

# Lifelong Learning for All Through CLCs: The Philippine Experience<sup>1</sup>

## 1.0 CLCs in the Philippine Context: Policy Environment and CLC Strategy

The 1987 Philippine Constitution and the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan articulate the over-all goal of Philippine education: to provide universal access to quality basic education through formal delivery modes and alternative learning systems. It seeks to develop in the young, including disadvantaged groups, children with special needs and those in extremely difficult circumstances, the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for active and successful participation in the economic, political, socio-cultural, spiritual and moral life in a just and moral society.

The delivery of education through community learning centers (CLCs) is one of the strategies adopted by the Government to achieve the goal of providing educational opportunities to out-of-school youth and adult learners. The term CLC has varying meanings to different Philippine institutions engaged in non-formal education. However, they are generally guided by the overall CLC framework of UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All (APPEAL) which has provided continuing technical assistance to CLCs in Asian countries since 1998: *"a local education unit outside the formal system. Usually located in the village, it is managed by the local people. It provides a place not only for reading and writing but various learning opportunities for community development. Among its functions are education, training, information and community development activities as well as coordination and networking both among the community learning centers and also with government offices, schools and other organizations.... location can be anywhere, but it should be accessible and should make use of existing facilities"*.<sup>1</sup>

Following are present-day CLC structures, mechanisms and practices in the country at present:

- *The Department of Education, Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems* serves as an institutional resource to CLCs and has spearheaded the establishment of more than 500 CLCs throughout the country by the end of 2011.
- *The local government unit (LGU) as the focal point and lead implementor of CLC activities.* LGUs have partnered with various sectors of the community and they jointly manage the CLCs.
- *Other CLC focal points.* Many CLCs are managed either individually or as corroborative efforts of various community-based groups, such as: non-government organizations (NGOs); volunteers from the community; community cooperatives; women's/ladies groups; church groups/missionaries; youth groups; community leaders, and senior citizens.

## 2.0 The Life-Skills and NFE training in CLCs

**Life skills** or **skills for life** are interchangeable terms in the education landscape and they have a multitude of meanings to different organizations, groups and individuals that implement non-formal education. Developing life skills among the youth covers a wide variety of contexts and sectoral settings: education, health, business and industry, environment, agriculture, social services, and other socio-economic development thrusts. Providers of life skills learning in the country may be categorized into the following groups: National Government Agencies (NGAs), Local Government Units (LGUs), Non-

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Government Organizations (NGOs), and; the Academe, particularly state colleges and universities with extension programs, and private schools with community outreach programs.

### **2.1 The Skills for Life (SFL) Program of the Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA).** <sup>ii</sup>

ELSA is a multi-stakeholder, and multi-sectoral public-private partnership of 11 partner institutions at the national and field levels, with the International Youth Foundation (IYF) as the lead coordinating partner. It is one of the implementing organizations of the Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills Project Phase 2 (EQuALLS2) a Mindanao-focused education project of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with the Philippine Department of Education, DepEd ARMM and Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA), local government units and other government/ non-government organizations. EQuALLS 2 was implemented from 2008-2011 with the following objectives: (1) to increase learning opportunities for children and youth through community support for education (community engagement); (2) strengthen capacity for teaching English, science and math at the elementary level (educator professional development), and; (3) improve relevance of education and training for out-of-school children and youth (OSCY).

As part of a global initiative of the World Bank to enable young people to have better opportunities for growth and development, the IYF initiated the **Skills for Life (SFL)**, a comprehensive positive youth development and prevention learning program for young people, with the following program goals:

- To engage young people, families, school, and community members in creating a respectful learning community of caring relationships, high expectations for positive behaviors, and meaningful involvement.
- To provide opportunities for young people to learn the essential life and employability skills needed to live healthy and productive lives.
- To promote a safe, healthy approach to life including freedom from the harm of alcohol and other drug abuse.
- To strengthen young people's commitment to their family, positive peers, school, and community.

Comprised of 44 sequential, skills-building lessons, SFL contains six instructional units focused on core social, emotional, and employability skills. These are: (1) Self-Awareness; (2) Interpersonal Relationships/ Communication Skills; (3) Coping with Emotions and Stress in Positive Ways; (4) Critical Thinking and Decision-Making Skills; (5) Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution Skills, and; (6) Setting Goals for Productivity and Success.

