

Barangay Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Team: An Effective Partner in Monitoring Projects in Indigenous Communities

Policy Recommendation

✓ Institutionalize the Barangay Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Team (BPMET) in the local government unit as partners in monitoring public good. Involvement of partner-beneficiaries in project monitoring aside from planning and implementation encourages social responsibility and volunteerism. This builds on the indigenous value systems of cooperative work, as well as it augments government resources to ensure quality and timely implementation.

✓ Support the capacitation trainings and on-site coaching and mentoring of recognized BPMET members. BPMET members who are technically capacitated and frequently assessed are more confident and efficient in monitoring and evaluating any community project.

Public service quality, availability, and delivery remain a challenge in the Philippines especially in the highland rural areas. Government institutions often lack resources including manpower hence, the need to decentralize power and resources to the Local Government Units which are expected to have a wider reach to the grassroot communities. Guevarra (2000) noted that this decentralization should go beyond the transfer of responsibilities and resources – it requires reforming governance and empowering the community to participate in advocacy and decision-making. This suggests collaborative or participatory governance which is strengthened through social accountability initiatives that support public sector performance. The Local Government Code of 1991 which created the Barangay Development Council opened doors for the civil society to participate in decision making and the opportunity to monitor and evaluate programs and projects implemented through public funds.

In addition, it has been a good practice in development work to use participatory approaches especially in indigenous communities. The Cordillera region represents a particularly pertinent case given its geographic characteristics having communities which may only be accessed after long hours of walking through mountains and crossing rivers. The success of projects greatly depends on the quality of the community people's involvement. Hence in implementing the Second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management

(CHARM2) Project, partner communities were involved from the planning, implementation, monitoring and up to evaluation of the project and its activities. Communities were consulted to projects based on their needs. From this, partner organizations were formed, organized, recognized, and strengthened to implement their identified projects. Also included in this process is the formation of the Barangay Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Team (BPMET), a volunteer monitoring partner in the community.

The BPMET complements community indigenous values and local government resources in monitoring

Most of the CHARM2 Scale-up Project areas are geographically isolated however, these indigenous communities have a strong sense of self-determinism, unity, and cooperation. The participatory approach of the Project in monitoring and evaluation through the BPMET is easily understood in the context of their traditional practices of cooperative work such as *binnadang*, *alluyon* and *ob-obbo*. It affirms concept of ownership and social responsibility thereby encouraging volunteerism.

On the other hand, tapping existing manpower within the community for the purpose of monitoring all development projects augments the shortage of personnel from the LGU. The BPMET also ensures prompt troubleshooting as monitoring is done on-site. Reporting to LGUs are also done promptly making inspection and correction of work efficient. This guarantees accurate, timely, and quality implementation of all projects and activities.

Institutionalize BPMET in the LGU as partners in monitoring public good

Recognition and institutionalization are key to build up the credibility of the BPMET and expand its scope. Barangay resolution or administrative order can be passed to recognize the BPMETs as members in the BDCs' Monitoring Committee or as an independent monitoring body. They will be authorized and recognized by the barangay to conduct monitoring and evaluation. This will promote regular project monitoring and evaluation activities and will minimize project irregularities. Also it will encourage volunteerism, strong sense of ownership, and high responsibility on project sustainability.

The Provincial Government of Benguet has recognized the assistance of BPMET in monitoring subprojects. This has led to the enactment of an Administrative Order 2019-035 Reorganizing the Provincial Project Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (PPMEC) which has included in their composition BPMET chairman or member from municipalities. This move necessarily implies the creation of BPMET in all Barangays in the province of Benguet.

In support of the Provincial Executive Order, several municipalities in Benguet, namely: Sablan, Kapangan, Atok, and Bakun have released Municipal Ordinances mandating for the creation of BPMET in all their Barangays.

“Conducting monitoring has its risks, *maoyaw*, *maigalis*, but we have gained courage and confidence for the sake of good quality and above standard project which we know would benefit our community. A sub-standard project such as in the past where there are no BPMET is a great loss to both the government and the community.”
- Edna, BPMET member, Bokod, Benguet



The BPMETs are trained on what and how to monitor in terms of rural infrastructure projects through continuous coaching and actual monitoring of projects.

