



# Delivery of Devolve Social Services: Its Contributions to the Socio-economic Conditions of Women in Columbio Sultan Kudarat

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## Abstract

This is an evaluative study on the delivery of devolved programs in health, agriculture and social welfare. It aimed to identify the major devolved programs/projects implemented by the LGU of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat; the responsiveness of the actual delivery of devolve services in terms of human resources, facilities and fund allocation; the status of devolve services implemented if it was effective and efficient; and the inadequacies encountered. The “expose facto” method of research was used. There were 49 implementers and 132 beneficiaries of the various devolved programs. There were 181 total respondents. A four-part questionnaire was constructed and the gathered data were supplemented by information extracted through interviews with Key Informants, Focus Group Discussions and document analysis. There were three departments implementing the devolved social services programs such as the Municipal Health Office with 6 devolved health programs; the Municipal Agriculturist Office with 6 devolved agricultural projects; and the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office with 7 devolved social welfare programs. The respondents rated the implementation of devolve services in health, agriculture and social welfare programs between rank 5 to 9 for the aspects of human resources, facilities and fund allocations. The respondents assessed the implementation of devolved programs as Very Efficient and Most Responsive programs to the needs of the people specially the children, youths and women. The study also found some inadequacies observed during the implementation of devolved social services programs which were Agreed by the majority of the respondents. These findings implied that the implementation of various devolved social services for several years has made a significant difference in the lives of the people of the Municipality of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat, the Local Government of Columbio and program implementers with their commitment and solidarity to serve the people especially the marginalized is a manifestation of their unselfish dedication to uplift the socio-economic condition and well-being of the people. Hence, continuing projects should further be strengthened and supported to ensure the sustainability of the projects even if the support of different institutions has been terminated.

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**Keywords** Local Government Code of 1991 · Decentralization · Women · Delivery of social services · Socio-economic conditions

## Introduction

It is said that a centralized governance has yet to provide an authentic development. Its progress and benefits are limited only to the few, and it is at the expense of the many. A decentralized one on the other hand emphasizes people-centered development. Decentralization of power and responsibilities and people's participation in all activities and programs is of vital importance [7]. The more the state becomes decentralized, resilient, and empowered, the more it will achieve an authentic development.

Thus, in the Philippines, the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991 highlights the devolution of the powers, functions, responsibilities and resources among different Local Government Units (LGUs). In understanding this Code's primary role in the development and growth of communities, LGUs exercises the service delivery functions to make them more responsive to the most basic needs of their respective constituencies [6]. In aims to promote the transformation of individuals and beneficiaries, fostering an enabling, accessible, responsive, and accountable state requires policies that recognize and advance the universal rights and responsibilities of citizens, and strengthen the capacity of people in recognizing their rights. It also requires a recognition and celebration of multiculturalism as a source of strength for societies (Social Development in East Asia and Pacific: 2007). And under the Medium Term Philippine Development Program (1999–2004), the principles of social justice, human development, social equity, self-reliance, popular participation and preservation/rehabilitation of the environment shall continue to guide the provision of social welfare and community development services.

The Local Government of Columbio therefore, aimed to strengthen the implementation and coordination of the social welfare programs and services in the rural areas in order to enable the municipality's poorest and disadvantaged to restore their normal functioning and participation in the mainstream of local and national development. However, administrative capacity of local organizations must be strengthened first before new functions and responsibilities are assigned to them [11]. The task of national agencies must be reoriented in a decentralized system of administration from control to supervision and support, and their capacity to strengthen local governments must be expanded [12].

The Local Government of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat despite its limited financial resources has committed the allocation of funds for economic and social development programs of its people. Aside that there are also lapses in the transfer of resources, funds and materials in the implementation of devolved services from the national government, the local government also experienced difficulties in monitoring and implementing the projects.

