

EXPLORING THE CONTRIBUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: BASIS FOR POLICY REVIEW

Krystal Dane B. Agyao
Graduate School
St. Louis College of Bulanao
Tabuk City, Kalinga, Philippines

Abstract— The main focus of the study is participation of civil society organizations in local governance. The mixed method, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, was used in the conduct of the study. The respondents of this study were accredited Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The study was conducted in the City of Tabuk, Kalinga, and included representatives. The total enumeration technique was used. The questionnaire was the main data-gathering instrument used in the study. Interviews were also conducted to verify the answers previously gathered. The percentage formula, Four-Point Likert Scale and Weighted Mean were utilized in interpreting the result of the study. Additionally, Thematic Analysis was applied to examine the issues and challenges faced by the respondents in their participation in local governance, as well as the recommended policies and interventions that could be formulated to address these challenges in city governance. Based from the results and findings, the researcher concluded that sector representation is a significant factor in determining the level of participation of CSOs in local governance in the CGO of Tabuk City. It was also recommended thw Establishment of Dedicated Budget for CSOs, conduct of Capacity-Building and Orientation Programs; implementation of Inclusive Governance Frameworks; implementation of Streamlining Bureaucratic Procedures; Flexibility in Participation; and Promotion of Political Neutrality and Inclusivity; and Regular Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms.

Keywords— *Civil Society Organizations, Participation, Local Governance*

I. INTRODUCTION

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) help promote a more inclusive type of governance—one that values accountability, transparency, and participation. Their engagement allows both citizens and the government to work together towards shared goals in development (Pasamonte, 2024). CSOs are key in promoting fairness in society, making governments answerable for their actions, and empowering citizens to participate in decision-making (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 20).

The legal systems that govern CSOs differ from one country to another. Some countries support the growth of civil society

by making it easier to register organizations and by protecting the right to assemble. However, other nations pass laws that make it harder for CSOs to function, especially when these laws limit freedom of association or discourage partnerships with international groups (Carothers et al., 2022). These restrictions can reduce their ability to address broader issues and collaborate globally. Despite these challenges, digital tools and global networks offer CSOs new ways to collaborate across borders. They can share useful practices and raise their voices more effectively on important issues (Edwards & Stefes, 2020). Forming alliances with international bodies like the United Nations also gives CSOs a platform to participate in global policy discussions (Glasius, 2023).

In the Philippines, civil society is deeply rooted in Filipino culture. Values like pakikipagkapwa (holistically interacting with others) and kapwa (shared identity) shape how Filipinos view charity and cooperation. Terms such as damayan (help during times of crisis) and pagtutulungan (mutual support) reflect the idea of equality between those who give and those who receive help (Del Castillo, 2024).

Article II, Section 23 of the Philippine Constitution states that the government must "encourage non-governmental, community-based or sectoral organizations that promote the nation's welfare." This shows the country's commitment to involving CSOs in nation-building.

Local governance in the Philippines follows a decentralized approach. This means that power and responsibilities are shared with Local Government Units (LGUs), such as provinces, municipalities, and barangays. As stated in Republic Act 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991, devolution is the act of transferring certain powers from the national government to LGUs. These local units are expected to manage essential services like infrastructure, education, and health (Local Government Code of 1991, RA 7160).

Section 34 of the same law encourages LGUs to support Non-Government Organizations and People's Organizations. These groups are seen as valuable partners in driving local economic growth. One of the key goals of this law is to ensure that all stakeholders, including CSOs, are involved in local

governance. Their involvement makes governance more inclusive and grounded in the actual needs of communities (Cabrera, 2021).

Local leaders, such as governors, mayors, and barangay captains, are elected and expected to be accountable to their people. However, some LGUs still face difficulties due to limited funds and lack of capacity, which affect how well they can deliver services (Oxfam, 2022). Even with these problems, CSOs continue to play a crucial role. They help fill gaps, bring attention to citizen concerns, and ensure that government processes remain transparent and accountable (Social Watch Philippines, 2024). The LGUs are closer to the people, so they are in a better position to encourage citizen participation. This makes it easier to put into practice principles like sustainability and fairness. According to Ibones et al. (2024), CSOs in the Philippines take on different roles—they act as Advocates, Givers, Mediators, and Partners. Their success depends on factors such as providing shared benefits, working well with others, solving conflicts early, using local knowledge, building trust, and aligning with other stakeholders.

On June 15, 2022, the City Government of Tabuk, through the City Barangay Affairs and Community Relations Office (CBACRO), conducted its first-ever inventory and assessment of all Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) within the city. This was done in accordance with the DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2022-083. After completing the assessment, the city issued an Executive Order officially designating CBACRO as the CSO Desk Office. As a result, this office now plays a key role in reviewing CSO applications and forwarding them to the Sangguniang Panlungsod for further review.

