Strategic Partnerships in Program and Project Implementation in Cebu City, Philippines[1]

BORDERLESS WORLD. Think Global, Act Local. Efforts towards global harmonization must start in our respective domains with stakeholders putting their acts together towards sustainable development. The state is not the sole actor that determines the content, process and outcome of development. Modern societies today recognize the essential role of the government, the business sector, and the civil society. These three key actors represent the realms of polity (government), economy (business sector), and culture/public interest (civil society). While independent from each other, these actors freely interact and collaborate to achieve the common good of society. For sustainable development to occur, there must be an interplay of market forces, state intervention, and civil society participation.[2]

Profile of Cebu City

Cebu City, the "Queen City of the South," is located at the heart of Philippine archipelago. It is the capital of Cebu Province, the regional capital of Central Visayas, the core of the Metro that includes three cities and eight municipalities. It is centrally located and its excellent harbors make the city the hub of transshipment and center for commerce, industry, finance and education outside of Manila. Its economy is highly diversified consisting of a large number of small cottage and medium industries and corporations engaged in a variety of activities. As of 2000, Cebu City has a population of almost 713,000. About 85% of the population lives in the urban barangays (covering approximately 20% of the land area) while 15% lives in the rural barangays (covering 80% of the land area). Participation rate is higher for me than women (79 percent vs. 49 percent). Cebu City also experiences a high level of in-migration from neighboring provinces and other municipalities of Cebu Province especially during the daytime. About 68% of the population was below the poverty line in 1994. A 1992 survey showed that 58% of the city's population lived in depressed communities. Cebu City was among the pioneer cities where open legal community organizing continued under the auspices of the church during martial law. After martial law, community organizing continued. NGOs were recognized as actors in development.

Partnerships in Cebu City Governance

Non-government organizations (NGOs), people's organization (POs) and business sector representatives (BSRs) compose about 40% (56 organizations) of the Cebu City Development Council (CDC). NGOs chair four committees of the CDC, namely, development administration, infrastructure, economic development and social development committees. The CDC approved a total of P29.6 million for NGO/BSR/PO development projects as part of the Annual Investment Plan (AIP) for 2002-2004. The proposed projects include, among others, the capability building program for local development council members (LDCs), solid waste management in barangays, support to barangay development planning, and services for street and working children, elderly, and persons with disabilities. A separate P15 million has been set aside for gender-responsive programs for 2004.

The extent of formal engagement by the civil society and the business sector in CDC is a result of and is being enhanced by various issue-based and alternative mechanisms of engagement, a number of which have developed into programs that have been regularly implemented for over a decade by the city government and its various stakeholders. Thus, the partnership between the city government and the private sector (including NGOs and other civil society groups) on priority development programs has redefined the direction of city governance. The partnership and engagement is there—alive, active and full of potentials. It has shown that civil society and the business sector, doing their own particular roles can advocate their stake in the management of the city affairs. Some of the milestones marking the growth of complementation and partnership-building are as follows:

- *Pushing for the People's Agenda in the City Election.* Influencing the local elections was a brainchild of NGOs in Cebu. The People's Alternative was launched to mobilize local residents to institute popular systems and generate an environment that would make the local elections issue-oriented and program-based rather than personality-oriented. Among the strategies done were the formulation of a local government agenda; sponsoring campaign rallies; and endorsement of candidates who were assessed based on qualifications and adherence to the people's agenda.

- *Championing the Cebu City Commission for the Urban Poor (CCUP).* The CCUP, operating directly under the Mayor's office, started with an office organized by an NGO from a number of staff seconded by the different existing departments. The CCUP triggered awareness on the "urban poor," and gave the urban poor access to services of the city government.

- *Initiating the Community Mortgage Program (CMP).* While not members of Social Security System, Government Security and Insurance System, and Home Development Mutual Fund; most poor people are willing to pay for the piece of the land they occupy.

[2] Serote, Ernesto M. 2004. Principles of regional and local development planning. University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.

