

Innovation Nation

Local Communities Thriving in Adversity



Living with COVID-19 by Dr. Eddie Dorotan

Addressing COVID-19 and Beyond

Lessons from the 12 Local Government Units of the Adaptive and Innovative Leadership Program for Good Governance of the Galing Pook Foundation

In the midst of the pandemic, the quest for learning continues for 12 local government units that have dedicated their time to participate in Galing Pook Foundation's "Participatory Adaptive and Innovative Leadership for Peace and Development" (PAILPD) Program in partnership with the DILG Local Government Academy. A timely and relevant program, it aims to enable local leaders to adapt and innovate towards peace and development particularly in this time of crisis.

This paper presents the various actions executed to address COVID-19 by the participating LGU leaders in the PAILPD program. Their initiatives are categorized based on those that ensure safety among communities, showcase smart innovations and promote sustainability. This paper concludes with the lessons we learn from the safe, smart and sustainable programs which aim to inspire other LGUs towards peace and development.

Ensuring Safe and Healthy Local Communities

LGUs have the shared responsibility to keep their people safe from the threats of natural and man-made disasters caused by environmental degradation, urbanization, marginalization, and high population density to name a few. A safe community means people are able to live their lives free from any fear, worry or threat from violence, exploitation or conflict that would affect their development. During this pandemic, this has been the priority of all local government units. All LGUs have been focused on identifying initiatives to contain the COVID-19 virus, and to ensure that they meet the public's basic needs. For the participating local governments in the PAILPD Program, they prove that in addressing community safety, the public has to be involved.



Residents of Candon City, Ilocos Sur purchasing their various food produce from the local government's Market on Wheels
(Photo from the City Government of Candon)

Pre-pandemic, the local government of Candon has been constructing its infrastructure projects, envisioning these to bring more comfort and economic benefits in the City. This includes the improvement of the Ilocos Regional Training and Medical Center, and the construction of the 200-bed tertiary hospital along the 7.3 km "Heroes Bypass Road" completed last 2019. These health facilities are expected to serve not only the residents of Candon City, but also those from the other municipalities in Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte and Abra. To further alleviate the situation of their residents, the LGU implemented its Market on Wheels project which aims to help the livelihood of farmers by buying their produce, and to bring the market closer to the residents in order to limit mobilization. Another initiative launched by Candon City is its Agkasapulan a Candonians, Tulungan (ACT) program which intends to encourage able households to adopt low-income families or those not covered by the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) of the national government. Barangays do the matching of adopter and adoptee, but adopters who have already identified families would just need to register. Adopters are expected to provide essential goods worth at least Php 300 every 15 days.



STIMULUS PROGRAM FOR SPECIAL SECTOR (SPSS) - GULAYAN SA PAMAYANAN

Melody Plains, Barangay Muzon | May 19, 2020

Gulayan sa Pamayanan in Barangay Muzon in CSJDM

(Photo from the City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan's Facebook Page)

Despite the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), the national government's financial resources would not be enough to cover the needs of low income households heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 1,634 local government units in the country. This made the City of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan come up with its Php 250M Stimulus Program for Special Sector (SPSS) which aimed to provide assistance to vulnerable households in the LGU.



*Agricultural staff preparing the vegetables harvested by the farmers in Tabaco City
(Photo from the Department of Agriculture Region 5's Official Website)*

Cash-for-Work, a component of SPSS, did not only benefit the displaced workers, but the LGU itself. The program enabled the LGU to repair its infrastructure facilities which have been left unattended for some time; and to secure its food source by offering compensation to residents who will participate in its “Gulayan sa Pamayanan” project. Cash-for-Work was conceptualized after noticing the increase in COVID-19 cases in the City due to its residents going outside the LGU for work. Seeing the positive effects of the program, Mayor Arturo Robes intends to proceed with its implementation as we now transition into a ‘better normal’. Aside from Cash-for-Work, SPSS also includes distribution of vitamins among households; fuel subsidy for tricycle and public utility jeepney (PUJ) operators and drivers; educational assistance; alternative livelihood assistance; distribution of seeds, seedlings, fruit-bearing trees and vermicompost; and supplemental feeding for severely underweight children from 12 to 59 months.

Tabaco City, through its project Kadiwa on Wheels, coordinated with the Department of Agriculture to buy the produce of its farmers, which were then sold in satellite markets managed by the Solo Parents’ Association. Kadiwa on Wheels did not only ease the livelihood situation of the farmers and solo parents, but it also offered convenience and safety for residents in purchasing their basic goods.

In Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental, the MRT Lokalisasyon project is the local government’s version of sustaining the livelihood of farmers by buying their products and distributing them to low-income households as the LGU’s ayuda. People’s organizations (POs) and cooperatives are tapped to make this happen. The LGU also supported its frontliners and quarantined individuals by feeding them through its community kitchen in partnership with the West Visayas State University (WVSU).