- Positive social behaviours that include self-discipline, responsibility, good judgment, respect for self and others, and an ethic of service
- Positive commitment to family, school (learning institution), peers and community
- Responsible citizenship skills and ethical behavior
- Problem solving and decision making skills
- Interpersonal and Teamwork skills
- Communication skills
- Belief in a Promising Future

The SFL Curriculum was developed by the International Youth Foundation in partnership with Consuelo Foundation and its field implementing partners involved with work for Filipino out-of-school youth. Each of the 44-lessons is conducted among the learners and trainees for at least an hour under

the leadership of a trained Instructional Manager (IM). During the SFL sessions, youth work closely together and explore ways to help young people develop self-confidence, responsibility and a commitment to help others. The sessions usually end with guidelines on how to apply learning in the classroom and in real life situations. The IM who is trained to use the SFL curriculum, schedules the sessions in such a way that each of the lesson is conducted for an hour to one-and-a-half hour and ends with guidelines on how to apply learning in real life situations.

Under the EQuALLS2 project, ELSA, through Consuelo Foundation, implemented the **Skills for Life** training in the Basic Education and Workforce Development Programs of the project, in order to develop the abovementioned skills for life and impart positive behavior among the OSCY learners. This inclusion was envisaged to enhance the Basic Education and Workforce Development Training Program offered by the EQuALLS2 Project.

**2.2 YOU... Makes a Difference.** One of the ELSA field partners which has implemented the Life skills program in Mindanao is the Notre Dame University (NDU). It is integrated into the Youth Outreach University Program (YOU... Makes a Difference) of NDU. **YOU- Youth Outreach University Program** (Makes a Difference!) was launched as early in November 2003, as a program of Notre Dame University to cater to out-of-school youth in Cotabato City and Maguindanao specifically on their education and training needs. The program's main objective is to provide opportunities for OSYs to become educated, skilled and productive citizens, with positive attitudes and work habits, and value-laden individuals.

With financial and programmatic assistance from the ELSA out-of-school youth training program under the EQuALLS2 project, the **YOU** is a scholarship program for out-of-school children and youth (OSCYs) in Cotabato City and Maguindanao who are interested to enroll in literacy and skills programs at Notre Dame University. The program is community-based and center-based. It is provided to OSCYs aged 10-24 years old. Since it started in 2003 until 2011, it has served over 5,000 out of school children and youth in Cotabato City and Maguindanao. The program caters to children and youth from communities which have no access to education. Majority of these communities are conflict affected areas in the Province of Maguindanao, some are adopted communities of NDU in Cotabato City which have high incidence of poverty, and a big number of out-of-school children and youth. The YOU program is part of NDU's commitment to its mission of empowering the community, especially the poor.

In terms of innovative points of the programme, particularly linking to lifelong learning, one of the program's objectives is to make the children and youth productive citizens of the society. YOU utilizes targeted approaches in the delivery of education, literacy, and skills training. The programme's innovative point is that it has a focused design to meet the training needs of out-of-school children and youth of the community – it is not just a generic approach for non-formal learners. Given this context, the program does not only teach literacy and or skills training but makes sure that skills for life, youth entrepreneurship training, and peace orientation workshops are part of the package. The Skills for Life (SFL) prepares the youth in the realities of life, help them build their self-confidence, teach them how to relate to other people and teaches them problem solving skills. The peace orientation workshops also help them understand what peace education is, the causes of "peacelessness," and provide them skills on how to deal with peace education issues, specifically those which they constantly experience in their daily lives, the armed conflict in Central Mindanao where many of these youth are victims. The Youth Entrepreneurship Training equip them of business skills to start and manage a business. These innovative programs help them become productive, skilled and literate members of society.

***Lessons learned from the program and challenges met.*** In 2011, a survey was conducted among 1483 Mindanao learners who underwent the life skills program of ELSA under EQuALLS2. Overall,

the results of the analysis of the pretest and posttest scores showed that there was an overall improvement in life skills scores among the training participants. Further analysis showed that there were differences in the learning uptake of the various life skills. For example, those who received training in basic education gained the most points in the life skills relationships with others and living a productive life. The results of the evaluation was able to help trainers assess where improvements can be made to maximize learning gains in each specific life skill.<sup>iii</sup>

One of the major challenges faced by YOU have is the job placement of graduates after training for those who completed their skills courses; and pursuing education (high school or college) for passers of the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) examinations. Many graduates of the skills training programs find jobs but not related to the course they completed. What is interesting in their employment is many of the employers give value to the Skills for Life they completed from the program when they are accepted in the job. This challenge continue to be a concern of YOU. To address this challenge, the Notre Dame University has put in place some mechanisms like facilitating scholarships for those interested to continue formal education, and working closely with business chambers and industries to strengthen academe-industry partnership.

