
An evaluation of the capacity-building program for community cooperatives in San Isidro, Isabela, under the SURE DA2E Extension Initiative

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Abstract

In agriculturally reliant areas, community cooperatives are crucial to rural development and the creation of inclusive, sustainable economic growth. Therefore, as part of the SURE DA2E (Sustainable and Resilient Development in Agriculture through Expansion and Enhancement) extension program, Isabela State University (ISU) established a capacity-building program for community cooperatives through its College of Business, Accountancy, and Public Administration (CBAPA). ISU and the Local Government of San Isidro, Isabela, collaborated on this program on August 19, 2025, to improve community cooperative governance, foster entrepreneurial and financial literacy, and support sustainable livelihood practices. This article highlights ISU's CBAPA's dedication to enabling communities to promote sustainable development through knowledge transfer, multi-sectoral collaboration, and the construction of resilient, community-based economic systems. It also describes the program's objectives, implementation, key activities, participants, and results.

Keywords: *Extension Services, Sustainable Livelihood, Community Development, Community Cooperatives, and Capacity Building*

Introduction

A commonly recognized strategy for empowering communities and enhancing the efficacy of grassroots groups (cooperatives, farmers' associations, and barangay-based companies) is capacity building. Cooperatives are essential to financial inclusion, livelihood diversification, and participatory governance in the Philippines, especially in rural and agricultural regions (International Labour Organization, 2022).

Isabela State University (ISU) continues to fulfill its threefold purpose of instruction, research, and outreach as a leader in the region's public higher education. Through its extension initiatives, ISU provides the community with responsive, inclusive, and sustainability-focused solutions to bridge the gap between academic expertise and community needs. By creating and improving agricultural development strategies through community development assistance, the SURE DA2E project, one program run by the College of Business, Accountancy, and Public Administration (CBAPA), enhances agricultural communities.

An accomplishment report on the Capacity-Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives, which was carried out in collaboration with the San Isidro Local Government Unit (LGU), Isabela, under the ISU-CBAPA Extension Program Partnership, is provided below. This program created cooperative ties with ISU, the local government, and community organizations while highlighting challenges related to sustainable livelihood development, cooperative governance, and financial management.

Program Objectives and Goals

The goal of the Capacity-Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives is to help San Isidro cooperatives and community organizations meet their cooperative development needs. It also aims to increase the capacity of cooperatives by improving their governance, financial management, and the sustainability of livelihood. Poor financial literacy, obstacles to policy compliance, a lack of governance structures, and the lack of sustainable livelihoods are among the challenges that many local community organizations and cooperatives face in building their capacity to contribute to regional economic development (FAO, 2023).

Among the many particular goals of the Capacity-Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives were: (1) to increase participants' understanding of cooperative policies and good governance; (2) to increase participants' financial literacy so they can understand and handle their cooperative financial accounts; (3) to offer chances for sustainable, creative, and contextual livelihoods; (4) to improve cooperative relationships between community-based organizations, LGUs, and ISU; (5) to encourage sustainability, accountability, and resilience in collaborative operations.

The Program's Execution and the Activities That Took Place: Organizational Structure and Leadership

Under the direction of Program Director Prof. Ma. Rita A., the BSBA Program of CBAPA carried out the Capacity-Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives. The College of Business, Accountancy, and Public Administration (CBAPA) of Isabela State University (ISU) hosted a training session for a chosen group of Local Government Units (LGUs) along the Quirino Highway on April 23–24, 2012. The following people planned the event: Ms. Jennifer M. Villanueva, MBA, Project Leader; Dr. Dahlee S. Pascua, Program Chair of the BSBA; and Mr. Ronald V. Reario, DPA, Dean of CBAPA. Accountable Extensionists and faculty members with expertise in their respective fields—such as business management, accounting, cooperative governance, and sustainable livelihood development—participated in the training to enhance it.

The training was hosted by the LGU San Isidro and was held at the CBAPA Multi-Purpose Hall. At 8:00 AM, participants registered, signaling the start of a training day that combined the two facets of learning by emphasizing practical application and providing theoretical information.

Ceremonial Services and Partnership Binding

Ms. Meryl Pearl L. Facun, MSHM, led the invocation to start the program. After the invocation, Ms. Jennifer M. Villanueva, MBA, gave a brief overview of the conference and what to expect. Important academic and extension leaders who delivered motivational speeches discussed the benefits of education and teamwork in empowering communities.

The formal signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoA) between ISU-CBAPA and the LGU of San Isidro was one of the morning session's main attractions. Mr. Christopher O. Sajonia, OIC Municipal Agricultural Officer, signed the Memorandum of Agreement on behalf of the LGU and reaffirmed the LGU's dedication to continued cooperative efforts to advance farmers, cooperatives, and barangay groups. The Memorandum of Agreement delineates the mutual obligations of both sides and upholds sustained cooperative endeavors to furnish

community members with livelihood and extension initiatives. Participation in Trainings and Education Provided by the ISU/CBAPA SURE DA2E Program

Cooperative development and community development were the main objectives of the Capacity Building Program, Training Sessions, and Workshops. Cooperative policy and good governance (training presentation for the capacity building program). Dr. Gilbert M. Eustaquio of the ISUMPC Board of Directors will be leading a training session on "Good Governance and Cooperative Policy: Ensuring Sustainable Growth". The seminar covered the value of sound governance and its potential impact on the long-term viability of a cooperative. To foster confidence between members and their cooperatives, the training sessions also addressed problems of accountability, transparency, member engagement, and adherence to cooperative law.

