

Collaborative Governance Between Local Government Units (LGUs) and People's Organizations in Panabo City

Bacalla, Beverly¹, Orbeta, Jessa Christa N², Pusta, Jocemae F.³, Galleto, Romalie Fullo, MSDeA⁴.

^{1,2,3}Undergraduate – Student

⁴Davao del Norte State College-Instructor

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100500849>

Received: 12 May 2026; Accepted: 18 May 2026; Published: 15 June 2026

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to identify the issues that hinder meaningful cooperation between Local Government Units (LGUs) and People's Organizations (POs) in Panabo City. The study will undertake the following objectives: To look into the mechanisms and processes through which Local Government Units (LGUs) and People Organizations (POs) initiate and maintain collaborative governance, identify the possible challenges that might hamper successful collaboration between LGUs and POs in Panabo City, and evaluate the lessons and best practices as a result of the cooperation of LGUs and POs in Panabo City. This qualitative research attempts to understand LGU-PO collaboration in the Philippines and how it functions in Panabo City, particularly by using the searchlight of a selection of 12 stakeholders who are interviewed (6 LGU officials, and 6 PO leaders). Thematic analysis pointed to four enablers of successful collaboration, including capacity-building programs that could enable POs to overcome role-hybridization and help align goals with LGUs, scheduled meetings with a healing capacity that represented transparent conversation, outreach activities that improved the profile of POs and provided them with solidarity, and formal conflict-resolution institutions that were able to maintain organizational harmony. But such setbacks as lack of LGU funds, red tape system and the loss of member interest, among others, mitigate the very potentials. Conclusion: The results are an indication that LGUs should focus on trust building, simplifying processes, and depoliticizing resource distribution, whereas POs require consistent work strategies, that urges institutional reforms of enhancing collaboration initiatives in local governance.

Keywords: Collaborative governance, local government units (LGUs), People's Organizations (POs), participatory development, Capacity Building.

INTRODUCTION

Governance in modern society is increasingly becoming a communal initiative, with an emphasis on inclusiveness, active participation, and cooperation among stakeholders. Nevertheless, in most local settings, these teamwork operations are hampered by a series of existing constraints, including power discrepancies, mismatched expectations, and communication lapses. Power imbalance has been identified as one of the key barriers to achieving sustainable resource management and to facilitating proper state participation due to limitations on collaborative ventures (Arai, Maswadi, Oktoriana, Suharyani, Didik, & Inoue, 2021). Furthermore, Haas (2023) stated that misaligned expectations are often the consequence of divergent motivations, a lack of knowledge of the counterpart's limitations, and miscommunication. Such factors may contribute to failure to establish unified objectives and undesirable outcomes, especially when some interests are given precedence over others.

Empirical literature (Shaikh et al, 2022; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2021) shows that these impediments are prevalent in collaborative governance. Adding to this, Thatchenkery and Piezunka (2024) underscore that collaborations are bound to fail when expectations are misplaced, leading to decreased intent to get involved, unfavorable results, and a high likelihood of litigation, as well as wrong expectations about the partnership that subsequently result in poor management, and ultimately failing to meet expectations. In addition to these problems, Shaikh, Hasaan, and Khan (2022) observe that inefficiencies in communication between government entities and

community organizations often hurt the viability of the connections.

Collaborative governance refers to a strategy in which people in Local Government Units (LGUs) and People's Organizations (POs) join together to address complex issues in society through shared decision-making, responsibility, and trust-building (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In the Philippines, collaborative governance is embodied in the Local Government Code of 1991, R.A. 7160, mandating Local Government Units to collaborate with People Organizations in the interest of local autonomy and community empowerment. This legal framework is similar to global mechanisms, such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, which aims to revitalise global partnerships to achieve sustainable development (United Nations, 2016).

However, the establishment of meaningful cooperation between the LGU and POs is challenged despite the institutional frameworks in place. Kamarudin, Kassim, and Ghazali (2023) highlighted how such imbalances can occur in the form of local systems of governance, particularly in cases where there is an unjust allocation of resource management and decision-making. Besides limiting PO input, such a situation will also breed mistrust and reduce the effectiveness of the entire collaboration process. In addition, an inadequate communication system hinders transparency and goal convergence, whereas historical distrust between the stakeholders complicates the situation. Recent studies demonstrate similar barriers in local governance and underscore the importance of purposeful actions to promote trust and capacity (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2021; Shaikh et al., 2022).

