



THE ASCENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NUTRITION IN THE PHILIPPINES

A Compendium of Actions on Nutrition

© Province of Davao del Norte



The Ascent of Local Governments in Nutrition in the Philippines

A COMPENDIUM OF ACTIONS ON NUTRITION



Printed copy ISSN: 2651-6594

Online copy ISSN: 2651-6586

Philippine Copyright 2018

Published by:

NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL

Nutrition Building, 2332 Chino Roces Avenue Extension

Taguig City, Philippines

July 2018

This book to be published every two years, may be reproduced in part or whole provided that the National Nutrition Council is acknowledged as source.

Suggested Citation:

National Nutrition Council. 2018

Compendium of Actions on Nutrition

Taguig: Philippines

Cover photo from the Province of Davao del Norte

First printing July 2018

Second printing October 2018

Messages	
National Nutrition Council _____	i
Department of Health _____	ii
Department of the Interior and Local Government _____	iii
Nutrition International _____	iv
UNICEF Philippines _____	v
Acknowledgements _____	vi
Acronyms _____	xi
Part I. The Overview _____	1
Part II. Journeys in nutrition of 11 local governments in the Philippines	
Davao del Norte Province _____	43
Quezon Province _____	61
Davao City _____	81
Mandaluyong City _____	100
Tagaytay City _____	119
Asipulo, Ifugao _____	137
Kadingilan, Bukidnon _____	156
Limasawa, S. Leyte _____	179
Malungon, Sarangani _____	200
Talibon, Bohol _____	221
Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya _____	242
References _____	262
CAN Production Team _____	265

In 1979, the National Nutrition Council started to evaluate annually the progress of nutrition actions of local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines and recognize outstanding municipalities, cities and provinces that strengthened their nutrition structures and human resource complement, mobilized resources and legislated locally to advance nutrition, mobilized the grassroots and delivered improvements in the nutrition of children and women. Since then, the annual nationwide monitoring and evaluation and recognition of performing local governments has been done by conferring the nutrition Green Banner award, Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) award and the Nutrition Honor Award (NHA).

The Compendium of Actions on Nutrition is the first attempt at documenting the experience of these progressive local government units. The experience of eleven LGUs from the three main island groups of the country representing provinces, different income class municipalities, two highly urbanized cities and one component city have been chronicled by a team of multi-expertise writers to provide a readable set of stories that other LGUs can enjoy and pick a lesson or two.

My deep appreciation goes to our partners from the Nutrition International, with support of UK aid from the British people, for enabling the development of the compendium by the team from NNC and NI TAN consultants from Alcanz International LLC assisted by a pool of writers and researchers. I also thank the Department of the Interior and Local Government, our development partners including UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO and PHILCAN with their member agencies for exploring ways to broaden the reach of the lessons of the CAN in the country.

The first eleven stories are just the beginning. It is NNC's wish that a more permanent system of documenting similar experiences of equally outstanding LGUs not covered in this first step be established soon. I envision that from hereon, the LGU winners of the different annual NNC-conferred awards that have demonstrated sustainability of the gains made become part of the expanding progressive LGUs fighting the war against malnutrition. I also envision that performing LGUs, the hundreds that the country has, would take on themselves to shepherd several neighboring LGUs to emulate their good practices in nutrition. The compendium will go a long way in ushering such LGU sisterhood to multiply the LGUs ascending in their work in PPAN.

Congratulations to our nutrition champion LGUs! Mabuhay kayong lahat!




MARIA-BERNARDITA T. FLORES, CESO II
Assistant Secretary of Health
 Executive Director IV, National Nutrition Council

As Health Secretary and Chair of the Governing Board of the National Nutrition Council, I am truly pleased to see the publication of the first Compendium of Actions on Nutrition. The 11 stories of the ascent of local governments in nutrition, specifically of two provinces, six municipalities, one component city and two highly urbanized cities provide local government units a good reference. The compendium discusses some of the strategies employed by these local governments along nutrition planning, management and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and mobilizing support to the nutrition program.

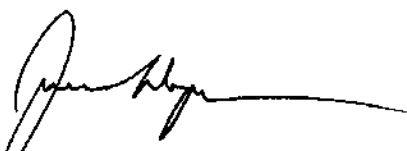
I commend the NNC under the leadership of Assistant Secretary Maria-Bernardita T. Flores for coming up with this Compendium. I am even more pleased to note that this will be the first of a series. The publication of the Compendium has raised expectations for a system that will continue to update the initial set of success stories with similar experiences of highly performing LGUs in other areas of the country. The system will further advance the goal of mobilizing more LGUs to scale up nutrition to win the war against malnutrition, a critical input and outcome as well of the Fourmula One Plus strategy of the Philippine Health Agenda.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank all the partners of NNC in this undertaking – the Nutrition International for supporting the development of this compendium; NI TAN consultants from Alcanz International LLC for seeing the whole process in the development of the compendium; the writers, researchers and the NNC senior officers from NNC's Nutrition Surveillance Division and Nutrition Information and Education Division who lent important technical and operational support for the demanding work involved in the development of the Compendium.

My appreciation also goes to the Department of the Interior and Local Government, UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO, PHILCAN with their member agencies for considering ways to share the lessons learned in the CAN to their networks in the Philippines.

Mabuhay!




FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc
Secretary of Health and
Chair, National Nutrition Council Governing Board

The problem on hunger and malnutrition in the country are getting serious as the latest National Nutrition Survey showed that around 3.8 million Filipino children are stunted primarily because of poor nutrition. National and local governments should, therefore, prioritize plans and programs on food and nutrition because there is nothing far more important than focusing on the most basic need of its human resources.

I am very pleased that the National Nutrition Council (NNC) has come up with the Compendium of Actions on Nutrition (CAN) which contains 11 stories of successful nutrition program implementation of local government units (LGUs). These stories are proof that there are enough good programs and practices on nutrition that are worthy of emulation and can be replicated by other LGUs.

This document will serve as a valuable reference for LGUs in their development planning on nutrition. It is also a testament that the government's advocacy on proper nutrition as well as nutritional wellness is bearing fruit and are gaining headway.

As NNC Governing Board Co-Chair, the DILG will continue to encourage all the LGUs in the country to advocate nutrition awareness and implement nutrition initiatives down to the grassroots level by formulating and implementing comprehensive plans and programs for the continuous nutritional improvement for every Juan and Juana.

The advocacy for proper nutrition continues, and we will not waver in our commitment to proactively support the government's initiatives against hunger and malnutrition. Our heartfelt congratulations to the NNC and its partners in producing the Compendium.



EDUARDO M. AÑO

Officer-in-Charge Secretary

Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)
and *Vice Chair*, National Nutrition Council Governing Board

At Nutrition International (NI), we are passionate about our mission to eliminate malnutrition – one of the greatest health challenges facing the Philippines today. We were honoured to provide technical and financial support to the Philippines National Nutrition Council (NNC) for the development and implementation of the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2017-2022. A product of the partnership, this Compendium of Actions on Nutrition (CAN) is a collection of 11 case studies that highlight the unique successes and challenges that local governments faced as they worked to address nutrition challenges within their communities.

The case studies included within this Compendium demonstrate the essential link between human interest stories, local development issues and public sector challenges. They share important insights and valuable lessons that Local Government Units (LGUs), national government agencies and stakeholders in other contexts can learn from and replicate to improve health outcomes in their own communities.

Technical support for the PPAN and the development of this Compendium was provided by Alcanz International LLC, under NI's Technical Assistance for Nutrition (TAN) project. Through TAN, NI provides Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement member countries with the technical support they need to increase capacity to meet nutrition targets and transform the lives of millions of people – especially women and children. NI is grateful for the generous support of UK aid from the British people, without which TAN would not exist.

NI wishes to recognize the leadership of the NNC and the LGUs who are tireless in their efforts to move the PPAN from documentation to measurable improvements in nutrition. Without their support, it would

have been impossible to develop this Compendium. We look forward to continued collaboration with like-minded partners in support of NNC's critical nutrition goals.

I would like to thank the writers, researchers and NNC senior officers from NSD and NIED who have contributed their valuable time and expertise to support the development and consolidation of this Compendium, as well as the Department of Interior and Local Government. Finally, I hope that our development partners, including UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO, PHILCAN and their member agencies and the League of Provinces of the Philippines, Leagues of Cities and Municipalities of the Philippines will amplify the reach of the Compendium within their networks and make the lessons learned available to their constituents and to the broader public.




LORETO B. ROQUERO JR., MD, MPH
Country Director
 Nutrition International Philippines

UNICEF congratulates the National Nutrition Council and Nutrition International for the launch of the Philippines Compendium of Actions on Nutrition (CAN) chronicling stories, key messages and lessons learned from the nutrition journey of 11 local government units across the three main islands of the country. It aims to provide and facilitate emulation of good practices by LGUs which are yet to perform well in nutrition. It is indeed an important tool in LGU mobilization critically needed to reduce the high prevalence of stunting and to deliver the other PPAN outcome targets in 2022.

Nutrition International and UNICEF are partners of the National Nutrition Council in operationalizing the PPAN 2017-2022. The Compendium of Actions on Nutrition has been one of the recent products of this collaboration with the government under the strong leadership of the NNC. This Philippines Compendium of Actions is different from the Global Compendium of Actions for Nutrition, developed by the UN Network Secretariat in consultation with the UN agencies at global level in 2016 which is a facilitation tool to help foster multi-sectoral dialogue in countries, particularly on nutrition-related policy formulation.

We perceive this publication as only the beginning of capturing the nutrition journey of performing LGUs, from which many more lessons and good practices can be learned. We look forward to working with the National Nutrition Council side by side with Nutrition International and other development partners towards an institutionalized system of documentation. This will include stories of performing LGUs in nutrition to continue to stimulate the interest of other LGUs and show that the way to better nutrition is indeed feasible and achievable. We will continue to support information building and sharing of updates on the CAN.

Finally we would like to express our gratitude to the NNC senior officers and technical staff for leading the development of this compendium, and the entire team of case study writers, researchers and NI TAN consultants from Alcanz International LLC. Their diligence helped to ensure that each case study is a balanced combination of accurate facts on the LGU journey, thematic lessons on mobilization of LGUs and nutrition program management, and a showcase of how LGUs overcame challenges and constraints.

Enjoy the interesting reading.



LOTTA SYLWANDER

Country Representative
UNICEF Philippines



The CAN Production Team expresses its sincere thanks to all the local government units and individuals who have made the realization of the Compendium of Actions on Nutrition.

DAVAO DEL NORTE

The CAN Team would like to express its sincerest gratitude to Governor Anthony Rafael G. del Rosario and his father, former Governor Rodolfo del Rosario, for accommodating our interview despite their busy schedule. Deep appreciation is likewise extended to key informants including former PNC Coordinator Dr. Jean Apolinar, former PNAO Dr. Agapito Hornido, and OIC-PNAO Dr. Eleanor Salva as well as to the PNC members for providing vital information about Davao del Norte's nutrition journey. Special thanks are also due to the Municipalities of Asuncion led by Mayor Eufracio Dayaday, Jr. and Talaingod led by Mayor Basilio Libayao. To all the MNAOs, BNS, health workers, and FGD participants interviewed, the Team is thankful for your time and encouraging stories. Last but not the least, thanks to PNC Coordinator Ms. Mayflor Espiritu and her staff for providing necessary materials to complete the documentation, for helping chase additional data and information required for this case study, and for making the Team feel very much welcomed.

PROVINCE OF QUEZON

The CAN Team is indebted to various offices and individuals for the warm welcome and openness to our numerous requests for information which fed into the writing of this story. First, we wish to thank the PNAO staff led by Mr. Roberto Gajo who meticulously compiled voluminous reports and documents, for facilitating our visits to the municipalities of Atimonan and Padre Burgos, and for providing us ample office space during our stay. These documents, together with the frank discussions with Mr. Julius Parcarey, Ms. Emma Coronado, and PNAO's District Nutrition Program Coordinators enabled us to get the past and present picture of Quezon's nutrition program. We also thank the individual members of the Provincial Nutrition Multi-Sectoral Council, who spent an entire day with the team to share their experiences and insights. We are grateful for the open discussions which gave us a rich picture of how the nutrition program in the province evolved. We are also grateful to the Q1K Secretariat and municipal coordinators, led by Ms. Joann Reyes, who met with us to give updates on the Q1K; and

to Dr. Grace Santiago for forwarding the highlights of the Q1K pilot phase evaluation. Special thanks to Mr. Bedwyr Maranan of the PNAO, who made sure we were always comfortably transported from our hotel to the various offices, venues, and the two LGUs we visited. Thank you to the municipal nutrition committees of Atimonan and Padre Burgos who graciously received us and patiently answered our questions, and to Punong Barangay Emma Verdan-De Vera and the barangay council of Barangay Buhangin (Atimonan), who welcomed us and gave us a vivid picture of the nutrition program at the grassroots.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge Governor David C. Suarez and Hon. Anna Villaraza-Suarez, for the inspiration they have given to the people of Quezon to seek better nutrition, as well as their candid insights that have helped in writing this story.

DAVAO CITY

The CAN Team would like to thank the Office of City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio for the warm welcome. The Team likewise acknowledges with much appreciation the City Nutrition Division, headed by OIC Ms. Evangeline Ginete, for sharing their first-hand knowledge on the city's efforts in fighting malnutrition and for providing the much-needed logistical support during our visit. Special thanks also to CNAO Dr. Josephine Villafuerte, to the members of the CNC, to the BNS and health workers for their valuable insights and inspiring

stories as partners in nutrition improvement. Thank you also to Ms. Venus Millana, former CND Head based abroad, for accommodating our video call interview despite short notice. Sincerest gratitude is likewise extended to the leadership of Barangays Mintal, Matina-Aplaya and 23-C for sharing their successes as well as struggles in nutrition and to the residents for actively participating in the focus group discussions.

MANDALUYONG CITY

We are grateful for the valuable time and insights of former Mayor Benhur Abalos and current Mayor Carmelita "Menchie" Abalos, the tireless CNAO of the intense long years of Mandaluyong City's journey to improved nutrition program implementation. For the productive discussions and organized documentation made available to the CAN Team, we thank current CNAO Dr. Pecos Camarines and the staff of the City Nutrition Office and the City Nutrition Committee. More information and insights gathered in our focus group discussions with Barangay Nutrition Committee members and some mothers of Barangays Plainview and San Jose are highly appreciated. We especially acknowledge the cooperation of ND Marie Tess Belo who accommodated our numerous requests for additional information on Mandaluyong City's story of excellent nutrition program management.

TAGAYTAY CITY

We thank Mayor Agnes Tolentino, CNAO Emilma Pello and the members of the City Nutrition Committee for the warm welcome and their time in sharing with us and readers the strategies and best practices of the Tagaytay City Nutrition Program. CNPC Marietta Dogelio, her teams of nutrition coordinators and BNS shared inspiring stories of personal and program challenges and triumphs in bringing the nutrition services to the barangay residents. Our conversations with BNS Femia Javier, City Councilor Joel Tibayan, Barangay Captain Mario Soriano, members of the BNC of Maharlika East and Barangay Sungay East Nutrition Committees made us fully understand what made nutrition a way of life for the people of Tagaytay.

ASIPULO

Documenting Asipulo's story was made possible through the heartwarming welcome of the people of Asipulo, particularly that of Mayor Armando Domilod who made himself available to the CAN Team and provided valuable insights on the challenges and successes of Asipulo on its road to nutrition improvement. Special thanks must also be given to Asipulo's Municipal Nutrition Committee, including MNAO Jimmy Taguilingon, MPDC Arnold Guyguyon, MSWDO Mary Jane Dulnuan and former MNAO Mercelyn Bonhaon, Municipal Accountant Shirley Dulawan, Municipal Health Officer Dr.

Meanie Licyayo and SB Florence Piggangay among many as they shared the story on advancing nutrition in Asipulo. The CAN team also acknowledges the wealth of information provided by the Barangay Nutrition Committees of Barangay Antipolo led by Punong Barangay Eddie Dinongon and Barangay Panubtuban led by Punong Barangay Wilma Ullay. To the BNS and residents of Asipulo, thank you for the inspiration.

KADINGILAN

The CAN Team would like to thank MNAO Jesus Dumangon. Aside from spending hours with the CAN Team to share information on Kadingilan's journey to improved nutrition, he mobilized his staff to provide necessary documents; arranged meetings with the municipal and barangay nutrition committees; and assisted in facilitating the focus group discussions with the BNS and community members. Deep appreciation is particularly extended to Mayor Jerry Canoy for sharing his valuable time and insights with the CAN Team. Special thank you is also extended to Municipal Budget Officer Rhesa Canoy, MSWDO Hydie Puaben, MHO Dr. Leo H. Ramirez, and Kagawad Ms. Thelma Villaremo for their significant contributions in documenting Kadingilan's nutrition journey.

LIMASAWA

The CAN Team would like to thank the municipality of Limasawa for its support to this project. Special thanks to Mayor Melchor Petracorta who sailed to and from the mainland just to accommodate interviews, and provided significant insights on the success story of Limasawa. To MNAO Remigilda Salomon for the assistance and introducing the Team to the municipal nutrition committee and the barangay nutrition committees, and for her active participation in the focus group discussions. Special thanks also goes to Dr. Martin Parreño for accommodating interviews and for providing clarity on Limasawa's journey towards the Nutrition Honor Award. Thank you to the BNS for their time and enthusiasm, to the barangay nutrition committees of Barangay Triana and Barangay San Agustin, to the municipal nutrition committee of Limasawa, and to the other residents of the Island of Limasawa.

MALUNGON

The CAN Team would like to express its sincerest gratitude to the municipality of Malungon for the kind support and efforts which made this documentation possible. Our special thanks to Malungon Municipal Mayor Atty. Maria Theresa D. Constantino and former Mayor Reynaldo Constantino for giving us the time and valuable insights during the interviews. We highly acknowledge the members of the Municipal Nutrition Committee, and the staff of the Municipal Nutrition Office led by MNAO Roselyn Dadivas Constantino who actively participated in the focus group discussions and interviews, facilitated the smooth visits to the areas which enabled the consultations with the barangay nutrition committees, prepared the relevant documents, mobilized other stakeholders who shared information which provided clarity and completeness of Malungon's story, and responded to queries even after the field visits. We also express our deepest appreciation to the barangay nutrition committee, BNS and community members in Barangay Kiblat and Barangay Nagpan for showing great interest to be part of this effort through their openness and willingness to share insights that would help other LGUs as well.

TALIBON

We sincerely thank the following: (1) Mayor Restituto Auxtero, now on his third and last term, for his full cooperation in mobilizing municipal staff and relevant agencies for the successful conduct of focus group discussions, key informant interviews and visits to selected barangays and the holding of the meeting and consultations with the Municipal Nutrition Committee to ensure comprehensive data gathering and analysis required for the case study; (2) Mr. Juanario Item who served as Mayor from 1995 to 2001, and again from 2004 to 2010, for granting no-holds barred interview on how he applied military discipline in setting up and strengthening the institutional and program framework for nutrition at municipal and barangay levels; (3) Dr. Francisco Ngoboc, MHO/MNAO, for mobilizing relevant staff support by the Municipal Nutrition Coordinator Lilia Auza and the health personnel; selected BHW and BNS; (4) Barangay officials of Sikatuna and San Pedro and members of their respective Barangay Nutrition Committees; and (5) Head of various municipal agencies, Ednardo A. Avenido, MPDC; Zosima C. Gabisan, MSWDO; Angelito A. Oroyan, OIC-Municipal Agriculture Office; Jose A. Tumarao, MLGOO-DILG; Victoria D. Camargo, ND/DNPC – PHO ; Lorenzo R. Flores, Municipal Engineer; Barbara A. Comendador, School Principal ; Erlinda B. Lanuga, Nutrition Coordinator, Talibon II Central Elementary School.

VILLAYERDE

Completion of this endeavor would not have been possible without the participation and cooperation of the Municipal Government of Villaverde and the assistance of the Provincial Nutrition Office of Nueva Vizcaya. Special thanks to Mayor Ronelie Valtoribio for providing detailed background of their journey towards success and for sharing her personal motivation in making health and nutrition as one of the major thrusts of Villaverde; to Dr. Telesforo Ragpa, MHO/MNAO for his insights and taking time to explain the technicalities in program implementation, especially the history and process behind the lying in and birthing clinic and for sharing his endeavours and dedication to community nutrition; to the staff of the Municipal Health Center, John Warry Alvenida, PHN, and Ms. Warlyn Morales, Nutrition Aide, for their patience and the assistance they provided to the CAN Team during data gathering; to the Municipal Councilors, Punong Barangay, the Barangay Councils, the BNS and the mothers and residents of Barangays Ibung, Sawmill, and Poblacion, for their warmth and enthusiasm, and for their support and participation in the focus group discussions; and to Ms. Luzviminda Ragpa, Provincial Nutrition Officer for providing logistics and for helping us get to know Villaverde and the province of Nueva Vizcaya better.

A-C

ABC	Association of Barangay Captains
ABCD assessment	Anthropometric, Biochemical, Clinical, and Dietary assessment
ACF	Action Contre La Faim
ALS	Alternative Learning System
AMARANTH	Addressing Malnutrition Through Ready and Nutritive Feedings in School
ANT	Agrikulturang Nayon sa Tagaytay
ASIN	Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide
BCCAD	Barangay and Cultural Communities Affairs Division
BDC	Barangay Development Council
BEmONC	Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
BHW	Barangay Health Worker
BIG	Bio-Intensive Gardens
BMTs	Barangay Monitoring Technician
BNAO	Barangay Nutrition Action Officer
BNAP	Barangay Nutrition Action Plan
BNC	Barangay Nutrition Committee
BNS	Barangay Nutrition Scholar
BSI	Barangay Sanitary Inspector
C/MNAO	City / Municipal Nutrition Action Officer
CDP	Comprehensive Development Plan
CGS	Child Growth Standards
CHO	City Health Office
CIMAM	Community based Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition
CNAO	City Nutrition Action Officer
CNAP	City Nutrition Action Plan
CNC	City Nutrition Committee
CND	City Nutrition Division

C-G

CNO	City Nutrition Office
COA	Commission on Audit
CPDO	City Planning and Development Office
CROWN	Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSWDO	City Social Welfare and Development Office
CVD	Cardiovascular Disease
DA	Department of Agriculture
DBM	Department of Budget and Management
DBP	Development Bank of the Philippines
DepEd	Department of Education
DILG	Department of the Interior and Local Government
DNPC	District Nutrition Program Coordinator
DOH	Department of Health
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
DTTB	Doctors-to-the-Barrios
EBaP	Evidence-Based Planning
EBF	Exclusive Breastfeeding
e-OPT Plus	Electronic Operation Timbang Plus
F1K	The first 1000 days of life
FAITH	Food Always in the Home
FBT	Fruit-Bearing Tree
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
G4	Garden of Go, Grow, Glow
GAD	Gender and Development
GIDA	Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Area
GKK	Gamay kong Kabudlay Tabang Ko

G-L

GP	Garantisadong Pambata
GTZ	German Organization for Technical Cooperation
HKI	Helen Keller International
HRMO	Human Resource Management Office
HUC	Highly Urbanized City
I CAN in Education	Innovation and Collaboration in Attaining No Limitation in Education
IDD	Iodine Deficiency Disorders
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
IFA	Iron-Folic Acid
IFR	Iron Fortified Rice
IGP	Income Generating Project
IPs	Indigenous Peoples
IRA	Internal Revenue Allotment
IRS	International Reference Standards
ITC	In-patient Therapeutic Care
IYCF	Infant and Young Child Feeding
KALAH-I-CIDSS	Kapit-bisig Laban sa Kahirapan Program – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Services
KAPITAN Program	Kabalikat Ako sa mga Programang Inihahandog Tungo sa Angkop na Nutrisyon
KKM	Kababaihan Kakaiba ng Mandaluyong
LCE	Local Chief Executive
LCPC	Local Council for the Protection of Children
LGU	Local Government Unit
LINGAP	Local Ingenuity in Alleviating Poverty
LNS	Lipid-based Nutrient Supplementation
LPA	Low Pressure Area

M-N

MAGRO	Municipal Agriculture Office
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MANCOM	Management Committee
MBN	Minimum Basic Needs
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MCPC	Municipal Council for the Protection of Children
MCR	Municipal Civil Registry Office
MELLPI	Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation
MHO	Municipal Health Officer
MLGP	Municipal and Local Governance Program
MNAO	Municipal Nutrition Action Officer
MNAP	Municipal Nutrition Action Plan
MNC	Municipal Nutrition Committee
MNCHN	Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health and Nutrition
MNO	Municipal Nutrition Office
MOBNC	Most Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Committee
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPDC	Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator
MPO	Municipal Population Officer
MRO	Municipal Registrar's Office
MSWDO	Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer
NC	Nutrition Coordinator
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
NCP	Nutrition Center of the Philippines
ND	Nutritionist–Dietitian
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NHA	Nutrition Honor Award

N-R

NICE	Nutrition Information, Communication and Education
NNC	National Nutrition Council
NOBNS	National Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Scholar
NPM	Nutrition Program Management
ONE-M	Orientation for Newly Elected Mayors
OPT	Operation Timbang
OTC	Out-patient Therapeutic Care
PACFM	Presidential Award for Child Friendly Municipality
PDNPC	Provincial District Nutrition Program Coordinator
PHO	Provincial Health Office
PIR	Program Implementation Review
PNAO	Provincial Nutrition Action Officer
PNC	Provincial Nutrition Committee
PNC	Provincial Nutrition Coordinator
PNMC	Provincial Nutrition Multi-Sectoral Council
PNO	Provincial Nutrition Office
PPAN	Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition
PS/MOOE	Personnel Services and Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses
PSN	Pabasa sa Nutrisyon
PWD	Person With Disability
Q1K Program	Quezon's First 1000 Days Program
RAC	Regional Awards Committee
RFC	Restore Food for the Children
RFC	Rose Feeds the Children
RHU	Rural Health Unit
RNPC	Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator

R-Z

RUSF	Ready-to-Use Supplementary Food
RUTF	Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SB	Sangguniang Bayan
SCOUT	Significant Commitment to Oust Over Nutrition and Undernutrition in the School
SDN	Service Delivery Network
SIKAT Cluster	San Isidro, Kapalong, Asuncion, Talaingod
SP	Sangguniang Panlalawigan
SPMC	Southern Philippines Medical Center
STC-FNPPM	Short-Term Course on Food and Nutrition Program Planning and Management
SUMMER BUN	Summer na naman, Bantayan Una ang Nutrisyon
TESSA	Total Elimination of Substance-abuse thru School Anti-drug
TMKKK	Tabang mo, Kinabuhì ug Kaugmaon Ko
TSFP	Targeted Supplementary Feeding Program
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VAC	Vitamin A capsule
VHW	Volunteer Health Worker
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WINDS	Women in Nation Building and Development in Sarangani
ZOD	Zero Open Defecation

THE ASCENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NUTRITION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Overview of Key Lessons

I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition 2017-2022 has ambitious goals in its fight against malnutrition. It aims to reduce stunting from 33.4 to 21 percent, wasting from 7.9 percent to less than 5 percent and halt the problem of growing overweight and obesity among all population groups and address selected micronutrient deficiencies.

All in a span of six years.

As other countries have shown, the lofty goals are achievable. But one valuable player - the local government units have yet to give its full contribution.

In 2018, there are 1,715 local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines, consisting of municipalities, cities and provinces. The country is divided into 81 provinces

which in turn are composed of cities and municipalities, altogether numbering 145 and 1,489 respectively. The interest of the compendium of actions on nutrition (CAN) is to get a selection from the universe of performing LGUs that can provide valuable insights and lessons on nutrition program implementation. According to NNC records, there were about 90 LGUs that received the Green Banner, Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) and Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) in the period 2011-2016, while a total of 234 LGUs had received at least one of the awards in the past. An unknown number of deserving LGUs, some with compelling stories, do not make it to the list either because they got eliminated by the highest scorer in the Green Banner category or because they were previous nutrition award winners that have not rejoined the nutrition evaluations despite maintaining functional programs.



The interest of the CAN is to get a selection from the universe of performing LGUs that can provide valuable insights and lessons on nutrition program implementation.

In the end, eleven local governments units (LGUs) were selected by the National Nutrition Council (NNC) in 2017, vetted by its regional offices, for inclusion in CAN. The objective of CAN is to analyze the experience of the eleven LGUs, understand what motivated them to transform from non-performing to ones recognized by the NNC for outstanding performance in nutrition, what they did to improve program outcomes, the obstacles and constraints they faced and how they were addressed. By default, the universe of LGUs was defined by participation in the NNC Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI) process and the selection includes NHA winners that continued impressive nutrition program implementation post-NHA. In addition, a number of other performing LGUs that have not attained the NHA status were selected also for their noteworthy examples of what they have already accomplished or attempted to accomplish despite considerable challenges in their LGU contexts.

NNC hopes that the lessons can provide inspiration and guidance to other LGUs in following the lead of the eleven, as well as valuable learning for national nutrition program implementers.

The LGUs selected are shown in the map, by location in the Philippine island groups (Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao) and by income class (first to sixth, first being the most developed in income terms). There are two provinces (Quezon and Davao del Norte), one component city (Tagaytay) and two highly urbanized cities¹ (Mandaluyong and Davao), and six municipalities (Asipulo in Ifugao, Villaverde in Nueva Vizcaya, Limasawa in Southern Leyte, Talibon in Bohol, Kadingilan in Bukidnon and Malungon in Sarangani).

¹ Cities are categorized into three types: Highly Urbanized Cities, Independent Component Cities and Component Cities. A highly urbanized city has a population that exceeds 200,000 residents as verified by the National Statistics office and should have a yearly income of PhP 500,000,000.00. Independent Cities must have at least 150,000 residents and an annual income of at least PhP 350,000,000.00. Cities not having these qualifications are classified as component cities. (Source: www.gov.ph)



The CAN was conceived as a tool for local government mobilization, limited in scope only by the resources available at this stage. In the long run, the 11 LGUs of the CAN shall expand to a richer set of categories and lessons for a more comprehensive and progressively more robust reference of how-to's in delivering nutritional performance and outcomes.

Methodology, Information Sources and Limitations

Information gathering was conducted in 4-5 day field research in each LGU by a three-person CAN team composed of a writer, a researcher (external or based in the LGU) and a Nutrition International Technical Assistance to Nutrition (TAN) consultant of Alcanz International, accompanied by an NNC technical staff who made much welcomed technical contributions and handled logistics. The schedules of focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) for each city/ municipality used similar sequence and format: courtesy call and KII with the local chief executive (LCE) or his/her proxy, interview with the nutrition action officer and key technical person, FGDs with the nutrition staff

followed by the local nutrition committee, and travel to selected barangays (one among the best and one among the least performing in the LGU) for some time with the barangay chair, barangay nutrition committee (BNC) and the barangay nutrition scholars (BNS). If a provincial LGU is the observation unit, the focus of data gathering is the province, with visits to one set each of one municipality and one barangay among the best and worst performers. Additional LGU data, documents and follow-up interviews complemented the information.

Of the eleven LGUs, five have long years of excellent program management evidenced by their NHA awards and NHA maintenance status after. The NHA is the highest award that the National Nutrition Council bestows on LGUs that consistently improved nutrition programming and reduced their malnutrition rates for a minimum of six consecutive years. The LGUs have so far maintained their NHA status to date. Please see Table 1 below for the LGU, MELLPI rank and income class.

Mandaluyong City in Metro Manila served as the pre-test site for the validation of the CAN working framework and completeness of the KII and FGD instruments. Fresh



The 11 LGUs' contexts and experiences are heterogeneous enough to provide narratives that other LGUs can relate to. The hope is that the latter will realize that setting up functional nutrition programs have been doable even among local governments confronted with three of the most common impediments: non-sympathetic LCEs, limited budgets and difficult terrain.

from its intensive program implementation in the run for the NHA, the City provided a comprehensive and detailed story of its journey towards nutrition excellence. It became a reference for the appreciation of other LGUs' own context-influenced paths as well as the role and potential of the NNC Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator (RNPC) and MELLPI.

The contexts and experiences of the 11 LGUs are heterogeneous enough to provide narratives that other LGUs can relate to. The hope is that the latter will realize that setting up functional nutrition programs have been doable even among local governments

confronted with three of the most common impediments: non-sympathetic LCEs, limited budgets and difficult terrain.

Below are the latest MELLPI ranks, income class and number of constituent LGUs of the 11 LGUs.

The reader is cautioned that the compendium includes only 11 observation points. Every LGU is a refreshingly unique case. Although the mix appeared to have captured divergent contexts and programs, it is likely that the selection also missed many aspects of nutrition programming of interest to other LGUs.

Table 1. MELLPI rank and income class of the eleven LGUs selected for CAN

Local Government Unit	MELLPI rank (As of 2017)	Major island group	Income class around the time the first award was received	Number of Barangays or Municipalities/Cities
Mandaluyong City, NCR	NHA in 2016	Luzon	1st , HUC	27 barangays
Tagaytay City, Cavite	NHA in 2004	Luzon	2nd , component city	34 barangays
Quezon Province	Green Banner (2nd year) in 2017	Luzon	1st	39 municipalities 1 component city, 1 HUC
Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya	#2 in province in 2016	Luzon	5th	9 barangays
Asipulo, Ifugao	1st Year CROWN Maintenance in 2008	Luzon	5th	9 barangays
Limasawa, Southern Leyte	NHA in 2011	Visayas	6th	6 barangays
Talibon, Bohol	NHA in 2004	Visayas	2nd	25 barangays
Kadingilan, Bukidnon	NHA in 2011	Mindanao	5th	17 barangays
Malungon, Sarangani	2nd Year CROWN Maintenance in 2016	Mindanao	1st	31 barangays
Davao City	CROWN in 2006	Mindanao	1st, HUC	182 barangays
Davao del Norte Province	2nd Year CROWN Maintenance in 2004	Mindanao	1st	8 municipalities 3 cities

In the data gathering, the rich heterogeneity of LGU contexts required adapting question guides in order to understand the paths of nutrition programming over time and pursue unexpected angles and nuances. In the end, the writers and researchers of the CAN could only pick up what the LGUs were willing to share or could emphasize in their stories. Recall is a challenge in LGUs with a

long history of program implementation. In addition, some interview findings needed further validation and several rounds of clarifications and probes to test whether interviewees and interviewers understood nutrition concepts in the same way. Finally, the fact that the case writers and researchers were different for groups of LGUs and have different backgrounds probably influenced the interpretation of certain aspects of LGU contexts or stories. Although two review sessions were undertaken, in the end the decision is that as much as possible, no attempt will be made to influence the thinking that went into the development of the cases. Finally, a recent advance in anthropometric measurements is the electronic Operation *Timbang* Plus (e-OPT Plus) tool that facilitates data entry and processing of measured OPT data in the determination of nutritional status and prevalence. Data would have been available for 1-2 years, but in the group, only two LGUs were able to provide the new information. One LGU's e-OPT nutrition data showed the expected break in prevalence trends, indicating actual higher levels of underweight and stunting than were captured by OPT Plus manual processing of results. In another, the decrease in stunting prevalence continued but appeared moderated. Only the second data were included; the e-OPT tool itself was not addressed.

II. THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE PHILIPPINE NUTRITION PROGRAM

For the 11 LGUs, the organization and implementation of the Philippine nutrition program have been largely influenced by three pieces of legislations and the LGUs' participation in the NNC MELLPI.

Legislation

The most relevant pieces of legislations relate to the establishment of nutrition committees and formulation of plans, employment of nutritionists-dietitians at the local level and rural health units, and the nutrition structures at the barangay level (barangay nutrition committee, barangay nutrition action plan and barangay nutrition scholars).

(a) In 1976, Letter of Instruction 441 directed the Department of Local Governments and Community Development (now called DILG) to establish functional nutrition committees in every region, province, city, municipality, and most particularly, assist the sub-barangay nutrition unit composed of twenty households each, with its own unit leader to implement a national nutrition plan. All committees at their level are expected to formulate a plan for their respective jurisdiction.²

(b) In 1978, Presidential Decree No. 1286 "Regulating the Practice of Nutrition and Dietetics in the Philippines" executed in lieu of RA No. 2674 specified the need to employ nutritionist-dietitians to fill up

² The same Letter of Instruction provides that plans be compiled and integrated at the different levels culminating in a national nutrition plan put together by the National Nutrition Council, clearly a bottoms-up process by intention.

the requirement of at least one nutritionist-dietitian for each province, city, municipality and rural health unit.

(c) In 1978, Presidential Decree No. 1569 or the “Strengthening the Barangay Nutrition Program” specifies the provision of at least one barangay nutrition scholar in every barangay.

Legislations (a) and (c) – the establishment of committees and their corresponding nutrition action plan formulation and the appointment of the BNS – are widely implemented but not in the same degree of compliance. Legislation (b), the appointment of the nutritionist-dietitian receives less compliance because of the budget implication to poor LGUs and the difficulty of finding enough trained human resources willing to take government assignments at local levels.

Dr. Florentino Solon, the architect of the original Philippine Nutrition Program describes in a 2006 article, “Good governance for nutrition in the Philippines: Elements, experiences, and lessons learned” the organization of the Philippine Nutrition Program.³

³ Food and Nutrition Bulletin, vol. 27, no. 4 © 2006, The United Nations University



The strategy of the national nutrition program is the establishment of an active organizational structure at all levels of operation. Whereas the NNC is responsible for national-level planning, there are regional, provincial, municipal, and barangay nutrition committees composed of individuals from government and the private sector. These committees are headed by the highest political leaders in the respective LGUs. On the premise that the solution to malnutrition should begin in the home, the organizational effort starts with the policy maker closest to the family, the barangay captain. The barangay captain is vested with two vital powers, executive and legislative. These can be used at the village level to facilitate the implementation of the nutrition program. The barangay has been pinpointed as the focal point of planning and implementation of the nutrition program. The municipal mayors and the nutrition committees, assisted by a designated municipal nutrition action officer, plan, coordinate, and manage the nutrition programs of the respective barangay...

To mobilize the people of the community to accept and practice good nutrition, a properly selected and well-trained cadre of volunteers is necessary ... The BNS are carefully selected volunteers from the barangay who undergo intensive training in the delivery of practical nutrition services: monitoring the growth of preschool children, communication of simple nutrition messages to parents, particularly pregnant and lactating women, and timely delivery of food and pharmaceutical supplements to targeted women and children ... About 22,000 BNS are now serving the country [in 2006]. The BNS is further strengthened by another volunteer, the barangay health worker (BHW). These volunteers render primary health-care services, including nutrition, in a cluster of 20 to 30 households in every barangay. As an incentive to volunteerism, a law enacted in 1995 grants the BHWs hazard and subsistence allowances, educational programs, civil service eligibility, and preferential access to loans. These benefits go to more than 200,000 BHWs in the country [in 2006]. Both the municipality and the barangay have a share of internal revenue allotment as a source of income, as well as social development funds of which a certain percentage may be used for social projects, including health and nutrition projects. The municipal and barangay local chief executives (LCEs) and their respective legislative bodies have discretion on the amount to be allocated for such purposes in their areas.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI)

Participating in the MELLPI implies submitting the LGU to annual evaluations of features of program implementation. The absence or presence of the features receives corresponding scores such that an LGU intent on winning is motivated to satisfy the requirements to obtain a high MELLPI score. Those who meet the minimum total score are ranked to determine who wins the competitive level Green Banner award. Three years of consecutive Green Banner status and passing the national validation confers to an LGU the Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) award. The next two years are no longer competitive; the LGU that sustains the CROWN status by meeting at least the specified minimum score gets recognition for CROWN Maintenance Year I and II awards and brings itself to the door of the NHA evaluation. This is in the 6th year of successful MELLPI participation. If the LGU attains the minimum score set for the Nutrition Honor Award, the award is achieved. In addition to the recognition and trophy, CROWN and NHA winners receive cash prizes (PhP 500,000 for

CROWN, PhP 100,000 for 1st Year CROWN Maintenance Award, PhP 200,000 for 2nd Year CROWN Maintenance Award and the NHA winner gets PhP 1,000,000). The first two Green Banner years have no corresponding money prize. At any time, failure during the six consecutive years of evaluation for the NNC nutrition awards brings the LGU back to the starting line.

In addition to the NHA line, NNC also conducts evaluation for competitions such as the National Outstanding BNS⁴. Provincial and municipal/city candidates for the awards, specifically the NHA line, receive coaching and mentoring from the NNC Regional Office and at times from the Provincial Nutrition Office, an LGU nutrition structure. LGUs also make use of the Nutrition Program Management Training Manual provided by the NNC to guide them on nutrition program planning and implementation.

⁴Other awards that local governments receive in nutrition are provided by regions, provinces, municipalities/cities on their own initiatives, independent of the NNC awards. The Nutrition Center of the Philippines awards LGUs with exemplary implementation of the *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon*.

The Work that Brings in the Award

Joining the MELLPI implies that the LGUs agree to pass required resolutions and ordinances and provide budgets so that the components of the nutrition program can get set up and can sustainably function; establish local nutrition committees and program offices; appoint at least the minimum required number of BNS trained and equipped for their responsibilities; undertake capacity building for personnel for the implementation of the nutrition program; conduct planning, monitoring, resource mobilization; implement programs; conduct annual program implementation reviews as basis for planning programs and corrective actions; show documented evidence of program implementation processes undertaken and progress in the enabling indicators as proof of functionality; and show results of improved nutritional status.

With respect to programs, the LGU and the members of local nutrition committees, in accordance with their own sector mandates are encouraged through the MELLPI scores to target nutritionally depressed areas along the lines of the impact programs – home/ school/

community food production, micronutrient supplementation, food fortification, nutrition education, food assistance, livelihood assistance and sector initiatives with nutrition implications. In recent years, the components of the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and Nutrition (MNCHN) have received increasing attention. MELLPI scores also serve as motivation to conduct nutrition advocacy (e.g. letters in support of nutrition issues), expand activities and budgets over time from LGU funds and through non-LGU resource mobilization; plan and implement innovative projects and innovative monitoring activities. Finally, LGUs must undertake regular assessments of weight and height that should show significant improvements in the nutritional status of children (underweight, overweight, stunting and wasting), especially for pre-school and school children.

III. HIGHLIGHTS OF NUTRITION JOURNEY OF THE 11 LGUS

Summary of Key Lessons from the CAN

With varied contexts, the heterogeneity of experience of the CAN LGUs provided substantive learning to others aspiring to deliver good nutrition performance. A broad summary is attempted here; the reader, however, is cautioned that it could not include many specific lessons that other LGUs might find resonance for their own circumstances and needs.

1. **MELLPI elicits compliance and improvements.** The 11 CAN LGUs show that their structures conform closely to what would have evolved from the legislation and their participation in the MELLPI: a nutrition action office with a nutrition action officer and as few or as many nutrition program coordinators depending on the needs and resources of the LGU; the nutrition committees at all levels; and at least one BNS per barangay.
2. **Adaptations abound in structures and processes.** Divergences from this model concern adjustments in the roles assigned to offices or individuals to allow functionality and performance despite limited budgetary resources, challenging geographic features or specific program hurdles. A common response to lean staffing of the nutrition office that likewise satisfies other LGU objectives is the assignment of program implementation roles to municipal nutrition committee members or the appointment of a barangay midwife to supervise the BNS and BHW. A specific strategy for barangay mobilization (appointment of spouses of barangay chairs as BNAOs), expansion of service coverage (appointment of volunteer health workers in *puroks*) or ensuring that critical program objectives are met (adding a layer of barangay-based workers to watch over community food production or community sanitation or increase coverage of services) are undertaken by some LGUs.

3. **Good performance is evident across all types of LGUs.** Thus, improvements in the local nutrition program and delivery of results transcend the income class of the LGUs and their local contexts: size, social and cultural composition and geographical dimensions among others, because LGUs adjust to the limitations of resources and respond to the implementation challenges they face. Specific to scarce resources, there are many examples of creative strategies, of stretching budgets through substitution of energies for scarce finances and perseverance in resource mobilization.
4. **Leadership is indispensable to ascent in nutrition.** The leadership of the LCE is the most important factor to the ascent of the LGU in nutrition; the competent technical nutrition program person is equally indispensable. The essential combination of the “enabler” and the competent hardworking technical nutrition program person, whoever takes the role in the LGU, is already half of the engine that runs an excellent nutrition program.
5. **Catalysts are enlisting the LCEs’ interest in nutrition.** The factors that influenced the CAN LGUs’ decision to embark on the establishment of the nutrition program and implementation of actions include:
 - (a) the serious extent of the malnutrition problem, especially if ranked against the LGU peers,
 - (b) the attraction of the NNC awards and recognition, leading to the LCE and program person’s agreement to get their programs evaluated by the MELLPI,
 - (c) the availability of technical assistance to accompany attempts at program improvement and MELLPI evaluations,
 - (d) specific need of some LGUs to elevate themselves from a position of being underdeveloped or inconsequential, and
 - (e) the desire to operationalize development visions for the LGU or for residents.
6. **Learning from good practices is common to all CAN LGUs.** LGUs learn from highly performing LGUs through *lakkbay aral*, formal institutions and from the technical support provided by NNC regional offices. The most common modality is learning from the good practices of highly performing LGUs. Several of the CAN LGUs are sharing their good practices to interested local government visitors.
7. **Improved local nutrition plans and rigorous monitoring and review processes.** With regards processes, more expansive formulation of the LNAP at all levels is common in the CAN LGUs as a result of a wider and more intensive contribution of nutrition committee member agencies and the use of development and nutrition frameworks. Moreover, program implementation reviews have become creative – with accompanying evaluations (and coaching and mentoring) in competition formats that confer recognitions and awards to outstanding performers, a la MELLPI. In one LGU, committee members volunteer to be part of a municipal multi-sectoral evaluation team for sector-specific evaluations of barangays. LGUs integrate the program processes (mobilization, monitoring, IEC, services) in existing institutional and cultural fora, e.g. Nutrition Month, *Garantisadong Pambata*, and LGU’s own assemblies.

8. **Invigorating programs and mandating strategies.** CAN LGUs follow the MELLPI guide and implement the national seven impact programs but employ strategies to make their programs more effective, attractive and accessible to the people through catchy program titles, fun programs, ordinances mandating behavior and conscious design to facilitate access and representation of GIDA and IP communities.
9. **Financing the local nutrition program.** Once the LCEs and their teams get interested in nutrition, the LGUs find means to mobilize resources and successfully finance their programs. For the less endowed CAN LGUs, a fraction of the development funds and higher LGU subsidies do not provide adequately for the requirements of their nutrition program operations. Hence, LGUs undertake actions to identify additional resources and conduct resource mobilization.
10. **Harnessing the power of legislation is an imperative.** CAN LGUs use the power of legislation for budgets and programs and in overall support of nutrition. Engagement of the *Sanggunian* cannot be neglected.
11. **CAN LGUs' success hinges on wide mobilization of constituent LGUs.** All CAN LGUs mobilized constituent LGUs, in various modalities. The implementation of LGU programs in constituent local governments (i.e. barangays) is common. The strategy simultaneously produces three results: programs are implemented on the ground, the constituent LGUs feel the presence and concern of the "enabler", and feedback from implementation reviews guide constituent LGU planning and programming for nutrition. Other creative strategies in mobilization include: the LCE's hands-on

involvement or the alter ego's constant presence on the LCE's behalf, appointment of spouses to BNAO positions, and incentives and awards. The progressive requirements of outstanding performance in the MELLPI exercises are a strong force in aligning the constituent LGUs. Sharing the limelight of the awards to key program team members and key committee members contribute as well. Games, competitions, doing things together, other fun programs have been very helpful; health and nutrition campaigns in celebratory atmosphere that appeal to the culture add value.

12. **NNC Regional Office technical assistance is a key factor.** The regional offices of the NNC have a unique role in the interface with the local government units considering their proximity to the LGUs. NNC's technical assistance provided by the Regional Offices holds one of the potent ways in which the cross-pollination of ideas can happen through their coaching and mentoring. Thus, the regional offices should have adequate financial and human resources for the demanding and vital responsibilities.
13. **Sustaining the gains.** Factors such as MELLPI, the nutrition awards, legislation, fun programs, strengthening structures, community participation, continuous years of rigorous implementation of nutrition program, monitoring and program implementation reviews at all levels, and positive political and civic culture all help the LGUs sustain the gains and recognition they received. Losing key nutrition program people from time to time is unlikely to be a rare occurrence to LGUs and for that reason succession planning needs to be part of sustainability considerations. Social cohesion and loyalty to LCE and to one's LGU are also contributing factors.

- 14. Focus on stunting and First 1000 days.** Explicit efforts to implement the First 1000 days should be strongly undertaken by the CAN LGUs and strengthened in the MELLPI focus on processes and results. It should include supportive actions of which a very important one is the plant for complementary food for young children and mothers.

Nutrition program structures and processes

The 11 CAN LGUs show that in practice, their current structures, systems and processes conform closely to what would have evolved from the legislation and their participation in the MELLPI: a nutrition action office with a nutrition action officer and as few or as many nutrition program coordinators depending on the needs of the LGU; the nutrition committees at all levels; and at least one BNS per barangay. There are divergences from this model for various reasons they are undertaken by the LGUs, affecting which structure gets assigned to specific roles but not affecting the functionality of the program. From the experience of the 11 LGUs, the assignment of roles has no bearing on functionality and performance. What seems to matter is that someone is competently performing the roles or functions.

- In all 11 LGUs, the membership of the local nutrition committee (LNC) has expanded beyond the usual sectors of health, agriculture, social welfare and development, education, interior and local government. The expansion is consistent with MELLPI suggestions but there might be another objective: in a few instances, the LGUs expanded the LNC membership because they needed the program specialization and other assets of the new member. Examples are



Adaptations abound in structures and processes.

Divergences from this model concern adjustments in the roles assigned to offices or individuals to allow functionality and performance despite limited budgetary resources, challenging geographic features or specific program hurdles. A common response to lean staffing of the nutrition office, that likewise satisfies other LGU objectives, is the assignment of program implementation roles to municipal nutrition committee members or the appointment of a barangay midwife to supervise the BNS and BHW. A specific strategy for barangay mobilization (appointment of spouses of barangay chairs as BNAOs), expansion of service coverage (appointment of volunteer health workers in puroks) or ensuring that critical program objectives are met (adding a layer of barangay-based workers to watch over community food production or community sanitation or increase coverage of services) are undertaken by some LGUs.



MELLPI elicits compliance and improvements.

The 11 CAN LGUs show that their structures conform closely to what would have evolved from the legislation and their participation in the MELLPI: a nutrition action office with a nutrition action officer and as few or as many nutrition program coordinators depending on the needs of the LGU; the nutrition committees at all levels; and at least one BNS per barangay.

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for training and employment, the budget office for financing matters, local planning and development office for integration of nutrition programs in the annual investment plan, the civil registrar for mandating programs through birth registration and marriage license, and IP leaders to represent their people.

- Although the MELLPI encourages the appointment of a full-time nutrition action officer, the usual set up that has worked is a designated NAO partnered with a full-time nutrition program coordinator. The NAO has a full-time job in another sector or in the Office of the LCE while the nutrition program coordinator provides executive assistance to the LNC if s/he has staff, arranges capacity building, coaches the BNS and oversees barangay program operations. Further, although the MELLPI in effect recommends that the nutrition office be under the Office of the LCE, this has not been the common practice. Instead, the nutrition office is usually under health, agriculture or planning and development office. Some thoughts might have gone in the choice of administrative affiliation of the nutrition office.

For instance, **Villaverde** merged nutrition into health to strengthen delivery of services. Later, the midwife, acting as a Barangay Nutrition Action Officer (BNAO, not contemplated in the law or in MELLPI) supervises the BNS and the BHW in the barangay operations. Villaverde needs the BNAO role in the barangay because its municipal nutrition office is thinly staffed – just one designated MNAO and a full-time assistant. The midwife is likewise the principal barangay-based supervisor of BNS and BHW in

Talibon – an LGU that likewise has a thinly staffed nutrition offices. Moreover, the two Visayan LGUs have island barangays that need access to trained medical personnel especially during months when sea travel is perilous.

In **Tagaytay City**, the nutrition office is under the planning and development office that advises, among other things, on the inclusion of nutrition projects in the Annual Investment Plan. In the **Province of Quezon**, the nutrition office is under the agriculture sector. The logical expectation is that the administrative affiliation should add enabling asset or assets to the functionality of an LGU's MELLPI-influenced program.

- In small nutrition offices mostly in low income LGUs like **Limasawa** and **Villaverde** the MNCs were expanded to include barangay level individuals engaged in nutrition, resulting in flat nutrition organizational structures and direct communication among those involved in the municipality and barangays. In Limasawa, a flat nutrition organization has been established, where the Mayor and the MNAO on one hand, and the municipal and barangay structures on the other, can directly communicate with each other to provide updates in program directions and implementation. Each MNC member is likewise assigned tasks, which include mobilization of the fathers by male members of the MNC, and the “3 in 1 Program” where three MNC members assist in the care of one undernourished child, whom they supply with one egg, milk, and vitamins daily until the child achieves normal weight. In **Talibon** and **Asipulo** which do not have secretariat for the MNC, the MNC members are assigned tasks in implementation of LGU programs.

- In **Villaverde**, where the nutrition office only has a designated MNAO and a full-time assistant, the LCE is engaged in direct mobilization of and information, education and communication (IEC) for barangays and constituents. In **Kadingilan**, the MNAO himself is the program coordinator – all rolled into one. The MNAO, however, enjoyed highly supportive MNC members, BNS network and barangay officials, making this exhausting challenge lighter. The roles vital to making the program functional and nutrition actions implemented do get re-assigned and acted on, which is what is important. Having chosen that set up, the LGUs would have found something positive in it – cost saving on nutrition program staff and efficiency in communications, among others, but the set up might become unwieldy for a big office.
- In **Asipulo**, the Barangay Nutrition Committee is part of an umbrella committee in each barangay for women and children called the OBAN/Ayod Council, together with the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children, and Barangay inter-agency Committee on Anti-Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Children. In **Malungon**, the existing management committee of the municipality that reviews progress of local programs integrated nutrition in the committee, boosting the inter-disciplinary nature of the nutrition program.
- For bigger LGUs, several innovations are worth mentioning. One, in **Tagaytay City**, with numerous barangays to be covered, four of which are situated in difficult terrain, the LGU took advantage of an integrated rural project to divide barangays into 213 zones or *puroks*. For each *purok*, a volunteer health worker (VHW) is appointed to assist the BNS and BHW in the delivery of a package of services including agriculture, health and nutrition, livelihood, microfinance and environment. In **Mandaluyong City**, the wives of the *punong barangays* were appointed as Volunteer Barangay Nutrition Action Officers (BNAO), a position not contemplated in the law or in MELLPI, to help in barangay mobilization. In **Davao City**, deputy mayors for each ethnic group were tasked to coordinate plans and programs, including nutrition, intended for indigenous peoples (IPs) of Ata Manuvu, Iranun, Kagan, K'lata, Maguindanao, Maranao, Matigsalog, OvuManuvu, Sama, Tagabawa, and Tausug origin.
- Observations on the nutrition structures of the two provinces, Quezon and Davao del Norte, are also instructive. In **Quezon**, the governor's concern for the urgency that Quezon's First 1000 Days (Q1K) program be implemented resulted in the establishment of an entire Q1K office staffed by nurses as provincial coordinators and the hiring of individual municipal and barangay coordinators. In **Davao del Norte**, the province likewise formed through an executive order the Technical Working Group and the MELLPI-recommended Provincial Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Team that supervises and coaches municipal program staff and monitors and evaluates nutrition programs on the ground.

- At the barangay level, the structures have divergences as well. All LGUs have managed to appoint at least one BNS per barangay at present. Some LGUs increase the number of BNS in bigger barangays. **Tagaytay City** created a new post, the volunteer health worker, for each *purok* of 20 households to assist the BNS and the BHW. In **Villaverde** and **Talibon**, supervision of the BNS/BHW outreach team comes from either the city/municipal nutrition office or a barangay-based midwife. In **Malungon**, a barangay monitoring technician is another barangay-based worker watching over community gardens and their contributions to food security and feeding programs. There is also a barangay sanitary inspector in Malungon.
- With regards to the BNS, the security of tenure has been less of an issue for the 11 LGUs but it might be because in general, the 11 LGUs have enlightened local chief executives. The security of BNS tenure somehow surfaces in Davao del Norte, Malungon and Tagaytay City, and is being addressed independently by each LGU. **Davao del Norte** mentions the dismissal of the BNS without cause and suggests that finding a solution should be considered at the same time that the skills of the BNS should be upgraded. The **Malungon** MNC has a more consequential message to the *punong barangays* – they will shoulder the responsibility of training the BNS they replace, while advising the BNS not to get involved in politics. In **Tagaytay City**, DILG strongly advises the *punong barangays* that as per Memorandum Circular 2010-147: Termination/Retention of Barangay Health Workers (BHWs), Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) and Barangay Day Care Workers (BDCWs), although it is their prerogative to appoint the BNS they like, the existing ones should not be dismissed except for just cause.
- In general, the 11 LGUs have managed to appoint the number of BNS needed in their areas. BNS remuneration have increased to decent levels in cities while in others, different LGU levels (province, municipality, barangay) share or subsidize the BNS remunerations.
- The BNS Basic Course and re-training prescribed by the NNC is also being undertaken in all LGUs. In addition, in **Tagaytay City**, monthly BNS meetings last the entire day to include training and re-training of the BNS in various topics. The **Talibon** nutrition committee conducts numerous training activities for different types of nutrition workers, as ascertained in program records. More recent developments in anthropometric measures, the electronic Operation *Timbang* (e-OPT) Plus tool was introduced in some LGUs and results for one LGU are already reported in this compendium. The tool has the potential to minimize processing errors on the computation of prevalence but not errors on data generation. Although the e-OPT Plus tool would require laptops and computer-literate BNS, the requirements are not formidable as **Tagaytay City** has shown. In the City, the BNS have gotten their laptops and the required computer skills and are continually improving capacities. One BNS is 61 years old and another finished high school via the Alternative Learning System. One important issue at the moment relates to the BNS equipment. Almost all of the 11 LGUs managed to buy the mechanical column (Detecto) weighing and Salter-type scales and height boards. However,

except for the Salter-type scales, the tools are meant for clinics or flat surfaces and not suitable for communities in the middle of farms or for travel over long distances without the appropriate transportation. The equipment issue, along with the tenure of BNS, remains unresolved to date.

Evaluations and reviews and local awards. The CAN LGUs undertake assessments and analyses, and take actions based on collective appreciation of problems and their dimensions.

- Some CAN LGUs use reviews to stimulate good implementation by constituent local governments or individuals in a competition format, using tools patterned after MELLPI or RAC of the Child Friendly LGU. The best performers are conferred awards that usually carry money prizes, adding excitement to the exercise both for program people and constituents. Here are some examples. **Talibon** has an extensive award system financed by municipal budget for barangays, municipal agencies and individuals with outstanding performance in nutrition. **Tagaytay City** started conducting city-level competitions for best BNS as early as the 90s and the objective was to encourage the BNS to be the best they can. In the last five years, after winning three out of five National Outstanding BNS (NOBNS) awards, the Tagaytay City (NHA 2004) program has a goal – every BNS must be an outstanding BNS, national level or city level. City level awards are motivating enough for frontline workers who already feel rewarded by their own people's appreciation for the concern and services they bring.



Improved local nutrition plans and rigorous monitoring and review processes. With regards processes, more expansive formulation of the LNAP at all levels is common in the CAN LGUs as a result of a wider and more intensive contribution of nutrition committee member agencies and the use of development and nutrition frameworks. Moreover, program implementation reviews have become creative – with accompanying evaluations (with coaching and mentoring) in competition formats that confer recognitions and awards to outstanding performers, a la MELLPI, and that in one specific LGU is undertaken by a multi-sectoral group for sector-specific evaluations. LGUs integrate the program processes (mobilization, monitoring, IEC, services) in existing institutional and cultural fora, e.g. Nutrition Month, Garantisadong Pambata, and LGU's own assemblies.

- In another example in Atimonan, **Quezon**, the Municipal Nutrition Evaluation Team conducts year-end reviews of its barangays' program implementation (regardless of difficulty of access, even insecurity). A multi-sectoral team of the MNC undertakes the travels and the reviews. Usually the team has a representative from agriculture because the sector will assess community food production programs for the best barangay gardens, department of social welfare for the best day care center assessment, health for the most outstanding BHW or Junior BHW, in addition to best BNS, best BNC, Model Breastfeeding Barangay, and the like. According to the assistant MNAO (Program Coordinator), they innovate over MELLPI by making their visits to different barangays occasions for coaching and mentoring in all the concerns of sector members of the evaluation team.
- The MELLPI-required annual Program Implementation Review allows the 11 LGUs to take stock of where the program is at the end of the implementation year and is the prelude to the annual program planning exercise for LGUs undergoing MELLPI evaluations. The **Mandaluyong City** nutrition program was introduced by the NNC RNPC to the method of situation analysis using the malnutrition tree model. The malnutrition tree guided the **Malungon** program in situating nutrition in their overall model of development, as it did in **Limasawa**. Many other CAN LGUs' nutrition programs utilize the model.
- Early in the program, **Davao del Norte's** Provincial Program Coordinator conducted baseline assessments of municipalities, spending days in the areas, trying to understand the conditions and how programs could be effectively implemented. A second baseline

assessment was done after a furlough in program implementation - the new Provincial Program Coordinator assessed the state of program mobilization in municipalities at the start of resumption of provincial nutrition programming. The province has a Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Team created by an executive order which visited different municipalities and barangays, sometimes using a dump truck, to reach even far-flung and hardly accessible municipalities to monitor, evaluate, supervise and coach nutrition programs on the ground.

- Programs are monitored more frequently in some LGUs, the result of attempts to enforce accountability and update constituents of progress of programs. The twice-a-year Barangay Synchronized Assembly in **Villaverde** and **Malungon's** *LINGAP sa Barangay* are two distinct examples.

The catalysts in the nutrition ascent

For most of the CAN LGUs, several factors influenced the decision to embark in the implementation of their nutrition programs. First, the serious extent of the malnutrition problem in their LGUs disturbed many LCEs, especially if ranked against their peers, stimulating their desire to do something about it. Second, the NNC awards and recognition attracted many LCEs and nutrition program persons, leading them to agree to get their programs evaluated by the MELLPI.

Third, advocacy was accompanied by technical assistance coming from the NNC RNPC, provincial nutrition action office or another entity.

Fourth, for several LGUs, the need to elevate themselves from a position of being underdeveloped or inconsequential appeared to be an overall driving spirit in their general ascent.

- The four factors applied to **Mandaluyong City** in 1998 when the LGU leadership and the technical nutrition program person, assisted by the NNC RNPC, planned and executed a response to the poor nutritional status of residents –i.e. set up the nutrition structures and systems, implement programs and submit the LGU program to the annual evaluation of the MELLPI.
- In **Tagaytay City**, in the 1989 Operation *Timbang*, only half of all children were found to have nutritional status classified as normal. Upon the advice of the NNC RNPC, the Tagaytay's local chief executive at that time, with the DILG person at his side, established the city nutrition office, appointed the Nutrition Coordinator and implemented the five impact programs: food production, health protection, food assistance, nutrition education and credit assistance for livelihood.
- The same decision was taken by the **Talibon** LCE and his health and nutrition team with technical assistance from the provincial nutrition office when the poor nutritional state of the municipality came to his attention and informed that the municipality ranked 44 of 44 LGUs in the provincial MELLPI in 1995.
- In the case of **Davao City**, the inadequately staffed nutrition office and BNS team benefited from a 1996 reorganization of city offices resulting from salary standardization of government employees. With finally a bigger human resource complement, the head of the

City Nutrition Division under the City Health Office, assisted by the NNC RNPC, advocated vying for nutrition awards to the LCE, and the latter supported the idea. The city has decided to join the MELLPI.

- In **Kadingilan**, an agricultural technician took his appointment as MNAO seriously – attended MNAO meetings, read and learned as much as he could and took a short course on food and nutrition planning management in UP Los Baños to do his job properly. Steadfastly supported by nutrition committee members and the LCE, and mentored by the Provincial Nutrition Action Officer, the Kadingilan MNAO set its eyes on the prize – the NHA.
- In the case of **Villaverde**, the attention on nutrition was precipitated by the NNC RNPC member of the Regional Awards Committee for the Presidential Award for Child-Friendly Municipalities and Cities who called the LCE's attention to the gaps in nutrition services and the LGU's low ranking in nutrition program implementation, sometime in 2010.
- Starting in an LCE's second term of office in **Asipulo**, the priorities of the LCE started to shift from infrastructure to nutrition after he became aware from conferences that the municipality ranked lowest in the Ifugao Province in nutrition performance, and highest in malnutrition prevalence. He compared his municipality with Kiangnan, which was about to achieve the Nutrition Honor Award, and resolved that his town would do better in terms of nutritional status of the children.

For other LGUs, the establishment of programs or their strengthening came about as part of operationalizing their visions for the LGU or for its residents.

- For the **Quezon** Governor, enlightenment came in a World Bank meeting in 2015 in which the F1K was brought up as an effective way to address poverty, sowing the seeds for the Quezon First 1000 Days (Q1K) program.
- In **Davao del Norte**, the adoption of the Minimum Basic Needs Approach in 1998 as the social development policy of the province opened up space for nutrition after the governor's accidental introduction to the MELLPI awards, when he mistakenly walked into the regional nutrition awarding ceremony. The Governor was asked to speak after which he told the RNPC that he wanted the same award for his province.
- In **Malungon**, very limited nutrition program activities were undertaken prior to 1992, until the provincial nutrition action officer convinced the spouse of the LCE to take the MNAO post. From then on, little by little nutrition program evolved as a development agenda.
- In **Limasawa** in the early '90s, it was the pure and simple implementation of the nutrition program by a doctor-to-the-barrio, later the MHO/MNAO, to bring the health and nutrition services to all residents including those in hardly accessible island barangays.
- The need to prove the LGU's capacity has driven the ascent in nutrition of Asipulo, Kadingilan, Limasawa, and Mandaluyong City. **Asipulo**, which became independent of its mother municipality Kiangin, wanted to prove itself worthy of being called a town, and nutrition became part of its overall effort to development and gaining respect in the province. In **Kadingilan**, once a no man's land for its isolation and peace and order situation, nutrition was included in the town's development program. The island town of **Limasawa**'s desire to be self-sufficient included efforts in food security, health and nutrition. In **Mandaluyong**, the LGU team transformed the city referred to in the past as a "joke city" to a "Tiger City" with nutrition program improvement forming part of the overall transformation. The CAN research team senses the same spirit of distinguishing themselves in the rest of the LGUs.
- In **Villaverde**, the desire of the LCE to regain the LGU's well-preserved environment of her youth provided energies to her sectoral achievements including in nutrition. In addition, a personal mission to provide children, adolescents, women and her constituents better access to quality health and nutrition care is firing up all cylinders for this courageous lady mayor.

Political and program leadership - “enabling” the nutrition program

One notable similarity of features among the 11 LGUs is in the pervasive role of leadership. For all LGUs, the commitment of the political leader - the local chief executive, is the most important factor to the success of the nutrition program, especially in the initial period of establishing the program structures.

- In synthesis, the LCE’s role is that of the “enabler” who ensures that the legal framework and budgets required by the program are secured - for the establishment of the program office, the nutrition committees and BNS teams, for capacity-building and equipping of the BNS and offices, and for implementing programs and component systems and processes. By signaling that nutrition is a priority, the LGU machinery gives space to nutrition: the LGU legislative body (*sanggunian*) assists with the required legislation, and the planning and development office together with the budget office look out for nutrition in the local development and annual investment plan.
- In the course of program implementation, unambiguous support for nutrition by the “enabler” unblocks hindrances including inertia among program staff, agencies and barangay units, mediates in the unequal relationship between nutrition coordinators and sector heads of the local nutrition committees, or between the BNS and the elected barangay officials. Depending on the context, the LCEs in all 11 LGUs rally program people and constituencies by convincing arguments and political weight. These are most visible in the stories of **Mandaluyong City, Quezon Province, Tagaytay City,**



Catalysts are enlisting LCEs interest in nutrition. The factors that influenced the CAN LGUs’ decision to embark in the establishment of the nutrition program and implementation of actions include (a) the serious extent of the malnutrition problem, especially if ranked against the LGU peers, (b) the attraction of the NNC awards and recognition, leading the LCE and program person’s agreement to get their programs evaluated by the MELLPI, (c) the availability of technical assistance to accompany attempts at program improvement and MELLPI evaluations, (d) specific need of some LGUs to elevate themselves from a position of being underdeveloped or inconsequential, and (e) the desire to operationalize development visions for the LGU or for residents.

Talibon and **Villaverde**. Needless to say, the LCEs' contribution to the nutrition program range from providing adequate enabling elements to hands-on involvement.

- For most of the LGUs in the CAN, the LCE has a nutrition alter ego, the designated nutrition action officer (NAO) to whom the LCE passes the “enabler” role, supporting the program on behalf of the LCE. The NAO oversees the program, responds to the program's enabling needs, but is usually not the technical program person for nutrition because s/he has a full-time assignment in another sector or other assignments under the office of the LCE. The NAO supervises the nutrition program coordinator who in most LGUs is the technical nutrition program person. The NAO usually confines his/her role to “enabling”, although in **Mandaluyong City**, the CNAO herself learned nutrition program planning and implementation and was heavily involved in sector and barangay mobilization; in **Kadingilan**, the MNAO is himself the technical program person, while in **Villaverde**, the MNAO studied health leadership and governance together with the LCE. The Villaverde LCE personally conducts mobilization and nutrition promotion in barangay assemblies, talking directly with constituents. The essential combination of the “enabler” and the competent and hardworking technical nutrition program person, whoever takes the role in the LGU, is already half of the engine that runs an excellent nutrition program.
- The absence of any entity or individual performing the roles has serious consequences for the program as the experience in two LGUs show. In **Kadingilan**, one LCE who had little empathy for



Harnessing the power of legislation is an imperative. CAN LGUs use the power of legislation for budgets and programs and in overall support of nutrition. Engagement of the *Sanggunian* cannot be neglected.

nutrition cut the program budget by 50 percent and ignored the nutrition sector despite the recognitions for its achievements and the honor nutrition was bringing to the LGU. Although implementation continued, Kadingilan experienced a slowdown of its usual vigor in program functioning for most of the LCE's three-year term. The MNC members were vital in helping the MNAO keep the nutrition program alive during this term. In **Quezon**, a one-term LCE whose political affiliation was different from the previous one did not continue support for nutrition and shut down the plant for complementary food.

- Nevertheless, three other LGU programs that went through changes in LGU administrations did not experience withdrawal of program support and therefore, no adverse consequences for the program. In **Talibon**, the nutrition program thrived through three changes of LCE leadership of different political

affiliations on the way to the Nutrition Honor Award in 2004 and after. This is also the case in **Asipulo** where politics does not hamper development work. In this LGU, competition is forgotten after elections, and everyone goes back to working closely together, continuing and improving useful projects. Similarly, in the early program years of **Tagaytay City**, one LCE continued the strong support for nutrition started by another LCE, despite the contentious electoral contest between the two.

- With respect to the technical person of the nutrition program, **Davao del Norte** inadvertently provided the proof of the importance of the role. The retirement of the long-time program coordinator slowed down implementation for some time until a replacement was appointed. Davao del Norte's strong program had been notable for its close supervision and mentoring of municipalities' program implementation. When nutrition actions re-started, one of the first steps was the conduct of an assessment of municipal implementation during the slow down. Losing key nutrition program people

from time to time is unlikely to be a rare occurrence to LGUs, and for that reason succession planning needs to be part of sustainability considerations. The story should invite reflections by higher level nutrition entities on how to interest LGUs in succession planning and provide temporary technical support if needed. Awareness of the LGU leadership of the risks to the program is a vital factor in ensuring that program capability is safeguarded.

Learning the ropes in program implementation

Equipping themselves for nutrition program planning, implementation and monitoring is a long and continuous process. But the CAN LGUs found different ways of learning through formal as well as through a shortened process more popularly called "*lakbay aral*".

- The benchmarking that **Malungon** did in Kadingilan, Garden City of Samal, Lake Sebu and others contributed learnings which the municipality used to improve existing nutrition programs. The **Talibon**



Leadership is indispensable to ascent in nutrition. The leadership of the LCE is the most important factor to the ascent of the LGU in nutrition; the competent technical nutrition program person is equally indispensable. The essential combination of the "enabler" and the competent hardworking technical nutrition program person, whoever takes the role in the LGU, is already half of the engine that runs an excellent nutrition program.

MNAO with other members of the MNC visited the neighboring town of Calape in the same province to learn their secrets in winning the NHA. Years later in its journey to the NHA, the MNAO enriched his initial exposure to Calape by paying a visit to Banay Banay in Davao Oriental - a province that has become a role model in the fight against malnutrition in the Southern Mindanao provinces. The provincial nutrition office and district nutrition program coordinator guided Talibon through the MELLPI exercises. **Tagaytay City** actively sought outside assistance, sending staff to the National Nutrition Council Region IV and to the more advanced LGUs (Trece Martirez and Los Baños) for the learning. In **Quezon**, the governor's wife together with the provincial nutritionist, organized a trip to the town of Jordan in Guimaras island to learn about some promising nutrition projects they heard about. When they returned, the "Nutri-combo Program" was launched in selected sites in Quezon in 2015. Many of the 11 LGUs are now themselves destinations for others wishing to learn about the performing

LGUs' experiences in nutrition program management.

- **Mandaluyong City** capitalized on close mentoring from the NNC RNPC who provided many critical training including aspects of nutrition program management and situation analysis and was present in many evaluative exercises throughout the ascent of the city. The NNC RNPC was a cross-pollinator who brought the experience of a nutrition honor awardee to the City.
 - The MNAO of **Kadingilan** enrolled in the Short-Term Course on Food and Nutrition Program Planning and Management (STC-FNPPM) at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños as a scholar of the National Nutrition Council. The MHO/MNAO and the LCE of **Villaverde** together enrolled in the Municipal and Local Governance Program (MLGP), equivalent to a Master's Degree from the Open University of Benguet State University.
 - In **Limasawa**, the technical knowledge of the doctor-to-the-barrio, later MHO/
- MNAO guided the initial years of the nutrition program; in later years, technical assistance came from the NNC Regional Office. The provincial nutrition coordinator of **Davao del Norte** possessed many years of LGU experience and technical training from the Department of Health, similar to the Limasawa's doctor-to-the-barrio. The same case applies to the technical leaders of nutrition in **Davao City**. In all three LGUs, the technical leaders hit the ground running.
- **Asipulo** leaders were provided technical training on community development from agencies such as the German Organization for Technical Cooperation, programs focusing on health from the United Nations Population Fund, and capacity to provide assistance and respond to calls for support from poor communities from the KALAHYAN-CIDSS.
 - In a follow-up interview with former Mayor Benhur Abalos and former city nutrition action officer now Mayor Menchie Abalos of **Mandaluyong City**, they expressed their willingness to

continue mentoring other LGUs, even providing some funding for the requirements of nutrition programming. Several other CAN LGUs expressed similar disposition. All CAN LGUs have the materials from their experience to provide mentoring in nutrition to other local governments, that some of them have already been engaged in.

- It is to be noted that NNC's technical assistance provided by the Regional Offices holds one of the potent ways in which the cross-pollination of ideas can happen. It would imply that the NNC Regional Officers themselves need to be more familiar and keep updated with the best practices from LGUs to be able to use the same in their coaching and mentoring.

Creative strategies in mobilization of constituent LGUs

- The mobilization of constituent local governments happens in many ways in the 11 CAN LGUs. Implementing programs in constituent LGUs, especially barangays, simultaneously produces three results: programs are implemented on the ground, the constituent LGUs feel the presence and concern of the “enabler”, and feedback from implementation reviews guide LGU planning and programming for nutrition. The LGUs employ a variety of creative strategies in mobilization.
- In **Mandaluyong City**, convincing barangays to fully support nutrition program implementation had been difficult until the tireless CNAO's appointment of wives of *punong barangay* as volunteer BNAOs. Moreover, the LCE of the City at that time



Learning from good practices is common to all CAN LGUs. LGUs learn from highly performing LGUs through *lakbay aral*, formal institutions and from the technical support provided by NNC regional offices. The most common modality is learning from the good practices of highly performing LGUs. Several of the CAN LGUs are sharing their good practices to interested local governments.



NNC Regional Office technical assistance is a key factor. The regional offices of the NNC have a unique role in the interface with the local government units considering their proximity to the LGUs. NNC's technical assistance provided by the Regional Offices holds one of the potent ways in which the cross-pollination of ideas can happen through their coaching and mentoring. Thus, the regional offices should have adequate financial and human resources for the demanding and vital responsibilities.

often made his presence felt in program events to remind program people and constituents that nutrition is his administration's priority, in addition to his public references to nutrition and public acknowledgment of the good performance of the city's nutrition workers. Every year, the LCE personally kicked off the vitamin A supplementation program. In **Quezon Province**, the governor has been an articulate and effective advocate of the Q1K. Nevertheless, convincing lower level LGUs during the Q1K workshop to support the program necessitated making municipalities aware of, among other arguments, their poor nutritional status. The tactic was successful; only one municipality out of 40 did not commit to go along with the implementation. In **Villaverde**, barangay officials were curious initially of the leadership style of the lady mayor. She demonstrated the knack for calculated risk taking, hard work and good strategic decisions. When the LGU started to be recognized for achievements under her leadership, making others follow her lead became easier.

- In **Tagaytay City**, the program coordinators of the nutrition office are responsible for the implementation of the city nutrition programs including initiatives with nutrition implications in the barangays. In the earlier years of the Tagaytay program, the LCE closely monitored implementation and coached the nutrition coordinators in the dynamics of their interactions with barangay officials, even calling the latter to the LCE office for discussions if needed. Another LCE visited program sites unannounced to check on progress. In recent years, the CNAO performs the role on behalf of the LCE to make sure that local mobilization continues

to go smoothly, allowing the uninterrupted activities on BNS strengthening and implementation at the barangay level. In the province of **Davao del Norte**, the Provincial Program Coordinator and her team go out of their way to assess, coach and mentor municipalities in nutrition program implementation.

- In **Davao City**, the information nerve center of the City Mayor's Office (BCCAD) is used to monitor the needs of barangays, maintain linkages and facilitate coordination in the delivery of information, instructions and services. Reaching the indigenous populations is advanced by deputy mayor appointments for the 11 ethnic groups of the City. Moreover, substantial mobilization of the business sectors was undertaken in the food fortification (salt iodization and iron-fortification of rice) and CIMAM programs.
- In **Malungon**, to strengthen the priority that barangays put on nutrition, the MNC facilitated the BNC re-organization while the municipal management committee provides orientation to deepen understanding on nutrition among BNC members using their Nutri-Care Center data. Further, management committee meetings are held at municipal level and '*pulong-pulong*' (assemblies) are done in *barangays*, *sitios* or *purok*.
- In several LGUs, notably **Kadingilan**, the MNAO always attends the meetings of the Association of *Punong Barangay* to remind them of the importance of nutrition and update them on activities that need their leadership and support. The LCE makes himself visible in the barangays, attending activities such as the graduation of mothers in the *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon* program. In each July

Nutrition month celebration, the MNC plans activities to spark and sustain the interest of townsfolk in nutrition.

