

Evaluating the Implementation and Effectiveness of Urban Poor Development Programs in Selected Barangays in Central Visayas: a Comparative Study Between Barangay Pasil (Cebu City, Cebu) and Barangay Banilad (Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental)

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Abstract

This study focused on the initiation and effectiveness of community empowerment initiatives designed to reduce poverty in selected urban poor communities. Its primary objective was to assess how successful these initiatives were in improving the social and economic conditions of residents, as well as to identify the challenges and barriers encountered during implementation. A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized to gather data from local government officials, community members, and leaders. The research explored the relationship between the level of project implementation and its effectiveness in generating employment, fostering social engagement, and promoting self-reliance among urban poor households. Findings revealed that the implementation of community empowerment programs significantly enhanced participants' quality of life. Programs that emphasized active community participation, skills development, and leadership training yielded the highest levels of satisfaction, noticeable income gains, and stronger community cohesion. However, several obstacles were identified, including inadequate funding, limited training opportunities, weak inter-agency coordination, and the absence of systematic monitoring. These challenges hindered the full realization and sustainability of program objectives. The study concludes that community empowerment can serve as a key strategy for poverty reduction, provided sufficient resources, continuous collaboration among stakeholders, and effective evaluation mechanisms are in place. Strengthening community engagement and offering capacity-building initiatives are essential to ensure the long-term impact and sustainability of poverty alleviation efforts.

1. THE PROBLEM AND ITS RESEARCH DESIGN

Rationale of the Study

Urban poverty continues to be a pressing global concern, with millions residing in informal settlements marked by inadequate housing, restricted access to essential services, and heightened susceptibility to both natural and socio-economic shocks (Chambers, 1997; UN-Habitat, 2022). Studies suggest that urban poor populations face significant obstacles to social mobility and sustainable

livelihoods, emphasizing the need for comprehensive interventions that combine housing, healthcare, education, and livelihood support (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2022; World Bank, 2020). In Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, rapid urbanization has contributed to the growth of urban poor communities, where residents experience multidimensional poverty encompassing social, economic, and environmental challenges (ADB, 2020; UNDP Philippines, 2022).

In the Philippines, urban poverty is particularly pronounced in densely populated areas. Central Visayas exhibits high numbers of low-income households living in informal settlements, facing critical issues such as overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to education and healthcare (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2024; Zaragoza, 2011). Barangay Pasil in Cebu City and Barangay Banilad in Dumaguete City exemplify such communities, where residents grapple with compounded economic and environmental vulnerabilities (Asian Development Bank, 2025; Chambers, 1997).

To mitigate these challenges, national and local agencies have launched development programs targeting housing, livelihood, health, and education. In Barangay Pasil, the Division for the Welfare of the Urban Poor collaborates with NGOs and local government units (LGUs) to implement initiatives aimed at improving living conditions (City Government of Cebu, 2023; Thai Journal Online, 2024). Similarly, Dumaguete City's social welfare programs seek to reduce poverty and foster inclusive development in Barangay Banilad (City Government of Dumaguete, 2022; CSWDO, 2023). These efforts align with broader national strategies to enhance social protection for vulnerable populations (Department of Social Welfare and Development [DSWD] Field Office VII, 2024; National Economic and Development Authority [NEDA], 2023).

Despite these interventions, evidence on program effectiveness remains limited. Housing projects often offer temporary relief but fail to adequately address overcrowding, sanitation issues, and livelihood instability (National Housing Authority [NHA], 2023; Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS], 2023). Health programs, including maternal and child health initiatives, vaccinations, and safe water access, face logistical and resource limitations, reducing their impact on the most vulnerable households (City Health Office Cebu, 2024; Visayas Primary Healthcare Services, Inc., 2025). Livelihood programs designed to enhance income stability and skill development have shown inconsistent uptake and sustainability (ADB, 2021; UNDP Philippines, 2022). Comparative studies of Barangay Pasil and Barangay Banilad can reveal local factors influencing program outcomes and highlight areas for improvement (Zaragoza, 2011; Local Government Academy, 2023).

Housing initiatives, such as the Plainsview Banilad Project in Dumaguete, provide low-cost units but struggle with equitable access and long-term viability (NHA, 2020; UN-Habitat Philippines, 2021; World Bank, 2023). Likewise, education and skills development programs aim to enhance socio-economic mobility through literacy campaigns, vocational training, and youth engagement, yet marginalized households often remain underserved (Sen, 1999; NGO Forum on Urban Poverty, 2022; PIDS, 2021; DSWD Field Office VII, 2021).

