

Decentralization Policy of Local Government Units in the First District of Ilocos Sur

Christopher F. Bueno

University of Northern Philippines

Abstract

The study determined the effectiveness and responsiveness of decentralization policy in the first district of Ilocos Sur. It employed the descriptive survey research design with documentary analysis on the provisions of Republic Act No. 7160 in the areas of basic services. The findings revealed that the group respondents had favorable responses with a descriptive evaluation of highly effective in areas on Community-Based Forestry Projects; Municipal Agricultural Services; Health Services and Social Welfare Services. Furthermore, the group respondents have similar view as to the effectiveness and responsiveness on the decentralization policy for extension and on-site services and facilities and infrastructure services. It is indicated in this study that the visibility of the projects provides better insights in evaluating the development programs of the LGU. However, there are varied responses as to the effectiveness and responsiveness of decentralization policy for health services and social services. The primary respondents provided an objective evaluation as to how they implemented their programs while secondary respondents evaluated the current state of health services and the social services in the LGU.

Keyword index: *decentralization, policy, local government, Ilocos Sur*

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of Republic Act No.7160 otherwise known as Local Government Code of 1991 had evolved to new structural process through the application of decentralization system in local governance. In this mandate, the Local Government Units have given more powers, authority, responsibilities and resources to become responsive and self-reliant to the needs of the community. This is also implemented and formulated based on the operative principle of decentralization as provided in the policy and application of Republic Act No.7160. The operative principle of decentralization is provided in section 3, Chapter I, title one form paragraph (a) to (m) as mandated in the Local Government Code of 1991.

Specifically, this study evaluated the effectiveness and responsiveness of decentralization policy within the context of basic services and facilities (Republic Act No. 7160, Section 17-2). Those devolved programs that are transferred to LGUs: Agricultural Extension and On-Site Research (DA); infrastructure projects (DPWH); Field Health and Hospital Services (DOH); Social Welfare Services (DSWD); Community-Based Forestry Program (DENR) and other investment support services. It should be noted that the critical analysis in the devolved programs relies so much on the priority development programs implemented by the LGU Executive Officials including the support of the head or chief of municipal offices. Thus, it utilized the LGU Executive Officials, Department Heads and Personnel to assess their current experiences as to the implementation of the decentralization policy in their respective municipality.

Objectives

This study assessed the effectiveness and responsiveness of decentralization policy in the first district of Ilocos Sur. It specifically determined the socio-demographic profile of the secondary and primary respondents in terms of age; sex; monthly income; plantilla position; educational attainment; and years of government service. It also analyzed the effectiveness and responsiveness of decentralization policy of the group respondents along the following: a) extension and on-site research services and facilities of the municipal agriculture b) health services of the Rural Health Units in the municipalities of first district of Ilocos Sur and social welfare services of the Municipal Social Welfare Office and evaluated the over-all responses on the basic services for the as the effectiveness and responsiveness on the decentralization policy of the Local Government Units. It finally determined if there is a significant difference in the responses of the group respondents regarding the effectiveness and responsiveness of the decentralization policy of the said Republic Act.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to the first district of Ilocos Sur which includes the municipality of Sinait, Cabugao, San Juan, Magsingal, Sto. Domingo, San Ildefonso, San Vicente, Santa Catalina, Bantay and Caoayan. There were 71 respondents who evaluated the level of effectiveness and responsiveness of the decentralization policy in the first district of Ilocos Sur. Majority of the respondents were LGU executive officials and heads or chief of departments who were implementing the basic services programs in their municipality. They served as the key informant to assess the current status of the decentralization policy.

The secondary data of the study on the delivery of service and the result of research studies on decentralization which includes the primary analysis of the fiscal administration in relation to the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) and budgetary allocation of the municipality. The development initiatives are directed from the implementation of the devolved basic services along agriculture, health, environment, and infrastructure. Lastly, the popular participation includes the effectiveness along the service delivery provided in the municipality.