This ushered in the concept of community mortgages for the urban poor. The CMP is now a national government program that enables organized communities to secure tenure through a loan financing from the government payable at installment. Repayment for CMP registers higher than those of other programs.

• *Pursuing the Urban Basic Services Program (UBSP).* One of the milestones of the Program was the crisis prevention and Bantay Banay program. The Crisis Center for Women where women could seek help for cases of domestic violence was established. Lihok Pilipina, documented that 6 out of 10 women were battered by their partners. With these, the Bantay Banay (Family Watch Groups against Domestic Violence) was formed. Community leaders were trained to respond to direct acts of violence. Agencies were oriented on gender and domestic violence. Local governments supported the program and provided funds for the crisis center and for organizing more communities.

• *Championing the Women's Agenda.* Members of the Bantay Banay and the Cebu Women's Coalition advocated for programs for women. In 1997, both networks advocated for the creation of the Cebu Women's Commission. Bantay Banay members oriented the barangays regarding the Local Government Code and lobbied for the implementation of the gender and development (GAD) budget policy contained therein. In 2001, the Gender Code of Cebu City was passed. The Anti Domestic Violence Ordinance (first in the country) was also passed. The lobbying for the GAD Budget has resulted in the allocation to GAD activities of ₱34 million by the barangays from 2000 to 2003, and of about ₱20 million by the city government from 2002-2004.

• *Influencing the Masterplan and the Operations of the City Development Council.* In 1999, the City contracted a private firm to prepare the City masterplan. Consultations were done with a number of NGOs. Business sector representatives in the CDC led the review of the masterplan and appraisal of programs and projects (PAPs) for the AIP. Among the measures used were: (1) review of the proposed master plan and identification of proposed amendments; (2) creation of committees in the CDC to allow for more substantive participation; (3) presentation of program and project by a barangay and an NGO/BSR during meeting; (4) invitation to city agencies and instrumentalities to present performance reports; and (5) presentation of specific project proposals for funding through the NGO Development Fund.

Challenges to Replication

FIRST, the formal avenues of participation like the CDC have its limits. It meets only quarterly. With almost 150 people in attendance, it is difficult to expect substantive discussions. The committees will have to be maximized to surface issues and to do good analyses of policies and programs.

Second, ad hoc efforts have provided more flexibility and initiative. The challenge, however, is in making issue-based ad hoc initiatives into a sustainable program, such as the Bantay Banay, the Department for the Welfare of the Urban Poor, and the CMP, among others.

Third, NGOs and the POs need to learn from their own history. A documentation of the experiences provides a legacy of how these experiences contributed to the level of development in the city. There is also a need to strengthen the capacity to advocate on the strength of analysis and information. Data bases are need for good advocacy work.

Enabling Conditions for Partnership-Building

BASIC PRINCIPLES in organizing, networking and management are important. Business sector organizations need to start with where people are to understand their realities, conditions, and interests and to encourage them to work in their communities or in local development councils (LDCs). It is also important to let people own the issues. With people assuming more roles and harnessing more initiatives, they develop their own stake and consequently will do everything to make it work. Failure of the initiative, whether in the community or in the council, will be their own too. Nobody wants to fail. Since resources are limited, whether for meetings or direct project costs, the importance of organized groups and convergence of efforts are paramount.

Recommendations to Local Development Councils

Not all PSRs AND LCEs are really familiar with the Local Government Code. There is a need for reorientation. There is a need for more sharing of concrete situations and activities among the different stakeholders. By understanding concrete situations, people see their own need or see what they can contribute. In this way, more partnerships whether formal of voluntary may be encouraged. For LDCs, encourage more ad hoc groups within the committee that can work on more specific concerns, such as transport, traffic, employment, housing, etc. While technically, projects undergo all phases of project development these projects are usually with funding. In many cases, Initiatives spring from concrete needs and issues, often with just a simple objective and more often without funds. More successful efforts branch out to other concerns and expand in terms of scope and substance.