



Stronger Together

Finding hope in the midst of crisis

The MOVE UP Project



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Resilience Building in the New Normal

by Roger Cabiles, Head of Project and Consortium Manager

The Moving Urban Poor Communities toward Resilience (MOVEUP 4), in its 4th iteration, continuously aims to build on the important work of resilience building. At the middle of its implementation, the world changed as we know it as the pandemic ravaged the country and affected the lives and livelihoods of our people. This pushed us to ask, what is the relevance of MOVEUP in this time of pandemic? What is the importance of resilience-building in this new normal?

MOVEUP is a consortium of international humanitarian organizations Action Against Hunger Philippines, PLAN International, CARE Philippines and its local partner ACCORD, Inc. Funded by the European Union, the

project aims to contribute in building the resilience of urban poor populations to withstand and manage the impact of natural and man-made disasters by strengthening urban disaster preparedness, response and management capacity of the National, Sub-national and Local government units, and other stakeholders through the adaption and/or replication of tested Urban Resilience strategies. When we say our urban resilience strategies are tested, we mean it as, MOVEUP's Urban Resilience Framework and its interventions come from tried and tested implementation experience since 2016. Every iteration, we try to improve and enhance what we have been doing to better serve our communities. In MOVE UP 1 we piloted these strategies in Malabon, Quezon City and



Valenzuela. Coming from that experience, we expanded to include Navotas and Caloocan in 2017, to consolidate and refine these strategies. We proved the effectiveness of these and we realized that it can be scaled-up, so we did MOVE UP 3 to cover Metro Manila, Cebu, and Cotabato City in 2018. Now in MOVE UP 4, we focused on Mindanao to further expand beyond disasters to consider the conflict setting and also adapt our strategies to make it flexible in different cultural contexts. Moreover, we strengthened our national advocacy and partnered with DSWD through the Sustainable Livelihood Program and DILG's Local Government Academy.

The impetus for resilience-building is a no-brainer for a country like the Philippines. We are one of the countries most affected by the impacts of climate change. Located at the western side of the Pacific, we are at the Pacific Ring of Fire and is known to be an 'exporter of typhoons'. Socio-economic and political risks abound which led to

instability, armed conflict, and inequality. The National Government and local government units, albeit trying their best to respond to these issues, are overwhelmed with the enormous challenges. And then came the pandemic—years of economic growth and efforts in lifting people out of poverty are erased.

We are firm when we say that MOVEUP's resilience strategies work and are applicable in different contexts. But adapting to the novelty of the pandemic? How do we do that? Through grounded risk assessments and working together with our partner communities and government agencies, we have identified strategies and approaches to respond to the different effects of the pandemic. Originally meant for safe and secured shelters for families in evacuation centers during disasters, our Alternative Temporary Shelter Systems have been used as Community Quarantine Facilities helping LGUs better manage COVID transmission in their localities. Our Resilient Livelihood



strategies continuously help vulnerable and at-risk households access social and financial capital, through diversified livelihood activities, promotion of savings, and building linkages to government programs and services. This is more relevant now as MSMEs and the informal labor economy, sectors where majority of vulnerable people are involved, are greatly affected by the pandemic. The Consortium is also active in pushing for a better way of identifying vulnerable and at-risk population so that when there is a need to provide immediate support in response to disasters and pandemics, like the Social Amelioration Program, local government units will have a database of affected individuals and households based on an integrated and holistic vulnerability targeting system.

Integral to resilience-building is capacity development. Being at the forefront of responding to disasters, we help our partner local government units improve their systems, structures, and processes to make it more responsive and effective. We implement projects together and nourish our partnership to form new champions of resilience building inside the government. We influence national policies and programs based on our experience working with the local government units. With this approach, we ensure that the gains of MOVEUP in resilience-building will be localized, replicated and sustained in the long term.

