppliers before we award the project to them),” Balaba said. The supplier sent a formal complaint to DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS regional and national office as well as to the Presidential Complaint Hotline 8888, accusing DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff and volunteers of conniving for personal benefits and manipulating the procurement in favor of a certain bidder.

"It certainly somehow, tarnished our reputation as workers," Anjo Pineda, the town's program area coordinator said. "That was a serious allegation that we needed to address," he added. To their dismay, Balaba and other community volunteers expressed to vacate their respective positions. They said that they were receiving threats from the complainant who insists that they give in to her demand in exchange of not pursuing the grievance.

However, during assemblies, Didtaras villagers expressed support for the volunteers and asserted to face the complaint together as a team to protect the integrity of the project. They formally filed a complaint against the supplier at the Regional Office and responded to the allegations of the supplier.

An investigation was conducted as part of the program's response to the filed complaints. It was found that the complaining supplier offered PhP200,000.00 to Balaba in exchange of awarding the project to her. Several offers in forms of cash and in-kind followed, which they ignored. They turned it down and proceeded with the usual procurement process mandated by the program. Hence, trying to turn the table to Didtaras volunteers, the supplier filed a complaint and accused them of asking money in return of a favor.

With violations committed against the community volunteers, the program procurement processes, and to DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS program as a whole, the supplier was suspended and prohibited to any bidding transaction in DSWD Region 12 and to other municipal, provincial, and regional offices of the agency nationwide. "Ang laki ng natutunan namin sa programa. Natuto kaming lumaban. Natuto kaming manindigan. Mas lalo kaming pinalakas bilang isang komunidad." (We learned a lot in the program. We learned to fight. We learned to stand in our ground. We become stronger as one community.), Balaba said. Balaba added that they made sure that every step of the project implementation is done in a transparent, participative, and accountable manner. The community volunteers followed the procurement process in detail and awarded the

project to the qualified bidder based on guidelines.

The solar-powered streetlights project was implemented and completed ahead of scheduled timeline. With the bayanihan of the villagers, they had extra fund which they used to install four more streetlights.

Aside from the streetlights project, Didtaras villagers have also implemented a drainage canal system of 740 meters long worth PhP1.68 Million.

For Balaba, their project is more than just a structure. It is a symbol of empowerment, struggle, and unity. The project did not just illuminate the village but the minds of the villagers too.

He added that their experience will not defeat the community volunteers' pride of doing things right after learning the principles of participation and empowerment from the program.

"Ito 'yung mga bagay na karapat-dapat ipaglaban, gaano man kahirap. (These are the things worth fighting for no matter how difficult you have to go through)," Balaba added, who was also an awardee of the 2017 Regional Bayani Ka! Awards, conferred to the outstanding volunteers of DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Program. wToday, the once dark village of Didtaras is as vibrant at night as it is during the day.

GRS TIDBIT

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS grievance redress system espouses objectivity in handling resolutions. All actions of involved parties are looked into, including the complainant, for fair and transparent resolution.



UPHOLDING JUSTICE IN COMMUNITIES

FAIR RESOLUTIONS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Leveraging on People's Voice

Story from DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 8

*Words by Jonna Marie Marquez
Contributor, Malou Acebedo*

Beyond community infrastructure, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS aims to build empowered communities that seek transparency and accountability from their local officials and stakeholders.

People exercising their rights and making their voices be heard are evidences that the program is achieving its goals, just like the story of a concerned citizen in Brgy. Sta. Cruz in Tanauan, Leyte.

In 2016, a concerned citizen filed a complaint through DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS' website reporting corrupt practices in the implementation of their socio-cultural center project. He said that the fund was not fully used for the project and some supplies were missing.

As the program uses the community-driven development (CDD) approach, ordinary citizens are involved in the community projects. They are in-charge of the implementation of the project, hence they can also be watchdogs of public funds.

Responding to the voice

In the complainant's report, a former Municipal Coordinating Team member is still actively involved on Kalahi sub-project matters in his own home village despite already not officially assigned in this area. He is actually hired at the sub-region level assigned in a nearby municipality. Allegedly, he forged the payroll documents of laborers and violated the procurement guidelines for the purchase of construction materials.