The aim of the study is to assess the departments of health, agricultural, and social welfare and development's delivery of devolved services. Supposed target beneficiaries of the program by the Local Government of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat

are its constituents. The study seeks to find out answers on the major devolve programs/projects implemented by the LGU of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat. It also would like to know the respondents perception on the status of devolve services in health, agriculture, and social welfare in terms of Human Resources, Facilities, and Fund Allocation. It also wants to know the status of the devolved services implemented in Columbio, Sultan Kudarat in terms of economical, effectiveness and efficiency. And lastly, it would like to seek answers on the respondents perception on the responsiveness and the inadequacies or problems encountered in the actual delivery of devolved social services as perceived by the beneficiaries.

It is in line with the purpose of coming up with concrete evidence that this study was conducted with the objective of helping in one way or another improve the delivery of devolved social services to the general public in the municipality. Moreover, the researcher wanted to know also the problems encountered from the implementation stage up to the monitoring of the status of projects/programs in the area.

## Theoretical Framework

The Local Government Code of 1991 and the principle of decentralization were the concepts which this study is anchored. The Local Government Code (RA 7160) highlights decentralization which the 1987 constitution states that local governments shall among other things “provide for a more responsive and accountable local government structure instituted through a system of decentralization...” [5].

Decentralization is better understood as the shift of power and functions from the national government down to local government. It is based on the premise that the national government holds vast amount of power, thus, the approach of decentralization is to diffuse this and make local governments take its part. As Rondinelli et al. [10] theorized, decentralization can be deconcentration of of functions from central bureaucracy to local governments or to non-government organizations. This attempt of decentralization accordingly showed mixed results but in some countries, it resulted to greater participation in development activities, more effective and efficient administration of pocal and rural ddevelopment programs and expanded administrative capacity outside of the national government. As Cheema and Rondinelli [2] shared, decentralization must be an incremental process of capacity building of the non-governmental and local organizations in accepting and carrying out effectively new functions and responsibilities. The process must be carefully nurtured from the center and accompanied by a shift in the orientation of central bureaucracy from control to facilitation and support.

Thus, development policy and administration is focused on shifting from attaining macro growth to meeting people’s basic needs, which serves as means in improving their skills and productivity, and increase their income and purchasing power and also as an end in itself [1]. This approach achieves development from the bottom through promoting locals participation in development and administration process and attain community self-reliance. Theories of Sens (1985, 1992, 1999) shared broadest perspective of development goals. Accordingly, through enhancing human capabilities and his freedom to choice, the promotion of well-being is

the ultimate goal [3]. Likewise, the successful implementation of decentralization requires trust and respect between citizens and public officials, and recognition of the important roles that each can perform in the development process. On one hand, through decentration it will make local programs more responsible, and react more quickly to unanticipated problems that inevitably arise during implementation [8].

In fact this theory, decentralization should allow projects to be completed sooner by giving local managers greater discretion in decision making so as to enable them to cut through the red tape and the ponderous procedures often associated with over centralized administrations [9].

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study made use of the expose facto method of research. This method is most appropriate in unfolding the necessary information, data and feedback to the relevance, responsiveness and effectiveness of devolved services being delivered in the Municipality of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat Province.

### **Locale of the Study**

The Municipality of Columbio has a total land area of approximately 94,406.87 hectares and composed of sixteen (16) barangays. It is located in the easternmost part of the Province of Sultan Kudarat, bounded on the North by the Municipality of Tuluunan, North Cotabato; on the East, by the Municipalities of Magsaysay, Matanao, and Kiblawan, Davao del Sur; on the West by the Alip and Quezon ranges bordering the Municipalities of Buluan and Datu Paglas of Maguindanao and on the South by the Municipality of Tampakan and Koronadal City of South Cotabato.

The Municipality has sixteen (16) barangays and in terms of standard classification, fifteen (15) barangays are classified as rural and only one (1) barangay is considered as the urban area. The rural barangays are those situated quite far from the heart of the national highway or considered as remote areas but with lighting and water facilities. It has a total municipal population of 27,440.