- **Limasawa** implements entertaining programs that captured the interest of community members. The healthy lifestyle program adapted the TV show “Biggest Loser” with a local twist. They also adapted the popular reality TV show “Amazing Race,” one week before the town fiesta along with other local activities. The “*usapang lalaki*” or gentleman’s agreement between the BNC members and the fathers was an effective mobilization tactic for this group of men. Having the leader of the fathers’ group married to the midwife, who plays a vital role in the Rural Health Unit and the MNC has also benefitted the fathers’ group and program implementation.
- In **Malungon**, the convergence program called *Lingap sa Barangay* conducted twice a year brings services closer to the people. The municipal nutrition office conducts weighing of pre-school children, feeding, advocacy and promotion of good nutrition and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) to mothers of pre-school children, and pregnant and lactating women. It is also a gathering for advocacy and promotion, monitoring and increasing transparency and accountability. During the *Lingap*, health and nutrition frontliners such as the BNS, barangay monitoring technician and barangay sanitary inspector report publicly on progress of the Barangay Nutrition Center, backyard gardens, salt testing, vegetable seeds distribution, and compliance to zero open defecation (ZOD) policy. Barangays and community members who do not cooperate are publicly named, thereby enhancing compliance to nutrition programs and policies.
- In **Villaverde**, the Synchronized Barangay Assembly is a gathering for advocacy and promotion, monitoring and increasing transparency and accountability. More than a two-way engagement between leadership, community and the local departments, municipal employees, and civic organizations, the assembly serves as forum for development issues as well as information, education and communication (IEC) and nutrition update moments. Attendance is a requisite especially for households vying for grants from the barangay; attendance is recorded by the municipal local government office. The mayor attends all barangay assemblies, beginning with the first meeting at 9:00 in the morning to the last assembly ending in the evening. She is given 30 to 40 minutes per assembly for announcements and to make people more aware of the services available to the community, especially for health and nutrition. The assembly also provides an opportunity to present nutrition data from the Operation *Timbang* and call the attention of parents whose children are underweight for prolonged periods of time.
- In **Talibon**, a combination of strategies applied across three LCEs sustained the mobilization of constituent LGUs, sectoral stakeholders and other members of the local government: strict discipline in the conduct of MNC meetings, rigor in the reports and documentation, announced and unannounced barangay visits to monitor progress of sectoral and barangay programs, annual municipal and barangay program implementation reviews, and incentives and awards provided to performing sectors, constituent barangays and individuals involved.

Financing the nutrition program

Many LGUs in the country attempting to set up nutrition programs would find lack of financial resources a daunting problem. It is because the Local Government Code is silent on where the budget for the legally-prescribed functional nutrition committees, nutrition action plans and BNS for all barangays could come from, making nutrition an unfunded mandate. As the CAN LGUs' experience shows, with political will, funds can be identified and efficiently harnessed to deliver nutrition services and reduce the prevalence of malnutrition.

The CAN stories reveal the common use of the following sources of funds for nutrition to finance the seven impact projects:

1. The 20 percent development fund of local governments from the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA),
2. Subsidy from higher level LGUs, either financial resources or in-kind,
3. Nutrition committees' sector budgets for initiatives with nutrition implications included in the annual investment plan,
4. PhilHealth capitation fund,
5. Gender and Development fund,
6. Innovative mobilization of local resources
7. Private sector and civil society organizations, and
8. Mobilization of resources external to the LGUs.

Needless to say, the LGU leadership and the *Sanggunian* have discretion on the amount that they will allocate to programs.



CAN LGUs' success hinges on wide mobilization of constituent LGUs. All CAN LGUs mobilized constituent LGUs, in various modalities. The implementation of LGU programs in constituent local governments (i.e. barangays) is common. The strategy simultaneously produces three results: programs are implemented on the ground, the constituent LGUs feel the presence and concern of the "enabler", and feedback from implementation reviews guide constituent LGU planning and programming for nutrition. Other creative strategies in mobilization include: the LCE's hands-on involvement or the alter ego's constant presence on the LCE's behalf, appointment of spouses to BNAO positions, and incentives and awards. The progressive requirements of outstanding performance in the MELLPI exercises are a strong force in aligning the constituent LGUs. Sharing the limelight of the awards to key program team members and key committee members contribute as well. Games, competitions, doing things together, other fun programs have been very helpful; health and nutrition campaigns in celebratory atmosphere that appeal to the culture add value.

- The national government has strict rules on the use of the 20 percent development funds of the Internal Revenue Allotment. They are for infrastructure and technical equipment, for which big ticket items like health centers and nutrition physical offices, weighing scales and height boards would qualify. Higher level LGUs provide financing for their programs implemented by lower level LGUs, specifically barangays. Under **Davao del Norte's** Minimum Basic Needs approach that also covers nutrition projects, provincial funds are released to municipalities and barangays against validated accomplishment reports. For **Quezon's** Q1K, the province downloads the commodities to the lower level LGUs.
- As the less endowed among the CAN LGUs can attest, a fraction of the development funds and higher LGU subsidies do not provide adequately for the requirements of their nutrition program operations. Hence, there is always the need to identify additional resources and conduct resource mobilization. The PhilHealth capitation was extensively used in **Limasawa, Malungon** and **Villaverde**. In Malungon, through the increasing PhilHealth capitation fund, the use of general funds to finance health and nutrition has decreased. Villaverde's anecdote on how it established capitation fund as a source of program financing might be helpful to some LGUs. The PhP 8,000 capitation fund or the "per family payment rate" from PhilHealth is reimbursed to the municipality for every live birth or delivery. The amount goes into a trust fund for nutrition activities specifically for training and purchase of program supplies. However, the capitation fund is only available to municipalities with accredited lying in and birthing clinics. A major requirement for accreditation is that the LGU's health station be equipped for laboratory work, which is not the case for

Villaverde. DOH would provide equipment upon request through the Health Facility Enhancement Program, but not the cost of personnel. For the time that Villaverde could not be accredited, the MHO/MNAO outsourced laboratory services such as X-ray from other agencies, allowing the tedious accreditation process to proceed. Regular monitoring by DOH and PhilHealth was required to ensure compliance with standards. Once established, Villaverde's lying in and birthing clinic became a financial resource that augment funds from the municipal government.

- The members of the nutrition committee implement sector programs with nutrition implications that in practice, expands total LGU budget for nutrition substantially. The LGU's budget office and the city planning and development office have been helpful allies in the process. In **Tagaytay City**, the current CNAO, who is also the City Planning and Development Officer, motivates barangays to spend for the BNS laptops and reminds all sectors undertaking nutrition projects to get them included in the Annual Investment Plan. It also helps that whenever downloaded budgets are specified for "health and nutrition", the interpretation in Tagaytay City is 50:50 sharing for the two sectors. **Kadingilan** estimates that in 2017, sectors of the nutrition committee contribute a considerable PhP 27 million or 60 times the nutrition office budget. Based on the municipal records, the Kadingilan program is able to tap a substantial amount from Gender and Development, also a common source of funds for nutrition projects in other LGUs.
- In addition, as evaluations by the MELLPI go deeper into barangay programs, LGUs are strongly encouraged to undertake barangay

resource mobilization. For that matter, the NHA awardees in the group are noticeably strong in this aspect: **Mandaluyong City** (handicrafts from recyclables and baked goods), **Tagaytay City** (community gardens, food processing and recyclables), **Limasawa** (family emergency saving, Buntis Baby bank for pregnant women, diving and whale watching fees); **Talibon** (counterpart funds for credit assistance to farmers and fisher folks in nutrition-sensitive projects) and **Kadingilan** (“*alkanyasa*” for donations from barangays and municipal employees and visitors). Involving constituents in simple initiatives bring in fairly substantial funds at the same time that they provide constant opportunities for constituents’ participation. **Malungon**, a candidate NHA in the 2018 evaluation, engages barangays in communal gardens of fruits and vegetables and schools in legume production for household use and for feeding programs, watched over by the Barangay Monitoring Technician.

- Non-government and private organizations were extensively involved in **Limasawa**, **Davao del Norte** and **Davao City** while religious organizations have provided substantial assistance to the barangay feeding programs of **Tagaytay City**. Budget has been an issue in **Asipulo**, a relatively new municipality that started as an out-of-the way barangay. Early technical and financial support for LGU development and pro-poor social development programs including nutrition came from the German Organization for Technical Cooperation, the DSWD’s KALAHY-CIDSS and the United Nations Population Fund.



Good performance is evident across all types of LGUs.

Thus, improvements in the local nutrition program and delivery of results transcend the income class of the LGUs and their local contexts: size, social and cultural composition and geographical dimensions among others, because LGUs adjust to the limitations of resources and respond to the implementation challenges they face. Specific to scarce resources, there are many examples of creative strategies, of stretching budgets through substitution of energies for scarce finances and perseverance in resource mobilization.

- Two LGUs employed other notable strategies in making services available and generating permanent LGU income flows. In **Villaverde**, sharing of other services not available in some municipalities, such as ambulance, are made accessible through an agreement among municipal mayors, called the Inter-local Health Zone. The Mayor of this 5th class municipality was in constant search of ways to finance her development projects and the nutrition programs. One initiative was the taxation of the uplands occupied by the indigenous peoples (IPs) that involved convincing the IPs to claim possession of the lands and be willing to pay taxes thereafter. Strongly advised that it would be political suicide, she gave the idea much thought and after finally negotiating with

the IPs and getting their agreement, she went ahead. The process ended up with the IPs going down to the town to complete the process, bringing with them animals and produce to sell, marking a beginning of a new relationship between the upland IPs and the town populations.

- For all the time **Talibon** was vying for the NNC nutrition awards, financing was not easy for the 3rd class municipality then. Early in its program, the municipal planning and development officer assisted the municipality in preparing the required documents so that the LGU's health outreach program could fund the additional midwives for the barangays without violating hiring limits on personnel. The LGU's luck came in the third term of a mayor who was a former executive of the Development Bank of the Philippines. Investing municipal resources in constructing buildings for lease to private firms, the subsequent rental earnings now supports social development projects including nutrition.
- The 11 CAN LGUs with income class range from 1st to 6th showed that outstanding program implementation can be undertaken, whether LGUs are well-off or not. In LGUs with scarce resources, the determination to implement programs deemed important to their constituents shows through many examples of creative strategies, of stretching budgets through substitution of energies for scarce finances and perseverance in resource mobilization.



Financing the local nutrition program. Once the LCEs and their team get interested in nutrition, the LGUs find means to mobilize resources and successfully finance their programs. For the less endowed CAN LGUs, a fraction of the development funds and higher LGU subsidies do not provide adequately for the requirements of their nutrition program operations. Hence, LGUs undertake actions to identify additional resources and conduct resource mobilization.

Nutrition program

There are interesting observations about how the 11 CAN LGUs have designed their local nutrition action plans.

- As effectively recommended by the MELLPI, the LGUs implement the seven impact programs – (1) home/ school/ community food production, (2) micronutrient supplementation, (3) food fortification, (4) nutrition education, (5) food assistance, (6) livelihood assistance and (7) sector initiatives with nutrition implications. According to the stories, food assistance, specifically limited coverage feeding, food production and nutrition education were the programs often implemented by LGUs before they decide to embark on the road to improving nutrition program.
- A surprising observation is that at present, the 11 LGUs have extensive implementation of sector initiatives with nutrition implications. In the current PPAN, these are called “nutrition-sensitive” projects. Noticeably included in this group are programs on environmental sanitation – a very important intermediate variable adversely affecting the nutritional state, especially that of the child – in Davao City most especially in the IP areas where development partners, NGOs and private sectors have program coverage. **Malungon** has apparently triumphed over the problem, as explained in another section.

- The LGUs also have wide choices in respect of the depth and intensity of programs implemented. The divergences are not substantial and generally can be traced to the differences in the LGU contexts, namely resource endowments, levels of development, challenging or facilitating aspects of the program environments (geographic features, population spread across vast territory, disadvantaged groups) and distinctive strategies for implementing the nutrition program. Creative program strategies across the 11 LGUs are described below.

Making programs work: Creative strategies in programming

Mandating behavior in community/ school/ home food production and environmental sanitation. Mandating behavior is a common strategy of many LGUs to strongly push constituents towards behavior supportive of food sufficiency and environmental sanitation objectives and has apparently been successful. Examples from the 11 CAN LGUs briefly explain the strategies.

- In **Malungon** household gardens is a mandatory requirement for getting municipal or barangay certification or subsidy for Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program beneficiaries since 2007. Moreover, the LGU created the post of the Barangay Monitoring Technician to closely monitor household compliance to the community food production that provide households fruits and vegetables, and

in some cases are also income generating, demonstrating how determined the municipality is in pursuing its program philosophy of community empowerment and no dole-outs.

- **Limasawa** successfully adopted the “*gulayan sa barangay*” (community gardens) and intensified its implementation through a local ordinance requiring all households and couples registering for a marriage certificate to plant at least one *malunggay* tree in their yard. The rationale is compelling. Limasawa experiences every year the *Habagat* season (southwest monsoon), when strong tide could last eight weeks or eight months, making sailing risky, shipping of food supply from the mainland difficult, and fishing impossible. Despite the *Habagat* season, Limasawa explains that food shortage was never an issue on the island. Almost 95 percent of households have vegetable gardens, and dried fish and dried squid are abundant. Home gardens not only add to food availability when food supply is unable to reach Limasawa during the *Habagat*, but also make the local diet more diversified.
- The town of **Kadingilan** has a municipal ordinance which mandates that certificates of live birth and marriage be released only when the requesting party has at least five varieties of vegetables planted in his or her home yard. The BNS is tasked to report to the MNAO that a vegetable garden is indeed in place and only then can the local civil registrar release the requested certificate.

- Most transactions with the municipal government of **Villaverde** require planting of fruit bearing trees, including registration of marriages, business permits, application for Mayor’s permits, police clearance, etc. To sustain the supply of seeds, employees are required to submit seeds of fruit-bearing trees to the municipal agricultural office; otherwise, their salaries are withheld. The municipality has planted about 470,000 fruit-bearing trees to date out of the target 550,000 by end 2020. Its re-greening program has become one best practice in the province and region and was one of the first programs that jumpstarted the mobilization of the entire community.
- In the early years of the nutrition program in **Malungon**, the approach to encourage more barangays and households to establish backyard gardens was gentler: the municipality launched



Invigorating programs and mandating strategies. CAN LGUs follow the MELLPI guide and implement the national seven impact programs but employ strategies to make their programs more effective, attractive and accessible to the people through catchy program titles, fun programs, ordinances mandating behavior and conscious design to facilitate access and representation of GIDA and IP communities.

the Search for Best Barangay with most number of vegetables planted. In addition, the MNAO organized the Ladies Circle, a social networking group of women, to assist in the Green Revolution Program and sponsor activities such as cooking contests and clean up drive.

- In sanitation, in one nutrition awardee barangay of **Limasawa**, an ordinance requires homeowners to install toilets in homes before it is occupied and imposed a PhP 500 fine per offense on anyone caught defecating in public, a common practice since there were no public toilets in the barangay.
- In barangay meetings in **Asipulo**, residents and officials agreed that dogs and pigs have to be tied or kept in cages, that backyards would be kept clean and households would have their own sanitary toilets. It was also agreed that there would be penalties imposed should households fail to follow the agreements. The barangay council has organized quarterly monitoring of the cluster of homes to check if the community is meeting the agreed criterion.

- **Davao del Norte** appointed volunteer barangay sanitary inspector to address underlying causes of malnutrition (i.e. poor sanitation, improper food handling, lack of toilets, etc.), and engaged different department/sectors (agriculture, social welfare, health, LGUs, NGOs) to provide interrelated programs for nutrition.

Intensifying breastfeeding programs. All 11 CAN LGUs invariably invested in manifold strategies and actions to increase the practice of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) and continued breastfeeding of 6-23 month old children. It is inherently difficult to increase EBF because society tends to be unaware or unconcerned about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding to a baby less than six month old, and most especially if a mother lacks the support system that would permit her to exclusively breastfeed her child whenever the child needs to feed. Against these odds, performing LGUs explored different strategies from campaigns, community support groups, pregnant women tracking, breastfeeding stations across different locales, and mobilization of fathers.

With no exception, all eleven LGUs had breastfeeding projects either seen on their own merit or integral to a larger program such as the first 1000 days.

- **Mandaluyong City's** comprehensive program on breastfeeding educates on the importance of the practice for the health of infants and attempts to involve relevant groups to support the mothers: communities, community support groups, health units, private/ government offices, shopping centers, fathers, seniors, girl scouts. The components include breastfeeding campaigns, breastfeeding stations, mobilization of fathers, senior citizens and girl scouts for breastfeeding and communities for the indispensable support for breastfeeding (Breastfeeding Patrol), and food packages for mothers from the breastfeeding support group.

The rates of EBF are generally high in Mandaluyong City but the pressures on mothers to earn a living combined with inadequate societal support make EBF gains fragile, implying the need for EBF advocates to persevere in expanding the mother's support system.

- **Tagaytay's** breastfeeding programs are now subsumed under the new F1K program launched in 2017. The latter consists of the components: counseling of the pregnant woman, monitoring consumption of ferrous sulfate among pregnant women, feeding of the pregnant women, monthly weighing of children 0-23 months, counseling on exclusive breastfeeding, milk bank in the nutrition office, exclusive breastfeeding monitoring by the BHW and nurse, synchronized breastfeeding, organized breastfeeding support group in all barangays, *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon*, *eggducation* and vegetable education as well as other topics on pregnancy to complementary feeding, and demonstration of complementary feeding. Pregnant mothers are enthusiastic, if only for the gifts they receive (diaper, 600 pesos) if they complete four prenatal checkups. Further, an ordinance was passed on the establishment of lactation areas in all barangays, business and food establishments, found to be 100 percent compliant by the monitoring group. There is optimism regarding program accomplishments – exclusive breastfeeding rate tends to be stable and high.
- In **Limasawa**, the support system for the mother centers on the next adult most interested in the nutrition and health of the child – the father. A comprehensive program on fathers' active involvement in the health of mother and baby is led by MNC and BNC members and the BNS covering care for the mother

and child. One component is the regular fathers' class, a source of information on proper breastfeeding. The support from the fathers helped the mothers realize the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and encouraged more mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of the child. Even the Mayor actively participated in the exclusive breastfeeding seminar for the fathers.

- In 2017, **Davao del Norte** adopted the "First 1000 Days ni Baby" program and introduced it to its cities and municipalities. One municipality that already consciously pursues this program is Asuncion, since 2016, whose programs include distribution of IEC materials on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months, *Buntis* Congress, lecture on *First 1000 days ni Baby*, provision of essential maternal and child health services such as child immunization, maternal immunization, prenatal check-up and conduct of symposium (*Panagtigum sa Lumad*) on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health and Nutrition (MNCHN) for the indigenous peoples (IPs) in 20 barangays.
- Under the program, **Davao City** utilized its budget to educate pregnant mothers and women planning to have children on the proper care and good nutrition for mother and infant, promote early, exclusive and continuous breastfeeding, organize and reactivate breastfeeding mother support groups, enforce Executive Order 51 (Milk Code), and promote breastfeeding in the workplace. Still in its inception period, if the LGU could apply the same rigor to the First 1000 Days Program as it did to its micronutrient programs and the CIMAM, exclusive breastfeeding would have a high chance of success.

- **Kadingilan**'s program for the mother and child include the pre- and post-natal care for mothers, dietary supplementation for pregnant women, micronutrient supplementation, immunization coverage of children under one year of age, breastfeeding promotion, exclusive breastfeeding and later on continued breastfeeding and provision of complementary food.
- The pilot phase of **Quezon**'s Q1K Program on a sample trial of 1000 pregnant women is in its third year of implementation. The program has gone province wide. With the rural health system in the sample barangays, the assigned Q1K coordinators work with the breastfeeding community support groups to closely follow the pregnant women, promoting the practice opportunely.

Food plant for complementary and supplementary food. As the nation starts a more intense focus on the First 1000 Days, there is a need to prepare for new demands in advocacy, local government mobilization and more involvement of the nutrition program and LGU health centers, birthing clinics and health personnel whose mandated responsibilities respond to the F1K needs of mothers and children. The CANLGUs have already sown the seeds, in the intensification of services in pre-natal consultations, birth delivery, post-natal consultations, well-baby consultations and immunizations and other preventive and curative needs of mothers and babies. Another key aspect concerns supplementary and complementary feeding assistance to children and pregnant mothers that will require sourcing of supplies. Many of the CAN LGUs already rely on community gardens as sources of food for some of their feeding programs, notably **Malungon**, **Kadingilan**, and **Tagaytay City**. A parallel initiative has been on-going to speed up

the establishment of food plants to provide constant and convenient sources of complementary food, ready for the implementation of the F1K programs. Of the CAN LGUs, only **Quezon Province** has complementary food plants – in Atimonan, Calauag and Mulanay - but have not yet come up with products that meet the requirements of the province's Q1K program. Complementary food plants are a critical piece of the Philippines' F1K program. The Department of Science and Technology support to the food plants has a strategic role in ensuring this component of the F1K program.

Fun programs drawing constituents and program teams. Gathered from LGUs that mentioned them, fun programs are well received by the communities, drawing high participation, generating fun and achieving the promotion, education and hopefully the envisioned behavior change. They engender and sustain program interest. In **Limasawa**, the healthy lifestyle program adapted the TV show "Biggest Loser" with a local twist. Physical activities and challenges in the local version of the contest were undertaken alongside the clean-up drive, at the same time showcasing traditional and innovative games (e.g. *kadang*, pushing a container of water uphill and others). Held every Friday in the early years of the program in different barangays, the contestants race on old bicycles uphill, rolling a five-gallon water container and collecting trash. Whoever collected the most trash was awarded a prize, and after three months, culminating in the July nutrition month, the winner who lost the most weight was awarded PhP 10,000. This became a regular and much-awaited entertainment and socialization activity for the community. The Limasawan-ons also adapted the popular reality TV show "Amazing Race," which was held one week before the town *fiesta* along with the other local activities.

In **Mandaluyong**, music blares at 4:00 pm for the wellness activities in the city hall. In mid-2015, Mandaluyong City entered into the Guinness World Records for the largest Zumba class in one location. Fundraising competitions and games participated in by residents are common in many CAN LGUs. In all 11 LGUs, each July Nutrition Month is a high-profile event. In **Kadingilan**, the event is heralded by a huge municipal-wide festive activity, with banners proclaiming the nutrition month theme and parade. The local nutrition committees plan each year's celebration with activities to spark and sustain the interest of townsfolk in nutrition. The activity is often marked by booths to showcase their fruits, vegetables and handicrafts. The best booths receive awards. Additional fun to the occasion is provided by contests such as cooking and the like.

MELLPI and the Programs. As mentioned earlier, MELLPI has a strong influence on the programs LGUs adopt and invest in via the recommended seven impact programs. At present, few of the 11 LGUs have clear unified programs on the First 1000 Days, i.e. the program components of the first 1000 days are distinct in a continuum of services, compliant with standards to reduce low birthweight, increase EBF, increase the prevalence of young children correctly provided with breastmilk and complementary food, and consequently reduce stunting among the 0-59 months old. The imminent release of the National Dietary Supplementation Guidelines by the NNC will help shape the effectiveness of the existing complementary and supplementary practices in the LGUs, well in time for the strong entry of the F1K program.

Including GIDAs and IPs. Ensuring access to health and nutrition services for everyone, most especially to geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas whose access get cut when waters are not navigable for several months of the year or whose terrains are inaccessible, calls for a strategy. Nutrition workers in **Asipulo, Davao del Norte, Malungon** and **Davao City** walk the extra mile to extend nutrition and health services to the IPs and GIDAs. Appointing resident midwives in all barangays to provide residents with access to trained health professional is the strategy of **Talibon** that the LGUs could not afford in their early years of implementation but was made possible through the LGU's health outreach program. If something is a legitimate need, outside help might be available.



Focus on stunting and First 1000 days. Explicit efforts to implement the First 1000 days should be strongly undertaken by the CAN LGUs and strengthened in the MELLPI focus on processes and results. It should include supportive actions of which a very important one is the plant for complementary food for young children and mothers.

In **Villaverde**, two of the nine barangays are fully inhabited by peoples of Ayangan tribe and another adjoining two barangays are partly populated by the same ethnic group. In the LGU, there is no special program for IPs; instead, every nutrition service is planned and implemented across the municipality, including the IPs. Rural health posts and the team of midwife, BNS and BHW are found in all barangays, including the IP areas. Two out of nine BNS, seven of 54 BHWs and one of four midwives are members of the IP community. IPs are represented in municipal and barangay political structures. In early 2018, the municipality included an IP mandatory representative as part of the *Sangguniang Bayan* Office to look after the welfare of IP communities. In **Malungon**, IP representation in the nutrition committee is the conduit to culture-sensitive provision of services to the community. In **Davao del Norte**, specific to the IP community in Talaingod, to facilitate delivery of program services the following are undertaken: ongoing construction of road networks leading to remote areas of Talaingod, and LGU and NGO housing projects and livelihood provision for Ata-Manobo; expansion of scholarship grants to interested indigenous peoples, and membership in nutrition committees. In **Davao City**, in addition to the flagship programs on salt iodization, iron-fortified rice utilization and CIMAM, the fight against other forms of malnutrition was not neglected, including in barangays with IP communities where in most cases, IP leaders sit as BNC members. In Matina Aplaya, the trust built towards barangay and city nutrition division staff led to the improvement in IPs' health-seeking behavior and to higher participation in health services. It was difficult initially to convince pregnant Badjaos (of Brgy. Matina Playa) to go for prenatal check-up and bring babies for immunization. In addition, related to the inclusion of IPs in the development process,

Davao City's practice of appointing a deputy mayor for each of the city's 11 ethnic groups brings the IPs closer to governance structures, promotes understanding and cooperation of development processes and implementation of development programs.

SUSTAINING THE GAINS

It is one thing to get started, rev up, upgrade one's ranking in the province or region and finally get a Green Banner award. It is also another thing to keep the energy for the second, third Green Banner and the CROWN award and on to the Nutrition Honor Award. How does the LGU sustain its energy and commitment for the six-year non-stop march? Even more important, how does an NHA awardee maintain its status and achievement post-NHA?

Five of the CAN LGUs have received their highest nutrition award and another would receive the NHA in the 2018 ceremony. Talibon and Tagaytay (both NHA in 2004) have been engaged in improved nutrition program implementation for around 23 years; Kadingilan and Limasawa (NHA in 2011) have more than 16 years in similar undertaking and Mandaluyong (NHA in 2016) is trying to keep its status, a feat that two other previous NHA awardees in NCR LGUs could not maintain but hopefully could regain. The rest of the CAN LGUs show the same potential to continue improved performance. The nation will certainly cheer the Villaverde, Asipulo, Kadingilan and Limasawa experiences when their stories are told because of the unique disadvantaged situations the LGUs have been in.

Sustaining one's gains during the six-year ascent could be explained by the initial interest of the LCE in nutrition. MELLPI makes it imperative for the determined contender to improve program implementation and comply with requirements. The guidance of the NNC regional office in the process should not be discounted.

Given that the eleven CAN LGUs are all in their journeys, albeit at different stages, what would be the plausible explanations for their continued drive in improving program implementation? The stories logically suggest that for the LGUs that have not attained the NHA, the nutrition highest award continues to be a strong attraction, it also does not seem to be the only important reason. Here is where the similarities between the NHA awardees and the LGUs still attempting to attain the award have in common, ploughing hard with or without the nutrition awards. In the research for the CAN stories, these phases are often heard: there is such thing as public service, we are public servants, providing nutrition services is noble, I am in this work for a higher purpose.

Another reason are the years invested in the pursuit of the NHA. The MELLPI requires the LGUs to establish and institutionalize nutrition structures and functionality - in every sense of what functionality implies - through legislative measures and community support; expand programs and program coverage; and institutionalize processes such as program reviews. In the process, LGUs discover that there are other indispensable components that must be in place for efficient and effective operations: sustained mobilization of component LGUs including barangays, systems of accountability and rewards for innovations and good performance of constituent LGUs and workers.

They require the application of well-chosen LGU leadership actions whose effectiveness is manifested in improved nutrition outcomes.

If the LGUs could keep functioning at high levels of nutrition program implementation for a long time, several things happen: (1) LGU officials and sector leaders hear about the compelling reasons why the LGU and the nation as a whole must prioritize nutrition, especially the First 1000 Days of the child – as a most vital component of the nation's long-term development strategy to break the cycle in the intergenerational transmission of poverty, as a powerful long-run tool to reduce poverty by increasing the capacity of better-nourished children to take care of their families when they grow up, for the promotion of social justice by ensuring that children's cognitive development is safeguarded in the most critical stage of life; (2) the experience is behavior changing, in LGU officials, LGU sectors and workers' outlook about nutrition and results orientation in their work; and (3) institutionalized nutrition structures are likely to last. For the latter aspect, although it is understandable for LGUs to save on the costs of a nutrition office, once resources already permit, it would be better to have a permanent nutrition office and institutionally budgeted nutrition program to ensure continuity despite political leadership changes, and to fight a common scourge of nutrition programming – fatigue. As one NNC RNPC expressed, “if nutrition work is one's job, how can one speak of fatigue? One continues to deliver because it is her/his job”.

Nevertheless, keeping motivation high is important for sustained good performance. Reviews and contests are another lasting contribution of the MELLPI - programmatically effective, valued by constituents and fun. LGUs recognize the value of nutrition awards as rallying points

for the nutrition troop, as is accomplished by Tagaytay City's city-level best BNS recognitions with cash prizes, and Atimonan's (Quezon) best barangay awards in many sector categories devised by the multi-sectoral nutrition committee. Good relationship and solidarity with the troop are also important. The Kadingilan MNAO attributes the high motivation of the BNS team to, among others, the conscious strengthening of camaraderie and concern especially when conditions of work are challenging, which is also recounted in Tagaytay City. In the trying times of mobilization in barangays, the entire team of city coordinators in Mandaluyong City was ready to descend in a barangay to assist any BNS in need of managing program dynamics with elected barangay officials. Concern for the troop helps in sustaining good performance and is pervasive in the CAN LGUs.

Fun characterizes many nutrition program initiatives, exploiting the cultural excitement around games and *fiestas* and doing things together.⁵ One should not underestimate the long-lasting impact on unity and solidarity nurtured in wellness activities, for instance in Mandaluyong City, and nutrition actions in celebratory atmosphere, like how it is done in Limasawa, as well as in the potential contributions in all LGUs of the Nutrition Month and *Garantisadong Pambata* events. The more senior among us cannot help but remember the years of the Rural Improvement Clubs, when rural development is all about improving livelihoods, food security, health and nutrition of rural communities and genuine concern for the welfare of neighbors and the environment.

⁵ Nevertheless, caution should be exercised in choosing appropriate and good nutrition compatible contests. A case in point – LGUs should give second thoughts as to whether 'most gain in weight in children feeding contests over a matter of a few weeks' makes unqualified focus on underweight instead of stunting, and unintended encouragement of obesity and incorrect feeding of children.



Sustaining the gains. Factors such as MELLPI, the nutrition awards, legislation, fun programs, strengthening structures, community participation, continuous years of rigorous implementation of nutrition program, monitoring and program implementation reviews at all levels, and positive political and civic culture all help the LGUs sustain the gains and recognition they received. Losing key nutrition program people from time to time is unlikely to be a rare occurrence to LGUs and for that reason succession planning needs to be part of sustainability considerations. Social cohesion and loyalty to LCE and to one's LGU are contributing factors.

CONCLUSION

The experience of the 11 CAN LGUs can be instructive and at the same time reassuring to the PPAN leaders and managers and the aspiring local government units. While the sample of 11 LGUs is unlikely to be representative, the compendium has substantive lessons from six municipalities of different income classes, two provinces, a component city and two highly urbanized cities, and a variety of context that LGUs aspiring to deliver a good nutrition performance would find resonance. From the directions the eleven LGUs have taken, there is hope for the nation. The CAN aspires to keep the light kindled for the eleven and the other achievers not included in this compendium, for the rest of the LGUs of the nation.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS GOING FORWARD

The Overview presents highlights of the journey of the 11 LGUs towards improvement of their nutrition programs in delivering nutrition outcomes for their constituents. Key observations and lessons are useful for (1) LGUs intent on following the footsteps of performing LGUs as well as (2) national and regional agencies leading nutrition programs. Part III identifies ways in which the observations and lessons can be used by both the LGUs and the agencies in local government mobilization. Given that the PPAN 2017-2022 has only four years left in the planned period, five sets of action doable in the remaining period have been selected. They are described below.

1. **Disseminating the Lessons of CAN.** Through the CAN's stories, the eleven LGUs provide a rich reference of how to's in local level nutrition planning, implementation and monitoring, mobilization of constituent local governments, legislating in support of nutrition, resource mobilization and sustaining gains. Though certainly not exhaustive, the experience described in local government mobilization has sufficient variety of contexts – incomes and development levels, number of constituent LGUs, geographic features, style of leadership, and many strategies have wide applications. Disseminating them to local chief executives and their teams is an obvious way forward consistent with the purpose of the CAN. Some cost-effective ways of dissemination are as follow:

- **Making the CAN available and accessible in electronic formats.** The websites of the NNC and its member departments especially the Department of the Interior and Local Government,

development partners and the leagues of provinces, municipalities and cities of the Philippines will house or provide appropriate links to the CAN stories; and announce the same in their websites. The NNC will also provide the CAN in USB to incumbent LCEs and those who will be elected in 2019.

- **Timely updating of the CAN in the websites and sharing of the new stories in USBs.** Assuming that this first compendium could stimulate other initiatives to document other LGUs' experiences in nutrition program implementation and that new stories would be written in the coming years, the timely updating of the CAN in the websites and sharing of the stories in USBs to the LCEs are important actions for effective dissemination.
- **Preparing a media plan (TV, radio, print and social media) to support the initial CAN stories and the expansions.** This will amplify the dissemination and interest the LGUs to access the stories - in the websites and from the USBs.
- **Familiarization of the NNC and partners with the lessons and conclusions of the CAN.** The NNC staff particularly those in the regional offices and partner agencies who have opportunities or obligations to interface with the LCEs and their teams need to be knowledgeable of the lessons and conclusions of the CAN (as well as other best practices) to inspire the LGUs to scale up nutrition actions. Dissemination seminars with local government agencies and key staff are important part of actions. The lessons and good

practices in the compendium can be used in the capacity building of nutritionist-dietitians (NDs) deployed by the Department of Health for LGU mobilization.

- **NNC can harness in 2019 in particular, new opportunities for orienting the new local chief executives.** Elections in 2019 will bring new governors and mayors vital to leading the work in nutrition. The NNC and its partners are well positioned to take advantage of opportunities to reach out to new LCEs, argue for the need to invest in nutrition and use the CAN to show that it can be done by any LGU. Rigorous planning is required to ensure that nutrition stakeholders could use the opportunities for maximum impact. Partnership with the leagues, the DILG, Local Government Academy, among others in this endeavor is essential.
- **Tasking lead role in dissemination.** Within the NNC Secretariat, the provision for planning, implementing and resourcing the dissemination opportunities is necessary and an integral part of actions for effective dissemination of the CAN to the LCEs.
- **Organizing the CAN LCEs as nutrition champions.** Champions for advocacy on nutrition are an excellent ingredient of LGU mobilization. They can come from the performing LGUs. The best champions are the peers of LCEs themselves - governors, town or city mayors - from all income classes of LGUs. They can be incumbents or former LCEs. The selection and recruitment, orientation and capacity building, program of work, financing and managing relations with the champions are but some of the tasks to best leverage their value as nutrition champions. An

NNC staff in the Secretariat could be given the task of managing the champions, to building and managing linkages with partner agencies and coordinating to ensure coherence in the discourse and in areas of work.

2. **Establishment of more organized way of in-depth sharing of good practices.** In the ascent of the majority of 11 LGUs in nutrition, they used informal benchmarking strategies to learn from good practices of others. Some went for formal institutional courses to get guidance on nutrition planning and management. A more organized mechanism for faster results in LGU mobilization is needed.

One such mechanism is the community of practice for the 100 or so highly performing LGUs. The United Nations Development Program around the world promotes the organization of communities of practice (COP) on themes, for groups of people and communities with common interests. The COPs have proven useful in the exchange among practitioners, enriching each other's knowledge and tool box of solutions, addressing common problems to expand the range of solutions on the table in real time. Nutrition COPs exist in various countries.

The 100 (or so LGUs) can be a good start to establish the COP of performing LGUs in nutrition. It can serve the purposes mentioned above and can be a platform for encouraging the 100 to take the challenge of shepherding, say five non-performing LGUs each in their region to adopt good practices in nutrition and become performing LGUs themselves. The PPAN target outcomes by the end 2022 are premised on about 708 LGUs turning their program around to deliver

nutritional outcomes. Certainly the 500 (100 multiplied by 5) is one hefty contribution. The enlisting of the 100 to take on the challenge needs a plan and can be programmed during the rest of 2018 so that they can have four years to deliver, should they all be convinced to make the heroic contribution to the cause of PPAN. The COP can be operated by the NNC Secretariat or one of its partner agencies.

3. Redesign key tools such as the MELLPI, NNC nutrition awards, and further improvement in skills and equipment in measurement of stunting. The stories in the CAN invariably demonstrate the singular importance of the MELLPI in guiding the LGUs' attempts to improve nutrition programs overtime. There are three ways the design of the MELLPI (and the NNC awards tied up with MELLPI) is fundamental to LGU mobilization.

First, once the LGU, specifically the LCE, gets interested in nutrition for reasons discussed in the Overview, MELLPI guides and herds the LGUs to progressively improve their nutrition programs and results, through requirements of progressively higher scores. The tool also covers a comprehensive set of criteria from plans, structures and evidence of functionality of structures, project coverage and results, outcomes and innovations. The 11 LGUs are rich in stories of how around the time of the evaluations, they go to hyperactive mode, meeting beyond prescribed frequency, mobilizing barangays and agencies to ensure good LGU-wide programming and results, and complete the required documentations before the evaluation defined in the MELLPI checklist.

Second, the MELLPI is the tool based on which the Green Banners, CROWN and NHA awards are conferred. The current system of

NNC awards selects only one Green Banner awardee per LGU level (province, municipality, and city) per region per year. Six years are required to win the NHA award. The competitive nature of the Green Banner award limits the winner to the highest ranking LGU in the region instead of conferring the award once the LGU reaches a minimum score. A few LGUs that have lost in the competition have been discouraged. NHA awardees that regressed also signals that some gaps exist in the design of the NNC awards and the follow up needed even for NHA awardees.

Third, with respect of its program focus, clearly building in stunting in MELLPI, without demoting underweight until people fully understand why it is an imprecise measure, will be needed. Corollary to this point are the issues around anthropometric measurements and prevalence of malnutrition especially stunting, related to skills to take measurements and process data, and the availability of equipment for weight and height measures for all terrain and circumstances.

4. Establishing a system for continued documentation of good practices on nutrition. Further documentation of the experiences of highly performing LGUs on nutrition is of great added value to the mobilization of LGUs and ultimately in the achievement of outcomes of the current and future PPANs. It is envisioned that documentation will include not only the stock of good practices of already recognized performing LGUs but also emerging ones as identified by the MELLPI and recognized in the annual National Nutrition Awards Ceremony (NNAC). The system will involve writers ideally available in the regions and central level, their screening and continuing update on nutrition, financing, contracting, assignments and contract management, repository and dissemination strategies among others.

The design and the demands for the system to work are not simple but should be defined and established for the great value the work will provide to LGU mobilization.

5. **Increasing NNC's focus on LGU mobilization.** The lead role in LGU mobilization rests with the NNC Secretariat supported by the member agencies of the NNC. The regional offices of the NNC have a unique role in the interface with the local government units considering their proximity to the LGUs. However, the regional staff are few and under resourced. It is important in the near future to beef up the regional human resource strength for advocacy with and mobilization of LGUs, the numbers of which are indicated in the PPAN targets. Increasing the capacity of the staff at central and regional levels on mobilization of LGUs on nutrition, encompassing a combination of advocacy, negotiation and technical skills is an integral part of the work ahead. Conclusions and lessons of the CAN are part of the available tool set of the staff who will be involved in the mobilization of LGUs.

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a traditional red and yellow striped garment, holding a young child. The child is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and is smiling broadly, looking upwards. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and colorful fabrics.

Davao del Norte

Davao del Norte mobilizes constituent local government units for better nutrition of children and women across the province and among different ethnic groups.

Photo by: Province of Davao del Norte

Weathering the Challenges of Time: Davao del Norte's Journey to Better Nutrition

INTRODUCTION

Located in the Davao Region in Mindanao, Davao del Norte is a first-class province, home to 1,016,332 inhabitants in its three cities, eight municipalities and a total of 223 barangays. It borders the provinces of Agusan del Sur to the north, Bukidnon to the west, Compostela Valley to the east, and the City of Davao to the south.

The province is primarily agricultural, producing high value tropical fruits and other crops for export and the local markets, while forestry, mining, and commercial fishing likewise provide substantial contributions to the local economy. In addition, Tagum City, the provincial capital, is Mindanao's fastest-rising city due to its strategic location. Lying at the intersection of three major road network systems that connect to other major destinations in the region and to the rest of

Mindanao gives Tagum City much potential as a commercial and financial adjunct of Davao City located only 55 kilometers to the south.

The socio-demography of the province presents a good case of multi-culturalism where indigenous peoples, Muslims and Christians live together in an area with a growing economy. For example, the Ata-Manobo's presence in this predominantly Christian-inhabited province is a living testimony of a synergy that forges harmonious assimilative process while respecting the uniqueness of their cultural differences.

Two events are most relevant to Davao del Norte's actions to improve the nutritional status of its people: (1) the devolution of responsibilities of the

The socio-demography of the province presents a good case of multi-culturalism where indigenous peoples, Muslims and Christians live together in an area with a growing economy.



Figure 1. Location map of Davao Del Norte

national government to local government units in the provision of social services under the Local Government Code of 1991 and (2) the adoption by the LGU of the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) approach to development in 1998 that identified good nutrition as one of the unmet needs of its people. Figure 2 shows the milestone events and programs in Davao del Norte's journey to improved nutrition.

JOURNEY TOWARDS NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT

1992 - 1998

In 1992, the province undertook the first ever reorganization of structures and functions of every office to make them more responsive and supportive of the delivery of devolved local government services. The management and delivery of health services, including nutrition, formerly handled and financially supported by the Department of Health (DOH) passed to the Provincial Health Office (PHO). Gov. Prospero Amatoong appointed the Provincial Health Officer Dr. Dolores Castillo as designated Provincial Nutrition Action Officer (PNAO), DOH Nutritionist-Dietitian Dr. Jean Apolinares as full-time Provincial Nutrition Coordinator and

appointed two other staff to work with the office of Dr. Apolinares.

As part of its initial action, the province conducted a review of the nutritional status of its children in 1993, revealing some depressing news. According to Dr. Apolinares, based on the Operation *Timbang* (OPT) results, 30 out of 100 children were undernourished. Given the varying degree of undernutrition in the barangays, the province, as a strategy, ranked the municipalities according to the prevalence of undernutrition and prioritized municipalities with highest undernutrition. It actively advocated to its priority cities and municipalities to support supplementary feeding. Moreover, believing that proper nutrition starts at home, the province started using Nutrition on Air in DXDN every July as a platform for advocating infant and young child feeding, proper food preparation and other nutrition programs. In addition, the province intensified the solid waste management and sanitation program, which was patterned with the good practices of the municipality of Sto. Tomas in the same province.

Next in the agenda was the creation of the Provincial Nutrition Committee with NGOs among its members and inter-agency working groups. The province believed that having nutrition structures

and processes would be instrumental in effectively managing the nutrition programs. It even provided honorarium to provincial nutrition committee (PNC) members perhaps in recognition of the seriousness of the responsibility added to their shoulders. The practice was stopped pursuant to a Commission on Audit (COA) directive years after. Engaging the member sectors proved to be difficult at first. Some members seldom attended PNC meetings because they thought nutrition was only about providing sufficient food; hence, a concern of the agriculture office alone. Eventually, members realized that the cause of malnutrition was not only food inadequacy - their data showed that Davao del Norte had high malnutrition despite the province's food sufficiency - and that solving malnutrition entails an integrated or multi-dimensional approach, which would necessarily involve various sectors and even the communities¹.

To serve as arms of PNC at the level of cities and municipalities, the province also started in 1993 the formation of city and municipal nutrition committees and the installation of an improved reporting system. To send its message across to appointed city/municipal nutrition action officers

¹ Interview with Dr. Hornido, 19 April 2018

	1992 - 1998	1998 - 2003	2004 - 2007	2007 - present
Nutrition structures and processes	<p>Dr. Dolores Castillo was PNAO (1992-1997)</p> <p>Dr. Jean Apolinares was appointed as provincial nutrition coordinator (1992-2014); two staff were tasked to work in the provincial nutrition office</p> <p>Province reviewed the OPT results and discovered that 30 of 100 children were undernourished</p> <p>Provincial Nutrition Committee was organized</p> <p>Sector agencies became involved in nutrition</p> <p>Provincial nutrition committee led the organization of city and municipal nutrition committees, and implemented regular and strict monitoring of LNCs</p> <p>Provincial Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Team and TWG were created</p> <p>BNS Federation in the province was organized</p> <p>BNS were recruited and underwent capacity building with support from external partners</p> <p>Additional honorarium provided to BNS</p> <p>Start of annual province-wide BNS convention</p>	<p>Governor Rodolfo del Rosario adopted the Minimum Basic Needs approach</p> <p>Dr. Agapito Hornido was PNAO (1997-Jun 2016)</p> <p>Governor del Rosario introduced to nutrition award and instructed PNAO Hornido to double efforts for nutrition</p> <p>Barangay sanitary inspectors recruited through a SP Resolution No. 241</p> <p>Start of annual PNC Program review, MNC coordinators review and BNS officers review</p> <p>Davao del Norte Health and Nutrition Workers' Association (DDNHNWA) was organized</p> <p>PNC continued regular meetings and monitoring of constituent LGUs, conducted visits and provided technical assistance to barangays</p> <p>Big brother – small brother approach</p> <p>Organizational structures and inter-agency coordination further strengthened</p>	<p>PNC continued the conduct of regular meetings, program reviews, monitoring of constituent LGUs, MNC coordinators review, barangay visits and provision of technical assistance, and BNS officers review</p>	<p>BNS trained on nutrition program management</p> <p>Rural health midwives and BNS trained on WHO-CGS</p> <p>Training of trainers on healthy lifestyle and the revised policy on Micronutrient Supplementation Program</p> <p>Service Delivery Network launched and facilitated links between public-private facilities with focus on MNCHN Program</p> <p>Province required the collection of height measurement in all barangays (2013)</p> <p>BNS honorarium from the province increased</p> <p>PNC Jean Apolinares retired in 2014 and Ms. Mayflor Espiritu was appointed as PNC in 2016</p> <p>PNAO Hornido retired from service in 2017 and OIC PHO/PNAO Dr. Salva took over the post until early 2018</p>
Programs and policies	<p>Advocacy to constituent LGUs to support local supplementary feeding</p> <p>Nutrition on Air in DXDN</p> <p>Intensified program on solid waste management and sanitation</p> <p>Seven impact programs (food production, micro-nutrient supplementation, food fortification, nutrition education, food assistance, livelihood assistance, sector initiatives with nutrition implications)</p> <p>Search for Best Community Garden / Best BNS / Best BNC</p>	<p>Pilot implementation of inter-local health zone (SIKAT Cluster) on MNCHN</p> <p>Implemented the Applied Nutrition Program in partnership with the Department of Education (90-120 day feeding in schools)</p> <p>Basic Literacy Program for Indigenous Peoples (2003)</p>	<p>Continued implementation of Applied Nutrition Program (until 2013)</p> <p>ECCD Program (with nutrition component) was implemented; DSWD and provincial government provided budgetary support to LGUs</p> <p>Province allocated PHP 7 million to local governments for <i>Pabasa sa Nutrisyon</i></p> <p>Provincial Ordinance No. 2005-047 established the Davao del Norte <i>Pagkaon para sa Kabatan-Unan</i></p>	<p>RDR WHEELS (2007)</p> <p>EO No. 11 created the Provincial Anti-Hunger Task Force (2009)</p> <p>Province-wide establishment of Dairy Project for preschool and school children in New Corella (2013)</p> <p>Livelihood Program for IP women</p> <p>Adopted the First 1000 Days ni Baby Program and introduced the same to its constituent LGUs (2016)</p> <p>Ang Gulayan Revolution (2017)</p>
KEY RESULTS	<p>The province and its constituent LGUs received several awards in nutrition and development</p> <p>Galing Pook Award (for the Minimum Basic Needs, 1999)</p> <p>CROWN Award (2002; 2008; 2012)</p> <p>Green Banner (2000-2002; 2006-2008; 2010-2012)</p> <p>CROWN Maintenance Award (2003-2004)</p> <p>Constituent LGUs with awards in nutrition</p> <p>Panabo City (NOBNS, 2009)</p> <p>New Corella (Green Banner, 2012)</p> <p>Carmen (ROBNS, 2012)</p> <p>Tagum City (CROWN Award, 2012; Pag-asa Award; NOBNS, 2010; 2nd place - Search for NOBNS)</p>			<p>Nutritional status of children improved over years</p> <p>Underweight decreased from 6.3% in 2010 to 3.6% in 2017</p> <p>Wasting decreased from 5.7% in 2010 to 2.8% in 2017</p> <p>Stunting decreased from 12.1% in 2013 to 9.5% in 2017</p> <p>Overweight decreased from 2.1% in 2002 to 0.7% in 2017</p>

Figure 2. Milestones of the nutrition journey of Davao Del Norte



To date, the Provincial Nutrition Committee continues to convene municipal nutrition committees every quarter to discuss updates, monitor and review progress in nutrition program, and provide technical assistance as necessary.

Source: Provincial Nutrition Office

(C/MNAOs) and nutrition coordinators that nutrition is a serious business, the PNC adopted a rigid annual routine.

The 1st quarter of the year was for program implementation review of the previous year with PNC, C/MNAOs, coordinators and BNS officers. The conduct of OPT was from January to March. The 2nd quarter was for the implementation of *Garantisadong Pambata* (GP) program, evaluation from regional and national level and province-wide evaluation of nutrition program in the municipalities. The 3rd quarter highlights the Nutrition Month celebration, implementation of other nutrition programs, and meeting for

adjustment of targets. In the 4th quarter, another program implementation review and OPT would be conducted to determine the year-end performance of the province.

Each quarter was capped with a quarterly meeting of C/MNAOs, coordinators and BNS officers, for proper coordination of nutrition programs as well as monitoring of their compliance with submission of various reports to the province and NNC. Most nutrition workers recalled how Dr. Apolinares had been strict with reportorial requirements. She was concerned not only with timeliness but also the presentation of reports. Written reports should be filed in separate folders



Given the varying degree of undernutrition in the barangays, the province, as a strategy, ranked the municipalities according to the prevalence of undernutrition and prioritized municipalities with highest undernutrition.



Kung walang monitoring, baka matulog kami. (If there is no monitoring, we might sleep.)

JOEL ANDOY
MUNICIPAL NUTRITION ACTION OFFICER

Another nutrition worker acknowledged that the province's rigid supervision of her work was one of the factors that made her a regional level awardee for outstanding performance.

with proper labels and the different maps (spot map, causal map, or problem tree, etc.) should be posted on the wall at their respective designated places. At times, she would personally pick-up the reports from the C/MNAO or BNS or would visit their nutrition offices for random inspection.

While some nutrition workers found the close monitoring tedious and time-consuming, they likewise admitted that it had made them conscious of their responsibility and developed the discipline required in their work. As Mr. Joel Andoy, MNAO of Asuncion, puts it, “*Kung walang monitoring, baka matulog kami.*” (If there is no monitoring, we might sleep.) Another nutrition worker acknowledged that the province's rigid supervision of her work was one of the factors that made her a regional level awardee for outstanding performance. For some city and municipal staff, the regular conduct of Program Implementation Review (PIR) taught them how to analyze and use their OPT data as a basis for interventions needed by the community.

Aside from the regular activities and meetings imposed by the PNC, the province likewise formed through an executive order a Provincial Nutrition Monitoring and Evaluation Team and a Technical Working Group. The Team visited different barangays, sometimes using a dump

truck, to reach even the far-flung and hardly accessible ones, to monitor, supervise or evaluate the implementation of the nutrition programs on the ground.

Year 1995 marked the start of recruitment and capacity building of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS). The target was at least one trained BNS per barangay. Through coordination with barangays and provision of additional honoraria to the BNS from provincial funds, albeit minimal, the number of BNS gradually increased². Capacity building for the BNS (and the nutrition action officers) followed in topics such as action plan formulation, preparation of reports, growth monitoring, accurate nutritional assessment, and basic course for newly hired BNS. Technical and financial support were extended by the NNC Regional Office and international organizations.

In 1995, the province began organizing the Barangay Nutrition Committees (BNCs) and initiated monitoring and supervision of barangays and BNS' implementation of nutrition programs. To equip the BNS for the conduct of the OPT, the province purchased salter-type weighing scales, for LGUs that did not have them or to replace the bathroom scales inappropriately being used for taking children's weights.

² That same year, the federation of BNS was established.

In 1996, Hellen Keller International conducted training on micronutrient supplementation, nutrition program management and childcare, among others.

In sum, the first six years after devolution was focused on setting up the nutrition structures at all levels, establishing systems and work processes, and capacity building and equipping of the barangay nutrition workers, while programs on advocacy and nutrition promotion, province-wide celebration of Nutrition Month, OPT and Garantisadong Pambata were also undertaken. It was also a period of transmitting unequivocal signals on the importance of quality of work and discipline within the nutrition community.

1998 - 2003

In 1998, the Province of Compostela Valley was carved out of Davao del Norte³ and about six months after, former 3rd District Congressman Rodolfo Del Rosario was sworn into office as the first Governor of the new Province of Davao del Norte. In his first term, he adopted the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) approach to development to

³ Moves to create a separate province started in the '80s because it was believed that the sheer size of Davao Del Norte, then the 8th largest province in the country, had greatly hindered the realization of the province's full potentials. <http://pia.gov.ph/provinces/compostela-valley>

afford a better quality of life to his constituents. The MBN survey identified the top ten unmet needs of his constituents as follows: unemployment, lack of education, lack of access to potable water, absence of a compost pit, low number of livestock being raised, inability of children to get pre-school education in day care centers, having households without backyards, lack of toilets, and inability of couples to practice family planning⁴.

Around this time, the governor happened to have a fortuitous introduction to the NNC nutrition awards (see box). He was attracted to the awards and realizing that nutrition is the cause or the result of many of the unmet basic needs, he instructed PNAO Dr. Hornido and Nutrition Coordinator Dr. Apolinares to double their efforts in the implementation of nutrition programs. In the following year, the province would be joining NNC's Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI).

In compliance with the directive, the Nutrition Office continued the conduct of regular meetings of the PNC and regular monitoring of cities and municipalities, included the barangays in the visits and rendered technical assistance to them. The Office likewise visited poor performers giving

⁴ Minimum Basic Needs Approach, <https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/minimum-basic-needs-approach>

them special attention, urged municipalities to help each other and share resources through the "big brother-small brother" approach in which big municipalities help smaller ones in meeting the basic needs of residents. The provincial government laid down strict standards to ensure the success of the MBN program. For one, it does not release funds to a barangay or municipality until an accomplishment report has been made and validated. The province's push might have created "pressure" on the ground for everyone, but they believed that the nutritional status of the province would not improve unless the nutritional status in each component city and municipality improved.

One concern is related to poor sanitation or improper food handling, an intermediate cause of malnutrition especially among children. It was observed, however, that the city and municipal sanitary inspectors and provincial sanitary engineers were normally occupied with inspection for business licensing during the first half of the year⁵. Consequently, the active promotion and preservation of the health of the barangay is usually sacrificed. To address the gap, the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* (SP) passed SP Resolution No. 241 that provides for recruitment and hiring of a

⁵ Interview with Dr. Hornido, 19 April 2018.

BOX 1

A MISTAKE THAT BECAME A TURNING POINT

Dr. Teresa Ungson, the NNC Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator for Region XI, vividly narrated Governor del Rosario's introduction to NNC's nutrition awards. Sometime in 1998, NNC Region XI hosted the Regional Nutrition Awarding Ceremony in a hotel. In the middle of the ceremony, the governor entered the venue, thinking that a meeting he was supposed to attend that day was being held there. Because some LGU leaders were also in attendance, he hardly noticed that he was in a wrong event until the organizers invited him to give an impromptu speech to address the nutrition awardees, he being a prominent politician in the region.

After his speech, Gov. Rodolfo del Rosario approached Dr. Ungson and told her, *"Gusto ko yang award na 'yan. Paano namin makuha yan?"* (I like that award. How can we achieve it?)

In 1999, Davao del Norte joined the MELLPI, winning their first Green Banner Award a year

volunteer barangay sanitary inspector (BSI), after which the province, in coordination with the cities and municipalities, started recruitment of volunteer BSI in every barangay. The functions included the active promotion and preservation of the health of the barangay following the basic implementation of the Sanitation Code of the Philippines; extending maximum basic environmental health and sanitation services to the people of the barangay; coordinating with the city sanitary inspectors and provincial sanitary engineers in health programs which include public health, water and environmental sanitation, sewerage and mosquito control and other preventive health programs⁶.

⁶ In 1998-2000, an extensive study on water supply, sewerage and sanitation was undertaken, preparatory to the JICA assistance to the Philippine Government on the development of provincial water supply, sewerage and sanitation in 21 provinces in Visayas and Mindanao, including Davao del Norte.

Just three years after the organization of the BSI, the province joined the National Search for Barangay with Best Sanitation Practices.

In 2000, Davao del Norte received its first Green Banner Award, a well celebrated event which all key nutrition officers attended.

For subsequent programs, the province tapped NGOs, including the Council of Women, Rotary Club and the Barangay Sanitary Inspectors (BSI) Association for the conduct of food handler's seminar, as well the BNS Association for support to nutrition programs. The Department of Education became a partner in the implementation of the Applied Nutrition Program, a 90-120 day feeding of school children using the produce from the school garden and support from the school canteen, the province, lower government levels and NGOs from 2001 to 2013.

In 2001 and 2002, Davao del Norte received two more consecutive Green Banner Awards and subsequently the Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) Award, followed by the first and second year CROWN Maintenance Awards in 2003-2004.

2004 - 2007

In 2004, Governor RDR briefly retired from local politics to serve as the Presidential Adviser on New Government Centers of the Arroyo government. This paved the way for the late Gelacio Gementiza, the former mayor of Tagum City, to become the fifth governor of Davao del Norte. Governor Gementiza continued many of his predecessor's programs and projects geared towards alleviating poverty.

A singular feature of his three-year term for nutrition was the provincial allocation of PhP 7 million to local governments for *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon*, micronutrient supplementation, deworming, repair of health center and day care center and supplemental feeding. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) provided PhP 23 million while the LGUs provided their 30 percent counterpart to the program. Moreover, the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* passed an ordinance establishing the Davao del Norte *Pagkaon para sa Kabatan-Unan (Nutri-Grow+)*. However, it was during Governor Gementiza's tenure that the honorarium for PNC members was stopped by a COA directive.

Regrettably, Davao del Norte failed to achieve the national Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) in 2005

because of the high malnutrition rate in Talaingod, the most challenging municipality of Davao del Norte. Frustrated but not discouraged, Davao del Norte continued its efforts and reclaimed the Green Banner Award in 2006-2008 and another CROWN also in 2008. The same sequence of awards was received by the province in 2010-2012. During that time, some of Davao del Norte's municipal LGUs were also winning NNC nutrition awards. To date, eight of the 11 LGUs have been awardees in nutrition. Tagum City bagged in 2012 the CROWN award for the city category for its exemplary efforts in addressing the malnutrition problem. The city also won the Pag-asa award

for posting the greatest decrease of malnutrition prevalence rates among preschool and school children.

In the same year, the Municipality of New Corella further clinched the Regional Green Banner award for the municipality category, while the Island Garden City of Samal won the second-best City in the region. A number of BNS of Davao del Norte have distinguished themselves in nutrition program implementation in their barangays: BNS Maria Enonie dela Cueva of Panabo City won the National Outstanding BNS in 2009; BNS Angelito Conde of Tagum City won the same award the



The province of Davao del Norte won the Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) award for the second time in 2012.

Source: Provincial Nutrition Office



Several of the local government units in Davao del Norte and a number of barangay nutrition scholars have won nutrition awards at regional and national level.

Source: Provincial Nutrition Office

following year; BNS Madeline Gulane of Brgy. Alejal, Carmen, Davao del Norte bagged the 2012 Regional Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Scholar (ROBNS) award; while BNS Sherwin C. Abellaniza of Barangay Magugpo East, Tagum City landed as second runner-up in the 2012 Search for National Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Scholar.

2007 - 2016

Governor Rodolfo Del Rosario returned to the governorship in 2007. This time he elevated the locus of intervention through his hard infrastructure-oriented RDR WHEELS development agenda, primarily addressing the infrastructure needs of grassroots communities.⁷ The governor

⁷Roads and Infrastructure Development, Development of Cooperatives in All Sectors, Reforms in Governance and Peace and Order, Water and Electricity Development, Health, Sanitation and Social Services, Education, Culture, Sports and Human Development, Economic Development and Environment Protection and Rehabilitation, Livelihood Skills and Development and Spiritual and Moral Recovery.

considered one project, a road leading to some far-flung areas of Talaingod, nutrition-sensitive because it brought government health and nutrition services closer to the people in some of Talaingod's isolated areas⁸.

In 2010, he ran unopposed, unfolding his human development agenda known as PEOPLE, in order to put a human face to development. The main goal is to place the Dabaonon people in a better position to be the center, and the driver, of their own development⁹. One project was the establishment of a multi-million dairy development project in New Corella town funded by the USDA Food for Progress Program and implemented by the Land O'Lakes Foundation, Inc. Milking cows were dispersed to farmer-beneficiaries. The milk is

⁸ Interview with Gov. RDR, April 19, 2018.

⁹ People Empowerment, Education, Optimum health and social services, Public-Private Partnership, Link to the World and Employment and Livelihood Opportunities

collected and processed in the New Corella plant, and the fresh milk produce are in turn bought by the province for its milk feeding program in schools. Other nutrition programs during this period also improved the income opportunities of people.

Collaboration with private hospitals was undertaken to strengthen mother and child care as well as the implementation of the DOH Service Delivery Network (SDN) strategy to reduce maternal and infant mortality. Authorities tapped public-private partnerships to bolster the province's four inter-local health zones where cities and municipalities are grouped with one core referral hospital each for better coordination in emergencies and service delivery. The pilot implementation of the program began in 2001 covering the SIKAT Cluster (San Isidro, Kapalong, Asuncion, Talaingod). Constituents province-wide



Through a caravan of services, the provincial government of Davao del Norte brings health and nutrition interventions to municipalities particularly hard-to-reach areas such as Talaingod.

Source: Provincial Nutrition Office

needed to be aware of government services such as this referral. According to Governor RDR, while 92 percent of women in the middle-class to upper middle-class income brackets have access to skilled medical professionals during childbirth, only 25 percent of poor women do¹⁰.

The province pursued several nutrition programs during this period which have not only advanced the nutrition program of Davao del Norte but have also improved the income opportunities of its people, of which the example previously mentioned was the establishment of a multi-million dairy development project in New Corella town.

In 2015, vegetable seeds and education on community gardens were provided under the Livelihood Program for IP women, a poverty alleviation program to solve malnutrition.

As a gesture of appreciation of the BNS' contribution in advancing nutrition, the province increased BNS honoraria from PhP 500 per year in 2012 to PhP 3,000, then doubled it in 2015.

¹⁰ BusinessWorld Online, "Davao del Norte partners with private health sector to improve maternal, child health programs" June 27, 2015 <http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Nation&title=davao-del-norte-partners-with-private-health-sector-to-improve-maternal-child-health-programs&id=110427>

2016 TO PRESENT

In 2016, Anthony Rafael G. del Rosario (AGR), succeeded his father as governor, and appointed Ms. Mayflor Espiritu to the Provincial Nutrition Coordinator (PNC) position vacated by Dr. Apolinar upon her retirement in 2014, and Dr. Eleanor Salva as OIC PHO/PNAO in lieu of PHO/PNAO Dr. Hornido, who retired from service in 2017. However, Governor AGR is yet to appoint a PNAO and constitute the PNC membership.

The unfilled position of the PNC in 2014-2016 resulted in the slowdown in the functioning of the provincial nutrition program. The results of the baseline assessment of status of MNCs in 2016 were used to guide coaching and mentoring, ushering in a new beginning.

The province conducted a series of trainings of community volunteer health workers and health personnel on the community-based management of acute malnutrition as part of its continued capacity building efforts. While the PNC has not met since 2016, the nutrition office at municipal/city level continued program implementation, and complied with reportorial requirements and the conduct of regular program implementation review with C/MNAOs, coordinators and BNS officers.

In 2016, the province adopted the “First 1000 Days ni Baby” program and introduced the program to its cities and municipalities. One municipality that pursued this program in the same year is Asuncion, whose programs include distribution of information, education and communication materials on the importance of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months, Buntis Congress, lecture on First 1000 days ni Baby, provision of essential maternal and child health services such as child immunization, maternal immunization, prenatal check-up and conduct of symposium (*Panagtigum sa Lumad*) on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health and Nutrition (MNCHN) for the indigenous peoples (IPs) in 20 barangays.

In other municipalities and cities, while they also have MNCHN programs, it appears that they have yet to adopt the First 1000 days program. However, since the First 1000 Days advocacy is included in the 2018 local nutrition action plan of the province, it would only take some time for the component LGUs to be fully aware about the program.

In 2017, Governor AGR launched his banner nutrition program called “*Ang Gulayan Revolution*” (vegetable garden revolution) which requires all 223 barangays to have community gardens.



Ang Gulayan Revolution mandates the establishment and maintenance of community gardens in all 223 barangays in Davao del Norte.

Source: Provincial Nutrition Office

OUTCOMES

The prevalence of underweight, stunting, wasting and overweight children (0-71 months) in Davao del Norte shows a general decline over the years. The years 1998-2000 coincided with the initial actions

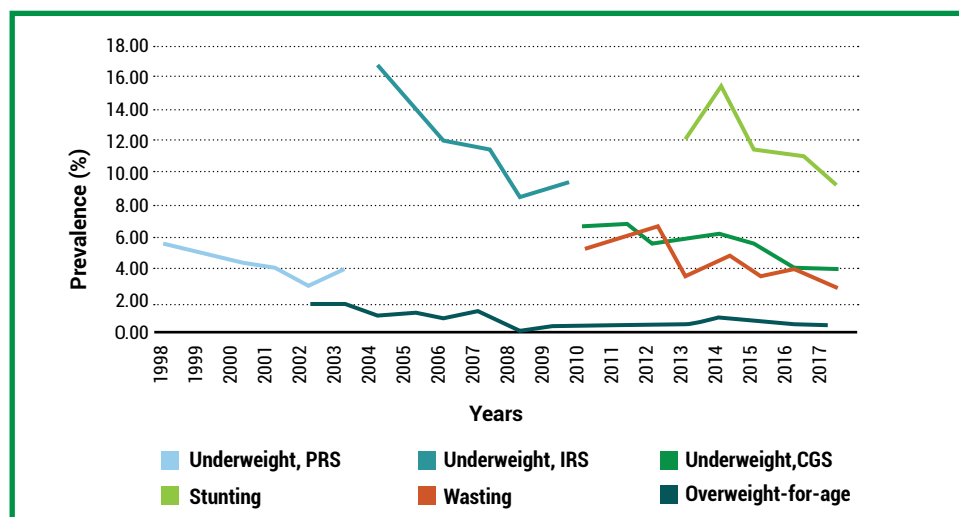


FIGURE 3. Levels of child malnutrition in Davao Del Norte, 1998-2017

Source: Operation Timbang record

PRS – Philippine Reference Standards; IRS – International Reference Standards; CGS (Child Growth Standards)

of the Province to strengthen structures at provincial and municipal level, train municipal and barangay nutrition and health workers, and monitor implementation of regular programs and innovations in the province and its municipalities.

The prevalence of wasting decreased from 5.7 percent in 2010 to 2.8 percent in 2017, and stunting from 12.1 percent in 2013 to 9.5 percent in 2017. Reporting on stunting in the province started in 2013. Further improvements in stunting measurements are expected to be undertaken at provincial and municipal level in the coming years. The prevalence of overweight decreased from 2.1 percent in 2002 to 0.7 percent in 2017.



Davao del Norte's success in nutrition is attributable to a great extent to its leadership who knew how to strategically attack the problem of malnutrition and mobilize its diverse people.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

An analysis of Davao del Norte's journey will show that the following are the key factors to its success in improving the nutritional status of its people: competent leadership, political unity among component LGUs, adoption of multi-sectoral and inclusive program strategies, strengthening of nutrition structures and processes at all levels, including regular monitoring and PIR, expanded participation of sectors to, notably, NGOs and private entities in the nutrition program, the supervision and provision of technical assistance by PNAO, nutrition coordinator and the Regional NNC, legislative support, the MELLPI and the nutrition awards and the deployment and capacity building of the BNS.

Davao del Norte's success in nutrition is attributable to a great extent to its leadership who knew how to strategically attack the problem of malnutrition and mobilize its diverse people. Knowing the importance of functional nutrition structures, Governor Amatong focused during the first years after devolution on establishing the PNCs, C/MNCs and BNCs, establishing management of implementation processes, appointing key officers and personnel who were instrumental in the smooth planning and implementation of nutrition programs in subsequent years.

Governor Rodolfo del Rosario's employment of the MBN approach, an evidence-based, consultative and participative planning process, also helped him analyze the situation of the province and the needs of its people. He also institutionalized "Cluster Development" that grouped municipalities and cities for better developmental complementation. Governor RDR's credibility and integrity as a leader had also contributed to the effective mobilization of stakeholders including the community. As PNAO Dr. Hornido recalled, if he wanted the participation of any department, group or sector in nutrition programs or campaigns, he would normally ask Governor RDR to sign the communication to ensure compliance with directives or to endorse campaigns so that it would be supported by the public. Governor RDR was likewise a visible leader. During his term, he visited all 223 barangays in the province at least once a year to let his people feel his concern for them and his interest to know the actual situation in the grassroots level for action.

Governor Gementiza, on the other hand, focused on implementation of key nutrition programs and mobilized sufficient resources. Governor Anthony del Rosario essentially followed the footsteps of his father and is currently working on

revitalizing the nutrition structures, particularly the PNC, while continuing the implementation of existing and new nutrition programs including F1K.

One remarkable feature of good governance exemplified under the leadership of Governor RDR is the bonding together of the elected provincial officials into an organization known as “*Hugpong Dabaonon*.” Under “*Hugpong*” the provincial officials committed to work together, setting aside political affiliation. This political unity and solidarity among leaders facilitated program implementation at city, municipal and barangay level.

The participation of the communities is an essential component of nutrition improvement. This aspect of participation should be seen not only in the identification of problems of the communities but also in the planning, implementation and monitoring of policies and programs to address these problems. The use of the MBN approach and the involvement of IPs in nutrition committees are some good examples of Davao del Norte’s courses of action along this line.

The adoption by the province of multi-sectoral inclusive strategies also showed the province’s

understanding that a holistic approach is necessary to ensure sustainability of gains. It provided infrastructure to complement social development such as the opening of roads in Talaingod to facilitate delivery of basic services. The province recruited volunteer BSI to address underlying causes of malnutrition (i.e. poor sanitation, improper food handling, lack of toilets, etc.), and engaged different departments/sectors (Agriculture, Social Welfare, Health, LGUs, NGOs) to provide interrelated programs for nutrition. It also made use of media for information dissemination and advocacy. Some municipalities focused on livelihood programs for families with malnourished children and others on scholarship grants to members of IP communities in the hope that education will influence long term behavior change and will make them more receptive of nutrition interventions.

Davao del Norte’s performance is likewise attributable to the 223 barangay nutrition scholars and city/municipal nutrition action officers, nutrition coordinators and rural health workers who were at the forefront in fostering healthier children and in making Davao del Norte a Green Banner and CROWN awardee.



Under “Hugpong Dabaonon” the provincial officials committed to work together, setting aside political affiliation.

The regular monitoring, supervision and provision of technical assistance by PNAO, nutrition coordinator and the Regional NNC to the municipalities and barangays facilitated compliance of the latter to required processes that eventually resulted in improved performance in nutrition of their respective cities or municipalities. Another motivating factor is the nutrition awards given by NNC Regional Office in recognition of the outstanding performance of nutrition workers, likewise boosting their morale and inspiring them to be more dedicated in their work. Regular evaluation of both outcomes and processes is important and provinces play a crucial role in it. It determines whether programs met its goals, and to what extent it was as a result of fidelity to the plan. Moreover, it keeps key actors on their toes.

The dedication of nutrition workers of Davao del Norte is remarkable. It is clearly one of the key reasons for Davao del Norte's drive to better nutrition. Some nutrition officers and workers went beyond their call of duty. For instance, Dr. Apolinar immersed herself in some communities for months, ignoring personal discomforts, to have first-hand information of the situation on the ground. Sometimes, Talaingod's BNS need to walk for a day, climb mountains or cross rivers just to weigh and monitor children in remote areas. MNAO of Talaingod even studied the language of the community to be able communicate with them better regarding nutrition matters. In Barangay New Bantayan, the BNS usually make door-to-door delivery of food to malnourished children whose parents do not religiously attend feeding programs. According to them, "*Walang Huwebes Santo o Biyernes Santo sa mga BNS*" (We do not stop working even on Holy Thursday or Good Friday). Mr. Andoy, MNAO of Asuncion, is also an epitome of a nutrition worker who takes advocacy to heart wherever he goes, regardless of circumstance. His stories about how he advocated breastfeeding are inspiring (see Box 2).

All throughout the process of the journey, the contribution of methodical planning that the provincial nutrition coordination office with support from the NNC regional office stands out. The process was not only helpful in understanding the multi-sectoral nature of malnutrition, it has also engendered the program participation of wider sectors and the innovations in the provincial approach to nutrition. Unique to the province for many years is the deployment of BSI in every barangay to attack the problem of sanitation and address its impact on nutrition, the factoring of nutritional dimensions in provincial strategies like the MBN and different programs.

BOX 2

MNAO JOEL ANDOY ADVOCATES FOR BREASTFEEDING ANYWHERE AT ANY TIME!

Mr. Joel Andoy is the long-serving MNAO of Asuncion. Prior to his present work, he was into community organizing. Influenced by his line of work, Mr. Andoy has become a staunch advocate of breastfeeding. He shared several stories proving the same.

One day, while aboard a jeepney, an incessantly crying baby cuddled by a mother seated next to Mr. Andoy. Although the mother might have already sensed that her child was hungry, she appeared reluctant to nurse her baby in public. Out of concern, Mr. Andoy convinced the mother to breastfeed her baby and even taught her the proper way to do it. On another occasion, Mr. Andoy asked a mother why she was bottlefeeding her child despite her having enough milk supply. In fact, her top was a little damp, obviously, because of breastmilk. Flabbergasted by the rather point-blank remark, the mother went away. Perhaps she was surprised to hear comments about breastfeeding from a total stranger and a male at that.

While shopping in Gaisano Mall in Tagum City, Mr. Andoy saw a mother hiding near the line of clothes as she was nursing. Understanding the difficulty being experienced by moms who need to nurse in malls, Mr. Andoy approached the management of Gaisano Mall and shared his observation. In his next visit the following month, Gaisano Mall already has a breastfeeding center.

Excerpt from interview with Mr. Andoy conducted on 17 April 2018 in Asuncion, Davao del Norte.

MAJOR GAPS AND CONSTRAINTS IN NUTRITION AND WAYS FORWARD

Davao del Norte's journey to better nutrition is certainly not a walk in the park. Along the way, it encountered numerous challenges and constraints, of which the most important constraints appear to be the management of transition gaps, the tenure of the BNS and issues related to their functioning, and the lagging progress of the MNCHN program that has much to do with the slow reduction of stunting.

Davao del Norte's outstanding performance owed much to the determination and hard work of the provincial program team and committee with the support of the succession of governors. The achievements of the province had been publicly recognized, and the success of their local level mobilization, coaching and mentoring was reflected in the impressive city/ municipality/ barangay implementation that were conferred their own corresponding nutrition awards. It is compelling that the province regains the extent and depth of nutrition mobilization it demonstrated before, by first and foremost managing transition gaps better. This is even more urgent with the First 1000 Days program of Governor AGR.

The tenure of the BNS is a common area of program weakness. Political dynamics at the barangay level weaken local operations in

instances when the tenure of BNS depend on non-program interests of the barangay decision makers, whether political or personal. Some BNS inform that Davao del Norte is no exception in this respect. If the culture persisted, it might result in demoralization of this frontline nutrition worker and wastage of valuable resources, clearly inimical to the program. BNS training and accumulated skills gained from experience cannot be readily reproduced in terms of money and time. Moreover, disruption to program implementation could affect nutritional status of children and families. Given the serious implications, it is vital that a policy, local or otherwise, protecting the tenure and the investments in the BNS, be given thought.

Corollary to this, Davao del Norte likewise believes that the qualifications of BNS should be upgraded to meet the changing demands of their work. Setting higher qualifications for BNS is a commendable plan as long as the dedication and commitment of prospective BNS applicants remain as principal considerations in recruitment.

Believing that valid assessment of the nutrition situation is the foundation on which effective interventions can be built, making standard measuring tools available and easy to use should

be given priority. It is a common sentiment among BNS that they have too few height boards and are too heavy to carry around. Hence, some of them are forced to use non-standard measuring tapes. For instance, the BNS in Talaingod find it burdensome to carry heavy height boards during their visits to remote *sitios*.

BNS interviewees mention Talaingod as most challenging when it comes to nutrition program implementation, primarily due to its geography, peace and order situation, socio-demographics and culture of its indigenous inhabitants. Difficult access to some *sitios* of mountainous Talaingod delays the conduct of OPT and delivery of social services. Encounters between the military and NPA as well as tribal wars (*pangayaw*) constrain nutrition workers to temporarily leave affected areas and work. No less problematic, because of the nomadic way of Ata-Manobo, it is common in Talaingod that one will not see the child weighed or child receiving interventions in the same location during next visits. Moreover, not all members of the ethnic group accept the nutrition programs of the government given their beliefs and culture, and sheer lack of understanding due to the language barrier.