At the heart of our work is building resilience in our communities. We put value in working with them as they are the ones experiencing all the effects of natural and human-induced disasters. With that, they are also the primary agents in responding and adapting to these shocks and stresses. We try to create an enabling environment by working with local government units, national government agencies and other organizations, so that people can thrive to reach their potential and their aspirations for their communities. We build their capacities so that they can

improve their social positions and engage with individuals and organizations that can support them.

At this crucial juncture, we should put more effort in resilience-building. This is a collective endeavor, and so we work closely with national government agencies, local government units and various institutions and agencies. Lastly, key to the effectiveness and relevance of MOVEUP's resilience strategies is a belief in our communities' collective struggle in building their resilience and thriving amidst all the challenges.

Beyond MOVEUP, we have our local government units and our communities in resilience building in the new normal.



Roger Cabiles and the MOVEUP Team in the signing of memorandum of agreement between MOVEUP4 Project and Cotabato Province

Ground Up Synergy

by Regina Caburnay, Thea Petricia Gonzaga, and Rian Tirol

In light of the pandemic, Filipinos have been braving through multiple upheavals and tragedies. One of many persevering is Ms. Alma Bayawan, dotingly called *Ate Alma*. As a local beneficiary of the MOVEUP Project 4 from Kidapawan, Mindanao, she mentions that even before the arrival of Action Against Hunger, agriculture has always been her source of livelihood, selling assorted vegetables. However, present-day circumstances have led to heightened difficulties given the nature of her livelihood in an area vulnerable to natural hazards, coupled with having to support her family, while living in caution with the virus as an imminent threat. With Action Against Hunger's assistance, Ate Alma was able to engage with the local government unit and even the Department of Agriculture (DOA) to further address communal concerns, despite initial financial apprehensions associated with seeking help. Through the initiatives of the organization, Ate Alma was able to continue her means of livelihood with their guidance, further enabling her to continue her education and send her kids to school.

Service is not only an amenity that is to be received, it is both the will and definite responsibility to give. Ms. Aimee Espinosa, the acting assistant of the City Social Welfare and Development Office in Kidapawan, holds such will—with efforts, in collaboration with other members of civil society, directed towards the promotion of social protection and community empowerment. *“Thank you sa Action Against Hunger dahil pinush nila na magkaroon ng social protection plan ang LGUs”*, she divulges, and continues to remark on the efficient collaborative processes vis-à-vis the NGO. Such expressed significance of contributions is founded on the community's encounter with adversity, with disarray possibly engendered by deep-rooted vulnerabilities—such as the city's susceptibility to natural hazards, the number of positive COVID cases in the community, and the contextual mobility restrictions that had severely affected employment within the LGUs. Those

of which highlight the fact that the assistance provided by Action Against Hunger is integral especially at the height of the pandemic, with positive impact manifested through current recovery and relocation efforts from a recent earthquake, housing units provided by the National Housing Authority (NHA), decrease of COVID cases with the support of the city government on food resources, and social protection plans among LGUs were forwarded like the organized Community Savings Groups (CSGs) which was reinforced by Action Against Hunger's developed Plans, Programs, and Activities.

With such, Action Against Hunger has not only established its presence as a constant assisting organization that enables communities to gain better access to services and resources, but it has also proved itself an entity that builds with and for the community - allowing the partners to gain ownership of the development in their locality. With the collaborative efforts of institutions and groups aiming to alleviate current conditions, the country manages to effectively mitigate both local and national matters on security, resilience, and development—ultimately aiming to achieve inclusive community resilience by employing a capabilities approach. This is manifested through strong social safeguard, initiatives, livelihoods, improving access to basic resources — aiding the disaster risk reduction endeavors of LGUs.

“Sana hindi lang hanggang December ang Action Against Hunger sa area”, mentions Espinosa, expressing gratitude for the organization's involvement in a dialogic and collaborative process with the Kidapawan community—emphasizing that aid transcends the mere need for survival, and touches into the collective pursuance of giving what people need to live a dignified life.



