

**VIABILITY OF ORGANIZING A COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE TO CREATE
JOBS FOR SELECTED BENEFICIARIES OF ONE LA SALLE YOLANDA/HAIYAN
REHABILITATION AND RECOVERY PROJECT (OLSYRRP)**

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Abstract

Cooperative is a business form of organization usually formed by ordinary people to help themselves and solve basic economic and social problems. Cooperatives, as we know them today, originated during the 1800s when manual labor was replaced by machines resulting to higher levels of production. Workers decided that the only way out of their misery was to work together to create their own business. They pooled together the little money they had and started a store where they could buy basic necessities at lower price and better quality. The success of this first cooperative store was replicated by other occupational groups who formed their own cooperatives to supply their own needs. To succeed, the co-operative has to cater to the needs of all members (*economic purpose*); *it has to be capitalized by members themselves, who are expected to patronize their own business to make sure that it succeeds* (www.cda.gov.ph). The business of the co-operative is the means by which members satisfy their economic needs, but its ultimate purpose is to improve the lives of members and ultimately the community in which they live (*social purpose*) (www.cda.gov.ph). Considering the nature and characteristics of cooperative which make it distinct and different from other forms of business organization, this type of business organization is appropriate to ordinary people who don't have enough capital to put up their own business.

Keywords: Community Development, Cooperative, Employment Generation, Rehabilitation, Survivors of Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan)

1. Introduction

Within a few hours on Friday, 8 November 2013, the super typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) ripped through the Philippines, bringing death and destruction. It is now two years since Typhoon Haiyan made landfall on 8 November, devastating parts of the central Philippines and affecting 14 million people overall (Based on ILO Facts and Figures). A massive international mobilization and the resilience of the survivors helped restore livelihoods but millions still have needs requiring urgent attention.

After substantial relief operations for the survivors of Typhoon Haiyan in the Visayas, De La Salle Philippines (DLSP) is now implementing its **One La Salle Yolanda Rehabilitation and Recovery Project (OLSYRRP)**. The rehabilitation project now focuses on assisting three (3) public elementary schools and the residents of the barangays (village) where these elementary schools are located. OLSYRRP adopted a comprehensive community development approach and created various interventions that will contribute to rebuilding disaster resilient learning communities and provide quality education for the children. They were selected after a thorough community profiling, assessment, on-site visits and focused group discussions with the typhoon survivors, school teachers, school principals and local government officials. (OLSYRRP September 2014 progress report).

As recovery continues in areas hard hit by Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda), the OLSYRRP group headed by DLSP helped equip partners with knowledge on community-based enterprise development.

Latest initiative includes co-op entrepreneurship training which is a low-cost, easy to implement type of business organization that requires only a small amount of capital, uses hands-on, activity-based lessons while promoting dialogue and sense of ownership since membership in the co-op means being one of its owners.

As part of the DLSP's response to help Haiyan affected areas, a series of co-op trainings have already been conducted in Diit, Tacloban and San Miguel, Dulag, Leyte. The co-op trainings were held March 1 & 2, August 8 & 9, September 2 & 3, October 24 & 25 and Dec. 11 & 12, 2015 in partnership with the school officials in the area. A total of 120 displaced vendors, small-scale business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs joined the training from Diit and Dulag.

Follow-up meetings with interested participants were also held together with the cooperative development specialist assigned in the area and the representative of DLSP from Tacloban to discuss opportunities to organize selected beneficiaries into a cooperative. As of this date, the researcher is very proud to say that this research paved the way for the organization and formation of two cooperatives namely Diit Producers Cooperative (DPC) and Yolanda Survivors Community Producers Cooperative (YSCPC). At present, the group is preparing the documents to avail of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (DILEEP).

2. Research Problem

1. Determine the entrepreneurial skills and traits of selected beneficiaries of OLSYRRP measured in terms of their creativity, innovativeness, business know how, knowledge in sourcing capital, product making, managing employees, recording financial transactions and selling products and services.
2. Determine the willingness and readiness of selected beneficiaries of OLSYRRP to organize, join and manage the community cooperative.
3. Identify possible problems that should be addressed prior to the formation and organization of the cooperative.
4. Assess the viability of organizing community cooperative for the selected beneficiaries of OLSYRRP by identifying what is needed to implement the program, source of assistance needed, respondents' counterpart and needed assistance from OLSYRRP to assess the soundness of the business idea.
5. Determine how cooperative formation and organization at Dulag, Leyte and Diit, Tacloban, Leyte can help create jobs as part of the community development rebuilding strategy in the area after typhoon Haiyan.
7. Propose programs to develop the capability of the selected beneficiaries of OLSYRRP to organize a community cooperative including livelihood programs and other productive activities based on their preferred business ventures.