Another concern in the province is the low coverage of some MNCHN services in recent years. The low coverage of MNCHN services may have been due to several factors. Among them:

1. The emphasis of the existing nutrition monitoring and evaluation is on underweight, and less on stunting. The latter relates more closely to the MNCHN program.
2. Provincial records in 2017 show that among the MNCHN services, only deliveries attended by skilled birth attendant and the provision of 1st dose of Vitamin A to 0 to 6 months infants reached the 90 percent benchmark, while the rest of the services (prenatal visit, immunization, micronutrient powder supplementation for children 6-23 months) have low coverage.

The provision of four pre-natal consultation reaches no more than half of the pregnant women. If the serious inadequacies were not addressed, it is likely that the prevalence of stunting among children will continue. As per NNS 2015 rough estimates of stunting, the prevalence in Davao del Norte is 34.2 percent. Stunting is one of the most significant impediments to human development. Moving forward, it is imperative for the province to utilize the data gathered in formulating more integrated and responsive interventions.

Cognizant of the above challenges, the province has started serious efforts and programs to address the gaps, from which significant progress in the nutritional status could result. Specific to Talaingod, some of the actions taken by Davao del Norte are:

- On-going construction of road networks leading to remote areas of Talaingod to facilitate delivery of program services.
- Exploration by the local government of the possibility of negotiating the cessation of *pangayaw* with ethnic leaders and peace talks between the government and the NPA.
- Start of local government and NGO housing projects and livelihood provision for Ata-Manobo to make them settle in one place.
- Investing in education through scholarship grants to interested indigenous people. Some 25 of the 35 Bachelor of Public Administration students sent to Davao del Norte State College with full educational assistance came from ethnic communities.
- Including ethnic leaders as MNC members to give way to more participative and consultative process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of nutrition programs. According to the nutrition workers in Talaingod, ethnic leaders serve as their link to the community. Coordinating with the leaders make them more receptive to nutrition initiatives. Including IP representatives in MNC has so far yielded positive results in Talaingod and even in New Bantayan's IP communities. A similar initiative was planned by the PNC.
- Strengthening of their First 1000 Days Program by consciously implementing the same in all cities and municipalities under close supervision of the province. The incumbent Governor expressed his keen interest in benchmarking good practices in F1K in 2018 as an initial step towards improving MNCHN and preventing stunting and other forms of malnutrition.

Take-away from Davao del Norte

Davao del Norte performed well in Nutrition Program Management since 1992 onwards. **Under various leadership, it strengthened nutrition structures at provincial and component LGU levels, expanded and trained nutrition human infrastructure in its municipalities and cities, and improved processes from planning, implementation reviews and monitoring.** A vigorous coaching and mentoring of local government units characterized the efforts of long-serving nutrition leaders in the province. Provincial programs led by the governors supported nutrition across the board. Provincial budgets have been provided in support of province-wide initiatives and complementing municipal and city budgets for nutrition.

Davao del Norte joins many other provinces that, for many years, undertook similar initiatives and inroads to improving nutrition in the component LGUs and the entire province and yet have failed to win the national Nutrition Honor Award. It is no secret that failing to bag the highest award in nutrition can be disappointing to local government units; it is interesting to discover what keeps them going despite the repeated falls. In the case of Davao del Norte, **the efforts at improving nutrition structures and processes and training personnel over a sustained period provides part of the explanation. The commitment of its leadership to nutrition transcended political changes from 1992 to date.**

The effort of the province during the past three decades produced outstanding LGUs that keep the dynamics of nutrition programming alive even in times of loss and changes in provincial nutrition leadership. Being an achiever in nutrition in various periods served to provide renewed

energy to recover and get back to the journey for better nutrition. Given that very few provinces have won NHA and a good number keep failing to move beyond Green Banner and CROWN, it is also incumbent to reflect on the way provinces are rated in the MELLPI system.

Business continuity demands that succession planning for key strategic positions in nutrition leadership such as the Provincial Nutrition Coordinator and the PNAO in the case of Davao del Norte should have been undertaken, avoiding the two-year or more void and their consequences to the program and nutritional status of its children.

No doubt the strengths of Davao del Norte remain – the provincial nutrition program has years of effective lower LGU mobilization strategy that have strengthened cities, municipalities and barangays and produced nutrition awardees. It has evolved its own proven best practices in program implementation in ethnic communities. More importantly, the provincial leadership remains supportive; the gains in its flagship development programs would be in better position to accommodate renewed nutrition-sensitive actions and the governor's new program of the First 1000 Days would provide even more inspiring impetus to nutrition program implementation in the entire province.

Quezon Province

Quezon province shows the way with its Q1K Program taking care of pregnant women and young children in the first 1000 days.



Strengthening Nutrition and Pioneering the First 1000 Days Program: The Story of Quezon Province

BACKGROUND

Over past few years, the Province of Quezon made strides toward improving the health and nutrition of its people. Before the story is told, it would help the reader to briefly take a step back to see the bigger picture and take in the historical context of the province and some of the distinct challenges it faced over the years.

Quezon is a first-class province with a population of 2,122,830 based on the 2015 census, distributed in 1,242 barangays in 39 municipalities and one component city. Located 220 kilometers southeast of Manila, it links the Bicol Peninsula to the rest of Luzon Island. Quezon's expansive irregularly-shaped land area of 906,960 hectares is largely made up of rugged hilly to mountainous terrain with patches of plains, and several outlying islands the biggest of which is Polillo located in the northern part of the province. With vast fertile land and coastal areas, agriculture and fisheries are the lifeblood of the people of Quezon. Breathtaking scenery describes many far-flung

towns and seaside barangays but tourism potentials have been relatively unrealized.

QUEZON'S CHALLENGES

Compared to other provinces within CALABARZON¹, Quezon faced inherent challenges to its development. The province is vulnerable to natural disasters, particularly typhoons that traverse the country every year. Poverty incidence at 22.7 percent in 2015 is the highest in the region and slightly higher than the national average. Several municipalities and barangays classified as geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) are characterized by limited employment and livelihood opportunities and inadequate access to public services (NEDA, 2016). The long travel to some settlements with no transportation routes, over difficult terrain or unpaved roads or to outlying islands that are inaccessible in bad weather, invariably puts an extra toll on the delivery of social services and

¹ CALABARZON or Region IV -A consists of the following provinces: Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon.



Figure 1. Location map of Quezon Province



Addressing malnutrition in Quezon has been an uphill climb.

human development. Remnants of insurgency and occasional armed clashes with security forces add to a sense of insecurity in a few remote communities.

This is the backdrop to the province's struggles to achieve food security and good nutrition, pointing to poverty, food insecurity and chronic hunger as basic causes of malnutrition, and the inadequacy of "quick fixes" alone as permanent solution. In the following sections, the key milestones in Quezon Province's journey to nutrition improvement are described (Figure 2. Timeline of Quezon's Journey in Nutrition). Is the province on the right track and what lessons, if any, can be shared with the rest of the country?

QUEZON'S JOURNEY TO NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT

Historically, addressing malnutrition in Quezon has been an uphill climb. Data from the 1998 and 2008 National Nutrition Surveys show high prevalence even after declines during the period. Underweight among children below five years of age decreased from 33.4 in 2013 to 21.7 percent in 2015 and stunting from 36 to 33.2 percent in the same period. The situation has been the most problematic in the region, underscoring urgency of efforts undertaken by the provincial government in nutrition improvement over the past years.

1990-1994: Sowing the seeds for community nutrition programs in Quezon: In recalling the history of nutrition programs in Quezon province, the most knowledgeable informant was Ms. Emma Coronado, the long-serving Provincial Nutritionist of the Integrated Provincial Health Office. During the period, she was the sole nutritionist for community nutrition covering the entire province.² The years 1990-1994 was significant for the program - the province was selected, together with Northern Samar and Zamboanga del Sur, as a focus province of the groundbreaking Vitamin A Expansion Project (the "Vitex Project"). The USAID-funded project, implemented by the Department of Health's Nutrition Service and Helen Keller International (HKI), piloted a delivery system for vitamin A capsule (VAC) distribution that many years later would become the basis for VAC delivery in the entire country. The community-oriented information, education, and communication (IEC) materials developed under the project remained useful long after the project ended.

The Local Government Code of 1991 and Devolution of Health Services: When the Local Government Code of 1991 devolved service delivery for health, agriculture, social welfare and development, and other national government agencies except education, the responsibility for delivering social services passed to the local governments. The role of the Department of Health (DOH) changed from sole provider of health services to provider of specific health services and technical assistance to local government units (LGUs)³, bringing adverse changes to the overall quality of services at grassroots level, especially during the immediate transition period. Even before devolution, only one-fourth of the country's roughly

² The only other Nutrition Officer trained in nutrition at that time was hospital-based

³ Magno C., 2001. "The Devolution of Agriculture and Health Services", available at: http://www.aer.ph/pdf/sw2001/articled2001_phi.pdf

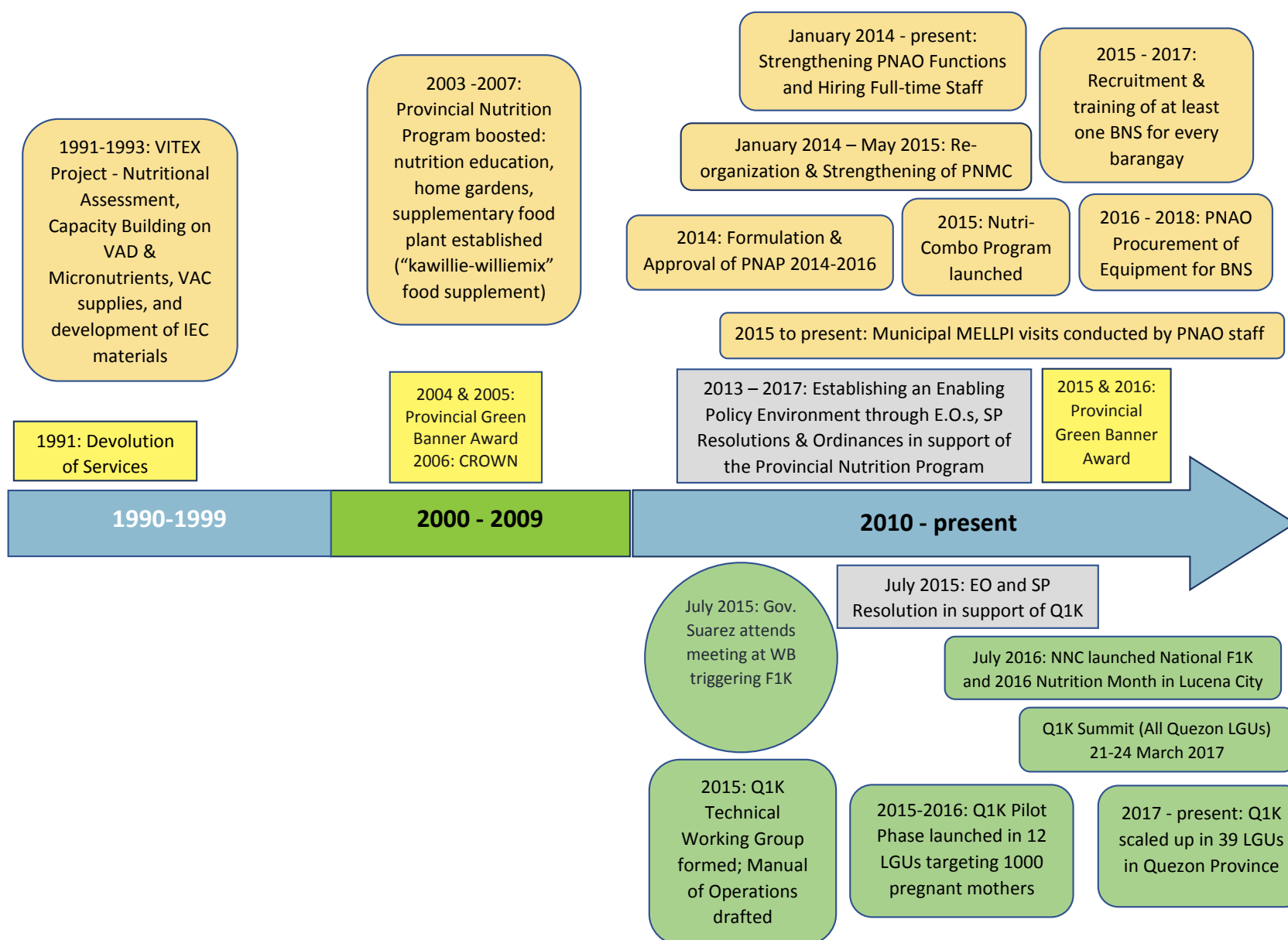


Figure 2. Milestones of the nutrition journey of Quezon Province

41,000 barangays had health stations, and most of them “were sorely lacking in equipment, supplies, and staff⁴,” and training. In general, the devolution of health services led to poor staff morale, further decline in infrastructure maintenance, and under-funding of operations.⁵

How the Vitamin A Expansion Project helped Quezon:

In the light of devolution and its accompanying challenges, Ms. Coronado considers the Vitex Project and the HKI technical assistance for the DOH very timely and much needed for improving the knowledge and hands-on experience of provincial health staff on delivery of Vitamin A and nutrition of young children. As it turns out, many children at that time were already suffering from various stages of Vitamin A deficiencies. Most eye parameters for Vitamin A deficiency (Xerophthalmia), especially night blindness, were above WHO critical levels. There was even a local term for the condition (“*matang-manok*”), a warning flag to doctors and health workers that night blindness was already a concern in the community. The project brought large volume of very much needed VAC supplies to Quezon.

Quezon province underwent a comprehensive nutrition situation analysis, the “ABCD” assessment – anthropometric, biochemical, clinical, and dietary assessment of the Vitamin A status. Covering a large sample of children, the survey gave a good picture of the Vitamin A deficiency in the entire

province.⁶ Children were given universal access to Vitamin A capsules twice a year in 1991-1993. By the end of the project in 1994, the before-and-after comparison of the assessments showed that the prevalence of eye signs of Vitamin A deficiency among children in Quezon had markedly improved.⁷

Another benefit from the project was the training for the Provincial Vitamin A Task Force and rural health personnel. Together with the project team, Ms. Coronado helped develop the training modules entitled “Ending Hidden Hunger”. Ms. Coronado was at the forefront of trainings conducted for health staff – seven batches of five-day trainings for municipal health officers, public health nurses, rural health midwives, and barangay health workers

The Project also had a component called “Weaning Moments” that made a strong push for the promotion of good dietary practices for weaning age infants, through training support for rural health midwives and barangay health workers on improved feeding practices for weaning age children. Information, education, and communication materials were produced and distributed to the communities. Many copies are preserved (now yellowing and brittle), including the “*Nutrikomiks*” that cover topics on breastfeeding, complementary feeding, growth monitoring, and complementary food preparation. The “*Nutrikomiks*” were popular among mothers in the barangays, and even after HKI finished the project, others continued to reproduce and use the *Nutrikomiks* series. Those were the years when most barangays still had no BNS or BHW who could provide face-to-face advice to mothers on sound breastfeeding and infant feeding practices.

⁴ “How sick are Filipinos?” CHD 1998 Health Situationer, as cited in Magno 2001

⁵ Grundy et al., 2003. “Overview of Devolution of Health Services in the Philippines”, available at: <https://www.rrh.org.au/journal/download/pdf/220/>

⁶ Klemm et al., 1996. “Coverage and Impact of Adding vitamin A capsule (VAC) distribution to annual National Immunization Day in the Philippines,” available at:

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.549.245&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

⁷ The before and after prevalence rates of xerophthalmia for children 12-59 months for 1991 and 1994 were as follow: night blindness (2.2 to 0.27), Bitot’s Sports (0.48 and 0), corneal ulcer (4.3 to 0) and corneal scarring (25.6 to 8.3) respectively. Source: Klemm, et al., 1996

2003-2006: A Surge in Quezon's Nutrition Program Under a Supportive Governor.

For Quezon's nutrition program in the late 1990s and early 2000s, some programming vigor of the Vitex Project lingered but with the end of VAC supplies, there were no more major turning points. According to Ms. Coronado, the proverbial shot in the arm came starting 2003 under Governor Wilfrido Enverga (three-term governor in 1998-2007), "one of the governors who prioritized nutrition." Several nutrition projects were launched such as the "*Pabasa Sa Nutrisyon*"⁸, strengthening of home food production bannered as "food always in the home" (FAITH), food processing activities, and a food assistance program that targeted young children. A food plant was established for the development of a complementary feeding mix that contained rice, munggo, and sesame seeds, dubbed as "*kawillie-willie mix*." But the Province's program at the time only had around 600 BNS, or roughly half the number needed to have the minimum one-on-one presence in the province's 1,242 barangays.

Despite this and other challenges, the renewed efforts and strengthened nutrition program processes caught the attention of the regional NNC's Monitoring, Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI) team who saw the progress worthy of the Green Banner Award for three consecutive years from 2003-2005 and the subsequent Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) award. After these achievements, however, there was not enough momentum to carry the efforts forward to the next administration, and the province's nutrition program lost steam.⁹

⁸ The *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon* is described as a "participative, circular gathering of ten to twelve mothers per class that informally discusses health and nutrition topics; it is a community-level approach for nutrition education". <http://www.ehealth.ph/media/kunena/attachments/554/Pabasa.pdf>

⁹ Governor Enverga completed his third gubernatorial term. New Governor who had other priorities closed the food plant.

BOX 1

THE GREEN BANNER AND CROWN AWARDS

The National Nutrition Council has institutionalized a system for recognition of LGUs with exemplary performance in nutrition program management. The assessment is done through the annual Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation or MELLPI, which NNC has conducted since 1979.

The Green Banner Award is given to a municipality, city or province, which has shown outstanding performance in implementing its nutrition program. An area awarded the Green Banner for three consecutive years as outstanding regional winner is subsequently conferred the CROWN Award.

Competing LGUs are evaluated based on an established protocol that looks at program efficiency, management, and effectiveness. It also gives additional points for LGUs who have introduced innovative or creative approaches in their nutrition programs.

2013: The Start of a Resurgence in Quezon's Nutrition Program: FNRI's 2011 Updating Survey of the Nutritional Status of Filipino Children and other Population Groups still painted a bleak picture of young child malnutrition in Quezon, especially when compared with other provinces in the region (Figure 3). The three forms of malnutrition – underweight, stunting, and wasting – were all highest in Quezon, catching the attention of Governor David C. Suarez who assumed office in 2010, and his wife, Mrs. Anna V. Suarez.

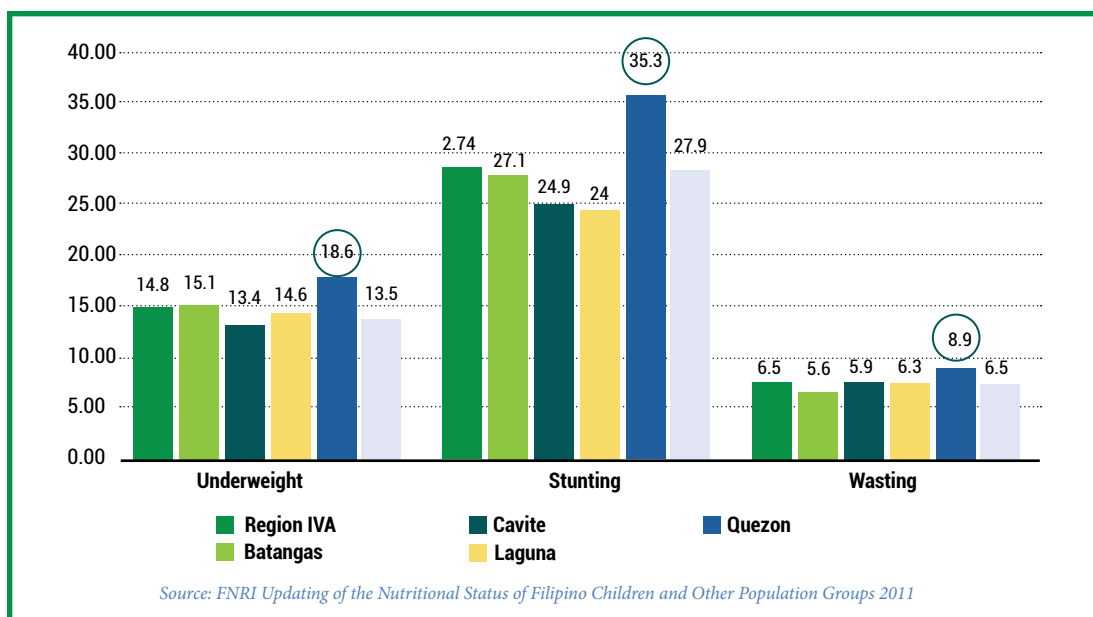


FIGURE 3. Prevalence of Underweight, Stunting, and Wasting among 0-5 years old in Region IVA and Provinces, 2011

According to some key informants, Governor Suarez and wife asked questions and sought effective solutions. Having no background in health or nutrition nor a dedicated nutrition office in the provincial government, they were not entirely sure how to move forward to address malnutrition. But with his training in economics he was fully aware that poverty is a multi-dimensional issue that has serious consequences to nutrition and human development (see Box 2). As it turns out, Mrs. Suarez, a mother of three young children had become increasingly concerned about malnutrition during the first

1000 days of life. She, together with the Provincial Nutritionist Coronado, organized a trip to the town of Jordan in Guimaras Island to learn about some promising nutrition projects they heard about. When they returned, the “Nutri-combo Program” was launched in selected sites in Quezon in 2015.¹⁰ The combined efforts and leadership of the Governor and Mrs. Suarez gave much more attention and prominence to the nutrition program in the province.

¹⁰ The Nutricombo Program of Quezon Province consists of meal distribution of nutritious ‘pandesal,’ vita-meal feeding from micro-nutrient powdered supplementation, livelihood trainings, and the establishment of backyard gardens.

With background on economics, Governor David C. Suarez was fully aware that poverty is a multi-dimensional issue that has serious consequences to nutrition and human development.

2013-2014: Establishing the Structures and Empowering the Provincial Nutrition Staff:

In December 2013, in a meeting with department heads, the Governor directed the Provincial Agriculturist and Provincial Nutrition Action Officer, Mr. Roberto Gajo, to form the province's Provincial Nutrition Action Office (PNAO).¹¹ With PNAO Gajo as the lead on part-time capacity and the First Lady's Chief of Staff, Mr. Julius Parcarey assigned as full-time province's first-ever Nutrition Action Office was established.¹² Two other full-time staff joined in the next one and a half years. In May 2015, an Executive Order issued by the Governor increased the number to seven full-time District Nutrition Program Coordinators assigned "to monitor and manage the nutrition program" in all four districts of the province.¹³ Under the overall leadership of Mr. Gajo, the PNAO became fully operational. The Governor ensured the availability of funds to perform its mandate and empowered the PNAO to set its directions.

Mr. Parcarey remembers 2014 as a year of rapid and numerous efforts to boost the province's nutrition programming capacity, the programming capacity. The governor issued an executive order to re-organize and revitalize the inactive Provincial Nutrition Multi-Sectoral Council (PNMC),¹⁴ composed of provincial department heads and their alternates to plan nutrition projects and activities under his [the

¹¹In other provinces, "PNAO" is the acronym for the Provincial Nutrition Action Officer. In Quezon province, the PNAO refers to both the entire office set up in 2014 and the head of office.

¹²Provincial Executive Order No. 3, Series of 2014 was signed on January 22, 2014. The designated Provincial Nutrition Action Officer, Mr. Roberto Gajo is also the concurrent Provincial Development Cooperatives Officer, aside from his full-time function as Provincial Agriculturist.

¹³ Executive Order No. 11, Series of 2015 (May 28, 2015), establishing the Provincial Nutrition Action Office

¹⁴ Executive Order No. 4, Series of 2014, Re-organizing and strengthening the Provincial Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Committee.

BOX 2

EMPOWERMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PROVINCIAL STAFF ON NUTRITION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

"The governor lets the Department Heads plan, decide, and implement [in running their respective departments]. He does not micro-manage to the point that you will need to give him all the details. Each department will just have to demonstrate what they are capable of, and at the same time manage any risks that might be detrimental for the provincial government. The governor puts his trust in his people to manage and implement their respective programs."

Mr. Robert Gajo

Provincial Agriculturist and Head of PNAO

"We benefitted from a training given by the National Nutrition Council Region IV-A on Nutrition Program Management (NPM). In 2014, I, together with some municipal nutrition action officers (MNAOs), attended the NPM training. This was how we learned how to conduct NPM at the local level. We also attended a training given by NNC on the Barangay Nutrition Scholars Program. These were the first two formal trainings we were able to receive. We then conducted echo-trainings for others in the PNMC and other MNAOs in the province."

Mr. Julius Parcarey

Provincial Focal Person for Nutrition, PNAO of Quezon

**Excerpts from FGD with PNMC Members on 6 February 2018, Queen Margaret Hotel, Lucena City*

governor's] direction. By the end of 2014, the PNAO and PNMC finalized the Provincial Nutrition Action Plan for 2014-2016. Subsequently, the provincial budget for nutrition increased. From then on, the PNMC became more active, convened quarterly meetings, improved inter-sectoral planning and coordination and became more nutrition action-oriented.

The next step was to implement the revitalized nutrition program and cohesively address the high malnutrition prevalence in the province. The PNAO worked closely with a core group of the PNMC - the Integrated Provincial Health Office, Provincial Agriculture Office, Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office, and the Budget Office – in the roll-out of the nutrition plans. Coordination and sharing of information between offices were enhanced, and the flow of nutrition-relevant reports and documents became more seamless.



The big boost came after the passage of Provincial Ordinance 2015-45 that mandated the deployment of BNS in every barangay and allocated a budget for the BNS program. The province achieved full deployment of one BNS for every barangay.

Bolstering Local Nutrition Capacity at the Frontlines: A first concrete step of the PNAO was to ensure that each barangay had a BNS, and that they are trained and properly equipped with the correct tools – weighing scales and height boards. But enticing new BNS volunteers to increase the number from 600 was not easy. “We had to sometimes beg mayors to add more BNS in their municipalities,” said Ms. Coronado. On one hand, the BNS honorarium was problematic for many LGUs which had very limited allocations for nutrition. On the other, the BNS who typically had numerous tasks to fulfill, received meager allowance. Part of the PNAO’s effort was to retain the 600 long-serving and highly committed BNS volunteers.¹⁵

The big boost came after the passage of Provincial Ordinance 2015-45 that mandated the deployment of BNS in every barangay and allocated a budget for the BNS program.¹⁶ The province achieved full deployment of one BNS for every barangay. Basic training for them ensued. The NNC Regional Office gave technical guidance and Mrs. Suarez supported their on-boarding process. To date, the province has 1,426 trained BNS, with some large barangays having more than one BNS. Each BNS receives a small honorarium from the provincial government,¹⁷ to augment the modest amounts provided by their respective LGUs. Finally, the frontline nutrition workers were equipped with the basic tools of the trade: mechanical column scales (Detecto) and height boards procured by the PNAO.

¹⁵ Video, “Kwentong BNS: #Dedikasyon”; Accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1myZ28cswCw>

¹⁶ Provincial Ordinance No. 2015-45, entitled “An ordinance establishing Barangay Nutrition Scholars in every barangay in Quezon province was enacted on November 23, 2015, through Resolution No. 2015-3390.

¹⁷ To augment the BNS allowances, Executive Orders Number 18 (Series of 2015) and Number 3 (Series of 2017) were issued by Governor Suarez on 9 July 2015 and 25 July 2017, respectively.

2015: Championing the First 1000 Days Program:

Sometime in early 2015, Governor Suarez attended a meeting in Manila with the World Bank. Soon after that fateful meeting, staff narrated that the Governor's interest in the first 1000 days of life became more intense. According to Mr. Parcarey, "during the Monday meetings with the department heads, he [the Governor] would always talk about the first 1000 days program" (Box 3).

According to Governor Suarez himself, "Our biggest challenge [then] was that there wasn't any program that we could copy and use as a basis. We had the ideas, we had the concepts, and we had to see where the gaps were in what the government agencies like the Department of Health were doing, and from there, we took off with the program."¹⁸ It took a few months for the Governor and his team to figure out and conceptualize the program that would focus on the first 1000 days of life. The Governor made the first step by calling together a small team of five of his staff in the Provincial Government.¹⁹

Governor Suarez and the five-member Technical Working Group brainstormed on the design of a program tailor-fit to the needs of the province and constituents, and more importantly, one that could address the persistent underlying causes of child malnutrition. Designing the Q1K program

¹⁸ Youtube Video of Quezon's 1000 Days of Life Program <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idPa04U3j8&index=15&list=PLGiGxE54-GyG0cSGDfx1DPvyL85YAPqbV>

¹⁹ The provincial staff involved in the conceptualization of the Q1K Program were representatives from the Provincial Offices for Agriculture, Nutrition Action, Integrated Provincial Health, Provincial Social Welfare and Development, Gender and Development.

BOX 3

THE MEETING THAT SPARKED THE GOVERNOR'S INTEREST IN THE FIRST 1000 DAYS*

Sometime before July 2015, Governor David "Jayjay" Suarez attended a meeting in Manila with the World Bank, and in the group was a prominent economist. Among the topics they discussed was poverty. As Governor Suarez narrates, "they posed to me this question: What are your thoughts about poverty?" Caught rather off-guard by the point-blank question, the Governor – having a background in economics himself, and had been very vocal about human development as one of his administration's priorities – replied that poverty for him was a multi-dimensional problem that required a multi-dimensional approach to address. But what provoked Governor Suarez was the follow-up question: "What are your thoughts if you were told that an effective way of addressing poverty is in the first 1000 days of life?"

The ensuing discussion triggered the governor's interest, both from a professional and personal point of view. After all, he and Mrs. Suarez were just starting to relish parenthood, with a young daughter and twins on the way. According to Mr. Julius Parcarey, the Governor at some point was also shown a photographic image of a child's brain with ideal neurologic development during the early stages of pregnancy, which was then contrasted with that from a child whose developing brain was impaired because of maternal deprivation. He was able to relate with these images at a personal level.

Reflecting on these compelling thoughts discussed during the fateful meeting, he began to contemplate the meaning of "intergenerational cycle of poverty" and how difficult it would be for a person to break that cycle if he/she was born with a disadvantage, all because of the mother's malnutrition, lack of access to safe water and sanitation, immunization and other basic services. The seed of the first 1000 days program was planted in the Governor's mind.

**Excerpts from Governor David Suarez's statements during the Compendium of Actions on Nutrition (CAN) Exit Conference, 9 February 2018, Queen Margaret Hotel, Lucena City*

took a series of back and forth discussions before reaching the final decision on the best way forward. To deepen the analysis and firm up the program plan, they went through a series of consultations with external experts and professional groups²⁰ who gave much-needed advice on how to proceed. The seeds of the Q1K Program thus sown, the Program was formalized in July 2015 when Governor Suarez issued an Executive Order forming the Q1K Council and the Q1K Technical Working Group.²¹

Launching the Q1K Program - the first 12 Municipalities: In the program design, the governor and his team wanted a holistic approach that takes into account the basic and underlying causes of malnutrition in the first 1000 days of life. Feeding programs alone would not suffice but instead, the holistic approach for Q1K would stand on three key pillars: food and nutrition, health and sanitation, and social care, requiring the involvement and synchronized efforts of at least three LGU departments with sectoral responsibility over the pillars. Next, the team drafted the program's manual of procedures to guide the roll-out.

Communicating the Program: People needed to first know about the basics – the importance of the first 1000 days, what the program was going to do, and why it was important for the community to be actively involved. An information campaign was conducted for technical staff, program implementers and the public – especially the actual beneficiaries of the program - through a series of workshops, seminars and public assemblies, and through information materials disseminated in the 12 chosen pilot areas, all the way down to the grassroots. Target communities were informed

of the different program components, what they can expect to receive, and what they as beneficiaries are expected to do in return. Thus, considerable time was spent on social preparation activities to establish public support. It was also crucial to secure political support from the local chief executives and the *Sangguniang Bayan* members.

On 5 July 2016, Quezon province was chosen as the venue of the launching of the national First 1000 Days Program to kick off the 2016 Nutrition Month celebration (with theme: “*First 1000 days ni baby pahalagahan para sa malusog na kinabukasan*”), in recognition of Quezon province’s implementation of the First 1000 Days Program through its own local version of Quezon’s First 1000 Days (Q1K) Program.

Bringing New Staff on Board for Q1K: The program hired qualified staff – most of them nurses - as coordinators in the 12 pilot municipalities to ensure that the program and the “moving parts” are functioning as intended and an inter-sectoral cohesive approach is achieved in reaching the ultimate beneficiaries. Also recruited were barangay coordinators who were from the community, literate and able to relate well with the mothers. All Q1K staff were oriented with the program and what their efforts are aiming to achieve: to augment the existing delivery system, catalyze and facilitate the achievement of results: better health-seeking and infant feeding behaviors among beneficiaries, improved pregnancy outcomes, and better nutritional status for mothers, infants, and young children. All Q1K staff familiarized with their day-to-day tasks, lines of supervision, monitoring, and reporting requirements.

²⁰ Key health and nutrition experts including associations of Obstetrics and Gynecology were consulted.

²¹ Executive Order No. 17, Series of 2015, signed on July 9, 2015 created an eleven-member Q1K Technical Working Group and Council; it also officially named the program as “Quezon’s First 1000 Days” (Q1K).

BOX 4

SECURING THE FUTURE OF QUEZON THROUGH THE FIRST 1000 DAYS PROGRAM

From pregnancy to childhood, good nutrition is a key to a baby's health and development. Quezon's First 1000 Days Program – dubbed as Q1K – aims to optimize the implementation of the national and provincial programs on maternal and child care, dental health, immunization, nutrition, and sanitation. Q1K's stands on three key pillars, namely: Healthcare and Sanitation, Food and Nutrition, and Social Care. The program explicitly aims to provide the core programs through a holistic and systematic approach.

A pioneer program of the Provincial Government, Q1K initially covered 12 pilot municipalities (Buenavista, Catanauan, General Nakar, Jomalig, Lopez, Mauban, San Andres, San Antonio, San Francisco, Tagkawayan, Tiaong, and Unisan). Staff from the municipalities underwent training-seminars on antenatal, post-natal, neonatal, and infant care. The pilot phase targeted 1000 pregnant women and their newborn babies.

Key Components of the Q1K Program

- Assignment of Q1K Coordinators in each town who works hand-in-hand with Public Health Workers; they oversee the implementation of Q1K activities and ensure that beneficiaries receive quality services;
- Enrolment of beneficiaries in PhilHealth under the sponsorship program;
- Conduct of baseline ultrasound and laboratory workup (i.e. CBC, Urinalysis, and Random Blood Sugar testing) among mothers during the first pre-natal check-up; free of charge;
- Conduct of Parent Effectiveness Service sessions during prenatal and postnatal period with emphasis on the psychosocial development of the baby, and including topics on everyday hygiene;
- Conduct of activities on how to maintain environmental and water sanitation;
- Procurement and provision of complementary food in a sachet ("Momsie") for children 6-23 months old;
- Provision of the "Mama Book" and "Baby Book" which includes "Tatay and Nanay Tips" to guide parents on taking care of both mother and baby; and
- Participation of the Southern Luzon State University (SLSU) Research Division as a third-party evaluator and to do geo-tagging of beneficiaries, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and statistical analyses throughout the duration of the program.

From the outset, the prime movers of Q1K articulated a clear vision of the First 1000 days Program as one meant to secure the future of generations of Quezon's citizens. Governor Suarez himself has publicly acknowledged the high premium he places on human development for his province.

Sources: Provincial Government of Quezon, 2017. "Securing the Future in Quezon through the First 1000 Days Program." CALABARZON – the Official Newsletter of Regional Development Council IVA, 2nd Quarter June 2017, pages 10-11. Available at: <http://calabarzon.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Q2-2017-Newsletter.pdf>

Establishing the Q1K Office: The Q1K Program Office, the nerve center where the provincial government oversees, coordinates, and delivers the Program, was established after about a year when the needs for the overall management of Q1K grew.

It is headed by the concurrent Provincial Health Officer Dr. Grace Santiago, who was concerned about the poor health-seeking behaviors in the communities. “A mother needs complete pre-natal check-ups before she gives birth. But the question is, why is it that we receive reports that not all mothers are able to have complete pre-natal check-ups?”²² Thus, a first priority of the municipal and barangay coordinators was to ensure that pregnant mothers had pre-natal check-ups as soon as they were found pregnant – not in the second or third trimesters as was the typical practice reported by local health workers. Later, they are expected to provide close support to each mother (working harmoniously with the existing team of health, nutrition, and social workers in the community) when the mothers give birth. The coordinators are there to help mothers start and continue breastfeeding and support them in practicing better complementary infant feeding. Through sheer perseverance and hard work, getting young children through this critical period of development without having to suffer from malnutrition is the unspoken mantra and driving force of the Q1K program.

²² Video, “Quezon’s 1000 Days of Life Program,” October 2, 2017, Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idPa04U3j8&index=15&list=PLgiGxE54-GyG0cSGDfx1DPvyl85YAPqbV>

Managing the Q1K Program in the Pilot Municipalities: As the program in the 12 pilot municipalities began, the roles, the evolving tasks, the reporting and coordinating relationships of the newly hired staff in each LGU (i.e. the Q1K’s municipal and barangay coordinators), had to be constantly communicated and clarified. Explaining working relationships with other LGU departments and existing staff – especially those who have long been implementing existing programs in health and sanitation, food and nutrition and social care – was a crucial and delicate process. Communication and coordination mechanisms had to be established, all part of the change process that Q1K sought to establish. Monthly feedback and reporting sessions with the municipal and barangay coordinators were set up.²³

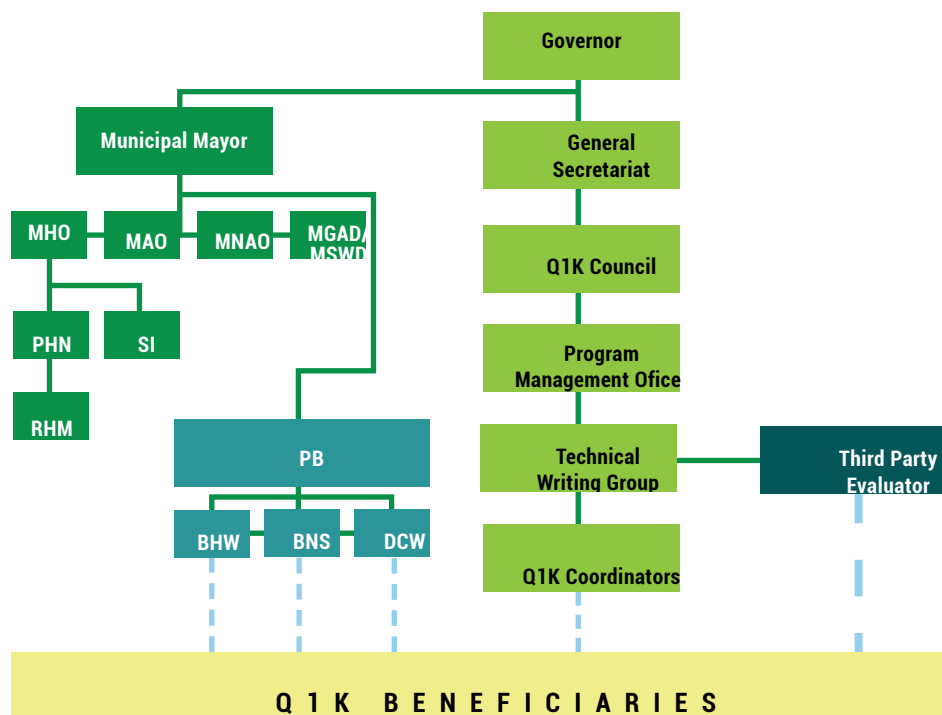


FIGURE 4. Program Management Structure of Q1K

Source: Q1K Manual of Procedures

²³ Interview with Q1K Program Coordinators, together with some Municipal Q1K Coordinators and Secretariat staff on 9 February 2018 at the Q1K Office.

At the beginning of Q1K, it was clear to the governor and his staff that to achieve their desired end results, the maternal and child care services delivered by the provincial and municipal governments needed to drastically improve. With the Governor himself asking the question “What are the current gaps in service delivery?” the Q1K services and interventions were put in place precisely to address the weaknesses in the existing delivery system. For example, inadequate access to laboratory tests essential for monitoring their well-being during pregnancy, lack of skilled birth attendants especially among those living in far-flung barangays, poor health-seeking, care-giving and infant feeding behaviors among mothers, poor sanitation, lack of livelihoods among poor households – all these factors were contributors to poor health and nutrition outcomes in the province.



The Mama and Baby Books



The “Momsie” Complementary Food in 25-gram sachets

How has the Q1K changed service delivery for mothers and their children?

Q1K pregnant mothers are closely monitored by the barangay coordinators. Mothers are each given a “Mama Book”²⁴ to record and monitor their pregnancy and contains useful tips and information for both parents. They are encouraged to have 14 pre-natal visits (compared with non-Q1K’s just four visits), given free access to laboratory tests, free (or minimal fees for an) ultrasound, closer monitoring for pregnancy danger signs or complications, tetanus toxoid and other pregnancy services and enhanced access to PhilHealth. Newborns are given free screening for congenital disorders and a “Baby Book”²⁵. After giving birth, mothers are supported to practice exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding when their infant reaches six months old. Children between 6 to 23 months old receive free complementary food in sachets.²⁶ Coordinating and delivering the activities and services with the BHW, BNS, rural health midwives and public health nurses, and the municipal health officer (as well as securing the active involvement of the social worker, sanitation inspector, and the municipal agriculturist for the delivery of their sector component under the program) are all part of the challenge, particularly since the interface between the Q1K office and coordinators on one hand and the existing nutrition program structures on the other are still under development.

²⁴ The “Mama Book” is a 56-page handbook given free to each Q1K mother. It contains a personal calendar and checklist of important dates, and information such as danger signs of pregnancy, weekly reminders, spaces for notes by the mother and doctors, graphical examples of exercises for pregnant mother, home gardening tips, practical tips for the husband of the expectant mother at different stages of the pregnancy, among others.

²⁵ The Q1K “Baby Book” is 76-page handbook given free to each newborn baby, for growth monitoring and to record of immunizations. Written in simple Tagalog, it also contains developmental milestones/ECCD checklist, feeding tips, information about child rights, and other helpful information that the mother can use.

²⁶ Complementary Food in sachets (“Momsie”) are given free-of-charge by Q1K coordinators to children 6 to 23 months old, especially those who are severely underweight. Momsie is a chocolate-flavored food in a 25-gram sachet that contains soybean, peanuts, sesame seeds, mongo oil, skim milk, margarine, cocoa, sugar, salt, and emulsifier. Produced by NutriDense Food Manufacturing Corporation, the product was developed with technology from the DOST - Food and Nutrition Research Institute.

EARLY GAINS, AWARDS, AND ACCOLADES:

There are indications that the province's collective efforts are beginning to make some progress toward reducing malnutrition. Based on the results of the Operation Timbang Plus, the prevalence of underweight has slowly but steadily fallen over a period of eight years (Figure 5). In addition, the NNS 2013 and 2015 suggest a reduction in the prevalence of stunting (from 36.1 percent to 33.4 percent) while wasting remained essentially unchanged. High hopes for significant reductions are pinned on Quezon's First 1000 Days program, which started in 2015. The program followed up the Q1K mothers during the entire pregnancy and all received tetanus toxoid vaccines and iron-folic acid supplements. Complementary feeding was part of program services.

According to the narrative results provided by the Q1K coordinator, the pilot phase partial results²⁷ are out for the following indicators on 739 mothers (out of 1000 initial target beneficiaries) and actual Q1K 746 babies of which all had measurement information as of the time of writing the study:

- 55 cases or 7.4 percent low birthweight;
- 71 cases or 9.5 percent underweight;
- 86 cases or 11.5 percent stunting;
- 33 cases or 4.4 percent wasting;
- 2 cases overweight; and
- exclusive breastfeeding rate was 90 percent.

Quezon's low birthweight (55 cases or 7.4 percent) from the Q1K project compares favorably with the country's and region's prevalence of low

²⁷ A total of 138 out of 1000 beneficiaries have been dropped due to non-compliance with program guidelines and conditions and some beneficiaries moved to other province or city.

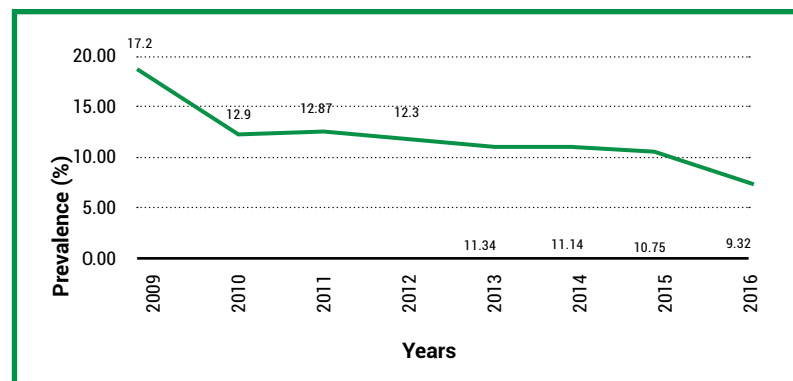


FIGURE 5. Prevalence of Underweight among preschoolers in Quezon Province, 2009-2016

Source: Parcarey, Julius Carmelo A., "Call to Action: the 2016 Provincial Nutrition Situation, Facts and Figures, PNAO, Quezon Province"

birthweight in 2013 of around 21 percent (NDHS 2013). Administrative data from FHSIS on low birthweight shows prevalence of 19.6 percent.

Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) rate was 90 percent and the rest of the mothers practiced mixed feeding for their babies. Compared to national NNS 2015, this is phenomenally high and the Q1K supportive individual monitoring, follow up and promotion for EBF among pregnant and lactating women covered is the only logical explanation for such results. Quezon's FHSIS data of 2017 show EBF rate of 36.7 percent.

The stunting level among the Q1K babies was 11.5 percent or 86 cases. The babies covered were likely to be 12-23 months. The most comparable cohort in the National Nutrition Survey are Filipino children between age 12-23 months with stunting prevalence of 36.2 percent.



Governor Suarez sharing the experiences of Quezon Province in Q1K to the governors of the 36 PPAN priority provinces during the RTE on Nutrition on 29 May 2018.
Source: Quezon Public Information Office

The stunting measured by the Q1K compared to the stunting at age 3 in NNS. It is worth mentioning that Quezon's PNAO is paying close attention to the quality of the data generated by the annual OPT Plus²⁸ activity. For example, Quezon has now fully adopted the electronic tool for OPT Plus. The PNAO staff have realized that the computerized tool reduces computation errors and hastened the aggregation and reporting of nutritional status data from the barangays so that they can be acted upon as needed.

The provincial government's initiatives that boosted the province's capacity for nutrition program management in Quezon have not gone unnoticed. Quezon was again awarded the Green Banner Award for two consecutive years (2015 - 2016²⁹) by the National Nutrition Council after a ten-year drought. The awards undoubtedly serve to motivate the provincial leadership and staff to keep investing in nutrition

²⁸ The e-OPT Tool was introduced by the NNC in 2016 to facilitate the calculation of the age in months and nutritional classification of each pre-school child, that since the introduction of the OPT in the late 1970s, has been done through a tedious, manual, and error-prone process.

²⁹ In 2016, aside from the Green Banner Award, the municipality of Atimonan, Quezon was also the recipient of Green Banner Award; the Provincial Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Committee Award was given to Barangay Poblacion 4 of Atimonan; and the Provincial Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Scholar (BNS) Award was given to Eleanor Anda of Barangay Zone 2 Poblacion, Atimonan, who was also a finalist in the Regional Outstanding BNS in 2016.



The awards undoubtedly serve to motivate the provincial leadership and staff to keep investing in nutrition and persevere in their efforts for the long haul, hopefully long enough to make a significant impact on malnutrition, especially stunting.

and persevere in their efforts for the long haul, hopefully long enough to make a significant impact on malnutrition, especially stunting.

On 10-11 November 2017, Governor David C. Suarez was invited as resource speaker, representing the Province of Quezon in a two-day International Symposium on "Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets and Improved Nutrition³⁰" in Bangkok, Thailand. He presented the Q1K program and advocated for First 1000 Days of Life, Maternal and Child Healthcare Program as a national policy for government leaders and policy-makers to address the problem of malnutrition. He was also invited as speaker

³⁰ The event was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO-UN), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Program (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Representing the Province of Quezon in this 2-day International Symposium.

to the recent high-level Round Table Experience on Nutrition of governors of the 36 PPAN priority provinces convened by the National Nutrition Council on 29 May 2018 in Manila. The RTE was held to mobilize the 36 priority areas to implement the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) and the first 1000 days.

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY TOWARDS BETTER NUTRITION IN QUEZON

There are high hopes that the gains of the province over the past two years will gather enough momentum to merit a third consecutive Green Banner Award for its 2017 implementation and its second CROWN Award³¹. More importantly, the gains – if sustained – could eventually translate to measurable and robust improvements in the malnutrition rates among young children in the province.

Through the efforts of the PNAO, all barangays in Quezon now have a BNS, trained and equipped with weighing scales and height boards, and expectations are now higher that nutrition service delivery can better reach even impoverished and far corners of the province. To ensure that nutrition projects and activities are systematically laid out, the Provincial Nutrition Action Plan (PNAP) for 2017-2019 and the detailed work plan was finalized by the PNAO and approved by Provincial Nutrition Multi-Sectoral Council during its 3rd Quarter Meeting (2016). Likewise, the plan was also presented to the Executive Legislative Agenda team in October 2016 during a three-day workshop to formulate the provincial government's roadmap for 2017-2019.³² The amounts of 25M and 30M pesos have been allocated for the operations of the PNAO for 2017 and 2018, respectively, according to Mr. Parcarey.

³¹ Official results of the 2018 MELLPI will be released in the latter part of June 2018.

³² ELA 2017-2019 is a collaboration between the executive department and the Sangguniang Panlalawigan (Provincial Council), which sets the 3-year road map for the province. The ELA team is headed by the governor with all department heads, the vice governor, secretary to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan and two non-governmental representatives from the Provincial Development Council (PDC) as members. Source: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/quo-vadis-quezon/>

A pending issue is the enactment of Provincial Ordinance 2016-58 which mandates the creation of the Provincial Nutrition Action Office and establishes 13 *plantilla* positions for the PNAO. The same ordinance also mandates the creation of Municipal Nutrition Action Office in each of Quezon's LGUs, a move meant to encourage inactive Municipal Nutrition Committees (MNC) to become functional. The PNAO and his staff have been working hard – one municipality at a time – to conduct MELLPI visits and engage the mayor and municipal department heads to advocate for and support the revival or strengthening of the MNCs.

For the Q1K, the grand plan to expand the Program to the entire province was set in motion in early 2017. A Q1K Summit was held on March 21-24 in Tagaytay City, where all mayors, *Sangguniang Bayan* (SB) representatives, and key stakeholders participated in plenary and small group meetings to discuss the impending move to deliver Q1K province-wide. Primarily, the Summit sought to highlight the importance of the program for the people of Quezon and gain the support and Q1K ownership by the mayors. Only two LGUs in Quezon have not signed into the program.³³

For the 38 LGUs, program activities have begun in earnest. Most municipal coordinators are already in place, and barangay coordinators have been recruited and briefed.

³³ Not yet signed in are the distant Municipality of San Narciso in the Bondoc Peninsula and the highly urbanized City of Lucena, according to PNAO Gajo.

On 21 August 2017, the Provincial Launch of Q1K was held in the presence of almost 8,000 health workers from all over the province. Like what was done in the pilot areas, a vigorous public information campaign on the first 1000 days is being undertaken.³⁴ Very soon, the expansion communities can expect to receive the services, supplies and commodities from the program, as the amounts of 25M and 30M pesos for 2018 and 2019,³⁵ respectively, have been set aside.

BUILDING SYNERGY BETWEEN THE PNAO INITIATIVES AND THE Q1K

It is thus evident that Quezon province has not one, but two major thrusts in its nutrition programming. On one hand, there is the broader nutrition program coordinated by the PNAO that oversees the implementation of the provincial nutrition action plan and interfaces with the municipal nutrition structures for planning and implementation of local nutrition action plans, and on the other hand, there is a more focused

³⁴ Based on observations made during the CAN team's visit to two municipalities both about an hour away from the Provincial Capitol on good roads, it appears some local community members are still not aware of the details of the Q1K and thus a vigorous public information campaign on the first 1000 days is necessary.

³⁵ Source: Bello, John. "Quo vadis, Quezon?", Businessmirror news article; <https://businessmirror.com.ph/quo-vadis-quezon/>



The Q1K program delivers essential health services to pregnant women in the province of Quezon
Source: Quezon Public Information Office

thrust in the Q1K that strives to make immediate gains in the nutritional status of mothers, infants, and young children up to two years old. The Q1K – headed by the Provincial Health Officer and Q1K Coordinator – has a strong focus on health and emphasis on the importance of social care and environmental sanitation. Over a relatively short period, Q1K has notably served as a potent vehicle for advocacy and public awareness on the importance of nutrition in the first 1000 days of life. Indeed, the attention that the Provincial Government and Q1K has received from national agencies and international organizations is a testament to this.



The heightened public awareness spurred by Q1K that gives greater prominence for the value of nutrition could possibly cause a ripple effect for the broader program being coordinated by the PNAO -- headed by the Provincial Agriculturist – in gaining more political and public support and thus generate more resources for nutrition.

The heightened public awareness spurred by Q1K that gives greater prominence for the value of nutrition could possibly cause a ripple effect for the broader program being coordinated by the PNAO -- headed by the Provincial Agriculturist -- in gaining more political and public support and thus generate more resources for nutrition. As the lead nutrition office that gives emphasis to broader inter-sectoral linkages of nutrition improvement programs, the PNAO's thrusts, as well as the corresponding municipal plans and actions for nutrition, should rightfully be boosted and sustained for the long haul.

The linkage between the two program thrusts and the extent to which they complement (rather than duplicate) each other merits close attention and will need to be carefully managed. There are potential risks for overlap and confusion in the implementation of the two program thrusts at the grassroots level, given the parallel management and staffing structures established from the province down to the barangays and the interface between the two programs. To avoid these pitfalls, the PNMC and the PNAP have an important role to play in fostering continuous multi-sectoral dialogue and facilitating program management to ensure that on-the-ground activities are well-coordinated.

Conclusion: Key Lessons from the Quezon Experience

Quezon's journey toward nutrition improvement is an evolving story. Clearly, the final destination -- a significant reduction in malnutrition in particular stunting through the first 1000 days strategy -- has yet to be reached, and many of the societal and environmental challenges continue to persist. But the path taken, the early wins, and Quezon's overall narrative presents some early encouraging and valuable lessons for other provinces on how the nutrition program can be ramped up over a relatively short period of time.

Leadership is key. The most visible trigger for change was the inspirational leadership and the role of the current governor, and to some extent that of his predecessor in 2003-2006, by putting nutrition high up on the agenda of the provincial government. The political resolve of Governors Enverga and Suarez to take on nutrition as a priority program has been quite prominent. What they did was to strongly communicate their vision and high priority for nutrition to all the mayors, department heads, the staff charged with service delivery, and most of all, the constituents in the entire province. They persistently conveyed these messages in staff meetings as well as through the speeches they delivered in public gatherings. Particular to the incumbent, one should add the passion and strong tangible support for nutrition from Mrs. Suarez. In her dual capacity as a mother and a congresswoman, Quezon's first couple became a formidable voice for nutrition, especially the First 1000 Days Program.

An enabling policy environment serves as a strong base for the nutrition program. Getting the provincial legislature to pass resolutions and ordinances supportive of the nutrition program, markedly increasing the budget and allocating a steady source of funds, getting the support of the mayors, and ensuring the active involvement of the provincial nutrition multi-sectoral committee assured the availability of resources for logistics, equipment, and staff incentives for nutrition for the long haul. The creation of an office with full-time nutrition staff to run the nutrition program increases the likelihood that nutrition would receive sustainable solid attention. The provincial budget officer has been a pillar in the financing support to the nutrition program of Quezon. He has developed his budgetary strategy to enable the provincial budget office to respond to the demands of the governor's priority to nutrition.

Communication and advocacy are key to public awareness, support and ownership of the importance of nutrition. As an active member of the PNMC, the Quezon's Public Information Office spotlights the important contribution of communication in building up support for a new priority program such as Q1K. The office produced a considerable amount of nutrition information materials through print, radio, videos, banners and posters and social media. In the case of Q1K, deliberate use of branding to “sell” the program to mothers was evident, as the program purposely promoted a sense of pride among beneficiaries to be identified as a “Q1K mother” or a “Q1k baby.”

Openness to learning of the leadership is a key element in the province's scaling up of the nutrition program. The leadership of Quezon has time and again demonstrated its belief that the provincial government can learn from the experiences and good practices of others. The benchmarking trip of both the First Lady and the Provincial Nutritionist to Jordan, Guimaras, the use of experts on the First 1000 Days to design its Q1K Program, its interface with the Department of Science and Technology for the production of complementary food are but a few of the clear examples of the leadership's openness to learn from others.

Awards and recognition of early successes have helped to sustain the motivation for the program. Recent awards and recognitions received by Quezon province no doubt serve to validate efforts and inspire the leadership and people of Quezon to persevere. Keen observers of Quezon's journey to better nutrition can only wish them well, knowing the road ahead will not be easy. Not losing sight of their destination will eventually enable them to reap the bigger reward in the future: better-nourished and more productive people of Quezon.



Quezon's journey toward nutrition improvement is an evolving story. Clearly, the final destination – a significant reduction in malnutrition in particular stunting through the first 1000 days strategy – has yet to be reached, and many of the societal and environmental challenges continue to persist.



Davao City

Davao City - home to three successful programs on salt iodization, iron fortification of rice and integrated management of acute malnutrition.

Photo by: Davao City

Davao City brings lessons from the South in Nutrition Programming

Davao City improved its nutritional status and pioneered the implementation of a number of nutrition programs, notably the Community-based Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition, Food Fortification and the Salt Iodization Program. Success was achieved using strategies and measures the city put in place to overcome obstacles along the way in the context of a complex geographical, political, economic and socio-demographic setting.

INTRODUCTION

Davao City is one of the largest cities in the world in terms of land area (244,000 hectares), approximately 7.8 times the size of Cebu and three times that of the entire Metro Manila. Composed of 182 barangays in three congressional districts, Davao City's diverse population settlements consists of residents of highly urbanized districts, urban pockets of indigenous peoples, geographically isolated and disadvantaged populations.

The 1st class highly urbanized city (HUC) by income class category is home to a population of 1,632,991 based on the 2015 census. Migration from other regions was substantial - Davao City offers opportunities as a hub of government, business and industries, employment and education.

A significant part of Davao City's land is perfect for agriculture, giving rise to agro-plantations and industries around tropical fruits for the local markets or for exports. In addition, many local and foreign investors have set up business in the city encouraged by the business-friendly environment, leading to a rapid expansion of industries and services.

Home to many Tagalogs, Pampangos, Ilocanos and Visayans who have found grounds in the city to start or renew their base in life, Davao City has earned the honor of being "the Melting Pot of the Philippines". It is also the most culturally-diverse city in the country, finding chemistry in the fusion of the different cultures and traditions of



Figure 1. Location Map of Davao City in Davao del Sur

its numerous ethnic tribes, among which are the Bagobo, Mandaya, Ata, Manobo, B'laan, Muslim groups and the Badjaos.

This geographical, political, economic, and socio-demographic context of Davao City has, in one way or another, affected the city's journey towards improving the nutritional status of its people.



Davao City improved its nutritional status and pioneered the implementation of a number of nutrition programs, notably the Community-based Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition, Food Fortification and the Salt Iodization Program.

DAVAO CITY'S NUTRITION JOURNEY

1979-1995: Pre-Reorganization: Figure 2 shows the timeline of the city's ascent to good programming in nutrition and its pioneering implementation of key programs on nutrition. As early as 1979, Davao City had a City Nutrition Office under the Office of the Mayor. It had five staff: one Head, who was co-terminous with the appointing Mayor, two Nutrition Officers, an administrative clerk and a liaison officer who were all contractual. The City Nutrition Committee (CNC) with members from Agriculture, Social Welfare, and Health was likewise already organized but meetings were not regularly held. Various Barangay Nutrition Committees (BNC) were organized but not all were active.

Assisting the City Nutrition Office (CNO) in the implementation of nutrition programs were the barangay nutrition scholars (BNS), starting with 50 BNS receiving PhP 30.00 monthly honorarium from the City, gradually increasing to 75 in 1986 and to 100 BNS in 1991 because of stronger advocacy from the National Nutrition Council Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator NNC RNPC. Several reasons primarily accounted for the slow recruitment of BNS for the city's 182 barangays: peace and order situation in NPA areas

such as Paquibato, geographical location and difficult access to some barangays particularly the GIDAs¹ and the limited budget of the City and barangays for honoraria and BNS tools.

Late or incomplete reporting of Operation *Timbang* (OPT) results was usual. Only those barangays with BNS and weighing scales (bar scales) normally submitted OPT reports, and they were of uncertain accuracy.

Notwithstanding the foregoing challenges, this early period of Davao City's journey towards improved nutrition was not without significant milestones. Davao City had already been implementing programs such as OPT, follow-up weighing, Mother's Class, supplementary feeding, goat's milk feeding, cooking demonstration, nutrition counseling by nurse or midwife, home visitation of household with malnourished children, food production, seedling distribution, bio-intensive gardening, Nutri-Pak distribution and Nutri-Bus operation. The Nutri-bus, a special project of then Nutrition Center of the

¹ As narrated by one BNS, to reach far-flung sitios other than by foot, riding a horse was the option and the high cost usually came from BNS's own pocket unless the barangay offered to shoulder it.



Barangay Nutrition Scholars making a spot map during a BNS training conducted by the city nutrition division.

Source: Davao City Nutrition Division

Philippines, stopped operation after four years due to insurgencies. Years after, the Garantisadong Pambata program was turned over to the CNO and the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) program, use of iodized salt and fresh cow's milk feeding were introduced and implemented.

In 1996, when the City was undergoing reorganization arising from salary standardization of government employees, Dr. Azucena M. Dayanghirang, the last Head of the City Nutrition Office (CNO) and then City Nutrition Program Coordinator, lobbied for a separate City Nutrition Department under the Office of the Mayor and proposed regular positions under the salary standardization. In Dr. Dayanghirang's belief, a

separate nutrition office with tenured nutrition officers would ensure the functionality of nutrition structures and processes and sustainability of programs. Although the separate Nutrition Department was not created, her proposed *plantilla* positions (approximately 50 Nutritionist-Dietitians) were eventually approved after the reorganization in 1996.

1996-2000: Reorganization and Its Effects:

Instead of a separate office as proposed, the CNO was merged with the City Health Office under the leadership of Dr. Miguel Oppus (later appointed as CNAO) and became one of its divisions. For the new City Nutrition Division (CND), Dr. Dayanghirang's proposed 50 *plantilla* positions

were created, of which 19 were immediately filled up: one Nutrition Officer III (Division-OIC occupied by Ms. Evangeline Genite), 15 Nutrition Officer II (assigned one per district), two Nutrition Officer II (assigned at the CND) and one Assistant Nutritionist-Dietitian.

Massive recruitment, capacity building and provision of additional honorarium and incentives of BNS in 1996-2000 and the number of city-paid BNS increased to 100 in 1991, 350 in 2016, 370 in 2017 and 400 in 2018; barangay-paid BNS were appointed as needed for big barangays. Monthly honorarium gradually increased, from PhP 350 in the 1980s, then PhP 2,000 to PhP 5,000 in 2017. The City Nutrition Division (CND) arranged for basic BNS training and IYCF. The City Nutrition Committee (CNC) expanded to include sectoral representation from agriculture, social services, education, city veterinarian, planning and development, science and technology, trade and industry, budget, information, interior and local government and private organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions Club. The expanded membership is still practiced at present. Kiwanis led the city Food Fortification Program launched in 2007 while the University of Immaculate Conception has been providing research assistance to CND and sharing students and faculty for select nutrition programs.

	1979 – 1995 (Pre-reorganization)	1996 – 2000 (Reorganization)	2001 - 2007	2007 to present
City Mayor	Luis T. Santos (1972–1981) Elias B. Lopez (1981–1986) Zafiro L. Respicio (1986–1987) Jacinto T. Rubillar (1987–1988)	Rodrigo R. Duterte (1988–1998) Benjamin C. de Guzman (1998–2001)	Rodrigo R. Duterte (2001–2007)	Rodrigo R. Duterte (2007–2010, 2013–2016) Sara Z. Duterte (2010–2013, 2016–present)
City Nutrition Action Officer	Dr. Benjamin Panganiban* Dr. Natividad Amoroso Ms. Edna Coloma Dr. Azucena Dayanghirang <small>*No CNAO; the City Nutrition Office Head was the City Nutrition Program Coordinator</small>	Dr. Miguel Oppus	Dr. Joy Villafuerte (2004–present)	
Nutrition structures and processes	The CNO started with 5 contractual staff under Office of the Mayor Number of BNS increased from 50 to more than 100 CNC was chaired by the Mayor, membership was limited to government offices, functional, no policy issuance yet CNC meetings were convened but not regularly, CNC members received honorarium. AO facilitates convening of meetings though NDs are unable to attend due to field work BNCs were organized only in barangays with BNS, and not all were active Quarterly and sectoral accomplishment reports submission was incomplete and irregular Initiated the Search for OBNS and Outstanding District Nutritionists with the CNC as evaluators Dr. Dayanghirang lobbied for a separate nutrition office under the Office of the Mayor with <i>plantilla</i> position of (approx. 50 NDs)	Salary standardization was implemented. All NDs from various offices (CSSD, DA, etc.) were placed under the City Nutrition Division (under the City Health Office). CNO NDs (contractual) were given <i>plantilla</i> position and standardized salary. 50 ND positions approved. CNO structure: Head of CND - NO IV - vacant, 1 NO III - Div. OIC, 15 NO II (one per district), 2 NO II (assigned in CNO), 1 Assistant ND. Remaining ND positions yet to be filled up CNC expanded from 7 member sectors to 12 (Agri, CSSDO, DepEd, City Vet, CPDO, DOST, DTI, Budget, PIA, DILG, ROTARY, KIWANIS, LIONS CLUB, business sector and the academe) Ethnic group leaders were included as BNC members Massive recruitment, capacity building of BNS and provision of additional honorarium and incentives	Head of CND – Nutrition Officer IV Venus Millana Ms. Millana together with NO III Ms. Vangie Ruiz sought assistance from NNC Region XI RNPC Teresa Ungson to learn how the MELLPI exercise was done in IGACOS and Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte. Furthermore, the nutrition awards received by Davao City's neighboring towns challenged Ms. Millana to push nutrition agenda especially since the City had more resources and a very supportive Mayor.	Davao City BNS Federation organized Province-wide training on Promote Good Nutrition sponsored by NNC Evidence Based Participatory Training conducted (springboard of Davao IMAM Program) Number of city paid BNS increased to 400, Mayor Sara approved and announced PHP 5,000 monthly allowance for BNS and BHWs starting 2018 to include tasks for TARA NA Project (for drug reformists)
Programs and policies	OPT, follow up weighing, supplementary feeding, installed Nutripak processing plant (<i>munggo, bigas, oil, dills</i>), Nutri Bus in brgys with BNS and OPT results (1979 to 1991), cooking demo, nutrition education, home visitation of households with malnourished children, referral to health services, food production, goat milk feeding (later replaced by fresh cow's milk) for malnourished children Additional programs: IYCF, bio intensive gardening, RICs, cooking demo, home management, food processing, fresh milk feeding, <i>Garantisadong Pambata</i> , <i>Araw ng Sangkap Pinoy</i> , Salt Iodization Shifted from the use of bar scale to salter-type weighing scales following NNC directives	Sustained implementation of existing programs Training of BNSs Improved OPT results Food Fortification Program launched and institutionalized	Nutrition program expanded to include supplementary feeding, community garden, mothers' classes, <i>Garantisadong Pambata</i> , IYCF with participation of fathers, and milk feeding The city was recognized for its immediate enforcement of Republic Act 8172 otherwise known as the ASIN (Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide) Law, and RA 8976 or the Food Fortification Law. Pioneered Patak Asin in ports, food establishments, bakeries, wet markets, eateries, hotels, mini groceries, malls and school canteens. Executive Order No. 19 created the Davao City Task Force on Food Fortification and ordered the mandatory use, purchase and distribution of only Iron Fortified Rice (IFR) on official functions by local government agencies, and in relief operations and feeding programs Received PHP 2.8 million budget from PAGCOR which was allotted for nutrition	Social Preparation for Davao IMAM Project. Pilot run, program launch and fund raising, Institutionalization of Davao City IMAM with PHP 6.5M initial funding. Additional funding for the program was allocated in 2018.
Key results	2003 - joined the MELLPI exercise and used it as the standard to improve nutrition program implementation 2004 - Green Banner Award (conferred 2005); added motivation to improve city nutrition program 2005 - 2nd Green Banner Award 2006 – 3rd Green Banner Award and subsequently CROWN Award (conferred in 2007 in Manila)			Child malnutrition decreased from 2006 – 2017: underweight decreased from 6.91% in 2006 to 3.06% in 2017 stunting decreased from 10.7% in 2012 to 6.2% in 2017 wasting decreased from 5.3% in 2012 to 1.0% in 2017

Figure 2. Nutrition Journey of Davao City



Barangay Nutrition Scholars of Davao City proudly showcase their certificate received upon completing the BNS Basic Course.

Source: Davao City Nutrition Division

2001-2007: Further Strengthening of Nutrition Structures, Processes and Programs

The appointment of Ms. Venus Millana by Mayor Rodrigo Duterte² to the vacant position of the head of the CND launched the City's conscious efforts to vie for nutrition awards. Ms. Millana and Nutrition Officer III Ms. Genite, sought the assistance of RNPC Dr. Teresa Ungson, who accompanied them for good practices benchmarking and managing nutrition programs in the Island Garden City of Samal (IGACOS) and in Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte. They learned as well about the Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI) and the awards received by neighboring LGUs. Ms. Millana confidently thought, *"Madali lang pala. Kaya ko ito. Kung nakaya nila, kaya ko rin lalo na't may supportive akong Mayor."* (I realized it is easy. I can do it. If they were able to do it, I can also, especially if I have a supportive Mayor.) Accompanied by RNPC Dr. Ungson, Ms. Millana convinced Mayor Duterte who promised to give his support. "Do whatever you can do, I'm behind you," the Mayor said.

²Current Philippine president, Rodrigo R. Duterte served Davao City in the following capacities and tenure: appointed vice-mayor and officer-in-charge by President Corazon Aquino (1986-1988); elected city mayor for three terms (1988-1998); representative of Davao City 1st district (1998-2001) during which time Benjamin de Guzman was elected mayor; city mayor for three terms (2001-2010); city vice-mayor for one term (2010-2013); city mayor for one term 2013-2016 preceding election as President of the Republic of the Philippines.

The CNC further expanded to academe and business, conducted quarterly meetings, regular reporting and monitoring. In barangays with ethnic communities, the inclusion of ethnic leaders as BNC members built trust towards barangay and CND workers, facilitating the gradual change in health-seeking behavior and generating higher community participation. Before their BNC membership, it was difficult to convince pregnant Badjao women to go for prenatal check-up and bring babies for immunization.

Simultaneous with improving functionality of nutrition structures, the implementation of nutrition programs improved as well. Between 2001-2012, aside from the conduct of regular nutrition programs, the city was recognized for its immediate enforcement of Republic Act 8172 otherwise known as the ASIN (Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide) Law, and RA 8976 or the Food Fortification Law³. Through the help of various groups such as the Kiwanis International, business sector and non-government organizations, Davao City was the first city to vigorously implement the ASIN Law which aims

³RA 8976 stipulates mandatory fortification of staples like rice with iron and voluntary fortification of processed foods with iron, vitamin A and/or iodine to address the nutritional deficiency problems of the Filipino people. Under this law, all LGUs are instructed to assist in the monitoring of foods mandated to be fortified in public markets, retail stores, and food establishments.



Davao City was the first city to vigorously implement the ASIN Law which aims to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) in the country.

Mayor Rodrigo Duterte signed Executive Order No. 19 in November 2007 which created the Davao City Task Force on Food Fortification. It likewise ordered the use and distribution of only iron fortified rice (IFR) by local government agencies in relief operations and feeding programs.

to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) in the country. The City pioneered *Patak Asin* in ports, food establishments, bakeries, wet markets, eateries, hotels, mini groceries, malls and school canteens to inspect whether all salt meant for human and animal consumption were iodized. In a local forum in October 2006, the CNAO and head of Davao City Health Office, Dr. Josephine Villafuerte, proudly announced the City's 100 percent compliance to ASIN Law.

In 2007, in compliance with the Food Fortification Law, Davao City took a giant step towards eliminating micronutrient deficiency by again vying to be the first city in the country to fortify its rice. Mayor Rodrigo Duterte signed Executive Order No. 19 in November 2007 which created the Davao City Task Force on Food Fortification and designated the Kiwanis International as co-chair of the Task Force. The Task Force ordered the mandatory use, purchase and distribution of only iron fortified rice (IFR) on official functions catered to by hotels, restaurants, caterers and other food service establishments. It likewise ordered the use and distribution of only IFR by local government agencies in relief operations and feeding programs. To ensure compliance, the Task Force conducted intense and regular monitoring of all food establishments and outlets.

Complementing the efforts of government and private sectors, a local ordinance dubbed as the Fortified Rice Utilization Ordinance of Davao City was passed, hoping to give more teeth to the poorly implemented Philippine Food Fortification Program and an opportunity for the city to be at the helm against micronutrient malnutrition⁴.

Davao City was proclaimed "Best City to Implement a Food Fortification Program" in Region XI in the Neophyte on Food Fortification Program (R.A. 8976) of the Department of Health. Davao City was also declared as Region XI's pride for the successful implementation of the Food Fortification Program. It was also chosen as the Best City – The "Melting Pot of the Philippines" – the Food Fortification Program Implementor in Region XI.

⁴Along the way, there were challenges to full and sustained food fortification: 1) limited rice supply in Davao City; 2) lack of final standard on iron rice premix; 3) limited number of supplier of rice premix and fortification blenders; and 4) resistance from some traders because of additional cost for fortifying rice.



First Stakeholders Meeting on Davao City SAM Initiative Program was conducted in October 2013.

Source: Davao City Nutrition Division

The fight against other forms of malnutrition was not neglected. The Operation *Timbang* (OPT) results from 2005-2007 showed a declining prevalence of malnutrition rate in the city. From 9 percent for 0-71 months old in 2005, it decreased to 6.9 percent in 2008 (coverage of 93 percent) and to 6.8 percent the following year (coverage of 90 percent). Right after it started joining MELLPI in 2003, the City bagged the Green Banner Award and the Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) Award in 2004-2006. This was the culmination of several years of hard work, coordinated efforts in program implementation and constant consultation with the NNC Regional Office for policy and technical support.

2007- present: Davao City's zeal in implementing its nutrition programs continued, pushing the Food Fortification Program, ASIN Law implementation and other regular nutrition programs with the same vigor. This resulted in the decrease of prevalence of malnutrition of 0-71 month- old children from 6.6 percent in 2008 to 4.7 percent in 2010. In micronutrient fortification, by 2010, NNC RNPC Dr. Ungson said that in the country, only Davao City has fully implemented Republic Act 8976; it is also the only city in the country that practices the use of iron-fortified rice in food establishments.

In the country, only Davao City has fully implemented the Food Fortification Law; it is also the only city in the country that practices the use of iron-fortified rice in food establishments.

DR. TERESA UNGSON
REGIONAL NUTRITION PROGRAM COORDINATOR

EBaP and CIMAM and undernutrition: In early 2013, the city-administered program implementation review (PIR) revealed below target performance and inequities among districts in coverage of many primary health care programs including immunization, TB screening and treatment, skilled birth attendance, and an increase in underweight and severely underweight among under-five children (OPT 2012). An Evidence-Based Planning (EBaP) exercise conducted by the CHO, CPDO and *Sangguniang Panlungsod* Committee on Health with support from UNICEF highlighted serious acute malnutrition in certain districts as per WHO Crisis Classification.

In view of the findings, stakeholders recognize the ethical imperative to provide urgent interventions to children identified with severe acute malnutrition (SAM)⁵. During that time, Save the Children launched the first Community based Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (CIMAM) in Davao City following the 2008 North Cotabato displacement crisis. Encouraged by CIMAM success stories in emergency contexts and the effectiveness of the “scientific approach” during the displacement crisis, city nutritionists recommended the introduction of CIMAM as the response to the city’s high SAM prevalence⁶. A successful three-month pilot-test of the CIMAM protocol on nine severely malnourished children followed⁷, after which

⁵ Acute malnutrition reflects weight loss as highlighted by a small weight for a given height. It occurs as a result of recent shocks to a child’s nutritional status, which can be as a result of food shortages, a recent bout of illness, inappropriate child-caring or feeding practices or a combination of such factors. Children who suffer from severe acute malnutrition are very susceptible to infections and at high risk of dying. The problem remains hidden because these children are usually reported to have died of other causes (e.g. pneumonia and diarrhea).

⁶ IMAM is a set-up of updated and scientifically proven protocols that can be used by health providers to manage cases of acute malnutrition in most vulnerable target age group of 6-59 months. It is adopted from a set of international standard guidelines replacing the use of less effective methods of diagnosing and treating acute malnutrition.

⁷ The protocol consists of the first three CIMAM components: supplemental feeding with hot meals or therapeutic treatment to SAM patients, OTC day per district, regular stakeholders meeting for CIMAM, Caregiver/Mothers Class on Hygiene and monitoring and evaluation thru home visits of caregivers of SAM patients

Mayor Duterte gave PhP 6.5 million budget in 2014 to integrate CIMAM in the local health system for city-wide implementation. Davao City served as the demonstration area, with UNICEF and ACF (Action Contre La Faim) International providing technical assistance, becoming the first and only city in the country that applies CIMAM in a non-emergency status.

The linked components of CIMAM are:

- Community Outreach and Mobilization;
- In-patient Therapeutic Care (ITC) for the treatment of SAM cases with medical complications;
- Out-patient Therapeutic Care (OTC) for the treatment of SAM cases without medical complications; and
- Management of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) through targeted supplementary feeding program (TSFP).