The issues are of particular relevance to Panabo City, where local government units and people's organizations have collaborated on various programs. Still, these efforts can also face long-standing impediments that could hinder the whole process of collaborative governance. In Panabo City, any barriers to building strong partnerships, such as unequal power dynamics and ad hoc stakeholder contributions, can be countered by targeted strategies and the imperative need for strong partnerships. This paper aims to identify the issues that hinder meaningful cooperation between Local Government Units (LGUs) and People's Organizations (POs) in Panabo City. Specifically, this study aims to provide actionable insights to improve LGU-PO partnerships and enhance collaborative governance for inclusive and participatory local development.

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative-descriptive approach, which provided in-depth descriptions of participants' experiences and opinions. Recent works, including Lambert and Lambert (2022), emphasize the role of qualitative descriptive research in applied research and practical settings. The target population of the study was representatives of Local Government Units (LGUs), such as elected officials, heads of departments, and program coordinators who are involved in LGU-People Organization partnerships, and leaders or members of accredited People Organizations in Panabo City. Panabo City was selected as the study site for initiatives and deep engagement in collaborative governance between local government units and people organizations, and it provides a timely context to analyze the processes, issues, and practices of these collaborations (Alberca & Salapa, 2024).

Mashuri, Sarib, Alhabsyi, and Ruslin (2022) explain that the semi-structured interview beats other types of interviews adopted in qualitative research, as this interview type allows the researchers to acquire detailed information and evidence from participants, and the researcher does not lose focus on the study. In order to study the processes of LGU-PO collaboration, their best practices, as well as challenges, researchers have carried out in-depth interviews. Rutledge and Hogg (2020) state that an in-depth interview is used to gather detailed information that can clarify the position held by an individual, his/her experiences, moods, and the importance attributed to a particular aspect or problem. Purposive sampling was applied to select people who can make good and relevant contributions to the research goals by offering quality information. Some of the participants were chosen on the basis of their direct interaction with the LGU-PO collaboration.

A total of 12 individuals from the LGU and people's organizations were interviewed. Six participants were selected from six people's organizations, with one representative per organization based on availability and role relevance. Another six participants were drawn from six departments of the Local Government Unit of Panabo City, with one representative from each department. Thematic analysis was applied to assess the data obtained through our conducted interviews. This cyclical process involved familiarizing with the data, coding the relevant

parts of the text, and identifying repetitive patterns grouped into themes. The six stages (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of thematic analysis were followed to analyze the qualitative data collected and identify patterns of repetition.

To guarantee the trustworthiness, as indicated in the study by Ahmed (2024), namely: Credibility. To enhance the credibility of the qualitative information, member checking was utilized. The authenticity of responses was ensured by asking participants to review their answers to verify the accuracy of the transcripts (McKim, 2023). The researchers also applied triangulation by using various data collection methods, such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and field notes (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). Dependability. An audit trail was employed to document the approaches, techniques for data gathering, and procedures for analysis in a way that ensured transparency and reproducibility, thereby providing the reliability of the findings. Confirmability. In a bid to prevent researcher bias, reflexivity procedures were adopted, which involve keeping a reflexive journal to document the researchers' perceptions, in line with McGrath (2021). Furthermore, peer debriefing was conducted with an expert or research adviser to confirm interpretations and reduce potential bias. Transferability was achieved through the fully elaborated accounts of the study context, participants' consent, and the steps followed.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study on collaborative governance practices between Local Government Units (LGUs) and People's Organizations (POs) in Panabo City. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, using key informants and in-depth interviews with LGU officials and PO leaders. The study examined mechanisms that facilitate and hinder collaboration, as well as the lessons drawn from actual governance experiences.

