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## REFORMATIVE ENHANCEMENT FOR HOLISTIC ADVANCEMENT OF BENEFICIARIES (PROJECT REHAB): READINESS, AVAILABILITY AND UPTAKE

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### Abstract

This research was undertaken in response to a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among stakeholders involved in Project REHAB (Reformative Enhancement for Holistic Advancement of Beneficiaries). The project was initiated by the Parole and Probation Administration Region VI (DOJ-PPA) as proponent and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) as provider of funds. The involvement of the Graduate School of PHINMA University of Iloilo centered on providing technical assistance in coming up with a research component of the project, particularly in relation to project evaluation.

The project beneficiaries were probationers, parolees, and conditional pardonees undergoing community-based rehabilitation under the supervision of field offices of DOJ-PPA Region VI, based in Iloilo City, Philippines.

**Keywords:** REHAB, DOLE & Philippines.

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### 1. Background of the Study

This evaluation research examined and evaluated the different aspects of Project REHAB in terms of readiness, availability and uptake. Specifically, the study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) to establish the readiness of both the implementers/supervisors and the beneficiaries in carrying out the project
- 2) to determine the availability and/or accessibility of the project deliverables as needed; and
- 3) to determine the project uptake based on the indicators of project sustainability and scalability as identified by the supervisors and the beneficiaries.

### Definition of Terms

Availability refers to the presence of project deliverables or resources such as pig pens and piglets for those embarking in hog raising, vending paraphernalia for those whose ventures are related to selling, farm lots for those engaging in gardening, and so on. Readiness as used in project management is determined by the project prerequisites called precursors and inputs. Precursors include the data systems in the environment such as legal, institutional, human, and technological, the leadership component, and the needs and demands for the project. Inputs include money, labor, technology, values and motivations, administrative support and targets (Heeks & Molla, 2009). Uptake refers to the extent to which the project deliverables are being used by the beneficiaries (Heeks & Molla, 2009). It is also concerned with the issue of project sustainability over time and the potential or actuality of scaling up or expansion of the project.

## **2. Review of Related Literature The Concept of Project Evaluation**

The key message in project evaluation is that success predominantly depends on how much effort one is willing and able to put into planning his or her project and its evaluation. Telling about project success without having conducted an evaluation makes the statement meaningless (SACHRU, 2007).

Evaluation generates accountability as it gives the project proponents some feedback on whether the project is achieving what it has set out to achieve. It enables the proponents to prove to their communities, funding bodies and other interest parties that they did what they said they were going to do.

Evaluation likewise generates improvement of prevailing situation. It helps us to learn what worked and what did not, how successes can be repeated and mistakes minimized, and how the project can be made sustainable.

Evaluation likewise promotes knowledge as it contributes to our body of evidence around what works.

On the other hand, the International Labor Organization (ILO TCM, n.d.,) adheres to internationally established good practices in evaluation which means that project managers and responsible officials should ensure that project evaluations are, and are seen to be, credible and independent, that they contribute to organizational learning and reinforce accountability and transparency. To ensure impartiality and credibility, independent evaluations are of particular concern to ILO. The ILO evaluation policy guarantees that independent evaluations are unbiased and of high quality.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This study is based on the theory-based impact evaluation (White, 2009). This theory calls for rigorous impact evaluation accompanied by the quest not just to find out what works but why. It maps out the causal chain from inputs to outcomes and impact and test the underlying assumptions.

The foregoing theory blends well with an expanded version of the systems theory as proposed by Heeks & Molla (2009). This theory begins with the so-called precursors, which refer to the prerequisites needed to establish the level of readiness among the implementers, the stakeholders and the beneficiaries in carrying out the proposed project.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The paradigm of the study is presented in Figure 1. The framework is composed of four major areas: 1) readiness; 2) availability; 3) uptake, and 4) impact. It may be mentioned, however, that project impact will be the focus of another study.

## **3. Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research adopted a participative approach to project evaluation (CIDT, n.d.) and a mixed-method design (Westat, 2002) using both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis and discussion.

### **Participants of the Study**

Forty-nine (49) officials and subordinate officers and 226 probationers, parolees and conditional pardonees from field offices of DOJ-PPA Region VI were the participants in the

study. All of these 49 officials and officers were the project implementers and supervisors while the 226 clients were the project beneficiaries.