*Harvested vegetables in Himamaylan City being prepared to be sold
(Photo from Mayor Ronaldo Tongson's Facebook Page)*



*Northwest Samar State University making moisturizing alcohol-based handrub for frontliners in Calbayog City
(Photo from Northwest Samar State University's Accomplishment Report 2020)*

At the onset of the pandemic, Calbayog City was quick to tap its stakeholders to help in containing the COVID-19 virus. The LGU partnered with the Northwest Samar State University and public elementary schools to serve as facilities to accommodate locally stranded individuals (LSIs) and returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). Barangays also led local assemblies to educate residents about COVID-19 and the protocols needed to be adhered to. The immediate action of the local government and cooperation among residents serve as important strategies in containing the pandemic in Calbayog City.



*Dr. Reagan Joseph Villanueva conducting a telepsych session with Mati patients
(Photo from the City of Mati's Official Website)*

Mental health has been a priority in Mati City since 2016. With the pandemic affecting our mental conditions, the health program has been proven helpful and further maximized in the City. The local government of Mati inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC) which set up the telepsychiatric facility inside the Acute Psychiatric Care Unit (APCU) in one of the barangays in the City. Every week, a specialist from SPMC conducts a telepsychiatry session in the facility through teleconferences. Those who need to be admitted at the APCU are fed, treated and provided medications, all expenses covered by the LGU, even if they are not residents of the City.

Moving Towards Becoming Smart Cities



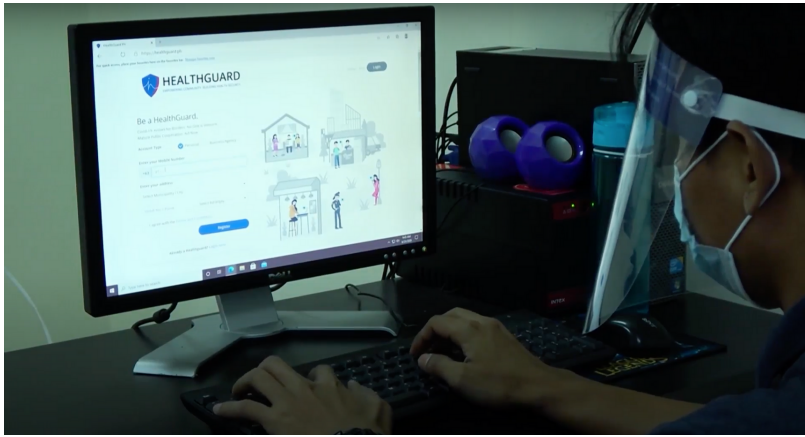
*The Local Government of Ilagan signing the Memorandum of Agreement with Isabela State University for the implementation of the Health Guard Contact Tracing System
(Photo from the City of Ilagan's Website)*

A smart city, as described by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) or OECD, leverages on digitalization to boost citizen well-being and deliver more efficient, sustainable and inclusive urban services and environments as part of a collaborative multi-stakeholder process. Digitalization is seen as an effective way to manage data and information that would help leaders in making better and informed decisions. LGUs are keeping up in this inevitability of a digital world. Pre-pandemic, LGUs like the cities of Lipa in Batangas and Himamaylan in Negros Occidental have set out plans to digitalize their processes. As we battle out COVID-19, digitalization is seen as a necessary initiative.

In containing the virus and managing its impact, the local government of Lipa sees collaboration as an effective way to do it. To give a few examples, the LGU partnered with the Red Cross for swab testing; with telecommunication companies, Globe and Smart, for better connectivity among students in their online learning; and with an information technology firm for the implementation of E-Lipa to digitalize government systems and processes. Its digitalization project, E-Lipa, is the LGU's response to the new context of conducting transactions online. Once done, the LGU sees E-Lipa to make government services more accessible and procedures more efficient.

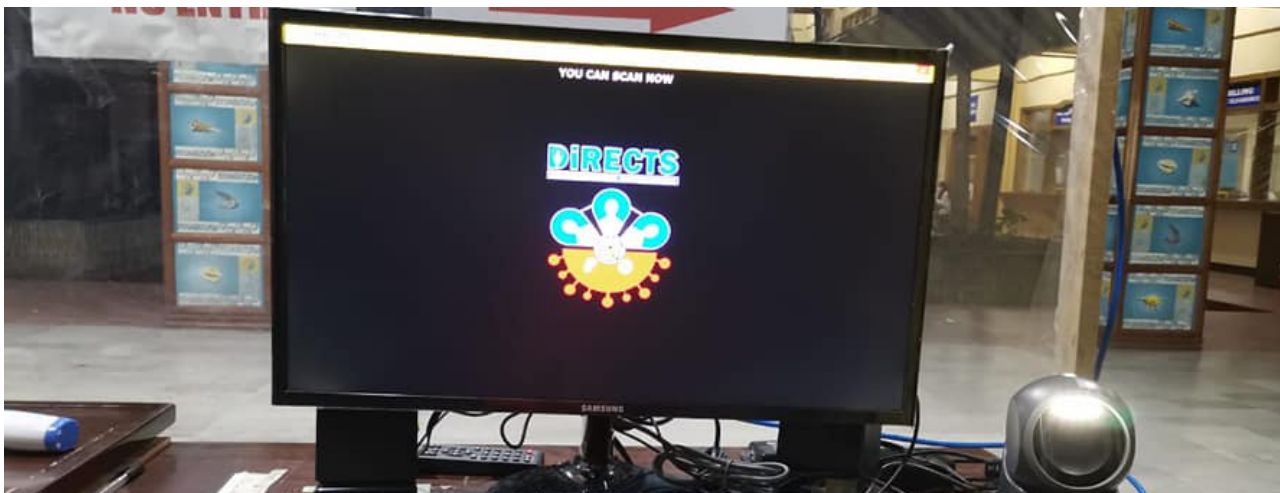
In preparation for a better normal, the local government of Himamaylan partnered with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to implement e-BPLS or the Electronic Business Permits and Licensing System. The system not only provides a means to lessen physical transactions, but it also intends to make business processing more convenient and efficient so as to attract more investors in the locality.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 demands quick action to contain it, and the City of Ilagan, Isabela, just did that through digitalization. In partnership with the Isabela State University, the City developed its Health Guard Contact Tracing System, an automated contact tracing platform for its residents. Aside from being an efficient tool for contact tracing, it also generates data on the non-COVID cases, persons under monitoring (PUM), status of hospitals and quarantine facilities, as well as analysis on social welfare interventions among others. The app is useful in producing reports for the Inter-Agency Task Force of the City, as well as in guiding the LGU in formulating and implementing services. This technology is now being used by Region 2, and a few municipalities in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). PLDT, Smart and volunteer software engineers from the Information Technology (IT) industry helped in the expansion of Health Guard.