Table 1. KII Participants Information

Code	Age	Affiliation	Position	Designation	Length of Service
KII 1	51	City Agriculture Office	City Government Department Head	City Agriculturist	26 years
KII 2	40	City Economic Enterprise, Management and Development Office	Admin Officer V	Section Head	31 years
KII 3	42	City Cooperatives Development Section	Senior Cooperative Development Specialists	Coop. Coord	18 years
KII 4	24	City Agriculture Office	Administrative Aide (COS)	City Agriculture Office	18 years
KII 5	45	Public Employment Service Office	Manpower Development Officer		18 years
KII 6	41	City Social Welfare Department Office	Social Welfare Officer II	Community Section	7 years

Table 1 shows the breakdown of key informant interviewees by five units of local governance, as well as a general characterization of their age, professional designation, and work experience. These are people holding key positions, such as department heads, representatives of Local Government Units (LGU), and the president or representatives of People Organizations (PO). Therefore, they wield significant influence and oversee major programs and initiatives. Taken together, the contributions highlight the significance of their role in achieving the study's research objectives.

Table 2. IDI Participants Information

Code	Age	Organization	Position	Length of Service	Accredited by the City?
IDI 1	27	Rehoboth Agriculture Cooperative RACO	Acting General Manager	8 years	Yes
IDI 2	47	Guardians Brotherhood, Inc	Supreme Master Founder	12 years	Yes
IDI 3	44	Farmers Finest Agriculture Cooperative	BOD	4 years	Yes
IDI 4	24	Nagkahiosang Maggugulay Central Market Panabo City Inc.	President	28 years	Yes
IDI 5	60	Federation of Tricycle Operator Driver Association, Panabo City	President	3 years	Yes
IDI 6	58	New Malitbog High Valued Crops Farmers Association (NMH VCFA)	Chairman	2 years	Yes

In Table 2, all organizations were officially accredited by the city; the accreditation periods ranged from 2 to 26 years. The individuals involved had a substantial prior history in the research, as they were engaged in agricultural production, transportation, and community development. Their enormous age span, diverse membership, and contrasting lengths of tenure provided an opulently stratified view of collaboration and governance in the local precinct.

Table 3. Significant Themes and Core Ideas on LGU-PO Collaboration Establishment

Table 3 shows the significant themes and core ideas that emerged from the participants' experiences on how People's Organizations and Local Government Units establish collaboration with each other in terms of the mechanisms and processes adopted in initiating and sustaining LGU–PO collaboration in Panabo City.

Major Themes	Description	Core Ideas
Forging Collaboration via Joint Capacity-Building	<i>Strengthening relationships and joint actions of POs-LGUs through a process of shared learning and skill development, which is truly empowering for both parties in terms of effective collaboration</i>	Free trainings help cacao farmers improve harvest quality.
		Rabbit-raising training covers care, processing, and income potential
		Trainings strengthen our knowledge and participation.
Utilizing Structured Dialogues to Facilitate PO–LGU	<i>Conducting organized and strategic dialogues aimed to mutually understand</i>	Regular coordination meetings enable inclusive feedback and swift problem-resolution for all stakeholders.

Collaboration	<i>and emotionally position the parties closer to each other, and thereby to pair up more concerted decision-making and enhanced collaboration practices of POs-LGUs</i>	We hold regular meetings and consultations to stay informed about LGU plans and provide feedback.
		Meetings provide a forum for suggestions, system development discussions, and responsive interventions.
Organizing Public Events to Facilitate PO-LGU Engagement	<i>The establishment of dialogue platforms and joint decision-making means more transparency, trust, and active participation of POs in local governance processes.</i>	The Binulig Festival serves as the primary platform for farmers, members, and officials to demonstrate organizational strength to the LGU
		People's Organizations are actively engaged in major city-sponsored festivals and events.
		The annual LGU-led festival actively engages farmers and fisherfolk.
Implementing Conflict Resolution Mechanisms to Strengthen PO-LGU Partnerships	<i>Dealing with the process of application of conflict resolution mechanisms that could be instrumental in resolving disagreements, which helps tame the situation and, in the process, helps to retain the trust required for long-term cooperation of POs-LGUs.</i>	Our mediation process emphasizes active listening and mutually agreeable solutions before considering external escalation.
		A formal Grievance Committee was established to systematically address member complaints and organizational disputes.
		Our association's mediation committee filters and resolves internal issues before escalation to LGU-level committees.

Table 4. Major Themes and Core Ideas on Challenges to Effective LGU-PO Collaborative Governance

Table 4 shows the major themes and core ideas that capture the challenges that the participants faced in implementing the collaborative governance of the LGU–PO in Panabo City, as well as the key challenges that must be catered to by LGUs and POs for effective collaborative governance.