3. Literature review

There are so many blogs, articles, write-ups, case studies, researches conducted about the devastation brought about by typhoon Haiyan, including articles about what different government and non-government organizations, local and international are doing to help in the rehabilitation and recovery of its victims. However, there is no data regarding how co-operation can serve as part of the long term strategy in rebuilding the devastated communities as a result of typhoon Haiyan.

Cooperatives play a critical role in building community wealth for several key reasons:

- Because of co-ops distinguishing characteristics compared to other form of business organization, they can provide quality goods and services to areas that have been shunned by traditional businesses because they are deemed less profitable markets.
- They typically invest in local communities. For example, the case of Lamac Multi-Purpose Co-operative formerly located in a very remote area in Cebu with no electricity and passable roads. With the initiative of the co-op and the cooperation of its members, electricity was installed and passable roads were constructed. The co-op lies where the famous Hidden Valley Resort is located. Many rural cooperative utilities finance community infrastructure projects, make equity investments in local businesses and sponsor a range of community-focused events.
- Since most cooperative members are local residents, business profits remain and circulate within the community.
- Cooperative membership builds social networks and strengthens social cohesion, which are essential elements of strong, healthy communities, by connecting diverse community residents. (<http://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/coops/index.html>)

As pointed out by Belo (2005), for several years now, cooperatives have been an effective way for people to exert control over their economic livelihoods. They provide a unique tool for achieving one or more economic goals in an increasingly competitive global economy. As governments around the world cut services and withdraw from regulating markets, cooperatives are being considered useful mechanisms to manage risk for cooperative members through monthly contribution that is deducted from their income, own what might be difficult for individuals to own by their efforts, and strengthen the communities in which they operate through job generation.

Based on the ILO Report (1993) about the role of co-operatives in the promotion of employment and income in the rural and informal sectors during the meeting of experts on Co-operative in Geneva, experts agreed that “the co-operative sector can effectively augment public and private profit-oriented sector efforts to solve pervasive employment and income problems. “The report further noted that small-scale enterprises and co-operatives can adapt more readily to economic crises”.

Research studies, empirical evidence and published and unpublished examples from around the world support the conclusion that co-operatives have considerable employment-and-income generating potential. Here in the Philippines, there are a lot of successful millionaire and billionaire co-operatives that started from the grass roots <http://www.soemco.coop/history-of-philippine-cooperatives>.

A co-op is a business owned and controlled by the people using its services (client-owned co-ops) or working in it (worker-owned cooperatives) to mutually increase their income or enhance their standard of living. In addition to the direct benefits they provide to members, cooperatives strengthen the communities in which they operate. According to Somavia (2002), cooperatives

are specifically seen as significant tools for the creation of decent jobs and for the mobilization of resources for income generation.

People cooperate-work together- to achieve things they cannot achieve alone. This is very ideal for the victims of typhoon Haiyan. Cooperatives are viewed as important vehicle for community development because they can mobilize local resources into a critical mass and their structure allows them to be more community oriented (Fairbairn et al., 1991; Wilkinson & Quarter, 1996). The findings of the study conducted by Zeuli and Radel (2005) show that the co-op development process can be initiated by a group of people in a community who are interested in creating a co-op to meet a collective need or opportunity. Alternatively, the process can be initiated by an external party, such as a community development agent like the team from OLSYRRP who are interested in developing a cooperative to meet the needs of its identified beneficiaries for the project. From a local development perspective, a critical feature of the cooperative model is that it can be owned and controlled by community residents. Therefore, a cooperative is more likely to be interested in promoting community growth than an investor-owned firm controlled by non-local investors. Since community residents control the firm, they can ensure their own objectives are met and not those of people who live elsewhere. This makes it ideal for the survivors of typhoon Haiyan. Considering what they have experienced as a community, cooperative formation makes it ideal for them to work together as a community looking for means to rebuild and regain what they have lost in terms of livelihood.

