

THE METRO NAGA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL:
Strategizing Regional Development through Local Participation and Urban-Rural
Linkages: A Philippine Best Practice

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I. BACKGROUND

A. The Philippine Government System

The Philippines is a democratic state under a unitary system of government. It is an archipelago of over 7,000 islands and islets with an area of approximately 300, 000 square kilometers and a population of 84 million in 2004. According to the Philippine National Statistics Office (NSO), the country has a literacy rate of 92.3%. It has gross domestic product (GDP) of \$ 18.82 million and \$20.214 million gross national product (GNP). Poverty situation though is estimated to be at 40 %.

The Philippines is an agricultural country, thus majority of its population depend on agriculture as their source of income. This explains why most of the country's land area is devoted to agriculture. Ironically, more than half of the population resides in urban areas, thus leaving the challenge of agriculture to few farmers and agriculturists. Moreover, with the rapid changes posed by decentralization and globalization, most agricultural lands are converted to eco-zones and industrial parks to get by with industrialization. The country is also investing on information technology to be more globally competitive and increase investments from foreign countries.

The country follows a presidential form of government. It has three (3) branches: the Executive, Legislative and Judicial. The legislative branch is constitutionally empowered to propose legislation, enact laws and determine rules and procedures. However, the power of the execution of the laws lies in the hands of the President who is also the Chief Executive of the state that basically administers the affairs of the government. On the other hand, the judicial branch refers to the authority to interpret the laws of its constructions. It is exercised by the Supremen Court headed by a Chief Justice and composed of 14 Associate Justices.

Apart from the President, the Executive Branch is also composed of Cabinet members that are appointed by the President to spearhead departments of the government. They are called secretaries and are responsible for the localization of national projects and devolution of functions to the local government units.

To date, the local governments are composed of 81 provinces, 118 cities, 1510 municipalities and 42, 000 barangays (village governments). All consists of respective local officials. A governor heads provinces; a mayor heads a city or municipality; and a punong barangay (village chief) heads the barangay. All have gained consensus votes from the voting public of the country.

B. The Bicol Region, The Challenge of Urbanization & Birth of Metro Naga

The Bicol Region is a peninsula at the southeastern end of Luzon, the islands of Catanduanes and Masbate and several small outlying islands. It has a total land area of 17, 632.5 square kilometers and includes six provinces, which includes Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon. It has three cities: Iriga, Legaspi and Naga City. Bicol region has a total population of 4, 629, 000 (2000 Census) where mostly live in a rural setting. More than 50% of the region's land are devoted to agriculture, 30% are forestland while the rest are for residential, commercial and industrial purposes.

Like other local governments in the country, Bicol's LGUs are confronted with the problem of urbanization, which is considered as one of the primary challenges of the Philippine government today. Recent studies shows that out of the 84 million total population of the country, 54% of which resides in urban areas and these numbers are estimated to double by year 2025. Therefore, the problem of urbanization is haunting LGUs and pushing them to be more prepared and innovative in addressing this transformation.

Because urbanization is closely linked to development and vice versa, local governments tend to invest on transforming their areas into a more urbanized and industrialized communities. Though, urbanization maybe a beacon for opportunities and development, it still underlies numerous challenges and dilemmas that governance is trying to address. Such dilemmas include poverty, overpopulation, underemployment, prostitution, and other social problems, disorderliness and environmental degradation. These should not be ignored; local governments should be equipped with knowledge, sustainable mechanisms and adequate resources to carry out such challenges. Appropriate initiatives are necessary to ensure that the local governments are doing and investing on the right thing.

However, with the enactment of the Philippine Local Government Code of 1991, LGUs were given autonomy and power to choose and design strategies to develop their respective communities.

Taking on the challenge of urbanization and grasping the opportunities given by the LGC of 1991, the Metro Naga Development Council (MNDC) headed by local officials of 15 local government units of the Province of Camarines Sur, was created.

Metro Naga was a form of amalgamation of Naga City and nearby municipalities in the said province by linking the rural municipalities to Naga City. It was primarily triggered by a common desire of the mayors of Naga City's neighboring towns to have their people enjoy the privileges the people in Naga City are enjoying. Common service delivery and balanced economic growth are some of their common visions that united them that led to the birth of the Metro Naga Development Council (MNDC).