The Local Government of Ilagan signing the Memorandum of Agreement with Isabela State University for the implementation of the Health Guard Contact Tracing System (Photo from the City of Ilagan's Website)

To complement the COVID-19 testing laboratories established in the City, the LGU of Roxas City in Capiz further utilized technology in its implementation of DIRECTS or the Digitized Roxas City Epidemiological Contact Tracing System, a mobile app to effectively conduct contact tracing; and E-Consulta, a contactless consultation and prescription system. Putting E-Consulta in place provides people with an alternative way to seek medical advice without the need to go to the hospitals.



The Digitized Roxas City Epidemiological Contact Tracing System (DIRECTS) (Photo from Roxas City Official Website)

Recognizing that not all low income households received ayuda from the national government's Social Amelioration Program (SAP), Tabaco LGU decided to provide for them instead. Through its Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS), the LGU was able to verify its non-SAP residents and extended financial assistance to them. The CBMS proved to be helpful in identifying the necessary social welfare programs to be implemented for the people.



Tatay Armando, one of the residents in Tabaco City who received financial assistance from the local government unit (Screenshot from Tabaco City's COVID-19 Response Video Presentation)

Promoting Sustainability for a Better Future

Sustainability has various meanings attached to it. It may mean continuity of services or the ability to carry on program services through funding and resources shifts or losses. It can be about institutionalizing policies and programs. Sustainability can also mean the ability to adapt to various changes. In the context of sustainable development, it is described as development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Following the Triple Bottom Line Concept, it entails the balance between environmental, social and economic sustainability. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 describes sustainable cities as those that do not only provide access to safe and affordable housing, public transportation and public green spaces, but also assure resilience to disasters while protecting the vulnerable and decreasing economic casualties.

LGUs have proven their resilience in the midst of COVID-19. Their different versions of food sustainability initiatives, beyond providing financial assistance, show us that their leadership enables their local governments to become self-sufficient and self-reliant. In the case of the City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, its “Gulayan sa Pamayanan” project aims to provide its residents with a more sustainable food source so that they would not be dependent on ayudas. The same goes with the other LGUs such as Iriga City, Camarines Sur and Gingoog City, Misamis Oriental. These are good examples of food security and we are yet to see how their agricultural practices ensure environmental sustainability.



Vegetables on Wheels in Iriga City (Photo from City Agriculture - Iriga's Facebook Page)

Farmers in Iriga City had a surplus of vegetables which they cannot deliver outside their area due to the COVID-19 restrictions. This definitely affected the income of farmers. The LGU then implemented its Vegetables on Wheels project which procured vegetables and other farm produce from the agricultural sector. To ensure continuous vegetable production, the LGU also provided seeds to the farmers. Some harvests were distributed to households, as part of the City's ayuda during the lockdown, and others were sold in the satellite markets which they called Talipapa sa Barangay. Talipapa sa Barangay offers accessibility and relief to the residents of Iriga as both vendors and buyers do not need to go to the markets to buy their basic necessities. Typhoons Rolly and Quinta, which hit the Bicol Province last November 2020, on top of the COVID-19 situation, required more workforce from the local government to address their impact. The LGU mobilized transport workers, who were displaced by the pandemic, and capacitated them to become checkpoint guards and to help in handling emergencies. The City of Iriga did not only provide income for the unemployed, but it also bridged its limitation on human resources.



Young learners guided by a volunteer teacher in Tabaco City's Community Learning Hub
(Photo from Tabaco City Community Learning Hub's Facebook Page)

COVID-19 has caused enough disruption that Tabaco City did not allow it any further to affect the continuous provision of quality education to its children. The City collaborated with the Office of the Vice President of the Philippines and Siklab Pilipinas to establish community learning hubs which provided gadgets, internet access, and tutoring services to elementary school learners. Learners with difficulties accessing online and modular learning systems, as well as parents not prepared to assist their children, found relief in the community learning hubs with volunteer licensed teachers managing their sessions.