### **Method of Gathering Data**

A focus group discussion (FGD) involving four members of the Project Management Team (PMT), five DOJ-PPA officers, two Volunteer Probation Assistants (VPAs), and four beneficiaries, was conducted by the researchers as a preliminary step in the research. A researcher-constructed questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions, was personally administered to the supervisors by two of the researchers. The same questionnaire was translated into Hiligaynon (the major language of Western Visayas) and used as an interview schedule for the beneficiaries.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The accomplished questionnaires were coded and arranged by two members of the Project Management Team based on the instructions of the researchers who analyzed and interpreted the data. Quantitative data were presented in frequency distribution while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analyses to obtain the prevailing themes. Follow-up interviews of some participants were conducted to triangulate the data obtained from the FGD and the accomplished questionnaires.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **Readiness of the Implementers and the Beneficiaries**

#### **In Carrying Out the Project**

Responses of the participants revealed that they were prepared to carry out the project. Their readiness was clearly established through the analysis of the precursors and inputs of the project. A very convincing set of responses was given by the participants in all issues related to project precursors such as the project relevance vis-à-vis institutional goals of DOJ-PPA; the readiness to go ahead with the project; the conduct of trainings and seminars; the relevance of the project to participants' specific needs; the level of confidence about project success; and, the prevalence of specific factors that would contribute to project success. Although there were some responses that were not aligned with the majority opinion, these responses were very minimal, ranging from zero percent to 10 percent, suggesting that the minority view was rather isolated or relatively insignificant.

In terms of project inputs, the same trend of responses was noted. These included the clarity of tasks and responsibilities, the degree of satisfaction of their roles and tasks, and, the effectiveness of project supervisors and their staff. Specially noted were the high ratings given by the participants to their supervisors in terms of effectiveness where the ratings ranged from "Very Good to "Excellent". The same level of ratings was accorded to the effectiveness of the staff.

Specifically, the findings reveal that all the 49 project implementers, from the project Management team down to the field officers who acted as supervisors of the Project, believed that Project REHAB was in line with the objectives and goals of DOJ-PPA; 48 (97.96%) viewed that the project was an answer to the institutional goals of DOJ-PPA. The lone dissenter to the issue might have misperceived the question "Is the Project answering the major institutional goals of DOJ-PPA?" The respondent answered "No" with the explanation that "... the project focuses on only one aspect of the human psyche... that the other aspects of individualized rehabilitation might have been overlooked as human behaviors are unique and each client has his/her own way of thinking..." The foregoing responses were parallel to the result of the focus group discussion where all officers said "Yes" when asked of the same question.

Regarding their preparedness to implement the project, 20 (40.82%) claimed that they were “very much prepared,” 26 (53.06%) felt they were “prepared,” while the remaining three (6.12%) claimed that they were “not prepared.” Their reason revolved on the claim that they had lots of tasks to do, that they lacked field officers to do the task or even just to help them, or that they had little expertise on the project. On the other hand, those who were “very much prepared” and “prepared” attributed their level of preparedness to their involvement since the project preparation, their attendance in meetings and workshops, and the fact that undertaking a project of these types was part of their job expectations.

Concerning trainings and seminars related to the project, 33 (67.35%) claimed they participated in said trainings; 15 (30.61%) answered “No”, and one answered “not applicable,” claiming that a training or seminar was not necessary. The variation in the responses was due to the fact that some subordinate officers did not attend any formal training on the project but they were just briefed by the chiefs/supervisors who attended the formal training.

On the question as to whether the project would answer their specific needs, 26 (53.06%) answered “very much,” 15 (30.61%) replied “much,” five (10.21%) answered “maybe,” and three (6.12%) answered “not at all.” Those who answered “very much” embraced the project as the answer to their need to provide livelihood projects for clients in order to elevate the latter’s socio-economic condition which was necessary to promote clients’ self-esteem, self-worth and self-reliance. Those who responded that the Project was not an answer to their needs, clarified that the Project was “not an urgent need but was an additional job without compensation.” Nonetheless, these respondents added that the Project “was worth the effort as it addresses client needs.”