Ten (10) years after its creation, the MNDC has so far succeeded in activating linkages among its members and instituting development mechanisms that provided positive contribution to the service delivery capability and socio-economic conditions of its member-LGUs. Since then, the Province of Camarines Sur and the life of the people has never been the same again.

II. THE METRO NAGA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

A. LOCAL AND PHYSICAL FEATURES

The Metro Naga Development Council (MNDC) is a partnership of 15 local government units (LGUs) of the Province of Camarines Sur. It consists of a city and 14 municipalities. The MNDC member LGUs are Naga City, Bombon, Bula, Calabanga, Camaligan, Canaman, Gainza, Magarao, Milaor, Minalabac, Ocampo, Pamplona, Pasacao, Pili and San Fernando. Camarines Sur is an eight-hour bus ride or 420 kilometers (kms.) south of Metro Manila. It has the biggest of land area among the six (6) provinces of the Bicol Region. The map in Figure 1 shows the location of the province.

With a land area of 122,098 hectares (has.), the MNDC covers almost one-fourth (1/4) of the province. Land use remains to be primarily agricultural. Its total population was 614,929 (2000) with an average growth rate of 1.88%. Naga City and Gainza had the biggest and smallest populations, respectively. Of the total population, 61.17% were located in rural areas and 38.83% in urban areas. Both populations are expected to increase by 21% in the year 2010.

The Municipality of Gainza has the largest land area while the Municipality of Calabanga has the smallest. By income, Naga City is the richest LGU among the 15. It is a first

class city, hence has an average yearly income of PhP205 million or more (US\$3.7 million; US\$1 = PhP56). The Municipality of Gainza has the smallest income, being classified as a sixth class municipality, with an average yearly income of less than PhP7 million (US\$125,000). Seven (7) of the municipalities are categorized as fifth class municipalities, with an average annual income of between PhP7 million (US\$125,000) and PhP13 million (US\$232,143). Pili has the highest income among the municipalities, with an average annual income of between PhP27 million (US\$482,143) and PhP35 million (US\$625,000).

MNDC has 317 barangays out of the 1003 barangays of Camarines Sur. The barangay is the smallest political unit of the Philippines.

Based on the 2000 census, the total population of Metro Naga is 614,929. Naga City has the biggest population accounting for 22.41% of the population while the municipality of Gainza had the smallest with only 1.37% of the whole Metro Naga population.

Of the total Metro Naga population, 38.83% or 238,790 lived in urban areas while 61.17% or 376,139 lived in rural areas. All of the 137,810 people of Naga City lived in urban barangays. Magarao and Canaman had the second and third largest urban populations. Calabanga, with the second highest population in Metro Naga, only had 12.48% of its population living in urban areas, ranking it third to the lowest among all 15 LGUs.

B. FORMATION OF THE MNDC

The oil crisis brought by the Gulf War in 1991 led to the initial meeting of the local chief executives (LCEs) of the Metro Naga LGUs for a consolidated plan to resolve the fuel-rationing problem. The positive result of this initial cooperation eventually led to the formation of the Metro Naga Senior Citizen's League to allow the equal availment of the rights and privileges of the LGUs' senior citizens; and the Metro Naga Equipment Pool, in response to the need of the municipalities for equipment and machineries to use for the infrastructure development.

On April 23, 1993, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) formally creating the Metro Naga Development Council was signed by the 13 LGUs – Naga, Bombon, Calabanga, Camaligan, Canaman, Gainza, Magarao, Milaor, Minalabac, Pamplona, Pasacao, Pili and San Fernando, with Mayor Jesse Robredo of Naga as its Chairman. The Council's establishment was further bolstered by the Executive Order (EO) No. 102 issued on June 18, 1993 providing for its powers and functions, and an initial budget for its operating expenses. It was only in July 1997 that the municipalities of Bula and Ocampo joined the MNDC through a MOA with the then existing members of the Council.

The LCEs of the 15 member-LGUs comprise the Council's Executive Committee. In charge of the administrative operations of the Council is its Project Development Unit (PDU) headed by the MNDC Executive Director. The unit is likewise primarily responsible for the implementation of the Council's programs, projects and activities (PPAs).