Preserving the environment is the main strategy of the local government of Sipalay City, as a recognition that their local economy hugely depends on it. The LGU recognizes that the ecosystem-based approach would be an effective way to sustain its natural resources, which serve as the lifeblood of the municipality. As Sipalay City does its tourism development initiatives, COVID-19 forced LGUs to close borders to contain the virus. Inevitably, this hugely affected the livelihoods of Sipalaynons who are heavily reliant on the tourism industry. As a response to the livelihood dilemma, the LGU of Sipalay launched its "Ginapangabuhi-an" project which aims to assist the displaced Sipalaynon workers. In partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the beneficiaries of Ginapangabuhi-an received Php 10,000 financial assistance to jumpstart their livelihood. The LGU utilized its Gender and Development (GAD) budget as well to fund more small entrepreneurs. The livelihood assistance by the LGU also serves as a preparation once travel restrictions would allow them to receive tourists, keeping in mind the need to conserve their local resources.



One of the fisherfolk beneficiaries of the local government of Sipalay City
(Screenshot from Sipalay City's COVID-19 Response Video Presentation)

For the local government of Gingoog which heavily relies on their ecological and agricultural resources, COVID-19 has given them more motivation to pursue their flagship programs. While putting-up the necessary responses such as facilities, check-points and teams, the LGU further maximizes the benefits of its agricultural investments. Pre-pandemic, it has increased its agricultural budget from Php 28M to Php 250M, which proves to be a smart move for the City. More than the ayuda, the LGU has provided free seedlings and fertilizers to households that have available spaces to plant. Farmers and fisherfolks have received more support through post-harvest facilities and equipment given by the local government. The various agricultural initiatives of the City, such as cacao farming, crop protection, Plant Now, Pay Later Project, and cavendish production among others, are the long term solutions of the local government on food security and livelihood.



Fishing gears for fishermen

*The local government of Gingoog discussing with their fisherfolk
(Screenshot from Gingoog City's COVID-19 Response Video Presentation)*

Learning from the Adaptive and Innovative Initiatives of LGUs

In summary, the adaptive and innovative initiatives showcased by the 12 participating LGUs in the PAILPD Program ultimately lead to becoming safe, smart and sustainable cities. Further, we learn that:

1. Crisis response demands immediate and innovative solutions.



Farmers setting-up their produce on the Vegetable on Wheels
(Photo from Iriga City's Official Website)

LGUs, even before the national government has ordered a lockdown on March 12, 2020, have immediately formed their respective task forces, gathered their stakeholders and put up the necessary protocols and systems to manage the impact of COVID-19. As early as January 2020, the Cities of San Jose del Monte, Lipa, Iriga, Sipalay, and Mati have mobilized their local government to do the aforementioned actions. On January 29, 2020, the City of SJDM organized an information drive about then 2019-nCoV for its 130 City Health personnel and 650 barangay health workers.

The local government officially created its Task Force for the Management of Emerging and Re-Emerging Infectious Disease (ERID) on February 20, 2020, followed by the activation of its Barangay Health Emergency Response Teams (BHERTs) the next day. Since then until the announcement of the national government of a nationwide lockdown, the City of SJDM has been releasing guidelines and advisories, such as the mandatory reporting of outside travellers to the City Health Office and the implementation of a four-day work week in the LGU, to prevent and control the entry of the virus in the City. By mid-February of 2020, Lipa City convened its Local Health Board to discuss the necessary measures to put in place against COVID-19. The local government of Lipa was able to establish and expand its isolation and quarantine facilities before March ended. In Sipalay City, it had immediately established checkpoints in their three major entry points in Camindangan, Cartagena and Nabula. The City also cancelled mass gatherings scheduled in March 2020. The City of Mati also reactivated its BHERTs in February, and it was also able to realign its funds in order to prepare for the necessary interventions to manage the impact of COVID-19.

The crisis sparked LGUs to be innovative in their responses. The different social welfare initiatives of the LGUs, such as the Stimulus Program for Special Sector (SPSS) of CSJDM, and the Vegetables on Wheels of Iriga City, went beyond the usual *ayuda* / dole-out scheme. These innovations entail people's participation to ensure their effectiveness. Their speedy response, or “pagiging maagap”, combined with their innovativeness in addressing the virus, helped them in coping with the pandemic.

2. Clear communication and seamless coordination are key to effective program implementation.

One of the challenges shared by LGUs in their COVID-19 response was the constant change of the national government protocols cascaded among LGUs. Various agencies would release different memorandums which the LGUs have the responsibility of simplifying and complying with. Fortunately for the City government of Lipa, communication among stakeholders became more efficient as it expanded its local boards and councils namely the Local School Board, the Local Health Board, the Peace and Order Council, the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, the City Anti-Drug Use Council and Cooperative Council, by including representatives from the business groups, non-government and civil society organizations. By doing this, the LGU enables proper dissemination of the right information and guidelines among sectors so as to ensure compliance of the public. In the 1st District of Albay, the City of Tabaco chaired the Interlocal Health Zone and Area Development Team composed of local chief executives (LCEs), Vice Mayors, Planning Officers, Finance Officers, Health Officers and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Officers (DRRMOs), to ensure proper coordination of policies among LGUs.