Capacitated BPMET members can efficiently monitor and evaluate projects

The BPMET is composed of community volunteers who are “willing and able to donate their energy to the monitoring and evaluation of development projects established in their own barangay or community” (BPMET Manual, 2017). It is noteworthy that membership to the BPMET does not require certain technical skills as long as they are willing and able to donate their time. However, there are technical skills and knowledge necessary to conduct monitoring and evaluation of development projects. The CHARM Project having involved the community volunteers in the project saw this need. Technical trainings, coachings and skills enhancement were provided to the BPMET members prior and during the implementation of sub-projects. These were not limited to the project’s technical knowledge but also included organizational management, conflict management, and effective communication. Coachings were done on-site with Project and LGU personnel.

Through these trainings, the volunteers are armed with necessary skills and knowledge for them to properly monitor. In the of Project Scale-Up barangays, BPMETs were provided cellular phones with load cards for documentation purposes and transmission of reports to implimenting units and to project management.

Support the capacitation trainings and on-site coaching and mentoring of BPMET members

In the Municipality of Sablan, Municipal Ordinance 19 – 02 Institutionalizing Barangay Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Team for the 8 barangays of sablan was signed to effectivity on June 24, 2019. This was made based on the Municipal Development Council Resolution 22-2018 recognizing the BPMETs of the 8 barangays of Sablan through their respective Barangay Administrative Orders.

Scope of monitoring shall include all foreign and nationally funded programs including development projects funded from Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) implimented in their respective barangay. An amount of Php 100,000.00 was allocated from their Municipal General fund to finance the capacity building, planning, and evaluation activities of the BPMETs. Prioritization to the inclusion to the PhilHealth sponsorship program is also being considered.

The Barangays having already created and recognized their BPMETs may also allocate funding for their teams from their IRA. Such would include funding for their skills trainings, group insurance and other expenses necessary for the existence of the teams.

Risk Management

Most of the BPMET members in CHARMP areas have recorded various experiences of antagonism and harrasment from project implementers during monitoring of subprojects especially infrastructure subprojects. These, aside from the environmental or natural risks and force majeure are the risks and threats faced by the BPMET members in their monitoring.

In order to mitigate and manage risks, the following steps are suggested: 1. Authorize and recognize BPMET through Barangay Ordinance; 2. Provide Identification Cards to the BPMET members; 3. Practice of Pre-Construction Conference; and 4. Provision of Basic Group Insurance Coverage. The first three suggested steps are already practiced within CHARMP covered areas. The pre-construction conference is a venue where all project stakeholders meet and project specifications are discussed and expectations are laid prior to the actual physical implementation of the project.

The provision of insurance and other honorarium would be a possible innovation and a risk mitigator. Group insurance policies which may provide for basic coverage for BPMET members may not reduce risks but mitigates the possible impact of any degree of loss to the BPMET members and their beneficiaries. Having a guarantee that any loss is covered or may be covered will encourage the members to do their work under any circumstances.

“*Nan mengawisan nan BPMET et nu umey kami ay menmonitor, kanan me isnan mangub-ubla ay gayyem, i-suggest mi man ay kagtona nan maaramid (The benefit of being a BPMET member is that when we go and monitor, we can say “friend, may we suggest if we could do it like this)...*”

- Felix Polon -BPMET member in Brgy. Balugan, Sagada, Mt. Province

CONCLUSION:

The increasing emergence and demand of Community Monitoring and Evaluation Systems/ efforts present tremendous opportunities but also underscores critical challenges and future priorities.

First, and probably the most important is the need to more consistently link community M&E efforts and results to policy planning and budget process. This then would require institutional incentives and enhanced monitoring methods.

Second, it will be important to build M&E capacities both for the BPMET and the users and producers of information (other stakeholders).

Third, to continue encouraging the growth of community participation and social accountability building on the existing core values of the indigenous peoples.

Finally, the prevailing political set up where public sector accountability and transparency in governance are lacking would remain a determinant to the success in the delivery of quality public service. Efforts to promote social involvement and social accountability by involving the community in the whole development process (planning – implementation – monitoring and evaluation) must be supported.

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