The people, despite religious differences continues to live in harmony with one another. A place teeming with a richly captivating Column of Views such as mountains, waterfalls and hot springs.

### **Respondents of the Study**

This study was confined only in the eight (8) barangays of the Municipality of Columbio, namely: Poblacion, Libertad, Polomolok, Mayo, Datablao, Telefas, Maligaya, and Natividad. The respondents were the implementers who are the front liners in project implementation and the beneficiaries of the various devolved services or programs of the Municipality of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat Province.

The implementers of the program came from the Office of the Municipal Agriculturist with 9 employees and Social Welfare and Development Office with 19 respondents compose of regular employees and volunteers; and from Municipal Health Services/Office with 21 medical staff such as doctors, nurses, midwives, administrative officer and barangay health workers. There were a total of 49 implementers considered as respondents of the study while the 132 respondent-beneficiaries who have availed of the programs in 2014 were drawn from the total beneficiaries of the eight sample barangays under study. There were 181 total respondents in the study. The demand of the people for a more and better quality of government services has become the responsibility of program implementers and the agencies involved in the implementation. The devolution of some projects and services was designed to respond to that demand, by way of promoting an effective delivery of services to its external and internal beneficiaries.

To elicit information and data for the study, a three-part questionnaire was constructed. The first part of the questionnaire was on the perception of respondents on the status of devolved services in health, agriculture and social services in terms of human resources, facilities and fund allocation and the assessment on the implementation of the major devolve programs and projects. The second part of the questionnaire dealt on respondents responsiveness to actual delivery of devolve social services and the third part was the inadequacies observed in the delivery of devolve social services.

The study also gathered data through interviews with key informants, focus group discussion and document analysis to have a general observation and probe deeply the current situation of the social services being delivered to the people.

## Results and Discussion

The demand of the people for a more and better quality of government services has become the responsibility of program implementers and the agencies involved in the implementation. The devolution of some projects and services was designed to respond to that demand, by way of promoting an effective delivery of services to its external and internal beneficiaries.

### **Major Devolved Programs/Projects Implemented by the Local Government of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat**

It is the mandate of the Local Government Unit to deliver services to its constituents. Therefore, it is a need to assess how far a Local Government Unit has attain its goals in achieving an authentic development, and how the delivery of services were performed. It is to know whether services were effecient and were succesfully implemented.

The Local Government of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat through the interviews of key informants, program implementers and participants in focus group discussions, the devolved programs and projects from the three departments namely the

Municipal Health Office, Municipal Agricultural Office and the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office. The identified devolved social services programs were also counter checked by the researcher with the Approved Annual Development Plan for Calendar Year 2014 (ADP) of the Municipal Government of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat.

The devolved programs and projects were identified mostly by the program implementers in each department because they are the front liners in implementing these devolve social services. The key informants were interviewed in their capacity as heads of the departments where official transactions as to funding, processes of implementation accomplishment reports, policies and other mandates needed their action or approval, the Barangay Chairmen of barangays, the nurses, midwives and volunteers and farm technicians assigned in different sample barangays covered in the study.

The participants in focus group discussion also identified the devolve social services delivered to the constituents in the municipality during the meeting specifically called for the purpose of this assessment.

### **Status of Devolved Services in Health, Agriculture, and Social Welfare Programs in Terms of Human Resources, Facilities and Funds**

The local government of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat being the implementers were mandated to implement and monitor programs which are designed to enable the implementers to function and act on their tasks with more prudence but also guided by the tenets of greater responsibility. In the scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), participants were asked about their perception on the status of the implementation of devolved services in health, agricultural and social welfare and development programs in terms of human resources, facilities and funds.