3. Reliable and accurate data make for better and informed decisions.

The Cities of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan and Tabaco, Albay proved to us that having sufficient and accurate data helps in making informed decisions for program planning and implementation. In the case of SJDM, although the data did not paint a good picture of their COVID-19 situation, it served as a wake-up call to look into the issue and identify gaps, which led them in implementing SPSS. For Tabaco City, their CBMS enabled them to extend the necessary financial assistance for its residents who were not part of the Social Amelioration Program. For the other LGUs that have implemented digitalization such as Ilagan City, Lipa City, Roxas City and Himamaylan City, they utilized technological advancements which allowed them to better manage their data.



*A resident in Barangay Muzon taking part in the City of SJDM's "Gulayan sa Pamayanan" Project
(Photo from the City of San Jose del Monte's Facebook Page)*

4. Collaboration with stakeholders addresses gaps in program resources.

The adaptive responses of the LGUs have demonstrated that the people whom we always view as beneficiaries are actually partners in development, especially in this extraordinary time. Limited resources would always be a problem, but with collaboration and innovation, together with the right information, these would be addressed. Close partnership among government agencies, non-government organizations, and the private sector proves to be one of the effective strategies in resolving a complex challenge like COVID-19.



Cooperative Council in Lipa City having a meeting with its local government
(Screenshot from Lipa City's COVID-19 Response Video Presentation)


Further, the pandemic has taught us that the LGUs' valuable resources are its people. Farmers, vendors, transport workers, and other vulnerable sectoral groups do not simply receive dole-outs to ease their financial difficulties for a short period of time, but they are empowered to continue their livelihood and even to assist the LGU in helping their fellow residents.

5. Adaptive leadership focuses not only on the present but foresees the future as well.

The LGU of Candon had a headstart in constructing its health facilities, which reflects how leadership is about looking into future scenarios and planning ahead. The same goes with the local government of Gingoog, which has even boosted its flagship programs after seeing the impact of COVID-19. In the case of Calbayog City, it may have put on hold some of its major infrastructure projects as part of its ecotourism plan, but the local government's shift to provide its people quality basic services still feeds into its vision of having a more sustainable economy. The LGUs' examples teach us that being adaptive to current situations means continuously implementing initiatives that look beyond the present and anticipate future challenges.

