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Direct Democracy in the Philippines

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Introduction

In the past two decades, Philippine civil society organizations (CSOs) have become critical players in ensuring the integrity of public service delivery. Formal and informal spaces for citizen participation are now available in the areas of public financial management (PFM). CSOs, both at the national and local levels, have developed and implemented tools and technologies aimed at fostering transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment in various stages of public financial management: planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring. While there are documented best practices of citizen engagement in governance in various sectors aimed at addressing development issues, the comprehensive stocktaking, knowledge generation, and analysis on how citizen technologies and tools have contributed towards fostering transparency, accountability, and integrity of the overall PFM process remain scant and under-publicized. Distilling the lessons from existing CSO practices can serve as inputs in developing key recommendations in improving citizen participation in PFM processes.

History of Direct Democracy

The Philippines experienced the renewal and broadening of civil society during the 1980s as mass mobilizations helped bring down the Marcos dictatorship. As a product of democratic transition, the 1987 Constitution recognizes the importance of civil society and its participation in governance and development. The Charter declares that the State shall encourage non-governmental, sector-specific, and community-based organizations that promote the welfare of the nation. It emphasizes that the right of the people and their organizations for effective and meaningful participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged. To pursue this aim, adequate consultation mechanisms will be set up by the government.

The Philippines is a unitary state with a presidential system of government. It is characterized by the formal separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Historically, the executive agencies under the direction of the President enjoyed wide latitude for development planning, spending decisions, and appointments of key people to steer the bureaucracy. Nevertheless, these actions were subject to the oversight authority exercised in the budget and confirmation hearings of Congress as well as the audit procedures of independent Constitutional bodies, including the Commission on Audit and the Civil Service Commission.

Since 1946, free elections were held on a regular basis to choose the leaders from the President to legislators and local government officials except for the fourteen-year interregnum from 1972 to 1986 when the country was placed under martial law. As a platform for voice and accountability, elections leave much to be desired. The combination of a weak political party system, poor election administration, and inadequate voters education led to the low quality of democracy and the failure to convert campaign platforms into effective governance programs. In this landscape, rent-seeking opportunities abound to use campaign finance contributions as a window to get state-conferred business contracts and other concessions. On the other hand, the politicized recruitment of executives for bureaucratic positions from the top down to the level of middle managers distorted efforts to professionalize the government career executive service.

The weakness of democratic institutions like political parties fostered a state that became vulnerable to capture by politicians and their business allies while being unable to provide ordinary citizens with the voice mechanisms to express their demands and gain access to public services. A two-party system shaped the contours of electoral politics from 1946 until it was destroyed by martial law in 1972. The return of formal democracy in the aftermath of the people power revolution in 1986 gave rise to a multi-party system. Nevertheless, the shift from a two-party towards a multi-party system did nothing to alter the general lack of clear programmatic differences among the major parties.

The downfall of authoritarianism led to the establishment of a Constitutional Commission by President Corazon Aquino. In 1987, a new Philippine Constitution was ratified. Reacting to the twenty-year rule of Ferdinand Marcos as president, the new Charter limited the term of office of the President to a single six-year term. Other elected leaders like legislators and local government officials are also governed by term limits but can seek re-election under restricted successive term provisions. Another feature is the introduction of proportional representation in Congress for party-list groups that promote the interests of marginalized sectors. Twenty percent of the seats in the House of Representatives are allocated for proportional representation. A party-list group gains a seat when it reaches the threshold of two percent of the national vote and can occupy as many as three seats in

Congress.

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Direct Democracy: Institutional and Non-institutional Mechanisms

Community-Driven Development

Community-driven development is pursued through the provision of grants for community-based social preparation, planning, and implementation of sub-projects such as water systems, access roads, schools, health stations, and daycare centers. The goal is to enable communities in target municipalities to enhance their access to social services and to engage in more inclusive local planning, budgeting, implementation, and disaster risk reduction and management.

The Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services-National Community-Driven Development (KALAHI-CIDSS-NCDD) Program encouraged marginalized communities to engage with their barangay officials in identifying their needs and accessing resources from other government agencies. The program enabled communities to participate in decision-making, exact accountability from local officials, and foil efforts to divert funds.