Review of Related Literature

The Code provides for three forms of decentralization-"devolution," "deconcentration," and "debureaucratization." Devolution is defined as the transfer of political power and authority over a distinct territory from the national government to local governments (Sections 15 and 171). Deconcentration is the parallel transfer of administrative control over a certain sector. Debureaucratization is the transfer of certain public functions to private entities or NGOs. Specifically, under the Code, LGUs gain the main responsibility for the delivery of basic services and facilities in their communities (Section 17 a and b)

According to Raquiza (1998), the implementation of the decentralization policy of the LGU in tum, they are to acquire: (1) a bigger share of the internal revenue and other national assets (Sections 284-290) as well as more opportunities for revenue generation and application (Section 18); (2) jurisdiction over personnel previously under national government agencies, or NGAs (Section 17i); and (3) material and technical assistance, particularly from the devolved NGAs (Section 17h). Likewise, Capuno (2009) pointed out that they are suppose to allocate funds for the devolved functions from their substantial incremental share in the internal revenues of the national government and in the proceeds from sale of natural wealth (like mineral resources), and from other locally sourced revenues

Simultaneous with vesting local governments with a broader mandate, the Code institutionalizes people's participation in community decision-making processes through, for instance, the creation of representative local special bodies, most notably the local development councils (Section 107) (Raquiza, 1998)

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the descriptive survey research design using documentary analysis on the provisions of Republic Act No. 7160 in the areas of basic services. This research study evaluated the extent of effectiveness and responsiveness of decentralization policy of the Local Government Units through the delivery of basic services with an end goal of improving the quality of life by the people of the municipality. These basic services and facilities evaluated in this study were; (1) Extension and On-Site Research Services (2) Community-Based Forestry; (3) Health Services; (4) Social Welfare services; and (5) Infrastructure Services.

The questionnaires were gathered through the following group respondents who provided relevant data and information on the extent of effectiveness and responsiveness of the decentralization policy of this study: Group A - LGU executive officials for elective positions: (1) Mayors; and (2) Sangguniang Bayan Members; Group B - Chief/ Head of Departments:(1) Municipal Head and Personnel; (2) Municipal Treasurers; (3) Assessor Officers; (4) Budget Officers; (5) Bookkeepers; (6) Accountants; Group C-- Local Governance and Development Officers: (1) Local Government Officers; and (2) Municipal Development Planning Officers; and Group D - Agriculturists and Medical Personnel: (1) Agricultural Technicians; (2) Agricultural Officers; (3) RHU Medical Officers and Personnel; and (4) Social Welfare Officers.

The respondents of Group D were classified into primary and secondary respondents to have an objective analysis as to the set of data questionnaire answered by them. The secondary respondents were those not directly involved in the implementation of the basic services in the municipality including Group A, Group B and Group C. The primary respondents were the following; (1) Extension and On-Site Research Services and Facilities - Agricultural Technicians and Agricultural Officers (2) Health Services - RHU Medical Officers and Personnel; and (3) Social Welfare - Social Welfare Officers. To determine the level of effectiveness and responsiveness of the decentralization policy, the following numerical and descriptive scales are presented below:

Scale	Description
4.21 - 5.00	Very High Level of Effectiveness and Responsiveness (VH)
3.41 - 4.20	High Level of Effectiveness and Responsiveness (H)
2.61 - 3.40	Average Level of Effectiveness and Responsiveness (A)
1.81 - 2.60	Low Level of Effectiveness and Responsiveness (L)
1.00 - 1.80	Not Effective and Responsive (NE)

This study used the frequency counts, percentages and mean to analyze the level of effectiveness and responsiveness of the decentralization policy in the Ist district of Ilocos Sur. The respondents evaluated the extent of effectiveness in the decentralization policy of Republic Act No. 7160 otherwise known as Local Government Code of 1992 through the responsiveness of delivery of basic services with an end goal of improvement of quality life by the people of the municipality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

The profile of respondents in terms of age, sex, monthly income, plantilla position, educational attainment and years of service is shown in Table I.

Age. Majority of the respondents generally belonged to the age bracket 41-50. This is particularly true for the respondents in Group A (60.00%) and Group C (66.67%). For the respondents in Group D (50.00%), one-half belonged to the same age bracket.

Sex. Majority of the respondents in three groups (Groups A, B, and C) are male. For the respondents in Group D, there is an equal distribution by sex.