This was investigated by the Kalahi-CIDSS staff of DSWD Region 8 and conducted separate interviews with the subject of complaint, the staff team assigned in Tanauan town, and the community volunteers and barangay council of Brgy. Sta. Cruz.

Upon validation, they found that the concerned sub-regional staff was actively involved in the implementation of Brgy. Sta. Cruz, his home village, even if he was already assigned to a different town. Through his know-how and familiarity of the processes and guidelines in addition to several family members hired



as pakyaw leaders during implementation, he was able to get around the financial processes of the program. It was found out that he facilitated the salary documents where he had the chance to list down more names than who actually worked. The community stated that they had an agreement with the former engineer regarding the arrangement on payment laborers. The community did not officially report that they are implementing thru pakyaw system.

The community members believed what they were doing was a strategy, because accordingly, it was difficult for them to get laborers, based on their previous experience. Moreso, knowing that the subject of complaint was former long-time MCT staff and currently Kalahi staff agreed to the arrangement.

The voice that gave difference

The ACT finance staff and the Area Coordinator were asked to officially submit their statements and explain their side.

The ACT finance staff assigned in Tanauan admitted that she was able to observe irregularities but failed to do rigorous inspection. According to her statement submitted to the Regional Office, she felt abused and manipulated, as she was being condemned for not immediately signing the disbursements. She was apparently told by the subject of complaint that there were many laborers and the pakyaw leader is the one financing the weekly labor salaries and delaying the disbursement of Kalahi also depletes the pakyaw leader's resources. With this, the ACT finance staff just requested the proof of engagement /agreement with the pakyaw group and allowed the payment.

On the other hand, the area coordinator or the head of the staff team was aware that the subject of complaint was actively involved in Brgy. Sta Cruz specifically on the financial documents. She believed that he wanted to help his home village.

The subject of complaint admitted that he did all the allegations raised against him and did not contest the sanctions given for his actions. As such, his contract

under the program was terminated on June 2017.

For the finance staff and area coordinator, sanctions/ disciplinary action commensurate to the violations committed was imposed by the regional office and they were strictly monitored thereafter. Other sub-projects in their covered areas were also checked and a refresher training on finance and procurement was spearheaded by regional office to ensure that staff are reminded of their duties and functions.

In addition, a disallowed amount of Php 62,980, was returned to the government coffers.

When the grievance was brought to the attention of the community, they cooperated well with the fact-finding team and disclosed all they know of their financial transactions. They were unhappy with the issues raised in their barangay but at least it was uncovered and investigated on. The community realized that issues or wrong doings like this could have been prevented, if they had been more critical and immediately complained. This is perhaps an experience they will remember so that in the future, they will be more discerning.

The resolution process was relayed to the complainant, who expressed approval and gratitude regarding the actions taken. He was thankful for the grievance redress process and the opportunity to ensure a transparent implementation of community projects.

A person can be considered poor if he /she is deprived from participating in the development of community. Giving power and recognizing their voices can turn the story around, as leveraging on one's voice can do greater good for the community.

GRS TIDBIT

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS' grievance redress system ensures the anonymity of the complainant to avoid any trouble in the community. The contact details of the complainant is requested to personally report the progress of his / her complaint.



RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITY

ENSURING RESPONSIVENESS TO COMMUNITY NEEDS AMIDST CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION



Braving through waters: The Truth Behind Balbalayang's Community Project

Story DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 1

*Words by Jonell Aspiras
Contributor, Ruperto Sabalo Jr.*

The name of Brgy. Balbalayang in San Gabriel, La Union was derived from a type of banana tree abundant in the area. Bananas have the characteristic to float in water but, ironically, the said barangay named after it is frequently submerged in flood.

Streams and rivers surround the village that overflows and floods the community during rainy seasons and strong typhoons. Whenever this happens, students' participation in school and people's livelihood are affected as transportation is nearly impossible.

In 2015, the residents had the opportunity to propose a box culvert project to DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS in order to manage waterflow and prevent flooding in the community. The residents were organized as community volunteers and assigned in committees with specific tasks to implement the project.