C. PROCESSES IN THE MNDC

1. PLANNING. For the preparation of plans for its programs, projects and activities, the MNDC, conducts **strategic planning sessions** every three (3) years primarily because the term of office of local elective officials is only three years. During these planning sessions, newly-elected officials are briefed on the objectives and goals of the MNDC.

Involved in the conduct of these strategic planning sessions are the LCEs of the member-LGUs, the Congressman of Camarines Sur, sectoral representatives, the municipal planning and development officers (MPDOs) of all the member-municipalities, and other key stakeholders of the MNDC.

It is during these strategic planning sessions when the priorities of the MNDC for the next years are determined. To arrive at the specific priorities of Council, identification of all the common problems of the member LGUs is done. The LCE and other representatives of each LGU are given the opportunity to raise their problems and concerns. Afterwards, common problems are identified by all participants of the planning session. From these, the members of the Council arrive at a consensus on what common problems would be given priority in the PPAs of the Council for the succeeding years.

After arriving at a consensus on which areas of concern the Council would focus on, specific PPAs are then identified. These PPAs are classified as **Short-term** and **Long-term/development PPAs**.

Short term PPAs are purposely for the LCEs to be able to show their constituents immediate and more "visible" PPAs implemented during their term of office. These short-term PPAs also serve as a means for the MNDC to sustain the LCEs' cooperation, because without these, LCEs may lose interest in their involvement in the Council for lack of support in their individual endeavors. The short-term PPAs of the MNDC includes: **MN Emergency Rescue Service:** installation of radio equipment, training of ambulance crew; inter-LGU posting of units; **MN Water Supply Enhancement Project:** provision of Level I water systems, expansion of Level III service; **MN Medical, Surgical and Dental Missions:** augmenting rural health services and supplies; **MN Public Employment Services Office:** posting of jobs, conducts of job fairs and **MN Livelihood Program:** equalize access to credit by rural and urban entrepreneurs.

Long-term PPAs on the other hand are those that are more long-term and developmental in nature. However, so far, the MNDC has not been able to implement long-term PPAs primarily because of financial constraints. It was only recently that it has started to give attention to two of its priority developmental projects. One of these is the Solid Waste Management Program, which is targeted to be implemented within the succeeding months to catch-up with the Solid Waste Management Act that provided a deadline for each LGU to have its own solid waste disposal facility by the year 2005. Another long-term project that the MNDC is now focusing on is the Integrated Metro Naga Investment Promotion Project (IMNIPP), which targets to boost investments in the Council's member LGUs. Feasibility studies funded by international institutions have been done on the said programs and have since been submitted to the regional development council for approval. Long-term PPAs of the MNDC includes: **MN Solid Waste Management Project:** establish solid waste mgt facility that would serve all 15 LGUs; and **Integrated MN Investment Promotion Program:** attract investors to MN and presentation of investment opportunities in MN

After the preparation of the proposals, the TWG presents these to concerned NGOs/POs and NGAs to gather their feedback/suggestions for their further improvement. During these consultative meetings, NGOs/POs and the NGAs sometimes suggest or refer the PDU to institutions that could possibly provide additional funding for their PPAs.

After such consultations, these project proposals are then submitted to the Executive Committee of the Council for their additions/suggestions and approval for implementation.

2. IMPLEMENTATION: The MNDC has a Project Development Unit that led the implementation of all its programs and activities. The NGOs, POs and other partners were tapped to help in the implementation of these projects.

3. MONITORING AND EVALUATION: To date, the MNDC have not institutionalized its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Still, there are no set rules/ guidelines on how PPAs should be conducted nor has the Council issued the same to LGUs for individual implementation of Council PPAs in their localities.

D. RESOURCES

To support the financial needs of the Council as well as to implement its projects and activities, the MNDC has maximized the use of the following resources:

- a. Economic Resources: To finance its PPAs, the MNDC practices resource complementation and maintains a Common Fund, an aggregate of the individual contributions of the member-LGUs, appropriation from the national government, as well as the assistance extended by local and foreign institutions. A portion of this fund is allocated for equal distribution among the member-LGUs to complement individual local government resources for different projects, while the rest of the fund is allocated for the implementation of the PPAs.
- b. Human Resources: The MNDC has a Project Development Unit that is composed of 5 individuals – 2 Project development officers; 1 Administrative and Finance Officer and 2 Support personnel—that manages the operation of the Council. Officers/employees of member LGUs are at times assigned to assist the members of this unit in the implementation of the MNDC’s programs and activities.
- c. Physical Resources: The Council also maintains an office at Naga City. Likewise, it maintains an Equipment Pool to facilitate the use of equipment and machinery of its member-LGUs.