**3.0 Newer Country Educational Initiatives to Reduce Poverty in the Philippines.** Lifelong Learning is a major strategy aimed at helping reduce poverty in the country. The education sector has embarked into public-private partnerships with various sectors to provide continuing education to the population. Workforce development programs are key components in bilateral agreements as well as financial assistance from various international funding institutions. The use of ICT is also seen as an important feature of poverty-alleviation programs. The national leadership. Numerous educational initiatives use ICT to improve access and quality of learning.

For their part, individual educational institutions have embarked in poverty reduction programs through education. As an example, the NDU has established Small Business Institute (SBI) an enterprise and micro-financing program to help uplift the economic conditions of the communities and sectors the University serves. The Institute conducts entrepreneurship training and provide opportunities to individuals and groups to avail a loan to start their business.

**3.1 Innovation and new approaches through CLCs to reduce poverty.** In the Philippines, the ultimate vision of the CLC is to uplift the quality of life of the population through education. A fast-growing initiative is the establishment of social entrepreneurship programs in CLCs. For instance, the Notre Dame University has institutionalized the entrepreneurship training where learners and trainees are given the theoretical and practical knowledge on how to start and manage a business. This approach hopes to develop in the minds of the learners and trainees the idea to venture into self-employment after completing or even during their training. This approach help reduce poverty. Aside from the trainees and learners, their parents, are also given entrepreneurship training, local product development, costing and pricing trainings.

**3.2 New contents of Life Skills/Skills Development in the Philippines.** Various educational initiatives with life skills education components have been implemented since the 70s. In the early 2000s, the Department of Education (DepEd), UNICEF, and non-government organizations involved in educational projects in the country worked together to “flesh out a relevant life skills framework for children and youth.”<sup>iv</sup> The major output of this workshop was the **Action Plan on Life Skills Education Among Filipino Children and Youth** which defines *life skills* as abilities for positive and adaptive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands, challenges, experiences and

situations of everyday life. Recognizing the physical, psychosocial, mental, cultural and spiritual needs and concerns of Filipino children and youth, an enabling and supportive environment has to be developed for the enhancement of their life skills, which are:

- **Self-awareness** includes our recognition and appreciation of our basic worth and dignity as persons, our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes, our uniqueness.
- **Empathy** is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with. It helps us understand and accept others who may be different from us, which can improve social interactions, e.g. in situations of ethnic cultural diversity.
- **Effective communication** means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations.
- **Interpersonal relationship skills** help us to relate in positive ways with other people
- **Decision-making** helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decisions about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options, and what effects different decisions may have.
- **Problem-solving** enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.
- **Creative thinking** contributes to both decision-making and problem-solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action.
- **Coping with emotions** involves recognizing emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influence behavior and being able to respond to emotions appropriately.
- **Coping with stress** is both recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress.
- **Production skills** is an addition to core life skills for Filipino children and youth. It is basically defined as the ability to utilize and maximize internal and external resources toward generating productive endeavors responsive to young people's needs.

The IYF-initiated ELSA skills for life program which has been adopted by YOU of NDU is fully synchronized with the above framework of the developed by DepED, UNICEF, and various NGOs.

**3.2 New contents of Life Skills/Skills Development in the Philippines.** Considering present-day realities and challenges that substantially affect the educational system and other sectors in the country, the following life skills need to be infused in the existing programs and projects:

- Inter-faith/Religious Relations/Dialogue so that we can prepare the young people in understanding other faiths, religion, cultural practices and traditions. This is relevant especially that in the Philippines, there is pluralism in religious and faiths. The inter-religious relations/dialogue is also helpful to adults so that inter-cultural understanding will be promoted and peaceful co-existence between and among peoples will reign in the land.
- Higher order thinking skills to develop more thought-processes among the youth. This life skill is envisioned to enrich the existing creative thinking life skill as it shall enable the learner to develop more analytical skills, especially in contextualizing situations in various settings and realities.

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#### End Notes

<sup>i</sup> Kiichi Oyasu, "Promoting Community-Based Learning Centers in Asia Pacific," Integrating Lifelong Learning Perspectives, Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo, editor, UNESCO Institute for Education, 2002, p. 45.

<sup>ii</sup> Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance (ELSA), Making an Difference with Skills for Life, published by the USAID, 2011.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*