Monthly Income. The Group A for the Mayors and Sangguniang Bayan Members had a monthly income bracket of P 21,000.00- 25,000.00 which is within the salary grade of 25 to 29. It has similar salary grade bracket with Group B (Municipal Health Officers, Municipal Treasurers, Municipal Civil Registrars, Municipal Assessors and Municipal Accountants). The Municipal Development Planning and Local Government Officers had monthly income bracket range of P16,000.00 – P20,999.00 with salary grade range of 16 to 24. It must be noted that salary grade level 16-29 from monthly income bracket of P 16,000.00- P 25,000 is a favorable one as compared with the poverty threshold income below P 12,000.00. This poverty threshold income is within the salary grade level 5–14 or a monthly income of P5,000.00–P 12,000.00.

Table 1. Distribution of the Socio Demographic Profile of Respondents in terms of Age, Sex, Monthly Income, Plantilla Position, Educational Attainment

Profile of Respondents	Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D		As a Whole	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Age										
Over60	2	13.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2.82
51-60	2	13.33	2	11.11	4	22.22	9	45.00	17	23.94
41-50	9	60.00	8	44.44	12	66.67	10	50.00	39	54.93
31-40	2	13.33	6	33.33	2	11.11	1	5.00	11	15.49
21-30	-	-	2	11.11	-	-	-	-	2	2.82
Total	15	100	18	100	18	100	20	100	71	100
Sex										
Male	8	53.33	10	55.56	10	55.56	10	50.00	38	52.52
Female	7	46.67	8	44.44	8	44.44	10	50.00	33	46.48
Total	15	100	18	100	18	100	20	100	71	100
Monthly Income										
26,000-30,000	-	-	1	5.56	3	16.67	-	-	4	5.63
21,000-25,999	15	100	8	44.44	7	38.89	-	-	30	42.25
16,000-20,999	-	-	3	16.66	8	44.44	7	35.00	18	25.36
11,000-15,999	-	-	5	27.78	-	-	3	15.00	8	11.27
Below 10,999	-	-	1	5.56	-	-	10	50.00	11	15.49
Total	15	100	18	100	18	100	20	100	71	100
Plantilla Position										
Permanent	-	-	18	100	18	100	20	100	56	78.87
Elective	15	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	21.13
Total	15	100	18	100	18	100	20	100	74	100
Educ'l. Attainment										
With MA Units	-	-	-	-	3	16.67	-	-	3	4.22
College Grad.	15	100	18	100	15	83.33	20	100	35	95.78
Total	15	100	18	100	18	100	20	100	71	100
Years of Govt Service										
Above20	-	-	7	38.89	12	66.67	16	80	35	49.30
16-20	2	13.35	7	38.89	6	33.33	-	-	15	21.12
11-15	2	13.35	2	11.11	-	-	1	5	5	7.04
6-10	8	53.00	-	-	-	-	2	10	10	14.09
0-5	3	20.00	2	11.11	-	-	1	5	6	8.45
Total	15	100	18	100	18	100	20	100	71	100

Legend. Group A- Mayors & Sanggunian Bayan Members
 Group B - Chief/Head of Departments
 Group C- Local Governance & Development Officers
 Group D - Agriculturists and Medcial Personnel

Plantilla Positions. Majority of the respondents have permanent plantilla positions. But Group A respondents are elective positions such as Mayor and Sangguniang Bayan Members. The security of tenure is provided for those with

permanent plantilla positions.

Educational Attainment. Majority of the respondents were college graduate in their field of specialization. The Group C respondents, Local Government Officers and Municipal Development Planning Officers had higher educational attainment with MA Units. The respondents had not considered the professional development through MA Graduate Studies. Based on the interview conducted the career service appointments including promotion for municipal position's depend on the discretion of the incumbent executive official in the municipality. The decentralization policy on human resource and development as provided in Book I, Title 3, Section 77 of Republic Act No. 7160 mandates the chief executive of the LOU is responsible in the human resource and development of the unit.