As regards supervisors’ confidence level for Project success, 12 (24.49%) answered “very high, 35 (71.43%) answered “high,” and two (4.08%) answered “low.” The common themes in the responses of those who answered “very high” and “high” were commitment of the clients, close monitoring and supervision of the officers or supervisors, and constant motivation, education and dialogues among the stakeholders. On the other hand, the two respondents who answered “low,” attributed their confidence level to weather conditions and to their allegations that some clients need intensive or one-on-one explanation on how to proceed with their tasks.

On specific factors that would contribute to project success, the supervisors’ reply focused on regular Project Monitoring, the development of a stronger sense of commitment, and other positive values on the clients, and the proper records-keeping pertinent to the Project. On the other hand, 224 (99.12%) of the client beneficiaries believed that the Project was in line with the objectives and goals of DOJ-PPA. The themes that emerged from their responses included the realization that the project was designed to “help them become useful and productive,” “answer their need for livelihood to augment family income,” and “promote their sense of well-being and to avoid a life of crime again.”

On their level of preparedness to undertake the project, 148 (65.49%) claimed that they were “very much prepared,” 71 (31.42%) believed they were “prepared,” and two (.88%) did not have any answer. The themes that surfaced were those related to the “project being an area of their expertise or in which they had sufficient experience,” the project being “a responsibility for which they had prepared themselves,” and their “attendance in trainings and seminars.” The clients who said they were “not prepared” had different reasons. Two claimed they had no trainings, one claimed being sickly, another claimed being a neophyte in business, another said he/she haphazardly decided to go into fish ball business, only to realize that he/she had no refrigerator for the storage of the stocks.

On the aspect of training relative to the Project, 210 (93 %) alleged that they had trainings and seminars, while 16 (7%) claimed they had none. The prevailing themes that emerged along this area were the “write shops and tripartite seminars,” “seminars given by DOLE, Department of



Agriculture (DA), and by DOJ-PPA,” and “experience in jobs related to the Project.” Those claiming that they had no seminars explained that they were sick when the seminar was conducted.

On the issue of whether or not the project would answer their specific needs, 160 (71%) answered “very much,” 44 (19%) answered “much,” 18 (8%) answered “maybe”, while the remaining four (2%) had no answer. The dominant themes included “extra income or financial needs,” “family needs,” “educational needs of children,” and “need to change.” On the other hand, the minority attributed their doubts to “insufficient capital” and “long waiting time,” particularly with regard the hog-raising, cattle-raising or carabao-raising projects.

Regarding their level of confidence in the success of the project, 115 (51%) answered “very high,” 102 (45%) answered “high,” seven (3%) answered “low”, and two (1%) did not answer. The emerging themes for the “very high” and “high” levels of confidence were “good use of and focus on the project,” “prior experience related to the project,” “ability to manage the project,” “good customer demand,” “increasing number of customers,” “help of the family” and “supervisor’s supervision and assistance.” Those with low levels of confidence cited “insufficient capital,” “unfavorable weather conditions,” “illness in the family” and “unfavorable business competition.”

Regarding the presence of specific factors that could contribute to Project success, 219 (97%) answered “yes,” three (1%) answered “No,” and four (2%) had no answer. The prevalent themes that emerged were “hard work and determination,” “care for the project,” “help of family,” “good income from the project,” “big number of customers,” “prior experience related to the project,” “support of the office,” “additional capital,” “avoidance of vices,” and “good project location,” the last being cited especially by sari-sari store owners. Two of the three beneficiaries who answered “No” cited “absence of income to sustain the needs of the swine for feeds” as the budget for the feeds was not enough. The other said that the “piggery project was not gaining.”

### **Availability and/or Accessibility of Project Deliverables as Needed**

On the availability and accessibility of project deliverables, the responses of both groups of participants yielded a resounding “Yes” in favor of the availability of the Project materials. As to the extent of use of these deliverables, the responses ranged from partially used (14% and 5%, respectively) to fully used (84% and 94% respectively).

More detailed findings on the availability and/or accessibility of project deliverables as needed showed that on the issue regarding the existence and availability of the project materials like piglets, pig pens, vending paraphernalia, farm lots, etc., 48 (98%) of the supervisors said “Yes,” and one (2%) said “No.” The supervisors explained that they made it clear with the beneficiaries that they would have the needed materials and goods prior to the grant of the project. Further, they clarified that most of the clients had prepared their counterparts for the project before the livelihood funds and materials were released to them. Furthermore, they stated that before the avilment of the Project, monitoring was done to ensure that clients were ready for the project based on the established timelines.