Major Themes	Description	Core Ideas
Insufficient Budget	Limited funding constrains program continuity and weakens the sustainability of LGU–PO initiatives, reducing their capacity to respond effectively to community needs.	Lack of funding leads to failed or delayed project implementation.
		LGU budget shortages hinder project implementation.
		The main challenge is the insufficient LGU budget to grant our requests.
Delays due to Complex Procedure	Bureaucratic processes slow implementation, undermine responsiveness, and discourage meaningful participation in collaborative	Delays in processing due to compliance requirements prolong renewal releases up to 3 months.
		Unclear LGU policies create confusion in submission processes, hindering collaboration.

	governance	Strict documentation demands delay project/funding approvals, straining LGU-PO partnerships.
Perceived Political Bias Undermines Trust and Fairness	Perceived favoritism erodes trust and legitimacy, weakening inclusive participation and equitable collaboration between LGUs and POs.	Unequal resource distribution occurs when POs without close ties to the mayor's office are deprioritized.
		Political bias hinders collaboration and delays project approvals and funding.
		LGU and POs must work together, but there is perceived favoritism; those closer to decision-makers are prioritized, especially cooperatives
Declining Member Participation Weakens Organizational Engagement	Reduced member involvement diminishes collective ownership, representation, and the effectiveness of POs as collaborative partners.	Many members have become inactive and no longer participate in organizational activities.
		Associations often become inactive after receiving assistance, leading to wasted resources and fragmented efforts.
		Providing continued support becomes difficult when People's Organizations (POs) withdraw from interventions.
Fragmented Institutional Coordination Slows Governance Response	Poor coordination creates inefficiencies and delays, limiting timely decision-making and effective service delivery.	Disunity between the legislative and executive branches delays proposal approvals and project implementation.
		LGU disunity hinders project prioritization, leaving proposals unimplemented.
		City Council disagreements obstruct policy implementation and delay projects

Table 5. Major Themes and Core Ideas on Lessons from Panabo City's Collaborative Governance Practices

Table 5 illustrates the main themes and core ideas that emerged from the experiences of the participants in the LGU-PO collaboration in Panabo City, highlighting the lessons learned, insights, and best practices that can be gained.

Major Themes	Description	Core Ideas
Shared Goals and Collective Action	<i>This unifying community vision and LGU-PO engagement drives effective governance outcomes</i>	Alignment of LGU and PO missions ensures collaborative continuity.

Strengthen Governance		Cooperation and unity are essential for the growth of the cooperative.
		Unity and shared goals between LGU and POs sustain collaboration
Leadership Alignment Facilitates Smooth Program Execution	<i>This aligned leadership and clear communication ensure efficient program execution.</i>	Unified decisions among community leaders enable faster project implementation with clearer direction.
		City officials' unity improves LGU-PO collaboration and makes project execution smoother.
		LGU's inability to prioritize major projects stems from executive-legislative disagreements.
Flexible Collaboration Adapts to Local Realities	<i>This adaptive and responsive collaboration effectively addresses local conditions.</i>	Proactive problem-solving is essential for unexpected issues.
		Weather disruptions require contingency plans to maintain project continuity and success.
		Project flexibility and adaptability are crucial for overcoming resource, weather, and scheduling challenges.
Streamlined Processes Encourage Greater Participation	<i>Streamlining processes is essential as it boosts opportunities for PO involvement and, therefore, promotes inclusive local governance by including them in the process.</i>	The business permit application process should not be overly difficult for business owners.
		The biggest problem we usually face is during permit renewal, and the financial statement, which costs (10k-15k), is a major burden for micro-cooperatives with limited income.
		Simplifying compliance requirements would greatly help small organizations.

DISCUSSION

Mechanisms of Collaboration Between People's Organizations and Local Government Units

Forging Collaboration via Joint Capacity-Building.

According to one informant, the free training helped cacao farmers to improve the quality of their harvests because of the provision of free training. This claim shows that the free training that the cacao farmers received has significantly enhanced their technical information, especially in the right way to farm and post-harvest practices. It is also an indication of the role played by the Local Government Unit (LGU) in providing technical

support, which improves the quality of production and, as a result, improves the livelihood contribution by farmers. Therefore, the training is a case of institutional support to enhance the agricultural competencies at the grassroots level. These findings are consistent with Abubakar (2024), who revealed that the skills learned during the training become a significant boost to the performance in the execution of daily practical tasks execution. The report of the positive changes in the Panabo cacao industry also supports the finding by Sivashankar and Malkanthi (2021) that agricultural training programs enhance output both in crop and livestock production and thus enhance the gross income of farmers. Also supported by Cayabyab et al. (2024), whose research showed that the farmers who utilized their inferences acquired in training programs enhanced their yield in various ways, such as lower costs, decrease in the number and occurrence of pests, higher yield and income, better organized farming activities, and better relationships between farmers and the local government unit (LGU).

