

## **The Assessment Report: Past and Future**

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In my research and study to find a solution regarding the declining rate of the delivery of the basic services by the Local Governments or Local Government Units (LGUs- in my country) to their respective constituents, I have to broaden my perspective in order to come up with a more effective way to enhance the present state of the LGUs in my country, especially in my region.

**Choosing the right theme/topic for my report:** Taking advantage of the learnings that I had during the lectures and technical visits and at the same time applying these learnings to my country, I have to consider the following: **1)** I have to define and differentiate local governance as embodied in our laws with the actual local governance that is happening in a real situation. Quoting Professor Nakamura, he once said that “every community is unique in so many ways”. We have a national law and other supplementary laws which set forth every little bit of duties and responsibilities of the LGUs and its public officials, and almost anything that an LGU needs to be self-sufficient and more. It may be complete and it is universal, but the effects of its application are definitely not the same on every LGUs. That is where the issue on effectiveness comes in. Is it effective? Is its application morally right? **2)** Another thing that I considered is my role in this study. I have to be one of the implementors of my study and not just a mere researcher. I want to apply my studies and I don’t want it to remain just as a theory. Presently, I am a Local Government Operations Officer, and my job requires me to be a catalyst for good governance. Part of my mandate is to give support to the LGUs to improve the delivery of the basic services to their constituents through capacity development programs, trainings, technical support, guidance and advise and anything within my capability to enhance and promote good governance.

**Identifying the issue:** Our Ministry conducts a lot of assessments to the LGUs and for almost every aspect of local governance. These assessments are geared on assessing the functionality of the LGUs based on the responsibilities and duties that were given to them by the national law and other relevant laws. We gather informations on whether the LGUs are conforming to the standards set by laws. We have assessment tools for almost everything, for peace and order, for the war against illegal drugs, the functionality of the local special bodies and so on and so forth. Through indicator ratings and results of these assessments and despite the sufficiency of the national laws, we still get a low passing rate on the assessment programs that we conduct. All these failures in assessment programs poses a critical issue in my country especially on the issue on good local governance. If an LGU did not pass the assessment, it only means that the LGU is not functioning very well, that it is not performing very well. And the obvious

effects of non-functionality and non-performance of the LGUs are delayed services, unprogressive LGU, poor public infrastructure and facilities, corruption, highly politicized environment, poverty and so much more, all to the detriment of the constituents.

**Proposed solutions/ways forward:**

1) REVITALIZED Programs, Policies, Projects and Activities (PPPAS): our Ministry have at least 42 programs that are all aimed to enhance the performance of the LGUs. These programs include the assessments that we conduct for every LGUs. We conduct these PPPAs every year. However, it seems that it is not enough to stick to just the same PPPAs. Everything is getting more complex nowadays and PPPAs must adjust to keep up with the growing needs of the local communities. Clearly it is hard to update or amend a law, because it needs an affirmative act on the part of the National Government, but the same is not the case with the implementing policies. That is why there is a need to update the PPPAs, the need to revitalize them according to the present needs of the LGUs and this revitalization of PPPAs are within the power of the Ministry. Let's take for example the Local Government Functionality Assessment (LoGFA, one of the many assessment tools that we use in our Ministry) which is a major assessment tool of the Ministry. Careful study of the present LoGFA, reveals that it lacks the criteria on citizen participation. We want to promote participatory government, but our major assessment tool does not even assess citizen participation. Another proposal is to add special assessment programs to the low performing LGUs. The purpose is not to burden them with additional requirements or regulations or policies but to help them to specifically pinpoint the areas where they need help and design special workshops and trainings to improve their standings. It has to be a special assessment to cater to their special needs because they may need a unique intervention as compared to other local communities. Another Program that needs to be revitalized is that one program which promotes participatory governance. The current program that we have only outlines the process on how to accredit CSOs and how to engage them in planning and decision-making processes. What we need to add is to change the mindset of the people. There is a process, but the problem lies with the voluntariness of the people and the lack of motivation of the LGU to involve the citizens. Taking some lessons that we learned on citizen collaborations, to entice the people to take part in local governance, it would be better if the people have their own forum or group or platform which is independent from the local government, although this initiative has to start from the local public authorities for its inception. A forum or platform on which they can freely speak their minds and gather their ideas for their welfare. And after that, these ideas will be filtered and summarized and discussed with the proper authorities for consideration and integration into the local policies and other programs of the respective LGU. And of course, the need to revitalize

capacity developments. There is a need to back up the assessment programs with the proper capacity developments that are aimed to improve the areas where the LGUs have failed.

2) INNOVATIONS: What the PPPAs, or the law or the policies lacks, the innovations should complement. Not everything can be covered by the law. You have to make up for some programs through local initiatives and innovations. One local government body that is very unique in my country and will serve a greater purpose to help the local communities are the barangays. Think of it as a group of people living together in close-proximity sharing the same values and most of the times traditions and customs or everyone is related by family. Everyone knows each other in this locality. After our visit with the House of Shikishima in Toyota City, I realized that in my country, there is no need to form a community-based group as this is already given in our LGUs in the form of barangays. Barangays are institutionalized and funded by the national budget. What they only need are innovations to sustain the local community. The idea of pooling of resources. The idea of helping each other just like a one big happy family, where one lacks, the other members supplement. In barangays, there is no need to look for sources outside the community. What they only need are innovations which are geared towards the welfare of its small community. If we can apply the innovations of the Shikishima community in the pooling of their resources, especially physical or talents or skills, and use it to help or alleviate the conditions of the barangay constituents, then there is no need for them to outsource. Like our technical visit in Nagakute City, we can also integrate the “Denen Valley Concept”, along with the community garden project and agricultural school, and the farmer’s market where the local farmers can consign their agricultural products for display and for selling.

3) POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT PROGRAMS: These are in the form of awards and recognitions. Giving out subsidies and creating a standard or guide or serve as a role model to be replicated by other LGUs. The reward system is to be promoted rather than the punishment system. LGUs which gathered an exemplary score in the assessment programs and in the implementation of their PPPAs and innovations should be recognized and should be awarded. This creates an atmosphere of competitiveness but not competition among the LGUs, because in the first place every community is unique and therefore they cannot really compete on an equal footing.

With all these proposed solutions geared towards the improvement of the LGUs, still it cannot be guaranteed that boosting the passing rates of the LGUs in the assessment programs will also enhance the delivery of basic services to their constituents. That is why there also a need to regularly Monitor and Evaluate the results or products the proposed solutions. There is also a need to sustain and regularly enhance these solutions to attain the desired state of governance in every local community. Differing LGUs, different needs, different solutions and innovations.