Community outreach and mobilization entail promotion of and community involvement in programs combating wasting through the processes of assessment, sensitization, case finding and referral, and case follow-up. Both OTC and ITC components fall under the Health System and Services. SAM cases without medical complications are brought to the OTC for weight recovery through the provision of routine medical treatment and nutritional rehabilitation with ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF). ITC on the other hand treats SAM cases with medical complications in a health facility with 24-hour care capacity and treated with either Formula-75 (F-75) or Formula-100 (F-100) therapeutic milk until the child’s condition is stabilized.

The fourth component, which is the focus of the set of guidelines, handles services and programs aimed at addressing MAM through supplementary feeding with the distribution of supplementary foods in the form of lipid-based nutrient supplementation (LNS), Ready-to-Use Supplementary Food (RUSF) or locally available food with the same nutrient content as that of an RUSF. TSFP specifically caters to children under five who are qualified MAM cases and aims to improve their nutritional status to normal. It also serves as a follow-up venue for cured SAM cases.



Considering the successful outcome of the program, Davao City integrated the CIMAM in the local health system, and expanded implementation of the program to cover the entire city.

In preparation for the CIMAM program, ACF Nutrition team trained health and nutrition workers in the city: doctors, nurses, midwives, BNS and barangay health workers particularly on the management of SAM. The trainings were re-echoed at barangay level. For resource mobilization, the City tapped stakeholders as partners for supplemental feeding, while UNICEF's assignment was to provide procurement services for the RUTF purchase under a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

During the pilot run of the program, Davao City focused on nine severely malnourished children. The city conducted supplemental feeding activities by providing hot meals or therapeutic treatment to SAM patients held per district, conducted regular stakeholders meeting for CIMAM, Caregiver/Mothers Class on Hygiene and monitoring and evaluation through home visits of caregivers of SAM patients.

After three months of implementation, the city obtained 100 percent success rate and rehabilitated all nine children.



Health professionals in Davao City screen children for acute malnutrition by measuring the mid-upper arm circumference.
Source: Davao City Nutrition Division

Considering the successful outcome of the program, (see box 1) Davao City integrated the CIMAM in the local health system, and expanded implementation of the program to cover the entire city. In 2015, the data revealed a cure rate of about 86 percent, a non-recovery rate of 5.6 percent and a defaulter rate of 8.4 percent⁸.

In the same year (2015), Davao City Health Office Nutrition Division with ACF International also started implementing the fourth component of the program: supplementary feeding for moderately

⁸ Davao City Annual Report 2015

BOX 1

JOJO AND THE PILOT CIMAM PROGRAM

Jojo is a 3-year old boy identified with SAM in 2013. He was just skin and bones, had an abnormally bloated and distended stomach, a typical symptom of acute malnutrition.

Upon counseling, his mother agreed to enroll him in CIMAM pilot program.

After 90 days of treatment, Jojo gained weight and was declared to have recovered from malnutrition. Jojo was likewise able to walk and became energetic having recovered from his malnutrition. Jojo's mother noticed that since the child's recovery, her husband always go home earlier than usual to play with his now energetic son.



The use of evidence-based planning process, massive advocacy, partnership and coordination with stakeholders, and support of local decision-makers facilitated the strong and continued implementation of the CIMAM.

acute malnourished children age six months to less than five years old. Done in partnership with NGOs, which donated food commodities, the feeding program for MAM children runs for about 1.5 to 2 months until children reach their target weight. Besides supplemental feeding, blood and stool examinations, deworming and multivitamins are also provided to the program participants. In 2017, partnership with private companies supported 120-day feeding projects (Feeding Hope and *Lutong Nanay*) for 360 severely wasted children. These projects also provided trainings on nutrition and values formation to the mothers of the beneficiaries.

The use of evidence-based planning (EBaP) process, massive advocacy, partnership and coordination with stakeholders, and support of local decision-makers facilitated the strong and continued implementation of the CIMAM. According to CHO and CNAO Dr. Villafuerte, had it not been for the EBaP, some stakeholders would not have discovered the severely acute malnourished children in their area. Moreover, the extensive advocacy of stakeholders became instrumental in making CIMAM a priority program of the local government. Support from the Davao community was likewise strongly felt. Dr. Villafuerte recalled that the city received PhP 7 million worth of pledged donations during

the formal launch of CIMAM Program alone, from NGOs, business sector and private individuals who believed in the program. The Regional Nutrition Committee, for its part, provided policy support to integrate CIMAM in the local health system of Davao City.

However, bureaucratic issues related to procurement of RUTFs hindered implementation of the CIMAM. Ms. Genite, the OIC of CND after Ms. Millana resigned in 2012, said that while the total PhP 6.5 million CIMAM budget included provisions to purchase RUTFs, the CND was unable to buy the commodities because UNICEF requested full payment in cash. This was not permitted under existing city disbursement policies; only quarterly payment was allowed. Hence, UNICEF temporarily provided the therapeutic food for free. To date, the budget for RUTFs remained unutilized and subject to recall to the general fund soon if not deployed or realigned to other programs. UNICEF intervention with accord of the city prevented possible interruptions in the program operations for the rehabilitation of SAM children. Some cases of non-compliance of program participants also challenged program implementation but were addressed by the implementers.

Cardiovascular Diseases Program: In 2011, the city government likewise brought in improved access to health services for the prevention and management of diabetes, hypertension and other risk factors at the grassroots level through the Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Program. Implemented in partnership with Handicap International Philippines and Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC), the CVD Program provides medical consultations, regular monitoring, nutrition and diet counseling, foot care and laboratory testing. It aims to prevent further cases of diabetes and hypertension which are among the top ten causes of morbidity and mortality in the country.

During the launch of the program, it was estimated that about PhP 15 million capitalization would be spent for training of barangay health workers in 182 barangays, installation of equipment and laboratories in 16 barangay health centers, and support activities.

This program continues to be implemented at present. In fact, in 2017, Mayor Sara Duterte allocated PhP 1 million for one-month training of city diabetes educators which included 25 nutritionist-dietitians and nurses. Participants of this training became certified diabetes educators who can provide counseling to *Dabawenyos* with diabetes.

First 1000 Days Program: In 2016, Davao City has increased its budget for nutrition programs to PhP 10 million from PhP 6 million in 2015, aimed at strengthening its campaign against infant malnutrition. The City hoped to increase awareness of the importance of proper nutrition and early childhood care during the first 1000 days of life of the child – the period most critical for the physical and mental development of the human being. The first 1000 days of life (F1K) consist of the nine months in the mother's womb until the child turns 24 months old. Poor nutrition and care in the F1K period manifest in stunting.

Under the program, Davao City utilized its budget to educate pregnant mothers and women planning to have children on the proper care and good nutrition for mother and infant, promote early, exclusive and continuous breastfeeding, organize and reactivate Breastfeeding Mother Support Groups, enforce Executive Order 51 (Milk Code), and promote breastfeeding in the workplace. However, since the First 1000 Days Program is still in inception period, its impact is too early to assess.

PagbaBAGo (Change) Program: The City also launched the *PagbaBAGo* Program, a planned and responsible parenthood program for the distribution of *Pagbabago* bags to women containing instructional and promotional materials on reproductive health and location of nearest centers of services. The program aims to empower women by making them conscious of their health and reproductive roles, also a step in alleviating poverty.

Innovative Efforts of Barangays: Given the huge size of Davao City and differing context and needs of its 182 barangays, nutrition program management is normally a challenge. Yet barangays are innovative enough to respond to their respective situations or context. The leadership of Barangay Mintal was pivotal in using physical structures to create barangay identity and make the presence of health and nutrition felt in the community (see box 2). Barangay Matina Aplaya included tribal leaders of the Badjao community as members of the barangay nutrition committee to engage them in efforts towards nutrition improvement. In effect, communities started to be more participative in nutrition programs.

Effective Scaling-Up Strategies: Again, considering the size and number of barangays in Davao City, cascading the nutrition programs to all barangays is indeed a challenge. However, Davao City has fared well in this regard because of the following strategies: first, assigning one nutrition officer per district

BOX 2

MOBILIZING CONSTITUENT BARANGAYS

The case of Barangay Mintal

Upon assumption in office, Barangay Chairman Ramon M. Bargamento II of Barangay Mintal observed that his constituents appear oblivious of their own barangay nutrition programs, probably because the barangay health center was located in the same building as the district health center. Also, it was usual before that barangay nutrition activities were merged with church activities. In other words, the barangay did not have identity and platform from which to expect participation from them.

Uneasy with the situation, the Sangguniang Barangay built a barangay hall in 2014 to make its presence felt. Like a one-stop shop, barangay services are offered finally in its own space -- the health center is at the back, the LGBT and women's desk are in the adjacent structure, the offices of the BNS and BHW are inside the barangay hall. The courtroom for the Lupong Tagapamayapa (Peace and Order Council), mini museum and a conference room have their own space. Regular office hours are set at 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. In the barangay official's assessment, the increased level of participation in programs that eventually followed is attributable to the aforesaid strategy.

to ensure close supervision of BNS within their jurisdiction; second, increasing the number of BNS to ensure that every barangay has at least one BNS; third, tapping the *Liga ng mga Barangay* (League of Barangays) to channel information and policies to barangays; fourth, taking advantage by Ms. Millana of her concurrent position as President of Barangay and Cultural Communities Affairs Division (BCCAD) of the City Mayor's Office. BCCAD serves as the Office's information nerve center to monitor the needs of the 182 barangays, maintaining linkages and facilitating coordination with agencies/offices and NGOs in the timely and synchronized delivery of information, instructions and services; and fifth, appointment of a deputy mayor each (not to be confused with a popularly elected vice-mayor), to assist the elected mayor in his political activity and development project to represent each of the ethnic groups of Ata Manuvu, Iranun, Kagan, K'lata, Maguindanao, Maranao, Matigsalog, OvuManuvu, Sama, Tagabawa, and Tausug, facilitating, coordination of plans and programs intended for IPs.

Strong and Dedicated Human Resource Base: Davao City's competent CNAOs and CND heads gave direction and motivation to other nutrition officers and BNS. Davao City's journey is replete with stories of sacrifices of its nutrition workers. Some risked their lives to deliver services to NPA areas or in tribal communities with security threats because of tribal war (*pangayaw*). Some walked several kilometers just to reach GIDAs, while some exerted efforts beyond their call of duty such as learning the language of the Badjaos just to effectively communicate with them. See Box 3. Hence, the effort of the City to increase their honorarium and provide additional incentives and benefits to them is commendable.

Stakeholders Participation: Another remarkable factor of success of Davao City in nutrition is the active involvement of NGOs, people's organizations, business sectors, academe and international organizations, in various capacities, in most of nutrition programs of the city. Some took a lead role in implementation of banner programs (i.e. Kiwanis International led the Food Fortification Task Force); provided human

resources (i.e. University of Immaculate Conception shared its students to render assistance in research or field work); most shared financial resources to fund programs such as CIMAM, supplementary feeding for MAM kids (Kiwanis Davao Eagles, Rotary Club of Davao West and Davao Adventist Hospital), others technical assistance (i.e. UNICEF, ACF International); and still others a combination of assistance.

This is likewise true at barangay level. In three barangays visited (Barangays Mintal, Matina Aplaya and 23-C), the presence of non-government sectors is likewise strongly felt. Barangay Mintal tapped the University of Southeast Philippines for the creation of a database facilitating generation and interpretation of OPT result, the University of the Philippines Mindanao for direction-setting workshop, Rotary Club for provision of ambulance, and the Japanese government for funding support for various programs. Students of Ateneo de Davao offer activities for children in the Badjao community of Barangay Matina Aplaya. NGOs are also initiating efforts to construct communal toilets in Barangay 23-C.

The Davao City leadership attests that at the city and barangay levels, the organization's support extended thus far has produced significant and lasting positive impact on their respective communities.

BOX 3

WALKING THE EXTRA MILE FOR MATINA APLAYA

Shortly after passing the licensure examination, RJ's first assignment as registered nurse is in Barangay Matina Aplaya, one of the five depressed barangays of Davao City at the time and home to the Badjao community in the coastal area.

His first few months in the community were challenging. The community had poor sanitation conditions. Most households had no toilets. Malnutrition was prevalent. Incidence of teenage pregnancy was increasing. The community's health-seeking behavior was likewise not developed. Most of the time, RJ would only discover a woman is pregnant in her second trimester of pregnancy. Many mothers and fathers were hard to convince to bring their children in the health center for immunization, feeding program or for consultation.

RJ did not easily give up. Determined to build the community's health-seeking behavior and improve their nutritional and health status, he sought ways to win their trust. First, RJ studied the language of the Badjaos, facilitating the identification of the community's needs and the conduct of health/nutrition education. Second, he made himself and his services visible to the community by putting a table in the barangay multi-purpose hall to serve as his office/clinic. True enough, the simple act gradually encouraged the community to avail of health and nutrition services.

Today, because of the joint efforts of the local government and the nutrition and health workers, the condition of the Badjao community in Barangay Matina Aplaya has shown significant improvements in many aspects. While not all households have toilets, there are now sufficient communal toilets with water supply. The community became more disciplined in their garbage disposal. Their participation in health and nutrition interventions significantly improved, resulting in better nutritional status of the community, particularly their children. More importantly, Barangay Matina Aplaya is no longer included in the list of top five depressed barangays.

KEY RESULTS IN NUTRITION AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

Davao City had its fair share of ups and downs during its journey towards improved nutrition. There appears, nevertheless, a general downward trend of child malnutrition from 2006 to 2017 based on OPT Plus records. Stunting decreased from 10.7 percent to 6.2 percent between 2012 and 2017; wasting and underweight from 5.3 percent to 1.0 percent and 6.9 percent to 3.1 percent in the same period (see Figure 3). The OPT coverage from 2006 to 2017 averaged 91 percent. The latest MELLPI exercise undertaken by the Regional Evaluation Team in Davao City was in 2016.

Just like any other journey, Davao City had its share of obstacles, mostly in the area of program implementation. The most challenging feature of the Davao City Nutrition program is its scale - being one of the biggest cities in the world in land size, with 182 barangays spread out across the territory - and its multiple ethnic groups.

An example is Isla Verde of Barangay 23-C, a community of mostly Badjaos and Muslim migrants from Marawi and other areas in Mindanao. The community is beset by the high prevalence of malnutrition attributable mainly to low level of education, poor sanitation and lack of discipline, and poverty. Out of 150 households, only one has its own toilet. They lack water connection which makes sanitation more difficult. Some do not know their age nor the ages of their children. While some have odd jobs, poverty remains prevalent in the area. The children are mostly malnourished, usually subsisting only on *lugaw* (porridge) or *balanghoy* (cassava). The prevalence of teenage pregnancy is also high.

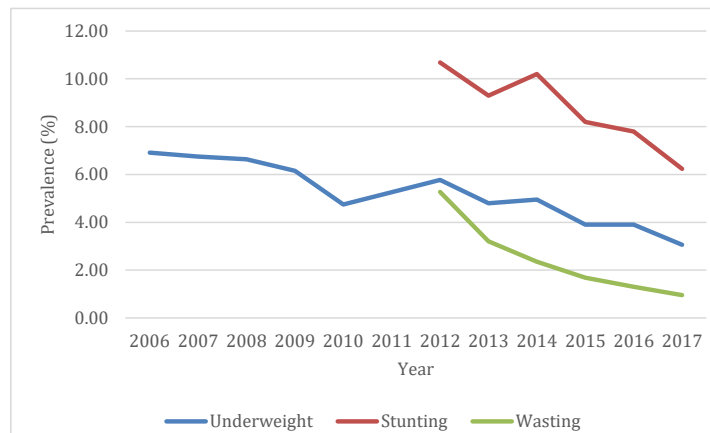


Figure 3. Prevalence of malnutrition among children 0-71 months, 2006-2017

Source: Davao City Annual Report 2012 and 2017 State of the Women and Children Report, Operation Timbang Plus reports



Just like any other journey, Davao City had its share of obstacles, mostly in the area of program implementation. The most challenging feature of the Davao City Nutrition program is its scale - being one of the biggest cities in the world in land size, with 182 barangays spread out across the territory - and its multiple ethnic groups.

The barangay and the city are aware of the situation and, in fact, have exerted serious efforts to address them. Program beneficiaries themselves attest to the activities of the nutrition officers and BNS assigned in the area who conduct regular weighing and monitoring of children, give mothers classes and deliver nutrition programs or interventions. NGOs and religious organizations are tapped to offer services or programs to alleviate their situation. However, it is clear that the City and the barangay need to come up with holistic programs and interventions to address the underlying causes of malnutrition. Barangay 23-C may find inspiration from the journey of the Badjao community in Matina Aplaya which had been in the same situation a few years back but, with deliberate actions from various stakeholders, achieved significant improvement in their living conditions.

Another major challenge of Davao City as a growth pole is the problem brought about by rapid urbanization of Metro Davao. Urbanization attracts migrants. Davao City is considered a prime destination for many migrants notably because it is the center of trade in Mindanao and it offers scores of economic opportunities and higher paying jobs, agricultural development, as well as educational pursuits. While a growing urban population is a potential source of human productivity in industrial and commercial sectors, on the other side is the challenge it poses in terms of nutrition, housing, education, health, infrastructure, roads and transport, utilities, sanitation and waste, and employment.

Presence of insurgencies in some areas such as in Paquibato and the far locations of some barangays such as Marilog likewise hinder delivery of social services. In fact, statistics show that for the years 2012 and 2016, the districts with the top two highest prevalence of underweight children 0-71 months were Paquibato and Marilog. The former has underweight prevalence of

11.12 percent in 2012 and 15.53 percent in 2016 while Marilog's underweight prevalence stood at 6.51 and 10.75 percent for the same years.⁹ Moreover, SAM cases are predominant in Paquibato district. The causes identified are poverty, poor feeding practices, low awareness of basic nutrition concepts and care giving practices indicating the need to address these causes head on.

The City Health Office statistics from the OPT Plus showed that for 0-71 months old children in 2017, seven out of top ten barangays with the highest prevalence of underweight and four out of top ten barangays with highest rate of stunting came from the Paquibato district, where the presence of insurgencies hinder the delivery of social services including health and nutrition¹⁰. Second, in both lists is Marilog, an upland barangay.

City-wide data from the January to May 2015 OPT suggest that stunting is not a small problem. Almost 15,000 children were stunted and more than 5,000 were severely stunted. Talomo District had the highest number of children and a stunting prevalence of 21 percent. The contributing factors identified were poor maternal health and nutrition before, during and after pregnancy, as well as inadequate infant feeding practices especially during the first 1,000 days of a child's life, and infection.¹¹ Exclusive breastfeeding, a maternal practice for which the Davao Region including Davao City has been strong, is on a decreasing trend from 2008-2015 (see Figure 4) and among identified reasons are lack of IEC materials and insufficient counseling given to pregnant women on EBF.¹²

⁹ Page 22, 2017 State of the Women & Children Report.

¹⁰ City Health Office Nutrition Officer II Eloisa Simbajon in <http://davaotoday.com/main/economy/health/paquibato-district-has-highest-number-of-malnutrition-cases-in-davao-city/>

¹¹ Page 17, Davao City Local Development Plan for Children 2016-2019 volume 1

¹² Davao City Local Development Plan for Children 2016-2019 volume 1

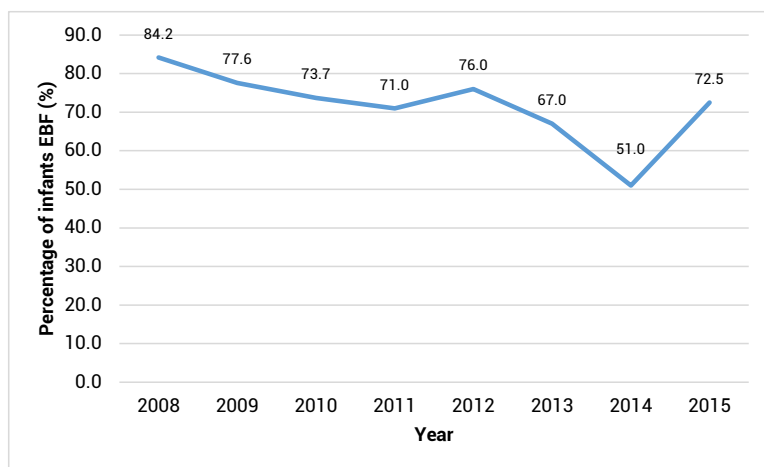


Figure 4. Percentage of infants exclusively breastfed up to 6 months old, 2008-2015

Source: Davao City Annual Report 2012 and 2015

Because of this, the city has included in its 2016-2019 Local Development Plan for Children, programs to increase the number of mothers practicing exclusive breastfeeding: production of IEC materials on EBF, conduct of symposiums on EBF, capability building on IYCF, assisting a number of tertiary hospitals in the city to become “mother-baby friendly hospitals,” advocates of exclusive breastfeeding, among others. An aspect that should as well receive attention is infant and young child feeding practices.

Davao City is exploring to expand the above programs to cover the complete First 1000 (F1K) Days period of the child, giving an F1K program the same level of energies and emphases as the food fortification and CIMAM programs of the city that are worthy of emulation by other LGUs.

Lessons Learned

The geographic, political, economic, and socio-demographic context of Davao City provides significant challenges in its journey to good nutrition. Nonetheless the city has taken huge steps to overcome these constraints by the support of the leadership of the LGU, strengthening its structures and expanding its personnel base, equipping them, providing budgets to its programs and enabling structures, implementing key programs with excellence and taking into account its IP and GIDA communities. The story of its journey offers lessons other similar LGUs may learn from:

- 1. Leadership plays a vital role in the implementation of nutrition programs and policies.** In the case of Davao City, the hands-on, visible and action-oriented leadership of its past and present chief executives has undoubtedly inspired and mobilized key actors to be part of the city’s journey towards nutrition improvement. In fact, there appears a general culture among key actors of being action and results-oriented, which they probably emulated from their LCE. Full budgetary support has not been lacking from the leadership.
- 2. The critical role of the CNAO and the CND in the overall steering of the city nutrition program is an important ingredient to success.** In its long journey to better nutrition Davao City has counted on committed, capable and relentless operational and strategic directions and management of two entities – the CNAO and the CND. Without the well-established functional offices and focal persons, the city’s nutrition program would not have gone far.

3. **The strengthening of the structures for nutrition at all levels from the CNC to BNCs has been vital part of the ascent of Davao City.** It is evident in the history of the city's nutrition program that the CNC and the BNC have been platforms for stronger sectoral involvement in the nutrition program.

4. **The broad participation of the NGOs, people's organizations, business sectors, academe, and other private sectors provide good complement to the resources of the local government.** In Davao City, many of its nutrition programs were executed in collaboration with these key stakeholders. Davao City, particularly its CIMAM Program, teaches that successful resource mobilization requires effective articulation of the results to be achieved, the planned evidence-based solutions and the role of the local government and the partners in achieving the goal.

5. **The recognition of the importance of WASH and livelihood in the fight against malnutrition in the city's program is an important part of the journey.** In certain parts of the city, malnutrition would not have gone far without success on improving the sanitation practices of the population. The decisive action of the city's nutrition leaders to address the water and sanitation and hygiene education is one that should not be forgotten in LGUs where this is a serious issue compounding the problem of malnutrition.

6. **Close collaboration between health workers (doctors, nurses, midwives) and nutrition workers (nutrition officers and BNS) in Davao City results in efficient implementation of nutrition programs and maximization of human resources.** The CVD Program of Davao City is a clear example of this.

7. **Migration needs to be incorporated in the urban planning.** Migration is both an opportunity and a threat to sustainable development. Hence, cities must become involved proactively in the decision-making process of allowing migrants into their cities and in providing facilities for them so as not to reduce its development potential. The private sector and non-government organizations have a vital part to play in migrant integration by ensuring access to urban services and infrastructure, among others.

8. **The innovations engendering the broad and committed support of the barangays in the fight against malnutrition are also worthy of including in the arsenal of lessons for huge LGUs.** First, the city assigned one nutrition officer per district to ensure close supervision of BNS within their jurisdiction. Second, it increased the number of BNS to ensure that every barangay has at least one BNS. Third, it tapped the League of Barangays to relay information and policies. Fourth, the former CND Head used her concurrent position as President of Barangay and Cultural Communities Affairs Division (BCCAD) of the City Mayor's Office to nutrition program's advantage. BCCAD serves as the nerve center of information and caters to the needs of 182 barangays in Davao City. It also maintains linkages and coordinates with agencies and non-government organizations in implementing community-based programs and activities. Fifth, the city continued to appoint deputy mayors, a tradition which started since 1955, to assist the city mayor in political activities and development projects. Deputy Mayors make rounds in barangays within their jurisdiction to ensure that the city's programs and services are properly implemented in each barangay and progress is reported to the city mayor.

9. **IPs and GIDAS and conflict areas were given equal priorities in the city nutrition program.** Many innovations in sanitation and livelihood, the programs of development partners and NGOs as well as private sectors had coverage of these areas. The city has a deputy mayor for each of the tribes of Ata Manuvu, Iranun, Kagan, K'lata, Maguindanao, Maranao, Matigsalog, Ovu Manuvu, Sama, Tagabawa, and Tausug. With their appointment, coordination of plans and programs intended for IPs is facilitated.

10. **Benchmarking is an effective strategy utilized by LGUs as a shortcut to understanding the process and best practices in nutrition program management.** Davao City utilized this strategy, visiting IGACOS and Sto. Tomas, Davao del Norte and picking up the confidence to embark on improving the nutrition program.

11. **The conduct of situation analysis is the first step to evidence-based planning (EBaP) that enables LGUs to develop plans and programs appropriate to the identified situation and needs of their communities.** Encouraged by UNICEF and the CIMAM training from UNICEF and ACF, the City recognized the seriousness of malnutrition crisis. This gave way to the development and implementation of the Davao City CIMAM Program to address acute malnutrition even outside an emergency situation.



WELCOME TO THE **CITY OF MANDALUYONG**
LEAGUE OF
NUTRITION ACTION OFFICERS
PROVINCE OF ILOCOS NORTE



SPONSORED BY
MAYOR MENCHIE ABALOS
MANDALENO...DISIPLINADO • GAWA HINDI SALITA

Mandaluyong City

Mandaluyong City is a frequent site for nutrition learning visits. Its leaders expressed willingness to continue mentoring other LGUs.

Photo by: Mandaluyong City Nutrition Division

Transformational Leadership in Nutrition: The Case of Mandaluyong City

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the highly urbanized City of Mandaluyong (population: 350,528 in 2015, income class: 1st) in the National Capital Region received the country's highest award in nutrition, the Nutrition Honor Award. It was the culmination of almost two decades of continuous improvement in nutrition programming that in the period 1999-2016 brought down the prevalence of underweight and severely underweight children from 6.95 percent to less than 0.69 percent and the prevalence of overweight and obese children from 5.77 percent to 0.25 percent based on OPT data (refer to Figure 2)¹. The prevalences are now among the lowest in all LGUs in the country.

Up until 1997, nutrition hardly figured among the City's priority programs. The Nutrition Service under the City Health Office staffed by six nutritionist-dietitians implemented limited

nutrition program under the supervision and funding of the Department of Health-District Health Office No. III (Micronutrient Supplementation, Food Fortification, Targeted Food Assistance Program and Operation *Timbang*) along with the celebration of the Nutrition Month every year. Other funds came from Urban Health and Nutrition Project and the 4th Country Program for Children (UNICEF).

The local units of national sector agencies also undertook small projects (nutrition education in school, limited feeding by the social welfare department) with nutrition objectives guided by memoranda and directives of their mother agencies that likewise provided their small budgets. There was no coordination of operations nor timely sharing of reports of activities with the Nutrition Service.



Figure 1. Location map of Mandaluyong City

In 2016, the highly urbanized City of Mandaluyong in the National Capital Region received the country's highest award in nutrition, the Nutrition Honor Award.

¹ After the introduction of height boards and the Guidelines on Child Growth Standards the prevalences were revised upwards for underweight among pre-school children (0.9 percent) and overweight/obesity (1.8 percent) for 2015. Malnutrition indicators dependent on length/height measures (stunting prevalence, wasting prevalence) are not reported, awaiting the success of on-going initiatives in improving measurement techniques and skills of barangay workers in the field, health units, daycare and school.

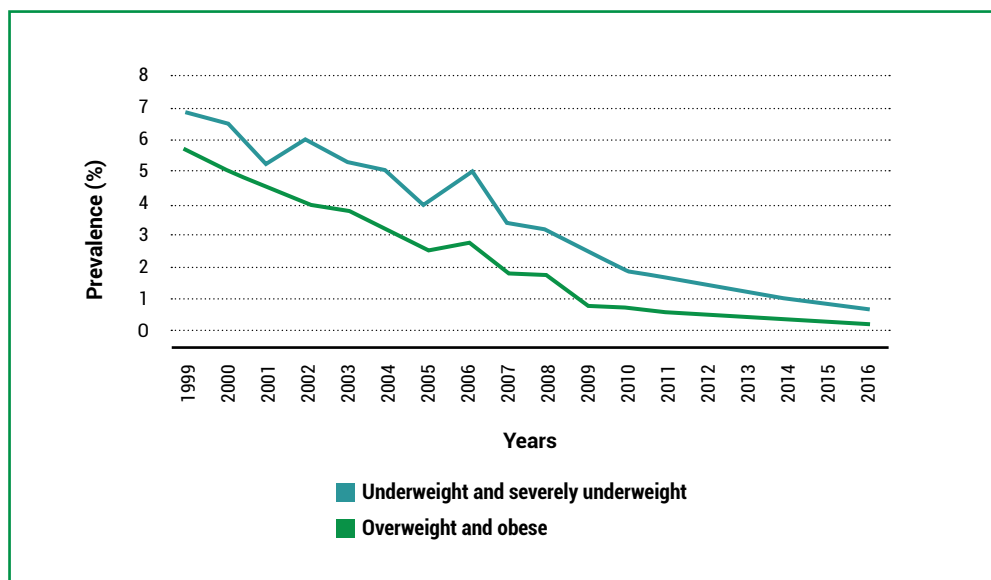


FIGURE 2. Nutritional status of children in Mandaluyong City, 1996-2016

Despite deficient anthropometric measures, the staff of the Nutrition Service was well-aware of the City's malnutrition problems at that time but did not have direct access to the highest leadership of the local government unit (LGU). Sometime in 1996, they finally got the ear of then Mayor Benjamin Abalos Sr. towards the end of his term to request for the deployment of a Barangay Nutrition Scholar for each barangay as the law mandated. The Mayor endorsed them to then Councilor Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos Jr. who would soon-to-be the winning candidate to succeed the elder Abalos as city mayor. The Councilor promised to do something for the unit.

The first watershed moment for nutrition came during the presence of the new Mayor Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos Jr. to welcome attendees of the Regional Nutrition Awarding Ceremony in August 1997. At the request of the NNC Regional Office, the LGU hosted for free the nutrition awarding ceremony in its new conference venue, the auditorium of the *Kaban ng Hiyas*. This was Mandaluyong's fortuitous introduction to the awards. Shocked for having received no recognition except for hosting, it likewise brought to light another disturbing fact: the city ranked last among 17 LGUs in Metro Manila in the

annual Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI).

For an administration that turned out to be people-centered and that placed a high premium on social development, joining the MELLPI to improve nutritional status is an activity the LGU must undertake. Participating in the award process provides the workshop to get ideas from. According to the Mayor, "*Sumali ka para matuto ka*" (By joining, we learn.)

Thus, began the LGU's long journey to improve the City's nutrition program, beginning as host of the NNC awards in 1997 to achieving the coveted national Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) in 2016. The gains in nutrition for the people of Mandaluyong have been notable and thus far sustained.

The road to the NHA entails the establishment of functional nutrition program structures and effective delivery of programs for nutrition results (see Figure 3. Nutrition Journey of Mandaluyong City). Political leadership ensured that the enabling elements for functionality and effectiveness were available. Putting together all elements required the time-intensive involvement of the leadership, determined mobilization to

counter stakeholder inertia, uncooperative behavior and fatigue, and technical guidance from the NNC. It helped that winning the NHA and precursor awards were effective rallying points. It helped in a huge way that the leaders were examples to emulate for those involved, in their open-minded willingness to learn, correct weaknesses and work tirelessly.

A year after the City earned the NHA, in 2017 Mandaluyong got an even higher MELLPI rating, thus maintaining its NHA status.²

STRENGTHENING THE NUTRITION PROGRAM STRUCTURE- THE ROAD TO FUNCTIONALITY AND RESULTS

Soon after the NNC awards hosting incident, the City set out on the journey to achieve the nutrition goal. To ensure that the Nutrition Service would always have a direct line to the local chief executive, the Nutritionist-Dietitians recommended that the Mayor appoint the first lady Mrs. Menchie Abalos as the City Nutrition Action Officer.

Participation in the NNC's nutrition awards require at the outset, complying with institutional requirements for an implementable nutrition program that are not yet in place in the City, among which were the appointment of a City Nutrition Action Officer (CNAO), establishment of the City Nutrition Committee (CNC) and the hiring of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS). By September 1998, barely three months after newly elected Mayor Abalos Jr. took office, the mayor's wife Carmelita "Menchie" Abalos assumed her role as CNAO, the recruitment of BNS for the 27 barangays started and

²The improvement in nutrition programming and nutritional status happened in the context of generalized city development. Excellent management is pervasive. The City had been reaping rewards, among which in recent years are: the Presidential Award for the Most Child Friendly City of the Philippines in 2011; the Seal of Child Friendly Local Governance in 2012; Top Performing Local Government Unit in NCR in 2015, the Seal of Communities of Practice on Child Friendly Local Governance in 2016, the DOH Kalusugang Pangkalahatan and TESDA's best livelihood training program, Galing Pook Award for best practices (management of public cemeteries) in Philippine local governance, along with personal awards from business associations. Also in July 2015, Mandaluyong City entered into the Guinness World Records for the largest Zumba class in one location.

BOX 1

THE NUTRITION HONOR AWARD

NNC's Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) is given to an LGU which has won three consecutive regional Green Banner Awards (2010, 2011, 2012 for Mandaluyong City), followed by three consecutive CROWN Awards (2013, 2014, 2015 for Mandaluyong City), culminating in the NHA (2016 for Mandaluyong). The awards required the set-up of the nutrition program structures and enabling elements that would generate continuously improved nutritional outcomes, i.e. sustained reductions in underweight, stunting, wasting and overweight and obese prevalences. The NHA is a symbol of consistent LGU priority given to nutrition, translated into effective multi-sectoral work in the city and its barangays, measured by the indicators of the NNC Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI). Since the inception of the MELLPI in 1979, NNC has accorded the honor to 45 LGUs.

the CNC was re-organized and activated. The Nutrition Service under the City Health Department became the City Nutrition Division (CND).

Clarity in the nutrition mission among the city leadership, the CNAO and her CND team when they embarked on the long journey to the NHA provided constant guidance in the ascent. In 1998, the modest First City Feeding Program was launched in one barangay of Mandaluyong. In the same year, the NNC Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI) validation again ranked Mandaluyong at the bottom of 17 cities in the entire Metro Manila.

	Before 1998	1998 - 2006	2007 - 2009	2010 - present
Nutrition Action Officer	None	Carmelita “Menchie” Abalos’ term as CNAO (1998-2003) Alexandria “Queenie” Gonzales term as CNAO (2004-2007)	Menchie Abalos was CNAO post	Menchi Abalos was CNAO until she was elected as Mayor of Mandaluyong City in 2016 Dr. Pecos Camarines assumes CNAO post at present
Nutrition structures & systems		Reactivation of CNC and start of BNS hiring (1998) Series of BNS training on nutrition programs (1999-2000) RNPC Federizo assessed 2006 as start of noticeable increase in City motivation for nutrition	ND Bello assessed 2008 as year of program take off	Appointment of the Barangay Nutrition Action Officers (wives of barangay chairmen) as counterpart of CNAO (2010)
Programs		1998 - First City Feeding program in launched in one barangay 1999-2000 Millenium Baby Project launched, project of KKM, for preventive, curative health care for pregnant women 2004-2005 Citywide Feeding Program and launch of Tutok Dental Gamutan	2007 - Millenium Baby Project repacked, re-launched into Enhanced Millenium Baby Project 2007 – Launch of Breastfeeding patrol (breastfeeding group advocates) initially in some barangays 2008-2009 highlights: Media Caravan, Nutrilympics	2010 Innovative projects: <i>Kusinero</i> Festival, Nutri Cake projects, aimed at increasing vegetable consumption 2011 Innovative projects: <i>Nutri Pan de Nash Eskwelahan</i> , <i>MandaRUNTakbo para sa Kalusugan</i> , Breastfeeding with the First Hour at MCMC, Establishment of breastfeeding stations at City Hall, 6 barangays, all public schools, Globe Telecom 2012 – Innovative projects: <i>D'yaryo</i> Bags, E-Trike, Nutri Fun Run, <i>Kaps Amazing Talent</i> Year 1 to 4 (2012-2015) 2014 – Innovative projects: OW-OBESE PO!, <i>HakbangsaTamangTimbang</i> , Provision of Healthy Food in the Canteen, <i>Cookielicious</i> , Campaign on Nutritional Guidelines for Filipinos and Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle, <i>Task Force Batang Ina</i> 2015 – Mural Painting of Ten Kumainments, <i>Bulate Tyan ... AlisDyan</i> , 3 Zumba projects including for kids, Guinness World Records for the Largest Zumba Class 2016 – Manda 1,000 – <i>Unang Isang Libong Araw Para sa Batang Wow!</i> , <i>Comple Caravan</i> , <i>Family Big Day</i> , <i>Well po! Eh Di Wow!</i> Program 2016 IYCF Program: Breastfeeding Terminal, Breastfeeding Blitz, ERPAT (fathers for breastfeeding), <i>Tulong Para sa Disadvantaged for Breastfeeding</i> (TUPAD), Mandaluyong City Girl Scout Council for Breastfeeding, Food Packages for Breastfeeding Support Group, and other breastfeeding group advocates
Awards in nutrition		1999 – started at bottom in entire MM in the MELLPI evaluation 2001 – Special award for “Most Improved City in Nutrition Management” 2003 – 3rd place in Nutrition Program Management, NCR		2010 OPT – decreased prevalence of malnutrition from 6.95% to 1.65% in 1999-2010 2010 – 2012 Green Banner Awards and subsequently the CROWN Award 2013 – 2014 CROWN Maintenance Awards 2015 – Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) evaluated in 2016 2015 – Mary Grace Tamayo got the 2015 NOBNS

Figure 3. Nutrition Journey of Mandaluyong City



The Enhanced Millennium Baby Project consists of various activities that promote good nutrition of pregnant women and young children (within the first 1000 days period), such as distribution of grocery packs (left), delivery of prenatal care services (middle). Advocacy activities to promote exclusive breastfeeding, such as the synchronized milk letting activity (right), are also implemented.

Source: Mandaluyong City Nutrition Division

Incremental strengthening of the programs started slow. While immediately in 1998, a series of trainings to prepare the BNS for their role in nutrition programming in the barangays was conducted, the one-barangay First City Feeding Program expanded only in 2004-2005, six years after it was launched. The Millennium Baby Project started in 2000 was enhanced only in 2007. The above were concrete gains in structure and delivery mechanisms, earning for the City the 2nd Runner Up Award in nutrition program management, but program coverage remained limited to the city core.³

In fact, according to the NNC – Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator (RNPC Milagros Elisa V. Federizo), it would take years, around 2006, before she could sense that the motivation was increasing. By 2008, the take-off in programming has started, according to Nutritionist-Dietitian (ND Marie Tess Belo). One would note that by 2008, Mandaluyong City reached the 1st Runner Up in Nutrition Program



Clarity in the nutrition mission among the city leadership, the CNAO and her CND team when they embarked on the long journey to the NHA provided constant guidance in the ascent.

³ On completing his 3rd term as City Mayor, Ben Hur Abalos Jr. was replaced by a political ally, Mayor Neptali Gonzales II. With his wife, Alexandria “Queenie” Pahati-Gonzales as the new CNAO, he continued the nutrition programs of the previous administration. The new Mayor included in his priorities the strengthening of the health system for preventive care, launching the Tutok Dental Gamutan. The 2nd Runner Up Award happened under his watch. In 2007, Benhur Abalos Jr. was re-elected as mayor, assuming the post for 3 terms until 2016. Mrs. Menchie Abalos returned to her CNAO assignment.

Management in the NCR, likely convincing leaders and nutrition staff that the City has the capacity to reach the goals.

But the programs had not closed the gap in coverage of the entire City. Many barangays, specifically ones that were not of the same political parties, were not yet involved nor cooperative. The City had started to vie for the Green Banner Award and the CROWN was just three years ahead. The MELLPI exercises would become increasingly comprehensive and would delve deeper into the scrutiny of barangay performance in nutrition. In 2010, CNAO Menchie Abalos took an uncommon step, unspecified in the nutrition program guides. At the advice of RNPC Federizo, the CNAO established the counterpart of her City post in the barangays, the volunteer positions of the Barangay Nutrition Action Officers (BNAOs); then she enjoined the wives of *punong barangays* to serve at the posts. The strategy breathed life into nutrition actions in the barangays, the second watershed moment in the journey.

At this point, everyone including the CNAO, began learning the ropes of program implementation and responding to its requirements. Where they were unsure of steps, the CNAO and nutrition office requested assistance, often from RNPC

Federizo, and more importantly, heeded advice. The CNAO's instruction: "*Kung may problema, hanapan ng solusyon*." (If there are problems, find solutions). Noted the RNPC, Mandaluyong is a city apart from others in the National Capital Region in the sense that people in nutrition, including the LGU leaders were not afraid to be assessed and evaluated – they invited the Regional Evaluation Team; they welcome such exercises as opportunities to correct errors.

The attitude was not only an example for others to emulate; it was setting an unwritten policy. Nevertheless, it needed to set more firmly. In internal reviews where her assistance was often requested, the RNPC was assured that she can be honest, to tell it as it is, which was necessary because at times there were tensions. Once to get her message across to CNC members who had also been working hard, she had to be honest, "*Hindi ako nagpunta rito para makipagbolahan*." (I did not come here to stoke egos).⁴

The leaders were hands-on and tried to be thorough in their management style. Staff tasked for program roles were provided the needed tools and equipment and training. Monitoring status

⁴ A CNC member Dr. Zaldy Carpeso, then Medical Nutrition Program Coordinator appointed during the tenure of Mayor Neptali Gonzales II, assured RNPC Federizo that her honest assessments and suggestions were welcome in the City program.



Kung may problema, hanapan ng solusyon. (If there are problems, find solutions)

MRS. MENCHIE ABALOS
CITY NUTRITION ACTION OFFICER

Mandaluyong is a city apart from others in the National Capital Region in the sense that people in nutrition, including the LGU leaders were not afraid to be assessed and evaluated – they invited the Regional Evaluation Team; they welcome such exercises as opportunities to correct errors.

MRS. MILAGROS FEDERIZO
REGIONAL NUTRITION PROGRAM COORDINATOR,
NNC NCR

and implementing responses required accurate assessment of nutritional status and therefore, the BNS and the schools were provided with appropriate up-to-date mechanical column (Detecto) scales (to replace bathroom scales) and height boards (where none was available before) for measuring the height and weight of children.⁵ The action improved the program's capacity to accurately estimate underweight and, with the issuance of the Guidelines on Child's Growth Standards in 2012, the determination of stunting and acute malnutrition. In 2015, the City furnished the BNS laptops for e-OPT Plus and the training that facilitates OPT information processing and report generation.⁶ As the City's nutrition program grew bigger, its annual budget increased almost every year, reaching 18 million pesos in 2017 from the humble 50 thousand pesos in 1996.

⁵ A CNC member Dr. Zaldy Carpeso, then Medical Nutrition Program Coordinator appointed during the tenure of Mayor Neptali Gonzales II, assured RNPC Federizo that her honest assessments and suggestions were welcome in the City program.

⁶ The City encountered problems in the application of the e-OPT, resulting in delayed generation of malnutrition data to date. Low stunting rates are supported by administrative data on selected maternal and child services, yielding the following ranges: pregnant women with 4 or more visits (about 87-90 percent in 2011-2016); postnatal care (81-88 percent in 2013-2016); low birthweight (from 10.5 to 3.80 percent) in 2011 to 2016 and exclusive breastfeeding until six months (from 85 to 71 percent in 2013 to 2016). In 2017, all services have inferior data except for low birthweight (66, no data, 41 percent, respectively). Micronutrient deficiencies are not measured at the City level.

More capacitation would follow the initial BNS training: development and updating of skills for nutrition promotion and the measurement of nutritional status, recording, filling forms and report writing. The entire nutrition program team was trained in nutrition program management, including members of the City Nutrition Committee, and later the BNAOs and BNCs. In one planning exercise, RNPC Federizo assisted the City in situation assessment and taught the CNC and BNC members the method of problem tree analysis. Whatever training a member of the CND team got was shared with the rest. According to ND Belo, in planning the capacity building of people involved in nutrition, the CND followed the NNC manuals and the advice of the NNC Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator, referring to the Trainer's Manual on Nutrition Program Management of NNC as their "bible".⁷

Mrs. Abalos' position as CNAO was more than a statement that nutrition has the support of the City's leadership. As it turned out, she immersed

⁷ A seasoned NNC Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator, Mila Federizo has been "shepherding" LGUs in the National Capital Region, specifically the local nutrition committees, in improving nutrition program management. In the process, she herself serves as a vehicle for sharing good practices among LGUs. The Nutrition Action Officer in the Municipality of Pateros when the town was preparing for the Nutrition Honor Award that it would eventually achieve in 2002, Ms Federizo considered some of the Municipality's good practices related to the training and management of BNS applicable to Mandaluyong.



The entire nutrition program team was trained in nutrition program management, including members of the City Nutrition Committee, and later the BNAOs and BNCs... the CNC and BNC members were taught the method of problem tree analysis.

herself into the cause – chairing CNC meetings, participating in review and planning meetings, personally mobilizing barangays and everyone else, and taking care of her staff and workers. She established incentives for performance and showed consistency in her words and actions through her choice of healthy lifestyle for her own family.

The two leaders, CNAO and the Mayor, attended critical feedback sessions and planning activities. Both were present during report sessions of MELLPI evaluations while the CNAO also accompanied the internal annual reviews and planning exercises of the nutrition program where RNPC Federizo was always invited to assist in the process.

The Mayor himself is fully supportive, attended post-evaluation MELLPI sessions as well, frequently mentioned nutrition in his speeches and showed appreciation for members of the nutrition team including in simple gestures like introducing team members and their accomplishments in informal setting. He, himself was a learner. Once as a resource person sharing the experiences of Mandaluyong in nutrition programming, he competently explained the First 1000 Days, initially giving a scare to the NDs who thought he did not know the subject matter. Having garnered recognition for the City's achievements in nutrition in which he played an active part, he has shared the lessons in many fora and accommodated visitors to the City on "Lakbay-aral" (study visit for benchmarking) tours.⁸

Beyond caring for people who work for the City, the program consequences of the couple's empathy for constituents cannot be ignored.

As explained by some members of the CNC and the CND staff, some of the City's projects (e.g., benefiting persons with disability /children with

⁸ In recent conversation with Mr. Benhur Abalos and current Mayor Menchie Abalos, they expressed their willingness to continue mentoring other LGUs, even providing some funding for the requirements of nutrition programming.



Former Mayor Benhur Abalos was involved in MELLPI and joined post-evaluation sessions.
Source: Mandaluyong City Nutrition Division

scoliosis, adding a children's section in the City's TB service, programs to address overweight and obesity) were inspired by their leaders' encounters in their routine work schedules. Recognizing issues and big and small problems, nutrition or otherwise, affecting the lives of constituents, they immediately task teams to develop specific projects directed to the issues.

Despite the obvious huge contribution of Mayor Abalos' leadership in the City's achievement of the awards in nutrition, ND Belo recounts how he hardly took credit for them, always praised staff and partners for their excellent performance every step of the way.

Journeys to nutrition improvement always entail some degree of change process, more intense if the LGUs are non-performing ones at the beginning. As the journey of Mandaluyong City would attest, establishing and strengthening the nutrition program underwent many hurdles.

SETTING UP THE CITY NUTRITION STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS

The City Nutrition Office: The CNAO's base, the City Nutrition Division (CND) composed of nutritionist-dietitians (ND) and a Medical Nutrition Program Coordinator, serves as the engine of nutrition programming, the support staff for policy development, coordination and monitoring functions of the CNC/BNC and technical supervisors of the Barangay Nutrition Scholars. Much of the vibrancy of LGU mobilization for nutrition depended on how successfully the CND with support from the City leaders stimulated nutrition actions at two levels: horizontally through sector and multi-sectoral actions in the CNC and vertically through barangay BNS and BNC actions.

Initially, the CND experience had not been all smooth at both levels. There were frictions and inertias where the presence of the hands-on leader was less felt; there were challenges to leadership by proxy.

In monitoring at the City level, getting sectors used to submitting reports of activities and achievements for CND review and compilation into required LGU reports and the MELLPI initially created frictions. Timeliness and quality of reports complicated completion of documents, when not every sector was cooperative especially when projects are funded only by their mother agencies. The situation changed for two reasons. When the City's quest for the NNC awards advanced, program management reports compiled by the CND became directives of the CNAO. Further, innovative nutrition projects undertaken by sector agencies in response to the call of the CNAO were funded by the LGUs, translating into more budget for sector nutrition activities and more accountability. In one holdout case, it took several attempts at explaining what information was needed and why, for the local unit of a national agency (Department of Education) to start to regularly provide timely information.

In the past, it had not been simple as well to obtain the cooperation of barangay leaders used to running programs as they saw fit in their own localities. The NDs who coordinated nutrition actions on the ground recognized the need to be adept with different styles of advocacy and were determined to support their BNS when the latter encountered problems with local leaders, going full force if necessary. Though empowered by the CNAO support and inspired to hone their stock talents in negotiations, the tasks were nevertheless formidable - the lowly BNS was no match to the barangay officials. At times, it is a brave face that worked (see Box 2).

Making matters more complicated, the MELLPI was not only interested in the BNS effectiveness at barangay level; it was even more focused on evaluating the functioning of the BNCs headed by the barangay chairs. For the purposes of the increasingly urgent demand of the MELLPI, the final solution came with the creation of the BNAO posts, the deployment of barangay chairs' wives to the cause of nutrition and the personal approach to the barangay chairs by no less than the CNAO, Menchie Abalos. The CND took care of the technical side.

The reflected authority to the CND did not come about only as a result of the full support of the Abalos nor the technical management competence the NDs continually developed and demonstrated. Another factor greatly helped: over the years, the City was increasingly successful in improving children and adults' nutritional status and increasingly getting recognized. In 2010, they were competing for their 1st Green Banner Award and nutrition was getting more noticed. In 2015, they were vying for their 3rd CROWN award and were candidates for the top national award.

BOX 2

ENLISTING SUPPORT OF
BARANGAYS FOR NUTRITION

In one case, the nutrition staff were wary about approaching a barangay chairman who had earlier scolded his BNS. One ND had to do it finally, confronting the barangay official who started the encounter true to form. The ND held her ground, told him firmly why she was there, that she did not come to hear his unkind words and insisted that he listened. In the end, she convinced him with arguments that undertaking nutrition actions would benefit children and make him popular.



Can you bear to be the reason why Mandaluyong, our city, would not win the Nutrition Honor Award? And everyone plodded on.

Getting closer to achieving the NHA was generating a crescendo of excitement in various sectors of the LGU, at the same time that the intensity of efforts was a cause of fatigue expressed in barangay nutrition committees. Managing those situations fell on the NDs shoulders who used the personal relationships capital that the Abalos had built, “*Makakaya nyo ba na kayo ang magiging dahilan kung bakit hindi makukuha ng Mandaluyong ang award?*” (Can you bear to be the reason why Mandaluyong, our city, would not win the Nutrition Honor Award?) And everyone plodded on. Fast forward to 2016-2017, a year after the City achieved the NHA award, the same fatigue challenge was met with a similar discourse, “*Matapos bang makuha ng Mandaluyong ang award, iiwanan na ba natin sina Sir Benhur at Ma’am Menchie at hindi na natin ime-maintain ang NHA?*”⁹ (After garnering the NHA and putting tremendous effort in it, are we now going to abandon the Mayor and the CNAO and not maintain our level of excellence?) In 2017, the NNC NCR Office conferred the City the honor of having maintained the NHA in its first year. The challenges will not cease but the CND is optimistic that these will be surmounted.

⁹ The RNPC has a more practical appreciation of the “fatigue” factor, something to the effect that if nutrition work was your job, how can one speak of fatigue? One continues to deliver because it is her/his job, pointing to the strategic importance of institutionalization of responsibilities for nutrition.

Information System for Nutrition and Evaluation:

The information system is a main responsibility of the CNC, executed by the Secretariat.

Before the Nutrition Service became CND in 2013, information on barangay nutrition activities were submitted directly to the regional offices or sector mother units (e.g. DepEd-NCR, DSWD-NCR) before they could be shared with the LGU. After the establishment of the nutrition program, city-level reporting was established, followed by systematization of record keeping and reporting of *Operation Timbang* (OPT) Plus results and nutrition activities at the barangay level. Nutrition activities and results were therefore monitored more closely by the CNAO and the CND.

At present, the Barangay Nutrition Committees (BNC) develop the Barangay Nutrition Action Plans (BNAP) using NNC guidelines since 2014. All nutrition-related activities, both innovative and mandated programs including the e-OPT Plus, are described in the BNAP, facilitating subsequent reporting. Outputs of all activities, especially the e-OPT Plus, are reported by the BNS to their designated NDs, who then review and process reports for submission to the Public Information Office. The latter is responsible for maintaining a public use database. Starting 2015, to support BNS reporting, record keeping and

information processing, the city government provided computers and computer-training to the barangays.

Present monitoring of children's nutritional status is implemented by a well-coordinated team of BNS, midwives, BHW, and Mother Volunteers supervised by the Nutrition Coordinators (the NDs).

A CNC evaluation based on NNC indicators measures the effectiveness of the BNAPs and provides directions in setting objectives for future interventions and activities. In addition, a CNC-formed special evaluation group assesses performance in service delivery, nutrition assessment aspects (measurements and computation), documentation and report writing. The latter has become a tool for coaching and teaching the BNS and BNC, providing feedback on weaknesses that need corrections and foster a deeper understanding of the nutrition program.

In information dissemination and feedback, social media finds wide use by both constituents and nutrition officers, as well as in other civic and governance aspects.¹⁰ Each barangay has an active Facebook account where activities are documented with photos and posts from constituents, barangay council officers, civic groups and community organizations.

¹⁰ Facebook has been particularly useful in public service announcements such as job openings, basketball games, expressing grievances, barangay festivities, medical missions, seminars and meetings, and in mobilizing members of the Barangay Council and constituents during impending calamities and upcoming activities.



A city nutrition coordinator guides barangays in nutrition planning and solving problems of implementation.

Source: Mandaluyong City Nutrition Division

The City Nutrition Committee: Before 1998, the LGU's nutrition committee existed in name but was not functioning. The local offices of a few devolved national agencies undertook projects with nutrition or related objectives as part of their responsibilities for their mother agencies. The City Health Office (CHO) had ante-natal care, immunization and de-worming and a Nutrition Service in-charge of Operation *Timbang*; the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) had limited Day Care and the Department of Education (DepEd) had some nutrition education. Nutrition initiatives were guided by memos and directives of the (national) agencies that likewise provided their small budgets. There was no coordination and no sharing of information on operations. The city's Nutrition Service already suspected that the Operation *Timbang* provided a deficient picture of the malnutrition situation of children but there was no program in place to address the situation.



The feeding program launched by Mandaluyong City in 1998 and expanded in 2004 continues to be implemented.
Source: Mandaluyong City Nutrition Division

The Mayor presided over the first CNC organizational meeting. Thereafter, CNAO Menchie Abalos, chaired subsequent quarterly committee meetings, lending to nutrition the imprimatur of the LGU chief executive's office.

Within the following decade, three substantive programs were implemented to add to those being undertaken by the City Health Department (CHD), DepEd and City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD). These were the feeding program (launched in 1998, expanded 2004); the Millennium Baby Project of the local women's organization headed by the CNAO—*Kababaihan*

Kakaiba ng Mandaluyong (KKM) (launched in 1999, enhanced 2007) providing preventive and curative health care for pregnant women, and, the Breastfeeding Patrol in 2007.¹¹ The problem was that the coverage of the programs had remained city-based up to 2007, unable to gain foothold in many barangays. The resolution would come in about two years.

¹¹ CNAO Menchie Abalos was also the President of the *Kababaihan Kakaiba ng Mandaluyong*, a city-wide organization of around 30,000 mostly mother-residents from generally all walks of life, actively promoting women empowerment through sustainable livelihood projects. As expected, KKM also provide preventive and curative health care for expecting women and their unborn.

CNC member activities picked up by 2008. CNAO Menchie Abalos frequently challenged members to think of new nutrition initiatives and innovations to undertake, empowering sectors to mainstream nutrition into their otherwise unrelated projects. An explosion of sector and multi-sectoral projects ensued, most of them in the long six years leading to the NHA. Around 30 were innovative projects with catchy titles in feeding and early age nutrition, wellness and healthy eating and livelihood.¹²

Several flagship projects are extensively developed livelihood initiatives started by the nutrition committees of Barangay New Zaniga in 2011 (*Dyaryo Bag Making*) and Barangay Malamig in 2012 (*Mandaluyong Garland*), and by LGU sector Disabled Affairs Division in 2013 (*Livelihood Program for PWD*). The City Health Office in collaboration with some LGU sectors started in 2011 and expanded in 2013 the flagship Promotion of Desirable IYCF Practice (for exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding) and the Promotion of Desirable Nutrition and Lifestyle behavior in 2011 (for healthy eating, physical activity, managing stress, no smoking / drinking in the community school and workplace). The LGU sector Manpower and Development and

¹² Evangeline Kim Cuenco (WB Senior Urban Specialist) referred to Mandaluyong as a "laboratory for a lot of new innovations in local governance."



The Mandaluyong City Nutrition Committee.
Source: Mandaluyong City Nutrition Committee FB Page

Training Center implemented the Cookielicious – “Timbang ng Anak Ko Babantayan Ko” (I Monitor the Weight of My Child) in 2016. The City’s march towards the NHA goal was generating excitement, according to ND Belo – everyone and every sector seemed to want to contribute to the success.

Program expansions uncovered the limitations of then current CNC membership. At the recommendation of RNPC Federizo, membership expanded to include the Budget Office, Sanitary Inspector’s Office and TESDA. In 2010, for

efficiency reasons, the CNAO started holding joint meetings between two programs she administered: nutrition (under the CNC) and child rights (under the Local Council for the Protection of Children or LCPC). The potential is readily apparent: in addition to the efficiency in the use of the time of those involved, the measure unlocks the synergies between the two concerns - nutrition and child rights, strengthens the institutionalization of both in the LGU and promotes the notion that good nutrition especially in the First 1000 Days is a child right.

More and more sector agencies creatively thought out of the box, in the process benefiting from synergies with other nutrition projects from the training, guidance and guidelines coming from the CND, DOH and the Regional Office of the NNC, and additional budgets from the City. Conceivably, RNPC mentoring on program management fundamentals for the nutrition awards including the setting up of work processes and standards would have been applicable as well to project contexts outside of nutrition.



In 2010, the CNAO started holding joint meetings between two programs she administered: nutrition and child rights...the measure unlocks the synergies between the two concerns, strengthening the institutionalization of both in the LGU and promoting the notion that good nutrition especially in the First 1000 Days is a child right.

The Barangay Nutrition Committee: The counterpart of the City Nutrition Committee at the barangay level, the structure is headed by the barangay chair. Its contribution had been largely dependent on whether the barangay chief executive is sympathetic to nutrition or not. At the barangay level, the take-off for nutrition programming improvement occurred sometime in 2010 after the appointment of the wives of barangay chairs as volunteer BNAOs. It will be recalled that the year before, the City reached 1st Runner Up in Nutrition Program Management in the NCR. With the BNAOs as partners, the CNAO personally appealed for support to the nutrition programs in their respective areas and to prepare themselves in case their barangays got chosen in future random MELLPI exercises.

RNPC Federizo considers obtaining the cooperation of all barangays regardless of political affiliations as the most important challenge for the program. Once won over, “the cohesion and adhesion to the mission was remarkable”: the barangay chairs can explain their area’s nutrition situation and programs and identify the households in the barangay with malnourished children. BNS functioning and ND technical supervision of nutrition actions became smoother as well.

Getting closer to the NHA, the members of the barangay nutrition committee including the *Punong Barangay* made sure that they could explain their problems in nutrition, the programs to address them and aspects of program management. Everyone trained in nutrition program planning and management, including the use of the problem tree in analyzing the barangay nutrition situation. The learning was intense – some members of the barangay committees expressed desire to ease a bit because of fatigue, on the way to the NHA and after, but they had stuck to the high level of involvement thus far.

The Barangay Nutrition Scholars: Among the first acts of Mayor Benhur Abalos to address malnutrition in the city and set it on the long road towards the Nutrition Honor Award was the recruitment of the BNS for deployment in the city’s 27 barangays. The primary qualifications for a BNS in the City is that she should have the ‘*puso*’ (heart) and commitment to serve, should know how to deal with people and have the determination to achieve the goal of ending malnutrition in the community. The first batches of BNS recruited by the city government were handpicked by the CNAO herself. They were composed of women street sweepers from the City Environmental Office, women employees of the other departments and women members of the

Kababaihan Kakaiba ng Mandaluyong. To this day, most of the originally recruited BNS are still in the City Government payroll. Succeeding recruits for BNS were recommended by the Barangay Chairs.

Overtime, the number would swell to 70 during the City's busiest times of strengthening barangay operations, before stabilizing to the present 45 BNS. Their first series of training was undertaken in 1998, followed by several updating through the years to gain skills on nutrition promotion with mothers, measurements of weight and height of children using up-to-date equipment, recording and processing of information and filling up of forms.

They are employed under the City Health Department and stationed at the different health centers in the barangay. Since nutrition cuts across different health programs, the BNS is vital in the delivery, referral and integration of nutrition programs, projects and activities essential to health services such as Maternal and Child Health, Family Planning, Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses, Dental Health Service, National Tuberculosis Program for Children, Non-communicable Diseases and Healthy Lifestyle Program. In the barangays, they work side-by-side with the BHW and the BNC

under the direct technical supervision of the NDs of the City Nutrition Office. As the experience of Mandaluyong would show, the BNS did not reach optimal effectiveness until the barangay chairs and BNCs aligned themselves with the mission.

Mandaluyong City did not lack the other nurturing elements for the BNS. At some point, the CNAO tried to develop the career BNS, eligible under the Civil Service through equivalency of experience with educational qualifications. However, the successful first converts left nutrition service almost immediately after obtaining the civil service eligibility. At present, the BNS are hired as 'casual, regular' or in 'job order' positions.

An officially hired BNS in Mandaluyong City is provided a regular monthly salary from the city government, and stipends from the barangay LGU.¹³ The Mayor and CNAO ensured that the BNS are taken care of. In addition to providing them training and the tools of their mission, they are given recognition and incentives for their contribution. In turn, the BNS have a different level of reason to show and keep commitment, *"nakakahiyang hindi kumilos"* (embarrassing not

¹³ At the time of data gathering for this case study, the barangays pay their BNS a 1000-peso monthly stipend. One barangay, Plainview, grants a monthly stipend of 2,000 pesos to its City Government-hired BNS. This is in addition to 5,000 peso salary paid by the City.



The primary qualification for a BNS is the City is that she should have the 'puso' (heart) and commitment to serve, should know how to deal with people and have the determination to achieve the goal of ending malnutrition in the community.

to work hard), an example of the Abalos' adept use of culture in the cause of nutritional improvement. At present, before assuming their post, each BNS undergoes a three-day orientation on their roles and functions, a computer literacy training and a practicum which includes recording in the journal the weights, heights and nutritional status of children 0-71 months before they are deployed to their areas of assignment. Succeeding training programs for the BNS include: training on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), Nutrition in Emergencies, WHO Child Growth Standards Training, on top of the refresher courses and other follow-up trainings. More recently, they were trained in e-OPT, NNC's software on recording and processing the OPT Plus results.



The BNS have a different level of reason to show and keep commitment, “nakakahiyang hindi kumilos” (embarrassing not to work hard), an example of the Abalos' adept use of culture in the cause of nutritional improvement.



A learning visit in Mandaluyong City includes sharing on the city's nutrition programs and an exchange of good practices at city and barangay levels.

Source: Mandaluyong City Nutrition Division

Given Mandaluyong City's BNS recruitment procedures, training, technical support and incentives, it is no surprise that a BNS from Mandaluyong City, Ms. Grace Tamayo was recognized in 2015 by the National Nutrition Council as National Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Scholar (NOBNS) Awardee.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Having achieved the NHA recently, Mandaluyong City's intense experience is still fresh and continues through recent years of maintaining excellent performance.

The journey certainly was not easy but the challenges were less overwhelming with the cohesion and adhesion of everyone to a single mission. There was the leadership, the program implementers that include the nutrition program coordinators and the entire execution team, and the RNPC, giving life to the concept of the nutrition program management and its accompanying milestones defined by the NNC awards. From the stories of the journey, there is no doubt that each entity made huge contributions. Had the collaborative stance of any one group been different, the outcome for the City might have been different as well.

The program coordinators had a long history of patient advocacy with the leadership, waited in the wings, and were tireless when the factors aligned. Empowered by leadership, they strengthened skills in nutrition program management, planned and built capacities so that the trainees in turn can lead, and supervised others in day-to-day activities. The City Nutrition Committee rhetorically described the first few years of the journey "as a mission like climbing Mt. Everest", but recognized as well that it was a "guided climb".

They were backed by the constant presence and shepherding of a nutrition program "guide" and the stock of good practices that evolved and were nurtured in other LGUs. Unwittingly, the experience of other NHA awardees, specifically of Pateros according to RNPC Federizo, provided some guide posts in shaping aspects of Mandaluyong's journey. Improving nutrition from a low level is a naturally long process. Mastering nutrition program management took time; winning an award has no shortcut because MELLPI required sustained demonstration of progress over time. They drew guidance from the Regional Office of the National Nutrition Council at a much bigger scale during the journey than ever before.

Delivering results for nutrition that impact on prevalences requires that the nutrition program structures and systems set in place be nurtured and made sustainable by an enabling leadership that also equipped the structures with the tools necessary for effective implementation. In Mandaluyong City, the leader (the Mayor and the CNAO together) set nutrition as an unambiguous priority. The leader reinforced it at appropriate moments, gave people clear assignments, training, tools and resources to accomplish them and cleared the paths to implementation.

Leadership was transformational – positive roles were engendered among involved sectors in the course of implementation and nurtured through instilled discipline, standards and accountability for performance strengthened by incentives. Moreover, while enjoining everyone to work hard and show results, they present themselves as examples of the mindset that they want everyone to adopt in the journey: problem-solving, open-minded, focused, determined and persistent, and possess empathy for workers and constituents. Emulate the leaders. “Gawa, hindi salita” (Deeds, not words).¹⁴

It has not been only a learning experience for the City. It was a sharing one as well. Grace Tamayo, the 2015 NOBNS from Mandaluyong City, made herself available to assist in mentoring Pasig BNS. The City has accommodated other LGU officials wishing to learn from their experience. The former Mayor Benhur Abalos is a frequent resource speaker in the City or in other fora where he has in the past been invited to share his City’s best practices. He has likewise signified his willingness to continue helping other LGUs make their own journeys to improved nutrition implementation.

¹⁴ Mandaluyong City’s leaders appear to be successful in using mottos to rally its workforce and constituents and prime them towards certain desirable behavior: “Gawa hindi salita” (deeds, not words) and the more recent “Mandalenyo ... Disiplinado” (Disciplined citizens of Mandaluyong) Stirring up cultural pride is another banner: from “Joke City” to “Tiger City” and the ‘we are in it together’ mode most visible in wellness activities.



The journey certainly was not easy but the challenges were less overwhelming with the cohesion and adhesion of everyone to a single mission. There was the leadership, the program implementers that include the nutrition program coordinators and the entire execution team, and the RNPC, giving life to the concept of the nutrition program management and its accompanying milestones defined by the NNC awards.



Tagaytay City

In Tagaytay, implementing nutrition programs is a grassroots movement -- a good way to reach constituents and make them feel the sincere concern leadership has for them.

Photo by: National Nutrition Council

Tagaytay City:

A Grassroots Movement towards Nutritional Improvement

INTRODUCTION

Based on DILG's LGU fiscal sustainability scorecard for 2009-2012, the component City¹ of Tagaytay was rated at the top of its category and income class in revenue generation capacity and expenditure management. Dependence on the internal revenue allotment (IRA) for expenditure is low as a result of particularly strong local revenue collections. The presence of 21 accredited NGOs and community organizations including workers and employees' associations suggests that the institutional framework for public participation is in place for its population of 71,181 (as of 2015) in 34 barangays.

The City is only 59 kilometers from Manila, boasts of pleasant temperature for most months of the year, scenic views of Taal Lake and Taal volcano and a thriving food service industry, making it a popular tourist destination and

second home for residents of neighboring provinces and the Greater Manila Area. As a result of the vibrant tourism and consequent boom of the construction and service industry, Tagaytay City's landscape has been undergoing rapid change and along with it, some shifts in population composition. LGU officials estimate that 80 percent of the population is comprised of visiting residents (owners of housing and condominium units that serve as vacation residences) and transients (workers in the construction industry).

Even with the boom in the tertiary industry, its fertile lands and agriculture remain an important source of income among the 20 percent "native" Tagaytay population, the sustainable base for food security among the locals. In fact, participants of focus group discussions (FGD) completed for the case study in the City and one barangay mentioned that sporadic malnutrition cases pertain to the transient population beneficiaries, not to the children of locals. The small total number of beneficiaries,



Figure 1. Location map of Tagaytay City in Cavite

¹The Local Government Code of 1991 classifies cities according to population size and income as Highly urbanized independent, Component and Independent component. A component city's population size and/or income do not reach those required for Highly urbanized independent cities, and it is not independent of the province in which it is geographically located.

increasing fiscal capacity of local governments and resource mobilization at the barangay level enabled the City's feeding programs to cover all children, including transients, all year round. For periods not covered by the national programs' 120-day feeding of malnourished children in day care centers and public schools, supplemental budgets are provided through incomes from school canteens, City government allocations and resource mobilization in barangays.

Tagaytay City is long recognized as one of the LGUs that have excelled in nutrition program implementation, having been the recipient of the Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) in 2004 and the National Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Scholar (NOBNS) Awards in 2014, 2015 and 2016. "For us, nutrition is a way of life" according to the barangay officials of Maharlika East, the 2014 awardee for Best Barangay Nutrition Committee.

How the City managed to establish a nutrition program worthy of the NHA provides many valuable lessons to LGUs wishing to embark on the same journey. Perhaps more remarkable was how Tagaytay managed to keep motivation and performance in nutrition program implementation at a high level almost 15 years after it was awarded the NHA. The nutrition

program continues to face some remaining challenges, but from how the program arrived at where it is now, one can be confident that the same attributes of hard work, perseverance and sense of mission supported by political will would be enough to overcome them

TAGAYTAY'S JOURNEY TOWARDS IMPROVING NUTRITION PROGRAMMING

It took Tagaytay City two serious attempts to finally start its journey towards improved nutrition program implementation: the first time in 1989 and the second in 1995. The milestones of that journey are recounted below and presented in a timeline in Figure 2.

In the 1989 Operation *Timbang* conducted in the City, only half of all children were found to have nutritional status classified as normal. Of children whose nutritional status was below normal, 35 cases were 3rd degree malnourished and 500 cases were 2nd degree malnourished (using Gomez classification for severe and moderate malnutrition, respectively). Tagaytay's local chief executive at that time, OIC Mayor Benjamin Erni, decided to confront the City's state of child nutrition, with advice from the National Nutrition Council Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator (RNPC) Alice Ramos. RNPC Ramos had earlier lobbied as well for the implementation of the five impact programs on food production, health protection, food assistance, nutrition education and credit assistance for livelihood.

Through an office order, Mayor Erni established the City Nutrition Office (CNO) attached to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and appointed as Nutrition Coordinator (NC) Ms. Marietta "Mayette" Dogelio, the most active Barangay Nutrition Scholar among the five BNS the City had at that time.² The Nutrition Coordinator assignment was a one-man job-order post; the situation was not going to change in the next two years.

² In her younger years, Ms Marietta Dogelio became a BNS to help her father, then a barangay captain, with nutrition in the barangay. In 1989 before her appointment to the NC post, her research found PD 1569 & PD 491 useful to convincing the DILG for BNS allowance from barangays. Succeeding with 500 pesos/month BNS allowance.

Local Chief Executive	Benjamin Erni (1988 - 1993)	Francis Tolentino (1994 - 2003)	Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino, Jr. (2004 - 2013)	Dr. Agnes Tolentino (2013 - present)
Nutrition Action Officer	1989-1995 Marcos Bayos (designated, from City Planning and Development Office)	1995-1998 Rodolfo Castillo (designated from Budget Office) 1999-2008 Carmelita Perma (designated from DSWD)	2008-2010 Dr Raquel Bertudes (designated from DSWD) 2010 – present Engr Emilma Pello (designated from City Planning and Development Office)	Current CNAO Engr. Emilma Pello
Nutrition structures & systems	1989 – BNS Dogelio became CNPC, no staff; trained in NNC Region 4A; CNC reactivated 1989-91 BNCs set up in then 23 brgys; 1st BNS training 1991 - Launch of 5 impact programs: on 70,000 pesos CDF funding, first 10 Salter-type scales purchased 1992 - Nutrition office moved to LCE office, with budget; 4 more nutrition coordinators hired	1995 – BNS cooperative organized, ran iodized salt sale program for strict implementation of RA 8172; BNS Federation established. CNPC sent to Los Baños and Trece Martires to learn 1995 – BNS increase in LGU allowances to Php 1,000 2004 – started local search for outstanding BNS	2004 - DILG advised barangays to retain the BNS /BHW/DCW as per DILG Sec Robredo's memo 2010 – Mayor Bambol issued EO: all barangays provide office for BNS; started of BNS 8-hour monthly meetings, with budget 2010 – start of practice that health and nutrition budget in brgy equally divided between to BNS & BHW	2015 - e-OPT introduced. BNS provided laptops or desktops. 2017 - Bayanihan sa Nutrisyon sa Tagaytay launched. BNS mentor or coach other BNS 2017 - launch Achieve Good Nutrition Educate and Support (AGNES), technical assistance to BNCs on the prep of Action Plans and Minutes of the Meetings; program branding for innovative ideas
Programs	1992 – start of active phase of barangay resource mobilization to finance share of feeding programs 1992 – Excess food processing program launched, DA's RIC taught jelly, jam making, 10% net for school feeding 1992-93 – <i>Bayanihan</i> planting of fruit bearing trees, <i>malunggay</i> and <i>kadyos</i> 1993 – fund-raising activities, advocacy on nutrition month	1995 – FRANCIS program launched 1997 – Animal dispersal to farmers and families with malnourished children 1998 – start of rolling store, 50% subsidy to basic commodities 2002 – LUSOG Program launched 2002 – SIKAP program adopted for 4 years, became income generating. Other active resource mobilization 2002-2003 – HATID Program launched 2003 – Agrikulturang nayon sa Tagaytay (ANT) Program launched, zoning to 213 purok, VHW appointed	2004 – Lingap sa Brgy - Lingap sa Paaralan funded from GAD 2004 – DILG reminder to CNC: attend meetings, generate resources for programs; provide fish pond for feeding program; checked if action plans properly implemented 2005 - Feeding Program for pregnant mothers: funded by barangays only for indigent moms; others get nutrition info, egg & veg educ 2008 – Synchronized Breastfeeding every August; <i>Malunggay sa bawat tahanan</i> 2010 - present – Lingap sa Barangay at Lingap sa Paaralan 2012 – procurement of laptops and start testing e-OPT tools	2014 – Tagaytay Youth Organization draws youth in sanitation, youth development and OPT 2014 – feeding program of pregnant mothers allocated funds by all barangays 2015 – F1K days ni Baby launched; BNS gave IEC on proper child care. Pregnant mothers receive gifts (diaper, Php 600 from brgy) if complete 4 prenatal check up), with counseling on proper nutrition 2015- Ordinance on Establishment of Lactation Area in all barangays business & food estab; 100% compliance Intensive Nutrition Advocacy (INA), distribution of ProLacta – malunggay capsule (to increase milk production); enhanced ANT, LINGAP sa Barangay, LINGAP sa Eskwelahan in addition to blanket feeding of children. indigent mothers
Awards in nutrition	1993 – Green Banner Award; but not sustained in 1994 because of spike in underweight among school children; received LGU special citation on salt iodization	1998-2001 Green Banner Awards 2002-2003 CROWN Maintenance 2004 Nutrition Honor Award	2004-2009 Special Citations from NNC 2010-2012 No Awards for the City, only City OBNS 2010- 2nd Place NOBNS 2011-12 – NOBNS finalist	2013-2016 NHA Maintenance Award 2014, 2016, 2017 NOBNS Award 2015 OBNS finalist 2013-2016 <i>Pabasa sa Nutrisyon</i> Award and Hall of Fame in <i>Pabasa</i>

Figure 2. Milestones in the nutrition journey of Tagaytay City

To learn the basics and requirements of nutrition programming and implementation of the five impact programs, Ms. Dogelio was sent to the National Nutrition Council Region IV Office for a two-week training.

The Mayor also reactivated the City Nutrition Committee (CNC), dormant since its establishment in 1984. With the DILG at his side, he presided over in the series of initial meetings from which he got the Council members' commitment to include nutrition and the five impact programs in their agencies' plans, a vital first step in the preparation of the City Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP). Nobody knew how to prepare a CNAP. NC Dogelio again sought assistance from RNPC Ramos, who sent a senior Nutrition Officer to closely guide her and the CNC in the rushed preparation of the document before the Nutrition Month in July 1990.

The OIC Mayor had other nutrition structures to establish at the barangay level: appoint Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS), establish the Barangay Nutrition Committees (BNCs) which would formulate the corresponding Barangay Nutrition Action Plans (BNAP). The first one was easy - twenty-three BNS were appointed as per PD 1569. As to the second and third requirements, realizing what NC Dogelio was facing alone as a very junior

City employee, members of the re-activated CNC - the DILG, City Agriculture Office, City Health Office, City Budget Office, and City Planning and Development Office (CPDO) - decided to lend a big hand. They accompanied NC Dogelio in the spirit of unity and solidarity in the establishment of the BNCs and helped in the preparation of the BNAPs of the more advanced barangays. "*Kawawa naman si Mayette* (Poor Mayette)". Much later, when the number of barangays increased to 34, more BNS were likewise appointed to comply with PD 1569 including putting two BNS each in two big barangays. The CNC also continued to assist the Nutrition Coordinator especially in support of the BNS training.