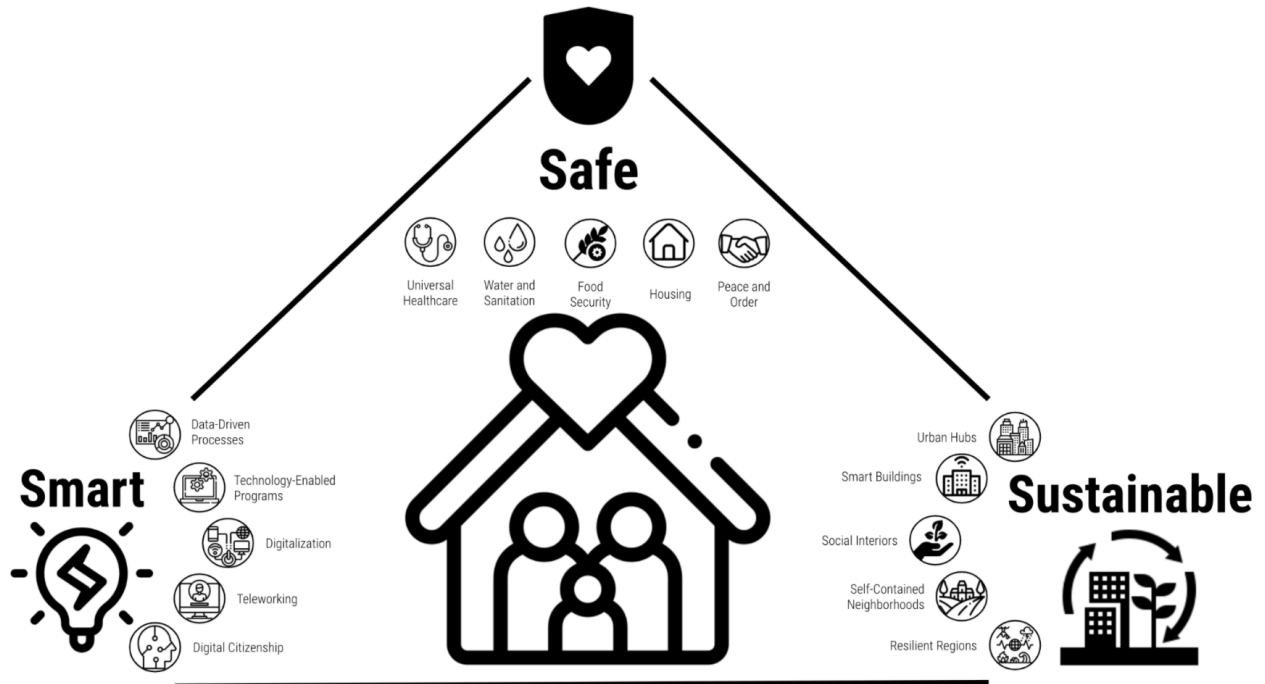
Synthesis

The experiences shared by the PAILPD LGUs in managing the COVID-19 pandemic have shown us what adaptive and innovative leadership looks like. A complex problem such as COVID-19 demands immediate response, agility, flexibility, and innovation, which the LGUs are able to showcase. Further, their cases highlight the necessity of involving the people, whom some people in power simply see as beneficiaries, in decision-making and program / project implementation. Most, if not all, of the time, real solutions to problems come from them. If given the proper enabling factors, the people themselves would be able to take responsibility in co-governing their communities. The LGUs' adaptiveness and innovativeness lead them to become better in responding to challenges.

The LGUs' examples could inform the development of more resilient local programs that would surpass future disasters, crises and pandemics. The positive impacts of their programs give us hope that they will be sustained and be replicated by other local governments to become safe, smart and sustainable cities. As former Galing Pook Foundation Executive Director, Dr. Eddie Dorotan, shared, "Smart, safe and sustainable cities can be attained with proper governance combined with adaptive and innovative leadership and empowered citizens". With the right skills, capabilities and tools, the LGUs would be able to achieve this vision. 

3S Framework

Based on the learnings gathered from the examples of the PAILPD LGUs, we came up with a framework illustrating the components to achieve a safe, smart and sustainable community. Other components included in the framework, particularly under Sustainability, came from Dr. Eddie Dorotan's presentation entitled "The City I Deserve Now and in the Future" during the fourth session of PAILPD. The five scales under Sustainability are lifted from [National Geographic's "Cities of the Future"](#).



Adaptive and Innovative Leadership

- Responsive
- Agile
- Flexible
- Transparent
- Accountable
- Collaborative
- Forward-Looking
- Efficient
- Resourceful
- Empathic

Citizens as Empowered Load-Sharers

This framework reiterates that aside from the programs and principles that have to be implemented, adaptive and innovative leadership, tied with an empowered citizenship, have to take place in order to become a safe, smart and sustainable city.

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Annex: LGU Case Studies

Luzon

- **(Region 1) Candon City, Ilocos Sur**

Pre-pandemic, the local government of Candon has been constructing its infrastructure projects, envisioning these to bring more comfort and economic benefits in the City. This includes the improvement of the Ilocos Regional Training and Medical Center, and the construction of the 200-bed tertiary hospital along the 7.3 km “Heroes Bypass Road” completed last 2019. These health facilities are expected to serve not only the residents of Candon City, but also those from the other municipalities in Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte and Abra.

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The LGU of Candon had a headstart in constructing its health facilities, which reflects how leadership is about looking into future scenarios and planning ahead. This example of Candon City also shows us that the public or our people, whom local leaders usually view as recipients of help, would be willing to share their own resources if they are given the opportunity to do so.

- **(Region 2) City of Ilagan, Isabela**

The rapid spread of COVID-19 demands quick action to contain it, and the City of Ilagan, Isabela, just did that. In partnership with the Isabela State University, the City developed its Health Guard Contact Tracing System, an automated contact tracing platform for its residents. Aside from being an efficient tool for contact tracing, it also generates data on the non-COVID cases, persons under monitoring (PUM), status of hospitals and quarantine facilities, as well as analysis on social welfare interventions among others.

The app is useful in producing reports for the Inter-Agency Task Force of the City, as well as in guiding the LGU in formulating and implementing services. This technology is now being used by Region 2, and a few municipalities in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). PLDT, Smart and volunteer software engineers from the Information Technology (IT) industry helped in the expansion of Health Guard.

The City of Ilagan was able to maximize the benefits of technological advancements and advantages of partnering with an academic institution through the Health Guard Contact Tracing System. This allowed the LGU to have a better management of the COVID-19 situation with the accurate data the system produces.

- **(Region 3) City of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan**

Despite the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), the national government’s financial resources would not be enough to cover the needs of low income households heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in 1,634 local government units in the country. This made the City of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan come up with its Php 250M Stimulus Program for Special Sector (SPSS) which aimed to provide assistance to vulnerable households in the LGU. Cash-for-Work, a component of SPSS, did not only benefit the displaced workers, but the LGU itself. The program enabled the LGU to repair its infrastructure facilities which have been left unattended for some time; and to secure its food source by offering compensation to residents who will participate in its “*Gulayan sa Pamayanan*” project. Cash-for-Work was conceptualized after noticing the increase in COVID-19 cases in the City due to its residents going outside the LGU for work. Seeing the positive effects of the program, Mayor Arturo Robes intends to proceed with its implementation as we now transition into a ‘better normal’.

Aside from Cash-for-Work, SPSS also includes distribution of vitamins among households; fuel subsidy for tricycle and public utility jeepney (PUJ) operators and drivers; educational assistance; alternative livelihood assistance; distribution of seeds, seedlings, fruit-bearing trees and vermicompost; and supplemental feeding for severely underweight children from 12 to 59 months.