E. PLANNED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MNDC

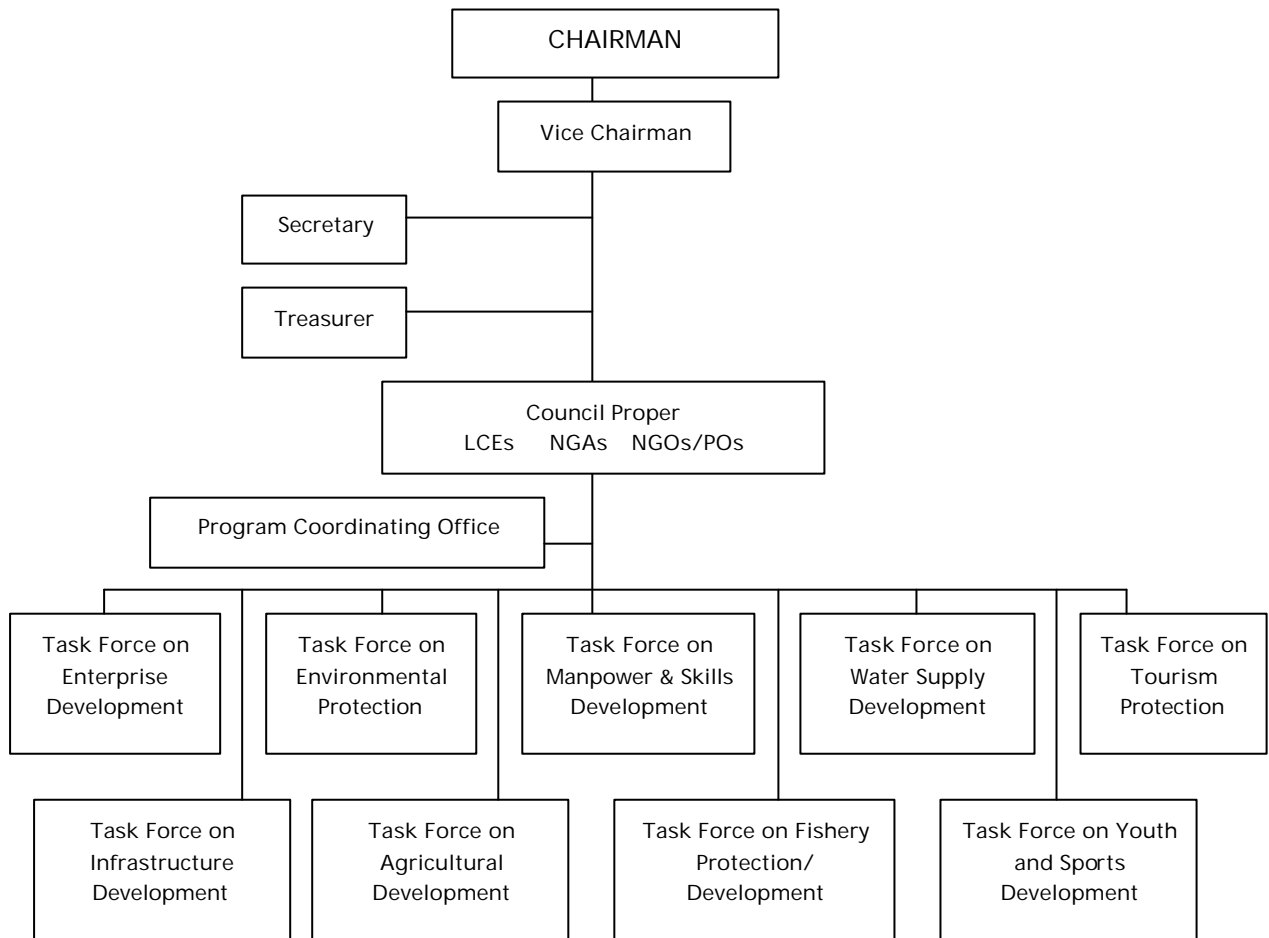
The E.O. creating the MNDC describes it as a council with functions and powers similar to that of a RDC. Being so, the primary tasks of the MNDC are to formulate, implement and monitor development plans for its members.