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It takes more than just the individual to imagine and realize a prosperous ideal for the collective.



Fortified Bridges

Paving the Way with Governmental Subdivisions

By Anne Barrientos, Jacqueline Lapira, and Jasmin Pandi

Another entity working diligently towards the objectives of alleviation and mitigation is the Local Government Academy (LGA). Responsible for monitoring and spearheading human resource development, as well as local government and department personnel training, the LGA aims to establish a standard for capacity development through valuing initiatives of integrity, commitment, and teamwork.

By providing quality and collaborative training, the LGA hopes to develop the competencies of local government personnel towards the attainment of performance excellence. And with its partnership with Action Against Hunger, specifically in working towards strengthening disaster resilience, the LGA is a primary stakeholder in studies and implementation processes for disaster preparedness skills for urban poor communities.

One of whom is Ms. Maine Galang, a current partnerships officer at the Local Government Academy, who aspires to protect the rights of the disadvantaged through her field. Working for the LGA, Galang shared working with LGUs, the Department of Interior Local Government (DILG), and service providers or local research institutions that deliver capacity programs to both LGUs and the DILG. Galang participates in this broad system of coordination through MOVEUP. To her, the institution has been highly engaging and supportive, so much so that collaboration and good working relationships are actualized.

With the pandemic, she was forced to follow a work-from-home set-up which allowed her to multitask on several endeavors needed for her work in LGA, granting an easier and more efficient flow and pace of operations.

On the downside, the existing conditions made it more difficult to reach LGA's shared objectives with its partners, such as physically attending to the needs of far-flung communities given a constraint in resources.

According to Galang, the LGA still has areas for improvement, particularly, the adaptation to the online setup or the digitalization of their procedures. After all, they used to conduct face-to-face trainings. Currently, they strive to make everything more accessible for their clients through developing an online system. Similarly, Ms. , who's currently working under the Local Governance Training and Development Division, pointed out that their modules are designed for onsite usage. However, they are now working on the digitalization of their modules, so they could be uploaded into a Learning Management System (LMS). Through this, they could cover a broader range of LGUs for their training programs and capture the self-paced learning. Unfortunately, a minimal amount of modules have been translated into the LMS since the transformation of the modules into ready documents can be a lengthy process.

But regardless of these challenges, Galang and Tabanera had articulated that MOVEUP continues to follow a system that's very engaging, organized, and responsive. Much of the program's efforts are collaborative and inclusive with its stakeholders—all the more proving its greatest strength of being efficient in communicating and transferring information with one another. Eventually with both LGA and MOVEUP coming together in a unified front, more partner communities are being educated and supported to improve disaster resilience.

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Behind good outputs is exemplary collaboration between groups of people who aspire for the same goal.

Leading Others to Saving

by Sophie Carsi-Cruz and Kirsten Ifurung

At 26 years old, Marie Joy Damali could have never imagined being the leader of her Community Savings Group (CSG). Hailing from Kidapawan City, Mindanao, one of Marie Joy's greatest struggles was saving money without knowing how to sustain and manage funds. The initiative of a CSG was an entirely new concept to her. Though she mentioned having known the MOVEUP Project through their relief efforts after a series of high-impact earthquakes devastated her area last October 2019, she does not deny being initially sceptical of the initiative.

A CSG was introduced to their community during the height of the pandemic while they were experiencing financial insecurity. It was through the referral of a friend that Marie Joy decided to attend an orientation hosted by Action Against Hunger regarding the community savings groups, with a focus centered on saving efficiently. She officially joined her area's CSG last May 2021. By joining, she was introduced to various opportunities to grow her assets. *"Natuto akong maging matipid, lalo na sa pandemiya,"* mentioned Marie Joy when asked about the impact of joining MOVEUP and CSG. She learned how to properly save, and as she saw herself improving, this fuelled her to work even harder.