Utilizing Structured Dialogues to Facilitate PO–LGU Collaboration.

According to one of the informants, frequent coordination meetings help the members to provide their feedback freely and address any concerns quickly. This shows the usefulness of routine coordination mechanisms as agencies of all-inclusive participation and timely conflict resolution. The statement emphasizes that structured communication helps to reduce the intensification of issues and encourages problem-solving in groups. Supporting these findings, Ansell and Gash (2008) found that face-to-face meetings are the key to successful collaboration since they contribute to the breakdown of the barriers that establish mutual understanding. In line with this, Kim (2016) noted that deep communication helps stakeholders to get past the superficial and stereotyped relationships to get a better grasp of each other in a way that they can develop solutions in common. Furthermore, Structured meetings are a two-way channel of communication between the People Organization (PO) and the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Panabo City. These regular interactions allow the LGU to provide information related to the plans and projects, and the POs state their concerns and share ideas.

Organizing Public Events to Facilitate PO-LGU Engagement.

One of the informants explained that the Binulig Festival serves as a platform where the farmers, the member organizations, and the officials get to show the LGU the strengthened unity of their group and the apparent leadership and trust of the community. The festival is a performative event of People Organizations (POs). It is a carefully planned event that is geared towards graphically demonstrating organizational power, a unified leadership style, and a wide membership directly to government officials. This is the only way to foster the development of political legitimacy, which is the ability to substantiate the PO as a valid and reliable partner who deserves their backing and cooperation in the future. According to Oliveira (2024), empirical evidence shows that cultural festivals are very useful in creating social cohesion. Festivals do provide people with different cultural backgrounds to interact, share, and enjoy the oneness of humanity. Festivals reinforced group identity, enhanced intergroup contact, and increased levels of trust. Consistent with this, Luna (2023) found that people attending the festival believe that such events are useful platforms to restore the economic functioning of the local areas devastated by the pandemic, to reunite the communities, and to maintain the traditions and enhance community building. These results are consistent with the argument advanced by Rutagand (2024) that cultural festivals contribute to greater social cohesion through the administration of cooperation between the members of the community.

Implementing Conflict Resolution Mechanisms to Strengthen PO-LGU Partnerships.

According to one of the informants, the people's organization has formed a mediation board and a grievance committee whose role is specifically aimed at solving internal problems and conflicts. These internal processes enhance institutional credit and make the processes of governance seem fairer. Besides, the creation of a grievance committee will make sure that conflicts remain within the organization, reducing the threat of taking the case to court and leading to open communications and transparency. According to Benedikt, Suslo, Paplicki, and Drobnik (2020), mediation is a confidential and less expensive process that maintains relationships and ensures that parties have the power to obtain acceptable solutions. The existence of a mediation board or grievance committee in the governance structure of a local authority reflects an institutionalized form of dealing with conflicts, mainly intra-organizational conflicts, as well as the communal level of conflict. The same report was made by Nyataya (2020), who also stresses that such mechanisms help to build social cohesion in

communities and achieve related socio-economic development. Aktar and Alam (2021) confirm that grievance committees are an important factor in preserving the stability of the organization.

Challenges of People's Organizations and Local Government Units in their Collaboration

Insufficient Budget.

According to one of the informants, the lack of budget allocations constrains the process of granting requests, hence denying people organizations the ability to execute the planned projects. The absence of financial resources forms a significant barrier to the collaboration of People Organizations (POs) and the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Panabo City. Continual budget deficit means that the LGU is unable to meet financial demands, which translates to a lack of implementation of funds, resulting in demotivation by the PO members. Even though the Republic Act 7160, Section 34 allows LGUs to provide a financial boost to POs to support various developmental projects, changing political agendas and the inadequate allocation of funds limit the realisation of this clause, as Ubungen, Ramos, and Casimiro (2022) explain. Supporting these findings, Mansuri and Rao (2014) support this fact by stating that many programs and projects do not meet their main goals, not only due to the decreased participation but mainly due to the insufficient amount of working capital necessary to support their actions. According to Munthali and Kandasamy (2024), budgeting is the decision-making tool that is the most significant in an organization.