Effective coordination among NGOs and LGUs is critical for program reach, efficiency, and sustainability (UNDP Philippines, 2022; World Bank, 2020). However, gaps between intended outcomes and actual impacts persist due to funding limitations, administrative inefficiencies, and variable community participation (City Government of Cebu, 2022; City Government of Dumaguete, 2021). A comparative evaluation of these two barangays can provide practical insights for refining urban poverty reduction strategies and informing policy development (Zaragoza, 2011; Local Government Academy, 2023).

Given this context, the study aims to assess the implementation and effectiveness of urban poor development programs in Barangay Pasil and Barangay Banilad. By examining program coverage, outcomes, and sustainability, this research seeks to generate evidence-based recommendations to guide policy, enhance service delivery, and support future interventions for urban poor communities in Central Visayas (PSA, 2022; World Bank, 2023). Ultimately, the study contributes to the broader discussion on inclusive and sustainable urban development by identifying best practices and addressing gaps in program implementation (UN-Habitat Philippines, 2021; ADB, 2021).

Theoretical Background

Urban poverty continues to be a significant social issue in the Philippines, particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas such as Cebu City and Dumaguete City (Asian Development Bank, 2025; Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). Residents in low-income urban communities frequently encounter overlapping deprivations, including inadequate housing, restricted healthcare access, poor sanitation, and insecure employment (Zaragoza, 2011; City Government of Cebu, 2023). These challenges are intensified by fast-paced urban growth and underdeveloped infrastructure, underscoring the need for structured development programs to reduce socio-economic disparities (Central Visayas Regional Development Council, 2024; UN-Habitat, 2022).

The study of urban poverty interventions is largely informed by Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, which posits that true development should expand people's freedoms and abilities to lead the lives they value (Sen, 1999; Chambers, 1997). From this perspective, improvements in income alone are insufficient; attention must also be given to health, education, and active participation in community life (Asian Development Bank, 2022; World Bank, 2025). Consequently, urban poverty programs are most effective when they address both material needs and social empowerment, encouraging self-reliance, community engagement, and sustainable livelihoods (Pontual & Guillena, 2023; UNDP Philippines, 2022).

Additionally, theories of urban development highlight the importance of participatory governance for sustainable poverty reduction. Local leadership and community involvement are key factors that influence the success of barangay-level programs (Local Government Academy, 2023; Deleña et al., 2025). Interventions designed with input from local stakeholders, community consultation, and resident participation tend to be more responsive to specific community needs, as observed in Cebu and Dumaguete (Philippine Journal of Social Development, 2022; SunStar Cebu, 2024; SunStar Dumaguete, 2023).

Urban poverty is inherently multidimensional, necessitating integrated strategies that combine social protection, housing, healthcare, and livelihood initiatives. Research shows that standalone interventions, such as conditional cash transfers or housing programs, rarely produce lasting outcomes unless paired with complementary support such as skills training, healthcare access, and local economic opportunities (DSWD Field Office VII, 2024; NHA, 2023). This holistic approach aligns with sustainable urban development principles, emphasizing resilience, equity, and reduced vulnerability to economic and social shocks (World Bank, 2023; Guo & Zhong, 2022).

Finally, the effectiveness of urban development programs is strongly influenced by local conditions. Factors such as population density, infrastructure quality, governance practices, and community cohesion shape program uptake and outcomes (Valdez, 2025; Villanueva et al., 2021). Comparing Barangay Pasil in Cebu City with Barangay Banilad in Dumaguete City provides insights into how these contextual differences affect program performance, offering lessons for replicating best practices and informing policy improvements.

In Central Visayas, urban poverty remains a pressing concern, particularly in Barangay Pasil of Cebu City and Barangay Banilad of Dumaguete City. High population density, the prevalence of informal settlements, and restricted access to essential services continue to strain local governance efforts (Asian Development Bank, 2025; Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). Addressing these challenges draws on Sen's Capability Approach, which underscores the importance of expanding individuals' freedoms and capacities to achieve well-being beyond mere income (Sen, 1999; Chambers, 1997). Similarly, Participatory Development Theory highlights the role of active community engagement in program design and implementation to ensure interventions are both sustainable and contextually relevant (Chambers, 1997; NGO Forum on Urban Poverty, 2022).

