

Transforming Lives: The Livelihood Program for Gender Empowerment and Sustainability

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Abstract

This study presents an analysis of a rag weaving training workshop, focusing on participant demographics, training effectiveness, and socio-economic impacts. Specifically, the extension project aimed to conduct profiling of target beneficiaries, develop skill sets in rag weaving, enhance participants' economic opportunities, promote gender equality, and evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the livelihood training. Quantitative data were gathered using a standard evaluation form, while qualitative data were collected from participants' comments, suggestions, and interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution, and the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The training included participant sharing, skill demonstrations, and practical rag weaving sessions. The workshop primarily attracted a female audience (80%), reflecting traditional gender roles in textile crafts. The age distribution showed significant participation from middle-aged and older individuals, driven by economic necessity due to rising living costs. Notably, participants hailed from diverse municipalities, underscoring the program's inclusivity across different economic classifications. High satisfaction scores indicated the program's relevance, with a mean score of 4.78 for training content and delivery. Feedback analysis revealed themes of gratitude, effective support, and a strong desire for continued learning. Participants recognized the potential for economic improvement through newly acquired skills, highlighting the workshop's role in enhancing livelihoods. The training also fostered a positive learning environment, with high ratings for food, accommodation, and service delivery. The findings illustrate the program's success in meeting participant needs and promoting skill development while emphasizing the importance of ongoing education for economic empowerment. This initiative supports individual growth and broader community development, reinforcing the relevance of vocational training in today's economic landscape.

Keywords: gender empowerment, skills demonstration, economic improvement, livelihood, sustainability



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INTRODUCTION

This extension project aims to provide livelihood training in rag weaving, promote gender empowerment, and foster sustainable practices. The project addressed the socio-economic challenges of middle-aged and older individuals facing financial instability due to rising living costs. With 80% female participation, it also tackled traditional gender roles limiting men's involvement in textile crafts.

The program promoted gender equality by creating an inclusive training environment and

engaging men through targeted outreach that emphasized the economic potential of rag weaving for all genders. Equitable educational opportunities were essential for societal advancement (Belingeri et al., 2021). Monitoring gender ratios and surveying participants' perceptions of empowerment fostered a collaborative atmosphere supporting both men and women.

Rags are versatile commodities used in households, cars, and as placemats. The project aimed to teach participants basic rag weaving techniques inspired by Prof. Betchie E. Aguinaldo's income-generating methods.

Conducted from 2019 to 2020 for the Isabela Green Ladies Organization (IGLO), the training led to the establishment of a small business in Cabatuan, Isabela. The program partnered with multiple agencies, including National Irrigation Administration (NIA), Irrigator's Association (IA), Rural Improvement Club (RIC), Local Government Units (LGU's), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP).

Rag weaving was introduced as an off-season activity for women, particularly after rice and munggo harvests, providing additional income. BJMP inmates also participated in making doormats and potholders, benefiting their families with extra income. The RAG Program's approach to skill development, entrepreneurship, livelihood training, and gender empowerment follows the industry's best practices, enhancing economic resilience and supporting sustainable community development.

The rag weaving program had a significant impact on beneficiaries, particularly women, who gained skills that enabled their husbands to earn additional income. Inmates participating in the program were also able to assist their families financially. This initiative aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Specifically, the training promoted gender equality (SDG 5), aimed to meet immediate subsistence needs (SDG 1), and fostered partnerships to achieve these goals (SDG 17). The alignment with these SDGs demonstrates the program's broader social and economic impact, highlighting its contribution to sustainable development and community empowerment.

General Objective. To deliver livelihood training in rag weaving production while promoting gender empowerment and foster sustainable practices.

Specific Objectives. The following are the specific objectives of the program:

1. *Profiling.* To conduct profiling to the target beneficiary and identify relevant information that is needed in designing the training program.

2. *Develop Skill Sets.* To equip participants with the technical skills required for rag weaving, including material selection and weaving techniques.
3. *Enhance Economic Opportunities.* To create pathways for participants to start their own rag weaving businesses, providing tools for effective marketing and sales.
4. *Promote Gender Equality.* To foster an inclusive training environment that empowers both women and men, encouraging collaboration and support among participants.
5. *Program Effectiveness and Assessment.* To evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the livelihood training.



Figure 1
Project Background

Pre-Training. Conduct site visits and coordinate with bargains, municipal, or civic officials. Gather beneficiaries' personal and socio-demographic data, analyze their demographics and conduct oral assessments before training to evaluate participants' interest and skill in rag weaving.

Implementation. Administer post-training assessments to evaluate participants' skill improvements in rag weaving through demo sessions, requiring specific product designs or tasks based on predefined criteria. Foster an inclusive environment empowering both women and men, encouraging collaboration. Create pathways for participants to start rag weaving businesses by providing marketing and sales tools, and have them develop a business plan to assess feasibility and clarity.