The supervisor who replied “No” to the aforesaid issue explained that certain changes were made due to lack of feasibility study which resulted in the inavailability of some materials. As to extent of use of these deliverables, 41 (84%) stated that there were “fully used,” seven (14%) answered “partially used,” and one (2%) answered “not used.” Some deliverables were only “partially used” or “not used” at all due to non-availability of PhilGEPs’s (Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System) accreditation for certain suppliers, as well as to certain changes made due to lack of feasibility study.

On the other hand, 223 (99%) of the beneficiaries claimed that the project materials were existing and available while three (1%) did not give any answer. In this regard, the beneficiaries clarified that their projects had been functional; that their business had been ongoing; that out of their initial income from their projects, they had used part of this to expand the project or to branch out to other endeavors. For instance, from the proceeds of the sale of the hogs, some beneficiaries invested into fishing by buying a motorized banca. Some sari-sari store owners also expanded their business by investing in the pedicab business.

On the extent of use of these deliverables, 211 (94%), claimed that the materials were “fully used,” 11 (5%) claimed “partially used,” and three (1%) said “not used.” About ten beneficiaries who replied “fully used” further added that the materials were not even enough, especially the feeds for the hog-raising projects. One who answered “partially used” explained that he used part of the capital for oyster (talaba) business since he had not enough money to spend for the pig pen as counterpart. Another respondent claimed that his/her store was demolished, thus the items for sale were just placed on the floor of their house as he/she was still preparing to rebuild the store.

### **Project Uptake for Sustainability and Scalability as Identified by the Beneficiaries and Supervisors**

As to indicators of project sustainability and scalability, the responses of both groups were clear and convincing that there was a presence of several factors promoting project sustainability and possible scalability.

The project supervisors believed that the project would be sustained and possibly expanded based on a lot of factors. The thematic analyses of the supervisors’ responses resulted in three main themes, namely good project condition, positive situation of the beneficiaries and, favorable support of stakeholders. Good project condition included the sub-themes of demand and market. Demand specified the high demand for pork and chicken and the increasing demand for organic farm products. Market included the salability of the products, good market for the product, and the presence of restaurants and other eatery shops that served as ready markets.

A Positive situation of the beneficiaries included the sub-themes of management skills and attitudes and values. The beneficiaries were observed to apply basic accounting and bookkeeping skills in their business; they had savings and investments out of the profits from their ventures; expansion of existing projects; and good handling of income and expenses. Attitudes and values included sense of commitment, hardwork and determination and industry. Regarding favorable stakeholders’ support, this came from the supervisors and the partner agencies. Supervisors’ support included regular project monitoring, site or project visitation, and advice and reminders. Support from partner agencies included equity in distribution of deliverables, technical assistance, and sense of satisfaction on project growth.

The responses of the beneficiaries ran parallel to those of the supervisors. However, the beneficiaries took note of the physical structure of their projects wherein most of them considered it as contributory to their project’s good condition. In terms of attitudes and values, many of them emphasized utmost diligence and care of the project. Some mentioned prayers to the Almighty God and avoidance of vices as beneficial to their overall situation. Likewise, in terms of stakeholders’ support, the beneficiaries took note of their need for supplementary inputs and additional capital.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

The findings suggested that both the implementers and the beneficiaries were highly ready to carry out the projects that were given to them. Isolated cases of confusion and lack of direction were noted, but not sufficient enough to discredit the Project as a whole.

It was concluded that in terms of readiness, availability and uptake, Project REHAB passed the evaluation very satisfactorily. Thus, its continuation and leveling up was strongly recommended.

### **Recommendations**

The project management Team should look more closely into the isolated cases that deviated from the majority in order to foreclose similar incidents in the future. Considering the significant findings and conclusion of the study, it is highly recommended that the continuation of the project evaluation research be conducted to constitute its leveling up as the second and final phase of the project study to be undertaken immediately to determine Project Impact, consisting of outputs, outcomes and development impacts.