Despite being first timers, the community volunteers were able to implement the project worth PhP1.2 Million and was completed on November 24, 2016. However, there are some processes they accidentally violated according to the barangay treasurer who filed a written complaint to DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 1.

The written complaint stated that there has been a suspicious transaction in purchasing the cement for the project. The community volunteers did not buy the cement from the winning supplier located in San Gabriel town and instead bought from a different supplier from San Fernando City. Hence, the barangay treasurer was unsure as to whom should the payment be settled.

"Sinisisi na ako sa barangay kasi ako daw ang nagpending ng payment. Hindi naman pwedeng basta-basta akong maglabas ng bayad kasi yung resibo nila ay galing sa ibang hardware at hindi sa winning supplier. (The residents accuse me for pending the payment.

But I can't release the payment because the receipt is from a different hardware and not from the winning supplier.)," the treasurer said.

The regional office created a fact-finding team and visited the barangay to validate the allegations raised. They reviewed the procurement documents and interviewed the barangay treasurer, the program engineer assigned in the area, and the community volunteers, specifically the members of procurement committee.

They found out that the winning supplier should have delivered 230 bags of cement but was not able to do so because of insufficient supply. The community volunteers were worried that it might cause delay hence, they decided to buy cement from a different supplier.

Since the community is bound to a contract with the winning supplier, they cannot use the fund to buy cement elsewhere. Thus, both parties decided that someone else should shoulder the payment first but has to make sure that all receipts and documents would reflect transactions happened with the winning supplier.

However, it was not clear to both parties on who shall purchase the cement. The winning supplier was just surprised that the head of the procurement committee already bought one amounting to PhP55,200.00 and the agreement on receipt did not go as planned.

The fact-finding team checked if any of the involved parties gained profit from the complicated transactions. They reviewed all documents and interviewed all concerned people and possible witnesses. Results showed that no one earned and all the bags of cement were used properly for the project.

But then, over-the-counter purchase is against the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS procurement guidelines. These findings were presented to the barangay assembly for final decision.

The assembly have decided that the payment be made to the winning supplier following legal finance

procedures. The winning supplier provided a proper delivery receipt which the barangay treasurer needs to facilitate the payment. After which, the winning supplier settled the payment to the head of procurement committee who shouldered the purchase of cement from the other supplier.

On the other hand, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 1 office issued stern warning to the field staff and community volunteers as a reminder to strictly follow the procurement process and conform to the guidelines. Even if there were no ill-intentions, the policies and procedures should be followed to promote and ensure transparency and accountability.

On April 2017, Brgy. Balbalayang implemented another flood-preventing project under DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS. The box culvert project worth PhP1.06 Million was properly managed and completed benefiting 157 households.

The mistakes of the community served as a guide to better implement the second project and show nothing but pure intention of keeping their community away from flood. Now, they can stand through their name Balbalayang, just like a staunch banana tree that can brave through the waters

GRS TIDBIT

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS grievance redress system aims to be accessible to anyone especially the communities. Contact details of barangay, regional, and national level are provided to the residents so they can choose where to report their concerns directly.





Rainy Days Don't Get Us Down Anymore

A story from DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 3

Words by Jeffrey Pelariza
Contributor, Nora San Diego

QUEZON, NUEVA ECIJA – As the sunset creeps across the rice fields of barangays Dulong Bayan, Doña Lucia, and Poblacion I and II, farmers are bound to go home. They walk across the paddies as their shadows seamlessly cut through the golden rays of sun.

However, a different view uncovers when it rains. All farmers are in their houses because their villages are submerged in flood. It usually takes three days before the flood subsides, which mostly affects their livelihood.

This has been a long-time problem that the residents are all eager to address. When DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS started in town on 2016, the four barangays teamed up and proposed a flood control system project worth PhP12 Million.

In November 2016, DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS conducted a Municipal Inter-Barangay Forum (MIBF) wherein representatives from every barangay present their proposed projects and cast their vote on which shall be

prioritized for funding. Most of the townfolk voted for the joint project of the four barangays making it the top priority for funding.

This made the community volunteers from the four barangays excited to start. However, the municipal staff of DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS were having a hard time to design the multi-million flood control project which took a lot of revisions. This caused much delays that eventually demotivated the community volunteers.