The Barangay Assembly became a venue for not just for reporting but also for accountability. It introduces the residents to the objectives and processes of the KALAHI-CIDSS-NCDD Program and validates the priority problems and proposed subprojects identified during the participatory situation analysis. The Barangay Assembly approves the various aspects of the chosen subprojects. During subproject construction, the Barangay Assembly instructs the village subproject management committees to report on the progress of implementation.

The Municipal Inter-Barangay Forum is the mechanism for subproject selection within the KALAHI-CIDSS-NCDD Program. Each village presents its proposal to the Forum, followed by an open forum where representatives of other villages are given an opportunity to raise questions about the proposal. After the subproject presentations are completed, proposals are graded using the criteria

agreed upon earlier. The scores of the proposals are consolidated to arrive at the overall ranking of the sub-projects. The ranking of the sub-projects is then used for the allocation of the KALAHI-CIDSS-NCDD Program municipal grant.

The Forum is a collaborative activity between the DSWD and the LGU. It aims to elevate people's understanding of the status of local development, especially in the areas of local governance, poverty reduction, and people empowerment. It provides a platform for face-to-face dialogue between project implementers and beneficiaries. It promotes the use of information by municipal and barangay officials to support better planning, implementation, and reporting.

Participatory Audit

The transition to democracy in 1986 opened windows for civil society participation in monitoring development programs of the government. In 1987, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the central planning agency of the government, signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG) to monitor the projects under the Community Employment and Development Program in the province of Abra.

To prepare for the task, the CCAGG volunteers underwent rigorous training on project monitoring. Capacity building was provided by the NEDA – Region I office. The CCAGG conducted community meetings and used local radio and newspapers, to inform residents about the status of public infrastructure projects. In the past, it was common for government agencies to declare the completion of projects and programs that have not been validated especially in remote areas where there are no local monitoring teams.

In a celebrated case, the CCAGG decided to conduct a social accountability check on the then Ministry Public Works and Highways report on the completion of 27 road projects in Abra. Mobilizing its band of citizen volunteers, the CCAGG produced detailed documentation of the actual state of the finished projects. The civil society audit contradicted the government report while many of the projects were only just beginning or were mid-way through the construction stage. The CCAGG report was submitted to the national government. An official audit on the road projects was launched. The COA report concurred with the findings of the CCAGG. As a result of public participation in infrastructure monitoring, 11 public works officials were suspended for dishonesty and misconduct. The Chief Engineer and Deputy Chief Engineer of MPWH in Abra were suspended without pay and debarred from serving in the province. Recognizing the critical role of the CCAGG in corruption prevention, the COA decided to partner with the CCAGG in conducting participatory auditing with the support of the United Nations Development Programme. The lessons from the audit exercises

were later incorporated into a Manual on the Conduct of Participatory Audit. Given its pioneering and extensive experience in infrastructure monitoring, the CCAGG was chosen to serve as Chair of the *Bantay Lansangan* (Road Watch) civil society network that monitored DPWH procurement processes under the Benigno S. Aquino III administration.

The Citizens Participatory Audit was launched in 2012 by the Commission on Audit (COA) and the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP). This mechanism makes it possible for CSOs and private professional organizations to participate in audit teams headed by COA. The CPA is based on the notion that the people have the “primordial right to a clean government and the prudent utilization of public resources”, and that “public accountability can prosper only with a vigilant and involved citizenry” (Department of Budget and Management, 2016). The following lists just some of the projects audited by CSOs under the CPA (Commission on Audit, n. d.):

- (a) Barangay health centers in Marikina City
- (b) Farm-to-Market Road (FMR) project
- (c) KAMANAVA flood control project
- (d) Solid waste management (SWM) program of Quezon City
- (e) Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) project

Textbook Count, a collaborative initiative between G-Watch and the Department of Education (DepEd), is intended to ensure that the right quantity and quality of textbooks are delivered to the right recipients at the right time. This effort is meant to:

- (a) Put an end to corruption in the procurement of textbooks;
- (b) Systematize the delivery of textbooks across the country.
- (c) Pressure suppliers to become more responsive to the needs of the citizens.
- (d) Establish standards regarding the performance of DepEd; and
- (e) Organizing citizens for monitoring and inspection efforts to attain greater transparency (Government Watch, 2012).