Years of Government Service. Majority of the respondents had above 20 years of service for Group C and D. This also holds true for Group B with 38.89 percentage distribution for 15 - 20 years of government service. This long years of government service can also justified by the age group bracket which majority of them were already 50-60 years old for the above 20 years of government service and 40- 50 years old for the 15-20 years of government service. Except in Group A with varied government years of service: 0-5 years; 6-10 years; 10-15 years; and 16-20 years of service. The Group A respondents were holding elective positions so those with more years in government service were possibly reelected from their incumbent positions.

Extension and On-Site Research Services and Facilities

Table 2 shows the agricultural services through extension and on-site research services and facilities. This decentralization policy has responsive delivery of agricultural services which conformed with the high level responses of the primary respondents the agriculture specialists, and the secondary respondents the implementers and planners for the agricultural services. It has been effectively implemented as provided in the republic Act No. 7160 (Section 17, (2) ii) in the enforcement of community based forestry projects which include integrated social forestry programs and similar projects, management and control of communal forests including the establishment of tree parks, greenbelts, and similar forest development projects. The groups of respondents in this study provided an average level of effectiveness in the areas of transfer of technology, other collective organizations and fishermen's cooperative. The Department of Agriculture through Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and University of Northern Philippines has been supporting the LGUs in the coastal management and aqua-culture development. The transfer of technology has also been receiving support from DA, TESDA

and the DOST.

Decentralization Policy on the Delivery of Basic Services and Facilities

Table 2. The Level of Effectiveness and Responsiveness of Extension and On-Site Research Services and Facilities

Basic Services	Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D		As a Whole	
	X	D	X	D	5	D	X	D	X	D
1. Prevention and Control of plants	3.43	H	3.17	A	3.18	H	4.00	H	3.44	H
2. Prevention and control of animal pests and disease	3.50	H	3.25	A	3.42	H	3.89	H	3.52	H
3. Dairy Farms	2.08	A	1.81	L	1.58	NA	1.33	NE	1.70	NA
4. Livestock Markets	3.15	A	2.72	A	2.20	L	2.59	NE	2.66	A
5. Animal Breeding Station	2.62	A	2.92	A	1.70	NA	1.09	NE	2.08	L
6. Artificial Insemination Center	1.85	L	1.83	L	1.45	NA	1.30	NE	1.61	NA
7. Assistance in the Organization of Farmers	3.62	H	3.69	H	3.69	H	4.05	H	3.76	H
8. Fishermen's Cooeralives	3.62	H	3.54	H	2.70	A	3.38	A	3.31	A
9. Other Collective Oraanizations	2.54	L	3.00	A	3.75	H	2.18	L	2.87	A
10. Transfer of appropriate Technoloov	2.62	A	2.58	L	2.59	A	3.94	H	3.02	A
11. Community-Based Forestrv Project	3.33	H	3.37	A	3.44	H	4.50	VH	3.66	H
Overall	2.94	A	2.90	A	3.73	H	2.93	A	2.88	A

The current status on the responsiveness and effectiveness in the health provisions showed high level of responses particularly on the part of the primary respondents (Medical Officers, Midwives and other RHU Personnel) 5=3.78. It had effectively implemented the primary health (←=4.09) and maternity health care (7=4.00). It is on basis of the initiative of the Local Health Board to implement the mandate of the decentralization policy along Book I, Title 5, Republic Act No. 7160. The Local Health Board has the direct control as to the implementation of priority health programs including budgetary allocations for the purchase of medicines, medical supplies and equipment.

Table 3. Effectiveness and Responsiveness on the Decentralization of Health Services in the Local Government Units

HEALTH SERVICES	Secondary Respondents								Average		Primary Respondents		Asa Whole
	Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D						
	X	D	X	D	5	D	5	D	5	D	\bar{X}	D	\bar{z}
1. Primary Health Care	3.57	H	3.67	H	3.90	H	3.40	A	3.12	A	4.56	VH	4.09 (H)
2. Maternity Health Care	3.38	A	3.42	H	3.82	H	3.60	H	3.56	H	4.44	VH	4.00 (H)
3. Communicable and Non Communicable Services	3.30	A	3.25	A	3.45	H	3.44	H	3.36	A	3.66	A	3.51 (H)
4. Access To Secondary And Tertiary Health Services	3.08	A	3.09	A	3.09	A	3.44	H	3.18	A	4.11	H	3.64 (H)
5. Purchase of Medicines, Medical Supplies And Equipment	3.62	H	3.5	H	3.45	H	3.33	A	3.47	H	3.88	H	3.68 (H)
Overall	3.39	A	3.39	A	3.54	H	3.44	H	3.34	A	4.13	H	3.78 (H)