Financial Literacy and Cooperative Accounting (Training Presentation for the Capacity Building Program). The program chair for accountability, Mr. Fler L. Madayag, CPA, gave a talk titled "***Understanding Financial Statements: A Guide for Cooperative Members.***" This training session's goal was to help cooperative members learn how to use fundamental financial statements to make informed decisions by demystifying them. Cooperative members learned to read cash flow, balance sheet, and income statements as a result of this training session. Participants felt more confident in their ability to manage their cooperatives' financial operations.

Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Development (Capacity Building Program Training Presentations). To support national goals for the diversification of livelihoods and the development of value-added agricultural output, two training sessions were held to discuss the development of barangay catering operations and oyster mushroom cultivation (Department of Agriculture, Philippines 2024). During these two training sessions, participants learned how to cost and process products, find prospective customers for their products, and begin a small business.

The afternoon plenary sessions gave participants the chance to work together to reflect, summarize, and create action plans to put the training they received at the Capacity Building Program into practice. They also had the chance to share their experiences, difficulties they encountered, and tactics they used to apply what they learned in their individual organizations.

Beneficiaries and Community Involvement

The Capacity Building Program drew participants from a wide range of backgrounds and viewpoints, with representatives from various organizations invited, including Barangay Treasurers, Farmers Associations, Seniors Associations, Cooperatives, and other LGU and Special Interest Associations. Organizations represented at the Capacity Building Program included the following: San Isidro Senior Citizen Association, Dur-As Farmers Association, 5S Mushroomery Association, Kapayacan Ramos West Farmers Association, New Generation.

The participants' variety produced a more inclusive framework and a deeper capacity building program. The community's desire for a capacity-building program grounded in local realities and valuable to their own communities is evident in participants' active engagement.

Participant Input, Effect, and Result

The ISU-CBAPA SURE DA2E Initiative's Capacity Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives had a very favorable impact on participants' knowledge acquisition, skill development, and relationship-building. The participant testimonials revealed a revitalized interest in creating sustainable livelihoods, improved understanding of their governance role as a cooperative, and increased confidence in managing the cooperative's finances.

Furthermore, ISU, LGUs, and community organizations have established formal institutional partnerships through the Capacity Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives. These partnerships serve as the basis for the ongoing, sustainable implementation of capacity-building programs in the community (UNDP 2021).

The Capacity Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives needs ongoing monitoring, follow-up, and increased collaboration to ensure its benefits are sustained. Additionally, as exemplified by #iSustain, #JUANISU, and #CBAPANangunguna, the initiative's success shows ISU's dedication to Sustainability, Innovation, and Service.

CONCLUSION

The ISU-CBAPA SURE DA2E Extension Initiative's Capacity-Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives serves as an example of how important higher education institutions are to the advancement of sustainable community development. The program effectively addressed significant gaps in cooperative governance, financial literacy, and livelihood sustainability among community-based groups in San Isidro, Isabela, through a carefully planned sequence of trainings, workshops, and collaborative engagements.

Cooperatives, farmers' associations, barangay authorities, and special interest groups all actively participate in the program, demonstrating its relevance and responsiveness to local development requirements. Participants were better able to comprehend cooperative policies, make sound financial decisions, and investigate feasible livelihood options that aligned with regional resources and national development aspirations, thanks to the integration of academic knowledge with real-world applications. Additionally, the formalization of the Memorandum of Agreement improved institutional ties among ISU, local government units, and community organizations, creating a solid basis for sustained cooperation.

All things considered, by strengthening grassroots organizations' ability to function openly, sustainably, and resiliently, the initiative helped to empower them. By converting scholarly knowledge into significant community impact in line with the university's mission of sustainability, innovation, and service, it further strengthened ISU-CBAPA's dedication to its extension mandate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are put forth in light of the results and knowledge acquired from the execution of the Capacity-Building Program for Community-Based Cooperatives:

1. Maintain and Extend Interventions for Capacity Building

To ensure greater reach and impact, ISU-CBAPA should carry on and extend comparable capacity-building initiatives to other municipalities and cooperatives in the province. It is possible to institutionalize periodic training cycles to meet changing community demands.

2. Behavior Monitoring and Assessment of Follow-Up

It is advised to conduct routine monitoring and post-training assessments to gauge how well learnt concepts are being applied in livelihood initiatives and cooperative activities. This will direct future program enhancements and aid in determining long-term efficacy.

3. Boost Mentoring and Technical Support

Establishing a coaching or mentorship system for cooperatives, especially in financial management and governance, can strengthen learning and help organizations implement new livelihood initiatives and reforms.

4. Strengthen Collaborations Across Sectors

To provide more resources, market connections, and technological know-how for cooperative and livelihood development, greater cooperation among national government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the business sector is encouraged.

5. Combine Innovation-Based and Digital Methods

To improve cooperative efficiency and competitiveness in a rapidly changing economic landscape, future initiatives might integrate digital tools for marketing, record-keeping, and financial management.

6. Record and Disseminate Best Practices

It is essential to record and share the successful tactics and experiences of participating cooperatives as best practices to motivate other communities and provide resources for extension initiatives.

Implementing these recommendations, ISU–CBAPA may continue to empower community-based cooperatives as important forces behind inclusive and resilient local development, strengthen its extension initiatives, and ensure the sustainability of program benefits.

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