Housing interventions play a pivotal role in improving the lives of urban poor residents, reflecting Sustainable Urban Development principles that link social, economic, and environmental strategies (World Bank, 2025; UN-Habitat Philippines, 2021). In Pasil and Banilad, the National Housing Authority and local governments have introduced initiatives such as affordable housing construction, upgrading informal settlements, and resettlement programs to enhance living conditions and promote social inclusion (National Housing Authority, 2023; City Government of Dumaguete, 2021). These housing efforts are complemented by programs aimed at economic empowerment, including skills training, livelihood support, and microfinance opportunities (Asian Development Bank, 2021; DSWD Field Office VII, 2023).

Healthcare access and social protection form additional components of a comprehensive urban poverty framework. Availability of community health services, maternal and child health programs, preventive care initiatives, and targeted social assistance supports vulnerable populations in meeting basic living standards (City Health Office Cebu, 2021; Visayas Primary Healthcare Services, Inc., 2025). Social protection strategies, such as conditional cash transfers and subsidies for housing and education, reduce residents' vulnerabilities while enabling meaningful participation in socio-economic activities (DSWD Field Office VII, 2021; World Bank, 2020).

Legal foundations guide the implementation of urban poor programs. The Urban Development and Housing Act (RA 7279) mandates secure housing for informal settlers, while the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act (RA 8425) emphasizes comprehensive poverty reduction programs. Local government initiatives under RA 7061 strengthen barangay-level social welfare programs (Central Visayas Regional Development Council, 2024; Local Government Academy, 2023). These laws provide a regulatory and policy framework ensuring accountability and alignment of development programs with national priorities.

Monitoring, evaluation, and community participation are integral to the framework. Systematic assessment of program effectiveness, including housing quality, livelihood outcomes, healthcare access, and education participation, ensures continuous improvement and sustainability (Philippine Journal of Social Development, 2022; City Health Office Cebu, 2024). Collaboration among local governments, NGOs, and community organizations enhances program reach, resource utilization, and responsiveness to residents' needs (NGO Forum on Urban Poverty, 2021; UNDP Philippines, 2022).

Overall, the theoretical framework demonstrates that effective urban poor development programs require an integrated approach combining housing, livelihood, health, education, social protection, legal mandates, and participatory governance (Asian Development Bank, 2025; World Bank, 2025). By applying these theories and legal bases, local governments in Pasil and Banilad can enhance program implementation, measure effectiveness, and achieve sustainable improvements in the lives of urban poor residents (Zaragoza, 2011; City Social Welfare and Development Office Dumaguete, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the approach and procedures used in the study, covering the research design, study flow, setting, participants, instruments, and methods for collecting and analyzing data. It also describes the techniques for scoring and processing information, as well as the definitions of key terms used throughout the research.

Research Design include

This study employs a descriptive-comparative and correlational research design within a quantitative framework. Its purpose is to assess the implementation and effectiveness of urban poor development programs in two selected barangays in Central Visayas: Barangay Pasil in Cebu City and Barangay Banilad in Dumaguete City.

The descriptive component focuses on documenting current practices, program outcomes, and the challenges faced by barangay officials and residents in implementing development initiatives. It provides a detailed snapshot of housing, livelihood, healthcare, education, and social welfare programs.

The comparative component examines differences between the two barangays in terms of program implementation and effectiveness. It considers contextual factors such as population density, resource distribution, and levels of community engagement, enabling a side-by-side evaluation of how these factors influence program success.

Finally, the correlational component investigates the relationship between program implementation and its effectiveness in improving living conditions and overall well-being among urban poor households. By analyzing quantitative data, the study seeks to determine how adherence to program guidelines, quality of execution, and availability of resources impact the outcomes of urban development initiatives.

This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of both the current state of urban poor programs and the factors that enhance or hinder their success.

Environment

This study will be conducted in selected barangays in Central Visayas, specifically Barangay Pasil in Cebu City, Cebu, and Barangay Banilad in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental. These barangays were chosen as research sites because both actively implement urban poor development programs that promote livelihood support, housing assistance, health and nutrition initiatives, and social welfare services as part of local government and community development efforts.