However, the communicable and non-communicable diseases control services had the lowest mean rating response ($\bar{X}=3.51$) among the indicators of effectiveness and responsiveness in this study. This is attributed to the awareness of respondents that prevention and control of communicable diseases has been the responsibility of the Department of Health to implement such program. The devolution of the health services has been confronted with financial constraints with limited Internal Revenue Allotment of the municipality provided the low level of effectiveness in the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Table 4. Effectiveness and Responsiveness on the Decentralization Policy of Social Welfare in the Local Government Units

Social Welfare Services	Group A		Group B		Group C		Group D		Group D Primary Respondents		As a Whole	
	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D
1. Child And Youth Service	3.62	H	3.50	H	3.75	H	3.67	H	3.62	H	3.63	H
2. Family and Youth Welfare	3.31	A	3.29	A	3.82	H	3.33	A	3.62	H	3.47	H
3. Women Welfare	3.38	A	3.54	H	3.64	H	3.67	H	3.67	H	3.58	H
4. Welfare of the Elderly and Disabled Persons	3.15	A	3.46	H	3.55	H	3.22	A	3.62	H	3.40	A
5. Community-Based Rehabilitation	2.61	A	2.67	A	2.33	L	2.67	A	3.50	H	2.76	A
6. Livelihood and Major Projects	3.38	A	6.57	H	3.09	A	3.88	H	3.50	H	3.48	H
7. Nutrition Services	3.46	H	3.46	H	3.36	A	3.16	A	3.33	A	3.35	A
8. Family Planning Services	3.46	H	3.27	A	3.18	A	3.77	H	3.89	H	3.51	H
Overall	3.30	A	3.35	A	3.34	A	3.42	H	3.59	H	3.40	A

Decentralization Policy on Social Welfare

Generally, the effectiveness and responsiveness of the decentralization policy of social welfare in the LGUs was assessed at an "average" by the respondents.

It was found out that there were high rating of mean on Child and Youth Service ($\bar{X}=3.63$); Family Planning Services ($\bar{X}=3.51$); Women's Welfare ($\bar{X}=3.40$); Family and Youth Welfare ($\bar{X}=3.47$) and Livelihood Program ($\bar{X}=3.48$). All these areas are identified in priority social services in Article 13, Book III of Republic acts No. 7160. The primary respondents (Social Welfare Officers) had an average responses on nutrition services ($\bar{X}=3.33$) and the secondary respondents identified community-based rehabilitation with an average response ($\bar{X}=2.76$). The low promotion on nutrition services as attributed to the specialization of social welfare to concentrate on areas of child, youth and family welfare. This service is related to the work of the RHU in health services. While community-based rehabilitation has a

concern on the financial resources needed to implement this kind of project for the community. Aldaba (2007) proved that financial resources remained to be the problem in the implementation of social services that almost all the current major studies of devolution in the social service delivery from the LGU perspective has shown compelling proof that social services has received minimal allocation both in the national budget and LGU budget

Table 6. Differences in the Assessment on the Level of Effectiveness and Responsiveness on the Decentralization Policy of Republic Act No. 7061 Across Groups of Respondents

Variables	F-ratio	Value of T	Critical Value	Interpretation
1. Extension and On Site Research and Facilities	.179		2.84	Not Significant
2. Health Services		4.18	1.86	Significant
3. Social Services		1.78	1.761	Significant

Table 6 presents the differences on the responses of the different groups of respondents on the level of effectiveness and responsiveness on the decentralization policy of Republic Act No. 7160 in the areas of extension and on-site research services and facilities, health services, and social welfare services. It was found out that there is no significant difference on the responses of the different group of respondents on the level of effectiveness and responsiveness on the decentralization policy for extension and on-site research services and facilities with an F value of 0.179 which is lower than the tabular value of 2.84 at 0.05 level of significance.