Delays due to Complex Procedure.

One of the informants says that long compliance procedures are the reason behind the resulting long delays in issuing and updating documents, which may even take months before they are approved. This statement indicates that lengthy and rigid administrative requirements significantly delay the release of renewals, affecting the organization's ability to operate smoothly and carry out its planned activities in a timely manner. Republic Act No. 11032, or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, amended the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 to streamline procedures and improve the efficiency of government services. However, despite these reforms, cumbersome administrative processes and persistent delays continue to hinder project implementation in various government agencies. This observation is confirmed by Morelos and Ybañez (2025), who state that postponements can be explained by a low level of awareness, an improper communication system, technical problems, and the lack of sufficient staff to cope with the workload. Government failure, as well as a low level of knowledge among applicants, thus makes significant contributions to the slowing down of administrative procedures today.

Perceived Political Bias Undermines Trust and Fairness.

According to one of the informants, the interaction between grassroots organizations and the local government units (LGUs) is too often undermined by actions taken at the top that result in decisions based upon personal or political interests and not the common good. This indicates that biased decision-making undermines collaborative governance and negatively influences development projects in a timely manner. The findings are consistent with Min, Arima, Backer, Hicken, Kollman, and Selway (2023), who show that administrators at the higher offices tend to allocate resources to places with high political loyalty, hence favoring

copartisan peers. The latter tendency is facilitated by partisan-balkanised bureaucracy and pool-credit-claiming-based approaches that have more to do with fostering electoral agendas than developmental ones. According to Teehankee (2014), political patronage is a transactional mechanism in which government officials give away public funds in exchange for votes. Political support is exchanged in the process of decisions regarding positions, subsidies, or approvals of projects, so that the end result is not based on objective priorities.

Declining Member Participation Weakens Organizational Engagement.

One of the informants argued that the organizations of many people normally end up becoming inactive once they are helped, which results in poor resource management and an increasing feeling of individualism as opposed to joint responsibility. This observation shows that external support is the key driver to get involved. Motivation is lost as soon as the aid is provided since the activity of the organization is focused on getting, and

not on personal objectives. The next basis of asserting ownership of donated resources privately is an acute failure to form these assets as community resources,

leading to fighting and disintegration as soon as external support is withdrawn. Bünthe and Weiss (2023) observed a sharp decline in CSO membership during the Duterte administration due to red-tagging, threats, and loss of civic space, creating a hostile environment that discouraged sustained participation, especially in politically sensitive or donor-funded organizations. Additionally, pre-existing issues like patronage politics and loss of public trust further contributed to the decline in membership and engagement.

Fragmented Institutional Coordination Slows Governance Response.

According to one of the informants, the conflicts between the legislative and the executive branches often delay project approvals and interfere with the implementation process, halting the projects and wasting efforts. Consequently, this illustrates that the lack of development of cohesive institutional coordination marked by incompatible priorities and the absence of a common decision-making mechanism can slow the implementation of developmental interventions as well as hinder collaborative governance because partners have to wait until they become cohesive internally, after which, alone, they can proceed with their projects. Fragmented institutional coordination refers to situations in which the various government offices or levels of governance do not work together, as a result of divergent interests, a lack of communication systems, and a lack of coordination. Lah (2025) argues that fragmented institutional set-ups are often a hitch to sustainable development efforts, with the sectors and actors acting in isolation rather than in unison. These disconnects cultivate siloed policy making, a lack of coordination of priorities, overlapping, and ineffective implementation that undermines the overall governance and slows down the process. Similarly, Scott and Gong (2021) explain that in a silos-based system, governmental units are managed independently with insignificant coordination, which creates a consistent implementation problem. These silos lead to a poor communication system, a lack of responsibility, and a lack of a coherent management system that can be used to coordinate collaborative operations, which impedes the effective solution of problems.

Lessons from Panabo City's Collaborative Governance Practices

Shared Goals and Collective Action Strengthen Governance.