Barangay Pasil in Cebu City is a densely populated urban area with ongoing programs addressing housing, livelihood, and health services for its residents. Notable best practices in Pasil include community-based skills training programs that equip residents with practical vocational abilities, microfinance schemes that provide capital for small business ventures, and health awareness campaigns that focus on preventive care and maternal and child health. These initiatives demonstrate effective collaboration between the barangay office, local NGOs, and community leaders, making it a key area to study the implementation and effectiveness of urban poor development interventions.

Barangay Banilad in Dumaguete City prioritizes the improvement of urban poor households by providing social welfare services, small-scale livelihood initiatives, and gradual housing enhancements. Notable practices in the barangay include community-driven volunteer projects that strengthen civic involvement, inclusive decision-making processes in program planning, and livelihood activities

specifically designed to address the needs of women, youth, and other marginalized populations. These strategies promote program sustainability by fostering a sense of ownership among residents and encouraging their active participation in local development initiatives.

Respondents

The study will involve household heads and adult members of urban poor communities in Barangay Pasil and Barangay Banilad. A universal sampling method will be employed, including all individuals who meet the established criteria. Eligible participants must be permanent residents of either barangay at the time of data collection, at least 18 years old, and willing to take part voluntarily. This approach ensures that the respondents have firsthand experience and knowledge of local development programs, allowing for accurate and comprehensive insights into the implementation and impact of these initiatives.

This distribution indicates a total of 73 respondents representing two key barangays in Central Visayas. The inclusion of both highly urbanized and smaller city contexts ensures diversity in program experiences, community engagement, and development initiatives. This comparative framework strengthens the study's validity by providing insights into how urban poor development programs are designed, implemented, and evaluated across different urban communities.

Instrument

The main tool for this study is a questionnaire developed to measure both the implementation and perceived effectiveness of urban poor development programs in Barangay Pasil, Cebu City, and Barangay Banilad, Dumaguete City. The questionnaire was created using established community development frameworks, local government urban poverty guidelines, and social welfare standards to ensure its relevance to barangay-level programs. Before its use, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of experts, including local government representatives, social welfare professionals, and research specialists, to ensure clarity, reliability, and appropriateness. A pilot test with community members outside the sample was also conducted to assess readability and internal consistency, leading to minor adjustments that strengthened the tool's validity.

The questionnaire has three sections. The first section collects demographic data such as age, gender, household size, income, education, and participation in barangay programs, providing context for understanding respondent perspectives. The second section examines the implementation of urban poor programs, organized into five domains: program planning and design, resource allocation, community participation and training, monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder collaboration. Items in this section are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never Implemented) to 5 (Always Implemented). The third section evaluates the perceived effectiveness of the programs in areas including livelihood improvement, housing, health and nutrition, access to social services, and overall community well-being, with responses measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Data obtained from the questionnaire will form the basis for analyzing the relationship between program implementation and its perceived effectiveness. Additionally, the results will highlight program strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement, providing insights for enhancing urban poor development initiatives in the selected barangays.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study will adopt a systematic and ethical approach to ensure accuracy, reliability, and confidentiality throughout the data collection process.

First, a formal letter of request will be prepared and addressed to the respective barangay captains of Barangay Pasil in Cebu City and Barangay Banilad in Dumaguete City. The letter will seek permission to conduct the research and administer the validated questionnaire to qualified household respondents within the two selected barangays. Copies of the approved communication will also be forwarded to the barangay council or local social welfare officers for coordination and endorsement.

Upon receiving the necessary approvals, the researcher will coordinate with barangay officials or designated personnel to schedule the distribution of questionnaires. Before administering the survey, respondents will be briefed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Clear instructions will be provided to ensure respondents understand each section of the questionnaire.

The validated researcher-made questionnaire will then be distributed personally to the respondents at their homes or community centers during convenient hours to avoid disrupting daily routines. Respondents will be given sufficient time (20–30 minutes) to accomplish the instrument, and the researcher will be available to clarify any questions or concerns during the process.

After completion, all accomplished questionnaires will be collected, checked for completeness, and organized for data encoding. The gathered data will then be encoded and submitted to a statistician for analysis using descriptive, comparative, and correlational statistical techniques. These analyses will determine the level of implementation and effectiveness of urban poor development programs and examine the relationship and differences between the two barangays.

Finally, the research report will be reviewed, refined, and finalized to meet academic standards and ethical research guidelines, ensuring that all procedures uphold the integrity, confidentiality, and professionalism required in community-based research contexts.

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