The CSOs involved in the Textbook Count program monitored DepEd’s delivery of textbooks and teachers’ manuals, the procurement process, counted and checked the materials, among others. Errors

or discrepancies discovered by the volunteers during the monitoring process were reported to the G-Watch, which then reports them to DepEd (La Salle Institute of Governance, 2012).

With the assistance provided by citizen volunteers, this initiative succeeded in ensuring the integrity of the bidding process, guaranteeing good textbook quality, assisting high schools and districts in checking that the textbooks were correctly delivered and distributing textbooks to different elementary schools (Government Watch, 2012).

People's Council

The Philippines developed a decentralized system of government with the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991. Specifically, the Code included the concepts of devolution, funding of local government units, and citizen participation. Local development councils in every province, city, municipality, and barangay determine the use of the local development fund which represents 20 percent of the Internal Revenue Allotment from the national government. Under the law, a quarter of the seats in these councils should be occupied by CSO representatives.

In 1995, a landmark legislation called the Empowerment Ordinance mandated the city government to recognize the importance of public participation, through non-government organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs) that are federated in the Naga City People's Council (NCPC), in fostering good local governance. The NCPC was empowered to appoint CSO representatives to local special bodies of the city government. It can observe, vote, and participate in the deliberation, conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of projects, activities, and programs of the city government. It can propose legislation, participate, and vote at the committee level of the elected city legislative council, and act as the people's representatives in the exercise of their right to information on matters of public concern and access to official records and documents.

There shall be one representative in the city council from each of the non-agricultural labor, women, and urban poor sectors of the city who shall be elected from among the members of the accredited NGOs and POs in each sector. The term of office of the elected sector representatives shall be co-terminus with the term of office of the regular members of the city council. They shall not be entitled to any salary. They may receive allowances as may be granted by the city council to defray the expenses for attending and participating in official functions, including city council sessions, committee hearings, and other activities in aid of legislation. The sector representatives shall enjoy the same rights and privileges, and exercise the same powers and responsibilities, as the regular members of the city council.

Through the efforts of the Naga City People's Council and with the support of the United Nations

Democracy Fund, capacity-building activities leading to the formation of local CSO networks were undertaken in the peripheral-urban municipalities that form part of the Metro Naga Development Council. The NCPC model is now being replicated in many parts of the province of Camarines Sur. The Naga City People's Council (NCPC), which was mandated by the Empowerment Ordinance of 1995, is a network of approximately 100 non-government and people's organizations in Naga. The NCPC functions not only as a watchdog of government actions but also as an active collaborator in making decisions and in the policy-making process. It is also a part of the *Sangguniang Panglungsod* committees, special local government bodies, and other groups (Naga City People's Council, 2015).

The Naga City People Empowerment Ordinance, which solidified the role of CSOs in Naga, has also empowered the NCPC to appoint NGO representatives to local special bodies of the city government. Under the ordinance, CSOs can observe, vote and participate in the deliberation, conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of projects, activities, and programs of the city government.. They can designate representatives to all city council committees, as well as suggest legislative measure and participate in deliberation and vote on a proposed legislation at the committee level of the *Sangguniang Panlungsod* of Naga. They can act as the people's representatives in the exercise of their constitutional rights to information on matters of public concern and access to official records and documents (Naga City People's Council, 2015).

Bottom-Up Budgeting

Being the constituents of a democratic state, Filipinos have the right to participate in the decision-making processes regarding public affairs and are encouraged to do so. This is to improve accountability and transparency, which are closely associated with good governance (La Salle Institute of Governance, 2012). In fact, the 1987 Constitution states that: "The State shall encourage non-governmental, community-based, or sectoral organizations that promote the welfare of the nation (Art. 2, Sec. 23)." Another important provision in the 1987 Constitution states that: "The right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged. The state shall, by law, facilitate the establishment of adequate consultation mechanisms (Art. 13, Sec. 16)."