As one community volunteer stated, “Nalungkot po kami dahil grabe po ‘yung hirap namin para maisakatuparan ‘yung drainage tapos baka hindi pala matuloy. May mga kasamahan po kami na umalis na dahil nawalan na ng tiwala.” (We were sad knowing the possibility that it might not be implemented. We put much effort to lobby the project. Some of the community volunteers lost trust to the program and vacated their positions already.)

Seeing much dismay from the residents, the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office of Quezon filed a complaint to DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 3. The field staff of the said program also sent an incident report to the regional office stating the issues of the project.

Ensuring environmental protection

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS staff from the national and regional offices consulted the municipal team and reviewed all related documents to the project. They found out that the main delay is the design of the additional Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), which is needed to filter household water and remove harmful contaminants from the drainage before releasing the wastewater to the environment.

The team conducted series of consultation with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the municipal local government for technical assistance. The engineers from both the municipal local government and DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS worked together until they have finished the project design.

On the other hand, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS staff from the municipal, regional, and national level worked hand-in-hand in reviewing and preparing other project documents. For them, doing so is their only chance to bring back the trust of the community and deliver the services that the people deserve.

Flood no more

With the collaboration of all the program staff, the project design was finalized and approved. This was presented to the community volunteers which encouraged them to get involved again and work together in fulfilling the project for the community.

The community volunteers proceeded with the construction, processing of financial documents, and formation of operations and maintenance group that will manage the repairs and improvement of the project in the future. The STP was also successfully installed as part of the community's commitment to protect the environment.

The project was completed on November 30, 2018. More than a thousand household in the four barangays do not experience three-long days of flood anymore. Farmers can now calmly wait for the rain to stop until the next sunny days when they can till the land again.





GRS TIDBIT

DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS grievances are classified into three types. Type A are queries, comments, or suggestions while type B are grievances about project processes and implementation. Lastly, type C are complaints about procurement and financial guidelines.

A tale of water, land, and life lessons

A Story from DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Caraga

Words by Marko Davey Reyes

Contributor, Cynthia Novee Jane Dumanig

Renowned as the Boracay of Caraga region, the town of Cagwait in Surigao del Sur is blessed with white beaches and crystal blue waters. It can offer a water sanctuary to anyone in a snap.

But despite the abundance, there is still shortage when it comes to potable water sources, just like in the far-flung village of La Purisima. For years, they have no regular clean water supply, which exposed them to various health problems such as diarrhea and other water-borne diseases.

The community is eager to end their long-time suffering. Hence, when they were engaged in the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS program in 2015, they prioritized to implement a water system project in their barangay.

The residents, barangay local government, and the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff, looked for possible potable water source in La Purisima. They found a viable source in Baugon Creek located in the upland area of the barangay.

From the source, pipes shall be installed to reach the residents which will pass through several private properties. The staff and the residents in charge of the project convened the landowners to lay down the plan and seek for their permission.

In lieu of monetary compensation, the landowners were prioritized for paid labor in

the project construction. They all approved and the agreements made were documented by the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS staff. On the other hand, the barangay officials helped in facilitating the documents of every landowner authorizing the use of their land for the project. All plans were set. The residents were excited for the start of the construction until they received a report that the heirs of one of the landowners are not allowing the project to traverse in their property. This hampered the start of their long-dreamed project.

Better for the people

On September 2015, the heirs filed a complaint about the project to the municipal local government. According to them, the barangay local government spearheads the

project and not the national government. They insisted that the project is income-generating and demanded to have a share in the revenue if it will traverse to their property.

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS regional office and the municipal local government agreed to jointly handle the situation – the program staff will adjust the project design while the municipal local government will handle the complaint. Both parties wanted to avoid delays since the community has already waited for years for such project to arise.

"The residents have done so much for the project. We had to find ways to continue the implementation," then DSWD Caraga Assistant



Director Mita Chuchi Lim said.

The engineers of DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS and the municipal local government revised the project design. They explored other areas where the pipes can be placed and found a nearby property whose owner is amenable to the project.

"I had no problems allowing the project to pass through my property because I saw the need for potable water in the community. It was clear that the community would benefit, not the barangay local government", said Marco Silvosa, the owner of the nearby property.