The preparation for the nutrition program implementation was advancing. In 1991, the Nutrition Office still attached to DSWD received its first budget for programs from the City's 20 percent development fund to finance the implementation of the NNC-defined five impact programs. Part of the funds was used for the purchase of the City's first ten Salter weighing scales. Around this time, the City Nutrition Committee conducted the training and subsequent evaluation of the BNS, of which the focus was documentation, with a trophy for the winner financed through Christmas caroling.



To learn the basics and requirements of nutrition programming and implementation of the five impact programs, Ms. Dogelio was sent to the National Nutrition Council Region IV Office for a two-week training.

In 1992, a City resolution transferred the CNO from the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) to the Mayor's office. Ms. Dogelio was given four additional nutrition coordinators for assignments to specific barangays to start off vigorous implementation of the five impact programs, namely (1) food production, (2) health protection, (3) food assistance, (4) nutrition education and (5) credit assistance for livelihood program. Three of the new staff came from the BNS ranks while the fourth one was from the CSWDO. It is worth noting at this point that from the beginning, the set-up of Tagaytay City's nutrition program deliberately focused on barangay-based program operations.

Providing the CNO with its own permanent staff was the start of the active phase of barangay mobilization for nutrition actions, including the delivery of programs and the resource mobilization the barangays conducted to finance their share of the program budget. The CNC, nevertheless, continued active involvement in program monitoring and BNS strengthening. In 1992, the CNC prepared a draft resolution for barangays to increase the monthly allowance of the hardworking BNS team from PhP 500 to PhP 1000 per month.

An example of a program of resource mobilization is Excess Food Processing, involving the collection by the CNO staff themselves of rejected fruits from street fruit sellers for processing into pineapple chunks, jam, jelly candy and the like with the help of the women members of the Rural Improvement Club of the Department of Agriculture (DA). The project became income generating from which 10 percent of income went to pre-school feeding. Tagaytay City has many examples of smaller projects that make financial contributions to the program. Income-generating activities provided a source of funds for barangay feeding programs as well as constant opportunities for participation of stakeholders in mobilization for nutrition.

Program implementation progressed satisfactorily, especially the maternal and child care, that by 1993, the City got its first taste of an NNC award – the Green Banner Award. It was short-lived: by 1994, the prevalence of underweight among school children worsened. Tagaytay City received special citation from UNICEF for a program on the use of iodized salt but failed to sustain NNC's Green Banner status. There would be no awards for the City till 1996.



Providing the CNO with its own permanent staff was the start of the active phase of barangay mobilization for nutrition actions, including the delivery of programs and the resource mobilization the barangays conducted to finance their share of the program budget.

The next mayoralty elections in 1994 brought in a change in administration.³ Mayor Francis Tolentino assumed office starting 1995 to the end of the maximum three terms, in 2003. To the relief of the nutrition coordinators, despite political differences, he also gave priority to nutrition and to the City's standing in nutrition program implementation.

Among the new mayor's actions for nutrition was to send NC Dogelio to two cities that were likewise new in the nutrition competition but that sustained their Green Banner status (Los Baños, Laguna and Trece Martires, Cavite which would both achieve the Nutrition Honor Award in 2001) to learn about the steps. "*Handa ka na ba?*" (Are you ready?) was the Mayor's question upon her return, reflecting the deliberate strategy the Chief Executive was taking. NC Dogelio was ready. After more intensive capacity building of the BNS and everyone involved in the program, the implementation by the BNS and BNCs of projects in all barangays took off the ground. The CNO staff (consisting of Ms. Dogelio and the nutrition coordinators) monitored and mentored the CNC, giving attention to barangays both in areas close

to the City center and areas that are hardly accessible.

To the City's unsustained Green Banner status, the mayor responded with a focus on school children through a program called Fortified and Reinforced Additional Nutrition for Children in Schools (acronym FRANCIS, later changed to FIDEL, on a budget of PhP 200,000 or an equivalent of PhP 5.50 per child for 120 days). In the same year (1995), the City had assessed that its frontline workforce, the BNS, was "fully enabled". The City Government decided to complement the allowances to the BNS paid out by the barangay by PhP 500.⁴ Altogether, the action ushered in a series of nutrition-sensitive and integrated nutrition programs with income generation or food security components, in addition to the feeding programs.

BOX 1

SYSTEM OF NUTRITION AWARDS

NNC's system of awards require three consecutive-year Green Banner, immediately followed by three consecutive years of Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) status and finally, the Nutrition Honor Award. To get thru each award, the LGU must set up required structures for nutrition program management and improve them over time, conduct programs and show consistently improved nutritional status of children (underweight, stunting, overweight and obesity). Failure to reach a minimum rating in the NNC Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI) system will return the LGU to its starting point.

The NHA is a symbol of consistent LGU priority given to nutrition, translated into effective multi-sectoral work in the city and its barangays, and in the case of a province in its municipalities and barangays, measured by the indicators of the MELLPI. Since the inception of the MELLPI in 1979, NNC has accorded the honor to 45 LGUs.

³ In the 1994 contested mayoralty race won by incumbent OIC Mayor Benjamin Erni, the electoral tribunal decided the election protest in favor of Francis Tolentino. Interviewed staff recounted apprehensions for the nutrition program during the period but fortunately, the political uncertainties apparently did not have a negative impact on the nutrition priority. In fact, Mayor Tolentino and succeeding LGU chiefs (Mayor Abraham Tolentino and the current LGU chief, Dr. Agnes Tolentino) similarly strongly embraced the cause of nutrition.

⁴ The initial allowance of 500 pesos per BNS would increase to 1000 pesos, then to 1500 pesos to the current 1650 pesos paid out of City budget. At present, barangays paid their BNS allowance according to their capacity – between 5,000 pesos and 8,000 pesos. What is expected from them in return are dedication and love for their work.

In 1997, the City undertook animal dispersal to farmers and families with malnourished children. In the following year, to cushion residents from the effects of high inflation adversely affecting the country at that time, the City launched the rolling store that reached all corners of the City including the hardly accessible areas, bringing in lower priced basic commodities and essential over-the-counter medicines.

Confident of the progress they were making, in 1998 and succeeding years, the City underwent the Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Planning and Implementation for the Green Banner award, achieved the recognition for three years and subsequently the Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) award, maintained the CROWN status for two more years, and finally, it was ready for NNC's Nutrition Honor Award.

The year 2002 was particularly active for the nutrition program, with feeding for pre-school children, more feeding program that promote egg and vegetable consumption and waste segregation with City ordinance that used recycled materials in planting vegetables. The Excess Food Processing Project and other income generating initiatives were folded into the four-year *SIKAP* program together with the campaign-type IEC program



The establishment and maintenance of vegetable gardens in the home, school and community initiated in 1992 and intensified in 2003, has remained a vigorous project in Tagaytay City.

Source: Tagaytay City Nutrition Office

of ten components for ten days for parents of underweight children. The latter tackled, among other topics, food production, dental health, environmental sanitation, responsible parenthood and *Pabasa sa Bulinggit* (Reading Program for Pre-schoolers).

At the end of 2003, the *Agrikulturang Nayon sa Tagaytay (ANT) Program* was launched that would become an enduring flagship program for the City. The City Nutrition Committee went all out to barangays for the social preparations,

orienting residents about the program, the requisite zoning component of barangays into 213 *purok*, the appointment of Volunteer Health Worker (VHW) in each *purok* and the ANT services: *Bayanihan* saving by households and Microfinance, Animal – kabir and cow dispersal to selected families, *Tindahan sa Barangay* (barangay stores) and *Bigasan sa Barangay* (barangay rice depot), Solid waste management, 150-200 square meter community garden, Arts for children, and Fortified food feeding. *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon*, a nutrition education activity, was

subsumed into the ANT. Barangays developed the first Information, Education and Communication (EIC) materials for the program. Apart from the social preparations, the CNC was tasked to monitor.

In 2004, the City received the Nutrition Honor Award⁵. Achieving the highest nutrition award was no cause for letup of the motivation for outstanding program implementation in Tagaytay.

The City integrated its nutrition programs into the multi-sectoral initiatives under the policy, “From Womb to Tomb” that takes the needs of various age groups into account. Education is a high priority area as well. The *Lingap sa Barangay, Lingap sa Paaralan* brought basic services to families with funding from Gender and Development (GAD). In the barangays, gains in mobilization for nutrition were later consolidated through the integrated programs in social development of which the *Agrikulturang Nayon sa Tagaytay (ANT)* Program mentioned above is the prime vehicle. The ANT resulted into the division of barangays into 213 *puroks* and the appointment of Purok Volunteer Worker (Volunteer Health Worker or

⁵It is to be noted that during the journey, CNC members City Planning and Development Office, CSWD Office and City Budget Office alternated in the designated position of City Nutrition Action Officer. The current designee, CPDO chief has been the CNAO for the past eight years.

VHW for the health and nutrition sector) made program implementation more manageable, not just for the nutrition program but conceivably as well for other social programs. The BNS worked hand-in-hand with the daycare center worker and BHW, assisted by the VHW in the *purok* in the implementation of nutrition-sensitive projects. The CNO nutrition coordinators oversee the barangay operations and personally implemented certain program components.

In 2005, Mayor Abraham “Bambol” Tolentino was elected to succeed his brother Francis Tolentino as Tagaytay City LCE. Like his brother, he would serve for the maximum nine-year service, ending in 2013. Over the years of his administration, the ANT Program would be more vigorously implemented. Other programs were introduced during his term for the pregnant mother (Feeding program for the pregnant mother, with milk and egg rations for ten days) and promotion of breastfeeding (Synchronized breastfeeding every August), in addition to the Executive Order for *punong barangays* to disseminate and implement the “*Malunggay sa bawat tahanan*” (Malunggay tree in every household). The City received Special Citation Award from the NNC Regional Office from 2005-2009 and the Outstanding in Child Health Care Award in 2010.



The City integrated its nutrition programs into the multi-sectoral initiatives under the policy, “From Womb to Tomb” that takes the needs of various age groups into account.

During the period 2010-2012, the City decided that “*hindi muna kami sasali sa MELLPI para mag-focus sa BNS.*” (We will temporarily drop the MELLPI to focus on our BNS). Clarifying, NC Dogelio said that they continued implementation of programs and actions with the same intensity but stopped preparing the MELLPI documentations. For the efforts, two BNS got into the Finalist ranking in 2011 and 2012. In the following years, barangays one after another procured laptops for BNS. Training therefore expanded to include computer use and the e-OPT (introduced in 2015). The first e-OPT processed Operation *Timbang Plus* results were released in 2017. In 2013, Efigenia Javier of Brgy. Maharlika East won the National Outstanding BNS award, while in 2015-2016 Danilo Posion of Barangay Iruhin Central and Irene Neulid of Barangay Maitim 2nd East, respectively, were back-to-back winners of the National Outstanding BNS award. Winners receive a trophy and cash prizes from the NNC. Every year from 2012 to 2016, six barangays of Tagaytay received Most Outstanding Barangay Nutrition Committee (MOBNC) awards: Brgy. Kaybagal South (second place), Maharlika East (MOBNC), Mendez Crossing West (MOBNC), Neogan (MOBNC), Iruhin Central (3rd place).

Even for a top performing LGU like Tagaytay City, challenges persist of which two are worth noting.



Tagaytay City launched the First 1000 Days ni Baby Program in 2015 to protect their children from stunting and ensure their optimal cognitive development.
Source: Tagaytay City Nutrition Office

The CNO estimates that to date, around $\frac{3}{4}$ of total BNS implement the nutrition program with the BNC without need for assistance, while 8-9 barangays have to be closely supervised. To strengthen the BNS' capacities, the nutrition coordinators use the monthly full-day all-BNS meetings for continuous training, tackling aspects of basic messages to mothers and filling out reporting forms, among others. They instituted the “Buddy System” wherein more advanced BNS are on call to assist the others in the nearby barangays



To strengthen the BNS' capacities, the Nutrition Coordinators use the monthly full-day all-BNS meetings for continuous training, tackling aspects of basic messages to mothers and filling out reporting forms, among others.

in work issues that the latter might need help on. The City also revived its local version of the National Outstanding BNS awards, i.e. the Most Outstanding City BNS, complete with trophies and cash prizes. The collective goal is that every BNS must win the prize, national or local; every BNS must be an outstanding BNS.

Another challenge for the City is the reduction of the stunting problem. In January 2015, moderate and severe stunting prevalence stood at 10.5 percent based on OPT Plus results. Although much lower than the national average, the prevalence translates to ten out of 100 children of Tagaytay City who will carry the disadvantage in physical and cognitive development to adulthood. This is a challenge that the current mayor, Dr. Agnes Tolentino recognized and is confronting head-on. In the same year of 2015, the First 1000 Days *Ni Baby* Program was launched in the City. The Program consolidated the previous feeding and breastfeeding initiatives with related components, including the feeding of the pregnant mother that received funding from all barangays since 2014.

All together, Tagaytay's First 1000 Days *Ni Baby* program consists of the components: counseling of the pregnant woman, monitoring consumption of ferrous sulfate among pregnant women, feeding of the pregnant women, monthly weighing of



*The synchronized breastfeeding is an important advocacy activity of the First 1000 Days *ni Baby* Program that promotes exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and continuing breastfeeding with appropriate complementary feeding from 6 to 23 months.*

Source: Tagaytay City Nutrition Office

children 0-23 months, counselling on exclusive breastfeeding, milk bank in the nutrition office, exclusive breastfeeding monitoring by the BHW and nurse, synchronized breastfeeding, organized breastfeeding support group in all barangays *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon*, *eggducation* and vegetable education as well as other topics on pregnancy to complementary feeding, and demonstration of complementary feeding. Pregnant mothers are enthusiastic, if only for gifts they receive (diaper, PhP 600) if they complete four prenatal checkups. Further, an ordinance was passed on the establishment of lactation area in all barangays, business and food establishments, found to be

100 percent compliant by the CNCP which is responsible for monitoring. In 2017, e-OPT results estimate the stunting prevalence among children 0-5 years of age at 8.9 percent, suggesting 1.6 percentage points reduction in two years.

The First 1000 Days *Ni Baby* Program is in addition to the expanded Tagaytay's ANT program, the integrated programs in school and communities (LINGAP) and enhancements since 2004, the focus on sanitation and youth development that the mayor supported upon her election to the City's chief executive post in 2013.

More nutrition awards were won by Tagaytay City in addition to the NHA and BNS awards: *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon* Award in 2013-16 that also conferred to the City the Hall of Fame in *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon* for having achieved the honor for four consecutive years and the Regional NHA Maintenance Award in 2015 – 2016. While continuing to be inspired by awards, the staff of the CNO and the barangay officials who participated in focus group discussions for this documentation expressed more enthusiasm for the appreciation by their beneficiaries of the public service they deliver, and for the examples they are able to offer to their colleagues in other LGUs. Since 2005, the City has been receiving local and international visitors on *Lakbay Aral* (study tours), that might already have numbered 100 groups by now. In addition, at the invitation by other provinces and cities, the Nutrition Coordinator and staff of the MNO have been sharing Tagaytay's good practices in nutrition implementation as resource speakers.

FACTORS IN THE CITY'S EXCELLENCE IN NUTRITION PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Organization of the Nutrition Program and LCE program Support

Many aspects of the organizational structure and organizational support turned out to be of critical importance to the Program.

Leadership from the LCE and CNAO: The LCE is at the top, actively leading directly or indirectly through his/her proxy leader (CNAO) who takes care of the enabling requirements to support and facilitate the work of the lead Nutrition Coordinator in charge of the technical management of the Program. Throughout the terms of the Tagaytay City LCEs, the priority on nutrition only became more determined.

The Program started well with OIC Mayor Benjamin Erni (1989-1995). He budgeted for nutrition programs for the first time, got programs implemented and won for the City a Green Banner Award. It could not be sustained because of a spike in underweight among school children. Nevertheless, his legacy for his constituents is that by the time he left the post, the key nutrition structures were in place. The critical enabling elements were left for succeeding leaders of the program.

Mayor Francis Tolentino (1995-2004) re-started the Program after the setback, sending a Nutrition Coordinator to learn from more advanced LGUs. The strategy is a short-cut of the learning process on

nutrition program implementation that would have taken years in another setting. A hands-on leader, Mayor Francis attended the monthly BNS meetings, coached frontline workers how to manage interpersonal dynamics in barangay nutrition operations and improved worker incentives, indispensable support that he and the members of the CNC provided hardworking but junior staff given demanding assignments. The entire implementation run up until the NHA was achieved under his administration.

Mayor Abraham N. Tolentino (2004-2013) further strengthened the barangay roots of the Program within the context of the City's 'From Womb to Tomb' program policy. Another hands-on leader, he is known for making many unannounced project visits to check on progress of "*gulayan*" (vegetable gardening) activities and for the instances when he called uncooperative *punong barangay* to his office for discussions, thus continuing the priority that the former mayor gave to nutrition and the support he extended to the nutrition coordinators and the BNS.

The current Mayor Agnes Tolentino (2013 - present) has expanded and nurtured the legacy projects that have served the people of Tagaytay City well. Continued support from her Office and the CNAO brought more recognition to Tagaytay



City-level recognition of outstanding barangay nutrition committees (left) and outstanding barangay nutrition scholar (right)

City and its nutrition program.⁶ In 2015 she launched the all-important F1K program, the “First 1000 Days *ni* Baby” which many LGUs and nutrition entities in the country would be interested to follow, being implemented as it is by one of the country’s most awarded LGUs.

It would have been very difficult for the nutrition program to make a start and over time take root had the city leaders not recognized the role of nutrition, its intrinsic importance to children and families and its value as a mobilizer of barangays and constituents. One after another, the LCEs

⁶ In addition to the awards already mentioned, the City was Regional awardee for the Rafael M. Salas Population and Development Award in 2015, the Seal of Local Good Governance in the same year and the Presidential Award on Most Child-Friendly Cities and Municipalities (component city category) in 2014-2016.

strategically positioned nutrition under the Mayor’s Office and later the CSWDO for the agency link to barangay, and cleared the way for the enabling elements through unambiguous signals that nutrition is a priority. Required ordinances and resolutions got passed, nutrition activities and actions are budgeted, capacity building is undertaken, and staff incentives (recognition, prizes and remunerations) are institutionalized. In the development of the nutrition program, the presence of the Mayor is critical because it created pressure for people at all levels to effectively work together.

The City Nutrition Action Officer. Beginning with the appointment of the first CNAO in 1989, the posts have been designated ones, occupied concurrently by the chiefs of either CSWDO, Budget or CPDO who strategically placed nutrition in accordance with the LCE priority for the sector. The CNAO of Tagaytay City Nutrition Program is a proxy leader, making decisions on actions in ways that reflect the priority of the LCE. It is notable that since 2010, when budget instructions lump the financing for Health and Nutrition, the City’s default interpretation is 50:50 sharing for the two offices, instead of the usual division where nutrition simply fades into invisibility. The current CNAO from CPDO, Engr. Emilma Pello, is a civil engineer who has been eight years on the post and it helps that her husband City Councilor Patricio Pello is the Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. On the topic of financing nutrition actions, her uncomplicated advice to nutrition units is that justifiable project proposals must be submitted on

time during the planning / budgeting schedule to get included in the City Investment Plan. Recently under her watch, all BNS got their own physical offices and computers in the barangays.⁷

The City Nutrition Committee: Together, the members find simple solutions to challenges in program implementation, not the least of which is their own direct involvement beyond the mandate of the CNC of CNAP formulation, coordination and monitoring of program effectiveness. The members directly provide assistance to the barangays in training, planning and improving the BNS incentive system. It would be recalled that the chiefs of DILG, DA, CSWD, Budget and Health have been behind the Nutrition Coordinator and Nutrition Office at critical times during the early period of establishment and strengthening of barangay structures and capacities – in setting up the BNCs, in helping the more advanced barangays in formulating the BNAP and in training BNS. The DILG accompanied Mayor Erni in the process of organization of existing BNS to start the nutrition program. The agency was the sounding board in finding ways to minimize the practice of barangay captains of terminating trained BNS services without reason and actively encouraged barangays to raise funds to finance nutrition activities in their barangays. The CNC conducted the social preparations for the ANT project and is in-charge of monitoring activities. Sectoral mobilization for the Tagaytay City nutrition program has been one of its strengths.

The City Nutrition Office, Barangay Nutrition Scholars and Barangay Nutrition Committees: In addition to their city level work with the CNC, the City Nutrition Office composed of five nutrition coordinators supervise the implementation of barangay nutrition operations and undertake continued

training of the BNS. The lead nutrition coordinator and three staff rose from the ranks of the BNS (the fifth joined from CSWD), a factor that would have contributed to the ease with which nutrition programming immediately was barangay-based and sensitive to the needs of barangay-based workers (capacity-building, relationship with barangay officials, remuneration, among others).

The division of barangays into “*purok*” of 20-30 households, the upshot of the ANT project and a DILG memorandum added to the manageability of barangay operations, providing resources for integrated programming with nutrition-sensitive components. Another remarkable aspect of programming at the local level is how the BNS and the BNC members composed of health and day care center staff and members of the *Sangguniang Barangay* (Barangay Council), chaired by the *Punong Barangay*, have teamed up for the planning and implementation of nutrition actions in their area. Members of the BNC that include *Kagawad* (members of barangay council) discuss and decide on program. All programs and revisions to programs are “legal” and transparent according to them, i.e. supported by barangay resolutions. Each *Kagawad* is in-charge of at least one nutrition project.⁸

THE INTERPLAY OF LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

The long-term support and clear expectations of the LCEs and CNAO contributed to the smooth relationships with the BNS. The BNS know what is expected of them: devotion and love for their work. NC Dogelio recounts how during the initial years of the program the LCE (Mayor Francis Tolentino) who attended the BNS monthly meetings, boosted their confidence. “*Hwag nyong sabihing hindi kayo graduate ng nutrition. Hindi naman nila alam. Magsalita*

⁷ The design of the physical offices facilitates the smooth flow of services of nutrition and health: the patient enters through the nutrition office lined with children's anthropometric and individual nutrition history booklets in pocket card holders and is screened by the BNS; nutrition cases stay with him/her or referred to the midwife in the adjoining Health Clinic when necessary.

⁸ Out of the punong barangays' ranks are at least two exemplary leaders (ex PB Joel Tibayan and current PB Mario Soriano of Maharlika East, a multi-awarded barangay gaining fame as a Lakbay-Aral destination) who the BNS and the Kagawad cited as having done a lot to support nutrition in their barangay.



The long-term support and clear expectations of the LCEs and CNAO contributed to the smooth relationships with the BNS.

The BNS know what is expected of them: devotion and love for their work.

kayo dahil may alam kayo.” (Do not consider your lack of formal education in nutrition as a constraint. When you speak with content, nobody will realize you have no formal training).

Later, Mayor Bambol Tolentino has this advice to the BNS: *“Hwag kayong matakot sa mga kapitan dahil kayo ang tutulong sa kanila. Bibigyan nyo sila ng programa at tutulungan sa mga programa na gusto kong iparating”*. (Do not be intimidated by the barangay chairs because you are helping them plan and deliver the barangay components of City funded-programs.)

The BNS described the Nutrition Program as inclusive, reflecting the LCEs’ policy in program implementation. All barangays, regardless of

political affiliations of the punong barangay, are included in program coverage and benefits and are expected to implement.

Nevertheless, it is probably not all about leadership. There are probably aspects of culture that pre-dispose local officials and constituents to wholehearted cooperation with the City programs. Barangay officials are actively involved in their own nutrition-related projects as well, many in vegetable gardens and small agriculture projects with sectors of the community including the youth that generate some income for the feeding program. One *Kagawad* said that it would be embarrassing if he does not have any nutrition-related activity to report in the BNC quarterly meeting. Another said that the example of the *punong barangay* quietly doing his share of tending the community vegetable gardens inspires emulation. The constituents themselves cooperate - one BNS explains that they do not need to invite people to participate in projects. The community members come and help when they see their *Kagawad* in some nutrition activities in their areas. Nutrition is truly a way of life.⁹

Religiosity also appears to have some influence. A barangay official mentions the close relationships with religious organizations and houses and the latter’s substantial assistance to the feeding programs, complementing barangay funding for the summer break feeding, and social development programs in general. A recipient of the outstanding BNS award cites a “higher purpose” as her motivation for giving her best efforts to bring nutrition services to mothers and children.

When asked about a near-accident during one of their travels over difficult terrain to bring City services to the population, the nutrition coordinators said they were shaken but remain confident that they are delivering services that people need; the people are appreciative and for that matter, they will continue their *Tindahan Natin* activities.¹⁰

⁹ Asked if residents do not take advantage of their perceived entitlement in the feeding of their children and benefits from project, a BNC member explained that other than households occasionally partaking of vegetable harvest from barangay plots, they do not encounter such problems.

¹⁰ In one incident in Barangay Bagong Tubig, two CNO staff almost met an accident when their vehicle nearly fell off a steep road, travelling at night in an attempt to bring the basic commodities to the population before the barangay *fiesta*.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Tagaytay City staff refers to their nutrition program as a “total package”. It is evident that nutrition has been integrated in many aspects of the package (the social programs, in which education is also highly valued) and that in the context of Tagaytay, “nutrition is a way of life”. Nutrition program people on the ground seem to see the same point from another angle – they are public servants delivering services that constituents need. People observe, they know who is working and who is not. They will not vote for people they know, or have proven, will not do their jobs. If this is a correct reading of their own community, that in itself should sustain the communities’ regard for the importance of nutrition as well as the importance of other services. Other factors ensure that the outcomes of nutrition program operations would be favorable for Tagaytay City. The support of the City leadership, the dedication of the nutrition teams and the collaboration of *punong barangay* together have ensured that the gains in nutrition program implementation and improvements in nutritional status would be sustainable since the City was conferred the Nutrition Honor Award twenty-four years ago and would remain sustainable in the years to come.

1. **Tagaytay City’s experience confirms the commonly held view that LCE leadership, especially hands-on leadership, is a vital component in setting up and implementation of nutrition programs.** How to produce a leadership that has empathy and would act for nutrition is the question. The NNC MELLPI and award system might have found one way to bring about leadership interest in nutrition through the recognition motivation but the fact that less than 100 LGUs are considered performing well in nutrition out of a total of 1600 plus means that something is still missing. In the case of Tagaytay, it might have been the awareness of the City’s nutrition problem and advocacy from the NNC RNPC on the importance of nutrition (especially in the First 1000

Days), the attraction of peer recognition and the NNC awards, the reinforcement and excitement brought about by success in program implementation, the political value of successful grassroots mobilization and programs, and the positive feeling people get knowing the important services they provide are appreciated by city residents.

2. **At the very least, tasking barangay-based stakeholders in implementing strategies of mobilization at the barangay level would facilitate the mobilization process at that level.** In Tagaytay’s case NC Dogelio was a BNS at the time she was tapped for the strategic job. It is not common that a junior nutrition worker would be tasked to develop the technical competency to start a nutrition program. The fact that NC Dogelio rose from the ranks and is supported by the City leadership added to her other personal attributes of hard work, persistence and practical sense in mobilizing the BNS and the barangays.
3. **There are many modalities in learning nutrition program implementation.** Tagaytay City actively sought outside assistance, sending staff to the National Nutrition Council Region IV Office and to the more advanced LGUs (Trece Martirez and Los Banos) for the learning. Further, in addition to taking advantage of available training opportunities, the staff also self-learned from manuals on program implementation and IYCF, and set up 8-hour monthly meetings that are learning sessions as well. The NCs helped the BNS team accumulate skills and competencies that opened up opportunities for new learning. All BNS have



Barangay nutrition scholars in Tagaytay City undergo regular seminars and trainings conducted by the city nutrition office as part of their continuing education.
 Source: Tagaytay City Nutrition Office

- become sufficiently computer literate for the e-OPT. The oldest BNS is 61 years old and another BNS obtained his high school diploma through the Alternative Learning System of the Department of Education.
4. **Certain sectors of the LGU are valuable assets in dismantling specific resource / administrative / organizational constraints: planning and development office, budget office and the DILG.** They expand the resources (financial and legal bases) for nutrition and permit wider participation of sectors and barangays in nutrition actions. The case of Tagaytay City showed that they can take even more active role in nutrition in the context of integrated multi-sectoral programming, a direction that LGUs can easily adopt to complement direct nutrition interventions.
 5. **In connection with the previous point, the integration of nutrition in other sectors' programs (also called mainstreaming of nutrition in sectors' programs) that result in the development and implementation of nutrition-sensitive programs effectively** expands resources for nutrition and increases the opportunities to bring nutrition services to the needy.
 6. **In the long-term, the economy of families would have to improve to finally take over from the government the care of their own members.** Tagaytay City is fortunate to have its natural endowment (scenic beauty for tourism, pleasant climate and fertile agricultural lands) as base for the food security and local economic growth enjoyed as well by its population. For other LGUs, integration of nutrition in other programs might be the avenue for the trickle down of economic development benefits to people, without waiting for the income effect to solve nutrition problems that are due to poor families' lack of access to food. Tagaytay City has examples of "total packages" for others to learn from.
 7. **Direct nutrition interventions, e.g. feeding, and nutrition in "total package" of services to beneficiaries are necessarily grassroots projects.** It is not clear whether politically the city leadership gain benefits from nutrition but conceptually, implementing nutrition programs especially the ones in "total package" seem to be a good way to reach constituents and make them feel the sincere concern leadership has for them. The more LCEs are convinced of this

experience in Tagaytay City, the better their appreciation for the value of nutrition program implementation probably would be.

8. **One way to achieve manageability of program implementation is by division of service areas into smaller units.** Tagaytay City divided its barangays into *purok* in the implementation of the ANT program that absorbed the feeding programs. This is not a new strategy – Letter of Instruction 441 has directed the DILG to assist sub-barangay units of 20 households each to implement a nutrition plan. Although admittedly more expensive and human resource-intensive, the potential is immediately obvious.
9. **Tagaytay City is one of the LGUs that have started the F1K program. Although it is too early to examine evidence of the results, indications are that the program is starting to make its impact felt.** The City's programs are logical: educate everyone about the importance of the First 1000 Days to the life of any human being, take care of the pregnant mother, monitor the newborn and strongly encourage exclusive breastfeeding, promote / teach the mother about complementary feeding and think of innovative programs for her to comply with proper complementary feeding. The rest of the country will want to hear how Tagaytay is succeeding in the F1K program in the next few years.
10. **Two aspects usually mentioned as constraints in nutrition programming (finances, geography) were regarded as challenges, not constraints in Tagaytay City program implementation.** It is true that the Tagaytay City revenues from economic activities are

first class level. The program, however, does not rely solely on the budget the City Government set aside for nutrition. The budgets of other sectors were tapped in mainstreamed nutrition actions and the barangays actively raised funds for the feeding programs and other needs to augment their budgets. Also, the nutrition workers of Tagaytay City consider difficult topography as a challenge, but not a constraint to their program implementation, evidenced by how they do not avoid servicing difficult-to-reach areas.

The Tagaytay City Nutrition Program has maintained excellent implementation for almost two decades, the result of a conviction to keep program services at that high level, facilitated by the choice the City leadership took when setting up the program: pick a motivated grassroots-based nutrition worker, a BNS, to learn the ropes and lead the setting up of the program. That strategy was reinforced by subsequent staffing of the nutrition program office by other nutrition workers with close connection to barangay workers, households and families. This factor as well as the confluence of many other factors favorable to nutrition, from supportive leadership at city and barangay levels, dedicated and creative nutrition execution teams to mature constituents are likely to ensure the preservation of the nutrition priority. The latter can be expected to solidify even more as the F1K program matures and the link to City's education goal established. According to the CNAO, "a healthy community is not just about feeding; it is also about learning (education), which is important in establishing the link to the barangays." As the link of nutrition to development solidifies, so does the implementation of nutrition as "a total package" from which other LGUs can learn.



Asipulo

Asipulo ascends in nutrition despite all odds including difficult terrain, harnessing leadership, determination and the power of a well-knit community.

Photo by: Asipulo Information Office

Asipulo Views Nutrition as Core to Development:

Sowing the seeds through neighborly traditions

INTRODUCTION

Getting to Asipulo, Ifugao is like a treasure hunt.

The road to Asipulo can easily be missed. Greenery and fog surround the narrow road that spirals up the mountains off the main highway to Kiangnan Municipality. Each twist along the road reveals beautiful pockets of rice terraces in different shades of green and gold. Far off, the summits are sporadically covered by clouds. After a 20-minute ride, the town center of Asipulo appears, dominated by its municipal building.

At first glance, Asipulo seems laid back and quiet but this is quickly belied by the vitality of a proud and dynamic people. They are Asipulo's treasure, all 15,261 inhabitants as of the 2015 census spread out in nine barangays over a total municipal land area of 25,000 hectares.

Asipulo is a fifth-class municipality in the province of Ifugao in the Cordillera Administrative Region. Formerly a part of Kiangnan, it became a separate municipality in July 1992 by virtue of Republic

Act 7173. Official operations started between the period September 1993 – January 1994 with the appointment of municipal officials and the hiring of three employees, namely the (1) Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator designated also as Municipal Engineer and Local Civil Registrar, (2) *Sangguniang Bayan* Secretary, and (3) Plumber. In February 1994, the municipality of Asipulo received its internal revenue allotment (IRA) from the national government and was able to hire additional employees. During these early years, the houses of municipal officials employees served as spaces for official work.

Prior to its break from Kiangnan, Asipulo was the small forgotten barangay. Services did not reach the place mainly because Asipulo was truly difficult to reach, only accessible by a mountain trail. It also did not help that most of the elected officials at the municipal level were from the town



Figure 1. Location map of Asipulo in Ifugao

The marriage between tradition and community empowerment lifts the nutritional status of women and children in this fifth-class municipality.



The shared aspiration of the members of the Asipulo local government to break free from their depressed situation and limited access to the rest of Ifugao and instead be known as a distinct, progressive municipality became a critical ingredient towards its successful journey in development and nutrition.

proper of Kiangnan. The area was best described as depressed and it was from this state that it would start as a municipality. Poverty must have been quite high; even in 2006, the estimate of poverty incidence for the municipality was 55 percent.

“I suppose, for them, it was fairly easy to forget Asipulo,” Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC) Arnold Guyguyon says.

The move to separate Asipulo from Kiangnan started in the late 1970s. The people rallied and Mayor Guyguyon who hailed in Asipulo was elected in the early 1990s. The road and social services started trickling more into Asipulo. It was also around this time when the move to separate Asipulo from Kiangnan resumed with more vigor.

PROVING ITS WORTH

Congressman Gualberto Lumaug authored the bill separating the municipality of Asipulo from Kiangnan, enacted in January 1992. Asipulo formally became an independent municipality in July 1992 through a plebiscite. On the shoulders of Carlos Gumangan, appointed to the post of mayor in 1993-1995, building the LGU commenced without Internal Revenue Allotment. Back then, MPDC Guyguyon worked as a volunteer for the

LGU because there were no positions immediately available after Asipulo’s separation from Kiangnan. He is now on his 25th year of service to the municipality. Twenty- five years today, Asipulo is proud to have risen to the challenges faced by a new local government unit (LGU) including the improvement of the nutritional status of its children.

“I suppose, even up to today, we strive to show that as an independent municipality, Asipulo can make it.” Chuckling, the MPDC Guyguyon continues, “Our rallying cry was and remains as ‘Forward ever, backward never’”

The shared aspiration of the members of the Asipulo local government to break free from their depressed situation and limited access to the rest of Ifugao and instead be known as a distinct, progressive municipality became a critical ingredient towards its successful journey in development and nutrition.

NUTRITION SITUATION BEFORE THE ASCENT

Asipulo's former municipality, Kiangnan, was itself a budding nutrition program performer that time and would later attain its Nutrition Honor Award in 2002. When Asipulo separated in 1992, it adopted the organizational structure for nutrition implemented by Kiangnan and continued implementation of national initiatives such as weighing of children (i.e. Operation *Timbang*) and counseling of pregnant women and mothers. However, activities to build the capacities of Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) in weighing, reporting and documentation were limited. There were only few weighing scales, some of which were defective.

For some time after the organization of Asipulo's Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC), it stayed largely non-functional; member agencies (e.g. agriculture, health, social welfare) were focused on their own sectors. No one wanted to assume the post of Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO) because the municipal staff were still learning their own sectoral programs and saw nutrition as an additional task. Barangay chairs and officials thought that their roles were limited to maintaining peace and order only. The BNS complied with reportorial requirements on the

children they weighed and visited some mothers but more active involvement had to wait for the turn of the century.

In 1995, Mr. Pio H. Dupingay became the first elected Mayor of Asipulo and prioritized infrastructure development in the municipality. Between the years 1994-2000, nutrition was placed under the Agriculture Office with limited staff, that consequently resulted in limited program implementation and monitoring. Cases of insurgency further hindered nutrition workers from visiting specific areas. Community members did not perceive health as a problem but instead regarded it as a normal consequence of their poor living conditions. They did not recognize the value of sanitation nor were they conscious to maintain a clean environment as they were rarely visited by outsiders. They raised pigs in the open and maintained open pit defecation facilities. There was no entity to ignite community pressure to strive for a clean, healthy and well-nourished municipality.

In 1998, a new Mayor, Jose "Jordan" T. Gullitiw was elected and would win for three consecutive terms. In his first term, the mayor prioritized

also infrastructure development, believing that improved access to the municipality and its barangays is necessary for better program implementation and delivery of services to communities.

The low political priority given to nutrition, inadequate human resources, uncommitted nutrition committee members, cases of insurgency and unconcerned community members pulled down nutrition in Asipulo and placed the municipality consistently at the bottom in the provincial evaluation in the years 1996-2000.

THE TURNING POINT

Prior to the first term of then Mayor Jose Gullitiw, delivery of nutrition programs had less direction. It was only in 2002 that the Municipal Nutrition Committee was convened to work on the malnutrition causal model and it was the time locally initiated programs were identified and re-focused to anchor on the causal analysis.

The priorities started to change during the second term (2001-2004) of Mayor Gullitiw from its initial focus on infrastructure. The local chief executive



Mayor Gullitiw frequently spoke of the importance of nutrition, health and social development in his speeches and meetings. Sector employees listened and soon became heavily involved in the promotion and integration of nutrition in their respective programs.

attended conferences and became aware that Asipulo was ranked as the lowest municipality in Ifugao province in terms of nutrition performance, and highest in terms of malnutrition prevalence. Comparing Asipulo with Kiangan, he thought, “If they can do it, why cannot we?” The importance of a healthy and well-nourished people was also impressed upon him during the conferences. He resolved that the municipality would do better than being among Ifugao’s worst in terms of nutritional status of children.

Having been convinced of the benefits of nutrition, upon return from the conference he met with then MNAO Marcelyn Dulnuan, who in turn convened the Municipal Nutrition Committee. MNAO Dulnuan convinced the MNC members to focus on nutrition during the early years of the child and not only when he/she gets older. Mayor Gullitiw emphasized that priority should be given to health, because if the people are not healthy, they will not enjoy the other programs of the government. He equated health and nutrition as basic needs of his people.

The Mayor started meeting the Municipal Nutrition Committee and rallied the members to focus their efforts on enhancing the nutrition of children. According to him, the children will be

the future leaders of their home. With his frequent encouragements, the committee members gained more interest in and became more active as they come to understand their role in promoting health and nutrition. The story of the municipal accountant is worth sharing. In the past by the nature of his work, the accountant was focused on budgets and liquidations. Because of his exposure in nutrition in the meetings’ discussions, he began to understand the importance of the program. Based on his knowledge from liquidation documents that he routinely reviews, he provided specific suggestions to maximize the use of available funds and make nutrition activities more productive.

Mayor Gullitiw frequently spoke of the importance of nutrition, health and social development in his speeches and meetings. Sector employees listened and soon became heavily involved in the promotion and integration of nutrition in their respective programs.

“Aside from infrastructure for land, we also started focusing on people’s health and nutrition,” says MSWDO Dulnuan. “We were tasked to do more than plan and implement. And we were motivated to put our hearts into it and do so much more.”

	1992 – 1995	1996 – 2002	2003 - present
Local Chief Executive	Carlos P. Gumangan (appointed, 1993-1995)	Pio H. Dupingay (1995-1998) Jose T. Gullitiw (1998-2001)	Jose T. Gullitiw (2001-2007) Armando P. Domilod (2007-2010; 2013-present) Eladio H. Bang-ud (2010-2013)
Municipal Nutrition Action Officer	Julita Bahingawan (Designated, Agricultural Technologist, 1994-1995)	Julita Bahingawan (1996-2001) Shirley Inso (Designated, Social Welfare Officer, 2001-2002)	Shirley Inso (2003) Marceline Dulnuan (Designated, Public Health Nurse, 2004-2006) Doris Nahpadan (Full-time, 2007-2010) Louie Ananayo (Full-time, 2010-2011) Bruce Guindayan (Full-time, 2011-2012) Mar Shallaine Afalla (Designated, PHN, 2012-2013) Villa Dulnuan (Full-time, 2014-2016) Jimmy Taguilingon (Full-time, 2016-2017)
Nutrition structures and processes	Limited capacity building for BNS on child weighing, reporting and documentation Non-functional municipal nutrition committee; department heads were focused on their sectoral work No one wanted to be the MNAO because most employees were in charge of specific sectors and saw nutrition as an additional task	Municipal leaders and employees underwent a series of trainings on holistic approach to development, Mayor Gullitiw on his second term as the municipal mayor prioritized social development including nutrition Community workers received various capacity building activities and measurement tools Celebration of Nutrition Month started at municipal level and barangays were engaged in nutrition All barangays were provided with new weighing scales BNS were trained on BNAP formulation	Implemented municipal level evaluation of nutrition program in barangays (Search for Best Barangay Nutrition Committee/ Oban/Ayod Council, Search for Best BNS) and provided technical assistance to improve barangay system of reporting and documentation Capacity building activities for BNS and BHW continued Municipality procured height boards using
Programs and policies	Upon separation from its mother municipality Kiangnan, Asipulo adopted the nutrition programs in the former, which is a performing LGU in nutrition Weighing of children was limited in coverage and defective scales were used Programs were implemented but had limited coverage especially in areas with cases of insurgency	National nutrition programs continued to be implemented Local programs including supplemental feeding were implemented Received various projects on water systems, environment and social services from external sources and partners	Implementation of local initiatives including CHIIOBUHA Continued to receive projects from external sources and partners Implementation of community-based projects such as KALAHI-CIDSS and <i>Makamasang Tugon</i> Pilot implementation of ECCD Program Approval and implementation of pro-poor “Ordinance Setting Policies for the Poverty Alleviation Program in the Municipality of Asipulo”
Key results	Received awards in nutrition and development Green Banner Award (2005 – 2007; 2010-2011); subsequently the CROWN Award in 2007 1st Year CROWN Maintenance Award (2008) 3rd Place, outstanding Regional BNS (2005) / 2nd Place, outstanding Regional BNS (2006) Best BNC in the Region (2007, 2008, 2010, 2011) / Model LGU in KALAHI-CIDSS KKB Project (2008) Seal of Good Housekeeping (2011) / Seal of Good Local Governance (2016) Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance (2014, 2016)		Underweight among children declined from 65.2 percent in 1995 to 1.5 percent in 2017

Figure 2. Timeline of Asipulo nutrition journey

Panubtuban *Punong Barangay* Wilma Ullay recalls that many years ago, when Mayor Gullitiw¹ was the Vice-Mayor of Asipulo, he always said in his talks that the seeds of progress start within families. Twisting an old saying, Barangay Captain Ullay says, “*Aanhin pa ang kabayo, kung patay na ang tao?*” (What is the horse for if the person is already dead?).² Although the proverb is slightly askew, the thought remains intact. It is ultimately better to prevent than to cure. Families besieged with illnesses will only hamper the community’s progress while healthy and well-nourished families are the foundation of development.

“I believe our thinking regarding development started with Mayor Guillitiw. If there are potential issues on health and nutrition, we shouldn’t wait. We should act to prevent the issue from becoming an insurmountable problem,” says Barangay Captain Ullay.

MSWDO Dulnuan agrees that former Mayor Gullitiw heavily influenced the development policy of Asipulo. The policies were put in action during the tenure of Mayor Domilod.

¹ Mr. Jose Gullitiw is at present the Vice Governor of Ifugao.

² The proverb originally goes “*aanhin pa ang damo kung patay na ang kabayo*” (What good is grass if the horse is already dead) pertaining to help that comes too late.



With support from the municipal nutrition committee, MNAO Jimmy engages barangays, counsels mothers in nutrition and encourages them to participate in nutrition programs.

Source: Asipulo LGU

ACTIONS TO SUSTAIN PRIORITY FOR NUTRITION

Strengthening the Municipal Nutrition Committee: While the Municipal Nutrition Council (MNC) is integral to the Keteguan Council (Asipulo’s Municipal Development Council), the MNC also has its own specific activities and programs. From the initial health, agriculture and social welfare, the Committee expanded to 23 members that includes Sanggunian Bayan members, municipal assessor, civil registrar, treasurer, Department of Education representative and representatives of non-government entities such as civil society organizations, farmers’ cooperatives and women’s group.

The Committee held quarterly meetings and often convened special ad hoc meetings to discuss emerging issues. Topics taken up during the meetings include the review of the annual Nutrition Action Plan, the results of the Operation *Timbang* Plus (OPT Plus), activities and local initiatives such as Concert for a Cause, Funwalk for a Cause, the search for the best Barangay Nutrition Scholar and best Barangay Nutrition Committee (*Oban/Ayod* Committee)³ and school reports on nutrition.

³ *Oban* refers to the sling that women customarily use to carry their babies while *ayod* refers to the rattan hammock traditionally used to transport a sick or old person through the mountain trail. The name for the committee therefore is in reference to women and children and the people in need of health services.

With the mayor at the helm, a very strong engagement of most, if not all of the members of the committee, transpired. Members integrate nutrition in their own respective programs by linking their work with nutrition during information, education and communication activities and during field visits to the community. Due to the expanded membership, a larger pool of human resources geared towards improving nutrition and program coverage across the municipality was made available to nutrition.

Other Key Nutrition Actors: Aside from the Mayor, the Municipal Nutrition Council and the *Sangguniang Bayan*, another key nutrition actor is the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO). Despite the gains of Asipulo in nutrition, fulltime MNAOs were on short-term tenure. Since 2002, the municipality has had eight designated MNAOs.

“Of course, there is so much that needs to be done to sustain the gains of Asipulo on nutrition.” Record updating, monitoring and coordinating is a full-time job and strengthening of capacities for nutrition program management. They have been brought up to the attention of both the mayor and the *Sanggunian*, but budget constraint is an issue.

“I rely heavily on the support of the Mayor, heads of agencies and the *Sanggunian Bayan* members. Along with their support, the participation and leadership of the barangay captains, the Barangay Nutrition Scholars and the Barangay Health Workers make the nutrition program here in Asipulo work,” current MNAO Taguilingon said.

Another key mover is Dr. Meanie Licyayo, relatively new as the Municipal Health Officer (MHO) of Asipulo. She acknowledges that her role as MHO is critical for nutrition improvement, along with the 17 Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS), the 16 midwives and 73 barangay health workers who are also instrumental and active in the field of nutrition. “Here in Asipulo, I find it exhilarating to work with the mayor, the provincial and municipal development committees and the government employees. The BNS, barangay health workers and the midwives are a pleasure to work with since overall, they are dedicated to their work. I sense a very strong feeling of helping each other for the sake of bettering each other. The community spirit here is in itself a motivating factor to do one’s best.”



Due to the expanded membership [of the nutrition committee], a larger pool of human resources geared towards improving nutrition and program coverage across the municipality was made available to nutrition.

Barangay Nutrition Scholars: There are 17 BNS to the nine barangays and four economic zones of Asipulo.⁴ Most of them have undergone the three-day training course hosted by the National Nutrition Council Regional Office. However, the BNS benefit even much more from their quarterly meetings and the annual BNS convention held in the region.

Daisy Uy-Uyon of Barangay Panubtuban was recruited as BNS in 2014. Due to unforeseen circumstances, she did not have the chance to go through a three-day basic BNS orientation. However, her interactions with the MNAO and other BNS, and her participation in the BNS Convention held at the region were enough to equip Ms. Uy-Uyon with the task at hand.

“The MNAO and my fellow BNS have been very generous with their time and knowledge. They have helped me improve my skills in weighing my decisions and in dealing with community

⁴In 2018, the number of barangays increased to 10, namely Nungawa, Amduntog, Haliap, Panubtuban, Antipolo, Namal, Pula, Cawayan, Camandag and Liwon after a plebiscite in March 24, 2018. The re-classification of Liwon into barangay reduced the number of special economic zones to three: Numpaling, Natcak (Provincial Ordinance 2002-25) and Duli. The Special Economic Zones are also listed under Geographically Isolated and Depressed Areas (GIDA). In addition, they are treated as barangay territorial jurisdictions by the local government unit and are often counted as barangays.

members,” she says. BNS Kate Guinyang of Barangay Antipolo who is the concurrent President of the Asipulo BNS Association, was able to join the BNS Basic Training Course in 2016 held at Baguio City. Current MNAO Taguilingon was in that same training. “The training course included topics such as how to relate with clients, measuring techniques for weight and height and my duties as a BNS. As part of the training, I received booklets and books for reference,” recalls BNS Guinyang. “The training truly helped me with my dealings with the community and my co-BNS.”

Barangay Level Activities: In a municipal ceremony early this year, it was announced that Barangay Antipolo has the Best Barangay Nutrition Committee, surpassing Asipulo’s other barangays and special economic zones. Other barangays from other have started visiting Barangay Antipolo to learn about its success. *Punong Barangay* Eddie Dinongon explains that their *Oban/Ayod* Committee has been the key institutional organization responsible for planning and implementing social development programs that have virtually eliminated malnutrition in their barangay.

“Community empowerment is key,” adds Barangay Captain Dinongon. “We explained to the visiting barangays that we had meetings with families first and foremost. These meetings informed our decisions as a team.” In their many conversations with the families of Barangay Antipolo, *Punong Barangay* Dinongon and the *Oban/Ayod* Team realized that cleanliness is a top concern in the community.

“We wanted our village to be clean so that our children will be free from diseases due to unsanitary surroundings,” says *Punong Barangay* Dinongon. “In our meetings, we all agreed that the pigs and dogs had to be tied or kept in cages. We said we needed to keep our backyard clean and to have our own sanitary toilets. We also agreed that there would be penalties imposed should households fail to follow the agreements.” The *Oban/Ayod* Team has also organized quarterly monitoring of the *man-ili* (cluster of homes) to check if the community is meeting the agreed criterion.

“As barangay leaders, we just led the discussion but, in the end, it was the people who discussed, decided, and acted,” adds *Punong Barangay* Dinongon. “They empowered themselves to move forward.”



Mayor Armando Domilod (left) and the Asipulo MNC members pledged their commitment in the battle against malnutrition at the Launch of CHIOBUHA III in January 2018.

Source: Asipulo LGU

NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Beginning in 2002, Asipulo conceptualized and implemented nutrition-focused programs, including:

- CHIOBUHA or Adopt a Malnourished Child Program in which all members of the Keteguan Council give a PhP 100.00 monthly contribution for the procurement of essential nutrition supplements such as Vitamin A for the malnourished children in the municipality;
- Integration of nutrition initiatives into the Municipal Poverty Reduction Action Plan as one of the priority programs of Asipulo;
- Construction of its Nutrition Center where knowledge and skills training and meetings on health and nutrition by the Municipal Nutrition Committee, Barangay Nutrition Scholars and Barangay Health Workers are currently conducted;
- Barangay Nutrition Scholar (BNS) Incentive Program which recognizes good performing BNS and provides remuneration;
- Annual Search for the Best Performing Barangay, an award system for barangays that successfully address malnutrition among children; and the
- Annual Search for the Best Performing *Oban/Ayod* Council, patterned after the Regional Nutrition Council's outstanding barangay committee.

Collectively, these actions led to the active participation of stakeholders in the nutrition program.

Resources and capacity building for the nutrition program:

It is difficult to determine the financial resources set aside by Asipulo on nutrition because the seat of office and the municipal hall had been transferred three times, causing the loss of relevant documents. Nevertheless, the MPDC confirms that even as a 5th class municipality with understandably low allotment for nutrition and health, Asipulo was able to improve the nutritional status of Asipulo children through external resources. Windows for financial and technical support were tapped and maximized by the leaders of Asipulo for nutrition.

One such financial support came from the Department of Social Welfare and Development's KALAHY-CIDSS program that provided an initial funding of PhP 4.5 million as part of its pro-poor social development program.

KALAHY-CIDSS stands for Kapit-bisig Laban sa Kahirapan Program - Comprehensive and Integral Delivery of Services initiated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. It is a community-driven development initiative of the national government to alleviate poverty

and achieve good governance outcomes by helping poor communities determine their challenges and make informed decisions and manage resources to address identified challenges. Its engagement in Asipulo was principally in road improvement built through volunteerism and participation of the villagers. In 2013, the municipality institutionalized the community-driven development approach through Executive Order No. 14, which organizes the Community-Driven Development and Poverty Alleviation Program, otherwise known as the PAN-AAMUNGAN (convergence) Program, becoming the only municipality in the Cordillera that has institutionalized the community-driven development process through local legislation.⁵ The program also aims to build the capacity of the local government and civil society stakeholders to “provide assistance and respond to calls for support from poor communities as they implement development initiatives”.

Asipulo was successful in implementing the program and even accepted and met the challenge of taking on an additional funding of PhP 23 million, also from KALAHÍ. This latter amount represented savings from other municipalities’ KALAHÍ allocation that could not be utilized.

⁵ <https://www.dswd.gov.ph/asipulo-celebrates-community-driven-development-during-fiesta/>

The municipality implemented the PhP 23 million program in a record six months - thanks to the combined effort of the community and municipal leaders. MSWDO Dulnuan explains, “We often had to work late at night to meet the deadline, but we are proud to say that our pro-poor program was successfully implemented using the said funds and submitted the required documents to complete the transaction.” Sometime in 2006, the municipality was a best performer in the implementation of the program [KALAHÍ-CIDSS] in the entire country. For this reason, it was one of the first LGUs the national government provided an incentive project in the amount of PhP 15 million, according to Edna Duhan, DSWD Project Development Officer.⁶

Other external resources that came in the form of technical support were technical training on community development from funding agencies such as the German Organization for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the international development arm of Germany; and programs focusing on health from United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

One activity pivotal to Asipulo’s development was the 2005 retreat facilitated by Creative Training

⁶ PIA Press Release 2006/12/29. “KALAHÍ-CIDSS program turned over to three Ifugao towns.”

and Research Center, an NGO based in Baguio City. The one-week seminar-workshop enabled the municipal team to discuss and agree on how they will pursue the development of Asipulo.

“It was intense. We discussed. Argued. There was even a time during the workshop that we became divided and did not talk to each other,” MSWDO Dulnuan laughed as she recounted the experience. “We were like children who sulked and who were annoyed at each other. But in the end, that seminar-workshop was how we were able to clearly state and define our vision for Asipulo’s development.” The product was commensurate to the effort. The pro-poor ordinance of 2006 derived much of its elements from the workshop.

HARNESSING LOCAL ASSETS FOR NUTRITION

Asipulo's leaders optimized its traditional practices for nutritional benefits. Much of these actions revolved around pursuing development through empowering people. Empowering people was not easy. At first, MPDC Guyon was working alone for community projects. But with constant orientation, education and engagement in community projects, the residents finally embraced development as their personal and shared thrust.

Community participation was developed early in the story of Asipulo. Its conversion from a forgotten barangay of Kiangnan to a new municipality breathed a fresh start for the people and encouraged their participation in implementation of various programs for the development of their very own municipality. Everyone helped in program implementation because they wanted to see changes in Asipulo.

Community members have been actively involved in development projects, both in terms of infrastructure and social development. The municipality is a frequent recipient of community-based projects such as KALAHI-CIDSS. A similar project, *Makamasang Tugon* that aims to institutionalize the community empowerment activity cycle was implemented in 2008 in 33 pilot municipalities⁷. The project requires 10 percent counterpart from the local government unit (LGU). It was implemented in Asipulo in two consecutive years 2015 and 2016 since the local government was able to complete the project despite short notice and following the required processes and systems for implementing community-driven development projects within the given period.

⁷ Asian Development Bank. (2012). The KALAHI-CIDSS Project in the Philippines: Sharing Knowledge on Community-Driven Development. Retrieved from: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29878/kalahi-cidss-project-philippines.pdf>

Current Mayor Armando Domilod points out that development is for the people and that it is people empowerment that determines the progress of a community. Furthermore, Mayor Domilod knows that it is important for his people to understand that social development and improved nutrition are core components of progress. He believes that when people are actively involved and responsible, programs are better crafted to suit their needs.

"I believe that people should be empowered," Mayor Domilod explains. "Our people should be able to articulate their needs. They need to demand, only then will there be good interaction between the service providers and the communities."

The Mayor has stressed this idea in his 2015 State of Municipality Address:

Because we believe that improving the lives of our people is not just giving excellent health services but people empowerment as well, we have institutionalized a program called "PAN-AAMUNGAN (Convergence) Program" where social development is being achieved and alongside fostering people's awareness of their important role in alleviating poverty and improving health services in their own barangay. The process stresses that one should be vigilant and be participative in every activity and appreciate their responsibilities as citizens. They are encouraged to speak for themselves to achieve transparency in every project implemented."

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND TRADITION

The Keteguan Council - One council, one goal. The Municipality of Asipulo has translated the mayor's pragmatic view into effective management structures for development. These structures have started many years back at the municipal level when the Keteguan Council was established. The Keteguan Council is essentially Asipulo's Municipal Development Council, responsible for planning and implementation of all municipality-related development programs. But in many ways, the Keteguan Council is more than that.

"Keteguan" is a Keley-i word meaning 'to live' or 'to be alive,' explains Ms. Marcelyn Bonhaon, designated MNAO from 2004 to 2006.

Ms. Bonhaon strongly reinforces that a child must not only live but must also lead a healthy life. As members of the council, Ms. Bonhaon and her colleagues are expected to ensure that children with normal nutritional status continue to have a healthy life. Council members are able to do this task through individual member-office strategies and activities. Each office is expected to plan long and short term activities to improve and maintain the health and nutrition of the municipality's children.

While there are many mandated committees and councils, such as the Municipal Development Council, more often than not, the members of these committees are the same key people. The Keteguan Council aligns all individual member-offices' and committees' health and

nutrition-related activities under one plan. The Council also extends its membership to other agencies not traditionally involved in social development, such as the offices of the Civil Registrar, Municipal Engineer, and the Municipal Assessor.

"This way, we need not waste time and resources as we are able to discuss issues and suggestions easily and in one roof," says Ms. Bonhaon.

She adds, "We did not want to have many and separate meetings on the same or similar issues such as malnourished children and children victims of violence. This is the reason why we have one council—the Keteguan Council, whose goal is to guide Asipulo's children towards health and malnutrition-free living.



We did not want to have many and separate meetings on the same or similar issues such as malnourished children and children victims of violence. This is the reason why we have one council—the Keteguan Council, whose goal is to guide Asipulo's children towards health and malnutrition-free living.

MARCELYN BONHAON
MUNICIPAL NUTRITION ACTION OFFICER, 2004-2008

Oban/Ayod – versatility and synchronicity towards healthy and malnutrition-free communities.

At the barangay level, Asipulo has an umbrella organization called the *Oban/Ayod* Committee. *Oban* refers to the sling that women customarily use to carry their babies while *ayod* refers to the rattan hammock traditionally used to transport a sick or old person through the mountain trail.

Like with its municipality-wide counterpart, the *Oban/Ayod* Committee recognizes that the same key people are involved in barangay-level development agencies. These agencies are 1) the Barangay Nutrition Committee, 2) the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children, and 3) the Barangay inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Children. These three agencies are united under the *Oban/Ayod* Committee.

Ms. Mary Jane Dulnuan, Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer (MSWDO) of Asipulo, explains that aside from carrying the sick, the *ayod* is also used to lull the baby to sleep. It is also used by adults and young people as a place to rest when tired. In this way, the *ayod* is considered versatile while giving comfort and care. Ms. Dulnuan further explains that when the *ayod* is used to carry the sick, it needs two people with synchronized steps to be able to move the *ayod* forward smoothly. When those carrying the *ayod* are tired, other men take over and carry it.

Similarly, the *Oban/Ayod* Team should also be versatile, synchronized and well-prepared to achieve the goal of healthy and malnutrition-free communities. “Like in carrying the *ayod*, we need a team to perform all the duties and functions of

the barangay nutrition council and other health and nutrition-related committees,” adds Ms. Dulnuan. “We need a team to work together in an orchestrated manner to achieve the dream of a community that has good nutritional status and is healthy.”

Ms. Dulnuan further likened carrying the *ayod* with social development in general. Development in the community is achieved when men and women from the smallest household to the executive level are all working together towards a common goal.

“We need the support of everyone. All the agencies, the community, local leaders, NGOs and others must be together to make the work lighter, because the responsibilities are huge,” she says.



We need a team to work together in an orchestrated manner to achieve the dream of a community that has good nutritional status and is healthy.

MS. MARY JANE DULNUAN,
MUNICIPAL SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
(MSWDO)



Children in Asipulo enjoy delicious meals prepared by barangay nutrition committee members, who work hard to achieve a malnutrition-free community.

Source: Asipulo LGU



Punong Barangay Eddie Dinongon of Antipulo hands over his barangay's support for two malnourished children through the CHIOBUHA Program – a vivid example of pantutubtuban.

Source: Asipulo LGU

Pantutubtuban – neighborly traditions as intrinsic part of the community.

Bringing together everyone involved towards reaching the municipality's goal is relatively easy for Asipulo. Mayor Domilod explains that they have a tradition called *pantutubtuban* or the observance of helping each other, that ultimately makes their work in the LGU a lot easier.

“In our culture, we strongly value our family and our community. We reflect this value by assisting those who need our help,” stresses Mayor Domilod. “For instance, there was a time when one or two families were unable to put up their sanitary

pit latrine because of the lack of materials and human resources. With *pantutubtuban*, neighbors willingly pitched in to help those families have their decent sanitary latrine. This spirit of helping each other and caring for each other is very strong in Asipulo.”

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

For Asipulo's movers, assistance is always welcome.

“We want to learn. We want to excel. We look at the external support that Asipulo has already

“
In our culture, we strongly value our family and our community. We reflect this value by assisting those who need our help.

MAYOR ARMANDO DOMILOD
MUNICIPAL MAYOR OF ASIPULO, IFUGAO

received with gratefulness. Through the support of agencies such as the German GTZ, UNFPA, national DSWD and many others, we have shaped our social development to what it is today,” MPDC Guyguyon says.

MNAO Taguilingon recalls that before he joined as the MNAO of Asipulo, he has worked on nutrition when he was with the Ifugao Provincial Health Office as part of the evaluation team for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI). In a way, his work at the provincial level has helped him with the tasks at hand today.

“I also consult with the Provincial Nutrition Action Officer as needed and it is easy to do so because of our past work. I believe we can have more support from the provincial level but it seems that they are constrained with the limitations of their mobility funds,” MNAO Taguilingon says.

At the regional level, the BNS and the MNAO acknowledge that the Regional Nutrition Committee and NNC Regional Office are instrumental in undertaking the basic BNS skills training and in the evaluation activities under the MELLPI.

Recognitions for Asipulo and Outcomes in Nutrition

Asipulo has received many recognitions on its nutrition achievements at the provincial and regional levels. In 2005, the municipality received its first Green Banner Award from the NNC CAR Regional Office, CROWN in 2007 and CROWN Maintenance Award from the National Nutrition Council in 2008. The LGU received Green Banner Award again in 2010 and 2011.

To the movers of Asipulo, the importance of these awards is knowing that the nutrition programs implemented in the municipality are successful. Even though their last nutrition award was in 2011, it does not stop them from continuing their established programs such as the search for the best Barangay Nutrition Scholar and best *Oban/Ayod* Committee. They continue to have quarterly monitoring to check on the status of the *man-ili*. The goal remains the same: to have no undernourished child in Asipulo.

“It is not that we do not value the national nutrition award,” says MNAO Taguilingon. “We want it but if we do not get it, it does not stop our efforts on improving the nutritional status of Asipulo children.”

Aside from its nutrition awards, Asipulo has also been conferred the Seal of Good Local Governance in 2015 and Seal of Good Housekeeping in 2011. The Council for the Welfare of Children also awarded Asipulo with the Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance in 2014 and 2016.



To the movers of Asipulo, the importance of these awards is knowing that the nutrition programs implemented in the municipality are successful. Even though their last nutrition award was in 2011, it does not stop them from continuing their established programs such as the search for the best Barangay Nutrition Scholar and best Oban/Ayod Committee. They continue to have quarterly monitoring to check on the status of the man-ili.

The goal remains the same: to have no undernourished child in Asipulo.



A related challenge is addressing stunting among children, MNAO Taguilingon says. Asipulo needs to appreciate better the problem of stunting and the programs to address it.

Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO) Jimmy Taguilingon is proud of Asipulo's accomplishments and applauds his co-movers for their hard work. Together, the members of the municipal nutrition committee (MNC) look into the nutritional needs of their community, understand the causes of malnutrition and implement programs including sectoral projects and educating parents on the proper feeding and care of children.

"I think the support of the Mayor, the *Sangguniang Bayan*, the various committees and the people of Asipulo is the reason why we are improving the lives of Asipulo children," says MNAO Taguilingon.

"We are still working on improving the nutrition status of our children. We are however pleased that the Regional Nutrition Council has recognized our efforts through a regional award."

Indeed, the nutrition program in Asipulo produced positive outcomes over the last two decades. The prevalence of underweight children was reduced significantly from a critical level of 65.2 percent (equivalent to 1,044 children) in 1995 to 1.5 percent (equivalent to 28 children) in 2017. The reduction looks dramatic but must be viewed in the context of the strong determination of the municipality to prove itself as a break-away barangay. While official data are lacking in years 2001 and 2002, the available data show a steep decline from years 1995 to 2004, and continuing decline in the recent period. The prevalence of overweight was maintained at low level, which also decreased from 2.2 percent in 1995 to 0.9 percent in 2017. The measure of stunting began in Asipulo in 2015 and is expected to benefit from further improvements in data collection processes to increase data reliability and accuracy. Municipal records show decreased level of stunting in the last three years.

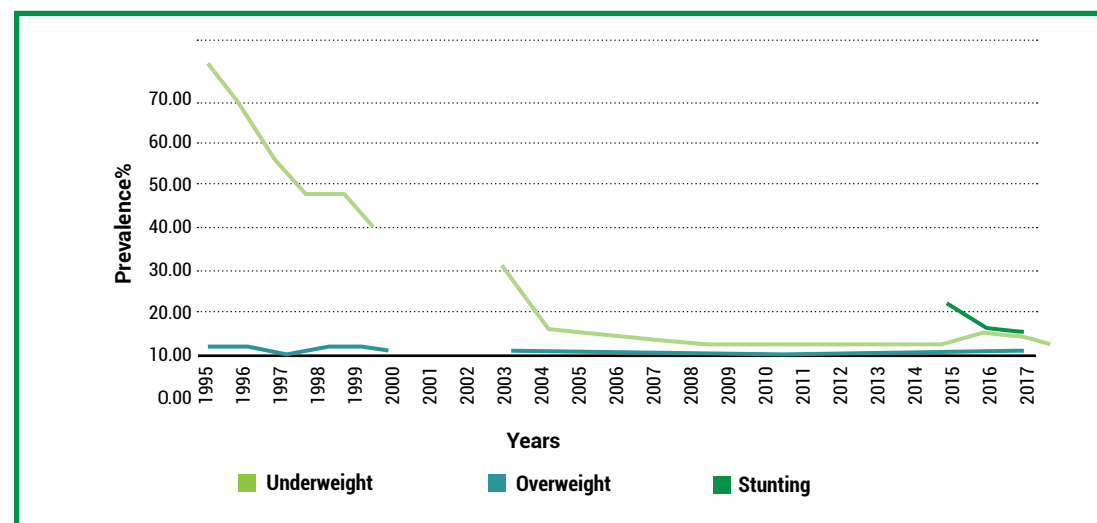


FIGURE 3. Prevalence of child malnutrition in Asipulo, 1995-2017

Source: Operation Timbang records

CHALLENGES IN ASIPULO NUTRITION PROGRAM

While the active participation of sectors and barangays in nutrition is demonstrated in Asipulo, the MNC members find the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) yet lacking. CSO representatives including farmers do not participate in MNC-led activities such as evaluating nutrition programs and impact in barangays, because they are focused on their personal livelihood activities and do not seem to recognize the above as opportunities to help in the overall progress of the municipality beyond their typical work. The municipal government, however, tries to improve this gap providing (transportation) allowance to CSO representatives so they can attend municipal activities.

MNAO Taguilingon says that Asipulo would still like to receive national nutrition awards, even if these awards are not what motivates Asipulo in continuing its nutrition-focused activities. “I heard that the provincial team will be assessing and reviewing three of Ifugao’s municipalities and I hope that Asipulo will be one of them,” he said. “In that way, we have a chance of being recognized once again at the national level.”

One of the gaps in the process of attaining a national nutrition award is the data on children and documentation of Asipulo’s experience. “Our problem is that here in our barangay, we like to take quick action and perhaps need to have more discipline in documenting our efforts,” acknowledges Barangay Captain Ullay. “It is an area which we should definitely improve on.”

The municipality also lacks proper weighing instruments, particularly for the schools for the mandated weighing of students. On this issue, the municipal nutrition committee is assisting the schools in getting the proper weighing instrument. A related challenge is addressing stunting among children, MNAO

Taguilingon says. Asipulo needs to appreciate better the problem of stunting and the programs to address it.⁸⁹

“In the Cordilleras, our people are generally small in height. How can we better explain that stunting is a concern that we need to address?” asked MNAO Taguilingon. For this, he sees the need to have more inputs from the National Nutrition Council so that he is better equipped in motivating and convincing people on the issue of stunting.

What can Asipulo share from its experience?

Having been a real underdog and wanting to prove oneself has been the constant concern of Asipulo, having been carved out from Kiangnan which apparently did not give it much facility to develop in its time as a barangay of Kiangnan. **Traditional ways and strong beliefs in working together with one common goal solidarity among community members (“Pantutubtuban” or a strong tradition of community members helping each other) always in a flexible and versatile fashion provided the twin spirit to the town’s desire to prove it can.**

⁸⁸ FNRI’s National Nutrition Survey for 2013 estimates food insecurity (moderate and severe) at 40.5 percent in the Cordillera Administrative Region to which the Asipulo’s Province, Ifugao, belongs.

⁸⁹ In Asipulo, attempts to increase rice paddy harvest using high yielding varieties resulted in increase in yields at levels inferior to those in lowland areas and not enough to provide food security and income. Moreover, inorganic fertilizer and pesticide application required by high-yielding varieties have increased soil acidity. Rice paddies are “obviously sick” according to Robert T. Ngidlo in “Modern Farming Technologies: Impact on Farm Productivity and Food Security in the Rice Terraces of the Cordillera Region, Northern Philippines”. American Journal of Experimental Agriculture 4(8): 913-921, 2014.

Translating this combined drive and strong traditional foundation to nutrition is a matter of process and chance. A solid vision of its leaders shared by many in his town that nutrition and health are core to the municipality's social development was helpful. Further in the journey, the leaders were exposed to three motivating factors during the pre-ascent period:

- (1) realization that they ranked close to bottom in the provincial nutrition performance evaluation
- (2) the mother LGU was a nutrition awardee and there is no reason why it could not do what Kiangan did and lastly
- (3) Asipulo's leaders in nutrition acquired the technical skills and guidance to define what was needed to succeed and receives different degrees of assistance from the MELLPI exercise and the nutrition offices of the province and the region.

What Asipulo can teach is fundamental. A municipality with a low income can succeed in nutrition. The full time MNAO with no office assistant managed to do it, relying on the cooperation of the MNC members and the network of nutrition partners. The formula is similar and common almost among performing LGUs: strengthen the MNC; ensure the presence and functionality of the BNS, a good working team of midwives, BHW and the BNS; develop effective processes of implementation and plans and mobilization of barangays; establish the BNCs and legislative support; and advocate for and convince the municipal leadership to constantly support the program. Efforts at filling resource gaps were extraordinary and proof of the distance the town would leap to drive results. The external funding of Php 23 million spent in six months to achieve results is indeed a feat for this isolated municipality.

There are still challenges in Asipulo with regards to nutrition, one of which is better documentation of their nutrition-focused initiatives and how to

convince Asipulo leaders and families that stunting is a critical form of under-nutrition that must be addressed. In the meantime, the people of Asipulo continue to forge ahead with its dynamism.

The story of Asipulo's success in nutrition is capped by what Mayor Domilod said,

“Recognitions from others are most welcome, but these are not what motivates us. We are here for the people of Asipulo and the people are primed to recognize that they have the ability to speak up and to act. The success of Asipulo is a concerted effort. Our success in nutrition and social development in general cannot be attributed to the leaders and technical staff alone. Success is recognizing that in development, community empowerment is a critical ingredient.”

Current Mayor Domilod gives another insight on why Asipulo is successful. **In their community, politics takes a back seat to people's development.** The municipality's concept of development has already evolved by allowing the community to have a voice in the conversation. The development structures built around these conversations are already in place and have already been proven effective and successful. For Mayor Domilod, there is no need to change what has been instituted by the community for the community and for this reason, the Keteguan Committee still exists.

“I worked as a *Sanggunian Bayan* member and after that, I ran and won as Mayor. I ran for re-election and lost. Then, I won the mayor's seat again. Our current Vice Mayor was my opponent in one of those elections but after the elections, we forget the competition and work closely together,” says Mayor Domilod. “We proceed with the good that has been established before us and we improve on it. We do not let politics hamper our development work.”

A close-up photograph of a middle-aged man with a grey beard, wearing a brown polo shirt with a yellow collar and yellow stripes on the sleeves. He is focused on a green plant, possibly a bean, in a lush garden setting. The background is filled with green foliage.

Kadingilan

Kadingilan was once an isolated, inaccessible municipality beset with security problems. It is now a vibrant community proud of its achievement in development, nutrition and the famous Gardens of Go, Grow and Glow (G4).

Photo by: National Nutrition Council

Nutrition soars in Kadingilan, Bukidnon

How did a 5th class municipality off the beaten track and once known as a no man's land transform itself into a multi-awarded municipality?

Kadingilan, a municipality sitting along the southwestern border of the province of Bukidnon rose to 3rd income class since 2009. Punctuated by rolling hills and rugged terrain and dissected every now and then by creeks and rivers, the municipality is blessed with a good amount of rainfall year-round. Most of the farming land is devoted to corn; the rest to sugar cane and cassava. However, unlike most of the municipalities of Bukidnon, the national highway does not pass through this municipality which makes it almost cut off from the busy route that connects Bukidnon to the adjacent provinces of Cotabato, Davao del Sur and Misamis Oriental.

Kadingilan consists of 17 barangays with a population of 33,778 in the 2015 census. The barangays are mostly accessible via a main provincial road but almost all of the sitios' farm-to-market roads are useful only on horses or carabaos.

Despite accessibility issues, Kadingilan got its first nutrition award in 1996, a 5th place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee Award. The next year, it received the 2nd place award as outstanding program implementer. After more years of improving program implementation, the municipality received the Green Banner Award in 2006 which was sustained in 2007-2008, leading to the automatic CROWN Award in 2008. Through consistent efforts in improving nutrition, the CROWN status was sustained in 2009 and 2010. Finally in 2011, Kadingilan obtained the Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) and since then maintained the status to date.¹ Moreover, among other recognitions, the municipality earned the Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance in 2015 and 2016.

¹Kadingilan is a Nutrition Honor Awardee for the years 2011 to 2017. Data for 2018 is not available as of this writing.



Figure 1. Location map of Kadingilan in Bukidnon

Kadingilan got its first nutrition award in 1996. In 2011, the municipality obtained the Nutrition Honor award and since then, maintained the status to date.

Perseverance and hard work brought the recognitions to the municipality. “Even if we are a fifth-class municipality, the lack of funds has never been a problem,” says Maria Rhesa Canoy, Kadingilan’s Budget Officer. “What matters is that there is the passion to do what we can for the very poor.”

NO MAN’S LAND

Several years back, Kadingilan was a very different place. “We were once the forgotten town,” explained Municipal Administrator James Apao.

It was a town to be feared. A no man’s land. Even the mini-buses now comfortably parked at the designated terminal beside the municipality’s food court refused to enter the town proper. Kadingilan families had to find ways to travel to the next municipality to get public transport that will bring them to Cagayan de Oro or other provinces.

With no street lights, the town was ominous and dark at night. The people of Kadingilan did not feel safe, usually rushing home by 4:00 p.m. to avoid being caught out in the street when darkness came. Several killings that remained unsolved had left the town folks fearful.

Current Mayor Jerry Canoy, Sr. shares his harrowing experience during the election campaign. Driving home just after sunset, his pick-up truck was ambushed along a bend where a road improvement project was on-going. A group of armed men opened fire. The Mayor was shot on his chest and abdomen. The brother of the current social welfare officer who was sitting at the passenger seat was also shot. Those who carried out the ambush escaped immediately, thinking perhaps that both men were dead. Somehow, the Mayor was able to call his wife for help and she, along with others, was able to bring both men to the hospital in the next town just in time.

At this point, Mayor Canoy, Sr. pulls up his shirt to show the scars the bullets have left on his chest and abdomen. “Yes, I am lucky to be alive,” he says. He said he was undeterred and pushed through with his campaign and won the election. As he had served as a vice-mayor for three terms under Mayor Julian Caballero, Sr., he was familiar with nutrition programs and saw nutrition as important to his municipality’s development. He gave nutrition his full support.

“I recognized that it was a change that my municipality needed,” says Mayor Canoy, Sr. “I wanted our municipality to shine and change its



I wanted our municipality to shine and change its image of a feared no man’s land to a municipality that is peaceful and prosperous. I wanted to show that our municipality can be different.

MAYOR JERRY CANOY, SR.
MUNICIPAL MAYOR OF KANDILANGAN, BUKIDNON

image of a feared no man’s land to a municipality that is peaceful and prosperous. I wanted to show that our municipality can be different.”

THE ROAD TO ACHIEVEMENT

More than simply receiving multiple national and other awards, the distinction of Kadingilan is that it has sustained the town’s success by 2017 for a total of 22 years from when Kadingilan achieved its 5th place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee Award in 1996 through securing the NHA in 2011 and maintaining the NHA status up to 2017 (see Figure 2). How was this achieved?

INITIAL STEPS TOWARDS CHANGE

The progress towards improved nutrition for children and women in Kadingilan dates back to Mayor Caballero, Sr. who served as the local chief executive from 1992 to 1997 and again from 2001 to 2009. The former mayor was instrumental in convincing the heads of agencies and departments to be more open about working together as a team rather than to function autonomously. It would prove to be a critical factor for the ability of the program to withstand the adverse change in the administration's regard for nutrition between the intervening years of Mayor Caballero, Sr.'s tenure in office.