In addition to this, the 1991 Local Government Code set down the structures of local government units (LGUs) as well as their powers and responsibilities. Aside from requiring LGUs to deliver the necessary basic goods and services to their constituents, the Code also promotes the participation of citizens in all aspects of governance. Some participatory mechanisms that serve as an avenue for the people to participate include mandatory consultations and public hearings. The Code

also encouraged the formation of Local Special Council Bodies which are semi-autonomous components linked to local governments that allow for the representation of CSOs as well as the private sector. Furthermore, one of the bodies mandated by the Code, the Local Development Councils, functions as “the mother local planning structure (La Salle Institute of Governance, 2012).” These legal frameworks, supported by an increasing desire of the public for greater accountability, have helped cultivate an environment that is conducive for CSOs inclined with monitoring and evaluation to flourish. Such organizations include the following: Citizen Score Cards, Procurement Watch, G-Watch, Social Watch, Local Government Watch, as well as the Social Housing Watch (La Salle Institute of Governance, 2012).

Over the last few decades since the post-Martial law period, CSOs have greatly improved in terms of effectiveness through “networking and coalition building, campaigning for policy reform, adopting good practice standards, and advancing ‘sustainable development’ as a uniting vision for all organizations” (Asian Development Bank, 2007). The PFM reforms over the last few years were pursued to address the persistent problems of corruption and poverty (Magno, 2015). According to the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) (2005), the Office of the Ombudsman determined that around U.S. \$48 billion was lost to government corruption between 1977 and 1997. This led to “the emergence of a set of core civil society beliefs about combating corruption and promoting good governance” (Dressel, 2012).

Citizen participation in the budget process is necessary for “better decision making, better planning, better budgeting, better expenditure and better accountability.” (Department of Budget and Management, 2016). Some of the most notable efforts include the Budget Partnership Agreement (BPA), Bottom-up Budgeting (BuB), and the Citizen’s Participatory Audit (CPA), all of which boosted the partnership between CSOs and the government (Department of Budget and Management, 2016). Today, opportunities for citizens and CSOs to participate in the budget process have widened. They can now take part in budget formulation, decision-making, monitoring the budget execution (Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific, 2010), budget analysis, as well as in public expenditure or input tracking (La Salle Institute of Governance, 2012). Interestingly, the Philippines ranked first among some selected Asian countries in the 2016 CSO Sustainability Index for Asia (United States Agency for International Development, 2016).

The Bottom-Up Budgeting (BUB) Process was introduced in 2012 for the preparation of the 2013 budget. Also known as Grassroots Participatory Budgeting (GPB), the BUB provides a mechanism for locally identified projects to be supported under the General Appropriations Act. It provides for the convening of a general assembly of CSOs who elect their representatives to the local

poverty reduction action team (LPRAT) to determine local priority projects. The CSO assemblies are convened by city and municipal level officers of the DILG, with the support of the provincial representatives of the basic sectors in the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC). These projects are submitted for incorporation into the budget of national agencies. Half of the membership in the LPRAT is from the government while the other half is from the CSO sector. The team is co-chaired by the Local Chief Executive and the CSO representative.

The first round of the BUB Process started with 5,898 projects in 609 cities and municipalities with a budget allocation of PHP 8.39 billion. The second round began in December 2012 for the 2014 budget. It expanded to 1,226 cities and municipalities involving 20,047 projects and funding support amounting to PHP 20.04 billion. Joint Memorandum Circular No. 4 was issued by the DBM, DILG, DSWD, and National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) in November 2013 for the 2015 budget preparation. All 1,534 cities and municipalities were covered. A total of 20,899 projects were identified with a budget of PHP 20.8 billion. Two modalities were applied, including the Regular BUB Process for the areas not covered by the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) Program, and the Enhanced BUB Process for LGUs that have graduated from or are currently under the KALAHI-CIDSS Program.