Now, Marie Joy is the leader of their CSG in Ilomavis, Kidapawan, handling a total of 32 members. According to her, their group has grown to be tight-knit, working to provide comfort and stability for their community. Members put in a collective effort to provide weekly savings as well as the upkeep of a social fund being monitored by a savings

report. In the event a member is in need of funds due to an emergency, the bulk that is saved by the entire group for that week goes to that member. As the leader of her CSG, Marie Joy maintains communication and good fellowship among her members. She also seeks to create bigger opportunities for them. She hopes by showing people that their CSG members produce results and are successful in saving, that she motivates others to join the initiative as well.

More than the CSG, Action Against Hunger also provided them support with regards to livelihood programs. Marie Joy recalls seminars that taught them to come up with business ideas, and resilient forms of livelihood. *"Isa sa pinakamahalagang natutunan ko ay ang paggawa ng negosyo na maging matagumpay."* In developing the business idea of their group, the members thought of what was most needed in their community, and eventually, they settled on rice. *"Wala kasing pagkukulang sa*

pangangailangan ng bigas." claimed Marie Joy. They put their "Bigasan" business in action in September 2021 and they haven't stopped since; distributing and collecting sacks of rice for the local community every 15 days. Through these different means and practices they've implemented, they were able to save P53,000 during the month of September 2021.

Marie Joy keeps her head high in these difficult times as she continues to lead her CSG members and motivate others. The MOVEUP Project for her has been a major factor in fostering resilience and hope in her community. *"Tinulungan kaming bumangon at mabuhay ulit ng normal kahit na sa mga nangyayari sa paligid."*

Marie Joy dreams that Action Against Hunger and MOVEUP can continue to extend their reach to others and through their projects, transform their lives just as they did hers.



Save Money to Save Lives

by Alen Gonzales and Nina San Andres

How far can your 20 pesos go? For Gemma Andot and her community savings group, 20 pesos goes a long way.

In the city of Kidapawan, North Cotabato, Gemma Andot leads the Community Savings Group (CSG) in Barangay Ilomavis. The group, aptly named Pine Tree for the abundance of pine trees in the area, is a 32-member community that was established in December 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. *“Sobrang laking tulong ng CSG sa buhay namin,”* remarked Gemma.

Before Action Against Hunger introduced community savings groups to Barangay Ilomavis, members of the community had to rely on loans or *utang* as saving money was a foreign concept to them.

When Action Against Hunger first approached the citizens of Barangay Ilomavis, people were hesitant to take part in the initiative, including Gemma. Things took a turn when strong earthquakes and massive landslides struck North Cotabato in October 2019, the community decided to take a chance on a community savings group.

“Noong una nga, akala namin scam,” recalled Gemma. One year later, the CSG has saved more than 100,000 PHP from member contributions, savings, and social fund earnings among many others, which they use in times of emergencies and crisis situations, or even just to solve

minor problems in the household. Just a few months back, Pine Tree utilized the funds to buy vitamins and alcohol for the members to help counter the surge in COVID-19 cases in the community. *“Anytime na kailangan namin ng pera, andyan na yung kakailanganin mo.”* Gemma adds. Before, members of the community would have to go to other barangays to look for anyone to loan from. Today, almost everyone in their community from all ages is part of the CSG.

How the CSG works is that every week, each person contributes 20 PHP to the group’s social fund. Apart from this, there are also penalties for members of the group for certain actions such as not wearing a mask, wherein they would have to add 5 PHP to the fund. If a member of the group needs money, they can borrow from the social fund but only double the total amount they have contributed. This loan should then be paid within three months for no interest. If exceeded, then a 10% interest will be added for every succeeding month. The group also convenes every Friday to discuss their finances and make any announcements for the members.

As they move forward, Pine Tree hopes to increase their savings for the next cycle, while also encouraging more people to take part in community savings groups.



*“Sobrang laking tulong ng CSG sa buhay namin”
-Gemma Andot*

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COMMUNITIES
TOWARDS RESILIENCE



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