Monitoring. Track the number of participants who successfully sell their products post-training, measuring sales volume and revenue. Monitor the gender ratio to ensure balanced representation in training sessions.

Evaluation. Conduct surveys and interviews to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the livelihood training.



Figure 2
Conceptual/Operational Framework

In response to the pressing need for sustainable livelihood among economically vulnerable women and men, a notable gap was identified: the lack of sufficient livelihood opportunities. To bridge this gap, a comprehensive intervention was introduced through livelihood training and seminars focused on rag weaving, particularly the production of doormats and potholders. This initiative was encapsulated in an extension project aptly named "Transforming Lives: The RAG Program for Gender Empowerment and Sustainability." The program successfully capacitated 352 participants, conducting a total of 12 training workshops. Additionally, it facilitated the signing of 10 memorandum of agreements, thereby formalizing partnerships and ensuring the sustainability of the program's impact. Through these efforts, participants were empowered with new skills, enabling them to generate income and improve their economic standing.

Table 1
Number of attendees, conducted workshops and signed agreements

Particulars	Total
Participants Capacitated	352
Training-workshop Conducted	12
Memorandum of Agreement signed	10

As earlier mentioned, the RAG Program for Gender Empowerment and Sustainability project successfully capacitated 352 participants through 12 comprehensive training workshops. These sessions equipped the participants with valuable rag weaving skills, enhancing their economic opportunities. Additionally, the project formalized partnerships with 10 local government units

(LGUs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) through Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs), ensuring sustained support.

Table 2
Total doormats and potholders sales volume from 2022-2024 of different organizations.

Name of Organization	Year	Potholder (pieces)	Doormat (pieces)	Unit Price	Total Sales
Irrigator's Association (Tumauini, Isabela)	2022-2024	80	---	15.00	1,200.00
		----	230	50.00	11,500.00
Sub-total					12,700.00
Irrigator's Association (Burgos, Isabela)	2024	20	----	15.00	975.00
		----	40	50.00	2,000.00
Sub-total					2,975.00
Irrigator's Association (Santiago City)	2024	20	----	15.00	300.00
		----	37	50.00	1,850.00
Sub-total					2,150.00
RIC- San Mateo, Isabela	2023-2024	400	----	15.00	6,000.00
		----	267	50.00	13,350.00
Sub-total					19,350.00
BJMP- San Mateo, Isabela	2022-2024	155	----	15.00	2,325.00
		----	150	50.00	7,500.00
Sub-total					9,825.00
GRAND TOTAL					47,000.00

LITERATURES

The RAG Program aims to deliver livelihood training in rag weaving production, promoting gender empowerment and fostering sustainable practices. Profiling beneficiaries is crucial in designing effective training programs, as understanding participants' socio-demographic data helps tailor interventions to meet their specific needs (Frank et al., 2024; Dushkova & Ivlieva, 2024). Site visits and coordination with local officials enhance data accuracy and relevance ((Vilbar & Bronda, 2024; Ballesteros et al., 2017).

Skills development through training workshops empowers participants, with oral assessments and post-training evaluations ensuring skills improvement (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Hands-on weaving sessions and product design tasks measure proficiency and enhance learning outcomes, complemented by entrepreneurship discussions to provide pathways for starting business (Paul et al., 2024; Lavanga & Brydges, 2014). Creating business plans and tracking sales post-training fosters economic opportunities, emphasizing market access and innovation in the textile

industry (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Bhargava, 2024).

Promoting gender equality in training programs ensures inclusivity (UNESCO, 2008). Monitoring gender ratios and surveying participants' perceptions of empowerment foster collaboration and support (UNESCO, 2008). Gender equality research highlights the need for equitable educational opportunities to drive societal advancement (Belingheri et al., 2021). Overall, the RAG program's comprehensive approach to livelihood training, skills development, entrepreneurship, and gender equality aligns with best practices, addressing beneficiaries' specific needs and fostering an inclusive environment to contribute to sustainable development and gender empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology involved systematically gathering participants' profiles using an attendance sheet, which recorded details such as names, age, gender, affiliated agency, and municipality. Participants acquired skills in rag designing, rag weaving, costing, and basic entrepreneurship through livelihood training, documented via casual interviews and direct observations for a thorough understanding of skill development. The program aimed to create economic opportunities by equipping participants with tools and knowledge for starting rag weaving businesses and promoting gender equality by encouraging all gender participation and ensuring equal rights. To assess training effectiveness, the ISU standard training sessions evaluation instrument was used, covering various aspects like training quality, resource speaker effectiveness, coordination, accommodation, timeliness, and overall assessment. This structured approach ensured comprehensive evaluation and meaningful outcomes for all participants.