Under the Regular BUB Process, the government representatives include the Chair of the City or Municipal Committee on Appropriation, as well as the City or Municipal Department Heads such as the Planning Officer, Budget Officer, Fishery and Agriculture Officer, Social Welfare and Development Officer, Health Officer, Community, Environment and Natural Resource Management Officer (CENRO) and Public Employment Service Office (PESO) Manager. The representatives of national government agencies that sit in the LPRAT include the DSWD Municipal Links, the DILG Local Government Operations Officer, the School District Supervisor, and the Agrarian Reform Officer.

The CSOs with seats in the LPRAT would come from the following groups: (1) Pantawid Pamilya Parent-Leaders recognized by the DSWD, (2) Leaders from DOH-organized Community Health Teams, (3) Leaders of the Parent-Teacher Associations, (4) Leaders of CSOs accredited by LGUs, (4) Leaders of CSOs accredited by any National Government Agency, (5) Leaders of a women's group, (6) Leaders of a basic sector organization recognized by NAPC, (6) Leaders of other community or grassroots organizations. In cities and municipalities where indigenous peoples (IP) constitute over 20 percent of the population, one of the elected CSO representatives must come from the IP sector. A representative from a local business association also joins the LPRAT.

Municipalities that have graduated from or are currently implementing the KALAHI-CIDSS Program shall follow the Enhanced BUB Process. The LPRAT shall serve as the technical working group of the Enhanced Local Development Council (LDC). The LPRAT would consist of 10 representatives from the government, 5 Barangay (Village) Development Council Vice-Chairpersons selected through the KALAHI-CIDSS Program, and 5 CSO representatives in the Enhanced LDC who got elected during the CSO assembly.

To encourage the meaningful participation of CSOs in the CSO assembly and LPRAP workshop, it has been suggested that CSOs should be given ample time to consult with their members and prepare for the BUB activities. LGUs should inform CSOs and send invitations ahead of time. The need for a thorough mapping of CSOs is also recommended (Pastrana and Lagarto 2014).

Benefits and Challenges of Direct Democracy

Open Government and Fiscal Transparency

Supply-side governance reforms have led to the institution of open data mechanisms that provide financial and budget information to citizens. The Transparency Seal pushes for the mandatory disclosure of key budgets and major programs and plans on their websites. The Full Disclosure Policy of the DILG has resulted in the mandatory disclosure of key financial documents of local government units including budget, procurement, and special purpose fund reports such as the utilization of the Gender and Development (GAD) Fund, Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Fund.

The launching of the Philippines-Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) has created a tripartite working group involving government, civil society, and business to ensure greater transparency in revenues from extractive industries. The aim is the publication of a report that compares government and industry figures on government revenues in mining, oil and gas. The key challenge is how to make revenue reporting a mandatory, rather than voluntary, effort.

Public Participation in Budget Policy

Over the past five years, various efforts were made to enhance public participation in the budget cycle, from budget formulation to budget oversight. The Budget Partnership Agreement creates a means for CSO engagement with national government agencies in crafting budget proposals. Aside from providing local CSOs with a formal mechanism to engage in national and local budgeting, the

Bottom-Up Budgeting Process also sought to make national government more responsive to local needs, as well as to improve the quality of governance and service delivery at the local government level.

The pilot implementation of the BUB Process in 2012 involved 595 cities and municipalities, resulting in PHP 8 Billion worth of locally-determined poverty reduction programs and projects integrated into the 2013 budget. Since then, the Aquino government has gradually expanded the BUB Process. In crafting the 2015 budget, the participation of grassroots organizations in 1,590 cities and municipalities resulted in a larger allocation of PHP 20.9 billion.

Through the KALAHI-CIDSS-NCDD Program, the barangays of target municipalities have been empowered to improve their access to social services and to participate in inclusive local planning, budgeting, and implementation of budgets. On the other hand, the Citizens Participatory Audit has led to the conduct of performance audits with CSOs to help find out whether public funds are efficiently allocated and properly spent.

Public Participation in Performance Monitoring

The key performance monitoring system for local government units is the Seal of Good Housekeeping (SGH) which has been succeeded by the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG). The implementation of the SGH has enabled citizens to gain better access to information on local government finances and development projects. Through this performance system, local governments started sharing financial documents with the citizens online through the FDP Portal. About 7 of every 10 LGUs have regularly uploaded their financial documents. Due to good financial housekeeping encouraged by the SGH, there is now a decline in the number of local governments obtaining a negative COA Opinion Report.