The respondent-beneficiaries of health programs perceived and rated the aspect on human resources and fund allocation for the projects as both rank 8. While facilities used in health programs were assessed as rank 7. The high ranks given by the beneficiaries to these programs imply that the respondents-beneficiaries are satisfied with the health programs afforded to them. On agricultural programs, the beneficiaries assessed the status of devolved services on human resources, facilities and fund allocation between ranks 6 to 8. On human resources of the agricultural programs implemented, beneficiaries rated this aspect as rank 8. While facilities used and the fund allocated for various programs were both assessed as rank. These findings imply that majority of the beneficiaries were amenable that agricultural program have contributed uplift their standard of living and enhance their capacity on modern farm technologies. In the assessment of status of devolved services in social welfare programs in terms of human resources, facilities and fund allocation, most of the beneficiaries rated the items between rank 7 and rank 8. The items on human resources and facilities were rated rank 8, while the item on allocation of funds was assessed as rank 7. The overall results could be considered high as shown by the ranking made by the respondents-beneficiaries of the social welfare programs.

The implementers of devolved social services programs in health, agriculture, and social welfare were also asked to assess the programs in terms of human resources, facilities, and fund allocations. In health programs, majority of the implementers have assessed the human resources as rank 9, facilities as rank 8, and the fund allocation as rank 6, respectively. The status of devolved agricultural programs were assessed by the implementers as high. The human resources aspect was assessed as rank 8 while both the facilities and fund allocation were rated rank 9, respectively. The implementers of social welfare programs were unanimous in their assessment of their programs in terms of human resources and fund allocations. They assessed the three aspects as rank 8.

This finding was affirmatively confirmed by one of the key informants who said that the devolve programs and projects of the local government contributed much to the alleviation of socio-cultural and economic conditions of the people. He further stressed that these programs lessen the health problems of the people specially those who reside in the remote areas and also increase their income.

The results of the study are in consonance with the mandates of Department of Health, Agriculture and Social Welfare and Development to develop and improve the delivery of basic services; to increase livelihood opportunities especially the disadvantaged sectors and communities; and to assist in overall strategy for the reduction of poverty by the local, regional and national governments.

Furthermore, the findings of this study imply that the implementers of devolve social services programs of the Municipality of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat Province have exercise one of the decentralization policies of the Local Government Code which is the devolution of service delivery functions of national agencies to Local Government Units. This is also in consonance with the idea of that in understanding the primary role in the development and growth of communities, the Code vests in LGUs the exercise of service delivery functions to make them more responsive to the most basic needs of their respective constituencies.

### **Respondents-Beneficiaries Assessment on the Implementation of Major Devolve Services in Health, Agriculture and Social Welfare Programs/Projects**

On health programs, respondents assessed family planning program as the best observed programs and is rated as very efficient. All the other health programs such as supplemental feeding and nutrition, barangay health workers training, support to operationalization of community hospital, medical and dental program, and purchase of medicines for indigent families were rated by the respondents-beneficiaries as efficient. The overall results do reflect a healthy situation of the constituents in the communities of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat. These findings imply that health programs delivered in different localities have benefited the children, the youths, the women, senior citizens and persons with disabilities, and have uplift the living conditions of the people.

The agricultural programs on the other hand were rated by the respondents-beneficiaries as very efficient. Projects like rubber seedlings dispersal, the construction of mini warehouse with multi-purpose drying pavement, rice and corn production,

and construction of solar dryers in various barangays. These programs obtained the mean ratings ranging from 2.50 to 2.72 which are found very efficient in the rating scale. The programs on Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) program and rehabilitation of potable water system were assessed as efficient in the rating scale. These findings imply that the respondents viewed the delivery of devolved services in agriculture as efficiently delivered as evidenced by the infrastructures constructed in the different barangays and the farm inputs and implements which benefited their constituents.