During the early years, the MNDC has acted less as a development council and more as a coordinating body that facilitated activities jointly undertaken by its member LGUs. Eventually, the Council graduated from that role and moved on to a more developmental role. One of the indicators of this shift was its success in defining the economic roles of the different LGUs under its wing. The PPAs that express these roles have yet to be fully implemented though. The E.O. likewise provides for the composition of the Council, with LCEs of the member-LGUs; Representatives in the Province of Camarines Sur of the departments and agencies represented in the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), including the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations based in the area who shall comprise one-fourth (1/4) of the members of the fully constituted Council, as its main members.

In compliance with these, the MNDC has planned an organizational structure that reflected the said provisions of the EO. (See Diagram 1: Planned Organizational Structure.)

However, in the implementation of the initial short-term PPAs of the Council, the nine (9) task forces were found to be unnecessary since the scope of the PPAs did not warrant such elaborate structures.

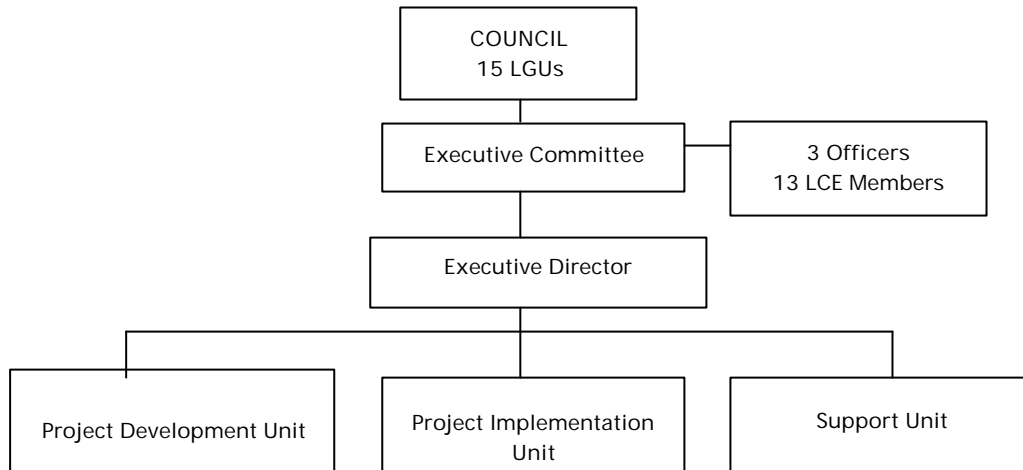
Diagram 1:
PLANNED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



Also included in the originally planned organizational structure were permanent seats for both the NGAs and NGOs, which according to the EO, must constitute a portion of the Council's membership. However, the limited scope of the initial PPAs, the negative perceptions that the LCEs had of NGOs, and the skepticism that these same NGOs/POs greeted the formation of the MNDC caused the limiting of the participation of NGOs and POs and the NGAs. Their involvement was on a "need basis" when and if their expertise were appropriate.

The representatives of the NGAs and NGOs are not considered regular members of the Council. They attend meetings upon the behest of the Council to render advice or assistance in matters being discussed.

Diagram 2:
FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



In the current organizational structure, the 15 LCEs constitute the Executive Committee, three (3) of whom serve as officers – the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary. These officers are elected by the LCEs themselves, except for the Secretary, who is appointed by the Chairperson. The position of Treasurer, included in the original organizational structure was deemed unimportant and its responsibilities were transferred to the Project Development Unit (PDU).

Traditionally, the Mayor of Naga City is elected Council Chairperson, since the city is the Council’s carrier or lead LGU. The members of the Executive Committee schedule meetings from time to timeto discuss immediate concerns of the Council.

Under the Executive Committee it is the Executive Director who oversees the Project Development Unit (PDU).

The PDU has five (5) members – two (2) Project Development Officers, one (1) Administrative and Finance Officer, and two (2) Support Personnel. This unit, aside from functioning as the Council Secretariat, is involved in the preparation of proposals of the Council’s PPAs. It likewise spearheads the implementation of the PPAs.