The creation of the CBACRO as the CSO Desk Office represents an important shift in how Civil Society Organizations are managed and coordinated in Tabuk City. Given this change, it is essential to evaluate how well this new system is working. CSOs appear to have limited awareness of their roles and responsibilities within the Local Special Bodies. Moreso, the Tabuk City Local People's Council hasn't been fully realized, particularly for those who are part of these committees and councils. Additionally, there is a noticeable lack of awareness and engagement among CSOs regarding their roles and responsibilities in these governance structures. This could stem from a lack of outreach, training, or communication from the CSO Desk Office. Furthermore, there is little previous research on how CSOs have participated in local development in Tabuk, particularly under previous offices that were responsible for these functions. This makes the need for an evaluation even more pressing.

The objective of this study is to examine the participation of CSOs in Tabuk and identify the issues and challenges they face. By doing so, this study will provide valuable insights that can help improve how the CSO Desk Office operates and support CSOs in their roles. Ultimately, this study aims to ensure that CSOs continue to play an active role in promoting a more participatory and responsive local governance system.

II. METHODS

Research Design

The mixed method, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, was used in the conduct of the study, with the descriptive method as the manner of presenting data on the level of participation of the respondents in local governance. A basic qualitative design was utilized to acquire data regarding the issues and challenges of the respondents' participation in local governance, and to explore the policies that could be formulated to ease the challenges experienced by the respondents in local governance.

Participants of the Study

The respondents of this study were accredited Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) who were members of the Local Special Bodies and the Local People's Council. The study was conducted in the City of Tabuk, Kalinga, and included representatives from the Local People's Council and Local Special Bodies, who represented the CSOs in the committees and councils within the city's jurisdiction. A total of 60 respondents representing various sectors participated in the study. The total enumeration technique was used.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was the main data-gathering instrument used in the study. Interviews were also conducted to verify the answers previously gathered. The content of the questionnaire was based on the "Guidebook for Civil Society Organizations in Local Special Bodies and Local Budget Process" and the DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2022-083, which provided guidelines on the accreditation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the selection of representatives to Local Special Bodies (LSBs). The questionnaire was structured with a scale of agreement, asking respondents to assess their engagement levels in various aspects of local governance, including CSO accreditation procedures, participation in meetings of local special bodies, and contributions to the local budgetary process.

In addition to the quantitative assessments, the questionnaire included interview questions aimed at gathering qualitative insights on the challenges CSOs faced in engaging with local governance. These questions sought to identify potential obstacles and opportunities for policy review to address these challenges.

Data Gathering Procedure

Formal letters of request were drafted to the office of the City Mayor and the CSO Desk Office, seeking approval for the research within the City of Tabuk and notifying the respective offices of the study's purpose. Additionally, the CSO Desk Office was asked to endorse the study to the different barangay captains in the city.

Upon obtaining approval from both offices, the researchers proceeded with data collection. This involved conducting interviews and surveys among identified Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the barangays of Tabuk.

Interviews facilitated in-depth discussions with key CSO representatives, while surveys gathered quantitative data on their activities, challenges, and perceptions.

Throughout the data collection process, confidentiality and ethical considerations were prioritized, with informed consent obtained from all participants. The collected data then underwent thorough analysis to derive meaningful insights and findings relevant to the research objectives and questions.

Participants were not pressured to participate and were assured that they would not be harmed in any way if they declined to participate. The researcher guaranteed that all data collected would be treated with strict confidentiality and that privacy would be maintained. The anonymity of all survey respondents was ensured. Finally, sources from previous research, magazines, websites, and books were properly cited throughout the study.

Data Analysis

The Percentage Formula was used to describe the profile of the respondents. The researcher employed a Four-Point Likert Scale to measure the responses of participants regarding their level of participation in city governance. The data were treated statistically using the Weighted Mean.

Scale	Limits	Descriptive Equivalent	Symbol
4	3.25-4.00	Much Participated	MP
3	2.50-3.24	Participated	P
2	1.75-2.49	Less Participated	LP
1	1.00-1.74	Not Participated	NP

Additionally, Thematic Analysis was applied to examine the issues and challenges faced by the respondents in their participation in local governance, as well as the interventions that could be formulated to address these challenges in city governance.

III. RESULTS

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Accrediting Agency		
Security and Exchange Commission	7	11.7%
Cooperative	4	6.7%
Development Authority	13	21.7%
Department of Agriculture	35	60%
Department of Labor and Employment		
Sector Representation		
Women	14	23.3%
Professional	1	1.7%
Civic	4	6.7%

Religious	2	3.3%
Business	1	1.7%
Farmers	15	25%
Indigenous Group	2	3.3%
Solo Parent	3	5%
Youth	3	5%
Transportation Group	3	5%
NGOs	3	5%
Senior Citizen	3	5%
Cooperatives	6	10%
Organizational Level		
Barangay- Based	50	83.3%
Chapter	1	1.7%
Affiliate of Larger Organization	9	15%

It was shown that majority of the respondents are from the Department of Labor and Employment with 35 or 60%, from the farmers sector representation with 15 or 25% and most of them are from the barangay-based organization with 50 or 83.3%.