Participants of the Program. Participants of the program came from diverse organizations and agencies across the municipalities and cities of Isabela province. These included the Irrigators Association (IA), Rural Improvement Club (RIC),

National Irrigation Administration (NIA), and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP).

Survey Instrument. The attendance sheet was employed to collect participants' profiles, while the ISU standard training sessions evaluation instrument was used to assess the effectiveness of the livelihood training. Table 3 below presents the 5-point Likert scale used in evaluating the indicators of the survey.

Table 3
5-point Likert scale used in evaluating the effectiveness of the livelihood training.

Range of Means	Interpretation
4.50 - 5.00	Very Satisfied
3.50 - 4.49	Satisfied
2.50 - 3.49	Neutral
1.50 - 2.49	Dissatisfied
1.00 - 1.49	Very dissatisfied

Source of Data. Data were primarily sourced from the attendance sheet, ISU standard training sessions evaluation instrument, and the documented casual interviews and observation.

Data Gathering Procedure. Participants were directed to complete the attendance form, which asked them to provide their name, age, gender, and organization or agency, to create their profile. Following the livelihood training, participants were asked to complete the ISU standard training sessions evaluation tool to assess satisfaction with the program.

Statistical Treatment of Data. To analyze the profiles of the participants, frequency and percentage counts were utilized, enabling a detailed examination of demographic factors such as age, gender, and affiliated agencies. This approach provided a comprehensive representation of the participant population. Meanwhile, to evaluate the participants' satisfaction with the livelihood training, the mean and standard deviation were employed. The mean offered an average satisfaction score, reflecting the overall sentiment of the participants, while the standard deviation

measured the variability of the satisfaction scores, indicating consistency in their training experience ratings. Together, these statistical methods ensured a rigorous and effective analysis of both participant demographics and training satisfaction levels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of the target beneficiaries.

Table 4
Distribution of Participants in terms of Age

Age Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
20 and below	19	5
21 to 30	66	19
31 to 40	61	17
41 to 50	98	28
51 to 60	65	19
61 and above	43	12
TOTAL	352	100

The Philippines' rag weaving training-workshop attracted a significant number of middle-aged (41-50; 28%) and older individuals (51-60, 61 and above; 31%) due to socio-economic and cultural factors. These individuals often seek additional income streams because of family income instability and rising living costs. Livelihood training provides practical skills for monetization and provides a sense of purpose and personal fulfillment. These individuals often have extended family responsibilities and need to contribute to their household's financial well-being.

Table 5
Distribution of Participants from Different Agencies

Agency/ies	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
IA- Mallig, Isabela	4 th Class Municipality	27	8
4P's - San Mateo	1st Class Municipality	73	21
IA- Dinapigue	1 st Class Municipality	27	8
NIA- San Manuel	4 th Class Municipality	21	6
IA- Burgos, Isabela	4 th Class Municipality	46	13
Brgy. Ayod-Dinapigue, Isabela	1 st Class Municipality	22	6
IA - Santiago City	Component City	39	11
BJMP- San Mateo	1 st Class Municipality	14	3
RIC- Malasin-San Mateo	1 st Class Municipality	25	7
RIC- San. Andres San Mateo	1 st Class Municipality	33	9
RIC- Pequeño	1 st Class Municipality	25	7
RIC- Estrella San Mateo	1 st Class Municipality	25	7
TOTAL	1st Class Municipality	352	100

**Classification source:*
<https://cmci.dti.gov.ph/prov-profile.php?prov=Isabela>

The rag weaving training-workshop participants came from various municipalities, regardless of their economic status. The program's inclusivity and effectiveness in providing livelihood opportunities, enhancing economic resilience, and fostering community development across diverse settings were evident in the broad engagement, demonstrating its effectiveness in promoting livelihood opportunities and community development.

2. Technical skills developed in rag weaving, including material selection and weaving techniques.

The training session kicked off with a lively group discussion where participants shared their past experiences. It quickly became clear that most of them had no prior experience in rag weaving. After this, the trainers gave an engaging talk about the purpose of the extension project and highlighted how it could create valuable livelihood opportunities for the participants.

Following the livelihood training, participants successfully acquired a variety of valuable skills, such as rag designing, rag weaving, costing, and basic entrepreneurship. These newly acquired skills were essential for enabling participants to engage in productive activities and potentially start their own small businesses. To ensure a comprehensive record of the participants' progress, casual interviews and direct observations were conducted. During these interviews, participants shared their experiences, challenges, and achievements, providing personal insights into their learning journey. Observations allowed for an objective assessment of how well the participants applied their new skills in practice.