It is shown from the responses of the extension and on-site research services and facilities that had commonly responded that the farmers' organization provided effective and responsive support given by the LGU in the delivery of agricultural services.

However, there is a significant difference on the level effectiveness and responsiveness on the decentralization policy for health service as indicated by the computed t-value of 1.78 higher than critical value of 1.86. It must be noted that the primary respondents have evaluated well in tenn of their performance on health programs for primary health care, maternal and child care and communicable and non-communicable diseases. However, the study of Capono (2009) and Raquiza (1998) that devolution in health services have not enough budget to support the program.

There is a significant difference on the level effectiveness and responsiveness on the decentralization policy for health service as indicated by the computed t value of 4.18 higher than critical value of 1.761. This implies that the variation may be attributed from the financial resources provided for social services in the LGU. It responded well to the insight of Aldaba (2007) as to the effectiveness of delivery of social services depends so much about the local budget for social welfare.

CONCLUSIONS

Those who had reached 20 age bracket of the respondents is within maturity age wherein decisions are made based on their professional responsibility. On gender analysis, the four (4) group respondents have similar view as their responses in the decentralization policy. There had been low monthly income of the LGU Personnel as proven by this study under the Group D respondents (Agricultural specialists) whose monthly income is within salary range below P 10,000.00. The security of tenure is to provide for those permanent plantilla position, it is assumed that responses are more objectively presented in this study. Majority of the respondents were college graduate. Majority of respondents' years of government service. There is highly effective and responsive delivery of agricultural services through the assistance in the organization of farmers. The respondents assessed highly responsive and effective health services program on primary health care and maternity health care. But low level or responses for communicable and non-communicable control diseases. The respondents evaluated high responses on responsive and effective social welfare program on child and youth service, family planning services, women's welfare and livelihood program. However, there is low promotion on nutrition services as attributed to the specialization of social welfare to concentrate on areas of child, youth and family welfare. This service is related to the work of the RHU in health service. The group respondents had favorable responses with a descriptive evaluation of highly effective in areas on (1) Community-Based Forestry Projects ; (2) Agricultural Services; (3) Health Services; and (4) Social Welfare Services . The group respondents have similar view as to the effectiveness and responsiveness on the decentralization policy for extension and on-site services and facilities. However, there are varied responses as to the effectiveness and responsiveness of decentralization policy for health services and social services. The primary respondents provided an objective evaluation as to the implementation how they implemented their programs while secondary respondents evaluated the current state of health services and social services in the LGU.

LITERATURE CITED

- Albada, F. (2008). A review of DSWD devolution. *Department of Social Welfare and Development Journal, Vol. 2, Issue No. 2*
- Capuno, J. (2009). *A case study of the decentralization of health and education services in the Philippines*. Human Development Network, Philippine Human Development Report Issue. UP School of Economics
- Raquiza, A.R. (1998). *Decentralization and official development assistance: USAID 's local development assistance program : A case study*. USAID: Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement.
- Goetz, E. G., (1993). The new localism from a cross-national perspective," in Goetz and Clarke, Eds., *The New localism: Comparative Urban Politics in a Global Era*,
- Altintas, H. et al, (2002). *Devolution and decentralization patterns of local government in Turkey*. EGPA Annual Conference, Turkey Potsdam.
- Campbell, A. (1996). Russia: The Reinvention of Local Government?" In Ben-Elia, Editor, *Strategic Changes and Organizational Reorientations in Local Government: A Cross-National Perspective*, pages 135-157.
- Schultz, A. (1979). *Local Politics and Nation-States: Case Studies in politics and policy*. Santa Barbara: Clio books, 234 pages.
- Elazegui, D. et al, (2001). *Policy imperatives for management under a decentralized regime: The Philippine Case*. SANREM Research Synthesis Conference, Athens, Georgia, USA, November 28-30.
- Sanrem (2001). *Conference on sustaining upland development in Southeast Asia: issues, tools and institutions for local natural resource management*, sponsored by SANREM CRSP, ACCEED Conference Center, Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines, May 28-