"I believe he was challenged to make Kadingilan government employees' work in a coordinated manner. He inspired and motivated us to collaborate," Municipal Budget Officer Ms. Canoy says. It was also Mayor Caballero, Sr. who appointed Mr. Jake Dumangon as the new Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO). Municipal Health Officer Dr. Leo H. Ramirez looks back and sees the appointment of Mr. Dumangon in 1993 as a pivotal step to the improvement of nutrition in their municipality. "I believe our MNAO, Jake, has made our work in nutrition soar into new heights," Dr. Ramirez says

of Mr. Dumangon. With a chuckle he adds, "He pursues us. He hounds us." It was Mr. Dumangon who helped Mayor Caballero, Sr. make two key decisions for the advancement of nutrition in their municipality: the establishment of the Municipal Nutrition Committee and the budget allocation (Php 72,000 in 1994) for the municipality's nutrition program.²

WORKING IN UNISON

Today, it is the Municipal Nutrition Committee's team work, regular meetings and leadership that make the committee excel in its work on nutrition. In the committee's regular meetings, they conduct open discussions on how to achieve success in improving nutrition and pool resources such as budget and human resources. The heads of LGU agencies, such as Dr. Ramirez, prioritize attending the nutrition committee's quarterly and ad hoc meetings. When, in the off-chance that the heads of agencies are unavailable, they make sure to send a trusted representative. "We would be embarrassed to disappoint Jake," Dr. Ramirez adds as an aside.

² Mr. Jesus Dumangon remains the concurrent Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO) of Kadingilan, Bukidnon.



In the committee's regular meetings, they conduct open discussions on how to achieve success in improving nutrition and pool resources such as budget and human resources.

	1992 and earlier years	1993 - 2005	2006 - 2011	2012 - present
Local Chief Executive	Julian C. Caballero, Sr. (1992)	Julian C. Caballero, Sr. (1993-1997; 2001-2005) Nestor M. Baliguat, Sr. (1998-2000)	Julian C. Caballero, Sr. (2006-2009) Joelito J. Talaid (2010-2012)	Jerry O. Canoy (2013-present)
Municipal Nutrition Action Officer	Designate MNAO and DOH Rep. Monina Fabros	Mr. Jake D. Dumangon (1994 – present)		
Nutrition structures and processes	LGU had around 12 barangay nutrition scholars	Nutrition Office was attached to Municipal Agriculture Office MNAO Dumangon attended the Short-Term Course on Food and Nutrition Program Planning and Management Municipal Nutrition Committee organized Mayor convinced department heads to work as a team Minimal budget allocation for nutrition and mainly intended for the honorarium of the BNS (1993-1995) BNCs organized in all barangays and became fully functional Number of BNS gradually increased to 21, who were provided with honorarium and incentives, and underwent capacity building activities Beginning 2003, nutrition had a separate physical office	MNCs and BNCs continued regular meetings, program implementation and monitoring Number of BNS increased to 24 in 2011 and their monthly honorarium also increased	MNCs and BNCs continued regular meetings, program implementation and monitoring Number of BNS increased to 25 in 2017
Programs and policies	Weighing of children Mothers' classes	Implementation of the seven impact programs mandated by the national government Promotion of the use of iodized salt <i>Pabasa sa Nutrisyon</i> Garden of Go, Grow, Glow (G4) Ordinance No. 04-13 requiring all households to plant at least five kinds of common vegetables in their backyard (2004)	Seven impact programs with additional local initiatives on barangay-based feeding program, <i>Gamay kong Kabudlay Tabang Ko</i> and <i>Tabang mo, Kinabuhay ug Kaugmaon Ko</i> Resolution No. 07-438N Putting up solicitation box for nutrition program in public offices in Kadingilan Resolution No. 09-375 allocating 10% of the proceeds from the yearly <i>Alay Lakad</i> for the nutrition program Ordinance No. 2010-02 providing incentives to all with rooming-in and breastfeeding practices Ordinance No. 2011-07 regulating the home deliveries of childbirth	Ordinance No. 2014-12 requiring applicants for the registration of live births and marriage license to have food garden in their backyard Ordinance No. 2016-12N subsidizing maternity care services and the newborn screening fees for non-PhilHealth clients
Key results	Received awards in nutrition and development Green Banner (2006-2008) CROWN Award (2008) CROWN Maintenance Award (2009-2010) Nutrition Honor Award (2011) Award of Merit for NHA Maintenance from the Province and from the Region (2012-2017) Regional Winner – <i>Gawad ng Pangulo sa Kapaligiran</i> (2006) Outstanding <i>Pabasa sa Nutrisyon</i> Award (2016) Exemplary Award in <i>Pabasa sa Nutrisyon</i> (2017)			Underweight among children decreased from 11.2% in 2004 to 3.5% in 2017

Figure 2. Milestones in the nutrition journey of Kadingilan



As mayor, he always chairs the nutrition committee's meetings and attends municipal and barangay level nutrition activities like the graduation of mothers from the Pabasa sa Nutrisyon program.

Like most of the MNC members, Budget Officer Ms. Canoy tries to attend the quarterly meetings to hear proposals, updates, and accomplishments. If there are issues, the members are able to come up with solutions most of the time. Dr. Ramirez recognizes the need for continuity of efforts on improving nutrition even without the expressed support of the Mayor. He recalls that for three years, before current Mayor Canoy, Sr. assumed the local chief executive (LCE) post, there was very little acknowledgment on the achievements of the Committee by the mayor who held the post.

“Yang mga awards na ‘yan, hindi niya pinapansin. Pero si Jake sige pa din nang sige. Kami rin sa Committee, galaw lang ng galaw. Kaya na-maintain namin ang good standing at nagkaroon pa din ng nutrition awards. (He did not value the awards. But Jake just kept going. We too in the Committee continued working. So we maintained our good standing and still garnered nutrition awards.) It is very difficult to have to work and work and garner accomplishments but in the end you still have an indifferent mayor,” Dr. Ramirez said.

Fortunately, current Mayor Canoy, Sr. is genuinely interested in nutrition. With his support, the committee members are doubly encouraged to push for the improvement of nutrition in

Kadingilan. As mayor, he always chairs the nutrition committee's meetings and attends municipal and barangay level nutrition activities like the graduation of mothers from the *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon* program. He also supports the development of policies and ordinances that improve nutrition including providing a budget to cover the pre-natal and post-natal health services for women.

Mayor Canoy, Sr. shares, “Aside from being a recipient of the Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance and Gawad ng Pangulo sa Kapaligiran, I am proud that our town is a consistent Green Banner and CROWN awardee and have received the Nutrition Honor Award in 2011 and have maintained it.”

CONTRIBUTIONS BY OTHER AGENCIES

The Municipal Registrar's Office (MRO) also has its ways of contributing to the advancement of nutrition. Mr. Gerardo Jurado, head of the MRO, explains that there is a municipal ordinance that mandates that certificates of live birth and marriage are released only when the requesting party has at least five varieties of vegetables planted in his or her home yard. Mr. Jurado explains that it is the job of the Barangay Nutrition Scholar



Day care students in Kadingilan learn and practice proper handwashing, personal hygiene and good nutrition.
Source: Kadingilan Nutrition Office

(BNS) to report to the MNAO that a vegetable garden is indeed in place. Only then can the Local Civil Registrar release the requested certificate.

Mr. Jurado further explains that there is very little if any resentment from the community members on this stipulation. There is sufficient encouragement from health workers, Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) and other members of the community, compliance is quite easy and is valuable in improving the community members' nutritional status. Simply put, requesting parties should have a backyard garden if they wish to facilitate the release of their birth or marriage certificate; but the larger picture is, having readily available vegetables in the backyard is always a step towards improving the family's nutrition.

Additionally, and as part of ensuring optimal growth of children under five years of age, Kadingilan has 44 day care centers that provide social, mental, physical and nutritional development.

“On a rating of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest—I would say that our day care centers are at ‘4’ when it comes to ensuring that enrolled day care children get their supplementary meals,” says Ms. Hydie Puaben, head of the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO). She explains that it is expected that several factors still hinder the completion of the recommended 120-day feeding program. There are instances when the mothers scheduled to do the cooking do not come or the food supplies are not enough. However, Ms. Puaben is quite sure that majority of the day care centers are doing their best despite the circumstances to deliver the feeding plan for the children.



Requesting parties should have a backyard garden if they wish to facilitate the release of their birth or marriage certificate; but the larger picture is, having readily available vegetables in the backyard is a step towards improving the family's nutrition.

“Higit sa lahat, ang trabahong ito’y para talaga sa mga bata at mga nanay ng munisipyo. Tungkulin naming ayusin ang kanilang kalagayan. Ito ay responsibilidad namin bilang isang nanunungkulan.” (The bottom line is, the work is really for the children and mothers of the municipality. It is our duty to attend to their welfare. It our responsibility as public officials), adds Ms. Puaben.

MR. DUMANGON, MUNICIPAL NUTRITION ACTION OFFICER

Mr. Dumangon was not always in the field of nutrition. He entered the public service as an Agricultural Technician of the Department of Agriculture back in 1988.

His journey to being MNAO was like that of a ball bouncing from one corner to the other until it was caught by the right person. In 1994, when MNAO Nurse Monina Pabros vacated her post, it was thought that Municipal Health Officer Dr. Ramirez would take the position. However, Dr. Ramirez declined due to his other pressing responsibilities. Next in line for MNAO was the Municipal Agriculture Officer, Mr. Dumangon’s supervisor. Mr. Dumangon assured his supervisor that he would personally handle all nutrition-related activities, including writing reports and coordination. The Municipal Agriculture Officer was not interested. He instructed that his name on the draft memorandum be stricken out and replaced with Mr. Dumangon’s. Upon submission, then Mayor Caballero, Sr. did not hesitate to sign the memorandum. Mr. Dumangon was officially designated as the MNAO.

“I had to read up on what it meant to be an MNAO,” explained Mr. Dumangon. He had documents from National Nutrition Council to review and took it upon himself to study nutrition issues. He sought guidance from the Provincial Nutrition Action Officer. He started attending MNAOs meetings and other



I saw that there were municipalities from the province that were being recognized for their efforts on nutrition. I asked myself, ‘is this something we can also do in Kadingilan?’

MR. JAKE DUMANGON
MUNICIPAL NUTRITION ACTION OFFICER

nutrition-related training in the province. He also attended the Short-Term Course on Food and Nutrition Program Planning and Management (STC-FNPPM) at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños as a scholar of the National Nutrition Council.

It was through these studies, discussions and training that Mr. Dumangon reaffirmed his belief on the importance of children and women’s nutrition. He understood that aside from health, nutrition is the foundation of a successful community, motivating Mr. Dumangon to perform well as MNAO.

Mr. Dumangon attributes his success as MNAO in part to his mentors and the key persons from other municipalities, provinces and the region. “I saw that there were municipalities from the province that were being recognized for their efforts on nutrition. I asked myself, ‘is this something we can also do in Kadingilan?’” Mr. Dumangon recalls he also briefed Mayor Canoy, Sr. on his observations and the mayor was excited about the possibility of doing what was good for his constituents while also gaining recognition for his team’s efforts.



We will not stop – award or no award. What we are doing is good. It is good for the barangays and the municipality. It is good for the people in our community.

MNAO Dumangon realized that half of the work for nutrition improvement was actually already in place. As an Agricultural Technician, he already had the profiles of families in his area. By reaching out to his fellow agricultural technicians, he was able to access the family profiles of other clusters. While Mr. Dumangon was formally mandated in his position as MNAO to gather information and to coordinate efforts, he still made sure to inform his boss, the Municipal Agriculture Officer, of his plans and specific tasks to make sure that he didn't overstep his boundaries.

It wasn't always easy as not all people he approached were willing to assist him.

Mr. Dumangon remembers showing his nutrition plan to a fellow MNAO representing a nutrition award-winning municipality. "The man just looked at my plan and shrugged. He told me: *'Malayo pa 'to,'*" (This [plan] still needs a lot of work.), recounts Mr. Dumangon. Instead of being discouraged, the encounter became a source of renewed energy for Mr. Dumangon. He vowed that a nutrition award would also come to Kadingilan.

And come they did.

Today, Kadingilan is proud to have received the highest award in nutrition—the Nutrition Honor Award and maintained the status, a testament to the persistent energy of the LGU in improving the nutrition status of children and mothers in the municipality.

"I wasn't alone. It was a joint effort of the mayor, heads of LGU departments, the Barangay Nutrition Scholars, and barangay officials. We made it!"

Mr. Dumangon says "We will not stop – award or no award. What we are doing is good. It is good for the barangays and the municipality. It is good for the people in our community."

IMPACT OF THE BARANGAY NUTRITION SCHOLARS

The Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) are actively responsible in undertaking many functions that help move the nutrition program. For example, they assist the *Punong Barangay* in facilitating the yearly nutrition planning. They are also the frontliners in nutrition-related service delivery such as the Operation *Timbang Plus* where they go house to house to weigh and record the nutritional status of children. The BNS also monitors nutrition program implementation at the barangay level. They report the barangay's nutritional situation to the MNAO and help in identifying barangay-specific nutrition problems so that these can be addressed.

"They are the spokes of the wheel of nutrition," Mr. Dumangon says. "They work very hard and are very dedicated."

Back in 1997, Kadingilan had 17 BNS—one for each of the 17 barangays. However, the Municipal Nutrition Committee did not have the means back then to do the proper training of the BNS. The Committee had to re-think its strategy and abandoned the "one-BNS-is-to-one-barangay" approach. Instead, a training program was put

in place and appointment of a BNS became contingent on the number of families in a barangay. Today, Kadingilan has a total of 24 BNS.

Thelma Villaremo is a BNS awardee and now an active kagawad of Barangay Pay-as. She relates that being a BNS has had its challenges but it has also been a rewarding and empowering experience for her. In her years as a BNS, she has learned that hard work and patience truly create an impact for improved nutrition. She has met all kinds of people in her work. There are those who easily adopt behaviors that impact positively on children and women's nutrition; and there are people who are so set in their ways and traditions, requiring extra effort to convince them to change.

"I have found much fulfilment as a BNS and have been fortunate to have earned recognition for my work," Villaremo says. Though she had to give up her post as BNS since she was elected as a *kagawad* of Pay-as, Ms. Villaremo still continues to coordinate activities with the BNS and is an active member of the Nutrition Action Office.

The Nutrition Action Office acts as the headquarters of the BNS. They all gather there every quarter to discuss their reports, issues, and agree on further actions. Because there is not enough funds to fully support the BNS' quarterly meetings, MNAO Dumangon avoids the catering services of nearby restaurants by designating cooks and providing funds for one or two of his team members to do the marketing. He also allows the BNS who do not have relatives in the town proper to take quarters in the office.

Mr. Dumangon adds that their regular interactions are part of the reason why the BNS continue to be motivated despite the pressure of doing monthly monitoring, house visits, and reports. Somehow, we manage with the little

resources we have," Mr. Dumangon says. "What is important is that the business for the day is completed in the spirit of camaraderie."

Training opportunities also are made available for the BNS such as the food-processing seminar conducted by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). Other skills development training for the BNS include those conducted by the Provincial Nutrition Action Officer, for instance, the Nutrition Program Management and *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon* and those directly initiated and facilitated by the MNAO. Examples of the latter are the Seminar on Gardens of Go, Grow and Glow; Basic Course for Barangay Nutrition Scholars; Promote Good Nutrition-Infant and Young Child Feeding Seminar; and *Kwarta sa Basura*.

The BNS are also given an honorarium and clothing allowance. A separate allowance is also provided for the BNS' participation to nutrition conventions.



The regular interactions are part of the reason why the BNS continue to be motivated despite the pressure of doing monthly monitoring, house visits, and reports. Somehow, we manage with the little resources we have.

Nutrition programs through time

Describing the journey of nutrition programs through distinct periods reconfirms the history of the mix of leadership the town had during these various periods.

1993 -1995: The municipality did not receive as yet any formal training in nutrition planning provided by the NNC. The nutrition program of the LGU/MNC was the sum of the existing programs that member agencies were doing. There was very minimal budget allocation for nutrition; budget was mainly intended for the honorarium of the BNS. The MNC was implementing regular programs of the MNC member agencies such as simple home food gardening, distribution of vitamins and micronutrients, conduct of nutrition education class but covering only few barangays that had Rural Health Midwife. There was no synchronization of program implementation - each agency implements its own program without looking at the impact, thus the reduction of the prevalence of malnutrition among preschool children was slow.

As the designated MNAO, a first step was to organize the MNC better and advocate securing financial support from the LGU through the

Sangguniang Bayan (Municipal Council). From PhP 3,000 for 1993 it was increased to PhP 72,000 for 1994.

1995 - 2000: Over time the activity of the MNC expanded, programs, projects and activities were guided by the seven impact programs of the NNC. Different projects were implemented but they were not well targeted. The overriding concern was to get the projects implemented. The results were not measured as the MNC did not undertake any assessment.

2001 - 2017: MNC intensified the implementation of nutrition and nutrition related programs and projects to achieve more concrete impact in the changes of the prevalence of malnutrition. The Municipal Nutrition Action Plan was formulated, following the seven impact programs explained below, with additional initiatives from the local government.

1. **Distribution of seeds, seedlings and cuttings.**

The MNC, in cooperation with other member agencies, distributed free seeds and seedlings to target families. Campaign on the utilization of local and available vegetables in the area was also done. The vegetable gardens in the municipality were ubiquitous and productive and definitely added to the food and food variety on the table.



The vegetable gardens in the municipality were ubiquitous and productive and definitely added to the food and food variety on the table.



The Gardens of Go, Grow, Glow (G4) of Kadingilan with rootcrops, legumes, green and leafy vegetables and herbs.
Source: Kadingilan Nutrition Office

2. **Establishment of fruit and vegetable gardens.** All schools and barangays are required to establish their own fruit and vegetable gardens, the purpose of which is to produce vegetables for local feeding program, produce seeds and planting materials for dispersal to households and showcase the impact of the project to the community. They were also encouraged to bring some of the seeds to the nutrition office for seed exchange. All schools participated in this municipal undertaking.

3. **Establishment of *Gulayan ng Bayan* project.** The objective is to produce organically grown vegetables for the local market. Income is deposited as part of the LGU general income. The seeds and planting materials produced by the *Gulayan ng Bayan* is packed and distributed to different barangays through the BNS. Identified households are given priority in the distribution of the seeds and planting materials from the MNC and Agriculture office.

4. **LGU's commitment to strengthen the implementation of food production and food availability at the household level.** An ordinance issued by the Sangguniang Bayan requires all couples wishing to get married to establish Gardens of Go, Grow, Glow (G4) using Bio-Intensive Gardens (BIG) technology. Likewise, parents registering their children at the Municipal Civil Registry requires a barangay certification proving the family possesses a G4 garden. The BNS is in charge of verification of compliance with the requirement and failure to comply delays the issuance of necessary documents.

5. **Distribution of poultry, livestock and fingerlings.** The LGU through its livelihood program initiated the distribution of small animals to families with feasible area for fishponds were given fingerlings free from Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources through the MAO.

6. Salt testing and monitoring of establishments using and selling iodized salt. Kadingilan is hinterland area where seafood as source of iodine is rarely available. The Municipal Nutrition Committee ensures the presence of iodized salt and fortified flour to the communities; the MNC conducts monitoring of establishments and bakeries operating in the area and spot checks on the salt and flour being sold.

7. Barangay-based feeding program supported by the BNCs. Supervised by the BNS, the BNCs conduct feeding programs at their level with the objective of contributing to the continuous reduction in the prevalence of malnutrition among children. Lack of resources and inconsistent parents' participation especially in the preparation of food were some of the challenges encountered. Continued engagement with the families on part of the BNS and barangay officials gradually eased these constraints. In far flung sitios and puroks, the BHW's assigned in the area conduct the feeding program for children.

8. Nutrition education classes and the Pabasa sa Nutrisyon. The municipal nutrition committee of Kadingilan has been recognized by the Nutrition Center of the Philippines (NCP) for exemplary performance in conducting the *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon*. The *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon* is a



The Municipal Livelihood Program disperses goat to mothers of underweight children 0-59 months old children.
Source: Kadingilan Nutrition Office

ten-week nutrition course that seeks to empower pregnant and lactating women, and mothers of preschool and school children and malnourished children to make decisions and adopt behaviors and practices to achieve good nutrition for their families. It is conducted by community workers including rural health midwives, barangay nutrition scholars, barangay health workers and volunteers from non-government organizations. The BNS are given targets of nutrition education sessions and participants per quarter. Successful parents are recommended for graduation and rewards are given to successful participants during graduation ceremonies. The barangay officials provide the funding for the activities.

9. Ten Kumainments and Pingang Pinoy campaign. The campaign was integrated in the pre-marriage counselling sessions and focus group discussions. The members of the committee in charge took care of the activity. The topics covered were the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), National Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, Breastmilk Supplements and Other Related Products (EO 51), and breastfeeding campaign were included in the *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon*.

10. Livelihood assistance. To generate funds and material support for the Income Generating Project (IGP), the MNAO requested the BNC members and other concerned groups and private individuals for assistance.

BNC members and private individuals extended cash assistance to mothers with malnourished children as starting capital for IGP. Instead of cash other members provided material support such as used clothing for rug making, coconut shell for charcoal making. Others contributed the mark up from selling of agricultural products to mothers with malnourished children.

11. **Gamay kong Kabudlay Tabang Ko (GKK):** Barangay Bagor initiated the project. Volunteer workers and members of Barangay Development Council (BDC) were encouraged to bring marketable items during their monthly meeting to be sold, and portion of proceeds collected as Barangay Nutrition Committee income. The collection is used to purchase vegetable seeds for distribution to households.

12. **Tabang mo, Kinabuhi ug Kaugmaon Ko (TMKKK):** Contributions made through a donation box stationed at the municipal treasurer's office add up and proceeds are deposited under the nutrition program Trust Fund and used in the MNC programs.

MOBILIZING RESOURCES FOR NUTRITION

In addition to the “*Gamay kong Kabudlay Tabang Ko*” and “*Tabang mo, Kinabuhi ug Kaugmaon Ko*” there were other resource mobilization strategies that Kadingilan put to work to support its program and add to its sustainability.

To augment funding, each barangay has an “*alkansya*” (piggy bank) where sponsors such as visitors are encouraged to donate funds. At the Municipal Treasurer's Office, there is also a sealed “*alkansya*” where employees can drop their spare coins for nutrition. These seemingly small initiatives bring in fairly substantial funds, with donations to the barangay *alkansya* meticulously recorded by the BNS in the presence of the *Punong Barangay* or a *kagawad*. The municipal *alkansya* coins are counted and recorded jointly by the MNAO and the Municipal Treasurer.

However, based on the municipality's records, the big chunk of the nutrition funds is from the LGU's budget on gender and development. Activities that have been earmarked and discussed by the Municipal



To augment funding, each barangay has an “alkansya” (piggy bank) where sponsors such as visitors are encouraged to donate funds.

Nutrition Committee include the BNS meetings, honorarium for additional BNS, and the BNS convention and nutrition month celebration. The annual budget for the activities amounted to PhP 450,000 for 2016. In 2017, PhP 450,000 was again allocated for nutrition activities. In addition, the municipality recognizes that agencies also have nutrition-related activities and budget. When summed up together, based on the LGU's 2016 records, close to 45 percent of the total municipal budget or around PhP 27 million was allocated for nutrition-sensitive programs.

PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND MOBILIZATION PROCESSES

The annual planning at municipal and barangay level for nutrition is a critical activity that Kadingilan gives importance to, with OPT Plus data being one of the bases for planning. Then, in the quarterly meetings, the review of progress of activities and accomplishments versus the planned targets is undertaken. Corrective actions are identified in the reviews keeping the municipality on track with improving its nutrition program. The monitoring visits of the Barangay Nutrition Scholars and barangay officials to families, particularly to households with identified malnourished children, also inculcates the importance of nutrition in the minds of the families of Kadingilan.

In addition to resource mobilization, Kadingilan's success in nutrition is attributed to the intense interest and support of the leaders of the municipality to the nutrition programs. MNAO Dumangon always attends meetings of the Association of *Punong Barangay* to remind them of the importance of nutrition and update them on activities that need their leadership and support. Mayor Canoy, Sr. makes himself visible in the barangays to reinforce the value he places on nutrition programs, projects, attending activities



The monitoring visits of the BNS and barangay officials to families, particularly to households with identified malnourished children inculcate the importance of nutrition in the minds of the families of Kadingilan.



Nutrition actors discuss barangay nutrition situation using a spot map.
Source: Kadingilan Nutrition Office



Kadingilan is committed in enacting local policies with corresponding budgets to sustain efforts in improving nutrition and the well-being of its constituents.

such as the graduation of mothers to the *Pabasa sa Nutrisyon* program. Their presence in nutrition-focused activities impress on government employees, village leaders, business owners and constituents that nutrition is an important concern that merits everyone's attention.

In Kadingilan, each July Nutrition Month is a high-profile event. The Nutrition Month celebration is heralded by a huge municipal-wide festive activity. The Municipal Nutrition Committee plans each year's celebration with different activities to spark and sustain the interest of townsfolk. Following an ordinance, businesses around the town proper are encouraged to put up banners proclaiming the nutrition month theme. The ceremony, opened by Mayor Canoy, Sr., usually would have a parade around the municipal buildings, participated in by barangay representatives, government employees, and elementary and high school students and teachers. The activity is often marked by booths at the municipal plaza set up by every barangay to showcase their fruits and vegetables as well as handicrafts. The best booths receive awards. Additional fun to the occasion is provided by contests such as cooking and the like.

LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

Kadingilan is committed in enacting local policies with corresponding budgets to sustain efforts in improving nutrition and the well-being of its constituents. The municipality already counts on ordinances formalizing the budget for nutrition activities; local nutrition plan of action; and nutrition in emergencies. Additionally, there are ordinances that encourage government agencies and business sectors to support nutrition programs. An ordinance that directs the pregnant and lactating women to avail of health services provides that the municipality will shoulder the fees for maternal care services and newborn screening. Another simple but impactful ordinance creates a committee to monitor the quality of drinking water as part of preventing diarrhea.

Table 1 below shows the legal bases for existing policies in nutrition being implemented in the municipality. The list provides a window into the solid implementation of the Kadingilan nutrition program, with simple and do-able components.

Table 1. Kadingilan policies for improved nutrition

Local Policy	Impact of the Local Policy
SB Resolution (annual) Approval and adoption of the Municipal Nutrition Action Plan (MNAP)	Serves as a guide for nutrition program implementation
SB Resolution (2016) Adoption of the Nutrition in Emergency, Preparedness and Recovery Plan	Serves as a guide for a strategic collaboration and comprehensive management in emergencies
Ordinance No. 2016-09 An Ordinance Regulating the Operation of Business Establishments Selling Liquor, Coconut Wine, Other Nature Wines, and Other Alcoholic Beverages in the Municipality of Kadingilan	Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle; Minimization of troubles/crimes committed by drunkards; prevents untoward accidents. Violators are penalized accordingly
Ordinance No. 2016-10N An Ordinance Creating Local Drinking Water Quality Monitoring Committee of Kadingilan, Bukidnon	Ensuring that water sources for drinking are potable and safe. Regular collection and analysis of water samples; Remedial actions conducted to correct water-related concerns
Ordinance No. 2016-12N An Ordinance Approving that the Maternity Care Services and the Newborn Screening fee for the Non-PhilHealth Clients will be shouldered by the LGU	Ensuring that indigent clients with no PhilHealth can avail of the program. Funding is annually incorporated in the General Fund on Maternal Care Package
Resolution No. 2015-134 Approving the Creation and Establishment of Maternity Care Package (MCP) at Cabadiangan, this Municipality in the amount of One Million Pesos	Protection of the lives of pregnant women and unborn children; strict prohibition of childbirth at home. Barangays adopt Municipal Ordinance 2011 – 07 strictly prohibiting childbirth at home, allowed only at the DOH-MCP in the municipality or other health facilities/hospital with midwives, trained health professionals or doctors to attend to mothers
Resolution No. 2015-350 A resolution Authorizing the Municipal Health Officer to Establish and Operate Birthing Facility in Barangay Poblacion (Maternity Care Center) and Perform Laboratory Services in the Municipal Health Office	Ensuring that Maternity Care Center and other birthing clinics are available for the pregnant women. Facilities are open 24/7 and manned by trained MHO personnel
Ordinance No. 2014 – 12 An Ordinance Requiring Applicants for Registration for a Certificate of Live Birth and Marriage License to Submit to the Office of the Municipal Civil Registrar a Certification from the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer the Presence of Garden of Go, Grow and Glow (G4) in their Backyard Using the Bio-intensive System in Support to the Nutrition Program of the LGU	Ensuring readily available foods in the backyard of the constituents. Strictly implemented; Barangay officials and workers inspect the applicant's garden and certification given to the MNAO
Ordinance No. 2011-09 An Ordinance Requiring All Households to Segregate All Biodegradable and Non-Biodegradable Waste Materials	Reduction of solid wastes generated in the households, market and business establishments. Amended Municipal Ordinance No. 05-11; incorporated salient features; the Sanitary Inspectors with the PNP, Market Administrator, Municipal Engineer, Licensed Officers and other concerned offices tasked for the enforcement.
Ordinance No. 2011-07 An Ordinance Regulating the Home Deliveries of Childbirth by <i>Hilot</i> and Providing Penalty Thereof	Protection of pregnant women and unborn children. Pregnant women are required to report to personnel assigned in the different health centers or birthing clinics

Table 1. Kadingilan Policies for Improved Nutrition

Local Policy	Impact of Local Policy
Ordinance No. 2010-23N An Ordinance Requiring All Barangay Officials and Workers and Inhabitants to Spend Friday Morning from 8 AM to 10 AM for an Intense Cleaning of the Surroundings to Avoid Further Spread of Dengue Fever and other Contagious Diseases	Dengue prevention and control. Enforcement has been assigned to the Sanitary Inspectors, MHO and Clean and Green Committee
Ordinance 2010-06 An Ordinance Providing for the Establishment of Nutri-Stores in All Barangays of Kadingilan	To make <i>Sangkap Pinoy</i> Products available in the barangays. The BNS and BHW are responsible for the management of stores, with PhP 3,000.00 initial capital from the barangay.
Ordinance No. 2010-02 An Ordinance Adopting and Providing for the Implementation of RA 7600 in Kadingilan, entitled: An Act Providing Incentives to All Government and Private Institutions with Rooming-in and Breastfeeding Practices and for Other Purposes, Pursuant to its Implementing Rules and Regulations, Including Addendum Thereof	Strict implementation of RA 7600 in the municipality. The government agencies concerned through their respective department heads ensure that the provision of incentives is properly observed.
Ordinance No. 09-22 An Ordinance Adopting the " <i>Pera sa Basura Program</i> " Under the Municipal Solid Waste Management Plan of Kadingilan, Bukidnon	Households are encouraged to religiously segregate solid wastes in exchange for money from the LGU's Buying Station for non-biodegradable waste materials; households trained to create marketable products out of the recyclable wastes for additional income; crafts (home decors, pillows, etc.) displayed and sold in barangays and Municipal Display Center
Ordinance No. 09-21 An Ordinance to Provide Special Privilege to the BNS to use one stall in the Public Market as Municipal Display Center of all Local Production from the BNS, Mothers' Classes, OTOP, etc.	Marketing outlet for crafts produced by the BNS and households free of rental; provides additional income for households; also for tourism promotion
Ordinance No. 07-06N An Ordinance Providing for Child Survival, Development, Protection, Security, Participation and Establishing a Comprehensive Children Support System in the Municipality of Kadingilan, Bukidnon and for Other Purposes	Children's right to life and full development is upheld and protected; children's participation is encouraged. Implementation and monitoring is ensured by the Municipal Council for the Protection of Children.
Ordinance No. 04-13 An Ordinance Requiring All Households to Plant at Least Five Kinds of Common Vegetables at Their Backyard	Food security at the household level. Monitoring is done by the Barangay Council and workers.
Ordinance No. 01-08 An Ordinance Requiring Salt Traders/Suppliers to Sell Only Iodized Salt, and All Food Establishments Such as Restaurants, Canteens, Caterers, Hospitals/ Clinics and Other Food Outlets as well as Food Manufacturers to Use Iodized Salt	Monitoring is done by the health and nutrition personnel; for prevention of Iodine Deficiency Disorders. Percent utilization of iodized salt is high.

NUTRITION OUTCOMES IN KADINGILAN

The prevalence of underweight among children (0-71 months) in Kadingilan has been declining from 2004 to 2017. In a period of 13 years, underweight prevalence experienced an annual reduction of about 5.3 percent starting with the years when Kadingilan started vying for the NNC nutrition awards, receipt of the national Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) in 2011 and maintenance of the status thereafter. Underweight decreased from 11.2 percent in 2004 to 8.4 percent in 2006 and further to 2.8 percent in 2011. The low prevalence doubled to 5.3 percent in 2013 then resumed the downward trend in 2014 to 2017, when underweight reduced again to 4.3 percent and 3.5 percent (Figure 3).

Table 2 shows the recognition in nutrition for the collective effort of the leaders, the MNAO, the MNC, the barangays, the health team, the BNS and the communities of Kadingilan, proving that the municipality has been consistent in both efforts and results in nutrition.

While there was a change in leadership from Mayor Caballero Sr. to a new mayor in 2010, the vigor of the performing MNC and nutrition program continued and led to the successful achievement of the NHA and improving outcomes

Table 2. Nutrition awards by Kadingilan

Year Received	Name of Award in Nutrition
1996	Plaque of Recognition , 5th Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 1995
1997	Plaque of Recognition, 2nd Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 1996
1998	Plaque of Recognition, 2nd Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 1997
1999	Plaque of Recognition , 3rd Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 1998
2000	Plaque of Recognition , 3rd Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 1999
2001	Plaque of Recognition , 3rd Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 2000
2002	Plaque of Appreciation, Top Ten Outstanding MNC
2003	Plaque of Recognition, 2nd Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 2002
2004	Plaque of Recognition, 2nd Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 2003
2005	Plaque of Recognition, 2nd Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 2004
2006	Plaque of Recognition, 1st Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 2005
	Outstanding Municipality in the Region
	Municipal Nutrition Green Banner Awardee in Region 10
2007	Plaque of Recognition, 1st Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 2006
	Outstanding Municipality in the Region
	Municipal Nutrition Green Banner Awardee in Region 10
2008	Plaque of Recognition, 1st Place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee 2006
	Outstanding Municipality in the Region
	Municipal Nutrition Green Banner Awardee in Region 10
	Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN)
2009	CROWN Maintenance Award - Year 1 (national level)
2010	CROWN Maintenance Award - Year 2 (national level)
2011	Nutrition Honor Award (national level)
2012	Award of Merit for NHA Maintenance (regional level)
2013	Award of Merit for NHA Maintenance (regional level)
2014	Award of Merit for NHA Maintenance (regional level)
2015	Award of Merit for NHA Maintenance (regional level)
	Outstanding Pabasa sa Nutrisyon Award (NCP PSN Award)
2016	Award of Merit for NHA Maintenance (regional level)
	Outstanding Pabasa sa Nutrisyon Award (NCP PSN Award)
2017	Award of Merit for NHA Maintenance (regional level)
	Exemplary Pabasa sa Nutrisyon Award (NCP PSN Award)

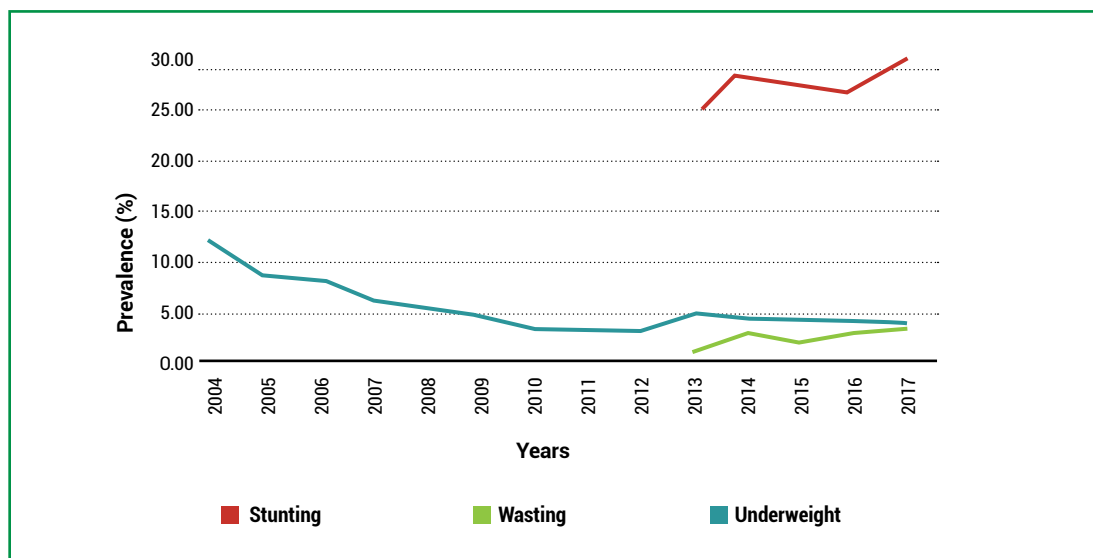


FIGURE 3. Prevalence of malnutrition of children 0-71 months, Kadingilan

in 2011-2012. Field interviews noted an unpopular record of the new Mayor in 2010 who cut the budget for nutrition by 50 percent and ignored the program despite the recognitions for its achievements and honor it was bringing to the LGU. Although implementation continued, Kadingilan was unable to sustain its usual vigour in program implementation for a short period beginning in 2012.

The impact manifested in the OPT records in 2013 - a doubling of the prevalence of underweight children. While the 5.34 percent underweight in Kadingilan was significantly lower than the national estimate and compared with the performance by other LGUs, the statistic should have reflected an alarming concern for the municipality. And it did. Coinciding with the change in administration in 2013 and the assumption of new Mayor Jerry Canoy Sr., the OPT Plus results in 2014 showed that the deterioration was arrested. As former vice mayor during Mayor Caballero's administration when Kadingilan received nutrition awards, Mayor Canoy Sr. provided policy and budgetary support for nutrition. From then on, the underweight prevalence resumed its downward path, indicating the return to vigour and support

accorded to nutrition. Mayor Canoy was re-elected in 2016.

Nevertheless, recent OPT Plus records show erratic trends of child stunting and wasting in Kadingilan despite the continuing decline of underweight. Lack of improvement in stunting results from sub-optimal compliance to service standards in the first 1000 days including prenatal care, micronutrient supplementation and dietary supplementation for pregnant women, exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding with continued breastfeeding. Prevention and management of acute malnutrition require strategies for timely screening, proper diagnosis and treatment of cases. It is important to note that measurements in stunting and wasting are just beginning to be institutionalized and would benefit from further improvements in data reliability and utilization.

Challenges and The Way Forward

The MNC takes nutritional measurement seriously. When asked about immediate challenges the concerns mentioned revolve around OPT Plus. The LGU recognizes that the quality of data from the school children's weighing needs improvement since not all schools can afford to purchase the recommended mechanical column scale (Detecto). The Department of Education has a budget cap on local procurement which prevents the schools from purchasing the said weighing instrument.

To address this, the Municipal Nutrition Committee is in the process of looking for local suppliers that can supply the mechanical column scales at a cheaper price. The committee is also thinking of providing funds to cover the additional amount needed for scales. The LGU also needs to procure more of the standard height/length boards for preschoolers' measurements and this will be considered in the next budget review. Further, MNAO Dumangon indicated that they want to have stronger nutrition awareness among constituents and are looking at maximizing the use of the local radio station for this purpose.

MNAO Dumangon has noted a problem on the electronic tool for OPT Plus used to plug in nutrition data as the resulting computation seems skewed. He said that this issue has been elevated at the provincial level and hopes that the matter will be resolved soon.

Kadingilan also believes that it needs to closely review the continuum of care and services that prevents stunting and other forms of malnutrition. Emphasis on total prevention should be the goal. The health programs include pre- and post-natal care for mothers, dietary supplementation for pregnant women,

micronutrient supplementation, immunization coverage of children under one year, breastfeeding promotion, exclusive breastfeeding and later on continued breastfeeding and provision of complementary food. While these programs are being implemented across Kadingilan, there is a need to link the services to the prevention of stunting under the umbrella of the First 1,000 Days and institutionalize a monitoring system with milestone indicators like prenatal coverage, iron-folic acid (IFA) supplementation, low birth weight and stunting at 0-5 months, and stunting at 12 months and 6-23 months. Focus on stunting is an additional challenge for the municipality as traditionally, the Kadingilan nutrition team has looked at underweight as its main indicator in assessing the nutritional status of children. Despite the challenges, MNAO Dumangon firmly believes that the municipality is on the road to sustained commitment and action in improving the nutritional status of its children. The municipality will continue to institutionalize the committee's strategies through municipal resolutions with corresponding budget allocations so that the strategies become set and legal.

The ordinances pave the way to concrete contributions to the betterment of the health and nutrition of children and women. More than the legal documents, the Committee is able to sustain its nutrition programs because of leaders, *Sangguniang Bayan*, BNS, and co-workers who truly believe in the importance of keeping the community healthy and well-nourished.



There is a need to link the services to the prevention of stunting under the umbrella of the First 1000 Days and institutionalize a monitoring system with milestone indicators like prenatal coverage, iron-folic acid supplementation, low birth weight, EBF and stunting at 0-5 months, and stunting at 12 months and 6-23 months.

What did we learn from Kadingilan?

The obvious conclusion one takes from the story is that scaling up nutrition is not the monopoly of the higher income class LGUs. Kadingilan once a fifth-class municipality and rose to 3rd income class since 2009, demonstrated big determination to prove itself. It appears that the driving force of a community provides that kind of sustained energy transcending income and other advantages of a better-endowed LGU. Indeed, being an isolated and feared territory, the leaders and people of Kadingilan transformed its peace and order situation and its image of being a no man's land that no one cares about through relentless hard work. Kadingilan proved itself with awards coming in streams, more expected of well-resourced communities.

The herculean achievement was obtained apparently by the combination of political strategy that earned the barangay its municipal status and its much-needed infrastructure. This also brought down crime and ended isolation and at the same time facilitated the provision of goods and services to the town. Once this platform was established, Mayor Caballero gave priority to nutrition establishing the MNC and appointing the MNAO.

The sustainability of the town's success is the major headline of the Kadingilan story. All told from 1996, a total of 22 years – from when Kadingilan garnered its first nutrition 5th place Provincial Outstanding Municipal Nutrition Committee Award in 1996, to securing the NHA in 2011 and maintaining the NHA status to date is a record aspiring LGUs should emulate.

The appointment of MNAO Dumangon proved to be one of the most important factors to the success and sustainability of the scaling up of nutrition work of Kadingilan. The MNAO was a mobilizing force and galvanized his expanded MNC, his BNS team and the BNCs, and the barangay leadership. He led the planning and the coordination of program implementation and monitoring and management adjustments to ensure the work progressed as planned. His LCEs for the most part were supportive and gave the right guidance to the team to work together

particularly for nutrition that demands multi-sectoral contribution. His unique worth was demonstrated during the lean years of an LCE who was unenlightened about nutrition. The MNAO kept ploughing and given the respect and camaraderie he has built with the team and the momentum of past leadership, the town soared to earn the NHA despite the lack of LCE support. Such is the importance of the MNAO to this town.

The leadership of Mayor Caballero and Mayor Canoy, the very harmonious MNC and the truly outstanding work of the MNAO were a formidable force. The leadership combined with the full cooperation of the MNC member agencies, the municipal budget officer and civil registrar, laid down the necessary ingredients to produce nutritional outcomes. The broad set of leadership ultimately proved vital during the interlude when the LCE was uninterested in nutrition. It kept the force alive.

The programs to address nutrition were planned with the interdisciplinary team guided by the seven high impact programs that combined nutrition specific, nutrition sensitive programs and support for enabling interventions. Most of the budget came from the LGU. Other resources were mobilized by a variety of sources and measures showing creativity, determination and wide community support for nutrition. Programs were implemented and progress was closely monitored and managed to address problems and ensure targets were achieved as planned. Year after year, legislative support was provided, mobilizing the *Sangguniang Bayan* for its unequivocal support to nutrition. The link of some of the legislations to building discipline and education about food security and nutrition has been creatively designed with good results. The Barangay Nutrition Committees were responsive and determined. The

BNCs and the BNS were an integral part of the team of the MNAO and were instrumental in securing the support of the communities on nutrition. The BNS commitment has been nurtured over time with simple caring from the MNAO and the leadership and recognition of the good work they are doing. The openness of the team starting from the MNAO to learn the ropes and obtain mastery of the technical dimensions that his work demands has been an asset. The MNAO went to brief schooling on nutrition and has been an incessant student of good practices from well performing LGUs on nutrition.

The municipality is not going to sit on its merits. It looks to continuous improvements in its nutritional measurement and in sharpening its program design to focus on the first 1000 days. Indeed, with the tremendous effort of the Kadingilan LGU, the municipality is no longer a no man's land to be feared and avoided but is a land to be respected and emulated.



Limasawa

The close relationships among well-knit Limasawan-ons serve as an asset in community-wide undertakings including sanitation and food production for a year-round availability of food.

Photo by: Limasawa Nutrition Office

Making Progress through Nutrition in Historic Limasawa



Figure 1. Location Map of Limasawa in Southern Leyte

INTRODUCTION

It is hard to imagine a tiny, geographically isolated and disadvantaged island such as Limasawa would have a success story to tell. Limasawa has a total population of 6,061 and occupies a land area of 632 hectares.

Once a barangay of Padre Burgos, Limasawa became a functioning municipality on 27 August 1989. Formal operation started in a house owned by the Palermo Family in Barangay Triana. There were no salaried municipal employees except for a *Sangguniang Bayan* Secretary and a few community members, mostly fishermen, who were asked to serve the government on a part time basis (half day). After three months, salaries of PhP 25 per day were offered and more employees were hired. While Limasawa was in the process of establishing itself as an independent municipality, the people and their leaders had yet to learn the concept of nutrition and how it would make them the most progressive geographically isolated area in the country.

From Tacloban City, Limasawa is a three to four-hour drive to Maasin City, then another hour to the port of Padre Burgos where a *lancha* (boat) waits for passengers heading for the island. The lancha is big enough to accommodate construction materials, food supplies, gallons of drinking water and a two-wheel vehicle such as the motorbike. The slow sail of almost an hour from Padre Burgos to Limasawa because of the heavy cargo gives one enough time to relish the vastness of the ocean. There are two piers on the island, one in Barangay Magallanes (on-going construction) where the water is calmer, and another in Barangay Triana where the waves are a bit more sensitive to low pressure area (the weatherman's LPA).

Both piers in Magallanes and Triana are more like break waters with a small platform for docking, and no physical structures. Once on the island, passengers will most likely board another vehicle to Maasin City to shop for basic supplies or conduct basic transactions that are relatively more accessible in urban and inland rural areas. On a good day, the lancha travels to and from

While Limasawa was in the process of establishing itself as an independent municipality, the people and their leaders had yet to learn the concept of nutrition and how it would make them the most progressive geographically isolated area in the country.

Limasawa twice a day. On a bad day, the lancha does one trip to Padre Burgos from Limasawa, and on a very bad day, one is stuck on the island until the waters calm down, or after the lancha becomes available from repairs or some other reason. When this happens, the only hope for crossing to the mainland is a pump boat, in which case the best safety net (without a life vest) would be a bunch of prayers and strong faith in God! The only mode of transport waiting at the dock are the *habal-habal* (motorcycles), unless special arrangements are made for the use of the police patrol or the Mayor's green multi-cab, the only four-wheel vehicles on the island.

The roads by the pier that go from San Bernardo to Cabulihan and up the Shrine of the First Mass in Magallanes were completed and made passable only in 2017. Prior to the existence of these roads in the recent months, walking was the only means to move around the island. This meant climbing over boulders of rocks along the shore, especially during high tide.

Twenty-four-hour electricity supplied by the National Power Corporation to households started only in the last quarter of 2017. For several years, households contended with rationed electric power from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm, and at around 1:00 am. Solar panels provided regular power

supply to the Municipal Hall during the day but beyond the office hours and the rations, the gasera and the *lampara* (gas lamp) were the only sources of light. Even without a curfew, the streets would be empty and quiet by sundown because it was too dark to be roaming around. The only movements after nightfall would be the fishermen who were off to get a good catch of squid and flying fish for the next day's meal.

The island is rich with water, not because it is surrounded by it, but the deep wells serve as rich source of alkaline water without the complicated filtration system. Gallons of drinking water in blue containers are still being imported from the main land because not all households have the capacity to pump alkaline water from the ground. Water pumps are powered by the solar panels but only in households who can afford them, and these are few. In the past year, water pipes were installed to supply all households with natural mineral water. However, installation has yet to be completed and a few public faucets are still being used as the main source of drinking water.

One should note that roads and utilities are necessities satisfied only in the past year 2017.

Aside from its historical sites, Limasawa is gaining popularity among tourists for its marine life and rugged landscape, where the sound and site of the water is calming, the sunset radiates a bright tinge of orange, and the afternoon breeze is hypnotizing. On 18 November 1994, Limasawa was declared a tourist zone through RA 7822, and with the support of the Congressman, the Provincial Government of Southern Leyte and the Department of Tourism, further developments were planned with the vision that Limasawa will become the next Boracay. But unlike Boracay, Limasawa is cautious with the influx of visitors and materials to preserve its natural environment and control possible contamination and entry of contagious diseases. This may seem overly protective for the island in need of added revenues from tourism, but with the Rural Health Unit (RHU) as the only source of medical care, it is understandable why the Mayor would want proper quarantine system in place. It has been almost 24 years since Limasawa Island was declared a tourist zone, but the development of its infrastructure has been gradual. With its well preserved natural environment, a small population and a tight knit community, Limasawa remains intact.

Lasting Contributions

The timeline of the journey of Limasawa in nutritional improvement is shown in Figure 2.

In the early nineties, two midwives and a municipal health officer were assigned in Limasawa. Since the municipal health officer (MHO) was appointed by the Department of Health (DOH), the programs and services being implemented then were mostly DOH programs (e.g. pre-natal consultation for pregnant women). During this time, the MHO was assisted by the barangay health workers (BHW) because there were no barangay nutrition scholars (BNS). Nutrition was not integrated in the health programs, except for Operation *Timbang* (OPT), which was supervised by the MHO, while sporadic feeding activities held during special occasions were coordinated by the provincial nutrition office (PNO) and the municipal government. During the first few evaluations, the PNO recognized the potential of Limasawa in tackling their nutrition situation because of its small population, making program implementation more manageable. In 1996, Limasawa was third place in the Provincial Nutrition Evaluation.

For almost ten years, health services in Limasawa continued with the MHO, a temporary assignment under the Doctors to the Barrios (DTTB)

Program of the DOH. Medical Doctors under the DTTB had more freedom to innovate health and nutrition interventions which they did over time. Limasawa consistently performed well with its improved operations and implementation of nutrition programs, which were mainly pre-natal services, feeding programs and food assistance. In 1999, Limasawa was again awarded third place in the Provincial Nutrition Evaluation.

In 2002, the MHO was appointed as the first Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO). The appointment of the BNS followed as well as the organization of the Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC) in 2005. The feeding programs continued and additional activities were implemented such as community gardens, mothers' class, and the infant and young child feeding (IYCF) with the active participation of fathers. The municipality received trainings and coaching from the National Nutrition Council Regional Office. The Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator allotted about five slots for the municipality in capacity building activities. In the same year, Limasawa received its first Green Banner award.

Since the MHO/MNAO was under the DTTB Program of the DOH Central Office, there were a couple of changes in appointments through the



Limasawa consistently performed well with its improved operations and implementation of nutrition program... Given these initial efforts, Limasawa was again awarded in 1999 the third place in the Provincial Nutrition Evaluation.

	1980's - 1995	1996 - 2005	2005 - 2009	2010 - present
Municipal Nutrition Action Officer	Dr. Magtibag (appointed in 1991)	Dr. Levon Baldoza (Doctor-to-the-barrio, appointed in 2002) Ms. Flora Dagohoy (Public Health Nurse, appointed in 2003-2005)	Dr. Martin Parreño (Doctor-to-the-barrio, appointed in 2005-2010)	Ms. Remigilda Salomon (Sangguniang Bayan Secretary, appointed in 2010-present)
Nutrition structures and processes	No data for nutrition and the local government prioritized the improvement of physical environment Two midwives were assigned in Limasawa (before 1989) A primary health nurse and an additional midwife were assigned in the LGU around mid-1990s	Limasawa joined the provincial nutrition evaluation, where the provincial team saw the municipality's potential in improving their nutrition program No barangay nutrition scholars (BNS) yet; barangay health workers (BHW) conducted health programs, OPT and sporadic supplementary feeding activities in schools and day care centers	The Municipal Nutrition Committee was re-organized and re-activated Formulation of municipal nutrition action plan improved, guided by the causal model of malnutrition Barangay nutrition committees were organized BNS were deployed in all barangays and provided with PHP 300 honorarium per month. BNS and BHW monitor children's nutritional status and conducted supplementary feeding for pregnant women Fund raising activities were strengthened through partnership with NGOs and innovative mobilization of local resources	As an additional income-generating strategy, the municipal government allocates 10% of its total diving fees collection for nutrition Expanded MNC membership to include all punong barangays, midwives, BNS, BHW, daycare workers, school principals, religious leaders and CSOs The Municipal Nutrition Center was constructed (2011) Mechanical column scales were purchased using proceeds from fund-raising activities, and provided to schools and barangays
Programs and policies	Nutrition programs were initiated only in 1991 when Dr. Magtibag was appointed as MNAO Routine programs in health, mostly on pre-natal services, were implemented in the municipality	Health programs continued to be implemented and the nutrition program expanded to include sporadic supplementary feeding activities until the barangays started their own plans on feeding projects beginning 1997 Start of community gardens, nutrition education classes for mothers and <i>Garantisadong Pambata</i> (vitamin A supplementation for children) Fathers became involved in IYCF and became an effective support for mothers in feeding and caring of children	Community and household food production intensified, planting of <i>malunggay</i> tree in all households was supported by a municipal ordinance The following programs were launched and implemented: "Prenatal sa Biyernes, Pakan-on ang Buntis" Program; "Buntis Baby Bank", local adaptation of Biggest Loser and Amazing Race with a local twist Massive nutrition information, education and communication through use of CDs and a local newsletter, "Nutrilines"	Nutrition programs continued to be implemented and additional projects with creative names were launched. Among these is the "3 in 1 Program" where 3 MNC members support in the care of 1 undernourished child Conducted additional fund-raising activities such as "Emergen-10" (where families contribute PHP 10 monthly as emergency fund). Wooden coin banks are also placed in offices so people can drop loose change for the nutrition program. Conducted various searches for exemplary individuals and families as models in nutrition (e.g. Search for Model Family in the Island)
Key results	Received various awards in nutrition and development 3 rd place in provincial nutrition evaluation (1999) Outstanding municipality in the province (2002) Brgy. Lugsongan awarded as Best Barangay in Nutrition Implementation in Region VIII (2005) Green Banner Award (2006 – 2008); subsequently the CROWN Award in 2008 CROWN Maintenance Award (2009 – 2010) Nutrition Honor Award (2011)			Continued improvement in children's nutritional status Underweight among children 0-71 months decreased from 5.33% in 2005 to 0.49% in 2016 Wasting among school children decreased from 5.14 percent in 2005 to 0.50% in 2016

Figure 2. Journey of Limasawa in nutritional improvement



The MHO/MNAO was a strong figure, whom people depended on for guidance regarding their health and nutrition and at times even their personal life.

years. With a newly appointed MHO/MNAO in 2006, the MNC was re-organized, and a causal model was used as framework for the formulation of the Municipal Nutrition Action Plan (MNAP). MNC meetings were scheduled on a regular basis, and a newsletter, “Nutrilines,” was circulated to educate and inform the community about the nutrition programs of the municipality. The MHO was a strong figure, whom people depended on for guidance regarding their health and nutrition and at times even their personal life. The MHO/MNAO also established friendly relations with the teachers, and civic and religious leaders. When iron fortified rice was distributed in the island in 2006, it was not well received because of its dark color and peculiar aroma. Since it was important that the children benefitted from the iron fortified rice, on the request of the catholic priest the MHO/MNAO spoke during homily and educated the people about its nutritive importance.

Given the trust, and the people’s eagerness to learn, the MHO/MNAO used every opportunity to talk in public to inform and educate the community about health and nutrition. The MHO/MNAO was also able to convince other agencies to steer their programs towards nutrition. For example, the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO) funded by the Bureau of Fish and Aquatic Resources implemented a project that involved distribution of jiggers for squid catching, and the MHO/MNAO suggested that priority be given to fishermen with underweight children to help their families earn an income, and consequently enable them to purchase more food. In the same manner, the distribution of seedlings to households with underweight children as priority recipients was also implemented by the MAO. Select households with sickly and underweight children and in need of financial support were aided by the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO). Such assistance included financial aid for food purchasing, and job order to employ the parents of these children.

The MHO/MNAO intensified fund raising for nutrition activities and required allocation of funds from the municipal government. Raffle tickets were sold every December for the purchase of mechanical column (Detecto) scales for all

Barangays, and prices for the winning raffle tickets were provided by the MNC. The capitation funds from PhilHealth were also essential in supporting the health facility in Limasawa. The amount received from PhilHealth depends on the number of households enrolled in the health insurance. For every enrolled household, the Rural Health Unit receives PhP 330, and are reimbursed for every service provided to a client. Eighty percent of the income from the capitation fund was allocated to health interventions, while 20 percent was used as incentive for the health worker(s) providing the service or intervention. The MHO/MNAO also took advantage of acquaintances, be it former classmates from medical school and friends from the pharmaceutical companies, and non-government organizations such as Kinderhlife Philippines to augment the limited allocation of medical supplies like intravenous fluids and emergency medicines. So adept was the MHO/MNAO in private sector resource mobilization that having a small LGU budget for health and nutrition did not pose significant constraint in program implementation.

While the health facility was an accredited Center for Maternal and Child Care, it was also upgraded to Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC) facility, which is well equipped to

provide services for non-complicated pregnancies. Thus, several new programs were added to existing interventions including enhanced child care, newborn screening, and a more structured feeding for children.

The MHO/MNAO initiated the organization of barangay nutrition committees and advocated for the appointment of barangay nutrition scholars. In effect, the *punong barangay* in all six barangays of Limasawa appointed their own BNS, organized their barangay nutrition committee, and launched the Clean and Green Program. In partnership with the Municipal Agriculture Office, the MNC initiated the Food Always in the Home (FAITH) campaign by providing CDs with information, education and communication (IEC) materials on home gardening as well as recycling of materials, and photos of “magic square meter gardens” as examples of ways to maximize the use of small areas for planting.

Through the FAITH campaign, households were encouraged to plant their own vegetable gardens to supplement their food supply, especially during the *Habagat* season (southwest monsoon). *Habagat* season or what the Limasawans refer to as “*walo*” pertaining to the duration of the strong tide that could either last eight weeks or eight

months starts in July through December, making the tides very strong and sailing a bit risky. This makes shipping of food supply from the mainland difficult and sometimes impossible. And if patients are in dire need of advance medical care, the only way to seek much needed health service is to risk sailing through the wild currents to the mainland. Fishing is not possible during *Habagat* but food shortage was never an issue on the island since almost 95 percent of households have vegetable gardens, and dried fish and dried squid are abundant. Therefore, home gardens not only add to food availability when food supply is unable to reach Limasawa during the *Habagat*, but also make the local diet more diversified.

Limasawa successfully adopted the “*Gulayan sa Barangay*” (community gardens) and intensified its implementation by requiring through a local ordinance all households to plant at least one malunggay tree in their yard. Before a couple can register for a marriage certificate, they are required by the municipal government to plant a malunggay tree.

With high prevalence of adult overweight/obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs like hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes), healthy lifestyle program was carried

out with the adaptation of the internationally known TV show “*Biggest Loser*” but with a twist in the local version. Physical activities and challenges in the local version of the contest were executed alongside the clean-up drive, at the same time showcasing traditional and innovative games (e.g. *kadang*, pushing a container of water uphill and others). The contest was held every Friday in the different barangays without the sophisticated equipment that were used in the TV show, instead, the contestants made use of old bicycles to race from the health station in Cabulihan to Barangay Triana and rolled a five-gallon water container along the uphill road from San Bernardo to San Agustin. This became a regular and much-awaited entertainment and socialization activity for the community. Whoever collected the most trash



Limasawa successfully adopted the “Gulayan sa Barangay” (community gardens) and intensified its implementation by requiring through a local ordinance all households to plant at least one malunggay tree in their yard.

was awarded a prize, and after three months, culminating on nutrition month (July), the winner who lost the most weight was awarded Php 10,000. The Limasawan-ons also adapted the popular reality TV show “Amazing Race,” which was held one week before the fiesta along with the other local activities.

With its consistent performance in nutrition and its program implementation, Limasawa was again recipient of the Green Banner Award in 2006 and in 2007. As they continued to effectively implement their health and nutrition programs, with the community as active participants, and with much support from the municipal government, health and nutrition thrived in the island. Because of this, Limasawa was awarded Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) by the National Nutrition Council in 2008. They received the 1st Year CROWN Maintenance Award in 2009, and the 2nd Year CROWN Maintenance Award in 2010. Limasawa was ready for the National Nutrition Council (NNC) evaluation for the national Nutrition Honor Award.

These were important contributions that the MHO/MNAO left for the Limasawa local government when it was time to move on to other assignments.

Binding Relationships

Mayor Melchor Petracorta was first elected in 2007 and served three terms. He appointed the *Sangguniang Bayan* (SB) Secretary as MNAO in 2010. It was also during this time when the LGU was gearing up for the highest honors in nutrition program implementation. Prior to taking up the SB Secretary position in 1999, the new MNAO was a teacher at the local high school where the Mayor was a student. The SB secretary plays an influential role in the MNC, not only as a government employee but as a former teacher of more than half of the members of the MNC and other members of the community. Since the new MNAO was not a health nor a nutrition expert, NNC Region VIII and the rural health unit staff were tapped to mentor and assist her. The MNAO attended the IYCF training in 2010 in Tacloban City to gain technical skills in health and nutrition. After the training, the MNAO subdivided the sections of the training manual on “Infant and Young Child Feeding Counselling: An Integrated Course, A Trainer’s Guide” (WHO, 2006), and assigned MNC members to lecture the different topics to their constituents.

The MNC does not have a secretariat to assist in its coordinative and monitoring functions. Instead,

its membership was expanded in early 2018 to 50 members to include all the *punong barangay* from the six barangays and their BNSs, daycare workers, school principals, NGOs, barangay health workers, religious leaders, as well as all the agencies and representatives of civic organizations. The result is a flat nutrition program organization where the Mayor and the MNAO on one hand, and the municipal and barangay structures on the other, can directly communicate with each other to provide updates in program directions and implementation, an adaptation possible in small LGUs. Each member is assigned tasks, which include mobilization of the fathers by male members of the MNC, and the “3 in 1 Program” where three MNC members assist in the care of one undernourished child, whom they will supply with one egg, milk, and vitamins daily until the child achieves normal weight (see box).

While most nutrition and health programs are focused on mothers and children, the fathers in Limasawa play a supportive role in child care and nutrition through the “*Tatay ko Kaagapay sa Kalusugan ko*” (My Father My Guide to Health) campaign. They are active participants in regular fathers’ class which is a source of information on proper breastfeeding and has served to strengthen their roles in the improvement and maintenance

BOX 1

In Barangay San Agustin, a child with a cleft lip became underweight because of difficulty in feeding, and a lack of resources of the single mother. Aside from monitoring the child's health and nutrition by the midwife, the fathers in the community took turns in feeding the child, sometimes in their own homes, as well as providing general care including bathing and babysitting.



Fathers in Limasawa play an active role in the proper care and nutrition of their children.

Source: Limasawa Nutrition Office

of the nutritional status of their children. Since the BNC members are mostly men, they play an important part in encouraging the fathers to participate in the fathers' class and other nutrition activities, especially during the cooking contest for the fathers, which has become a main event for the Nutrition Month celebration in July. The "*usapang lalaki*" or gentleman's agreement between the BNC members and the fathers was an effective mobilization tactic for this unique group of men. Having the leader of the fathers' group married to the midwife, who plays a vital role in the rural health unit and the MNC has also benefitted the fathers' group and program implementation.

Residents of Limasawa recognize the importance of the fathers' role in child nutrition especially when the mother is employed in the city and leave their children with the fathers, which is the case with fishermen who are out at sea during the evening and are home during the day to care for the children. If both parents are employed, the child is placed in the care of extended family members, usually exposing the child to improper feeding practices and higher risk of being malnourished. Such cases were commonly observed in Limasawa, compelling the BNS to take the role of secondary care takers of children in need, stepping up in extending their feeding activities to home visits just to provide an egg to the child in the morning, vitamin supplements in the middle of the day, and milk in the evening until the child is nutritionally rehabilitated.

Although there are different groups and individuals involved in dealing with health and nutrition in Limasawa, they work as one community with a common mission. Being a small community, people are either acquainted with each other, are distant or closely related, or have had some form of interaction such as the case of the MNAO being former teacher of most of the MNC members and other community members. There is a sense of familiarity with one another which has worked for the benefit of the community.

"HEALTHY COMMUNITY, PROGRESSIVE MUNICIPALITY" – MAYOR MELCHOR PETRACORTA

Since assuming duties in 2007, Mayor Melchor Petracorta was constantly approached by parents and other community members for medical referrals, financial assistance for medical care, and other needs pertaining to health and nutrition of children. He realized that the only way to stop people from needing medical assistance, and from acquiring any form of illness is to make them healthy, and this can only be achieved through proper sanitation and good nutrition. With the help of his constituents, municipal counsellors, and members of the MNC, the Mayor revised the 2007 ten-point agenda in 2010 elevating health and nutrition to top priority in the 2010 onwards plan from its priority number 8 position in the 2007-2010 ten-point agenda. He replaced concreting of inter-connecting roads with health and nutrition as top priority in the new agenda, even if the infrastructure such as roads, electricity and other utilities were not yet in place in Limasawa. He believed that with a healthy community, Limasawa will eventually become progressive. The changes in the 10-point agenda are presented in Table 1.

The Mayor's first exposure to the field of health and nutrition was at the College of Medicine at the University of Visayas in Cebu while working as a janitor, at the same time studying for a degree in BS Customs Administration. His vision for Limasawa is to eradicate malnutrition among children in the municipality and he knew that he had to address the underlying causes. In the municipality, poor child care and improper sanitation practices have dire impact on the nutritional status of children. Although feeding programs serve as a short-term solution to the problem of hunger, educating the parents on proper child care through different interventions such as pre-natal care, planting of malunggay trees, backyard gardening, as well as proper hygiene and sanitation can have long term effects on the overall well-being of children. For the Mayor, good nutrition will lead to better performance in school, employment opportunities that can provide a steady income, and perhaps better quality of life.



With the help of his constituents, municipal counsellors, and members of the MNC, the Mayor revised the 2007 ten-point agenda in 2010 elevating health and nutrition to top priority in the 2010 onwards plan from its priority number 8 position in the 2007-2010 ten-point agenda.

Table 1. Changes in Mayor Petracorta's Ten-Point Agenda from 2007 to 2010

TEN-POINT AGENDA		
	2007 to 2010	2010 onwards
1	ROAD CONCRETING AND INFRASTRUCTURES DEVELOPMENT Concreting of inter-connecting roads with standard drainage canals and construction of other infrastructure projects	HEALTH AND NUTRITION Providing programs for the better health status of all the residents and eradicating malnourishment among children
2	SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT Development of the Municipal dumping site for the implementation of Solid Waste Management Plan of the Municipality	TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT Developing and promoting the tourism potential of the island
3	AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT Organization of the fisherfolks and farmers for massive production for the augmentation of family income	AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT Providing trainings and programs among fisherfolks and farmers for mass production
4	ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT Mobilization of "Bantay Dagat" for the protection of our marine Resources	ROAD CONCRETING AND INFRASTRUCTURES DEVELOPMENT Concreting of inter-connecting roads and construction of much needed facilities
5	ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT Implementation of Coastal Management Resource Program on the Municipality	SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT Improving the MRF and proper implementation of the SWMP
6	TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT Improvement of the National Shrine	WATER SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT Providing level III water system in all barangays
7	TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT Improvement of the Municipal Park and other tourist destinations in the island	POWER SUPPLY IMPROVEMENT Increasing the daily power supply
8	HEALTH AND NUTRITION Assistance for the health needs of the residents especially the indigents	COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT Providing accessibility to high technology and improving the transportation facilities for the daily commute of residents and tourists
9	TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT Invitation to investors for the putting-up of dive shops to promote the diving industry of the island	LIVELIHOOD AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT Providing livelihood training and income generating activities and assisting the small-medium scale businessmen avail the opportunities to improve their business
10	LIVELIHOOD AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT Skill training and enhancements for livelihood programs/projects for the residents of the municipality particularly the out-of-school youths	SPORTS AND EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT Providing programs and trainings for the youth granting scholarships to poor but deserving students

IT ALL STARTS WITH WASTE MANAGEMENT

Limasawan-ons know that good health and good nutrition start with a clean environment. Already awarded for its work on nutrition, Barangay Triana focused on hygiene and sanitation to sustain their nutrition efforts, and identified three priorities: 1) sanitation, 2) nutrition, and 3) water. To encompass all three priorities, the barangay decided that installation of toilets in all households was the way to go! Therefore, the barangay adopted Municipal Ordinance 2011-04 requiring homeowners to install toilets in homes before it is occupied. The barangay council also imposed fines and penalties to anyone who was caught defecating in public, a common practice since there were no public toilets in the barangay. The fine of PhP 500 per offense became an income-generating operation for the barangay, which was used to fund the different nutrition programs.

In 2016, the municipal government passed Executive Order (EO) 10 S.2016 based on the Department of Health Administrative Order 2010-0021 on Zero Open Defecation. Through this EO, the Municipal Verification and Certification Team for Zero Open Defecation was created with the responsibility of visiting and validating sanitation of the barangay, declare ZOD status and issue certification, recommend the barangay for awards, and report verified and declared ZOD barangays to the Provincial Health Office and the Department of Health Regional Office VIII. In July 2017, Barangay Triana was declared Zero Open Defecation Barangay by the Municipal Government of Limasawa and the Provincial Health Office.

After the municipal government imposed strict waste management requirements for livestock raising - proper waste management system has to be in place - a few households raise poultry but swine production is almost non-existent. Nevertheless, a shortage of pork meat in the island does not pose dietary problems since other protein sources such as fish, seafood, eggs and poultry are widely available and majority of households have their vegetable gardens.

SMALL BUDGET, BIG IMPACT

Although Limasawa Island is considered a geographically isolated and disadvantaged area, and a 6th income class municipality, its local government managed to operate with low financial resource. Since its operations for health and nutrition interventions took off in the late 1990s, budgetary requirements for nutrition remain higher than the actual allocation. However, the municipal government made efforts to annually increase allocation for nutrition activities. In 2008, budget allocation for nutrition was two percent of the total municipal budget, which equated to 143 percent change from the previous year.

In 2009, the approved budget for nutrition was only one percent of the total municipal budget but substantial financial support was provided to the nutrition programs by the private sector, which amounted to 65 percent of the total municipal nutrition budget. With a separate fund, the local government and the private sector allocated funds for the BNS program.

The MNC also managed to come up with creative means to generate funds for its nutrition activities. In 2010, the *Sangguniang Bayan* enacted Municipal Ordinance 2010-12 that allows Limasawa to impose diving fees on tourists, ten percent of which goes to the MNC. In the same manner, fees from whale shark watching became a source of income. Since there was a constant need for medical assistance especially among poor families, the “*Emergen-10*” (*Emergen-diez*) was implemented family served as an emergency fund for families who need referrals to the mainland, transportation



“Barya mo, Kalusugan ko” is a long-standing fund-raising strategy that engages community members to contribute personal finances for nutrition programs.

Source: Limasawa Nutrition Office

money, and payment for hospital admission. One of the more sustainable fund raiser that has been in place since 2007 was the “Barya mo, Kalusugan ko” (Your Change for My Health) program. Bamboo/wooden coin banks are strategically placed in public and private offices where people can deposit their loose change. The BHW takes the bamboo/wooden coin banks on a weekly basis to collect more coins around the barangay while making use of this opportunity to educate the community about nutrition. Every quarter, the coin banks are collected during the MNC meeting, and the total collection is equally shared between the MNC, the BNCs and schools, which make use of their share to fund nutrition programs and activities in their

own barangays and schools. Bamboo/wooden coin banks were also used to support pregnant women.

“Buntis Baby Banks” are placed in barangay health stations. During their pre-natal check-up, pregnant women (and their husbands) are required to deposit some money in their designated bamboo coin banks, while additional coins are deposited in bamboo coin banks for expectant mothers. The money saved in the coin banks are then used to finance their delivery. In a similar manner, the “Sweethearts Club” was set up for residents with heart problems and diabetes mellitus. Members pay a fee of PhP 10 which is used to purchase medicines to augment the supply of the rural health unit (RHU).

Nevertheless, a shortage of pork meat in the island does not pose dietary problems since other protein sources such as fish, seafood, eggs and poultry are widely available and majority of households have their vegetable gardens.

Other sources of funds were provided by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes, An Waray Party List, Rotary Club of Talisay-Cebu



Limasawa helps its pregnant women save money for delivery by placing “Buntis Baby Bank” in every barangay health station (left). In addition, the municipality provides special care to pregnant women through a monitoring system that identifies the prenatal schedules, expected date of delivery and place of delivery of each pregnant woman in the barangay.

Source: Limasawa Nutrition Office

and Maasin, and the German NGO Kinderhlife Philippinen, mostly to support feeding programs, medical supplies and vitamin supplements.

When funds are urgently needed, the MNC members step up to provide financial support from their personal funds.

IMPROVEMENTS IN NUTRITION

Since the time when Mayor Petracorta reset his ten-point agenda making health and nutrition the top priority, the prevalence of underweight children age 0 to 71 months continued its decrease over the years, based on Operation *Timbang* Plus data (Figure 3). The prevalence of wasting among school age children, on the other hand, increased in 2010 before a decreasing trend set in from 2011 to 2016 (Figure 4). The LGU accounts the increase in 2010 due to the use of defective bathroom scales. Even with limited funds and after they were awarded the NHA, Limasawa managed to reduce the prevalence of wasting. Stunting for the same age group was at 3.56 percent. Given the recent introduction of stunting measurement as standard in the country, a further examination needs to be undertaken nationwide.

Limasawa's performance in managing its nutrition programs and maintenance of low prevalence of malnutrition is comparable to a much larger and more financially stable municipality. While the bigger municipality can maintain a low prevalence of malnutrition with a much higher income and bigger allocation for nutrition programs, Limasawa is able to perform just as well with much less funding and structure.

UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST 1000 DAYS

The concept of The First 1000 (F1K) Days appears widely known among the MNC members. Even the municipal accountant is familiar with F1K. However, the F1K was only introduced to the island in 2014 when the NNC celebrated the nutrition month in July with F1K as the theme. The concept has yet to be translated into a program with clear and specific implementation standards for LGUs and built into the Nutrition Program Implementation guides and the MELLPI which the well-performing LGUs use as reference for nutrition programming.

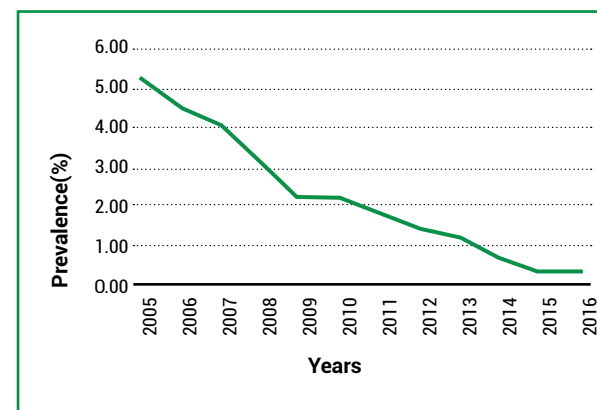


FIGURE 3. Prevalence of underweight children 0-71 months in Limasawa, 2005-2016

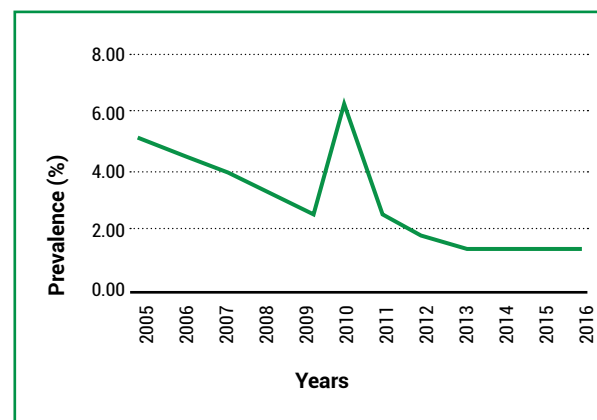


FIGURE 4. Prevalence of wasting among school age children in Limasawa, 2005-2016

GOOD NUTRITION LEADS TO PROGRESS

After receiving the Nutrition Honor Award in 2011, Limasawa was recognized as Best Implementer in IYCF and Breastfeeding in the LGU category, and was also awarded “Disease-Free Municipality” and “Rabies-Free Municipality” in 2012. It is important to note that the municipality of Limasawa started to receive recognition even before the development of its infrastructure which the municipality de-emphasized in favor of health and nutrition, tourism and development and agricultural development, in that order in 2010. With limited financial resources and access to basic utilities, a challenging transport system, especially its remoteness from the mainland, the people of

Limasawa are undoubtedly its best asset. The more recognition they received, the more motivated they become in making health and nutrition a way of life. Nutrition has become a lifestyle rather than a problem that needed to be resolved. The municipality of Limasawa received the “Galing Pook Award for Achieving Good Nutrition through Good Governance” in January 2012 in recognition for its excellent implementation of nutrition programs. Both the “Galing Pook Award” and the NHA were, perhaps, entry points to the “Seal of Good Local Governance”, which was awarded to the municipality in 2012. Mayor Petracorta has been recognized as one of the mayor mentors on nutrition of the Orientation for Newly Elected Mayors (ONE-M), a project of

“*Limasawa started to receive recognition even before the development of its infrastructure which the municipality de-emphasized in favor of health and nutrition, tourism and development and agricultural development, in that order in 2010.*”



The municipal nutrition action officer together with members of the municipal nutrition committee educate mothers on the proper feeding of infants and young children.
Source: Limasawa Nutrition Office

the League of Municipalities of the Philippines in partnership with the NNC. He was also conferred with the “*Bayani ng Kalusugan Award*” by the Department of Health in June 2015. With these awards, the municipality of Limasawa established its track record in health and nutrition, as well as effective governance.