Table 2. The Level of Participation of the Respondents in Local Governance towards Development

Indicators	Mean	DES
1. Participation in the inventory of existing CSOs per barangay.	2.70	P
2. Participation in the Call for Accreditation	3.57	MP
3. Participation in the 1 st CSO Conference conducted by CBACRO/CSO Desk Office.	2.83	P
4. Participation in the Selection of Representatives to the Local Special Bodies.	2.05	LP
5. Participation in the reorganization of the Local People's Council meeting with the Local Development Council, Local Health Board, Local School Board, and Local Peace and Order Council.	2.08	LP
6. Participation in the enhancement activities conducted by CBACRO/CSO desk office.	3.03	P
7. Participation on the Local Special Bodies meetings.	1.20	NP
8. Participation in the budget preparation in their respective barangays.	1.07	NP

9. Participation in the project inspection in your concerned barangays.	1.45	NP
10. Participation in the Local People's council meetings.	1.17	NP
Total Average Weighted Mean	2.12	LP

Table 2 shows that the participation of the in the CSOs in the activities and programs of government-led initiatives that require their engagement is “less participated” as shown by its obtained mean of 2.12. The participation in the Call for Accreditation is the most participated by the respondents as shown by its mean of 3.57 while participation in the budget preparation in their respective barangays is the “least participated” with a lowest mean of 1.07.

Table 3: Significant Difference in the Level of Participation of the Respondents in Local Governance towards Development when grouped according to their profile

Profile	p- value	Interpretation
Accrediting Agency	0.42	Not Significant
Sector Representation	0.02	Significant
Organizational Level	0.28	Not Significant

Table 3 shows that Accrediting Agency and Organizational level are not significant factors in the level of participation of CSOs in local governance while Sector Representation has a significance on the CSOs' level of participation in local governance.

Issues and Challenges of the Respondent's Participation in Local Governance

The thematic analysis results reveal that the Civil Society participation in Local Governance in Tabuk City faced some issues and challenges. These challenges include the Limited CSO awareness of the activities and initiatives that needs their engagement, Insufficient CSO funding for participant expenses, Political influence hinders CSO participation in local governance, Lack of time to engage and participate, and Excessive Requirements in Accessing Government Support.

Theme 01: Limited CSO awareness of the activities and initiatives that needs their engagement

Participants expressed lack of awareness regarding their roles as partners in local governance, highlighting the limited understanding of the activities and initiatives that require their

involvement. Limited awareness among Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) regarding activities and initiatives that require their engagement is a critical issue in promoting effective local governance. They have expressed the following:

CCi1: “Haan ko ammu nga adda ga.yam ti kasta nga akaktibidad iti city nga para kanyami.”(*I didn't know that there are such activities in the government for us.*)

CNI1: “No participation to other activities because we are not aware and no communications were given to us.”

CF2: “No knowledge to some activities for us.”

CF3: “We are not aware.”

CF10: “Ti panagobserbar ko ket kaadwan kanyami ket haan mi ammu dagitoy nga aktibidad. Mabalin kami gayam nga pumaset iti kakasta nga banag?Imbag lang ta naamwak.” (*My observation is that most of us are unaware of these activities. We can participate in such events? It's good that I learned about it.*)

Theme 02: Insufficient CSO funding for participant expenses

Majority of the participants expressed that one challenges is the lack of funds in their organizations. In the context of the Philippines, while laws and frameworks exist to support CSOs, such as the Local Government Code and the People Empowerment Act, there remains a gap in ensuring these organizations have the necessary resources for meaningful participation in government programs and initiatives. As CSOs are often reliant on membership fees, grants and government allocations, delays or insufficient funding can prevent their effective involvement. They have expressed the following:

CW5: “No funds”.

CW7: “Awan iti extra nga pundu mi para ti paayab iti city. Imbag kuma nu iri-imbers da iti pamasaha mi nu agatendar kami iti pampamiting da.”(*We don't have extra funds for transportation going to the cityhall. It would be better if they could reimburse our fare if we attend those meetings.*)

CC2: “No funds allocated for these kinds of city-led initiatives for us.”

Theme 03: Minimizing political influence creates opportunities for more inclusive and empowered CSO participation

Most of the participants said that leaving out some CSOs because of politics limits the different ideas and opinions that could help improve local governance. This makes it harder

to create policies that truly meet the needs of all people. It also reduces transparency, since decisions made without hearing from everyone can lead to poor results, unfair practices, or missed chances for better and more inclusive solutions.

Also, it creates a situation where CSOs connected to powerful political figures get more support, while those that speak up for poor or Indigenous communities are left out. This weakens the ability of local governments to listen and respond to the needs of their people, slowing down progress toward fair and lasting development.

CF1: *“Kanayun nga mapulpolitika. Nu sino lang ti asideg ti kalan nga arganization ket isu ti mapabpaboran.” (Politics is always involved. Only those organizations close to certain politicians are being favored.)*

CF5: *“Markaan data met nga opposition nu haan ta inbutos ni Kapitan. Isunga haan dakami ay-ayaban nu adda ti ipaayab iti city.” (We are marked opposition if we did not vote the barangay captain. That’s why we are not being informed if there are call for meetings by the CLGU.)*

CW6: *“Opposition kami kanu.” (They say, we are opposition)*

CT1: *“Nu magna jay surat ijay barangay mi,awan maawat mi karu ta jay president met ket haan na inbutos ni Kapitan mi.”(When the letter reaches our barangay we don’t receive it because our president did not vote our Barangay Captain.)*