The study conducted by Conover, Molina and Morris (1993) twenty two (22) years ago is also worth mentioning despite being conducted several years ago. This study is all about creating jobs through cooperative development. The result of the study shows that cooperative ventures in the service sector have been effective in improving employment opportunities. Authors found out that the major factors which contributed to success in achieving both business and co-operative goals were the presence of strong and committed management personnel and the establishment of cooperative policies to which all members are held accountable. Their findings also showed that co-operative formation has been successful in three major areas namely increasing members' incomes which has significantly improve the quality of life of members since some of the members have even doubled their earnings through the cooperative, increasing members' leadership skills within the cooperative, and giving members transferrable skills for personal development and growth since continuous training is provided not just for employees but for the cooperative members as well. The findings can also serve as a basis in encouraging the survivors of typhoon Haiyan to organize themselves into a cooperative.

In a study conducted by Babalola and Tihamiyu (2013), they enumerated ways on how cooperatives can create employment: it is a business enterprise that employs personnel such as manager, bookkeeper, cashier, sales personnel and even production workers depending on the nature of business and type of cooperative just like what the two community cooperatives are planning; a garment factory that can employ tailors, dressmakers, cutters, designers, helpers, drivers to name a few. Cooperatives employ salaried staff who may not necessarily be members of the cooperative like a consumer cooperative that employs storekeepers, inventory clerks, cashiers, helpers and the like. Additional employees are added when the cooperative diversifies into activities outside their core business like multi-purpose cooperatives. Below is the table representing the number of employment generated by cooperatives in the Philippines by region as of December 31, 2014.

Table 1: Employment Generated by Cooperatives by Region as of December 31, 2014

Regions	Total Reporting Coops	Total Number of Employees	Average Employee Per Coop
Region 1	795	4922	6
Region 2	326	3920	12
CAR*	509	2712	5
Region 3	1192	9445	8
NCR**	1287	131194	102
Region 4	1569	25064	16
Region 5	426	3750	9
Region 6	533	10378	19
Region 7	780	17858	23
Region 8	266	3290	12
Region 9	356	3302	9
Region 10	878	19820	23
Region 11	939	30812	33
Region 12	446	21358	48
CARAGA	446	2731	6
ARMM***	14	106	8
Grand Total	10762	290662	27

Legend: * Cordillera Administrative Region ** National Capitol Region *** Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
Source: cda.gov.ph

In a study conducted about the cooperative and non-cooperative strategies employed by fishermen (Basurto et al., 2013), participant observers and key informants spoke eloquently about the importance of collective action to sustain their livelihoods. All seven fishing cooperatives in the study area had developed a working relationship among their members before organizing as co-ops. In some instances, internal differences in the communities initially unified particular groups and then a tradition of working together developed. This study substantiates the importance of collective action among the residents of Diit and Dulag to organize themselves into a cooperative that can engage in livelihood program for the community.

It is also worth mentioning the comparative advantages of cooperatives in the field of employment creation and stabilization by Chavis et al. (1990). Cooperative organization can carry out joint purchasing and marketing operations and thus realize economies of scale; joint production facilitates division of labor and specialization and therefore enhances productivity; cooperative organizations also combines the offer and demand of its members and thus, increases their bargaining power. To add, because of risk sharing between members, cooperative societies are generally more stable than individual enterprises. The Diit and Dulag groups may have difficulty at present because of the devastation brought about by typhoon Haiyan, but when they pool their resources together, they can accomplish more. As the saying goes, there is strength in numbers which they can manage to do by forming and organizing a cooperative.

Literature review will not be complete if the “Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade” is not included. This is the paper that has been written under the guidance of the Planning Work Group of the International Co-operative Alliance by Mills and Davies (2015). In the summary of the blueprint strategy, the group emphasized why cooperatives are better, distinct and different from other business models. Cooperatives give individuals participation through ownership because as members, they are also the owners. This makes them more engaging, more productive and involved since, it is a business model that puts people at the heart of economic decision making. Those who started the concept of cooperatives over previous centuries could see that by getting people to work together, they could meet both their individual and collective

needs for access to goods and services and the jobs that they need. (ica.coop/en/blueprint-co-op-decade).

4. Methodology

The study began with the assessment of the selected beneficiaries of OLSYRRP, Bgy. 99 Diit, Tacloban City and Bgy San Miguel, Dulag, Leyte. In-depth assessment of the beneficiaries, including orientation and successive meetings with the group were conducted with the assistance of the management group of OLSYRRP.

The following section summarizes and describes the overall results of these efforts, including the economic viability and organizational structure of the planned community cooperative as well as the difficulty of attempting to organize victims of calamities into an organized group. The last section offers general conclusions and practical recommendations for those who are interested in assisting and organizing a community cooperative to help and assist the victims/survivors of calamities.