While most low-income municipalities focus on physical infrastructure before they establish their social services, Limasawans addressed their health and nutrition problems before they were able to benefit from paved roads and regular supply of electricity. Six years after becoming the recipient of NHA, the municipality of Limasawa was granted by the national government an infrastructure budget of PhP 101 million to further develop its roads, which will be very useful as the municipality gears up for the quincentenary anniversary of the first mass in March 2021. With thousands of tourists expected to participate in the celebration, more infrastructure development is deemed necessary.

HOW LIMASAWA ACHIEVED SUCCESS

Once Limasawa began to function as a municipality, it was able to independently pursue interventions that were needed by the community. Although it had some struggles in the beginning, there was strong coordination and support from the PNO and the RNPC, the first two entities to recognize the potential of Limasawa as an award-winning municipality.

With a relatively small population, it is not surprising that everyone is somehow connected to one another. In Limasawa, relationships played a vital role in its success in program implementation, facilitated mobilization of constituents and encouraged them to participate in the different programs. The “*usapang lalaki*” strategy among male members of the MNC, BNC and the fathers’ group gave way to active participation of fathers and proved effective in improving the nutritional status of undernourished children. The support from the fathers helped the mothers realize the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and encouraged more mothers to practice exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of the child.



With a relatively small population, it is not surprising that everyone is somehow connected to one another. In Limasawa, relationships played a vital role in its success in program implementation, facilitated mobilization of constituents and encouraged them to participate in the different programs.

Even the Mayor actively participated in the exclusive breastfeeding seminar for the fathers. The casual demeanor of the Mayor, and his leadership style of leading by example, also encouraged the community to participate in the different programs. He acts as if he is just one of the guys, with no expectations for special treatment during meetings with visitors or at a casual gathering. He is well-supported by his MNAO and vice versa, since the MNAO also holds the position of SB Secretary. Like the previous MHO, the MNAO is well respected by constituents and colleagues in the MNC having been a former teacher of most of the members of the MNC in the local high school.

Even without the health background, the special relationship between the MNAO and the people made mobilization of human resources much easier.

With the accreditation of the health facility as a Center for Maternal and Child Care with upgraded facilities for Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care, Limasawa can provide the necessary services for women during pregnancy as well as enhanced child care and newborn screening. This also allowed stronger monitoring and tracking of women during their pregnancy through regular pre-natal visits. As incentives to regular pre-natal visit to the health stations, women have their “*Buntis Baby* banks” in the barangay health stations to allow them to set aside some money for their delivery.

Significant turn overs of key players usually lead to the “reinvention of the wheel”. Programs, even if proven to benefit the community, are eliminated and replaced with new interventions for the sake of leaving one’s mark. Fortunately, this kind of transition did not get in the way of Limasawa’s path to award winning success. The MNC appreciated the contributions of the previous MHO/MNAO and sustained the good practices that were proven effective. Continuity of good practices provided consistency in Limasawa’s performance.

The expansion of the MNC membership allowed different agencies such as the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Tourism to implement programs that are more nutrition sensitive, and the institutionalization of nutrition across broader sectors in Limasawa. Almost all the activities implemented by the MNC and the municipality centered towards nutrition to a point that it became a way of life. Every member of the MNC had a role to play and were designated tasks in the pursuit of a malnutrition-free Limasawa, especially in IYCF, exclusive breastfeeding and first 1000 days.

One of the biggest achievements of Limasawa is making households more food secure with almost all households equipped with their own vegetable garden and a malunggay tree as source of nutrients. Even during the Habagat, when food supply from the mainland is difficult to ship to Limasawa, the community remains food secure and nutritional status of children was well maintained.



Almost all the activities implemented by the MNC and the municipality centered towards nutrition to a point that it became a way of life. Every member of the MNC had a role to play and were designated tasks in the pursuit of a malnutrition-free Limasawa.

SUSTAINING AWARD WINNING STATUS

Ever since Limasawa was declared a municipality, it managed to sustain improvements in its nutrition situation. Achieving the highest honor in nutrition does not mean the work has ended. Limasawa continues to move forward and has been sustaining progress for more than 10 years now. The early work and its outcomes can be credited to the people who built the program foundations, while sustainability of gains may be credited to the political will of the local officials beginning with the Mayor who put nutrition above all else and continued the good practices in addressing its malnutrition problems. There is much enthusiasm for nutrition among the community members and the municipal nutrition committee as nutrition has become a “way of life”, giving the program a greater chance of continuing far into the future.



New infrastructure projects combined with access to social services established in the early years of the journey are a boost for the Limasawan-ons.

Source: Limasawa Nutrition Office



There is much enthusiasm for nutrition among the community, especially within the MNC that nutrition has become a “way of life”, giving the program a greater chance of continuing far into the future.

Now that Limasawa has solidified its award-winning status, development of its infrastructure seems to be taking off. Perhaps as Limasawa becomes more developed, they will be able to do more with additional resources that may come about from its development, and finally achieve a malnutrition free municipality. Limasawa has been so far successful in managing and sustaining its nutrition programs. As the nutrition situation in Limasawa continues to improve and as more infrastructure is put in place, the Mayor’s tagline “a healthy community, progressive municipality” may not be a far reality.

Lessons from the Limasawa Experience

Limasawa carries out its mission with a vision of a malnutrition free community. Classified as a 6th class municipality, considered as low income, and geographically isolated, Limasawa is expected to have a high prevalence of malnutrition and other health challenges commonly found in similar communities. However, Limasawa has broken away from the norm and is now a recognized high performer in nutrition. The experience brings important lessons described below:

1. **The role of leadership of the local chief executive has been pivotal in putting nutrition as a priority program in the Agenda 2010 onwards replacing infrastructure as top priority of Limasawa and in valuing the contribution of the previous nutrition program architects.** The sustainability of the gains in nutrition in Limasawa relates in good part to the respect for good programs and good practices already put in place regardless of authorship. Looking ahead, the sustainability of the town's gains in nutrition are not likely to be broken by future changes in political leadership. Many elements in the municipality would defend the gains from such shifts.
2. **The influence the nutrition action officers in previous years and at present brought to the Limasawans was also critical in sustaining gains in the program and nutrition behavior of the people.** The MNAO during the municipality's ascent to NHA was well-trusted and respected by the community. His advices and advocacies were accepted with favor. The current MNAO who is also the SB Secretary and former teacher of more than half of the MNC members and the community also provides cohesion and continuity of the program.
3. **The income class of a municipality may not necessarily be the determining factor in solving the nutrition problems.** Even with Limasawa's low income status, the prevalence of underweight among children 0 to 71 months and school age children was reduced by making efficient use of available human and financial resources.
4. **Limasawa's historical experience demonstrates that critical enabling elements for program establishment and functionality do not all have to depend on the local government.** The role of a highly competent DOH's doctor-to-the-*barrio* has been critical in the development of the Limasawa nutrition program. The MHO/MNAO supported by the Provincial Nutrition Office and the health sector, developed very effective program strategies in advocacy, capacity building of health and nutrition structures, program actions and resource mobilization to lead the municipal nutrition program to the door of the Nutrition Honor Award.
5. **Both the PNO and the RNPC provided mentoring to the Limasawa during the various years the municipality was making strides to improve nutrition.** There was strong coordination and support from these provincial and regional offices. Both provided early encouragement to Limasawa by recognizing the potential of Limasawa as a potential award-winning municipality.

6. **Having had to contend with a basic nutrition program structure, the MHO/MNAO described above made use of newsletters and CDs for information on programs and advocacy and took advantage of every opportunity to educate constituents on health and nutrition.** A somewhat similar resource constraint confronted the later SB Secretary/ MNAO. After receiving the IYCF training himself, the former high school teacher's solution was to divide the IYCF trainer's manual and assign parts for MNC members to lecture.
7. **In the second part of Limasawa's story that continues to date, the LGU does not have a secretariat for the MNC. A flat organizational structure is an efficient solution that, by default, regularly brings everybody involved in the program to the table.** It was practical for the municipality's small program but might not be efficient for bigger ones. Nevertheless, ensuring that MNC members get timely information on what is happening to the program, giving them responsibilities in capacity building and actions to reduce malnutrition are strategies that increase their sector's and personal stake in the nutrition program and pave the way to better informed nutrition-sensitive initiatives. Engagement of the Sangguniang Bayan in the MNC and the fact that the MNAO is the SB Secretary facilitated the formulation of relevant nutrition policies and provided budgetary support to the program.
8. **One cannot underestimate the value of identity in working together for a common goal and it is important to draw on cultural strength as a mobilizing force.** The Limasawan-ons are well-knit isolated islanders, possessing an inner desire to show that they too can excel just like other municipalities. Good nutrition for its children became a rallying point.
9. **One way of ensuring service to far-flung areas or islands is to provide every barangay with at least one active and motivated trained medical professional,** in this case midwives funded by the Department of Health in the case of Limasawa, working with at least a BNS and BHW.
10. **Addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition (i.e. sanitation and waste management) is an important dimension in mitigating malnutrition.** Prohibiting open defecation and installation of toilets in households and in public areas, and proper waste management were likely one of the main drivers in improving the state of nutrition in Limasawa.
11. **Solving the problem of nutrition is a community effort.** This was exemplified by the fathers' active involvement led by MNC and BNC members and the BNS who conduct house visits to ensure that the undernourished children are fed until they reach normal nutritional status. Improving parental care and providing support to children in the absence or lack of parental supervision helped in the recovery of undernourished children in Limasawa.
12. **Household and community food production can address food insecurity even in isolated island municipalities.** Although Limasawa is remote and experiences challenges of food delivery from the mainland during the southwest monsoon season, the community is never without food. The municipal government requires every household to produce vegetables and *malunggay* (moringa) for home use. Every initiative helps - the prevalence of malnutrition does not increase during the southwest monsoon season, which could last up to five months.

13. **The support of the provincial nutrition structures in guiding the Limasawa program provided confidence to the small town** that indeed it can go further in its journey to good nutrition.
14. **For Limasawa, the next step is to explore how best to address stunting in the first 1000 days in the lives of children, developing a plan of action that adheres to the F1K standards.** For NNC, a review of MELLPI to increase the focus of programs and actions on the ground on preventing stunting through robust programming for the F1K and improvement of the OPT Plus would be needed.



Malungon

Under LINGAP, the major convergence strategy for service delivery of Malungon, pregnant women and children receive essential services such as weighing of children.

Photo by: Malungon Nutrition Office

Malungon's Story of Change:

The Power of Governance towards Nutrition Improvement

MALUNGON IN A SNAPSHOT

Nestled at the northeastern part of Sarangani Province, the municipality of Malungon can be reached through different parts of Mindanao including via Davao, General Santos City, or South Cotabato. Not only is the town vested with the biggest land area¹ from among the seven municipalities of Sarangani, Malungon offers beautiful mountain range, calm weather, and amazing ladder-like water falls. Kalonbarak Skyline Ridge situated approximately 2,375 feet above sea level provides a panoramic view of four mountains and a stunning sea of clouds in the early morning or afternoon. For the adventurous, one can trek in Busagan Falls, Nature and Adventure Park.

The name “Malungon” is said to have originated from the word “Malngan” which means end of tribal dispute; tree with curly leaves that are abundant and endemic in the area; or wave-like pattern of the river traversing the area.

¹Malungon's land area is approximately 89,662.9205 hectares

The Municipality of Malungon acknowledged that whichever is the true origin of the term “Malungon” definitely refers to the rich cultural dynamics of the area. Malungon is home to several indigenous tribes such as B'laan and Tagakaulo. The intricate craftsmanship and unique traditions of these two communities are showcased in the Lamlifew Community Museum and School of Living Tradition and the Kityan Daku Community Museum and School of Living Tradition, respectively.

Malungon is a first class municipality recognized in 2017 by the National Competitiveness Council as Mindanao's ninth (of 422) most competitive municipality and 26th nationwide. It has 31 barangays with a total population of 103,604 in 2015 equivalent to 25, 200 households².

² Projected population for 2018 is 109,299

The name “Malungon” is said to have originated from the word “Malngan” which means end of tribal dispute; tree with curly leaves that are abundant and endemic in the area; or wave-like pattern of the river traversing the area.



Figure 1. Location map of Malungon in Sarangani

MALUNGON'S NUTRITION JOURNEY

“We should stop thinking that we are the best because by thinking such we would no longer strive to be better”, a firm reminder of Atty. Maria Theresa “Tessa” D. Constantino, the municipal mayor of Malungon, to the staff of the municipal government on a regular Monday flag raising ceremony. The young Mayor elaborated that they should continue to focus and innovate regardless of the awards the municipality has received. At the period of writing in April 2018, Malungon was vying for the national Nutrition Honor Award, the highest award in nutrition conferred by the National Nutrition Council. On top of this are other awards the municipality received including the Seal of Good Local Governance, Gawad Kalasag, and First place in the Most Functional Municipal Council for the Protection of Children (MCPC) in the province of Sarangani.

The achievements being reaped today are results of incremental and cumulative efforts throughout the years. Members of the Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC), the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO), and key actors unanimously noted that efforts in nutrition are traced as early as 1990s. It evolved as a development agenda over the course of four political administrations.

During the earlier days, nutrition initiatives were basically embedded in other activities of the municipality as there was no separate budget for nutrition. Feeding program was part of the “*Munisipyo ng Bayan*”³ conducted in all weeks of September in the 1990s. Nutrition did not have a separate office and was administratively under the Municipal Agriculture Office and shared physical space with the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office. There was no designated MNAO or a functional MNC. Nutrition staff only met when they had activities. Until 1992, the municipality was ranked as lowest among seven municipalities in the provincial nutrition evaluation. The Provincial Nutrition Action Officer Belen Lopez encouraged the wife of then Mayor Felipe K. Constantino, Delia “Del” Constantino to take the role as MNAO, which she accepted.

MNAO Del convened a Program Implementation Review (PIR) and led the analysis of municipal nutritional data as basis for planning and implementation of the nutrition program. With the influence of PNAO Lopez to expand the communal garden of the Agriculture Office,

³A civil service mandated activity for delivering municipal services to selected barangays.



We should stop thinking that we are the best because by thinking such we would no longer strive to be better.

ATTY. MARIA THERESA “TESSA” D. CONSTANTINO
MUNICIPAL MAYOR OF MALUNGON

the municipality through the MNAO initiated the Green Revolution Program which involved backyard growing of vegetables, flowers, and herbal plants. To encourage more barangays and households to establish backyard gardens, the municipality launched the Search for Best Barangay with most number of vegetables planted. MNAO Del also organized the Ladies Circle, a social networking group of women, to assist in the Green Revolution Program and sponsor activities such as cooking contests, and clean up drive.

Indeed, people empowerment is central in Malungon’s nutrition progress. Households were engaged in establishing vegetable gardens and women joined skills training on food processing. Dole out was highly discouraged. People were taught to produce their own food and generate income so they can provide the needs of their families.

Major changes in the municipal nutrition program occurred in 1992. Nutrition was transferred under the direct supervision of the Office of the Mayor, a physical office was set up, budget allocations for nutrition activities were made separate, and barangay nutrition scholars in all 18 barangays then were mobilized. At present, the number of barangays increased to 31 and all have at least one barangay nutrition scholar.

The MNC was officially created with seven members in 1993 while the barangay nutrition committees (BNCs) were established in 1996. All 18 barangays were provided with salter-type weighing scale. While nutrition programs on food production, livelihood and skills training were continued during these years, the municipality

put emphasis on a number of projects for women through the engagement of the:

- Rural Improvement Club, a non-government women organization, for the conduct of quarterly food processing activities as livelihood projects for mothers,
- Ladies Circle for the clean-up drive, and
- Women in Nation Building and Development in Sarangani (WINDS) in 1998 for more skills training for women such as food processing, pickles making, and soap making.

During Mayor Felipe Constantino's administration from 1998 until the end of his term in 2001, the municipality conducted 120-day supplemental feeding for underweight children aged 24-83 months through funding support from the Regional Nutrition Office, celebrated Nutrition month, intensified production of legumes in schools to support supplemental feeding of school children, and established communal gardens. For three consecutive years, the municipality was recognized for its outstanding BNS at provincial, regional (2000 – 2001) and national level (2000 finalist).

The successor administration under Mayor Teody Padernilla (2001 to 2007) continued to put nutrition as a priority and ushered several developments in terms of nutrition structures, processes, interventions and policies. His sister Violeta P. Anfone served as the MNAO and Executive Secretary of the Mayor from 2004 to 2007. The MNC was formalized and became a functional body housed in the Office of the Mayor. Membership was expanded to include NGOs and monitoring of nutrition programs was intensified. Capacity building of barangay nutrition scholars was intensified. A number of nutrition programs implemented in the present administration were initiated during this time (see timelines in Figure 2). Incremental efforts already started to show concrete gains ushering the municipality to receive its Green Banner Award in 2006 and 2007.



Local residents boast of their bountiful harvest.
Source: Malungon Information Office

THE TURNING POINT

While nutrition programs have been implemented since the early 1990s, the MNC considers 2007 as the turning point for Malungon under the leadership of Mayor Reynaldo F. Constantino who succeeded Mayor Padernilla. The three-term mayor who served from 2007 until 2016 was challenged to continue what was started by his nephew (referring to Mayor Padernilla). Considering nutrition as an important foundation of children, he continued to put prime import on nutrition and addressed underlying causes of malnutrition, prioritizing empowerment of people and increasing access to government programs and services.

Mayor Reynaldo Constantino considered nutrition a behavioural change program. He saw commitment and leadership as crucial in urging people to follow. A leader cannot demand from his people unless he demonstrates commitment. Bienvenida G. Llego, former municipal administrator during the tenure of Mayor Reynaldo Constantino, recalled that despite the contributions of the earlier administration the challenge on malnutrition continued. Ms. Llego further recalled the Mayor saying that, “I am not a leader who will build you bridges. More than building roads and bridges, I would rather be

remembered as building people’s character and capacities.” In his banner program for agriculture, he emphasized the importance of strategies that will harness the initiative and self-reliance of his constituents such as home gardens more than building agricultural infrastructures⁴ in ensuring food security and good nutrition.

Municipal interventions were anchored on the conceptual framework that malnutrition is caused by multi-dimensional factors including food insecurity, inadequate care for mothers and children, behavioural and attitudinal problems, and lack of family income and knowledge.

Mayor Reynaldo emphasized that agriculture has to start in every backyard. Every household, barangay, and school was obliged to establish a vegetable garden. The municipality and barangays identified communal gardens for households without adequate space to establish a backyard garden. As in previous administrations, the designated MNAO was the mayor’s wife. Roselyn Dadivas Constantino taking benchmark from

⁴ Mayor Reynaldo Constantino explained that Malungon has a vast capital and yet he observed that a number of households still buy vegetables. “If they have vegetables in their garden, there will be fewer expenses and parents can focus on their children and on how to provide for their family’s needs”, the former Mayor emphasized.



I am not a leader who will build you bridges. More than building roads and bridges, I would rather be remembered as building people’s character and capacities.

FORMER MAYOR REYNALDO CONSTANTINO

the previous MNAOs also took to heart the role. In 2007, the municipality through its MNAO initiated the Restore Food for the Children (RFC) Nutri-Farm as source of food for the municipality’s in-house feeding activity and as resource-generating activity. Fruits and vegetable gardens, nutri-farms, poultry/duckery, and inland fishponds were established to ensure food sufficiency particularly among children.

Barangay Monitoring Technicians (BMTs) were hired to monitor agricultural program at the barangay level. Farmers were taught new technologies in agriculture. Seeds were provided and demo farms were established. KAPITAN⁵ gardens were established in all barangays as a source of low-priced fruits and vegetables for

⁵ Kabalikatan Ako sa mga Programang Inihahandog Tungo sa Angkop na Nutrisyon (KAPITAN Program)



Figure 2. Nutrition journey of Malungon

family consumption and as resource mobilization effort to augment funds for implementation of nutrition activities in the barangay. All these initiatives aimed to promote “Food Always in the Home (FAITH)” and ensure there is food in every household.

Nutrition programs initiated in the earlier administrations were continued and additional⁶ and enhanced interventions were implemented to increase access to social services of the 14 geographically isolated barangays, ensure food security, build capacity of parents, and ensure inclusivity of indigenous peoples (IPs) which comprise almost half of the municipal population. MNAO Roselyn initiated the improvement of the Municipal Nutri-Care Center that was built in 2005 as a “kubo” (hut) used for in-house feeding. Now called *Gumne Gumfat Dad Nga*⁷, the center has become multipurpose. It continues to serve as a facility for in-house feeding of severely underweight pre-school children, and at the same time serves as venue for nutrition education, meetings and



The Gumne Gumfat Dad Nga (Malungon Nutri Care Center).

Source: Malungon Information Office

skills trainings, and breastfeeding room. Emmanuel D. Pacquiao Foundation, a member of the Malungon Municipal Nutrition Committee since 2008 until 2013, donated a building with a breastfeeding room within the municipal premises. Barangay level feeding was also conducted through the KAPITAN program which involves provision of rice, mungo, sugar, milk and egg to families with underweight children. Complementing these activities were awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives such as the Story Book Project conducted in partnership with Department of Education (DepEd) to promote nutrition through an interactive method; Rose Feeds the Children (RFC), an initiative of the MNO to promote nutrition awareness among preschool children; translation of the “10 Kumainments⁸” into Tagakaulo and B’laan dialects, an initiative of the MNC to help IPs have better understanding of nutrition; and continued conduct of *PABASA sa Nutrisyon* which aims to enhance the knowledge of mothers, pregnant and lactating women on proper health and nutrition practices.

*LINGAP*⁹ sa Barangay replaced the *Munisipyo sa Barangay* in order to bring the services closer to the people especially those in far flung areas. *LINGAP sa Barangay* converges services from different agencies including nutrition programs and brings these to barangays. More specifically, the municipal

⁶ The Municipality of Malugon implemented additional relevant interventions which include the provision of college education assistance, Treevolution (TRIBU-LUSYON) project, a municipal-wide tree planting activity done in partnership with DENR; establishments of breastfeeding room in strategic areas; and putting up of Bahay Kalinga to provide physical therapy for children with special needs in partnership with GUGMA, Inc., an NGO that caters to special children and trains parents on physical therapy.

⁷ B’laan term which means Municipal Nutri-Care Center

⁸ The 10 Kumainments is the popularized version of the Ten Nutritional Guidelines for Filipinos

⁹ Local Ingenuity in Alleviating Poverty

nutrition office conducts weighing of pre-school children, feeding, advocacy and promotion of good nutrition and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) to mothers of pre-school children, pregnant and lactating women. Mayor Reynaldo finds the *LINGAP sa Barangay* effective in providing venue for advocacy and promotion, monitoring and increasing transparency and accountability. During LINGAP, health and nutrition frontline workers such as the BNS, BMT and Barangay Sanitary Inspector report publicly on project progress on the Barangay Nutrition Center, backyard gardens, iodized salt testing, vegetable seeds distribution, and compliance to zero open defecation (ZOD) policy. Barangays and community members who do not cooperate are publicly named thereby enhancing compliance to nutrition programs and policies.



Communal Toilet Barangay Kiblat, Malungon

The municipality enforces the Maternal, Newborn, Child Health & Nutrition (MNCHN) Resolution No. 11-2012-039, which provides for and encourages communities to avail a package of services from skilled health professionals in appropriate facilities and prevent maternal and neonatal deaths. In support to the policy, the municipality converted the RFC Kamaligs (huts) of the 31 barangays as halfway homes for pregnant women from far flung barangays so they can deliver at the municipal health facility.

The able leadership of Mayor Reynaldo Constantino was succeeded by his daughter Atty. Maria Theresa “Tessa” D. Constantino who also demonstrates dedication and commitment to public service. Mayor Tessa admitted that there is pressure to sustain the gains made by the nutrition programs her father put in place. Also a transformed leader, Mayor Tessa works to complement the soft development projects initiated by the former mayor and focus on infrastructure as her banner program while continuing social development to provide physical structures and ensure sustainability of social gains achieved in earlier years.

“With or without the award we should continue innovating and ask the question, how can



Turn-over Ceremony of Communal Toilet in Barangay Banate, Malungon, 13 April 2017

Source: Malungon Information Office

we improve?” Mayor Tessa emphasized. Her administration intends to continue innovations for nutrition and bridge the gaps particularly between nutrition and education. With this mindset, Malungon addresses malnutrition in a holistic approach by incorporating potential contribution of multiple sectors such as education, early childhood care and development, illegal drug prevention, sports and housing. *LINGAP sa Barangay* was further enhanced by bringing in additional services from 18 to 22 to include legal, dental, optical services, and anti-drug abuse information dissemination through its Total Elimination of Substance-abuse thru School Anti-drug (TESSA) Advocacy Program. The TESSA Program is complemented by Task Force Duterte

Illegal Drugs Symposium and the *Bola Kontra Droga*¹⁰. The municipality envisions a healthy, well-nourished and drug-free society. Malungon was declared as the first drug-free municipality in Saranggani Province.

Because people empowerment and capacity development are central in Malungon's efforts in preventing malnutrition, education is also a priority intervention of the municipality. In fact, it opened additional integrated schools to hold regular classes in hard to reach *sitios* and allocated more budget to hire local teachers. It has provided scholarship support to at least 1,000 college students, children with special needs, and children aged 3-4 years. It also promotes the Alternative Learning System (ALS) to provide individuals unable to attend regular classes the opportunity to complete elementary and secondary education.

Initially as a personal advocacy, the Barangay Chair Edna Tuanzon highly advocates for education. She said that, "*Walang mahirap kung makapag-aral lang tayo.*" (No one will be poor if everyone is educated.) The barangay initiated education campaign for parents and scholarship for children through their Adopt a Child Program

¹⁰ A sportsfest conducted quarterly among youth. Its main objective is to prevent the youth from being exposed to substance abuse by engaging them in sports activities such as basketball.

for Education, and *Kariton Eskwela* (school on wheels), a catch-up program where feeding is integrated. Each barangay council member sponsors five children and the barangay links with NGOs for additional support. The Barangay chair also promotes nutrition in her speeches during school activities promotes nutrition and ensures strict compliance to municipal ordinance regulating the sale of junk food.

Food security through communal gardens has been continually improved through the MTDC Program. The RFC Nutri-Farm initiated by MNAO Roselyn in 2007 was enhanced and called MTDC-RFC Nutri Farm (*Magtanun Ta ug Daghang Calan-on*, a Cebuano term which means to plant variety of food sources to restore food for children). The MTDC-RFC Nutri Farm managed by the MNC has become a technology demo farm and even an income generating initiative. The Agriculture Office informed that the MTDC-RFC Nutri Farm has produced 1,800 assorted vegetable seeds which were distributed to local farmers, and generated PhP 74,000.00 from its fruit and vegetable produce. For schools, households and communities with limited space, the MTDC-horizontal, vertical and container gardens make use of empty plastic bottles and containers.



People empowerment and capacity development are central in Malungon's efforts in preventing malnutrition. Education is also a priority intervention of the municipality.

UNITY AND COOPERATION

Malungon strongly believes that malnutrition is a multi-dimensional development concern that requires efforts from everyone at municipal, barangay and household level. This concept was further reinforced by the shared principle of "unity and cooperation" among local actors and community members. Indeed, a strong and committed political leader has to be complemented with a cohesive workforce and nutrition committees at municipal and barangay level.

This developmental paradigm and working principle is demonstrated strongly in nutrition program implementation and engagement of community members for nutrition.

Local Nutrition Committees: This involved the functionality of nutrition committees at municipal and barangay level. The municipal nutrition committee continues to be strengthened and expanded to include more partners from the private sector. Membership of committees became cross-thematic resulting in increased efficiency in information dissemination, convergence of efforts, and planning and implementation of holistic interventions. Inclusivity and culture sensitivity were advanced through membership of representatives from indigenous peoples and persons with disability (PWDs).

When MNAO Roselyn assumed office in 2007, she considered the low priority the barangays put on nutrition as one of the greatest challenges. BNCs were hardly functional. Funding was a major constraint and in some areas there were conflicts between barangay health workers and barangay nutrition scholars (BNS), and between non-supportive *punong barangay* and BNS. In response, the MNC facilitated re-organization and orientation of BNCs. Given the number of geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA) or barangays the MNAO felt the need for pinpointing specifically which areas have the highest prevalence of underweight children. The MNO provided assistance particularly to the 10 barangays identified with highest prevalence of underweight children. Three of these barangays are GIDAs. *Sitio* leaders

BOX 1

MALUNGON'S ADOPTED CHILD: STORY OF EM-EM

“Em-em” as they call her which means Municipality of Malungon is the new nickname given to an adopted child by the municipal nutrition committee. The story of Em-em is a concrete application of the municipality’s working principle of unity and cooperation. The municipal government led by the Municipal Nutrition Office (MNO) worked closely to rehabilitate Em-em from severe underweight.

In 2005, the MNO implemented the Adopt-a-Child Program through the In-house Feeding Program that provides 120-day feeding for severely underweight preschoolers. A year after it was launched, the MNO through its referral system, discovered Em-em who was then 13 months old but weighed 3.6 kg only, the normal weight of a one-month old infant. Her mother died due to complications a month after giving birth. Em-em was left to be cared by his 13 year old brother and was only fed with “*linugaw*” (porridge). The MNO would describe her as under near-death situation. Unsure if she can survive her critical condition, Em-em was housed at the Nutri-Care Center for supplemental feeding. The municipal staff took turns in attending her needs and monitored her closely during office hours and beyond. Former MNAO Anfone and her family took responsibility to care for Em-em during weekends. Em-em stayed at the Nutri-Care Center for almost a year until her weight improved. Employees of the municipal government raised funds to support her by contributing during pay day. They also sought assistance from other NGO partners.

Since her father died, Em-em eventually became part of MNAO Anfone’s family. She was baptized during the Civil Service Celebration with the municipal employees as her baptismal sponsors. Understanding that her needs are continuing particularly for medication and schooling, the succeeding administration since 2007 continually supports Em-em. The Program has become a regular and continuous undertaking. Since its implementation, Em-em is one of the three children beneficiaries continually supported by the program. Em-em is now a healthy elementary student at Holy Infant School.



*The Management Committee of Malungon. Photo taken 2017.
Source: Malungon Information Office*

were included as members of the BNC to improve monitoring of child nutritional status and referral of cases.

Coordination, Monitoring and Operational Platforms: The municipality initiated coordination and operation platforms to provide space for direction-setting, planning, management of gaps and adjustments, monitoring, strengthening teamwork, shortening processes and closing communication gaps, and increasing transparency and accountability. The Mayor promotes the programs, provides updates, gives directives and

consults with Punong Barangay to determine important concerns and issues during meetings of the Association of Barangay Chairs (ABC) and the LINGAP sa Barangay.

Mayor Tessa singled out the importance of the municipal management committee (MANCOM) meetings held every Monday and its contribution to effective program implementation. In the MANCOM, all department heads and municipal members are present. “They see each other eye to eye. This is why they are close and active”, Mayor Tessa shared. “Convergence is like culture for us”, MSWDO Ruth Arangote added. Notably, this set-up and culture is replicated at the barangay level. The municipal team reaches out to barangays and provides orientation among BNC members to level-off awareness and deepen understanding on nutrition using data reflected in their Nutri-Care Center. Furthermore, MANCOM meetings are held at barangay level and ‘*pulong-pulong*’ (assemblies) are done in sitios or purok. BNC members visit households in teams to promote nutrition and other programs.

Human Resource for Nutrition: The role of the MNAO is crucial in the successful implementation of nutrition programs. MNAO Roselyn stressed that the person needs to be someone that has the full trust and confidence of the local chief executive (LCE). That way, the MNAO has easy access to and significant influence on the LCE to secure his/her support to nutrition. The MNAO has to “love the work” and be persistent to overcome challenges along the way.

The municipality placed premium on human resources for health and nutrition as it understood that service delivery is linked significantly with the number of health and nutrition front line workers. During the time of Mayor Reynaldo, the municipality utilized other resources in addition to the mandated development fund (20 percent of municipal budget) to increase the number of health and nutrition workers. As of 2017-2018, Malungon has 14 nutrition staff, 43 BNS, 259 BHWs, and three Sanitary Inspectors in addition to Municipal and Barangay Monitoring Technicians unique in Malungon. The Table 1 shows that each barangay has two BNS and eight BHWs on the average. With its current human resource complement, one BNS attends to approximately 97 households, good BNS-household ratio. Availability of more than one BNS especially in



The municipality placed premium on human resources for health and nutrition as it understood that service delivery is linked significantly with the number of health and nutrition front line workers.

Table 1. Malungon health and nutrition personnel/workers, CY 2017-2018

Health Personnel/Volunteers	Rural Health Unit/LGU	Municipal Hospital	National Deployment Program	Total
Number of barangays: 18				
Doctor	2	6	0	8
Nurse	2	19	30	51
Medical Technologist	1	1	2	4
Pharmacist	0	0	1	1
Sputum Microscopist	1	0	0	1
Rural Health Midwife	33	0	12	45
Rural Sanitary Inspector	3	0	0	3
Dentist & Dental Aide	1	9	0	10
Nursing Aide	3	0	0	3
Barangay Nutrition Scholar (BNS)	43	0	0	43
Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO)	1	0	0	1
Nutrition Staff	14	0	0	14
Barangay Health Worker (BHW)	259	0	0	259
Day Care Worker	128	0	0	128
Total				571

GIDA barangays is crucial in ensuring that the nutrition status of all children will be monitored and appropriate interventions provided. In 2017, Malungon's OPT coverage was high at 94 percent.

Capacity building activities for barangay nutrition scholars, barangay sanitary inspectors and barangay monitoring technicians are conducted by the MNC with resource persons from provincial and regional offices. The municipality also conducts monthly coaching and monitoring of BNS. There is limited turnover of BNS in Malungon as the MNC discourages barangay chairs to replace the BNS. The MNC cautions the latter, "*Kapag papalitan mo ang BNS, ikaw ang magbayad ng trainings nila. Dahil ang dami ng investments ng munisipyo sa kanila*" (If you replace the BNS, you will take responsibility for their training. The municipality has invested heavily in building their capacity.) The BNS, on the other hand, are advised to remain apolitical.

The municipality conducted learning visits to several LGUs¹¹ where they picked up good strategies for nutrition. These learnings were then utilized to improve the Nutri-Center, container vegetable gardens, proper waste segregation, filing and organizing nutrition-related documents by BNS, and conduct of livelihood activities such as food processing, herbal plant processing such as turmeric, and tilapia growing.

¹¹ Kadingilan, Bukidnon, Garden City of Samal, Camiguin, Baguio City, Ilocos Sur, and Ilocos Norte, Surallah and Lake Sebu in South Cotabato, Iloilo, Bohol and Cebu, among others.

INCENTIVES AND ALIGNMENT SYSTEM

The carrot and stick approach is instrumental in mobilizing community members and securing their cooperation in the change process. Establishment of communal gardens was encouraged through the search for Best Barangay in 1992 and *Barangay Galing Program*¹² in 1998, and as a mandatory requirement for acquiring municipal or barangay certification or subsidy for 4Ps beneficiaries since 2007. *Hilots* (traditional birth attendants) became allies of the health center. They were given an incentive of PhP 300 for every pregnant woman they endorse to the birthing facility. Pregnant women who avail of all services and give birth in health facility receive zero billing and an incentive of PhP 500. Through the same approach the Zero Open Defecation (ZOD) was successfully launched in the municipality. During LINGAP sa Barangay, communities that are not fully compliant with the ZOD are publicly named. Similarly, at the barangay level, households that do not comply with the ZOD policy are called to report and explain.

¹² The *Barangay Galing Program* includes criteria such as having blind drainage, toilets, chicken pen, fence, zoned backyard garden which have different variants of vegetables (e.g. *malunggay*, *camote tops*, *alugbati*, *sayote*).



The MNC cautions the barangay chairs, "If you replace the BNS, you will take responsibility for their training. The municipality has invested heavily in building their capacity." The BNS, on the other hand, are advised to remain apolitical.

MALUNGON'S NUTRITIONAL JOURNEY AS A COMMUNITY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

About 41 percent of the population of Malungon are indigenous¹³. Long before the migrant settlers came in 1930s, the IPs were clustered based on their tribal affiliations as *B'laans*, *Kalagans*, *Tagakaulos*, and some Muslim tribal groups. The MNC and BNC recognized challenges in encouraging IPs to follow certain health and nutrition seeking practices which are not fully consistent with their traditions and culture. Among these include child immunization, use of latrines, prenatal check-ups, delivery in health facility and intake of medicines. No special interventions were employed to encourage IPs to avail health and nutrition services; the municipality rather put emphasis on 'inclusivity'. It provided IPs equal opportunity to all nutrition programs and basic services. Since initiation of the Malungon Highlanders Village Project in 2016 until 2018, a total of 50 IP families were given homes.

Indigenous peoples provide unique contributions in nutrition policy, programs and service delivery and the overall improvement of nutrition situation of communities. IPs are consulted in formulation of policies for nutrition and development. This

¹³According to 2011 Community Based Monitoring System as cited in the 2018 Municipal Nutrition Action Plan

consultation process is facilitated by including IP leaders (tribal chieftain) as members of municipal and barangay nutrition committees and relevant policy structures. Tribal chieftains have been particularly helpful in reaching IP communities and encouraging positive behavior change as a number of them are mobilized as development workers, build rapport for nutrition and overcoming language barriers.

For this documentation, the team visited two barangays, one (Barangay Kiblat) that is led by an IP as *Punong Barangay*, and the other (Brgy. Nagpan) that is IP dominated but led by non-IP. In both communities, IPs receive the same programs and services provided to other members of the communities. In Barangay Nagpan where 65 percent of the community members are IP, they recognized that IP tradition cannot be entirely changed or eliminated. Hence, the BNC intensified its promotion and monitoring efforts through consistent house to house visits among IP households, and by expanding BNC membership to include *sitio* leaders.



Apparently, 'no special' interventions were employed to encourage IPs to avail health and nutrition services; the municipality rather put emphasis on 'inclusivity'. They provided IPs equal opportunity to all nutrition programs and basic services.

The *Punong Barangay* further shared that they promote fair treatment for IPs to avail of health and nutrition services. Poverty and malnutrition particularly stunting are among twin challenges that Barangay Nagpan has been addressing. Almost half (40.9 percent) of its population are poor. Since 2013 to 2018, the prevalence of severely stunted children increased from 2.6 percent to 5.95 percent. In its analysis, the Barangay attributes the lack of livelihood and understanding of the program as one of the main causes of malnutrition. The barangay estimates that poverty is concentrated in tribal communities engaged in marginal farming and those located in far flung areas and have little access to transportation and services. Given these conditions, the barangay puts emphasis on education as a key strategy



*A municipal nutrition staff educating children on proper nutrition.
Source: Malungon Nutrition Office*

to enhance the community's understanding of nutrition interventions, and more importantly to improve their economic situation. This is done through different interventions such as counseling parents, promoting nutrition in school activities, providing educational scholarships, and conducting catch-up programs with integrated supplementary feeding. Education is considered as an equalizer and a long-term solution in addressing the challenge of malnutrition.

In Barangay Kiblat, the *Punong Barangay* is an IP, and the tribal chieftain is a member of the BNC. Malungon's municipal mayor is an IP as well. The tribal chieftain has been instrumental in

communicating advocacy messages and policies on nutrition and in encouraging the IPs to follow. The tribal chieftain would conduct consultations among its constituents to share and explain about nutrition programs and policies, such as the ordinance prohibiting child delivery at home or any non-accredited facility. Having IP leaders is seen as an advantage but Barangay Chair Miller Galang expressed that trust is crucial to gain the support of IP communities. The leader should be true to his or her words and translate pledges to actual service delivery.

The barangay chair shared that compliance particularly on ZOD and putting up of communal

gardens was an issue initially both among IP and non-IP members of the community. They intensified promotion through barangay assembly, *pulong-pulong* in the *sitios*, LINGAP sa Barangay. They also adopted the carrot and stick approach to increase compliance of households to barangay-mandated programs.

A BHW is assigned in every sitio to facilitate better monitoring of pregnant and malnourished children. In IP dominated sitios, the barangay mobilizes IPs as BHWs. The BNS shared that having IPs as BHWs is important in addressing language barriers and in ensuring cultural sensitivity of programs. The BNS further shared that they maintain simple look when visiting IP households or *sitios* to avoid intimidating them. BNC members find educating IP children as an effective strategy in relaying key messages to parents.

The municipality has ongoing policy formulation efforts on arranged marriage in line with the emerging challenge on teenage pregnancy. By virtue of Executive Order 29 series 2017, a technical working group (TWG) was created to mainly spearhead the policy formulation and recommendation of mechanisms and systems to stop the practice of arranged marriage or child marriage.



Regardless of changes in administration, the municipality sustained implementation of effective nutrition interventions.

EVOLUTION OF PROGRAMS AND POLICY

Sustaining good practices and building innovations from one administration to another is apparent in Malungon's nutrition program. Regardless of changes in administration, the municipality sustained implementation of effective nutrition interventions. The timeline in Figure 3 shows the major nutrition programs implemented in the municipality from 1990s to present. Continued implementation of certain projects allowed the municipality to realize its targets in later years. Across different administrations, the municipality implemented supplemental feeding, vegetable gardening, complementary feeding, *LINGAP sa Barangay*, Nutrition Information, Communication and Education (NICE) and *PABASA sa Nutrisyon*, and Adopt-a-Child Program. Malungon's interventions have been a mix of nutrition sensitive and nutrition specific programs which evolved through the years.

Further analysis shows that programs initiated during the earlier administrations are nutrition specific interventions intended to address the immediate causes of malnutrition. These include supplemental feeding, micronutrient supplementation and complementary feeding. As progress was made, the municipality

complemented its efforts by implementing nutrition sensitive programs such as the introduction of communal and backyard gardening, ZOD and water, sanitation and hygiene WASH activities to address underlying causes of malnutrition at household level particularly food insecurity, and access to potable water, improper sanitation and inadequate health services through the *LINGAP sa Barangay*. Multi-sectoral collaboration for nutrition began to be emphasized starting 2007 during the time of Mayor Reynaldo. The current administration of Mayor Tessa focuses on improving the integration of nutrition in other complementary sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, livelihood, and anti-illegal drug to address evolving and wider challenges in nutrition. In Mayor Tessa's tenure, the basic causes began to be addressed along with the integration of nutrition in complementary sectors giving rise to nutrition sensitive programs. Indeed the evolution of Malungon's nutrition program indicates the varying levels of malnutrition causes the municipality addressed through the years.

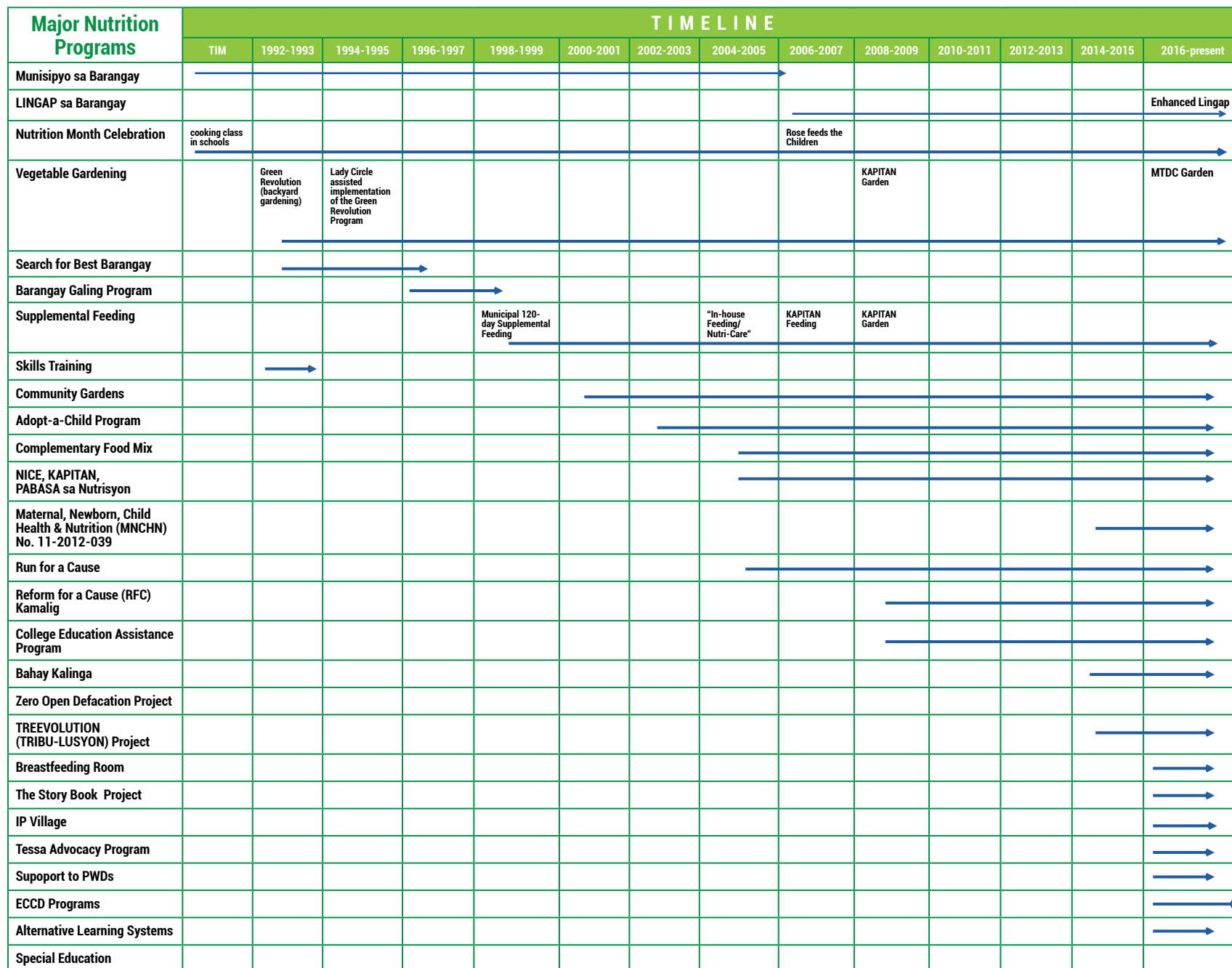
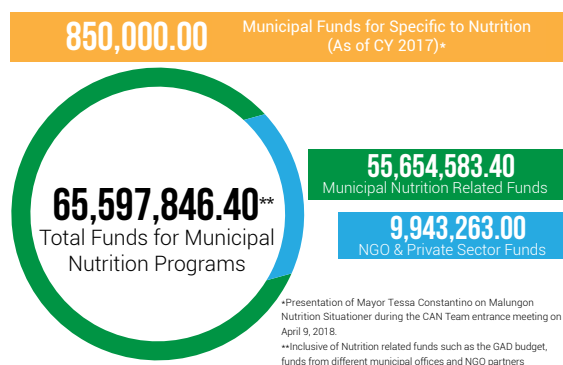


Figure 3. Evolution of Malungon nutrition program from 1990s to present

RESOURCES FOR NUTRITION

Providing counterpart funds by the barangay has been a key practice since 1990s. In 2007, budget tagging system for nutrition was started. Barangay budget proposals are mandated to include allocations for health and nutrition, otherwise these are not approved by the municipal budget office. Through the increasing PhilHealth capitation fund, the use of general funds to finance health and nutrition has



decreased. As of CY 2017¹⁴, municipal funds for specific to nutrition amount to PhP 850,000.00 while the total consolidated funds for the municipal nutrition program reached PhP 65,597,846.40¹⁵. The latter includes funds sourced from mobilizing stakeholders and key partners. Through networking initiatives such as the Run for Cause and expansion of the MNC membership to include NGOs and other partners, the MNC succeeded in generating additional funds and securing technical assistance for planning and implementation of nutrition programs.

¹⁴ Presentation of Mayor Tessa Constantino on Malungon Nutrition Situationer during the CAN Team entrance meeting on April 9, 2018

¹⁵ Inclusive of Nutrition related funds such as the GAD budget, funds from different municipal offices and NGO partners

Key Results

The major shifts in the nutrition programs, structures and policies in 2006 and 2007 such as the formality and expansion of the MNC, strengthened enabling environment for nutrition, implementation of the in-house feeding at the nutri-care center, Adopt-a-Child program, strengthened food production through the communal gardens and nutri-farm, intensified efforts to promote and make health and nutrition services accessible to the people through the *LINGAP sa Barangay* have significantly improved nutrition in the municipality.

From 2.74 percent in 2012, the prevalence of underweight preschool children decreased to 0.72 percent in 2017 (Figure 4). Three year data on stunting for children 0-59 months show a continuous decline, from 8.36 percent in 2015 to 7.98 percent and 4.94 percent in 2016 and 2017, respectively (Table 2). The 2018 MELLPI evaluation reviewed the data and undertook a random check on

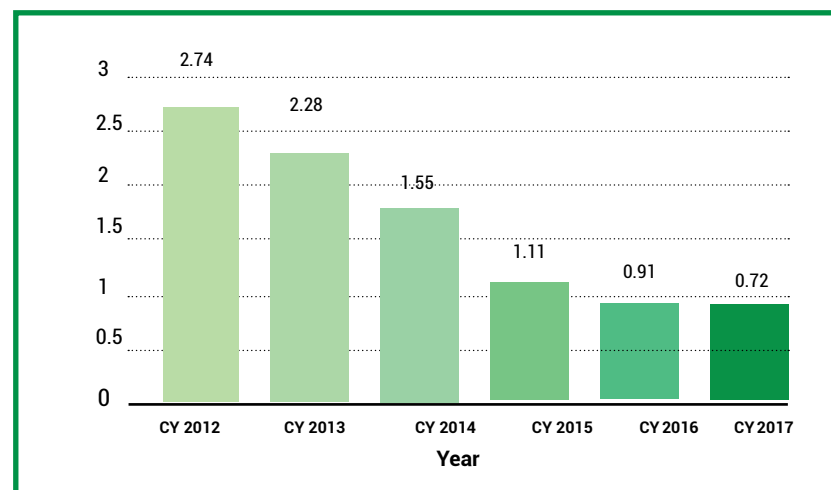


FIGURE 4. Prevalence of severely underweight and underweight preschool children (2012-2017)

Sources: 2015 MNAP, 2018 MNAP, Municipal Profile

**Table 2. Prevalence of child stunting
Malungon 2015-2017**

Year	Prevalence (%)
2015	8.36
2016	7.98
2017	4.94

measurement efficiency to a certain degree of data accuracy¹⁶.

Nonetheless, its overall performance in nutrition has led to its successive recognition. Its first recognition was the Green Banner Award in 2006 and was succeeded in 2007 and 2008 consequently leading to its CROWN¹⁷ First Year Maintenance Award. In 2008, the prevalence of underweight children further decreased the 5.25 percent. While it failed to maintain CROWN Second Year Maintenance Award in 2013, the municipality took it as an opportunity to take action on identified gaps. Since her election in 2016, Mayor Tessa mandated to further strengthen the coordination and integration of the education and nutrition sectors and pursued

¹⁶ The decline from 2015 to 2016 of about 5 percent is gradual and reasonable given established patterns of improvement in stunting levels. The 38 percent decline from 2016 to 2017, however, appears abrupt and needs to be further reviewed.

¹⁷ CROWN refers to Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition which is awarded to local governments that have consistently demonstrated outstanding performance in efforts to improve nutrition situation through implementation of its programs and services.



Mayor Tessa and MNAO Rose receiving Malungon's 1st Year CROWN Maintenance Award at PICC, December 2016

Source: Malungon Information Office

implementation of “I CAN in Education”, an initiative that promotes Innovation and Collaboration in Attaining No limitation in Education.

With these results Malungon once again received CROWN First and Second Year Maintenance Awards in 2016 and 2017 from the NNC. At the time of writing in April 2018, Malungon was among the local government units evaluated for the national Nutrition Honor Award. Both leaders, Mayor Tessa and former Mayor Reynaldo do not want their people to be mindful of the awards. They emphasize that people should focus on implementing the programs. “*Hindi namin alam na tinitingnan pala kami*. We were just doing our best” (We did not know that we were being watched. We were just doing our

best), Mayor Reynaldo expressed in an interview. Notwithstanding this, the municipality is a recipient of many other awards such as the Seal of Good Local Governance for 2016 conferred by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). It was awarded 1st Place in the Most Functional Municipal Council for the Protection of Children (MCPC) in the province of Sarangani. For 2017, Malungon was recognized as Mindanao's ninth most competitive municipality and 26th nationwide by the National Competitiveness Council of the Philippines. In the same year, it received two *Gawad Kalasag* Regional Awards, 2nd Best Prepared Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, and 1st Place as Best in Government Emergency.

CONTINUING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

In Mayor Tessa's State of the Children report in 2017 she highlighted that while the current data show that only 1 out of 100 children is underweight and this number can be considered small, the municipal government's effort should be geared towards having zero malnourished child. The municipality also recognizes its emerging problem on teenage pregnancy and the low coverage of prenatal visits. In 2016, only 61 percent of pregnant women completed four prenatal visits, way below the 90 percent target coverage. Due to varying reasons including personal embarrassment and social stigma, pregnant teens usually delay seeking prenatal care. The municipal nutrition office recognizes that teenage pregnancy and stunting can be closely related. While current municipal data show low incidence of wasted and stunted children, the increasing number of pregnant women unable to obtain proper health care have increased risk of delivering stunted children. The municipality has initiated a program for pregnant teens and is constructing a teen center to allow pregnant teens to access health and nutrition services in confidence. Its ongoing policy efforts to regulate arranged marriage among tribes is also relevant in addressing the issue on teenage pregnancy.

What Does Malungon's Journey Tell Us?

1. **Strong leadership and governance played a critical role.** Across all interviews conducted for this documentation, Malungon's progress is attributed as primarily fueled by a committed political leader that puts nutrition continually as a priority development agenda. Its programs were sustained regardless of changes in administration, and were further enhanced to respond to evolving challenges in nutrition.
2. **The strengthening of nutrition structures contributed to the sustained progress of Malungon in nutrition.** This includes building of capacity of nutrition workforce such as barangay nutrition scholars, consistently implementing tested processes in planning, program review and use of MANCOM meetings for cross-agency communication, the annual MELLPI exercises and monitoring and securing inclusion of IPs and GIDA communities.
3. **Another key driver of change is Malungon's developmental paradigm of malnutrition which is seen translated in its implementation approach and the nutrition interventions implemented throughout the years.** Implementation is cross-thematic and local nutrition committees continually expand to engage additional partners relevant to respond in emerging needs. Programs and approach were intended to be inclusive to address issues on access of geographically distant areas and indigenous communities. Provision of counterpart funds by barangays is a general practice that enhances ownership and accountability.
4. **The cohesive and committed group of multi-sectoral players at municipal and barangay level produced coherent actions for nutrition.** There is strong emphasis on unity and cooperation. MANCOM meetings at municipal level replicated in barangays provide opportunities to improve coordination, communication, and sharing of accountabilities among stakeholders. The legislative body is represented in MANCOM meetings, thus facilitating the link between programs and policies and resource mobilization. *LINGAP sa Barangay* mandates frontline workers such as BNS, BMT, BHW to provide public updates on project progress that increases transparency and accountability.

5. **The close partnership of grassroots workers in health and nutrition** (midwife, BHW, BNS, BMT, Barangay Sanitary Inspection) working as a team with defined individual roles and common mission led to effective implementation and regular monitoring of program in barangays and *sitios*, as well as the close relationship of these teams with community members.
6. **The incentives provided to the different stakeholders in nutrition, recognizing their contribution and outstanding work motivated participation and excellence.** The NNC awards at all levels were helpful in keeping the energy and dedication of the entire municipality.
7. **A performing LGU is open to learn from the experience of others and sees the good practices as inputs in their journey to better nutrition..** Malungon exhibited enthusiasm in investing to gain further knowledge. The benchmarking that Malungon did in Kadingilan, Garden City of Samal, Lake Sebu and others contributed learnings which the municipality used to enhance existing nutrition programs.
8. **The municipal nutrition program was guided by the nutrition program management and MELLPI scorecard of the national government.** It also received regular technical assistance from the NNC regional office. While there is increasing awareness on the first 1000 days, current coverage of services appear inadequate to completely address stunting and the emerging challenge on teenage pregnancy.
9. **The progress of nutrition among IPs and GIDAs was planned purposively by the leadership of the municipality and translated into program, interventions and design by agencies involved in the program.** ‘No special’ interventions were required. The municipality rather ensured inclusivity by providing IPs with equal opportunity to programs and services, representation in official structures and in the formulation of key policies, and an opportunity to be deployed and mobilized as frontline workers in IP barangays / *sitios* which contributed in better service delivery and addressed barriers in language and culture. Education of IP communities (and in general) is a long-term investment that offers sustainable impact on nutrition.
10. **Lastly, Malungon’s strong emphasis on empowering people proved to be a vital element in sustaining gains in nutrition.** By increasing their skills, providing them education opportunities, and increasing community-wide awareness, health and nutrition can have far lasting potential to sustain progress and achievements towards eliminating malnutrition in the municipality.

MUNICIPALITY OF TALIBON



The hometown of Pres. Carlos P. Garcia

Talibon

In 2011, under the Asenso sa Baroto (Progress in Boats) Project, Talibon provided paddle boats on rent-to-own scheme to 100 fisher folks from poorest households to improve incomes and food security.

Sustaining good nutrition over decades: Lessons from Talibon



Figure 1. Location map of Talibon in Bohol

In a country known for highly partisan politics the municipality of Talibon in Bohol and its leaders have shown political maturity with their tenacity during the past 23 years to pursue the common good rather than their own sectoral interests. Through their consistently vigorous support to the local nutrition program, the municipal mayors and their followers have demonstrated the outstanding feature of Talibon's nutrition story, that through a committed political leadership, no development goal is impossible to achieve.

Talibon's success in nutrition is a chronicle of how the town gained and sustained its achievements over 23 years under three different local mayors. Although they belong to different political parties, they found a common cause to support the municipal nutrition program. Each one of them has brought his own brand and style of leadership to ensure that nutrition is a priority development concern of relevant sectors in the exercise of governance at municipal and sub-municipal levels.

In appreciating the story of Talibon's journey to good nutrition, one has to understand the period from 1995 when it was close to the bottom in the provincial ranking in nutrition performance to slowly gaining recognition and receiving the first Green Banner Award in 1998, the Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN) at regional level in 2000 and then the national Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) in 2004 and sustaining the achievement up to the present.

Mayor Juanario Item served as Mayor from 1995 to 2001; Mayor Marcos Aurestila from, 2001 to 2003; again Mayor Item from 2004 to 2010; and Mayor Restituto Auxtero from 2010 to the present time. The maintenance of the CROWN award fell on the shoulders of Mayor Marcos Aurestila who led Talibon from 2001 to 2003 whose support to the nutrition program contributed to Talibon's winning three consecutive Green Banner Awards and the first CROWN that the town received under the two terms of Mayor Item.

With his military-style kind of leadership, Mayor Item was able to establish the organizational structure and institutional framework required

Talibon's success in nutrition is a chronicle of how the town gained and sustained its achievements over 23 years under three different local mayors.

by a municipal-wide program as well as provide the policy interface and linkage to national and provincial agencies supporting the local nutrition program. He also made sure that the grassroots triumvirate of midwives, barangay health workers (BHW) and barangay nutrition scholars (BNS) were in place in each of the barangays to serve as ground troops, as it were, in the war against disease and malnutrition.

On the other hand, Mayor Aurestila, who succeeded him, devoted his time in making sure that the Municipal Nutrition Action Plan (MNAP) was planned, implemented, monitored and assessed through the previously-created functional mechanism with minimum follow-up from him. He made sure that regular reporting on the progress of MNAP was done to the appropriate committee of the *Sangguniang Bayan* (SB) and feedback made known to the barangay nutrition committees (BNC).

Mayor Auxtero, who is serving his third and final term, brought to the Local Government Unit (LGU) his previous experience as executive of the Development Bank of the Philippines. He is widely perceived as the Local Chief Executive (LCE) who brought financial stability to Talibon LGU. He invested municipal resources in

constructing buildings which are rented out to private sector firms such as the Alturas Group of Companies that earn financial returns to the municipality. He supports nutrition projects not only financially through the budgetary resources of the municipality but also through partnership with provincial and national agencies such as the Department and Agriculture (DA) and its provincial counterparts. A proof of his financial savvy was his launching of the three vital nutrition-sensitive projects on the occasion of President Garcia's 115th birth anniversary on 4 November 2011 which enabled the LGU to tap financial resources for these projects from provincial agencies and their national counterparts.

It is imperative therefore that the story of Talibon catalog the pre Green Banner Award period; its journey towards the Green Banner reflecting the manifold actions and challenges onwards to winning the CROWN Award; and maintaining Talibon fit to compete with the national highest award in nutrition, as well as remaining worthy of the NHA after the year it was awarded. Although the mayors belong to different political parties, they found a common cause to support the municipal nutrition program. Each one of them has brought his own brand and style of leadership to ensure that nutrition is a priority development concern

of relevant sectors in the exercise of governance at municipal and sub-municipal levels. In short, it is both a story of ascent as well as the determination to maintain its level of excellence incubated by its positive political culture (see Timeline in Figure 2).

TALIBON IN BRIEF

Talibon is a quiet town in the province of Bohol, some 940 kilometers from the capital, Manila. Almost at the end of the northeastern coast of the island of Bohol, some 100 kilometers from the provincial capital of Tagbilaran, Talibon is probably better known as the birth place of Carlos P. Garcia, the republic's fourth president and the seafood capital of the province. Today, it is a first class municipality with an annual income of PhP 104,723,360 in 2016 and a population of 71,438.

Juanario Item, a retired military official and a native of Talibon was sworn in as the duly elected Mayor on 30 June 1995 after winning a hotly contested mayoral candidacy. He was elated with the victory. He won over the incumbent mayor who narrowly beat him in elections three years earlier.

Key Features	Pre-ascent (1990-1995)	Early years (1996-1998)	Run up to the Nutrition Honor Award (1999-2004)	Sustaining the gains	
				2004-2010	2010-2017
Ranking in MELLPI and NNC awards	44 of 44 LGUs in Bohol	Ranked 5th of 44 LGUs in Bohol	Received first Green Banner Award in 1999; second Green Banner Award in 2000; third Green Banner Award in 2001 and subsequently became the Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition Received CROWN Maintenance Awards in 2002-2003 Received the Nutrition Honor Award in 2004	Received the NNC Regional Award for maintaining its NHA status from 1995 -2010	Received the NNC Regional Award for maintaining its NHA status
Management of Nutrition	Not functional	Started organizing the MNC in 1995	Strengthening the MNC, Deployment of BNS, rigorous monitoring of barangays and agency program, implementation of programs and expansion Legislative support to the nutrition program Continuous improvement in response to annual MELLPI and PIR Incentives and awards given by the municipality to the agencies, barangays and individuals for performance in nutrition	Continuation of much of the programs and processes involved in nutrition	Continuation of much of the programs and processes involved in nutrition

Figure 2. Nutrition journey of Talibon

THE RUDE AWAKENING

The year 1992 was Juanario Item's first run as candidate for mayor and his first loss. At that time, Talibon was still a third class municipality with high prevalence of poverty and with eight island *barangays* out of total 25. During the first few days of his administration, Mayor Item was confronted with a disturbing reality: among 47 towns and a city (totaling 48 local government units in Bohol province) a 1995 Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI) report of the provincial nutrition committee ranked Talibon 44th - definitely among the lowest.

Mayor Item considered this an embarrassment and was eager to know why a town as big as Talibon, would end in such predicament. Without hesitation, he convened his nutrition team comprised of the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO), a Rural Health Nurse Aniceta Parades, Municipal Health Officer (MHO) Dr. Francisco Ngoboc, Jr., as well as the Provincial District Nutrition Program Coordinator (PDNPC), Victoria Camargo.

This meeting that occurred in early July 1995 between the Mayor and his team proved to be the initial turning point in Talibon's journey to good nutrition.

In his first term as Local Chief Executive (LCE) Mayor Item was not familiar with the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN). Nor did he know much about the MELLPI, its rigors and the ranking table that he received from the Provincial Nutrition Committee (PNC).

He knew little about nutrition – what interventions were necessary to address the problems of underweight, obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies that affected his constituents. But the newly elected mayor had a simple strategy in his mind. He thought that if he could strengthen the rural health delivery and reach his 25 *barangays*, obtained periodic technical advice from his municipal nutrition committee and execute a relentless follow up with the sectors and 25 *barangays*, he believed there was no way but to progress.

Immediately after the meeting, Dr. Ngoboc ran to obtain the help of the Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC), Engr. Ednardo Avenido in preparing a proposal, in pursuance to the mayor's instruction to field one midwife per *barangay* in Talibon. The RHU doctor also sought the support of the Budget

Officer and with this he prepared the proposal for the *Sangguniang Bayan (SB)* for the first seven additional midwives to serve the highly populated *barangays* of Talibon.

The proposal was well received at the SB. The first recruitment of additional midwives in 1996 was followed by a successive SB approval for additional midwives and deployment. By 2004, the municipality of Talibon boasted of one midwife for each of the 25 *barangays* in compliance with the expressed desire of the Mayor.

In 2011 there were 28 midwives with two most populated *poblacion* *barangays* having two and one additional midwife assigned to the birthing facility. In 2017, the actual count of midwives according to the Human Resource Management Office (HRMO) is 26, with two vacancies.

With the assistance of the MPDC and the Budget Officer, Mayor Item and Dr. Ngoboc crafted the proposal under the health outreach program with funding coming from the LGU's budget circumventing the 45-55 Personnel Services and Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (PS/MOOE) limitations imposed by a Circular

(Republic Act 7160) issued by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). This innovative move would have a long-term positive impact on both health and nutrition services in Talibon.

The deployment of more midwives has improved the outreach of health and nutrition services which contributed to Talibon's garnering health and nutrition awards and maintaining its outstanding performance for years.

In a military disciplined fashion, the newly elected Mayor Item did not fail to convene his Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC) in the first six months of his tenure and subsequently in the remaining five and half years during his first two terms. The agenda was properly prepared, meetings were held on time and records of conclusions and follow up actions were religiously recorded.

Mayor Item's presence as MNC Chair was a clear and unequivocal signal of the importance he accorded nutrition. In his retirement from political and official work, Mayor Item emphasized there was only one thing that angered him as Mayor. He says that "after I have given instructions to anyone in my administration, you will find me quarreling with this particular officer if he does not act on what was agreed".



The deployment of at least one midwife in every barangay improves service coverage in health and nutrition as in the case of all 25 barangays in Talibon.

Source: Talibon Nutrition Office

As a former military man, in his professional culture, his instructions bear the character of the word of honor. According to the members of the MNC and the staff at the municipal nutrition office, the Mayor made random visits in all barangays visiting projects of different sectors, getting updates of progress in the barangays from the Chairman and village workers in health, nutrition and other sectors. It was the Mayor's practice to follow up with different sectors on what was agreed in the MNC quarterly meetings.

FIRST TASTE OF SUCCESS

With the intense and continuous monitoring of the progress of the Municipal Nutrition Action Plan (MNAP) by the Mayor, combined with the handy support lent by the Provincial Nutritionist-Dietitian and the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer (MNAO) and his staff, it is no surprise that Talibon rose from 44th to 5th in the provincial MELLPI ranking of 1996 given the following year, in 1997.

This achievement fulfilled what the Mayor declared as his aspiration during the turning point meeting of July 1995 “*Paninkamotan nato nga motaas-taas ang atong score sa nutrition kaysa magpabiling naa sa ubos* (We will try our best effort to improve our score towards a higher rank in nutrition instead of being in the lowest rank)”.

Such aspiration he promptly revised as he received the news of Talibon ranking number 5. He said to himself which he then verbalized in his next MNC meeting that “*Ug nakab-ot nato ang rank 5, mahimo diay natong makab-ot ang rank 1* (if we can climb to number 5, then we can certainly climb to become number 1)”. The MNC members took that as instructions. The MNAO with other members of the MNC visited the neighboring town of Calape in the same province to learn their secrets in winning the NHA a few years back. Years later in its journey to the NHA, the MNAO enriched his initial exposure to Calape paying a visit to Banay Banay in Davao Oriental - a province that has become a role model in the fight against malnutrition in Southern Mindanao provinces.

From ranking number 5 in 1996 MELLPI and with the team effort and decisive leadership, the succeeding awards received by Talibon were

less surprising. Talibon garnered the first Green Banner award in 1998 and again in 1999 besting other candidates from the province. The year 2000, it won the third Green Banner (GB) award and was awarded the first CROWN, an award it received again the following three years finally earning it the national Nutrition Honor Award in 2004.

Several observations on the list of awards received by Talibon from 1994 to 2017 in nutrition, health, social welfare and governance in general are in order. One, it appears that there is a strong relationship between the deployment of the midwives and the awards received in health and nutrition. The sequence of awards also seems to suggest that the awards in health and nutrition ushered the awards in local governance. Finally, it appears that the awards in nutrition were sustained over different local chief executives (LCEs) over a period of more than two decades. Talibon is a national awardee in nutrition, recipient of the Presidential Child Friendly Municipality Award, recipient of the Seal of Good Housekeeping and Seal of Good Local Governance. From post 1994 Talibon has become a consistent multi-award winning local government unit.



With the intense and continuous monitoring of the progress of the Municipal Nutrition Action Plan by the Mayor, combined with the handy support lent by the Provincial Nutritionist-Dietitian and the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer and his staff, it is no surprise that Talibon rose from 44th to 5th in the provincial MELLPI ranking of 1996 given the following year, in 1997.



The impact of the combined political, technical, funding and institutional support to the nutrition program in Talibon resulted in the decline of combined moderate and severe underweight from 6.3 percent in 1998 and reached an all-time low of 0.32 percent in 2017.

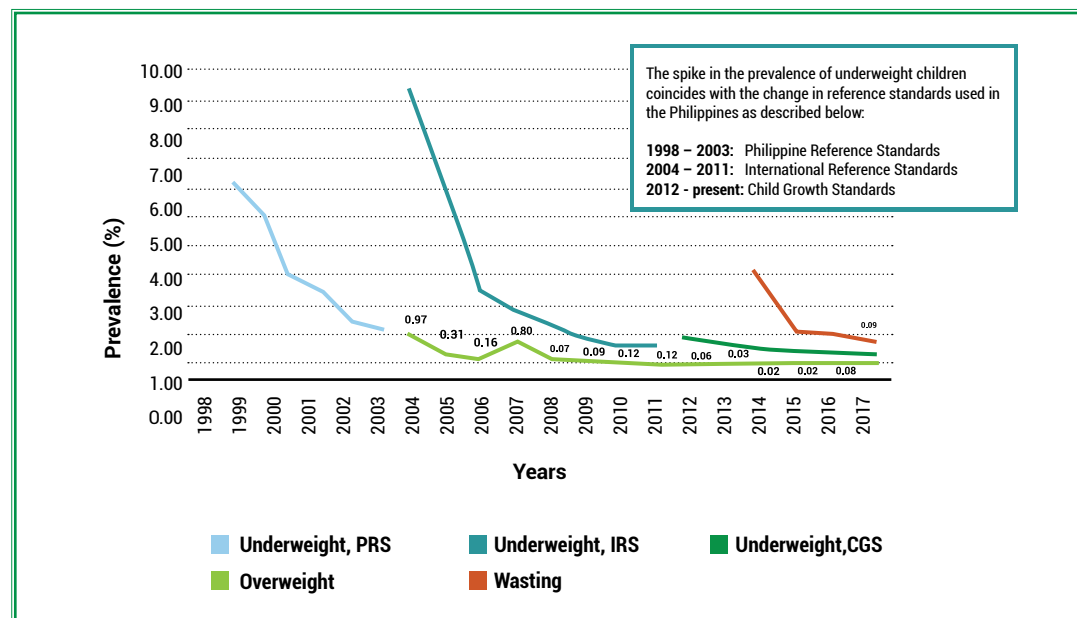


FIGURE 3. Improvement in nutrition situation in Talibon

NUTRITIONAL OUTCOMES

The nutritional status of Talibon also showed remarkable improvement over time. The impact of the combined political, technical, funding and institutional support to the nutrition program in Talibon resulted in the decline of combined moderate and severe underweight from 6.3 percent in 1998 and reached an all-time low of 0.3 percent in 2017. The spike in the prevalence of underweight children in 2004 coincides with the shift in the reference standards used in assessing the nutritional status of children in the Philippines (Figure 3). Wasting also showed a consistent decline from 3.1 percent affecting 314 children in 2014 when the collection of this indicator was started to 0.8 percent or some 81 children in 2017. Remarkable and consistent progress was achieved with the problem of overweight children from 1998 to 2017 with the prevalence being reduced from 1.8 percent (155 children) to 0.09 percent (9 children).

THE ASCENT FROM THE BOTTOM TO THE TOP AND MAINTAINING IT

The first part of the ascent was dramatic itself: from the municipality being at the bottom, number 44 in the provincial ranking of 48 LGUs in 1995, to number 5 in 1996; getting its first Green Banner Award in 1998; and again in 1999 besting all other LGUs in the province; winning the third Green Banner Award in 2000 and was awarded the first Consistent Regional Outstanding Winner in Nutrition (CROWN); winning the CROWN award again the following three years; and finally being bestowed the national Nutrition Honor Award (NHA) in 2004.

What followed the NHA was even more praiseworthy. Talibon has maintained its outstanding nutrition performance and sustained its NHA standing through the past ten years, avoiding the sad fate of some LGUs which have received the same award but declined in performance to lose the prestige and honor eventually of getting the highest award in nutrition. The NNC has consistently awarded the town the NHA Maintenance award from 2004 to 2017.

This feat is largely due to the political maturity of the leaders and the institutional strengthening of the specialized engines of governance, the Municipal Nutrition Committee and the sectoral agencies, the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer, offices of the municipality including budget and planning and development, the barangay nutrition committees, and the health, nutrition and social workers, operating under an enlightened political leadership in Talibon. The major awards that Talibon has earned for its nutrition program have apparently triggered local confidence and determination to pursue the higher recognition and excel in other fields like health, social welfare and local governance.

MAJOR CHANGES IN THE NUTRITION LANDSCAPE

What deserves detailed attention is to understand the combination of strategies applied by the local government as they garner award after award in nutrition and other development fields. What are the strategies and why did they work in the context of Talibon? What constraints did they meet? What was the role of the culture in the success of the strategies? Was sustainability a conscious concern of the drivers of the progress of nutrition?



Talibon's feat is largely due to the political maturity of the leaders and the institutional strengthening of the specialized engines of governance, the Municipal Nutrition Committee and the sectoral agencies, the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer, offices of the municipality including budget and planning and development, the barangay nutrition committees, and the health, nutrition and social workers, operating under an enlightened political leadership in Talibon.

Portrait of Talibon's Nutrition Infrastructure in 1995: Earlier in 1995 before Mayor Item took over as the LCE, Talibon had an existing Municipal Nutrition Committee composed of representatives from the health unit, social welfare, agriculture, education, planning and development office, treasurer's office, budget office, engineering and local government office. The Public Health Nurse served concurrently as the MNAO assisted by the District Nutrition Program Coordinator (DNPC) who covered six towns including Talibon. The records are not clear on how many Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) were in place in 1994 to serve the 25 barangays. The MNAO recalls that there were five but the records coming from Human Resource Management Office (HRMO) do not have any indication of any BNS for the years 1994-1998. Apparently the HRMO does not keep record of the BNS from the start to the present time since the latter are not considered government employees.

Their record is supposedly kept at the Municipal Nutrition Office but no records were found. Like many non-performing LGUs: the MNC did not meet regularly; the MNAP was prepared for compliance purposes and did not benefit from an inter-sectoral formulation process; and the BNCs were largely non-functional in the years prior to the appointment of the Municipal Nutritionist in 1997.

During the same period, Talibon did not conduct program implementation review for nutrition and could only claim major actions in relation to the nutrition month in July.

MANAGEMENT REFORM APPLIED TO NUTRITION

Table 1 compares the level of functionality and the capacity of the Municipality of Talibon with respect to nutrition planning and programming. The table clearly shows the major difference in MNC and BNC functionality from the period 1994/1995 when Mayor Item began his tenure and recognized the need to change the health and nutritional situation of his constituents, in 2004 when Talibon won the national Nutrition Honor Award and in 2017, two decades after the NHA was conferred. In 1995 onwards the functionality of the engines of the nutrition program in Talibon began to develop.



Three personnel in the health system were vital to the delivery of nutrition services: midwife, Barangay Health Worker and the Barangay Nutrition Scholar.

Expanding the Health and Nutrition Cadre:

Three personnel in the health system were vital to the delivery of nutrition services: midwife, Barangay Health Worker and the Barangay Nutrition Scholar. The swift actions on midwife deployment have already been mentioned. Indeed this was an important milestone in expanding the coverage of maternal and child health services along with other public health provisions and a stepping stone for the later actions in nutrition.

The ratio of one midwife per barangay was completed by 1999 and their tenure improved over time as the Mayor and the Municipal Health Officer (MHO) continued to believe in the virtue of full midwife coverage. The midwives were initially given job order appointment to get in and were gradually moved to casual status and regular as the budget and positions became available by vacancy or attrition.

Institutional support to nutrition and health workers is evident in Talibon. Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) were increased from 100 in 1994 to 175 in 1999 to the current 251, far exceeding the mandated one BHW per purok. The increase was made to keep up with population growth. Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) were increased from five in 1994 to 25 in succeeding years to maintain a ratio of one BNS per barangay. Midwives were recruited per barangay and given security of tenure to ensure outreach of quality health services to those who need them in the barangays. The Municipal Nutrition Committee was revitalized and strengthened as the governance arm for the local nutrition program.

Building Nutrition Capacity: Provision of the mandated numbers of nutrition related cadre was important. Their training and equipping is essential to their functioning and in delivering outcomes. The MNO has patchy inventory of the different training opportunities that were provided to the health and nutrition workers in Talibon. Gathering the information for the inventory was difficult enough. Providing more details like how many trained and the impact of training is impossible. There are several observations that can be gleaned from the records as follows:

- Tasking and enabling the health and nutrition workforce happened simultaneously through the formal and informal training and coaching events held by the municipality. In this continuous effort the combined practice of MELLPI organized by the province and the municipality and the established practice of annual nutrition program implementation review covering all the barangays provided ample training on the ground.
- For a third class municipality the training provided to the cadre is plentiful. For the period 1993-2017 a total of 166 training opportunities were given to the health and nutrition cadre of the LGU. This is equivalent to about seven training events per year. Training on maternal nutrition in 2000; Interactive Learning Session for Barangay Nutrition Team in 2003; Training of Service Providers Integrated Early Child Development Module 1 & 2, 3 & 4 on the same year was also provided.
- The generous provision of training focused on maternal and child health (MCH) and nutrition augurs well for the intentions of the LGU to improve its health and nutritional status and consistent with its achievements in both areas. The total training opportunities

provided in these areas total 90 for the entire 24 year period averaging about four training each year.