The implementation of the SGH and SGLG assessment has resulted in more CSOs' engagement in program development and performance monitoring nationwide. Thousands of development projects have been and continue to be implemented with the support of the Performance Challenge Fund (PCF). More communities are able to enjoy public services, including water systems, health centers, public markets, and farm-to-market roads that were created through PCF projects.

In monitoring the compliance of government agencies with the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007, CSOs join surprise visits to government agencies through the ARTA Watch of the Civil Service Commission. This social accountability mechanism is used by the Commission to promote awareness and compliance with the service standards identified in the Citizen Charters of national agencies and LGUs.

Reforms toward Full Democracy

The divide between government and CSOs has become more blurred today than ever before. However, both actors have begun to work closely together to address societal issues and to achieve greater transparency and accountability. This is known as co-production, which is defined by Elinor Ostrom (1996) as “a process through which inputs from individuals who are not ‘in’ the same organization are transformed into goods and services”. This implies that consumers of public goods and services may also serve as producers, which makes them *consumer producers* (Alford, 2014).

However, for citizens to better participate in co-production mechanisms, they must be empowered and competent, especially since these individuals serve as the backbone of any organization. Human capital development is essential for any group to function. In his book *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen (1999) asserted that freedom is both the end and the means of development. He specified five freedoms: (1) political freedom, (2) economic facilities, (3) social opportunities, (4) transparency guarantee, and (5) protective security. These individual freedoms are needed to achieve development, which he defined as the “process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy”. Hence, to build their capacity, it is necessary for individual citizens to have the freedom to make use of opportunities in exercising their rights such as the right to participate in the decision-making process in public affairs; this is what Sen’s (1999) capability approach is all about.

Based on the experiences of the CSOs concerned, it is apparent that the ties between the government, CSOs, the academe, and other stakeholders have become more intertwined. It has become more practical and convenient for them to work together in carrying out tasks, especially since a single actor does not possess all the necessary resources, funds, manpower, and assets to achieve certain functions. From the examples provided above, it is that both the national and local governments working with CSOs are actively engaged in the budget preparation process. The Senate and Congress are the main actors in the budget legislation phase, while CSOs participate in the procurement and accountability phases through monitoring. In short, CSOs play a vital role in planning for projects and programs and in monitoring these initiatives that are then implemented by the government.

In addition, the participation of non-governmental actors, especially in monitoring, has been proven effective in improving transparency and accountability as well as in reducing the incidences of corruption in government. The direct involvement of stakeholders and local CSOs in the budget cycle is necessary because these are the very people who have experienced and therefore understand the issues within their respective localities. After all, most of these concerns are better addressed at the micro-level. Thus, enabling CSOs to assume an active role in the budget process empowers them

since they get to somewhat decide for themselves and their community. It is also worth noting that it is clearly important that the citizen volunteers who are involved in conducting projects must be knowledgeable and competent with what they are doing. This is the reason why some CSOs conduct training or capacity-building mechanisms to train and empower their volunteers.

It is also interesting that the media and the Internet are considered important tools in strengthening ties and harmonizing relationships between the government and the citizens. With the massive exposure of people to social media, they can easily post and disseminate societal concerns that can be addressed by the government. This kind of action alone shows that by simply posting and sharing something on social media, a citizen can have the power to influence government actions. In this kind of modern, the Filipinos' basic right to free speech as guaranteed in the constitution, is better used not simply as a venue for creative expression but, more importantly, as an effective mechanism for positive empowerment in strengthening the democratic process for nation-building in the grassroots level.

Although some issues have been raised regarding the long-term sustainability of CSOs, these can be properly addressed. Such issues include the lack of time of those in urban areas to engage in social causes, convincing local government officials to consider certain plan changes, encouraging citizens to get more readily involved in local engagements (Lacson, de la Rosa and de Guia, 2018), and not gaining the support of LGUs (Naga City People's Council, 2015). Issues on funding may also exist considering that many CSO initiatives rely heavily on funds provided by international organizations like the United Nations or other foreign governments.

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