And lastly, on social welfare and development programs, respondents assessed the implementation of day care service program as very efficient. It is also observed that four projects of the social welfare and development were rated as efficiently implemented. The delivery of program on fund allocations for disaster and calamity risks reduction program, the project on financial and medical assistance to senior citizens, the project on the allocation of funds for mobilization of patients and birthing clients from barangays to the main health facility, and the project that strengthen and empower women's organization, these programs were rated by the respondents efficient. Data also revealed that projects like livelihood assistance for IP women and capability building for women in enterprise were assessed as inefficient. This finding implies that financial assistance maybe fall short to sustain the capital investment for livelihood and entrepreneurship of women in the community and lack of education towards capacity building that supposedly would motivate people to participate in community processes. It is believed that the change in peoples perspectives could be brought by continuing education in the community.

### **Implementers Assessment on the Implementation of Devolved Services in Health, Agriculture and Social Welfare Programs**

The implementers are important human elements in bringing efficiency in development by reducing vulnerabilities of communities through development projects. The implementers as respondents of the study were asked to assess the implementation of devolve services in health, agriculture, and social welfare in the Municipality of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat. Data on health programs show that majority of the implementers assessed the implementation of family planning program as very efficient. This finding could be attributed to the fact that the family planning program have been implemented through out the country for several decades and the program gave attention to shared responsibilities and resources between men and women and their families. Data also shows that all the other devolved programs in health such as the barangay health workers training, support to operationalization of community hospital, medical and dental program, supplemental feeding and nutrition, and purchase of medicines for indigent families were assessed by the implementers as efficient. On agricultural programs, three of the six devolved agricultural programs implemented were assessed by most of the implementers as very efficient. The program on rice and corn production, the construction of solar dryers in various barangays and the construction of mini-warehouse with multi-purpose drying pavement were unanimously rated by the implementers as very efficient.

On the other hand, rubber seedlings dispersal, the Payapa and Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) program, There were also three agricultural programs rated by the respondents as implemented efficiently. They are rubber seedlings dispersal, the Payapa and Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) program, and the rehabilitation of potable water system. The above findings imply that the LGU or implementers have contributed significantly to the cause of farmers development through policy making and the provision of extension support such as farm inputs and implements. On social welfare programs, day care service program was rated as very efficient. Programs like financial and medical assistance to senior citizens, allocation of funds for mobilization or patients and birthing clients from barangays to the main health facility, strengthen and empower womens organization, fund allocation for disaster and calamity risks reduction program, capability building for women in enterprise, and livelihood assistance for IP women, all these programs were found effeciently implemented.

Moreover, Estrada [4] gave credence to high valuation of dedicated service to social and economic communities beyond the family in which one participates, high valuation of personal efficiency in the chosen task and occupation, and strongly positive evaluation of high personal productivity in agriculture, industry or business. Likewise, the implementers as trained personnel in their own areas of concerns, the successful and efficient implementation of such programs and projects enable them to grow professionally with true commitment for public service and also the LGUs for building a cadre of leaders at the local level.

### **Respondents-Beneficiaries Perceptions to Actual Delivery of Devolve Social Services Programs/Projects**

On the respondents perception on the responsiveness of the program implementers to the needs of the community, majority have said it does responds.

Family planning program was rated high among the health programs. This is followed by the project on support to operationalization of community hospital. Rank 3 was the training for Barangay Health Workers. The purchase of medicines for indigent families was rated rank 4. While projects on medical and dental program and supplemental feeding and nutrition were scaled as rank 5 and 6 respectively. These finding implies that people both in rural and urban setting are concern about their health and majority of the group discussants that health programs are deliver and have responded to the needs of the constituents. It is also worthy to mention that though there are some respondents who observed the programs were properly implemented, they said they opt not availed it and instead gave the chance to those most in keed especially the indigent families and cultural minorities.

Agricultural programs such as rubber seedling dispersal, rice and corn production, the construction of Solar Dryers in various barangays, the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) program, and the construction of mini warehouse with multi-purpose drying pavement were rated high and most responsive. Though the rehabilitation of potable water system project had the lowest number of respondents, this project was also rank as number 1 or most responsive. These findings imply that

the programs implemented in different barangays of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat have greatly responded to the needs of the people and the communities. The findings also imply that the devolve services delivered to the people specially the farmers both in rural and urban areas have benefited to a great extent all these programs in agriculture. The projects have a strong pillar of support from the barangay officials and the people which helped organized and mobilized local resources and also strengthened community organizations.