Theme 04: Lack of time to engage and participate

Participants also stated that lack of time to engage and participate in the government initiatives leads to their disengagement to such programs and activities which limits their contributions towards development. Some of the respondent’s verbalization are as follows:

CW1: *“Nu mamingsan haan maymayat lattan nga mapan kami agubra kaysa mapan tumulong ijay barangay.” (Sometimes, it is better for us to go to work rather than to help in our barangay.)*

CF4: *“Lack of time”*

CSS3: *“No time.”*

CF6: *“Awan time mi nga miyembro” (We do not have time)*

Theme 05: Excessive Requirements in Accessing Government Support

In terms of support from the government and other agencies and offices, problem faced by the participants is the requirements being asked. As shown in Table 1, mostly of the participants are farmers followed by the women sector. This shows that most participants are involved in jobs, like farming,

that take up a lot of their time and attention. As a result, they find it hard to make time for community activities or to take part in community affairs.

The responses point to a common challenge, where work responsibilities are prioritized over civic duties. The lack of time, as mentioned by many participants, indicates that balancing work with community involvement is a major obstacle to being actively involved in local governance and community projects. It can lead to limited representation of community needs and concerns, especially among marginalized sectors that CSOs typically advocate for. When CSOs are unable to participate in development planning, budgeting, and decision-making, local policies and programs risk being less inclusive, less responsive, and less grounded in actual community realities. It also lead to disengagement from governance activities, which diminishes the effectiveness of participatory governance structures and their overall impact on local development. Some of the verbalizations are as follows:

CW2: *“Many requirements to acquire support like DA.”*

CF6: *“Adu adu nga requirements ti dawaten da nu mapan ta agdawat ti project pati resibo ijay BIR.Kasanu kami ngay nga farmers ket ti kakadwa mi nga dadduma ket no read no write?”(There are so many requirements needed when we ask for a project they even require receipts from the BIR. How about us farmers, where some of us cannot read or write?)*

CIG2: *“Too much requirements when requesting for livelihood programs.”*

CT5: *“Many many requirements to comply if we ask for government projects.”*

Policies that could ease the challenges of the participants

The thematic analysis results revealed the suggestion of the participants on policies that could ease and intervene on the challenges.

Theme1: Allocation of separate budget intended solely for CSO participation and enhancement

Most of the participants explained that the allocation of a budget also signals the commitment of local governments to support civic engagement and participatory democracy. It encourages a shift away from top-down governance models toward more collaborative, community-driven decision-making. Moreover, when CSOs are financially supported, they can help implement government programs more effectively, promote transparency, and even hold local authorities accountable. This ultimately strengthens democratic processes, increases public trust, and contributes to the development of

policies that are more responsive to the real needs of the community.

This approach would ensure that CSOs have the necessary resources to actively contribute to policy development, community consultations, and other vital governance processes. Furthermore, such a policy could help address the challenges faced by CSOs in terms of financial constraints, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and effective governance structure.

CN2: *“Allocation of funds for CSO meetings in the budget of the CSO Desk Office”.*

CC2: *“Financial training for cooperatives please.”*

CPI1: *“Provide honoraria to representatives of the Local Special Bodies (LSBs) and Local People’s Councils (LPCs) in allotting their time and commitment to government initiatives.”*

CY3: *“Trainings for us to level-up”*

CF5: *“Incentive us.”*

CF7: *“We should have travel reimbursement just like government employees because we are helping you in your works.”*

CW6: *“Incentive kuma” (Hopefully, there is incentive)*

CW8: *“More trainings for us.”*

IV. DISCUSSION

Most of the respondents were accredited by DOLE, primarily consisting farmers and are barangay-based organizations. Item number 2 in Table 2 represents the most participated activity among the CSOs, with the highest mean of 3.57 for participation in the Call for Accreditation, categorized as 'Much Participated.' This indicates a strong interest among the CSOs in being accredited by the City Government of Tabuk. CSOs located in Tabuk City are interested to become partners in local governance. This is supported by the study of Baesa et al., (2023), which showed that gaining approval from a particular LGU to become a partner through Civil Society Organization (CSO) accreditation is both a responsibility and an opportunity.

While item number 8 has the lowest mean which is 1.07 labeled as “not participated” activity/program which is contrary to the study of Rodriguez (2024), which he stated that participatory budgeting is an approach wherein citizens, through CSOs, are allowed to take part in the process of allocating public resources. It offers citizens the opportunity to contribute in the formulation of options and in making choices that will affect how their government acts. Since participatory budgeting helps promote transparency, it has the potential of reducing government inefficiencies and corruption. Participatory Budgeting offers citizens the opportunity to contribute in the formulating options and making choices that will affect how their government act. The average weighted

mean of 2.12 is a valuable indicator that the participation of CSOs in local governance is “less participated” indicating that despite the memorandum circulars issued by the DILG on the composition of different committees in PLGUs, LGUs and BLGUs that includes CSO engagement and participation, CSOs are still not aware of their roles as partners in local governance and development.