Barangay 99 (Diit) is one of the barangays of the Philippine highly urbanized Tacloban City located in the province of Leyte and found in the Eastern Visayas which is part of the Visayas group of islands.

Dulag is one of the barangays situated in the eastern coast of Leyte. It is a third class municipality in the province of Leyte in Eastern Visayas (Region VIII) in the Philippines (www.leyteportal.com).

News clippings, materials and data available at DLSP were reviewed to understand how co-ops can be used as a community development strategy and how to organize co-op business that can help the community to create jobs. Interviews, survey questionnaires, orientation and meetings with the respondents and concerned government and school officials were used to assess the readiness, qualifications and interest of the community to organize a community cooperative business. This study is in collaboration with DLSP that can provide the necessary follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the program.

The study used descriptive, exploratory and action research design. Descriptive because it described the skills and traits of the respondents, exploratory because it explored the possibility of organizing a community cooperative business as part of a long term strategy to help rebuild and restore the livelihood of the victims of typhoon Haiyan and action research design because the result of the study will serve as basis in the implementation of the recommendations made by the proponent.

For the statistical tool, frequency counts with their frequency percent were used to analyze the socio-economic and socio-demographic profile of the respondents, while weighted mean was computed to determine the reaction or opinion of the respondents regarding the possibility of organizing a community co-op in their place.

5. Data Analysis and Conclusion

Table 2: Identified Entrepreneurial Traits and Skills of Selected Beneficiaries of OLSYRRP at Diit Tacloban Leyte

Identified Entrepreneurial Traits and Skills	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Creativity	3.364	Large extent

2. Innovativeness	3.015	To some extent
3. Business Knowledge	3.652	Skilled
4. Industry and Passion for Business	4.059	Skilled/large extent
5. Persistence Despite Failure	3.955	Skilled/large extent
6. Strategist	3.926	Skilled/large extent
7. High Determination to Succeed	4.182	Skilled/large extent
8. Sourcing of Capital	3.636	Skilled
9. Product Making	3.530	Skilled
10. Managing Employees	3.215	Skilled
11. Recording Financial Transactions	3.700	Skilled
12. Selling Products and Services	3.828	Skilled
13. Self- Awareness	4.016	Skilled/large extent
14. Self-Motivation	3.463	Skilled/large extent

Table 3: Identified Entrepreneurial Traits and Skills of Selected Beneficiaries of OLSYRRP at Dulag Leyte

Identified Entrepreneurial

Traits and Skills	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
15. Creativity	3.086	To some extent
16. Innovativeness	2.982	To some extent
17. Business Knowledge	3.339	Skilled
18. Industry and Passion for Business	3.482	Skilled/large extent
19. Persistence Despite Failure	3.714	Skilled/large extent
20. Strategist	3.500	Skilled/large extent
21. High Determination to Succeed	3.679	Skilled/large extent
22. Sourcing of Capital	3.224	Skilled
23. Product Making	3.339	Skilled
24. Managing Employees	2.870	Has some skills
25. Recording Financial Transactions	2.251	Has some skills
26. Selling Products and Services	3.414	Skilled
27. Self- Awareness	3.690	Skilled/large extent
28. Self-Motivation	3.607	Skilled/large extent

For most of the factors, both groups of respondents' exhibit entrepreneurial skills and traits necessary to start the livelihood program.

Table 4: Willingness/Readiness of the Respondents from Diit

Entrepreneurial Willingness/Readiness	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
29. Willingness to be part of the program	4.284	To a great extent
30. Readiness to organize a community co-op	4.242	To a great extent
31. Willingness to give share capital	3.773	large extent
32. Interest to learn about livelihood project	4.609	To a great extent
33. Interest to earn from the project	4.597	To a great extent

Table 5 Willingness/Readiness of the Respondents from Dulag

Entrepreneurial Willingness/Readiness	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
34. Willingness to be part of the program	4.246	To a great extent
35. Readiness to organize a community co-op	4.175	To a great extent
36. Willingness to give share capital	3.797	large extent
37. Interest to learn about livelihood project	4.328	To a great extent

Majority of the respondents are interested to organize a community co-op for their group to become part of the livelihood program that can help them to earn from the project. During the series of meetings conducted, problems raised by the group were addressed by identifying possible solutions that can help the group to overcome these problems.