- Barangay Nutrition Action planning was given early in 1994; BNS training in 1997; refresher course for BNS, BHWs and midwives from 1998 to present.

Equipping the work force: Alongside with building the capacity of the health and nutrition workforce, the municipality gradually equipped the personnel with the necessary tools required in the performance of the tasks assigned to them. During the period 1996 to 2004 the town managed to provide all the 25 midwives, the BHWs and the BNS with the full equipment requirements of these personnel.

The BNS tools for monitoring and recording anthropometric information including the recommended weighing scales (starting 1996); calculators for computing ages in months of preschool children; templates for planning and monitoring were provided to the MNC and the BNCs; MELLPI checklists were made available from the NNC to the MNC. In 2014, the height boards were made available for municipal and barangay use as well as the electronic Operation *Timbang Plus* (e-OPT Plus) tool.

Swift infusion of disciplined management practices in the MNC, the agencies and the barangays:

Directly addressing the nutrition structure and processes, Mayor Item convened the MNC quarterly meetings; monitoring of the existing MNAP was done vigorously. All the BNCs in Talibon were reactivated and all Barangay Chairs tasked to pursue his platform of reducing malnutrition. The newly elected Mayor combined the formal actions of strengthening the structures with his style of hands-on monitoring of projects of the sectors and the barangays. Actions to deploy additional midwives and recruit new and more BNS and BHWs combined to strengthen the enabling capacity of the nutrition engine.

The military discipline of Mayor Item permeated the nutrition program with increased expectations for compliance and accountability. The Mayor used the MNC to set work priorities and he used these agreements of action as references for monitoring action and progress. He was used to random checks which barangays and sectors had to get familiar with and be prepared. Resistance to such style was not absent but was not common. The administration officials were largely obliging people, respectful of higher authorities and many of MNC agreements were followed up with incredibly little opposition. Respect for elders and authorities are one of the hallmarks of Boholano culture.

Financing and Legislative Support to the Nutrition Program:

Several features in the financing of the nutrition program in Talibon are worth describing. Before any point is made it is imperative to say that collection of information on budgets for nutrition has been invariably difficult and Talibon is no exception. Beyond this however, it is noteworthy that the local budget registered in Talibon traced to nutrition show dramatic increase from slightly over a fourth of a million pesos in 1995 to about thirty million in 2017. The growth has closely accompanied the priority accorded by the municipality to nutrition over the years; the expanding number of clients of the program; and the growth in the number of projects catering to the needs of these clients.

The financial resources allocated to the program and projects have been made possible largely with the support of the LCE and the full cooperation of Vice Mayors and the SB. Most if not all of the additional financing were legislated through the SB. The leadership in all 25 barangays also took part in financing nutrition projects.

The SB proved valuable in the scaling up of nutrition in Talibon with its unconditional commitment to support budget funds of the expanded nutrition program. Prior to the formal submission of proposals to the SB, informal discussions are initially held first between the Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC) and the relevant committee of the SB.



In Talibon, budget items on nutrition are institutionalized in the comprehensive development plan and are translated by the MNC members and barangay leaders in their respective annual investment plans.

Source: Talibon Nutrition Office

Table 1. Indicators of improving functionality of Talibon MNC

Indicators	1994/1995	2004	2017
MNC functionality	MNC quarterly meeting is not regularly held. No implementation of programs and isn't unified yet. Bottom line, the MNC was not yet functional.	Quarterly meetings were already regularly held. A meeting which is vibrant, interactive, definition of objectives for the next meeting, assessment of objectives whether the latter are met or not, informative with a feed backing practice with in depth thinking resulted to fulfillment of the members and eagerness to attend and participate/cooperate more to its plans and implementations the next session. Often times five meetings were conducted annually which continues to date, in order to really grasp and assess MNC performance, targets and accomplishments, and plans. Plans and targets were fulfilled and continued to date. Encourages and promotes maximization of time of Midwives, BNS, and BHWs.h	In the year 2006, an ordinance was crafted and approved creating the Municipal Nutrition Committee of the Municipality of Talibon, Bohol, under the leadership of the Mayor. Later on Executive Orders were issued reorganizing or reconstituting the MNC with members based on the ordinance whose primary functions are the following: (1)To formulate the Municipal Nutrition Action Plan (MNAP), review or revise the same on a yearly basis; (2) To coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the MNAP; (3) To assess the progress of its implementation; (4) To monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the nutrition program of the different agencies under its supervision; (5) To coordinate with the provincial and national governments and National Nutrition Council in the implementation of the National Nutrition Program; (6) To identify and mobilize local resources for nutrition interventions, and (7) To advocate local support through fund raising campaigns and donations to sustain the nutrition
BNC functionality	BNC was already established but wasn't functional. Undefined duties and responsibilities. No conduct of regular meeting and no conduct of plans implying no contributions yet	All 25 BNCs established. All 25 BNCs trained on BNAP. All BNCs have participated in internal MNC evaluation. Two BNCs randomly picked in national MELLPI evaluation. Five out of 25 BNC still below standards of MNC	All BNCs are fully functional to date with respect to implementation of the Barangay Nutrition Action Plan, coordination of the barangay nutrition activities, barangay network, conduct of Operation Timbang under the supervision of Rural Health Unit, Assessment of nutrition programs and activities, and formulation of interventions to improve further its performance, and lastly conduct of quarterly meeting
BNS deployment	Only five BNS were deployed this time and MNC planned creation of BNS in every barangay and reactivation of BNC	One BNS per barangay with direct supervision by the MNAO and MNPC. Initial trainings were already conducted.	BNS are all well trained and fully equipped with the skills necessary for a barangay nutrition scholar. Promote nutrition awareness, Initiate regular conduct of Barangay Nutrition committee meetings and submits excerpts of minutes, Initiate in the formulation of a Barangay Nutrition Action Plan together with the BNC planning team, prepare quarterly BNAP and accomplishment reports submitted to MNC office, submit consolidated OPT reports, Deliver direct nutrition services together with other barangay based development workers, keep records of the Barangay Nutrition Committee activities, assist the Barangay Action Officer in the overall supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of the nutrition program, and most importantly as linkage builder to ensure that the services are delivered and well used in the community.

Table 1. Indicators of improving functionality of Talibon MNC

Indicators	1994/1995	2004	2007
MNAPs	No MNAPS at this time	MNAP was formulated and effectively used. Was created from the consensus from the MNC meeting. All plans and targets views were all met	The practice of MNAP formulation and accomplishment of targets still continues to date.
BNAPs	No BNAPs at this time	BNAP was formulated, same is true with the MNAP its targets and implementations were fulfilled	Same is true with the MNAP, its best practice continues to date
Municipal Nutrition Office	No Municipal Nutrition Office yet. Still lumped with the Rural Health Unit (RHU) office with a Municipal Nutritionist	Sole MNC Office was already built with an assigned staff up to present who accumulates all reports submitted to MNC Office, spearheads every nutrition activities being the Municipal Nutrition Program Coordinator with direct supervision of the Municipal Nutrition Action Officer	...Continues to date...
Annual Budget for MNAP	PhP 268, 795	PhP 8, 195, 586.83	PhP 29, 747, 300
		Supporting enabling programs and seven national impact programs: supplementary feeding or food assistance; nutrition information, communication, education; home, community and school food production; micronutrient supplementation; food fortification; livelihood assistance; essential mother and child health services; and water, sanitation and hygiene.	Supporting enabling programs and 7 national impact programs and at least three large nutrition sensitive programs

This strategy is effective in building consensus prior to the formal presentation to the whole SB. Through SB support, the municipal nutrition program includes high-impact projects of the national nutrition plan as follows: supplementary feeding or food assistance; nutrition information, communication, education; home, community and school food production; micronutrient supplementation; food fortification; livelihood assistance; essential mother and child health services; and water, sanitation and hygiene.

Three large nutrition sensitive projects were funded from the coffers of Talibon with some support from central department of agriculture and implemented from 2011 to date. Brief of the projects is found below. The *Asenso sa Baroto* (Progress in Boats) Project was launched on 4 November 2011 as one of three nutrition-related projects during the 115th birth anniversary of the late Pres. Carlos Polestico Garcia. It provides paddle boats to enable fisher folks to fish farther from the shore to increase their catch. Target beneficiaries are the poorest households identified by DSWD and the municipal planning office which uses a pro poor targeting tool known as the Poverty Database and Monitoring System (PDMS) which include child malnutrition in the family. The beneficiary family pays the cost of the paddle boat (Php 4800) on an installment basis.



Supplemental feeding of children in a barangay in Talibon.
Source: Talibon Information Office

The project is implemented by the Talibon LGU in partnership with the Association of Barangay Captains (ABC), the Provincial Coastal Resource Management Office, and the Barangay Fishery and Aquatic Resources Management Council.

The *Bisag Saging Basta* Loving Project was also launched on 4 November 2011 during the 115th birth anniversary of the late Pres. Carlos Garcia as a tribute to the greatest Boholano of all times. This LGU-initiated project is still implemented today as part of Talibon's nutrition program under the administration of Mayor Restituto B. Auxtero.



Through SB support, the municipal nutrition program includes high-impact projects of the national nutrition plan as follows: supplementary feeding or food assistance; nutrition information, communication, education; home, community and school food production; micronutrient supplementation; food fortification; livelihood assistance; essential mother and child health services; and water, sanitation and hygiene.

The target beneficiaries are the poorest farming families especially those who are in the bottom structure of society. The LGU allocated PhP 500,000 as pure grant / incentive to the farmers. The LGU pays them PhP 20.00 per hill for planting banana (cardava variety) following the new package of technology in 15 coastal and hinterland barangays. This project also aims to encourage farmers to utilize spaces and transform barren areas to productive ones. At present, there is a great demand for banana even in the local market. The cooperating agencies are: Department of Agriculture (DA), Office of the Provincial Agriculturist, Agriculture Training Institute and the Department of Trade and Industry.

The “*Patubig sa Barangay, Kahimsog sa Pamilya*” (Water for the Barangay, Health for the Community) Project has been implemented since 2011 under the administration of Mayor Restituto B. Auxtero as part of the “Water is Life” initiative under the municipal nutrition program. Target beneficiaries are clustered into groups of five members and provided with jetmatic pump plus assembly. Funding assistance is from the 20 percent development fund of the LGU. The *Punong Barangay* and the Barangay Development Council selects the poor families based on indicators in the Poverty Database Monitoring

System (PDMS) used by the local government which include child malnutrition in the family.

ROLE OF THE MPDC

Talibon developed MNAPs and BNAPs which formed part of the three-year Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP). Financing supports the three year plans as part of the Annual Investment Plan. The MPDC who served the three LCEs provided the facility in translating the nutrition program into the CDP and to the investment plan of the municipality. The annual MELLPI and the six year run in competing for the nutrition awards have mobilized the entire administrative structure to support the demands of the program. Nevertheless, one cannot underestimate the desire of the Mayor to introduce programs that he believed were good for nutrition and perhaps also for constituent mobilization.

The SB in close coordination with the Mayors was instrumental to the support required in the area of legislation for nutrition. This did not come about accidentally. In the first place, when Mayor Item started the journey, his SB was majority in his political party. The seamless and generous legislative support in latter years of the journey was a combined effect of winning nutrition



The annual MELLPI and the six-year run in competing for the nutrition awards have mobilized the entire administrative structure to support the demands of the program.

awards, the involvement of the SB in the ascent, and the political culture of Bohol where politics is subservient to public interest in general. It did help that the MPDC who was himself a member of the MNC had the facility of preparing draft ordinances and legislations and selling these to the members of the SB prior to the formal session for approval.

Over the last two decades and a half, legislative support for nutrition in Talibon fell into three categories mainly. The first one is budgetary, formalizing and institutionalizing the budget items in nutrition in the three year municipal comprehensive development plan and the equivalent three year investment plan and its annual breakdown. The second category is the series of legislative approval of programs and budgets of major programs of the municipality of Talibon.

Most if not all the programs passed through legislative scrutiny given the planning and budgetary process followed by the municipality. Moreover, discrete SB approval was provided to huge programs such as the feeding provided to children 6-36 months and their mothers including pregnant women participating in the Pabasa sa Barangay, the pre-marriage requirements for



Bisag Saging Basta Loving Project mandates Talibon families to plant bananas to secure food and livelihood.
Source: Talibon Nutrition Office



The SB in close coordination with the Mayors was instrumental to the support required in the area of legislation for nutrition.

couple to plant bananas or fruit trees and for livelihood projects particularly among the poor fisher folk and farmers.

The MNC through its Mayor and the MPDC worked hand in hand with the SB. Members of the SB were part of the MELLPI exercise and the annual program implementation review (PIR) of the nutrition program conducted in Talibon covering all barangays, ensuring full support of the ABC in legislative requests of the MNC. The Mayor ensured that political gains are shared – the SB invariably participated and shared the limelight in the awards ceremony.

Expanding the Nutrition Program in Talibon: The nutrition program in Talibon followed closely the recommendations explicit in the PPAN and largely is a replica of the high impact programs of the national nutrition program at the time. In Talibon, programs and projects included in the MNAP could be divided generally into: supplementary feeding and food assistance; nutrition information, communication, education; home, community and school food production; micronutrient supplementation; food fortification; livelihood assistance; essential mother and child health services; water and sanitation.

The program coverage expanded as the midwife complement in Talibon increased over time and the deployment of the BNS and BHW also increased in tandem in the barangays over the past two decades. In the run up to winning the NHA – a period spanning from 1995 to 2004, Talibon pursued increased coverage of the Operation Timbang and implemented the eight high impact programs as their capacity and budget allowed.

The maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition (MNCHN) services and coverage were improved dramatically with the midwife, BHW and BNS deployment in the barangays. The nationally funded programs of supplementary feeding in schools, and day care centers and



Roll-out training for breastfeeding support group in 2014
Source: Talibon Nutrition Office

supervised neighborhood play sites for pre-school showed increasing coverage over the years. Full coverage of all 25 barangays was reached as early as 2011. These national programs administered locally also received supplementary budget from the municipality.

There are several aspects of the nutrition program in Talibon worth mentioning. The first one is that early on, in 1995, in the pursuit of nutrition improvement, the town invested in universal supplementary feeding of pregnant women and children 0-59 months. The program follows the national guidelines of 120-day feeding using nutrient dense supplementary food while the food given to pregnant women consisted of food commodities that included rice, fish and meat, vegetables and fruits. The provision of universal supplementation was combined with micronutrient supplementation and other MNCHN services, together with Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), aiming to comply with the standards of the first 1000 days. This effort by itself is commendable. The 120-day supplementary feeding program involves all the 25 barangays and is financed by the local government. The nutrient content of the food provided was initially designed by the municipal nutritionist.

However, there appears to be no widespread or rigorous understanding of the continuous process of reducing stunting with the combination of services spanning MNCHN and IYCF and the involvement of the sectors of health. Neither does it appear that the supplementary feeding program for 6-24 month old children comply with rigorous standards of the first 1000 (F1K) days) of life.

The barangay health stations' understanding of such standards is variable and needs full upgrading if long term reduction in malnutrition including stunting is to be achieved. The stunting record of the municipality is a grey area. The focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in the barangays showed that the understanding of stunting is yet inadequate and there are measurement problems that require review and skills upgrading. Integrating the F1K strategy in the overall nutrition program of Talibon will go a long way in addressing stunting and all the other forms of malnutrition. The generous nutrition awards provided by the incumbent mayor can be refocused on F1K performance and the reduction of stunting.

Monitoring, Program Reviews and Awards: Talibon cooperated in MELLPI unfailingly over the last 23 years and in addition conducts its annual PIR of all barangays and agency programs. The incumbent LCE participates first hand just like his predecessors in the PIR. The MELLPI exercise has remarkable impact on the continuous critiquing of the program and management and the concomitant improvements undertaken.

The conduct of its own PIR ensures the continuous improvement in all 25 barangays. The PIR and the MELLPI serve to determine the winners of the municipality-established awards which include nutrition. This is roughly PhP 1.25 million and given annually. It is an inspiring exercise and rewards individuals and teams for exemplary performance.

The Green Banner, the CROWN and the Nutrition Honor Award have been a strong motivation for the LGU to perform better in every round of MELLPI evaluation. Talibon, however, won its nutrition awards earlier prior to the giving of cash prizes. Hence, since 2004 after receiving the NHA, no one can doubt that Talibon only performed to obtain the award. As the incumbent Mayor says: *“the award is always politically good, but deep in our hearts there is also this thing called public service.”*



The award is always politically good, but deep in our hearts there is also this thing called public service.

MAYOR RESTITUTO AUXTERO
MUNICIPAL MAYOR OF TALIBON

Key messages and way forward

The success of Talibon clearly owes itself to various pillars. **The most visible pillar has been the leadership and management exercised by the three LCEs in the course of the twenty three years since the journey began in 1995.** The leadership was pivotal in strengthening field actors starting with the health structure, full deployment of midwives in all barangays, instilling discipline in agencies and member agencies of the MNC and BNCs, in rallying barangay chairs and the *Sangguniang Bayan* to ensure their full support. Simple systems such as building the team of midwives, BHWs and BNS working under the supervision of the MNAO/MHO came early in the spirit of streamlining management.

Legislation in support of nutrition and its financial requirements are direct results of the mobilization of the SB and chairs of the 25 barangays. **The hands on management style of the three mayors helped immensely in building capacity, and results orientation among the stakeholders.** The LCEs and the nutrition office with the MNAO ensured an annual program is prepared, and its financing built into the three year and annual investment plan of the municipality. They tasked the MNC and the workers of the sectors in turn, enabled and gave them the tools for the conduct of their work.

The annual MELLPI exercise conducted by the province honed the municipality in its continuous search for improvement. It provided technical inputs and guidance towards continued improvement of the work of the performing LGUs. The MELLPI exercise obliged the MNC and its leadership to analyze every scored item in the MELLPI forms to ensure the

maximum points in the evaluation exercise. The rigor repeated every year is one of the process factors in the ascending excellence of the town in Talibon in nutrition.

Intensive training provided value to the nutrition planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation system in Talibon. The ubiquitous presence of the district nutritionist-dietitian who resides in Talibon provided an added advantage to the journey. The practice of Talibon (which it started on its own) to conduct an annual PIR is a massive pillar that accompanied the journey to continuously improve its performance by identifying gaps and addressing them. This provided valuable feedback to all agencies and all 25 barangays.

The benchmarking that Talibon did, learning from the experience of Calape and Banay Banay opened the town to reconfirm that nutritional outcomes are possible. The role of learning models is quite clear. Key lessons from these models were used in adjustment of work in nutrition in Talibon. The realization by the LGU that it ranked last in nutrition had its own share of awakening the sleeping giant. The awards to performers came in two forms and both positively impacted in a big way on Talibon's journey to good nutrition. The honor bestowed by the National Nutrition Council mattered a lot to the LGUs. The initial recognition by the MELLPI of Talibon's improvement was inspiring and led them to work harder to garner the Green Banner and the succeeding awards hooked the town in the cycle of recognition and further improvement in its performance. The local municipal awards for performers in nutrition played a continuous influence on program performance of individual, agencies and barangays.

The municipality implemented a program largely following the high impact programs of the national government and guided by the nutrition program management (NPM) and the MELLPI scorecard. Whatever is the gap in the analysis of these programs and their actual value added, the fact is that Talibon can demonstrate dramatic and sustained outcome achievement in reduction of severe and moderate underweight, and in obesity. Its current program does not appear sharply addressed to stunting reduction and the analysis of compliance to the standards of the F1K is also yet to be done to address stunting.

All the above played a critical role in the sustainability so strongly demonstrated by Talibon. **All efforts at management strengthening of the nutrition structures and personnel, the financial support that has been institutionalized, the mainstreaming of nutrition in the CDP and in the annual investment plans, the coaching role it has played to other LGUs, and the honor and the political mileage the recognition has brought – all of these can explain the continuing performance of the LGU for 23 years. As aptly told by the incumbent Mayor, the rest of the explanation rests with the Boholano culture.** Culture played a big part in the success of Talibon in nutrition. We believed that the political culture distinct to Talibon and perhaps to the island is the key contributor to the sustainability of the initial gains in the nutrition program in the town. Nowhere in the story of the journey does one encounter an LCE who dropped the ball because of party or political affiliations. The concept of public service appears ingrained

in Bohol. The resistance if any in the drive towards improving nutrition planning, programming in both the sectors in the nutrition committee and in the barangays in Talibon was not evident. There appears to be a general nature to respect and follow orders from higher authorities.

Talibon has maintained its performance since receiving the NHA in 2004, obtaining year after year the regional maintenance award. It has what it takes to become a formal learning hub and is ready to be tasked to deliver a number of non-performing LGUs to become an aspirant and ultimately a winner in nutrition performance. Applying its excellence on F1K interventions and reduction of stunting appears to be Talibon's next challenge along with continuing and expanding its nutrition pro-poor and pro-nutrition development projects initiated in 2011.



Villaverde

Villaverde's roads are lined by Guyabano and other fruit-bearing trees (FBT) part of the 470,000 FBTs planted to date as part of its re-greening and food security program.

Photo by: Villaverde Information Office

Villaverde: The Eden for a Brighter Future for Children

INTRODUCTION

Proclaimed only in 1959, Villaverde is a relatively young municipality. It is situated on 8,150 hectares of agricultural land with vast area of rice fields surrounded by the Cordilleras in the province of Nueva Vizcaya in Cagayan Valley Region. In January, the fields are dotted with newly transplanted rice seedlings projecting an emerald landscape. But this municipality was not named after its greenery, or for its award winning “Re-greening Program.” Its namesake was from Father Juan Villaverde, a Spanish Missionary, who was instrumental in making this quiet agriculture locale into a municipality way back in 1872. Formerly known as Barangay Ibung in the town of Solano, Villaverde has a population of less than 20,000, and falls under the category of 5th income class municipality, which for many years focused on building its infrastructure to improve public services. Coming to grips with health and nutrition problems of Villaverde in 2010, governance shifted its vision geared towards the welfare of children and their environment. From the Mayor, to the MNAO, to the *Punong Barangay* and the BNS, the mothers and even the

fathers, this community has a common mindset of “volunteerism continuing challenge for a unified Villaverde”, which paved the way to an upward movement in its Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Level Plan Implementation (MELLPI) rankings from lowest among the 15 municipalities in the province, to second highest in 2017.

AGRICULTURE IN THE FOREFRONT, NUTRITION IN THE BACKSEAT

Villaverde thrives on agriculture, especially from its main crop production of rice, maize, root crops, and vegetables. Several decades and many mayors ago, Villaverde struggled to support its agro-industry and making public services for communication, roads and transportation, and water system more accessible. At a time when infrastructure was limited and underdeveloped, the jeepney was the only means of transportation, which was scheduled to travel twice daily from Villaverde to neighboring town of Solano



Figure 1. Location map of Villaverde in Nueva Vizcaya

Villaverde is a relatively young municipality. It is situated on 8,150 hectares of agricultural land with vast area of rice fields surrounded by the Cordilleras in the province of Nueva Vizcaya in Cagayan Valley Region.

where most of the amenities and public services were located. The Philippine Long Distance Telecommunication Company could not even serve the households, instead, the residents of Villaverde travelled to Solano just to make a telephone call from the “*Tawag Center*”. The 312 kilometer distance from Metro Manila, about seven hour drive, made access to public services even more challenging. While the municipal government concentrated on building roads and achieving its mission for its agro-industry, social services necessary to address issues affecting the vulnerable groups of the community took a back seat.

In certain instances when problems and issues pertaining to health and nutrition are dire or persistent, social services are usually meagre or non-existent. Although much of the necessary health services in Villaverde were already in place, its function was limited and did not have the political and financial support to fulfill its mandates. At the national level, the National Nutrition Council (NNC), established in 1974 to serve as a policy making body on nutrition through PD 491, coordinated the implementation of the national program for nutrition with the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA) at the helm of the NNC Governing Board.

Thus, the municipal nutrition action officers (MNAOs), supposedly the movers of PPAN and other national nutrition policies in the municipal level, were designated as part of the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAGRO). Such was the case in Villaverde, with the MNAO working under the MAGRO, its duties were divided between nutrition and agriculture, but most likely leaned towards the latter. The MNAO was supported by the Nutrition Aide, who held a shared appointment between the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO) and DA, and whose nutrition-related duties include information gathering, and summarizing the nutrition data from the Operation *Timbang* (OPT) collected by the Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS). Although OPT was being conducted in the barangays, the nutrition data (i.e. underweight, severely underweight) was not fully utilized to determine the extent of the nutritional problems, nor was it being used as basis of the Municipal Nutrition Action Plan (MNAP). Information gathering conducted by the Nutrition Aide was done “for the sake” of fulfilling its reporting responsibilities to the Provincial Nutrition Office (PNO).

While the Municipal Nutrition Committee (MNC) was responsible for formulating the MNAP, its composition during this period is quite

vague, except for the representation of the MNAO from the DA, and the nutrition aide from MSWD. The few members of the MNC also had minimal participation in developing the MNAP because they focused more on responsibilities and duties of their appointed sectors or agencies. Physically, the Municipal Nutrition Office (MNO) existed as corner table in the Agriculture Office, with minimal function, minimal staff, thus, minimal implementation of nutrition interventions necessary to address the nutrition problems of Villaverde. At the barangay level, human resources for nutrition activities were mainly the BNS and the Barangay Health Workers (BHW).

Division of duties was unclear, often overlapped, and lacked coordination. While the BNS was responsible for reporting nutrition data to the MNAO, data did not reconcile with information coming from the BHW. Their nutrition activities included sporadic feeding of school age children, but food intake was not monitored. The BNS shared bathroom scales with the public school, and produced their own forms used to input data. These forms were not standardized and at times incomplete. All BNS from the nine barangays were supervised and monitored by the MNAO, who did not have a counterpart in the barangay since designated Barangay Nutrition Action Officer (BNAO) was not in place at that time.

Needless to say, funding for nutrition was limited, mostly coming from the provincial government to cover incentives of the BNS. Programs were laid out during the budget hearing, and were allocated funding as determined by the budget officer and accepted by the Local Chief Executive. The budget hearing was described as “budget heard” since the MNC had no say in budget allocation for nutrition programs. Allocation for nutrition activities back then was only 1.2 percent of the annual municipal budget.

Given this scenario, there was not much awareness of the extent of malnutrition, much less the resolve to address the nutritional needs of the municipality. Although the Provincial Nutrition Office made attempts to present to the Local Chief Executive the nutrition situation of the municipality and the urgency to implement nutrition interventions, political will and support or the lack of the situation remained largely the same. With no progress in sight, the municipality contended with its low MELLPI ranking and continued to be the lowest among the 15 municipalities in Nueva Vizcaya, while neighboring municipalities were being awarded for their achievements in management of nutrition interventions.

TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS SUCCESS

“Deep Dive” towards Change: There are rare moments when being last is a desirable thing, and being known as consistently the lowest rank in MELLPI is not one of them! This was a rude awakening for Mayor Ronelie Valtoribio when she took office in the middle of 2010. A native of Villaverde, she grew up in this town with many shining moments especially in academic excellence. In her adulthood, she noticed that these shining moments were diminishing, and it became more obvious with its performance in addressing health and nutrition problems.

Within a year of taking office, the Mayor took action in mobilizing the different agencies, municipal employees, and holding a series of meetings with stakeholders including the health board, the local school board, and the MNC. Like jumping off a cliff, the municipal government took a “deep dive” in tackling the various problems of the community, zooming in on problems and issues affecting the overall well-being of the residents of Villaverde. This involved making tough decisions in human resource, taking control of the budget, establishing synergies across agencies, and formulating and signing executive orders to ensure programs moved forward. Further actions and events which took place in the nutrition journey of Villaverde are shown in Figure 2.

The municipality continued to support its agro-industry through maintenance of farm to market roads specifically in poor barangays in the upland areas. However, it refocused its goals to include improvements in health and nutrition through efforts in addressing climate change and food security. True to its name, Villaverde launched the Re-greening Program in September 2010, even before the national re-greening program was launched. The goal of the Re-greening Program was to encourage participation of municipal officials and employees, barangay councils, schools, private or non-government organizations and residents to plant 555,000 fruit bearing trees (FBTs) by 2020.

To date, Villaverde has planted about 470,000 FBTs. Villaverde’s Re-greening Program has become one of the best practices in the province and region and was one of the first programs that jumpstarted the mobilization of the whole community. For instance, “The Tree for the Future” required parents to plant a fruit bearing tree (FBT) for every child born in Villaverde before the child is registered with the Municipal

	Before 2010	2010 - 2012	2013 - present
Nutrition structures and processes	<p>MNAO was under the agriculture office and duties were divided between nutrition and agriculture, favoring the latter</p> <p>Nutrition Aide had various tasks for social welfare and agriculture and had very little time for nutrition</p> <p>OPT was conducted in barangays but nutrition data not fully utilized in nutrition program planning</p> <p>Information gathering and report submission were done “for the sake of compliance”</p> <p>MNC membership was vague; few participated in nutrition program planning</p> <p>Activities of BNS and BHW overlapped and lacked coordination</p> <p>All BNS were directly supervised by the MNAO</p> <p>Nutrition funds came mostly from the Province to cover BNS incentives</p> <p>MNC had “no say” in budget allocation for nutrition programs</p>	<p>Municipal government under the new leadership of Mayor Ronelie Valtoribio conducted series of meetings to tackle the problems of the community</p> <p>MHO Dr. Telesforo Ragpa was appointed as MNAO; he demanded a full-time nutrition staff and a distinct nutrition office to ensure a functional program; as MHO he facilitated the link between health and nutrition and consequently among BNS and BHW</p> <p>Nutrition Aide was moved from MSWDO to Nutrition Office with focus on nutrition</p> <p>Start of the bi-annual Synchronized Barangay Assembly where OPT results are reported among others (2011)</p> <p>Private sectors in the LGU were accredited</p> <p>LGU started to give incentives to BNS and BHW</p> <p>Municipal nutrition planning and programming improved</p> <p>Provincial rank in nutrition performance: 10th of 15 LGUs (2012)</p>	<p>MHO/MNAO joined NPM training conducted by NNC RO</p> <p>BNS and BHW trained on Promote Good Nutrition and Infant and Young Child Feeding Programs</p> <p>LGU provided barangays with mechanical column scales to replace bathroom scales</p> <p>Mayor and MHO/MNAO enrolled in Municipal and Local Governance Program</p> <p>Provincial rank in nutrition performance continued to improve to 5th of 15 LGUs in 2013-2014, 3rd in 2015-2016, and 2nd in 2017</p>
Programs and policies	<p>Operation Timbang (using bathroom scale)</p> <p>Sporadic feeding of school children</p>	<p>Re-greening Villaverde Program re-launched with the goal to plant 555,000 fruit bearing trees by 2020</p> <p>Universal Medical and Dental Check-up (UMDC) in schools</p> <p>People's Day was launched</p> <p>Gulayan sa Paaralan</p> <p>Municipal Search for Cleanest and Greenest School</p>	<p>2013 - LGU primary care benefit package and TB DOTS package (PhilHealth), accreditation of birthing facility</p> <p>2014 - Community PWASH in selected barangay</p> <p>2015 - Half Way Homes for indigenous peoples / SUMMER BUN / Municipal Search for Most Child - Friendly school canteen</p> <p>2016 - Project TELES / Project LABS ko si MAM / Project AMARANTH / Project SCOUT / Project HKK / Project ISSEM</p> <p>2017 - Portable water system installed in all 12 elementary schools using LGU funds / Project ONING / Re-greening Villaverde Program expanded</p>
Key results	<p>Received awards in nutrition and development</p> <p>Seal of Good Local Governance (2014, 2016)</p> <p>2nd Place in Provincial MELLPI ranking (2017)</p> <p>Runner Up on <i>Gawad Pamana ng Lahi</i> (2012)</p> <p>National Grand Winner on Sustainable and Eco-friendly School in the Philippines (2015)</p> <p>Most Child Friendly Municipality Award (2011, 2012)</p> <p>Red Orchid Award (2011-2013)</p> <p>National Winner on <i>Gawad Kalasag</i> (2015)</p>		<p>Continued improvement in children's nutritional status</p> <p>Underweight among preschool children decreased from 9.8% in 2010 to 3.1% in 2017</p> <p>Wasting among school children decreased from 10.6% in 2010 to 3.1% in 2017; overweight from 2.3% in 2010 to zero in 2017; stunting from 6.8% in 2015 to 5.6% in 2017</p>

Figure 2. Nutrition journey of Villaverde

Civil Registry (MCR) Office. Most transactions with the municipal government require planting of FBTs, including registration of marriages, business permits, application for mayor's permits, police clearance, etc.

To sustain the supply of seeds, employees are required to submit seeds of FBTs to the MAGRO, otherwise, their salaries are withheld. According to Mayor Valtoribio, "gone are the days when *caimito* (sugar apple) trees, *santol* trees, and guava trees grew everywhere" and children would climb the trees to pick some fruits. To "bring back these trees," the municipality started planting guyabano along the road leading to Barangay Bintawan, where travelers can stop on the side of the road and freely do a quick or not-so-quick guyabano picking. That is if one knows the difference between ripe and unripe fruit, and most important, able to climb a tree.

While tree planting was primarily carried out for the care and maintenance of the environment, it was also designed for sustainable food security. Aside from FBTs, the municipality began distribution of seeds and seedlings of vegetables as part of their home school and community food production program in partnership with the Department of Education's "*Gulayan sa Paaralan*", and the livelihood programs of the MAGRO, and



Community members remain committed in "re-greening" Villaverde in the midst of rain.

Source: Villaverde Nutrition Office

other civic groups. Parents with underweight and severely underweight children were provided seeds or seedlings for planting to allow them constant access to vegetables.

Beginning in 2011, another major enhancement of governance and community mobilization that came out of the municipality's "deep dive" is the regular schedule of the Synchronized Barangay Assembly held twice a year during the months of March and October. At least 90 percent of

households of the barangay must be represented in the Assembly, including the teens and the five year olds. Attendance is a requisite especially for households vying for grants from the barangay. Non-participation or absence in the barangay assembly disqualifies households from receiving grants. Also, the Mayor requested the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to conduct an audit of the barangay assemblies to ensure a quorum.

BOX 1

BEHIND THE MAYOR'S MISSION

Mayor Ronelie Valtoribio grew up in Barangay Bintawan Sur in Villaverde, Nueva Vizcaya. Her father was the first elected Mayor of Villaverde from 1959 to 1963. Before she was able to finish school, she became a wife and a mother at the age of 19. Being pregnant at a young age in a small town brought stigma to the young mother to be. Because of this stigma, she was too embarrassed to avail of pre-natal check up from the health center. Unlike today, support systems for teenage mothers were not in place back in the '80s especially in a conservative small town in Nueva Vizcaya. As a result, Ronelie's first born was a low birthweight infant and since then, her motivation for better health and nutrition services for the mothers and children of Villaverde has been *"wag nilang maranasan ang naranasan ko"* (I hope they do not experience what I experienced).

She has actively been involved in bringing back Villaverde's shining moments as a private citizen, and as a girl scout before she was elected Mayor in 2010. Her governance is based on former DILG Secretary Jesse Robredo's memos on good governance, especially in establishing partnerships and synergies across agencies and stakeholders. Electing its first woman mayor was a major milestone for the municipality of Villaverde.

All barangay assemblies are attended by the Mayor, beginning with the first meeting at 9:00 in the morning to the last assembly ending in the evening. The Mayor is given 30 to 40 minutes per assembly for announcements and to make people more aware of the available services to the community, especially for health and nutrition. The barangay assembly became the means of engaging both local and national government agencies, municipal employees, and civic organizations, and an opportunity to present nutrition data from the OPT, and call the attention of parents whose children are underweight and severely underweight for prolonged periods of time.

Since the Mayor was barely a year into her first term, barangay officials were curious about her leadership and governance. Because of this curiosity, barangay officials, especially the *punong barangay*, took time to listen to what the mayor had to say. The first barangay assembly fizzled out with very few people coming in to participate, forcing the Mayor to use the weight of her position to require full participation in the next assembly.

In the following assembly, the barangay officials and community members came and were a captive audience. The Mayor effectively communicated her plans and acted on what she intended to do. The municipality was ready to engage and mobilize all nine barangays in implementing the different nutrition programs. The designation of the Municipal Population



All barangay assemblies achieve good representation of households with the parents, teen agers and some children in attendance, and are participated by barangay and municipal leaders including the mayor. The first assembly typically begins in the morning (left) and the last convenes in the evening (right).

Source: Villaverde Nutrition Office

Officer (MPO) as point person to the barangays was strategic particularly as the MPO provided back channels with the President of the Association of *Punong Barangay* in Villaverde, a close relative.

The lack of printed information did not deter advocacy and mobilization actions. The barangay assembly served as the vehicle for information, education, and communication (IEC) on nutrition with the Mayor advocating for positive change in the overall well-being of children, especially in Barangay Bintawan Sur, where she is from. During the first barangay meeting in Bintawan, without a taint of shaming but with full intentions of calling for household and community action, the Mayor presented the parents with underweight children who were mostly relatives and neighbors. During this time, distribution of seedlings of vegetables was initiated.

In 2012, all nine barangays in Villaverde were engaged, enabled and empowered, and recognition in both the municipal and barangay levels started to pour in. As Villaverde started to collect its awards, the officials and residents became more inspired and motivated to work towards a common goal.

MARRIAGE BETWEEN HEALTH AND NUTRITION

In late 2010, the municipality of Villaverde initiated its application for the Presidential Award for Child Friendly Municipality (PACFM) with the Mayor and MHO at the forefront. One of the indicators of the PACFM recognition was the health and nutritional status of children in the municipality. The Regional Awards Committee (RAC) for PACFM, which includes as member the Regional Nutrition Program Coordinator, evaluated and provided technical assistance to Villaverde making the

Mayor and the MHO more aware of the gaps in nutrition and their low rankings in program implementation. The *punong barangay* and the BNSs participated in the evaluation process, and were also ranked according to performance. As expected, the low performing barangays were unhappy with their standing but at the same time became more motivated to address their nutrition problems. From the evaluation process, the municipality heeded the advice and inputs of the RAC and implemented programs, including vitamin A supplementation and *guyabano* tree planting, with the aim of eradicating malnutrition in its barangays.

Although the Municipal Nutrition Committee was already in place prior to Villaverde's application for PACFM, there was a lack of clarity in function and its membership, and the nutrition programs were "unnoticeable" to the general public. To "enhance" and "strengthen" the MNC, a series of executive orders were signed by the Mayor to expand membership of the MNC to include the private sector, NGOs, school nurses, DOH representative, BNS, and BHW, and civic groups. With the Executive Order, release of funds as well as the implementation of nutrition programs were guaranteed to push through. In addition, sector representatives were enabled to propose budgetary requirements for their programs and projects.

With a more functional MNC, data from OPT were analyzed and utilized in planning and formulation of programs. It was also necessary to have a strong leadership from the MNAO in fulfilling the functions of the MNC and in implementing the MNAP successfully. The duties of the MNAO were changing and not everyone was willing nor capable of taking on the job.

In 2011, the Mayor decided to designate the Municipal Health Officer as MNAO. Although this was a logical and obvious decision, the MHO hesitated to accept the offer because he was aware of the limitations in resources of the Nutrition Office. With that in mind, he laid out the conditions necessary for the MNAO to function well. First, it was essential to allocate space for the Nutrition Office. Second, the Nutrition Aide post in the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office but assigned to the Municipal Agriculture Office be transferred full-time to the Nutrition Office. Once these conditions were in place, the MHO accepted his new assignment and communication was released by the Mayor's office in July 2011 regarding the designation of the MHO as MNAO. This new appointment was an important link between health and nutrition and was supported with an ordinance leading up to the formation of the Local Health and Nutrition Board.

Previously, only the BHW benefitted from the augmentation of funds from the municipal government. In 2012, the municipal government decided to include the BNS in the augmentation. In succeeding years, augmentation for both the BHW and BNS was increased, and capacity building was made more available. In April 2013, the midwives, BNS, and BHW were trained on "Promote Good Nutrition" and "Infant and Young Child Feeding".

Towards the end of the year, the BNS participated in basic course training, while the MNAO attended the Nutrition Program Management (NPM) training conducted by NNC - Region II. It is the practice that all newly appointed nutrition action officers are invited to NPM trainings. By 2015, the municipality health human resources comprised of five midwives, 60 BHWs, one BNS for each of the nine barangays, with nine parent leaders.

Gradually, the barangays were supplied with mechanical column (Detecto) scales by the municipal government beginning with barangays with bigger population since the municipal government could not afford to supply all nine barangays with Detecto and Salter-type weighing scales at one time. Once the barangays were equipped with the Detecto scales, health stations were more capable of conducting the OPT Plus for 0-59 month children in their own facilities. Eventually, all the schools were also provided with Detecto scales. To fill the gap between the MNAO and the barangay, midwives were appointed as Barangay Nutrition Action Officers (BNAO) to serve as counterpart to MNAO in the barangay.

In the same year, the Mayor and the MHO/MNAO enrolled in Municipal and Local Governance Program (MLGP), equivalent to a Master's Degree from the Open University of Benguet State University. The MLGP is a "streamlined version of Health Leadership and Governance Program of the Zuellig Family Foundation, DOH, and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)". The MLGP was designed specifically for Mayors and MHOs who are "expected to improve the municipal health indicators and engage other local stakeholders". The program also required that all Executive Orders pertaining to health and nutrition are established from evidence-based research.

With a better equipped municipal system in place, health delivery services became more accessible. These included pre- and post- natal services, facility based deliveries with the accreditation of the birthing clinic staffed with skilled birth attendants, access to immunization, exclusive breastfeeding and new born initiated breastfeeding. The Municipal Basic Health Systems' Technical Roadmap of Villaverde (2015) is presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. Villaverde Municipal Health System Roadmap

Leadership & Governance		Health Financing		Human Resources		Access to Medicine & Technology	Health and Information System		Health Service Delivery								
Municipal Health Governance	Municipal Health Action Plan	Health Resource Generation and Management	LGU Budget for Health (15% IRA)	RHU and BHS Resources Management	Health Human Resources Adequacy at RHU (MD 1:19 007) (Nurse 1;19 007)	Drug Management System	Presence of Essential Medicine at the RHU (Stock Basis)	Data Collection, Utilization and information Dissemination	Accomplished Baseline Data Collection (FHSIS)	Barangay Health Infrastructure	Presence of Barangay Health Station						
	Expanded ad Functional Local Health Board		Actual Budget Utilization (95% utilization)		Full Implementation of Magna Carta for Public Health Workers		RHU Medicine Tracking and Inventory System		Regular Data Gathering and Recording (delayed submission and consolidation of data)		Maintenance & Operations						
			BLGU Health Budget (5% of Barangay IRA)		4 in 1 Accreditation		Installed Performance Management Systems (presence of IPCR)		Ration Community Based Pharmacy (1 BNB per Barangay)		Maternal/Infant Death Review	Monthly Updated Health Data Board	Accomplishment Utilization and Dissemination of DILG, DOH, LGU, Scorecards	MaterMaternal and Child Care	Utilization		
							Available and Accessible Transport for Emergency										
Barangay Health Governance	Implemented and integrated Barangay Health Plan	Local PhilHealth Administration	Regular IEC for enrolled indigent			Health Human Resource Adequacy in BHS (5 midwives, 60 BHWs, 9 BNS, 9 parent leaders)	Creation of Citizen's Charter			Reproductive Health					Sustainable Maternal Health Care Initiative		
					BHS HHR Competency 9Basic BHW Training Course and CHT Training)	Pre-natal Services (65%)											
	Reimbursement filling (PCB, MCP, TB, DOTS)		System for BHW Recruitment and Retention Mechanism		Fully Immunized Child (65%)	Post Natal Services (83%)											
						Ordinance and systems for claims, disposition and utilization monitoring									Ordinance and Timely Provision of BHW Honorarium	Facility-Based Deliveries (85%)	
	Sanitary Toilets (93.14%) households		Skilled Birth Attendants (87%)														
			Access to Safe Water (92.57% of households)			Sustainable Breastfeeding Initiatives											
	Unmet Needs (6%)					Exclusive Breastfeeding (55%)											
			Newborn Initiated Breastfeeding (61%)			Sustainable Essential Intrapartum and Newborn Care											
	Sustainable Infant and Child Care Initiatives					Under Five Undernutrition Prevalence Ratio 2:8											
			Sustainable Adolescent Reproductive Health Initiative			Teenage Pregnancy Rate (59%)											
	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (59%)					Unmet Needs (6%)											
			Sanitary Toilets (93.14%) households			Access to Safe Water (92.57% of households)											

OUTSOURCING AND TAPPING OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDS

Lack of funds is a typical problem among low income municipalities, and a common excuse for the failures of implementation and even leadership. Villaverde has the same problem but it made daring moves to access external sources of funds even when the odds were against them. For many years, Villaverde's local financial resources were very low, mostly due to non-collection of property tax by the indigenous people (IP) occupying the upland areas. These were untitled lands but were possible sources of income for the municipality.

After thoroughly reviewing the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, the Mayor proposed registration of ownership of these lands to the IPs. Although the Mayor was advised that this was not a popular decision and that it may cost her a second term, she went ahead and convinced the IPs to declare ownership and acquire titles for their land. When the IPs did come down from the upland areas to register, they brought with them their livestock and other goods, which were purchased by the community. Once the IPs started paying for property tax, Villaverde's revenues increased significantly and was recognized as top local revenue in 2011 and 2012. Come election time in 2013, Mayor Valtoribio was a lone candidate and won a second term.

Increase in revenues of the municipality allowed Villaverde to support the MNC and increased incentives for BNSs and the BHWs as dictated by the Executive Orders issued. Between 2011 and 2012, budget allocation slowly increased by 0.3 percent, at the same time, Villaverde rose from rank #15 to rank #10 after another round of evaluation. When the municipality was evaluated in 2016, its budget allocation was 3 percent of the total municipal budget, almost 2 percentage increase since 2010. In 2017, Villaverde garnered a number 2 ranking in MELLPI.

The increase in budget allocation for nutrition programs from revenues of the municipality still posed problems in executing the MNAP, mostly because of the accounting system which slows down fund disbursement. Because of this, Villaverde relied much on the capitation fund or the *"per family payment rate"* from PhilHealth. This is a packaged benefit which provides PHP 8000 to the municipality for every live birth or delivery. This amount goes into a trust fund for nutrition activities specifically for training and purchase of supplies for the different programs. The capitation fund is only available to municipalities with accredited lying in and birthing clinics. Initially, the MNAO/MHO hesitated to apply for accreditation because the

health station was not equipped for laboratory work, which was a major requirement for accreditation. The accreditation did not entail much expense on the part of the municipality since the DOH was ready to provide equipment upon request through the Health Facility Enhancement Program. However, this did not cover personnel. While the municipality's laboratory was not fully equipped, the MHO/MNAO outsourced services such as X-ray and other laboratory procedures from other agencies. This allowed the municipality to proceed with the accreditation, which demanded a lot of documentation and required regular monitoring of DOH and PhilHealth to ensure quality of service and compliance with standard. Other services such as ambulance service are made accessible through Inter-local Health Zone, an agreement among municipal mayors to share services that may not be available in some municipalities.

Private sectors and NGOs are not usual sources of financial support, but they provide services and supplies especially for the feeding programs, and the Re-greening Program. AMARANTH (women's organization and Mason counterpart) has been an active partner of Villaverde in programs for feeding, and healthy lifestyle,

and provides school supplies to children. A food corporation has been providing supplies for the feeding programs and a big supporter of the SUMMER BUN.

THE SUMMER BUN: AN EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION

Projects in education and nutrition are an integral part of the Villaverde nutrition program. This does not come as a surprise. The Mayor was a teacher. In an interview with the LCE, she remarked that meeting “KENNETHs”, boys and girls who “cannot” read or write makes her sad. She has resolved early in her life that children deserve good education and nutrition. Many more programs targeted to school children were implemented by Villaverde and because it is common for communities to not notice these programs, these projects were given attractive names. These include “*Labs ko si Mam*” (Laboratory and Medical Services for Magnificent Teachers) held during the celebration of Teacher’s Month in September to October; Project AMARANTH (Addressing Malnutrition Through Ready and Nutritive Feedings in School); Project SCOUT (Significant Commitment to Oust Over Nutrition and Undernutrition in the School), which was named after the youngest child of the Mayor; and the SUMMER BUN (*Summer na naman, Bantayan Una ang Nutrisyon*), an



The SUMMER BUN prevents nutritional deterioration among children during summer vacation, a typical observation in many areas, by providing supplementary feeding.

Source: Villaverde Nutrition Office

evidence-based program held during the school’s summer break.

While attending the MLGP in 2015, the Mayor and the MHO/MNAO analyzed the OPT data of school and pre-school children in Villaverde and the impact of the feeding programs conducted during the school year. The result of their analysis showed that children who were undernourished at

the beginning of the school year were able to attain normal nutritional status with the feeding program in schools by the time they were weighed at the end of the school year. However, the children would revert back to being undernourished during the summer break, when the school feeding programs were not being implemented. Therefore, the cycle of underweight school children would start at the beginning of the school year and repeat itself

during the same period. As a preventive measure and to sustain normal nutritional status during the summer break, Villaverde implemented the SUMMER BUN to continue the feeding program while the children were off from school during the summer months. Support for the feeding programs from stakeholders such as parents-teachers associations, civic groups, and the private sector was limited during the school year, thus, the municipality augmented financial support as a preventive measure to undernutrition and maintain normal nutritional status among school children throughout the year.

Nutrition interventions in Villaverde mainly focused on pregnant and lactating women and young children. Health Services as described in Table 1 includes delivery of pre- and post-natal services, and reproductive health services for teenagers. The “Buntis Party” and the “Buntis Congress” are means of information campaign for healthy pregnancy and child delivery by encouraging mothers to have regular check-up and to avail of assistance from skilled birth attendants. In line with these services, there is a concerted effort to ensure the health and well-being of the newborn through sustainable infant and child care initiatives and the implementation of exclusive breastfeeding and newborn initiated breastfeeding.

While there is a wide coverage for maternal and child healthcare during the critical period of development under the municipal health system, the concept of “First 1000 Days” does not seem to be the focal point in planning and implementation of health and nutrition interventions. In general, there exists a common knowledge on the importance of providing nutritional requirements of both mother and child since interventions and services were put in place even before the concept of the “First 1000 days” was introduced to the community. Since the concept of the First 1000 is newly launched in the Philippines in recent years, it may be too early to determine how this has been embraced at the grassroots level, especially in areas like Villaverde. The concept has been briefly introduced during one of the Nutrition Month celebrations, but there is a lack of a deeper understanding of how the existing interventions and services, together with maternal health and child health, exclusive breastfeeding, and proper feeding practices, all plays out during the first 1000 days.



The “Buntis Party” and the “Buntis Congress” are means of information campaign for healthy pregnancy and child delivery by encouraging mothers to have regular check-up and to avail of assistance from skilled birth attendants.

NUTRITION IN THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Indigenous peoples are found in several barangays in Villaverde. Two of the nine barangays, Cabuluan (population: 1,751) and Ocapon (population: 1025), are fully inhabited by peoples of Ayangan Tribe. The adjoining barangays of Nagbitin and Sawmill are partly populated by the same ethnic group. There is no special program for IPs in Villaverde; instead, every service that is planned and implemented for nutrition across the municipality is also delivered to them. There are BNS, BHW, midwives and rural health posts in IP populated barangays the same way one finds them in all other barangays in the municipality. Of the total nine BNS, two are IPs; and seven of 54 BHWs and one of four midwives are members of the indigenous community. IPs are represented in different municipal and barangay political structures. In early 2018, the municipality included an IP mandatory representative as part of the *Sangguniang Bayan* Office to look after the welfare of IP communities.

The improvements in nutritional outcomes observed for the entire town of Villaverde count on improvements in these two distinct IP barangays.

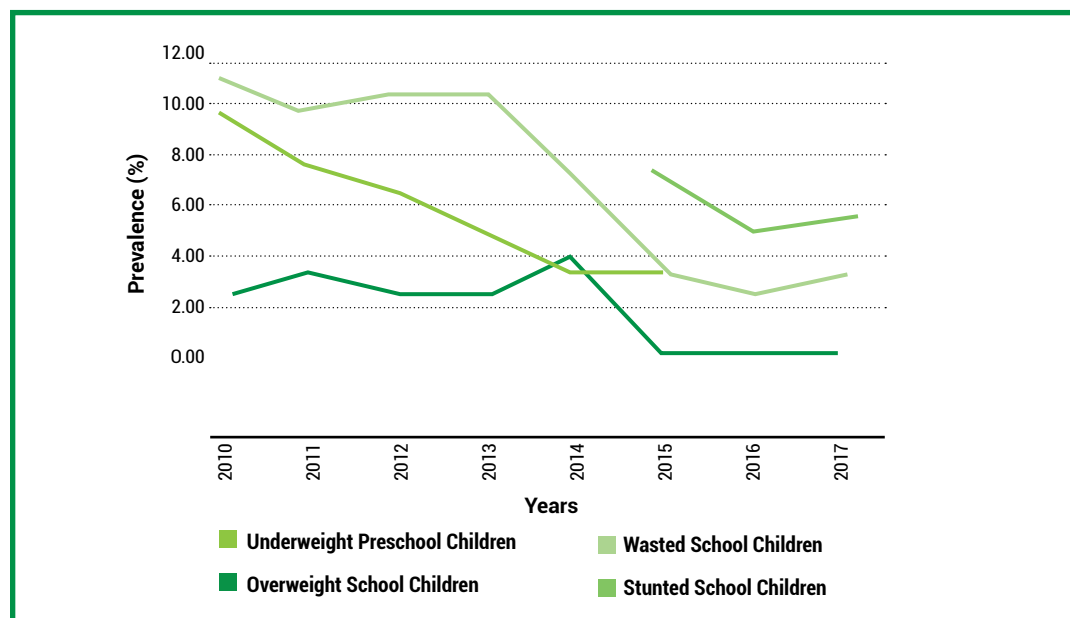


FIGURE 3. Malnutrition among pre-school and school children in Villaverde, 2010-2017

IMPROVEMENT ON NUTRITIONAL OUTCOMES

The nutritional situation in Villaverde began to improve once resources were in place and the nutrition interventions and programs were reinforced. During the time when they were ranked lowest in MELLPI in 2010, the prevalence of underweight pre-school children was 8.5 percent. The prevalence of severely underweight for the same age group during the same period was at 1.3 percent. The prevalence of underweight and severely underweight continued to decrease in 2011 to 2017 by almost five percentage points and remained below 2 percent. Since implementation of OPT Plus in 2012, the prevalence of stunting had a steady decrease among pre-school children. The prevalence of wasted school children was 8.3 percent in 2010, and 1.6 percent in 2017, while prevalence of severely wasted pre-school children decreased from 2.3 percent in 2010 to 1.6 percent in 2017 (Figure 3). Measurement of stunting started in Villaverde in 2015. The limited data on stunted school children show an overall decline from 6.8 percent in 2015 to 5.6 percent in 2017.

Villaverde's progress in managing health and nutrition brought them to higher rankings in MELLPI. As the BNS became fully engaged and enabled, Villaverde's ranking rose to 10 in 2012 from 13 in 2010. When Villaverde was evaluated in 2016, the municipality ranked no. 2 in MELLPI in 2017.

With the accreditation of the lying in and birthing clinic, more than 90 percent of child deliveries were facility-based and were handled by health professionals. Crude birth rate in 2015 was highest at 19.94 per 1000 population with 379 live birth, a slight increase from 17.58 in 2013, and 17.38 in 2014. Villaverde passed a Municipal Ordinance No. 4 Series 2015 promoting a "friendly quality and affordable facility-based delivery for all pregnant mothers to be attended by skilled birth professionals (doctor, nurses, midwives)" and to encourage mothers to avail of the services of the lying in and birthing clinic. Although traditional birthing attendants are still in service in the community, they have become partners of the medical team of the birthing clinic. The municipality also sponsored a series of "Buntis Party" and "Buntis Congress" as an information drive for the safe child birth and delivery in the birthing facility.

The municipality of Villaverde started to receive awards as it improved its health and nutrition services for its residents. One of the most prominent recognition that helped the municipality appreciate their nutrition and health situation was the Most Child Friendly Award they received in 2011 and 2012. It was during their application for this award that paved the way for Villaverde to improve the over-all well-being of children with a banner vision "Greener and Smoke Free World for Villaverde, Eden for a Brighter Future for our Children." Effective community mobilization and advocacy already described elsewhere helped Villaverde achieve its vision.

In 2014, The National Nutrition Council took notice of Villaverde's efforts in managing and delivery of nutrition programs. The municipality's MELLPI had significantly improved and rose to fifth place in Nueva Vizcaya. In the same year, Villaverde was 3rd Place in the provincial MELLPI ranking, which motivated the municipality and its barangays to sustain its most child friendly standing. Barangay Ibung earned the "Consistent Maintenance Award for Most Child Friendly Award" with cash award of Php 35,000. Since the lying in and birthing clinic was situated in Barangay Ibung, the clinic also served as the barangay health station where the BNS conducted OPT and other nutrition services. Officials saw the need to separate the two services and built a separate barangay health station funded by the Barangay, the Municipal government and the cash award.

Records will show that Villaverde has passed the MELLPI scorecard in recent years. Despite this achievement reflected in the process of program implementation and gains in nutrition outcomes, Villaverde has not received the Green Banner Award. A municipality in the same province obtained a higher score in the MELLPI exercise and was recognized as the winner. The MELLPI system limits recognition to the highest scoring municipality/city/province and ignores other LGUs even if they have met the qualifying score.

Effective community mobilization and advocacy extended to other awards, such as the best school canteen in Barangay Ibung, best sanitation practices for Barangay Bintawan Sur and Barangay Ibung to name a few.

VILLAVERDE'S WAY FORWARD TO A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Key factors of success

In 1995, Hillary R. Clinton published a book titled “It takes a village to raise a child”. The title was derived from African proverbs that translates to “a child does not grow up only in a single home” or “regardless of a child’s biological parent, its upbringing belongs to the community”. The book by Hillary Clinton describes the society’s role in raising children. The society includes, the parents, grandparents, teachers, neighbors, ministers, doctors, employers, government agencies, etc. Similarly, the residents of Villaverde have a common mindset of unity for the well-being of the young members of their community. In Barangay Sawmill, mothers help each other in making sure all the children take their share from the feeding program. As expected, not all the mothers are able to bring their children to the feeding centers due to the demands of house chores, lack of money or means of transportation. If a child were absent during the feeding, other mothers would collect the food and deliver it to the home of the absent child. This act of “*bayanihan*” (community self-help and cooperation) has been a common practice among the mothers for generations. In the same way, mothers in Poblacion with the

BOX 2

AN ACT OF *BAYANIHAN* IN THE BARANGAY

Angelo was a three-year old child born from a transient family in Barangay Poblacion. He was not only undernourished, he also lacked the basic care especially for personal hygiene and grooming. Angelo was diagnosed with an unknown condition that put him in the underweight category for an extended period of time. Because of this, the performance evaluation of the BNS was affected. But the BNS was persistent in caring for Angelo and determined to improve his nutritional status by making sure he attended the feeding program. Mothers took turns in providing his daily care, including bathing, proper clothing and grooming until Angelo’s nutritional status became normal and his health standing was good.

leadership of the BNS, take turns in caring for Angelo, a three year old child who was severely undernourished for extended periods of time until he recovered from malnutrition (see box story).

Mothers are not the only ones active in nutrition. Fathers have taken on the responsibility of bringing their children to the health stations for immunization, availing of vitamin supplementation and feeding. Tricycle drivers (who are usually males), are mobilized as advocates of exclusive breast feeding with posters on their tricycle and distribution of flyers. In one occasion, policemen were also tapped as speakers for the first 1000 days seminar for women.

Leading by example from the local executive, officers likewise visited barangays and households. Members of the community, regardless of the position whether a barangay official, a teacher, or a household member, take inspiration from their leader(s) who are also very active and very visible during village program activities. When the leaders are hard at work for the benefit of the whole community, constituents are motivated to do the same. Community participation brought many awards to the municipality of Villaverde, not only in health and nutrition, but also in environment, peace and order, and good governance. These awards added fuel to Villaverde, and inspired and motivated its residents to do more for their community.



Municipal Nutrition Committee members and municipal employees find delight in delivering services to households and children and in providing technical assistance to barangays.

Source: Villaverde Nutrition Office

As a fifth class municipality, financial resources are usually a limiting factor in getting anything done for the community. In the case of Villaverde, this limitation was taken on as challenge rather than a constraint and knowing where and how to tap external resources has worked to their benefit. National agencies such as the Department of Health and PhilHealth, and the private sector and civic organizations such as women's groups are active partners of Villaverde in nutrition programs. The accreditation of the lying in and birthing clinic was not an easy endeavor, as it required a lot of pen and paper pushing and outsourcing

to fill the gaps in services of the municipal health station. Once established, Villaverde's lying in and birthing clinic became a financial resource used to augment funds from the municipal government. Cash awards are also a source of funds, which the barangay and the municipality utilized to support health and nutrition services. This was particularly true in Barangay Ibung where a new health station was built from cash awards and funds from the barangay and municipal government.

While the private sector does not provide financial support, their in-kind donations and services helped supply the feeding activities and other nutrition programs. With the resourcefulness of the municipality and the initiative to establish partnerships with different stakeholders, both private and public, Villaverde has been described as "self-propelling" and has transformed itself from a low performing to an energized and dynamic municipality, to be taken seriously by other municipalities as a competitor for coveted awards in nutrition. Even with a growing reputation, Villaverde still has a "wish list" not only to sustain its high performance, but to make further improvements in health and nutrition services.

The goal for a well-nourished and healthy populace in a well-maintained environment would be difficult to achieve without a clear vision from the people who manage the nutrition programs. The Mayor was ready to take a deep dive to achieve this goal and she intended to have the MHO by her side as she took the plunge. But the MHO was hesitant and set certain conditions that will lead to the success of the health and nutrition programs. Without the changes in the MNC and MNO imposed by the future MNAO, things would have remained the same. Villaverde would not have been able to effectively manage and implement programs, and human resource would continue to be limited and divided among different agencies. The merging of health and nutrition with the designation of the MHO as MNAO, and the restructuring of the nutrition office in the health stations has given more visibility to nutrition in Villaverde. These changes allowed better supervision and harmonization of the duties of the BNS and BHW.

At the barangay level, synchronized barangay assemblies served as a direct communication with constituents. It has been particularly helpful in advocating for better nutrition with the services made available by the municipality. This direct communication approach was effective in engaging the barangays in supporting the municipal government's program implementation and delivery of services.

Learning from Villaverde Experience

Villaverde was able to transform itself from a non-performing to a multi-awarded municipality not by reinventing the wheel but by reinforcing and enhancing existing resources and programs. The process of transformation came with many and seemingly insurmountable challenges, but with good leadership and innovative officials and with the mobilization of communities and tapping into its culture, the low income class municipality of Villaverde was able to move forward with their mission and deliver nutritional outcomes and other public development good. Some of the lessons learned from Villaverde are described below:

1. **Strong, courageous, results-driven and informed and innovative leadership is vital to delivering nutritional outcomes.** The story of Villaverde amply demonstrates the importance of such combination of assets of leadership in its ascent to nutrition.
2. **Mobilization of officials and the barangays and households start with the executive level and is best done by educating constituents and leading by example.** Such combination allows an effective trickle down of nutrition mission to the entire officialdom and to the barangay and household levels. With the Mayor leading by example, and making herself visible and open to communication, this enabled mobilization of the punong barangay who were motivated to be just as active in implementing nutrition interventions. The Mayor's personal experience as a young mother was also a motivating factor in strengthening the health system and implementing nutrition centered policies and in rallying mothers and making nutrition a way of life.

3. **Although Villaverde is a 5th class municipality, its financial limitations did not hamper its transformation from a non-performing municipality to a multi-awarded municipality.** To augment its limited resources, the municipality tapped agencies such as DOH and the private sector to support its programs. This is particularly true during the accreditation of the birthing clinic and implementation of the year round feeding programs. The MHO's ability to identify resources and other services that can be provided by national agencies was an effective means of outsourcing.
4. **As is the case with other high performing LGUs, strong partnership between the Mayor and the MNAO is helpful in moving nutrition forward.** In the case of Villaverde, the Mayor who is a lawyer and the MNAO/MHO invested time and resources in taking a course together at the MLGP which they were both convinced was essential for moving Villaverde forward not just in nutrition but overall development. They were both open to learning from experiences of other LGUs. They worked continuously to develop evidence-based strategies and interventions, mobilized communities together and worked with the *Sangguniang Bayan* for important legislation and financial support. Trust between the Mayor and the MNAO has been essential in the progress of Villaverde.
5. **A local nutrition office with full-time staff and modest resources is indispensable to the effectiveness of the nutrition program.** This is clearly demonstrated in the case of Villaverde. The conditions set by the MHO to accept his designation as MNAO and the positive results of compliance of these conditions are a reminder of the above conclusion.
6. **Investing in human resources played an important role in enabling the BNS and BHW in managing and implementing nutrition interventions in the barangay.** Training and providing them with the appropriate equipment allowed them to collect more reliable data from the OPT Plus that can be used in developing BNAP and MNAP. Given the demands of the duties of the BNS and the BHW, incentives were provided and were useful in getting the job done, especially when expenses were incurred while on duty.
7. **The close partnership of grassroots workers in health and nutrition (midwife, BHW, BNS) creates synergy for increased program results.** Working as a team with defined roles and a common mission led to effective implementation and regular monitoring of program in barangays, and closer relationship with community members.

8. **Agriculture and tree planting came together with nutrition in Villaverde.** The establishment and maintenance of vegetable gardens, and replanting of fruit bearing trees (e.g. guyabano trees) helped tackle food security and nutrition. The vegetable gardens and the planting of FBTs were implemented not only for the purpose of environmental conservation and agriculture, but for a sustainable food system that would impact the nutritional needs of the community. While there is so much focus on the progress with advancement in technology and industry, Villaverde presents the importance of strengthening agriculture for sustainable food security.
9. **The Presidential Award for Child Friendly Municipality (PACFM) ignited the increased commitment of Villaverde towards improving its nutrition program particularly its implementation.** The Regional Awards Committee (RAC) for the PACFM advised the Mayor that she would need to put her nutrition program in order if she wants to win the Presidential Award, prompting the LCE to give concrete orders to her team. Nutrition has many friends that recognize its value to children.
10. **The municipal nutrition program was guided by the nutrition program management and MELLPI scorecard of the national government.** It also received regular technical assistance from the NNC regional office. While there is increasing awareness on the first 1000 days, current coverage of services appears inadequate to comprehensively address stunting and the emerging challenge on teenage pregnancy.
11. **The commitment of Villaverde to improve the nutritional status of its people transcends the importance it gives to the nutrition awards.** Despite not winning the Green Banner in recent years, it has continued vigorously to implement its nutrition program. It would appear that to mobilize more local governments for nutrition, it is important to find ways to recognize real achievements of other LGUs apart from the conferment of the Green Banner to the top performing LGU.

Various dates. Reports and notes on focus groups discussions and key informant interviews with key individuals, nutrition staff and committees in the 11 LGUs and their constituent LGUs

Various dates. Administrative documents (LGU profiles, LGU promotional booklets, situation analyses, annual investment and development plans, nutrition action plans, program manuals, annual reports, program/project reports, budget reports, administrative data of nutrition programs and health sectors) of the 11 LGUs and their constituent LGUs

2015 Census of Population, Philippine Statistics Authority

Aguirre, DeAnne and Micah Alpern (2014). "10 Principles of leading change management", in strategy + business issue 75, summer 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.strategy-business.com/issue75-summer2014>

Bello, J. (2017). "Quo vadis, Quezon?" Retrieved from <https://businessmirror.com.ph/quo-vadis-quezon/>

BusinessWorld Online (2015). "Davao del Norte partners with private health sector to improve maternal, child health programs". Retrieved from [http://www.bworldonline.com/content](http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Nation&title=davao-del-norte-partners-with-private-health-sector-to-improve-maternal-child-health-programs&id=110427)

[php?section=Nation&title=davao-del-norte-partners-with-private-health-sector-to-improve-maternal-child-health-programs&id=110427](http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Nation&title=davao-del-norte-partners-with-private-health-sector-to-improve-maternal-child-health-programs&id=110427)

Department of Health, Philippines (n.d.). "Doctors to the Barrios Program". Retrieved from Department of Health: <http://www.doh.gov.ph/node/1091>

Department of Interior and Local Government (2018). Province of Quezon [Open Data Portal]. Retrieved on from www.calabarzon.dilg.gov.ph/lgu/quezon

Encyclopedia Britannica (2018). "New People's Army". Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/topic/New-Peoples-Army_dated_1_May_2018

FAO Philippines (2016). "Electronic Tool for Monitoring Food and Nutrition Insecurity". FAO Philippines Newsletter. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/3/a-c0389e.pdf>

FNRI-DOST (2001). Philippines Nutrition Facts and Figures 1998. Taguig City, Metro Manila, Philippines: Food and Nutrition Research Institute - Department of Science and Technology.

FNRI-DOST (2010). Philippines Nutrition Facts and Figures 2008. Taguig City, Metro Manila, Philippines. Retrieved from [http://www.fnri.dost.gov.ph/](http://www.fnri.dost.gov.ph/images/facts_and_figures/eNutrition--2008-Facts-and-Figures-2.pdf)

[images/facts_and_figures/eNutrition--2008-Facts-and-Figures-2.pdf](http://www.fnri.dost.gov.ph/images/facts_and_figures/eNutrition--2008-Facts-and-Figures-2.pdf)

FNRI-DOST (2012). Philippine Nutrition Facts and Figures: 2011 Updating of Nutritional Status of Filipino Children and Other Population Groups. Taguig City, Metro Manila, Philippines. Retrieved from http://www.fnri.dost.gov.ph/images/facts_and_figures/2011-facts-and-figures.pdf

FNRI-DOST (2015). Philippine Nutrition Facts and Figures 2013: 8th National Nutrition Survey - Food Security Survey. Taguig City, Metro Manila, Philippines. Retrieved from http://www.fnri.dost.gov.ph/images/facts_and_figures/Food-Security-2013.pdf

Gamboa, R. (2014). "Cocolisap and other threats to the coconut industry". Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/business/2014/07/29/1351358/cocolisap-and-other-threats-coconut-industry>, dated 29 July 2014

Grundy, J. et al (2003). "Overview of Devolution of Health Services in the Philippines". Remote and Rural Health, 3(2). Retrieved from <https://www.rrh.org.au/journal/download/pdf/220/>

Klemm, R. D. et al (1996). "Coverage and Impact of Adding vitamin A capsule (VAC) distribution to annual National Immunization Day in the Philippines". Retrieved from https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnacn875.pdf

- Lagasca, C. (2010). "Vizcaya town elects first woman mayor". Retrieved from <http://www.philstar.com/nation/586183/vizcaya-town-elects-first-woman-mayor-date-22-June-2010>
- Magno, Cielo (2001). "The Devolution of Agricultural and Health Services". Social Watch Philippines. Retrieved from http://www.aer.ph/pdf/sw2001/articled2001_phi.pdf
- Mallari, D. J. and T. Santos (2017). Ferry sinking; 4 dead, 7 missing. Retrieved from <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/954312/ferry-sinking-4-dead-7-missing-dated-22-December-2017>
- McKigney, J. and B. Tisa (1992). "Mid-term Evaluation: Expansion of Vitamin A Supplementation and Nutrition Education in Three Provinces in the Philippines". Manila, Philippines: Helen Keller International
- Minimum Basic Needs Approach (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/minimum-basic-needs-approach>
- National Competitiveness Council (2017). "Most-Competitive Municipalities in Mindanao 2017"
- National Nutrition Council (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.nnc.gov.ph/plans-and-programs/philippine-food-and-nutrition-surveillance-system/monitoring-and-evaluation-of-local-level-plan-implementation-mellpi>
- National Statistical Coordination Board, R. D. (2009). "Limasawa Island: The Site of the First Mass in the Philippines and in Asia". Southern Leyte, Philippines. Retrieved from http://www.nap.psa.gov.ph/ru8/profiles/Municipal_%20Profile/Municipal_Profile_Limasawa.pdf, dated 27 November 2009
- Ngidlo, Robert T. (2014). "Modern Farming Technologies: Impact on Farm Productivity and Food Security in the Rice Terraces of the Cordillera Region, Northern Philippines". *American Journal of Experimental Agriculture* 4(8): 913-921, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.journalrepository.org/media/journals/AJEA_2/2014/Mar/Ngidlo482014AJEA9202_1.pdf
- Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines (1997). Retrieved from <http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1997/10/29/republic-act-no-8371/>, dated 29 October 1997
- Pazzibugan, D. (2014). "Quezon hardest hit". Retrieved from <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/621328/quezon-hardest-hit-article-dated-19-July-2014>
- PIA Press Release (2006a). "KALAH-CIDSS processes to be adopted by Asipulo town". Presidential Communications Operations Office. 24 July 2006
- PIA Press Release (2006b). "KALAH-CIDSS program turned over to 3 Ifugao towns". Presidential Communications Operations Office. 29 December 2006
- Philippine Daily Inquirer (2014). "3 towns learn from landslide tragedy". Retrieved from <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/654547/3-towns-learn-from-landslide-tragedy>, dated 4 December 2014.
- Philippine Statistics Authority (2016a). Official Poverty Statistics of the Philippines: Full Year 2015. Quezon City, Philippines. Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2015%20Full%20Year%20Official%20Poverty%20Statistics%20of%20the%20Philippines%20Publication.pdf>
- Philippine Statistics Authority (2017b). "Farmers, Fishermen and Children consistently posted the highest poverty incidence among basic sectors". Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases-dated-30-June-2017>
- Regional Development Council IV-A (2017). "2016 CALABARZON Regional Development Report". Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines. Retrieved from calabarzon.neda.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RDR-2016.pdf

Solon, Florentino S. (2006). "Good governance for nutrition in the Philippines: Elements, experiences, and lessons learned". Food and Nutrition Bulletin, vol. 27, no. 4 © 2006, The United Nations University

University of Queensland School of Population Health and University of Melbourne Nossal Institute for Global Health (2014). "Evidence-Based Planning in the Philippines - Phase II, Final Report 2013-14 (December 2014)". Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/health/files/UQ-UOM-EBaP-Final-Report-Philippines.pdf>

USAID (2016). Health Leadership and Governance Program (HLGP). Retrieved from USAID.gov: <https://www.usaid.gov/philippines/health/hlgp-zff>, dated 19 August 2016

Compendium of Actions on Nutrition

A sub-project of NI PHL 03

PRODUCTION TEAM

CAN consultant writers, research and logistics support

Mandaluyong City and Tagaytay City

Dr. Luzeta C. Adorna (PhD, UP School of Economics Professorial Lecturer), with support from Abigail A. Pabro (NNC), Maru Azalea Tinio-Pangilinan (NI PHL 03) and Aleli Catalina Y. Jimenez (CNAO Calamba City).

Davao City and the Province of Davao del Norte

Athenie Laarni S. Odi-Jacildo (practicing lawyer and a former LGU development officer), with support from Marissa dela Merced Navales (NI PHL 03), Maru Azalea Tinio-Pangilinan (NI PHL 03), Daniel G. Salunga (NNC CAN Project Coordinator) and Joy Angela D. Ignacio (local researcher)

Province of Quezon

Dr. Raymundo Celestino F. Habito Jr. (UP Los Baños Assistant Professor and FAO Consultant), with support from Dr. Luzeta C. Adorna (consultant), Daniel G. Salunga (NNC CAN Project Coordinator) and Cecilio L. Adorna (NI PHL 03 Team Leader)

Malungon

Rachelle Cerera-Leones (social development consultant and graphic artist), with support from Dianne Kristine P. Cornejo (NNC) and Maru Azalea Tinio-Pangilinan (NI PHL 03)

Kadingilan and Asipulo

Mary Ann Maglipon (C4D consultant and former UNICEF staff), with support from Lelit Navarez (CNAO Ozamiz City), Maru Azalea Tinio-Pangilinan (NI PHL 03), Jomarie L. Tongol (NNC), and Marveluz C. Daniels (local researcher).

Talibon

Dr. Nestor Pestelos (Bohol Tribune columnist and former UNDP staff) and Cecilio Adorna (NI PHL 03 Team Leader), with support from Daniel G. Salunga (NNC CAN Project Coordinator), Cenderella C. Cuyno (statistician) and Ivy Sarande (local researcher).

Limasawa and Villaverde

Cristina Sison (MSc/RND, consultant in IFPRI Washington DC and IRRI Los Baños), with support from Lelit Navarez (CNAO Ozamiz City), Abigail Pabro (NNC), Maru Azalea Tinio-Pangilinan (NI PHL 03), Daniel G. Salunga (NNC CAN Project Coordinator) and Aleli Catalina Y. Jimenez (CNAO Calamba City)

CAN Overview. Dr. Luzeta C. Adorna with support from Maru Azalea Tinio-Pangilinan

National Nutrition Council Regional Offices facilitated support on the ground and liaison with local government units prior to and after deployment of the CAN Production Team. Regional Nutrition Program Coordinators also served as key informant interviewees in some cases. Ma. Gisela M. Lonzaga (Region II), Milagros Elisa V. Federizo (NCR), Rita D. Papey (CAR), Carina Z. Santiago (Region IV-A), Dr. Parolita A. Mission (Region VII), Dr. Catalino P. Dotollo, Jr. (Region VIII), Gladys Mae S. Fernandez (Region X), Dr. Maria Teresa L. Ungson (Region XI) and Arceli M. Latonio (Region XII)

Editorial group: Maria-Bernardita T. Flores, CESO II (NNC Executive Director and Assistant Secretary of Health), Hygeia Ceres Catalina B. Gawe (NNC-NSD Chief), Daniel G. Salunga (NNC CAN Project Coordinator), Abigail A. Pabro (NNC), Cecilio L. Adorna (NI PHL 03), Maru Azalea Tinio-Pangilinan (NI PHL 03), Dr. Luzeta C. Adorna (consultant); and editorial feedback: Colin Beckworth (NI Technical Advisor Nutrition Surveillance) and comments on nutritional outcomes, Dr. Demetria C. Bongga

Layout and graphic artist: Rachelle Cerera-Leones and Ivy Baraquia, with support from Fatima E. Villaremo

CAN Team Leader: Maru Azalea Tinio-Pangilinan

NI PHL 03 Project Team: Cecilio L. Adorna

THE ASCENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NUTRITION IN THE PHILIPPINES

A Compendium of Actions on Nutrition



www.nutritionintl.org



www.unicef.org/philippines



www.nnc.gov.ph



www.doh.gov.ph