Annex: LGU Case Studies

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- **(Region 4-A) Lipa City, Batangas**

In containing the virus and managing its impact, the local government of Lipa sees collaboration as an effective way to do it. To give a few examples, the LGU partnered with the Red Cross for swab testing; with telecommunication companies, Globe and Smart, for better connectivity among students in their online learning; and with an information technology firm for the implementation of E-Lipa to digitalize government systems and processes. Its digitalization project, E-Lipa, is the LGU's response to the new context of conducting transactions online. Once done, the LGU sees E-Lipa to make government services more accessible and procedures more efficient.

The City government of Lipa believes in the importance of establishing partnership and collaboration among stakeholders. It has expanded its local boards and councils, namely the Local School Board, the Local Health Board, the Peace and Order Council, the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, the City Anti-Drug Use Council and Cooperative Council, by including representatives from the business groups, non-government and civil society organizations. As we continue to fight the virus, the LGU of Lipa will be moving towards a better normal together with its stakeholders committed to bring progress to the City.

- **(Region 5) Iriga City, Camarines Sur**

Farmers in Iriga City had a surplus of vegetables which they cannot deliver outside their area due to the COVID-19 restrictions. This definitely affected the income of farmers. The LGU then implemented its Vegetables on Wheels project which procured vegetables and other farm produce from the agricultural sector. To ensure continuous vegetable production, the LGU also provided seeds to the farmers. Some harvests were distributed to house-

holds, as part of the City's *ayuda* during the lockdown, and others were sold in the satellite markets which they called *Talipapa sa Barangay*. *Talipapa sa Barangay* offers accessibility and relief to the residents of Iriga as both vendors and buyers do not need to go to the markets to buy their basic necessities.

Typhoons Rolly and Quinta, which hit the Bicol Province last November 2020, on top of the COVID-19 situation, required more workforce from the local government to address their impact. The LGU mobilized transport workers, who were displaced by the pandemic, and capacitated them to become checkpoint guards and to help in handling emergencies. The City of Iriga did not only provide income for the unemployed, but it also bridged its limitation on human resources.

The adaptive response of Iriga City on COVID-19 demonstrates that the people whom we always view as beneficiaries are actually partners in development, especially in this extraordinary time. Farmers, vendors, and transport workers do not simply receive dole-outs to ease their financial difficulties for a short period of time, but they are empowered to continue their livelihood and even to assist the LGU in helping their fellow *Irigeños*.

- **(Region 5) Tabaco City, Albay**

COVID-19 has done enough disruption that Tabaco City did not allow it any further to affect its children's education. The City collaborated with the Office of the Vice President of the Philippines and *Siklab Pilipinas* to establish community learning hubs which provided gadgets, internet access, and tutoring services to elementary school learners. Learners with difficulties accessing online and modular learning systems, as well as parents not prepared to assist their children, found relief in the community learning hubs with volunteer licensed teachers managing their sessions.

To address the livelihood and food security concerns among the residents in the LGU, Tabaco City, through its project Kadiwa on Wheels, coordinated with the Department of Agriculture to buy the produce of its farmers, which were then sold in satellite markets managed by the Solo Parents' Association. Kadiwa on Wheels did not only ease the livelihood situation of the farmers and solo parents, but it also offered convenience and safety for residents in purchasing their basic goods.

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Recognizing that not all low income households received ayuda from the national government's Social Amelioration Program (SAP), Tabaco LGU decided to provide for them instead. Through its Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS), the LGU was able to verify its non-SAP residents and extended financial assistance to them. The CBMS proved to be helpful in identifying the necessary social welfare programs to be implemented for the people.

Partnership among government agencies, non-government organizations, and the public proves to be one of the effective strategies in resolving a complex challenge like COVID-19, as shown by the example of Tabaco City. Limited resources would always be a problem, but with collaboration and innovation, together with the right information, these would be addressed.

Visayas

- **(Region 6) Roxas City, Capiz**

Provinces in Region 6, specifically the Province of Capiz, heavily relied on the COVID-19 testing laboratories in Iloilo City. This delayed the release of test results of residents in other provinces, which is crucial to the pandemic response. The local government of Roxas City decided to put up its own COVID-19 testing laboratory, made out of container vans, with the help of private sector companies Pueblo de Panay, Inc. and Blue Chip Builders, Inc.. In more or less 24 hours, the laboratory was installed in Brgy. Milibili in Roxas City. To complement this effort, the LGU further utilized technology in its implementation of DIRECTS or the Digitized Roxas City Epidemiological Contact Tracing System, a mobile app to effectively conduct contact tracing; and E-Consulta, a contactless consultation and prescription system.

In handling the pandemic, Roxas City tapped its stakeholders to assist in the COVID-19 response. The LGU partnered with local hotels to provide additional quarantine facilities for individuals entering the City, which contributed as well to the local economy. It has also collaborated with several non-government organizations such as the Gerry Roxas Foundation in setting up quarantine facilities for health workers; the J. Amado Araneta Foundation in giving *ayudas* for local artists; and the Roxas City United Movement in providing gadgets to low-

income students for their online learning. It organized webinars on reviving the local economy, together with local entrepreneurs and business chambers. The City government also encouraged the youth in establishing vegetable gardens, with the help of its Agriculture Office.