This result is supported by the study of Pasamonte (2024), which showed a discrepancy between policy and practice, implying compliance may be a stronger motivator than genuine engagement. Another study from Abdula (2019) revealed that CSOs have some contributions in program implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects. But they seldom contributed in consultation and legislation activities of the barangays. There was an extensive participation of CSOs in the development planning, however, seldom participation in the program implementation as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of the projects. In consultation and legislation activities, the CSOs were seldom involved.

On the significant difference in the level of participation of the respondents in local governance towards development, the results indicate that accrediting agency and organizational level are not significant factor in determining the extent of contributions of CSOs. This suggests that any accrediting national agency accrediting a CSO does not influence its contribution to local governance. Similarly, whether a CSO is barangay-based, a chapter, or an affiliate of a larger organization does not have a significant impact. This finding is backed up by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) which emphasized that accreditation primarily facilitates CSO inclusion in local governance mechanisms rather than determining their impact. Guidelines like DILG MC 2022-005 aim to standardize and streamline accreditation processes, ensuring broader CSO participation in implementing government programs while reducing barriers related to organizational type or size. This approach supports the view that contributions are shaped more by engagement strategies than by structural characteristics of CSOs themselves DILG-NCR, (2022)

On the other hand, the study has a significant difference on the sector representation in the contribution of the CSOs. This is supported by the Local Government Code of 1991, which institutionalizes the inclusion of sectoral representatives in Local Special Bodies to ensure diverse perspectives in decision-making processes. These provisions recognize the importance of addressing the unique needs and expertise of various sectors, including women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples (IPs), thereby enhancing the responsiveness and effectiveness of governance (RA 7160, 1991).

However, the effectiveness of these contributions can vary depending on the institutional mechanisms in place to support sectoral representation. For instance, in Quezon City,

its People's Council successfully mobilizes representatives from diverse sectors to influence local governance meaningfully as reported by Philippine News Agency (2023). This indicates that sectoral representation is not just a procedural requirement but an important factor in leveraging the strengths and priorities of different groups to achieve equitable and participatory governance.

While CSO participation is the road toward good governance, the shift in this paradigm has still a long way to go. We have yet to see other local government units and implementing agencies accept CSO participation. They can learn from the good practices of LGUs who chose to abandon the traditional and exclusive type of governance. The world is changing and there are more and more leaders who are inclusive and open to a more liberal and progressive leadership. (Lu,2023)

The results reveal that the Civil Society Participation in Local Governance in Tabuk City faced the challenges on the Limited CSO awareness of the activities and initiatives that needs their engagement, Insufficient CSO funding for participant expenses, Political influence hinders CSO participation in local governance, Lack of time to engage and participate, and Excessive Requirements in Accessing Government Support. Several studies highlight that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) face major barriers to effective participation in local governance due to limited awareness and understanding of governance structures and mechanisms. Medina-Guce et al. (2020) emphasize that this lack of knowledge often results in CSOs not fully contributing to decision-making processes. Soriano et al. (2021) and Tapaes & Brillantes (2020) further note that even when CSOs are aware of governance frameworks, their limited capacity to navigate and engage with them effectively restricts meaningful participation, especially in policy advocacy and budget processes. Ruiz et al. (2020) observe similar challenges in the area of disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), where CSOs' limited awareness of policies hampers their involvement and reduces community resilience. Tusalem (2020) points to the lack of orientation and capacity-building efforts from the government as a key factor weakening CSO engagement. Additionally, Pasamonte (2024) underscores the issue of bureaucratic resistance and elite control, where some local governments deliberately withhold information or exclude CSOs from planning and budgeting to protect vested interests, ultimately undermining inclusive governance.

It was also found that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) often lack the necessary financial resources for meaningful participation in governance. Many CSOs, particularly grassroots groups, rely heavily on membership dues, grants, or limited government allocations, which are often delayed or insufficient. Ramos (2023) notes that even accredited CSOs struggle to access funding, as financial support tends to favor larger, more established organizations. To address this disparity, Banogon (2019) recommends the

creation of targeted funding programs specifically for smaller CSOs, which could strengthen their capacity and improve their engagement in local governance processes.

Further, majority of the participants also said that political bias and patronage continue to undermine the inclusive participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in local governance in Tabuk City. Studies reveal that political affiliations often influence which CSOs are favored in decision-making processes. Cahimtung et al. (2024) highlight how organizations with strong political ties are given preferential treatment, while those aligned with opposition or marginalized sectors are excluded. Diokno-Sicat et al. (2020) further emphasize that local power dynamics and elite control limit the involvement of CSOs, especially those advocating for vulnerable groups like Indigenous Peoples and rural communities. Font et al. (2021) suggest that more inclusive and equitable governance frameworks are necessary to address these political barriers and ensure fair participation across all sectors.

Additionally, most of the participants also expressed that their lack of time to engage in government initiatives often results in disengagement from programs and activities, ultimately limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to local development efforts. This time constraint, often due to competing responsibilities or limited organizational capacity, reduces their active involvement in decision-making processes and weakens the overall impact of civil society in governance. According to Espiritu et al. (2023), this situation can lead to limited representation of marginalized groups, which CSOs typically aim to support. When CSOs are unable to take part in development planning, budgeting, and decision-making, local policies risk becoming less inclusive and disconnected from actual community needs, ultimately weakening the impact of participatory governance and sustainable development at the grassroots level.