On social welfare and development programs, dar care service program, and the funds allocation for disaster and calamity risks reduction program were rated as rank 1. The projects on capacity building for women in enterprise and allocation of funds for mobilization of patients and birthing clients from barangays to the main health facility, both programs were scaled rank 3. And among the programs implemented, the program on strengthen and empower women's organization obtained the least (3) number of respondents who scaled this program as the most responsive program implemented in their community and was considered rank 6. Looking at the projects, it could be noticed that the projects mostly focused on children and womens welfare, senior citizens and persons with disabilities. This finding could be attributed to the mandates of the government to support and implement the Gender and Development Advocacy of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

### **Inadequacies Observed in the Delivery of Devolved Social Services Programs in the Municipality of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat**

Data revealed that the three inadequacies were rated agreed by the respondents. Key informants affirmed the respondents view on the inadequacies observed in the delivery of devolved social services programs. Accordingly, there were political interventions along the implementation of project, insufficiency in funds allotted for the projects and mismatch of project delivered to the development thrusts of the local government unit. The local government unit should have introduced a shift in perspective within the community, recognizing the importance of women in community-building and their capacity to nurture the community. Men and women must realize that in building a resilient communities, their active participation is a must.

Furthermore, respondents were undecided on the inadequacy of the delivery of construction materials for solar dryers. While on the statement that devolved employees from national agencies considered their reassignment to local government as temporary assignment and their commitment and loyalty still with the national agency was rated disagreed. This finding shows devolve employees are knowledgeable, prepared in terms of attitude for their work in the government and their commitment directed at serving the needs of the citizenry which the respondents-beneficiaries have noted.

## Implications

In the light of the findings and insights obtained in this study, the following implications were found: the implementation of various devolved social services for several years has made a significant difference in the lives of the people of the Municipality of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat. The Local Government of Columbio, the program implementers, devolved employees, and their commitment and solidarity to serve the people especially the marginalized is a manifestation of their unselfish dedication to uplift the socio-economic condition and well-being of the people; the Local Government of Columbio in the implementation of devolved social services and other activities to the people and community has created a greater responsibility and this contributed much to the alleviation of socio-cultural and economic conditions of the people; and, the respondents were amenable that all of the devolved programs were efficiently delivered and have been responsive to the challenges that beset the people and the different communities. Likewise, the participation of all stakeholders of the community served as the cornerstone for successful adaptation and in building resilient communities that enables the people to act together for the common welfare.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions made of the study, the results showed favorable outcomes of programs implemented. It is recommended that the continuing projects should further be strengthened and supported to ensure the sustainability of the projects even if the support of different institutions has been terminated. The LGU should impose transparency in the implementation of programs and projects. Communicate to the public updated information about the LGUs services, plans, programs and special events. The LGU of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat, should create a web-site and post programs, projects as planned, the status of implemented programs and projects in the area for the information of the public. This is a full disclosure of financial matters of any government unit. Aside from the web-site created by the LGU, copies of the reports likewise be posted on public places. This is to enable the other people to have information on fiscal activities of the local government unit, since, not all constituents in area are literate with the current technology in use, and hence the area is basically rural in setting. This act of LGU is also stipulated in the Seal of Good Local Governance of the Department of Interior and Local Government. To bolster the economic governance performance, it is recommended that the local government should increase its support to both fishery and agriculture sectors, improve the credit facilitation services through the cooperatives providing loan access, insurance and credit guarantees to poor fisher folks and farmers. For further research, it is hereby recommended that all barangays will be considered in the assessment of devolved social services delivered by the LGU in the area. This is to ascertain other problems encountered in the implementation of programs and projects not found in eight barangays under study.

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