The pandemic has taught our local leaders the importance of LGUs having their own resources, and not relying so much on the national government, to address the needs of their people. But the case of Roxas City reminds us that LGUs can always rely on its people in helping to resolve a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **(Region 6) Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental**

Himamaylan City's strategy to resolve the pandemic is to provide for its people's basic needs. For residents in far-flung areas, access to water is usually an issue. If water is not available, people cannot be expected to comply with the minimum health protocol. To effectively contain the virus, the LGU made sure that its residents can practice proper hygiene by providing them with sufficient water supply.

The MRT *Lokalisasyon* project is the local government's version of sustaining the livelihood of farmers by buying their products and distributing them to low-income households as the LGU's *ayuda*. People's organizations (POs) and cooperatives are tapped to make this happen. The LGU also supported its frontliners and quarantined individuals by feeding them through its community kitchen in partnership with the West Visayas State University (WVSU).

In preparation for a better normal, the local government of Himamaylan partnered with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) to implement e-BPLS or the Electronic Business Permits and Licensing System. The system not only provides a means to lessen physical transactions, but it also intends to make business processing more convenient and efficient so as to attract more investors in the locality.

- **(Region 6) Sibalay City, Negros Occidental**

Preserving the environment is the main strategy of the local government of Sibalay City in developing its local economy. The LGU recognizes that the ecosystem-based approach would be an effective way to sustain its natural resources, which serve as the lifeblood of

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the municipality. As Sipalay City does its tourism development initiatives, COVID-19 forced LGUs to close borders to contain the virus. Inevitably, this hugely affected the livelihoods of *Sipalaynons* who are heavily reliant on the tourism industry. As a response to the livelihood dilemma, the LGU of Sipalay launched its “*Ginapangabuhi-an*” project which aims to assist the displaced *Sipalaynon* workers. In partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the beneficiaries of *Ginapangabuhi-an* received Php 10,000 financial assistance to jumpstart their livelihood. The LGU utilized its Gender and Development (GAD) budget as well to fund more small entrepreneurs. The livelihood assistance by the LGU also serves as a preparation once travel restrictions would allow them to receive local tourists.

Even before the pandemic, Sipalay City has its Community Leadership in Central Kitchen (CLiCK) project, in partnership with the Jollibee Group Foundation (JGF), which aims to support the LGU’s school feeding program. Aside from ensuring the health and nutrition of school learners, the project also serves as an income-generating activity for the volunteer mothers serving in the kitchen and for farmers supplying their produce. During the pandemic, the Community Kitchen was utilized for the *Pangpiyan-piyan* project which provided ready-to-eat meals to low-income families.

The local government of Sipalay takes on the challenges presented by COVID-19 as opportunities to develop its current plans. In their tourism plan, for instance, while improving the local economy is at its core, it keeps in mind the welfare of its people so as not to jeopardize the health situation. Further, Sipalay City’s CLiCK project shows that investing in food security and nutrition would go a long way. The project did not only ensure the health of children, and low-income families during the pandemic, but the livelihood of *Sipalaynons*.

- **(Region 8) Calbayog City, Samar**

At the onset of the pandemic, Calbayog City was quick to tap its stakeholders to help in containing the COVID-19 virus. The LGU partnered with the Northwest Samar State University and public elementary schools to serve as facilities to

accommodate locally stranded individuals (LSIs) and returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). Barangays also led local assemblies to educate residents about COVID-19 and the protocols needed to be adhered to. The immediate action of the local government and cooperation among residents serve as important strategies in containing the pandemic in Calbayog City.

Mindanao

- **(Region 10) Gingoog City, Misamis Oriental**

For the local government of Gingoog, COVID-19 has given them more motivation to pursue their flagship programs. While putting-up the necessary responses such as facilities, check-points and teams, the LGU further maximizes the benefits of its agricultural investments. Pre-pandemic, it has increased its agricultural budget from Php 28M to Php 250M, which proves to be a smart move for the City. More than the *ayuda*, the LGU has provided free seedlings and fertilizers to households that have available spaces to plant. Farmers and fisherfolks have received more support through post-harvest facilities and equipment given by the local government. The various agricultural initiatives of the City, such as cacao farming, crop protection, Plant Now, Pay Later Project, and cavendish production among others, are the long term solutions of the local government on food security and livelihood.

The case of Gingoog City teaches us that being adaptive to current situations means continuously implementing initiatives that look beyond the present and anticipate future challenges.

- **(Region 11) Mati City, Davao Oriental**

Mental health has been a priority in Mati City since 2016. With the pandemic affecting our mental conditions, the health program has been proven helpful and further maximized in the City. The local government of Mati inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Southern Philippines Medical Center (SPMC) which set up the telepsychiatric facility inside the Acute Psychiatric Care Unit (APCU) in one of the barangays in the City. Every week, a specialist from SPMC conducts a telepsychiatry session in the facility through teleconferences. Those who need to be admitted at the APCU are fed, treated and provided medications, all expenses covered by the LGU, even if they are not residents of the City.