In a propitious time when this recommendation is put into action, the clients of DOJ PPA Region VI would be provided with the opportunity to examine and re-examine their capabilities in the management of resources that are basic in the promotion and enhancement of their well-being. The study will place them at the center of the development efforts and make them active participants in their journey to transform themselves and be truly liberated from a life of crime and successfully join the mainstream society.



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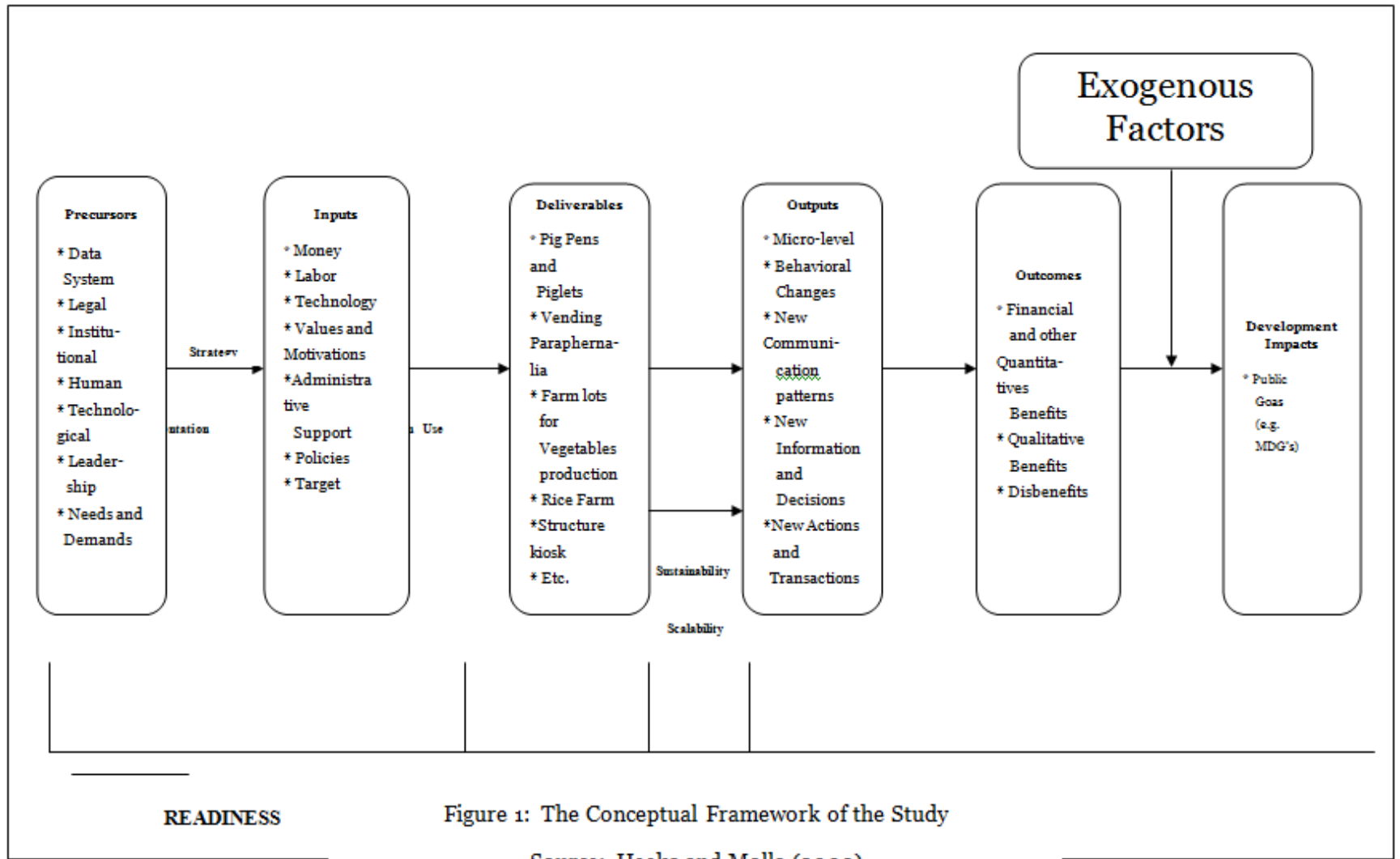


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Heeks and Molla (2009)