In 2015, the water system project was completed benefitting at least 300 households. It was registered to the Barangay Water and Sanitation Association (BAWASA) and additional tap stands were installed thereafter to accommodate more households. As to the case filed by the heirs of the landowner, it was dismissed after having no relevant evidences. Moving forward

Aside from championing a water system in the village, the barangay local government shared that the experience left important lessons to them. "This experience taught us to be always cautious in engaging to any contracts and agreements. Even if parties have agreed, documents should always be prepared to support the agreements. Also, family members should also be consulted especially if the owners are senior citizens to ensure no misunderstandings," the barangay captain said. Moreover, the barangay officials became familiar to existing laws related to land ownership. This urged them to process the Deed of Donation of their barangay lot to secure its tenure.

In 2018, the residents of La Purisma implemented another project under DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS and built a day care center. The center was built on the barangay lot and the barangay local government has secured all the needed documents for the land ownership. All these strategies were fruits of their experiences from the land dispute. Despite all the challenges, the community of La Purisma was able to pursue what is due to the people. They were able to solve an almost-life-long problem and ensured a healthy future for the residents of their community.



PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY

PROVIDING CLARIFICATIONS TO QUERIES

Never Stop Growing and Learning

A story from DSWD Region MIMAROPA

Words by Janina Legaspi
Contributor: Emerlinda Celeste

Located at the heart of Philippine Archipelago is the island province of Romblon composed of three major islands and 17 other smaller ones. It is home to 292,781 Filipinos¹ whose livelihood greatly relies on agriculture, fishing, tourism, and the marble industry. The province has 17 municipalities mostly in fourth to sixth income classes.

In the year 2014, DSWD KC Kalahi-CIDSS started implementing in Magdiwang, with the goal of bringing quality social services closer to the people. Since then, 17 community projects were implemented that helped improve the residents' access to education, transportation, and safety in times of flood and other disasters.

Residents were also hired as laborers for the construction of the projects to give them short-term income opportunities as aid to their families.

In 2017, the residents of Magdiwang implemented a four-classroom high school building project in Brgy. Poblacion worth PhP4.4 million. Residents were mobilized as community volunteers who were in-charge of the overall implementation from the planning, budgeting, and strategizing on project maintenance. Others were hired as paid laborers for the construction.

Before construction started, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff discussed the rates and salary schedule of the hired laborers for transparency. All agreements were documented to guide everyone on the set arrangements.



However, during sub-project implementation, one laborer sent a message to the program's social media page complaining about the labor payment. He said that their wage was too low given the difficult tasks expected from them. He also reported that their daily rate worth PhP220.00 was being deducted by PhP37.00 without explanation.

Moreover, he reported that there were delays in releasing the salaries. Instead of the agreed twice a month, the last tranche is given on the following month.

Following the grievance handling process, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS national office endorsed the issue to the MIMAROPA regional office and the field staff of Magdiwang town. The field staff commented that the complaint has been raised to them before and was already discussed the details to the laborers. However, with the issue still being raised, they realized that they might not have explained the details properly to the laborers.

As response, the field staff convened the laborers as well as the community volunteers. The volunteers were the ones who explained the details to the laborers and were able to verify the agreements made prior the start of construction. The volunteers' role in the grievance process is crucial because the GRS aims that the communities are responsible for resolving their problems. It was more facilitating and the laborer were more accepting when it was the volunteers who explained to them.

First, they clarified that the salary amount is based on the prevailing rates of the town certified by the local government. DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS follows the local rate where the project is implemented, which was earlier disclosed to the laborers.

The concept of bayanihan in DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS was the explained, which is the community's in-kind contribution to the project. It became a practice that residents give once-a-week free labor as part of their share to the community project.

For Brgy. Poblacion, they previously agreed to have daily deduction worth PhP37.00 instead of a day without salary. Agreements on these were presented to the laborers, which they remembered.

The field staff also presented the program reports reflecting the worth of the community's bayanihan. They assured the laborers that these were all properly accounted.