Lastly, participants reported that one of the main challenges they face is the burdensome and often complex requirements needed to access assistance or participate in programs. These requirements can be difficult to comply with, especially for smaller or grassroots organizations that lack administrative capacity or technical resources. As a result, this creates a barrier to receiving support and engaging fully in government-led initiatives, limiting the effectiveness and inclusivity of these programs for the communities that need them most. Based on the study by Levine et al. (2023), the Philippine Governance Transparency Act and related policies are designed to enhance transparency and accountability in government transactions. However, despite these well-intentioned goals, excessive documentation requirements and procedural hurdles often act as significant barriers to meaningful participation. These complexities hinder the ability of many stakeholders, including CSOs, to fully engage with government processes and contribute effectively to decision-

making, undermining the potential impact of transparency initiatives.

It was revealed that the allocation of separate budget intended solely for CSO participation and enhancement was suggested as an intervention program that could help the participants overcome the challenges. Most of them explained that allocating dedicated financial resources for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) is essential for ensuring their active participation in policy development, community consultations, and other key governance processes. Such a policy would help address the financial constraints faced by CSOs, promoting a more inclusive and effective governance structure.

Studies, such of Solis (2022), show that budget allocations for CSOs can cover essential operational costs like travel and communication expenses, which are often barriers to engagement. This financial support not only enhances legitimacy and accountability in local governance but also allows CSOs to maintain their independence while collaborating with local governments (Gonzalez, 2023).

International frameworks, such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP), underscore the importance of CSO involvement in improving government transparency and accountability. When CSOs are properly funded, civic engagement tends to improve, as seen in OGP member countries (OGP, 2023). Furthermore, the DILG Memorandum Circular No. 2022-083 highlights the necessity of financial support for CSOs to effectively engage in governance through Local Special Bodies (LSBs) and Local People's Councils (LPCs) (DILG, 2022). This reinforces the critical role of adequate funding in facilitating meaningful CSO participation in local governance. Majority of the participants also suggested that the City of Tabuk must conduct Capacity-building and Orientation Programs to improve CSO knowledge of local governance structures, policies, and procedures; implement Inclusive Governance Frameworks that ensure more equitable access to local governance processes for all CSOs, regardless of their political affiliations. This could include measures to reduce elite control and ensure that marginalized groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, are properly represented; Streamline bureaucratic procedures and reduce documentation requirements to make it easier for grassroots organizations to participate in government programs. This would help lower the barriers for small and emerging CSOs to access government support; and design flexible programs that accommodate the time limitations faced by CSO members, especially those who are involved in time-consuming livelihoods. This could include offering more convenient times for consultations or using digital platforms to engage CSOs more effectively.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals that while there is some engagement, significant barriers remain that hinder meaningful contributions to local development. CSOs, particularly those accredited by DOLE and consisting mainly of farmers and barangay-based organizations, show strong interest in the accreditation process, as reflected in the high participation rate in the Call for Accreditation. However, their involvement in other governance activities, such as participatory budgeting, is minimal, indicating a gap between policy expectations and actual engagement. The study identifies several challenges affecting CSO participation, including limited awareness of governance processes, insufficient funding, political biases, lack of time, and excessive bureaucratic requirements. To address these challenges, the study recommends several intervention programs, including the allocation of a separate budget for CSO participation, capacity-building programs to improve CSOs' understanding of governance structures, and the implementation of inclusive governance frameworks to ensure equitable participation. Additionally, streamlining bureaucratic procedures and offering flexible participation options, such as digital platforms and alternative consultation times, would help reduce barriers and accommodate the diverse needs of CSOs.

REFERENCES

- Aceron, J. (2019). Pitfalls of aiming to empower the bottom from the top: The case of Philippine participatory budgeting. Accountability Research Center. Accountability Working Paper, 4.
- Atienza, M. E. L., & Tadem, T. S. E. (2023). Reforms and Ways Forward for Responsible Governance, Decentralization, and Equitable Development. In *A Better Metro Manila? Towards Responsible Local Governance, Decentralization and Equitable Development* (pp. 489-518). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- Banogon, M. (2019). The Practice of Good Governance in the Two Cities of Negros Oriental, Philippines. *Journal of Public Affairs and Development*, 6, 89-115.
- Barati, A. N., & Seifi, B. (2021). A Comparative Study of the Role of Specialized Civil Society in Fighting Corruption in Iran, Singapore, and the Philippines with a Focus on the Pathology of Corruption Causes.
- Beshi, T. D., & Kaur, R. (2020). Public trust in local government: Explaining the role of good governance practices. *Public Organization Review*, 20(2), 337-350.
- Brillantes Jr, A. B., & Ruiz, K. E. V. (2023). Public administration in the Philippines: features, trends, issues, and directions. In *Handbook on Asian Public Administration* (pp. 175-195). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Cagas, J. F., & Balacy, G. M. V. (2022). The Seal of Good Local Governance in Digos City: Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 6(11), 130-139.
- Cahimtung, K., & Tenorio, C. (2024). STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS: ASSESSING THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE DECISION-MAKING OF A SOUTHERN PHILIPPINE DISTRICT. *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences, Policy and Politics*, 2(2), 47-53.
- Camarillo, M. E., & Bellotindos, L. M. (2021). A study of policy implementation and community participation in the municipal solid waste management in the Philippines. *Applied Environmental Research*, 43(2), 30-45.
- Cardullo, P., & Kitchin, R. (2019). Being a 'citizen' in the smart city: Up and down the scaffold of smart citizen participation in Dublin, Ireland. *GeoJournal*, 84(1), 1-13.
- Cheng, R. R., & Kim, T. J. (2019). Building Community-based Resilience in the Municipality of San Francisco, Cebu, Republic of the Philippines.
- Clemens, E. S. (2021). The constitution of citizens: Political theories of nonprofit organizations. In *The nature of the nonprofit sector* (pp. 261-275). Routledge.