This places the Diit and Dulag group at the core of a development process with two goals, to improve the quality of life within their community and to increase their community's internal capacity that will create further change by institutionalizing their community development process through cooperative formation (Cristenson, 1989; Flora & Fey, 2004; Green & Haines, 2002; Littrall & Hobbs, 1989). Cooperatives have a comparative job creation advantage over other types of enterprises because they are labour intensive by nature, they are cost-effective because of member commitment and participation, they generate economies of scale and scope through horizontal and vertical integration, they establish links between the informal and the formal sectors, and they put economic and social development on a broader base. Relative to this is the signing into law of RA 9520 which encourages and support the creation and formation of cooperatives to help the poorest members of our society. The cooperatives in many instances mobilize the local economy by not only mobilizing savings from members, but also by investing in economic and business ventures that will go back to the members and the community alike. Cooperatives have made significant contributions in generating livelihood projects, and providing opportunities for employment (Co, 2012).

In a crisis situation like what happened in the Visayas region after typhoon Haiyan, the victims are often at a loss in terms of what they are supposed to do after the calamity. Hence, local community based-solutions are needed. Starting a cooperative will not be a panacea solving all the problems, but it can make a significant contribution in helping the survivors to escape from poverty and to find a job, while distributing resources on a fair base. The survivors can be organized as a community cooperative with the participation of survivors as members and decision-makers. The local government needs to be informed of the benefits of cooperatives in creating economies of scale, ownership and control among members. In many countries, cooperatives were considered primarily as tools to execute certain economic or political functions on behalf of the government which can greatly contribute to job creation and to the empowerment of the poorest. This opportunity must be seized as pointed out by Babalola and Tihamiyu (2013).

For other organizers/community builders who are really after helping survivors of calamities, one good option is cooperative formation. The researcher is not saying the two newly organized cooperatives are already successful since they have just finished the registration at CDA and is still in the process of getting the approval of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for their livelihood project, but the researcher can proudly say that these two cooperatives were the result of this investigation. This research made it possible for the members of these cooperatives to be together to look for solutions that can help them to rebuild what they have lost as a result of typhoon Haiyan,

Job creation is not automatic once the cooperative is already organized and registered at CDA. The people behind the cooperative should work hand in hand to ensure its continuous operation and success. This also includes ensuring that the prerequisites for job creation through cooperatives are also present as mentioned by Babalola et al.(2013).

It should be economically viable that is why one of the requirements in the registration of cooperatives is an economic survey just like a feasibility study. This is because the cooperative is a business enterprise that needs to generate surplus. They can play their social role only after generating surplus in their operation.

There must be commitment and participation of members. There must be common bond of interest which means that the basis in the organization and formation of the cooperative should be based on the felt need of members. Sense of ownership should propel the members to continuously patronize and support the cooperative knowing that they are not just the cooperative owners, but the end-users as well.

They should have access to capital and technical support services. Cooperatives are usually formed by ordinary people like farmers, fisher folks, ordinary workers, ambulant vendors, drivers who did not have the chance to get higher education. The continuous training program for all cooperative officers, employees and members make it ideal to encourage cooperative formation and organization. There are so many opportunities available, internal and external funding that can help organized group like cooperatives. It is just of matter of knowing what they are, how to avail, and the process involved to make it possible.

In terms of steps/procedures and persons responsible to facilitate cooperative formation, series of meetings with the prospective members is a must for them to understand and own what cooperative formation can do to help their group. The meetings should include discussion about the documentary requirements prior to cooperative registration. It is also important to consider the problems in the community where you are planning to organize a cooperative before thinking about its formation. This will be the basis in preparing the economic survey which is also a requirement in the registration.

There is a need to identify the members of the core group who will be at the forefront in preparing the required documents. The core group is also tasked to conduct a pre-membership seminar. In this seminar, they will share information about cooperative ideas and practices with their fellow barangay members. This is to encourage them to join the cooperative. The core group can ask a cooperativespecialist from the CDA to help conduct the seminar. After the seminar, there is a need to conduct the first general meeting where they can prepare the final list of members, agree on the type of cooperative that they will form, as well as the name of the cooperative, elect the members of the Board of Directors and members of the different committees. There is also a need to carefully choose the individuals who will manage the cooperative since it needs capable and competent persons to manage it. The officers and members of the different committees will plan, organize, direct, control and address problems of the cooperative. Without their leadership, there will be no “cooperation” and each member will go on his own way. The success of the cooperative depends on these individuals and their efficient job performance. Hence, they should not be just ordinary individuals. They should be individuals with honesty, integrity, competence and willingness to serve the cooperative.

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