The Technical Working Group (TWG) is an ad-hoc committee tasked with formulating the proposals of the identified PPAs of the Council. It consists of the PDU and the

representatives of the member-LGUs, such as the MPDOs, local engineers and local environmental officers. The number and type of persons involved in the TWH depend on the particular PPA. Representatives of NGAs and NGOs are invited from time to time by the PDU to participate in the preparation of the proposals.

F. METRO NAGA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The MNDC has implemented several strategies to ensure economic full swing of the Council and its member LGUs. These are as follows:

1. Metro Naga Development Program: The Council has adopted the Metro Naga Development Program with the overriding objective of improving the quality of life within Metro Naga through generation of more jobs, higher income for residents and improved delivery of basic services. The Program also includes a two-pronged strategy for agriculture development these are—integration and diversification. Through this project, the Council would also like to create opportunity for the member LGUs and their constituents to be free from sole dependence on agriculture.
2. Capability-building Strategy: The MNDC facilitates and sponsors conduct of trainings and other capability-building activities to enhance knowledge and skills of LGU officials and other personnel as well as the Project Development Unit.
3. Development Roles for the LGUs: Practicing the mere essence of partnership and participation, the Council has assigned development roles to the LGUs taking into consideration the available resources, capacities and potentials. These roles were also accepted and approved by the other member LGU of the Council. This strategy was aimed to provide complementary and balanced growth among LGUs. The specific development roles are as follows:
 - a. Naga City: Business, education and cultural center
 - b. Pili: Secondary Trading center and agro-industrial development
 - c. Pamplona: Industrial estate and development
 - d. Canaman: Expansion area for middle class housing and
 - e. Milaor: Warehousing and bulk storage center and source of potable water

The remaining member LGUs were assigned to serve as the primary food bowl of the province.

G. MNDC CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Today, the MNDC is not only starting the fruit of its efforts but is still incessant in leveraging development strategies in the Province of Camarines Sur. Specifically; the Council has the following pipeline programs:

1. Investment Promotion: This includes the operationalization of the Metro Naga Investment Promotion Center. This center assists potential investors to explore opportunities that exist through out the areas and across the spectrum of industry sectors. It operated by center staff knowledgeable in regulatory requirements at both the local and national government levels. Among its investment priority projects are the following:

• Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bamboo processing • Muscovado sugar processing • Mango production and processing
• Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Island/resort facilities along Bicol River • Agro-tourism/leisure farm • Health food restaurants
• Household Décors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handicraft making
• Business Outsourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call centers • Digital animation • Data transcription • Website and software development
• Health and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade hospital facilities • Wellness clinics • Establishment of retirement villages
• Non-traditional industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bio-gas production • Cut-flowers and ornamental plants • Pine tree production
• Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ceramics processing plant • Crab meat edible paste production
• Lifestyle services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping malls • Family-oriented recreation centers
• Industry support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern fish drying facilities • Mechanical dryer and post harvest facilities • Multimedia advertising
• Real estate industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT park/internet building • Agro-industrial estate development • Housing and commercial development
• Freshwater aquamarine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sardine factory

2. Provision of Technical Assistance: The Council also provides technical assistance to member LGUs to enhance planning and development of their programs. At the

moment, the Council provides assistance on resort tourism promotion and project proposal making.

H. CHANGES IN THE COUNCIL

However, cognizant of its needs and limitations, the MNDC has instituted changes in its organizational structure. One of these is the removal of the nine (9) task force units included in the original organizational structure because the scope of the Council's initial PPAs did not necessitate such structures. It has likewise modified the role of the NGAs and NGOs as provided in the EO creating it. The EO states that the NGAs and NGOs comprise the Council together with the member-LGUs as regular members. However, in the functional organizational structure and operations of the MNDC, the NGAs and NGOs' participation in the Council's activities has been limited to periodic consultations and assistance in the implementation of the PPAs that warrant their expertise. This was implemented primarily because of the unenthusiastic relationship between the LCEs and NGO leaders during the early years of the Council's existence.