- De Guimarães, J. C. F., Severo, E. A., Júnior, L. A. F., Da Costa, W. P. L. B., & Salmoria, F. T. (2020). Governance and quality of life in smart cities: Towards sustainable development goals. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 253, 119926.
- Diokno-Sicat, C. J., Adaro, C. E., Maddawin, R. B., Castillo, A. F. G., & Mariano, M. A. P. (2020). Baseline study on policy and governance gaps for the local government support fund assistance to municipalities (LGSF-AM) program: Integrated report (No. 2020-03). *PIDS Discussion Paper Series*.
- Diokno-Sicat, C. J., Castillo, A. F. G., & Maddawin, R. B. (2021). Philippine local government public expenditure review: A survey of national government local government support programs (No. 2020-48). *PIDS Discussion Paper Series*.
- Diokno-Sicat, C. J., Mariano, M. A. P., Castillo, A. F., & Maddawin, R. B. (2020). Assessment of the performance challenge fund and the seal of good local governance: Perceptions from municipalities (No. 2020-05). *PIDS Discussion Paper Series*.
- Diola, M. F. L., & Rivas Jr, D. C. Governance Network Administration: Understanding the Concept Among Philippine Civil Society Organizations' Engagement with Government.
- Édes, B. W. (2024). The evolution of the Asian Development Bank's relations with civil society. In *The Elgar Companion to the Asian Development Bank* (pp. 213-225). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- ElMassah, S., & Mohieldin, M. (2020). Digital transformation and localizing the sustainable development goals (SDGs). *Ecological Economics*, 169, 106490.
- Font, J., Pasadas, S., & Fernández-Martínez, J. L. (2021). Participatory motivations in advisory councils: Exploring different reasons to participate. *Representation*, 57(2), 225-243.
- Franklin, A. L., & Ebdon, C. (2020). Participatory budgeting in the Philippines. *Chinese Public Administration Review*, 11(1), 60-74.
- Gallanosa, J., & De Castro, E. (2023). Full Devolution Transition: Challenges in The Implementation of Executive Order 138 in Selected Municipalities in the Province of Sorsogon.
- Gao, X., & Yu, J. (2020). Public governance mechanism in the prevention and control of the COVID-19: information, decision-making, and execution. *Journal of Chinese Governance*, 5(2), 178-197.
- Giles-Corti, B., Lowe, M., & Arundel, J. (2020). Achieving the SDGs: Evaluating indicators to be used to benchmark and monitor progress towards creating healthy and sustainable cities. *Health Policy*, 124(6), 581-590.
- Go, J. R. R. (2023). Decentralisation Experiences in the Philippines: Social Services Sectors and the Local Government Code of 1991. In *A Better Metro Manila? Towards Responsible Local Governance, Decentralization and Equitable Development* (pp. 157-192). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- Hendriks, B., Zevenbergen, J., Bennett, R., & Antonio, D. (2019). Pro-poor land administration: Towards practical, coordinated, and scalable recording systems for all. *Land Use Policy*, 81, 21-38.
- Ibones, K. A., Enero, J. V., Jore, J. S., Mamhot, V. I., Matheu, C. M., Pacaldo, H. B. B., & Jardin, R. A. (2024). Enabling role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in local environmental management in the Philippines: A systematic review. *Journal of Civil Society*, 1-21.
- Ibones, K. A., Enero, J. V., Jore, J. S., Mamhot, V. I., Matheu, C. M., Pacaldo, H. B. B., & Jardin, R. A. (2024). Enabling role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in local environmental management in the Philippines: A systematic review. *Journal of Civil Society*, 1-21.
- Jabeen, N., & Iqbal, D. M. Z. (2020). Gender and local governance in Pakistan: Promoting participation through capacity building. *South Asian Studies*, 25(2).
- Köhler, J., Geels, F. W., Kern, F., Markard, J., Onsongo, E., Wiczorek, A., ... & Wells, P. (2019). An agenda for sustainability transitions research: State of the art and future directions. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 31, 1-32.
- Kusters, K., De Graaf, M., Buck, L., Galido, K., Maindo, A., Mendoza, H., ... & Zagt, R. (2020). Inclusive landscape governance for sustainable development: assessment methodology and lessons for civil society organizations. *Land*, 9(4), 128.
- Levine, A. C., Park, A., Adhikari, A., Alejandria, M. C. P., Bradlow, B. H., Lopez-Portillo, M. F., ... & Heller, P. (2023). The role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the COVID-19 response across the Global South: A multinational, qualitative study. *PLOS Global Public Health*, 3(9), e0002341.
- Lihua, W. U., Tianshu, M. A., Yuanchao, B. I. A. N., Sijia, L. I., & Zhaoqiang, Y. I. (2020). Improvement of regional environmental quality: Government environmental governance and public participation. *Science of the Total Environment*, 717, 137265.
- Magno, F. A. (2022). Country Case 3: Philippines. *Ups and Downs of Direct Democracy Trends in Asia: Country Cases*, 38.
- Medina-Guce, C. (2020). Addressing Government-Civil Society Power-Sharing in Local Development Councils. Quezon City: Department of Interior and Local Government and United Nations Development Programme.