Lastly, they explained the tedious processing of salaries. The nearest bank is located in the island municipality of Odiongan, approximately four hours away from Magdiwang via boat ride. This takes a lot of time so instead of every 15th and 30th of the month, the earliest they can release the salaries is every 20th of the month and 5th of the following month.

The laborers understood the difficulties and accepted the arrangement. They requested to post weekly updates on salary processing and bayanihan contribution so everyone can easily monitor the progress. This was followed by the field staff and posted regular updates on the barangay's bulletin board.

The construction continued without any issues from the laborers again. Other residents also gave their share to the construction by giving snacks and water to the laborers to help ease their fatigue while working.

In November 2018, the four-classroom school building collectively built by the residents of Brgy. Poblacion stood tall in the town's public high school. Around 600 households are benefitting from the project.

Looking back, the field staff realized the importance of good facilitation and communication to the residents. Issues might have been prevented if they were able to discuss the matters at length during their meetings. The role of the volunteers in grievance resolution is also emphasized. Involving the communities in the redress of grievances provides opportunity for community members to learning resolving their conflicts in a positive way. Not only does it teach the community how to do it but also makes implementation more transparent and empowering

For them, this experience serves as a motivation to continuously harness their skills and effectively serve the people.

*Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015



GRS TIDBIT

In recent years, complainants use Facebook as a platform to report grievances. They send messages directly to the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS official Facebook page, which is more convenient to use for some residents.

Other modes of filing grievances could be through verbal narration, phone call, text message, e-mail, letter, or dropping complaints in the grievance box located in barangays.



Grievance system paves way for close LGU, stakeholder coordination in Iloilo town

A Story from DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS Region 6

Words by Karen Bermejo

Contributor, Nepo Dante Guiloreza

DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS maintains a grievance redress system to let people lodge their queries, clarifications, and complaints about the program. This unique feature allows the community to get heard and take immediate solutions for their concerns.

Trusting the value of the system, a local chicken grower in Brgy. Morobuan in Cabatuan, Iloilo filed a grievance report through the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS National Grievance Hotline in December 2017. The chicken grower complained that his business operation was disrupted due to an ongoing road project in the neighbor barangay of Pamuringao Proper.

He cited that no signage was put up on the site. This alarmed him because he knew that DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS projects always have a billboard to inform the residents of the project's progress. If a billboard was placed, he said, it could have been useful in adjusting their business schedule. Deliveries will not be delayed and some of their operations will not be hampered.

He likewise cited that the same road was closed as early as October 27, 2018 without any announcement nor an alternate route provided. Due to this, the complainant questioned the project's implementation.

As a resident of an agricultural community, the chicken grower heavily relies on his business to make ends meet for his family. It is important for him that the situation be

addressed properly and not happen again.

Learning to improve

The DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS region 6 staff created a fact-finding team immediately after his claims were received. They went to the barangay and discussed with the local government unit (LGU), the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff, and the residents.

Upon validation, it was found out that the road referred in the report is not actually a project under the program, but a joint project of the municipal and barangay LGUs. DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS, however, was implementing a road project in Brgy. Morobuan where the complainant resides. It has a billboard and warning signs, just as how the program usually implements a project.

To resolve the issue, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS field staff held a meeting with the LGU officials and residents of both barangays, as well as the chicken grower. On the meeting, the chicken grower was informed of the results of the validation, which he acknowledged.

After which, consultation meetings and installation of billboards were adopted by the LGU of Cabatuan. It was likewise agreed that residents should always be informed on any upcoming community projects or activities, whether it is a DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS or an LGU initiative.

Meanwhile, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS road project in Brgy. Morobuan was successfully completed on April 29, 2018. Now, the road is being used by the community benefitting 47 households. The experience of Brgy. Morobuan and the LGU of Cabatuan paved way for more open communication between the stakeholders and the government that lead to more successful projects for the community.

Indeed, more than just the infrastructure projects, the DSWD Kalahi-CIDSS has championed in empowering the communities with knowledge and skills, as well as providing them opportunities to take part in solving their problem. With an effective grievance redress system, the program is helping create more transparent and accountable LGUs in the country.



VOICES

STORIES OF EMPOWERMENT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH THE
KALAHI-CIDSS NCDDP
GRIEVANCE REDRESS SYSTEM





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