The information gathered from these interviews and observations was meticulously jotted down for documentation purposes. This documentation served as a vital resource for evaluating the effectiveness of the training program, identifying areas for improvement, and planning future training initiatives. Overall, this systematic approach ensured that the

participants' skill development was thoroughly recorded and could be used to support their ongoing growth and success.

3. Economic opportunities of participants in starting their own rag weaving business.

Discussion sessions include topics on marketing and sales strategies. The trainers also discussed the cost-plus pricing or markup pricing to compute the cost of production and determine the markup of a product produced. The table below shows the initial cost of materials and the products to be produced.

Table 6
Initial Materials Costing and Estimated Product Output and Pricing

Initial Cost of Materials	Price
1 Piece Wood Frame (Small/Big)	200.00
2 Sets Scrap Fabric	160.00
1 Piece hand Needle	10.00
1 piece Thread	20.00
TOTAL	390.00

Products to be Produced	Price/Piece	Total Price
8 Pieces Doormat (big)	50.00	400.00
12 Pieces Potholder	15.00	180.00
TOTAL		580.00
Less total cost of materials		390.00
Initial Profit		190.00

**Note: The cost of production will decrease over time, boosting the profit margin, as the wood frame and handle needle can be reused.*

4. Gender equality promotion fostering inclusive training environment, collaboration and support.

Table 7
Distribution of Participants in Terms of Gender

Gender	2021	2022	2023	2024	Frequency	Percentage
Male	5	14	2	7	28	8
Female	80	99	107	66	324	92
TOTAL					352	100

The livelihood program was designed to be inclusive, actively encouraging participation from all genders. By providing equal rights and opportunities, the programs aimed to eliminate any barriers that might lead to gender discrimination. Participants, regardless of their gender, were empowered with the same

resources, training, and support needed to succeed.

Baker (2024) emphasizes the importance of gender equality by stating, "gender equality ensures everyone has the same access to success." This means that when individuals are given equal opportunities, they can all achieve their full potential, regardless of their gender. By fostering an environment of equality, the livelihood programs contributed to breaking down stereotypes and changing societal norms that often limit opportunities based on gender.

By integrating gender equality into livelihood programs, we move closer to achieving a more just and equitable society, where success is not determined by one's gender but by their abilities and efforts.

5. Effectiveness and relevance of the livelihood training.

Table 8
Summary of the Training Session Evaluation

Criteria	Mean	SD
Training Proper	4.78	0.67
Resource Speaker	4.57	1.22
Training Coordinator/Secretariat	4.72	0.81
Food And Accommodation	4.93	0.28
Overall Assessment of The Training	4.75	0.78
Timeliness In Service Delivery	4.89	0.74
Total Rating	4.77	0.74

**Note: The cost of production will decrease over time, boosting the profit margin, as the wood frame and handle needle can be reused.*

The evaluation of the livelihood training program yielded positive results across various criteria, with high satisfaction scores: Training Proper (mean=4.78, SD=0.67), Resource Speaker (mean=4.57, SD=1.22), Training Coordinator/Secretariat (mean=4.72, SD=0.81), Food and Accommodation (mean=4.93, SD=0.28), Overall Assessment (mean=4.75, SD=0.78), and Timeliness in Service Delivery (mean=4.89, SD=0.74). The overall mean score of 4.77 and SD of 0.74 indicates a consistently high level of satisfaction, reflecting the program's effectiveness and positive impact on participants.

Conclusion. The rag weaving training-workshop has proven to be a highly effective initiative, particularly for middle-aged and older individuals seeking additional income due to socio-economic and cultural factors. The program's inclusivity and ability to attract participants from various municipalities, regardless of their economic status, highlight its role in enhancing economic resilience and fostering community development. Participants successfully acquired valuable skills such as rag designing, rag weaving, costing, and basic entrepreneurship, enabling them to engage in productive activities and potentially start small businesses. The systematic approach of using casual interviews and direct observations ensured comprehensive documentation of participants' progress and the effectiveness of the training program.

The workshop focusses on enhancing economic opportunities through discussions on marketing and sales strategies, as well as pricing methods, equipping participants with essential knowledge to succeed in their ventures. Additionally, the program's commitment to promoting gender equality by providing equal rights and opportunities for all participants contributed to breaking down stereotypes and changing societal norms.

The high satisfaction scores across various evaluation criteria indicate the program's effectiveness and positive impact on participants. Overall, the training program has significantly contributed to the well-being of the beneficiaries by providing practical skills, fostering economic resilience, and promoting gender equality, thereby supporting community development and enhancing the overall quality of life for its participants.

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DOCUMENTATIONS

Project Component 1. Profiling of the target beneficiaries to determine their personal and socio-demographic data.



Consultation meetings and forged MOAs with different agencies and associations were presented to approve extension projects.

Project Component 2. Training-Workshop to develop the participants' skill sets in rag weaving.