- Medina-Guce, C. (2020). Addressing Government-Civil Society Power-Sharing in Local Development Councils. Quezon City: Department of Interior and Local Government and United Nations Development Programme.
- Norton, J., & Gibson, T. D. (2019). Developing the CSO case studies. *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal*, 28(1), 20-24.
- Pasamonte, R. C. V. (2024). Empowering Grassroots Voices: Engagement of Civil Society Organizations in Philippine Local Governance. *Journal of Public Administration, Public Affairs, and Management*, 22(1), 197-197.
- Pasamonte, R. C. V. (2024). Empowering Grassroots Voices: Engagement of Civil Society Organizations in Philippine Local Governance. *Journal of Public Administration, Public Affairs, and Management*, 22(1), 197-197.
- Pirannejad, A., Janssen, M., & Rezaei, J. (2019). Towards a balanced E-Participation Index: Integrating government and society perspectives. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(4), 101404.
- Ramallo, J. (2019). Empowerment in the era of resilience-building: gendered participation in community-based (disaster) risk management in the Philippines. *Disasters*, 43(3), 614-635.
- Ramos, A. R. (2023). Political Participation and Democratic Governance in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 64(1).
- Ruiz, J. A. S. (2020). Understanding the Dynamics of Civil Society Organizations' Participation in Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Programs in the Philippines. *Philippine Sociological Review*, 68, 83-108.
- Samar, M. E., & Uy, M. J. (2023). Participatory Governance and the Strengthening of Civil Society in the Philippines. *Journal of Civil Society*, 20(2), 209-228.
- Santos, R. (2020). Disaster Risk Reduction, Management, and Civil Society Participation: Perspectives from Southeast Asia. *Southeast Asian Studies*, 9(2).
- Siddiqui, K. (2019). The State and Civil Society in Developing Countries. In *The Political Economy of Agrarian Change* (pp. 1-18). Routledge.
- Soriano, M. (2021). Civil Society Participation in Good Governance. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(2), 62-74.
- Tapales, P. D., & Brillantes, A. B. (2020). Participatory Governance and Accountability in the Philippines: Local Government Units and Civil Society Organizations. *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 64(1).
- Taylor, P. (2021). The Politics of Good Governance in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 52(3), 343-366.
- Tusalem, R. F. (2020). The State of Democracy and Civil Society in the Philippines. *Democratization*, 27(6), 1099-1120.
- Ullah, S., & Memon, A. R. (2021). Enhancing Good Governance through Citizen Participation: A Case Study of Selected Municipalities in the Philippines. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 44(5), 371-383.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). Citizen Participation and Local Democracy in the Philippines: A Study of Selected LGUs. Quezon City: UNDP Philippines.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2019). Strengthening Civil Society Participation in Governance: An Overview of CSOs in the Philippines.
- Velasco, M. (2020). Empowering the Poor through Civil Society Participation in the Philippines. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 41(2), 215-240.
- Wang, L., Jin, Y., Wang, L., Ma, W., & Li, T. (2019). Incentive-based approach to control demands for operation of one-way carsharing system. *Transportation Research Record*, 2673(4), 427-438.
- Watts, M. (2019). Local Government Accountability and the Role of Civil Society Organizations. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 43(3), 321-352.
- Weber, M. (2019). Civil Society Participation in Local Governance: Lessons from Philippine Experience. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*, 41(3), 177-196.

- White, H. (2019). Governance, Democracy, and Civil Society Participation in Southeast Asia. *Governance Journal*, 32(2), 217-234.
- Woldeyohannes, S. M. (2020). Challenges to Good Governance in the Philippines: The Role of Civil Society. *Governance*, 33(1), 37-56.
- World Bank. (2020). Citizen Engagement in Local Governance: The Case of the Philippines. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Yang, L., & Yang, Z. (2021). The Role of Civil Society in Strengthening Local Governance in Developing Countries. *Journal of Public Administration*, 45(1), 68-87.
- Zha, S., & Wu, X. (2019). E-Governance and Public Participation in Local Government in the Philippines: Challenges and Opportunities. *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 63(2), 157-173
- UN World Public Sector Report. (2020). Citizens and effective governance: Beyond theories, towards practice. United Nations. <https://publicadministration.un.org/publications/content/PDFs/WPS>

The author/s retain the copyright to this article, with IJAESSI granted first publication rights. This article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), allowing for open access.