I. ACTIVATED RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES

Specifically, the MNDC was able to activate the following LINKAGES:

The MNDC, through the alliance of its component LGUs, has activated a number of linkages –

- a. **PHYSICAL LINKAGES** such as roads and waterways for use in transportation;
- b. **ECONOMIC LINKAGES** such as the assignment of complementary development roles that maximize strengths of LGUs;
- c. **POPULATION PATTERNS** such as development of residential areas outside Naga City, as well as improved transportation facilities allowed for City's decongestion;
- d. **SOCIAL LINKAGES** such as consolidation of associations of LGUs' elderly and creation of Councils' PPAs which stand as venue for collaboration of various groups;
- e. **SERVICE DELIVERY LINKAGES** such as improved delivery of medical, transportation and other services through coordination and augmentation of resources;
- f. **POLITICO-ADMINISTRATIVE LINKAGES** such consolidated plans of the LGUs to maximize available resources and mitigate negative effects of individualized LGU planning and passed resolutions of the Council as result of their agreements. Likewise, it has provided cluster planning, resource pooling and access to opportunities for capability-building as development mechanisms; and
- g. **TECHNOLOGICAL LINKAGES** such as the installed advanced communication facilities, and radio communication equipment in all member LGUs.

J. IMPACT OF THE MNDC

The formation of the Metro Naga Development Council has contributed several impacts to the system of governance and provision of services. These impacts are as follows:

1. Linkages and Development Mechanisms for Member LGUs:

The members of the Council benefited from the linkages and mechanisms it has established. Specifically, they have succeeded in setting up critical development mechanisms, such as

- **CLUSTER PLANNING** that has helped enhance and focus economic and development plans of the LGUs;
- **RESOURCE POOLING** that has increased the capacity of LGUs to improve in certain areas; **and**
- **BETTER ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING** that has helped LGUs become more efficient and effective.

Further, these mechanisms has activated and have provided the following benefits:

- (a) More structured development plan for the Metro Naga LGUs;
- (b) Representation of the LGUs as an advocacy bloc;
- (c) Improvement of the capability of the LGUs to deliver basic social services;
- (d) Increase in the savings/capital build-up/investments;
- (e) Unified environmental protection efforts;
- (f) Increase in the income of the LGUs' constituents; and
- (g) Promotion of people empowerment

2. Direction and Pace of Development.

Through this effort, all the member-LGUs have progressed to at least a level higher in their income classification since their membership in the Council. Although such improvement cannot be entirely credited to their membership in the Council, it could be said that the MNDC has somehow guided the development efforts of the member-LGUs.

3. Paradigm Shift.

By serving as the "big brother" of the other member-LGUs, Mayor Jesse Robredo of Naga sees his LGUs' involvement in the Council as a form of long-term investment from which they would greatly benefit from, as this would eventually contain the problems of migration and scarcity of resources and ultimately help the City sustain the effects of its development efforts.

The municipalities, on the other hand, see their membership in the Council as generally beneficial. Although huge benefits from the implementation of the PPAs are yet to be experienced, the PPAs have significantly contributed to their progress.

Further, the participation of non-government organization (NGOs) and people's organization (POs) has significantly increased. This is a good sign that the people believes in the cause of the project and trusts their local government officials.

4. Impact on externalities.

The MNDC has affected the provincial government's planning in the sense that the province now considers the plans of the member-LGUs collectively as MNDC and not as separate entities. It has also caused the same in the planning at the regional level. Further, the provincial government now consider member LGUs of the MNDC as a bloc, which serves as leverage in lobbying efforts.

The MNDC likewise affects the national government as it is annually given a portion of the country's budget. Finally, the Council provides the country a model for inter-LGU cooperation that may usher in possible amalgamation to enhance local government viabilities.

K. FUTURE ASPECTS

With the milestones produced by the MNDC, the Council is looking at several ways on how to sustain the gains of the project and further improve mechanisms and increase local participation. Some of these future plans are the following:

SUSTAINABILITY:

a. Conversion into Metro Naga Development Authority: To ensure MNDC's sustainability, there have been discussions among LCEs of the member-LGUs about the Council's conversion into a Metro Naga Development Authority as this would necessitate the passing of a law by Congress, which would further bolster the establishment of the MNDC. However, issues like the involvement of politics in the processes of the Council have prevented steps towards the said plan of conversion.

b. Boost campaign with Local Legislative Councils: In recognition of the influence of the local Sanggunians in the implementation of its PPAs, the MNDC has started its campaign to involve the greater participation of its members. Members of the PDU have been going to the local Sanggunians, presenting to them the vision, mission and PPAs of the Council with the goal of gathering their support and greater involvement in the PPAs.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY:

a. Increase efforts to find alternative sources of funds: Although it has proven that it could implement its short-term PPAs without the assistance of the national government, the MNDC still has to find alternative sources to augment present funds especially now that it is targeting the implementation of long-term, development PPAs that require

more funds. One such alternative is for the Council to intensify their efforts and endeavors in microfinance.

REPLICABILITY:

a. Policy development: The establishment of the MNDC can be described as a procedure that is relatively simple, making it easy to replicate. However, it is important to point out that a very crucial factor in the formation of the Council is realization and recognition of the LCEs themselves that cooperating with other LGUs in solving their problems would be beneficial to them. Equally important in the success of the possible replication of the MNDC is the presence of legislations/national government policies that support such alliances.

IV. LESSON LEARNED

The creation of the Metro Naga Development Council has paved way for the realization of important factors and strategies that has been used and implemented to ensure more meaningful development. Some of the notable lessons learned from this project are the following:

- a. Institutional Arrangements and Frameworks: The MNDC has provided an effective and efficient institutional frameworks and arrangements by clearly defining the members' development roles; building consensus and agree on priorities; sharing of financing or resource sharing and monitoring and evaluation of the developments of the Council and its members.
- b. Legislative Structures and Mechanisms: Another significant factor that made the MNDC successful is the development of common ordinances for all its members. This effort ensured that their strategies are in synergy and are congruent to the agreements made in the Council.
- c. Roles of Stakeholders: Further, the MNDC would not be possible without the active participation of all its stakeholders. Their roles were clearly defined complementing the plans of the Council. The multi-sectoral participation of the all its stakeholders such as the NGOs, POs and Business sector as well as the support of the provincial and national governments – made the creation of MNDC feasible. Also, the commitment of the local governments to take the lead in the process made this project successful and operational.
- d. Policy Environment: The Philippine government, with its policy of granting LGUs the autonomy and the presence of the Local Government Code that provides for the greater freedom and power of LGUs, have encouraged, facilitated and

strengthened the formation of the MNDC by giving it a greater legal basis. Policies that encouraged and supported inter-local government cooperation, strengthened local autonomy; provided greater local accountability and corporate governance powers as well as the mandatory involvement of civil society and the private sector are all instrumental to the success of the MNDC.

- e. Capacity Requirements: Members of the PDU and LGU officials involved in the MNDC have undergone training and other capability building activities to enhance their knowledge and skills and make them more effective and efficient in planning and implementing PPAs. Some of these capability-building efforts are aligned to specific objectives or outputs such as the preparation of the LGUs' Comprehensive Land Use Programs and Economic Development Plans. Others are more general in nature aimed at improving the performance of daily tasks. Capability building is a continuous activity among PDU staff and LGU officials involved in the TWG.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Metro Naga Development Council (MNDC) is a fruit of partnership of 15 contiguous local government units (LGUs) that believed in the power of UNITY and PARTNERSHIPS to bridge opportunity and development to other local government units.

Through this experience, it was proven that strong horizontal cooperation such as urban-rural linkages coupled with synergy in planning and development and active participation of the people is an effective strategy to improve performance of local governments to efficiently deliver services to its people.

Moreover, such exemplary practice of LGUs has strengthened our conviction that active participation of the people, strong partnership and inter-local cooperation is indeed one of the effective schemes towards faster and sustainable development.

As I end this presentation, I would like to share a notable quote by Eleanor Roosevelt which states that:

"if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships—the ability to all people, of all kinds, to live together in the same world at peace."

We believe that WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS PROGRESS WILL BRIDGE GAPS, ACHIEVE COMMON DREAMS, REACH HEIGHTS OF SUCCESS, AND BUILD A STRONGER NATION RISING TO THE PROMISE OF TOMORROW.

However, as we usually say, there are still a lot of things that remain to be done. A big part of the void still has to be filled. A greater area for collaboration has yet to be tapped. Challenges will continue to hound us but with sustainable innovations such as the MNDC, we will remain steadfast in our quest for a more progressive nation.

Again, thank you very much and MABUHAY!