According to one of the informants, ongoing resource sharing, maintenance, and joint responsibility, the city works with outside experts and funding (Bhagavathula, Brundiers, & Stauffacher, 2021). Shared goals thrive when actors anticipate reciprocation, meet obligations, and meet expectations, fostering belonging, solidarity, and trust. The practices of mutual support discussed in the paper support the Collective Action Theory by Elinor Ostrom, who suggests that long-term cooperation between stakeholders requires the existence of relationships of reciprocity. The ability of different stakeholders to stay involved and support each other is the basic idea of collaborative sustainability. This helps the project meet larger goals like being climate-resilient and focused on the market, it ensures that the project's scope and quality are upheld over time, which aids the city's goal of inclusive growth (Balouch, Alamu, & Marcos, 2024). This mutual responsibility helps create significant value through collaboration rather than just being a short-lived success story. Their empowerment increases the voice of the community as the CSOs get stronger, which strengthens the social contract and maintains cooperation to meet the needs of the citizens. Besana, Palmares, and Diocos (2025) found that LGUs must take care of their workers through capacity building and development to keep government services modern and efficient.

Leadership Alignment Facilitates Smooth Program Execution.

According to one of the informants, weak coordination between the legislative and executive arms of a local government unit (LGU) may hamper the progress of policy initiatives, hence exemplifying the decisive nature of leadership synchronization in the process of effectual implementation. Nueva Ecija empirical studies reveal that a failure in the legislative assembly slows down the implementation of essential programmes in the wider LGU machinery (Ong & Gabriel, 2018). On the other hand, intralocal cohesion ensures that the local development agendas are not derailed by the disruptive nature of political rivalries or ambivalent mandates (Capuno, 2010). Therefore, the success of local governance depends on how much and well administrative

leaders coordinate. The alignment of leadership between the Local Government Units (LGUs) and People Organization (POs) poses a critical aspect of the smooth execution of collaborative governance projects.

Flexible Collaboration Adapts to Local Realities.

One of the informants revealed that the adverse weather conditions may result in extensive delays, cost increments, and the quality of the projects (Zid, Kasim, and Soomro, 2020). Supporting this fact, weather conditions

greatly impact the project timeline since in extreme weather, no one can schedule activities and adhere to the schedule, as construction projects are frequently delayed (Uvarova, Orlov, and Kankhva, 2023). The collaborative governance practices in Panabo City also highlight the need for being flexible in dealing with local issues, particularly, adapting to environmental and contextual conditions. The ability of the city to change plans and strategies given unforeseen situations, such as extreme weather conditions, proves that adaptive governance is vital in ensuring continuity and effectiveness of such projects. According to reports of Barangay Pasil, Cebu City, NGOs and LGU units negotiated their roles dynamically, shared resources, and constantly adapted their strategies to the needs of the community, thus leading to the development of resilient and context-sensitive joint service delivery (Lisao, Nuñez, Lopez, Huelva, More, Pelaez, & Jardin, 2024).

Streamlined Processes Encourage Greater Participation.

One of the informants emphasized the necessity to reduce bureaucracy in order to increase collaborative inclusivity. The proposal of initiatives that would entail digitizing and automating such systems is suggested as a way of gaining more transparency. The inclusion of predefined standards into the procedural working process is considered the most effective way to guarantee the long-term and regulated evolution of the built environment in a manner that is beneficial to the community, environment, and economy (Noardo, Guler, Fauth, Malacarne, Ventura, Azenha, Olsson, & Senger, 2022). The suggestion to streamline business permit applications highlights the importance of participation barriers and provides a feasible way of decreasing the complexity of procedures. These efforts can build trust between local government units and community stakeholders. Simplified and transparent processes also encourage more active engagement from citizens and organizations. Over time, this collaborative approach strengthens governance and supports sustainable local development. Based on empirical evidence, the reduction of bureaucratic challenges promotes the participation of a wider group of stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored the partnership between LGUs and People Organization (POs) in Panabo City. The research found that joint capacity-building, utilizing structured dialogues, organizing public events, and implementing conflict resolution are mechanisms that can be used to strengthen partnerships through the promotion of trust, transparency, and active participation. Nevertheless, issues like insufficient budget, delays due to complex procedure, perceived political bias undermine trust and fairness, declining member participation weakens organizational engagement, and fragmented institutional coordination slows governance response, limits effective cooperation. These challenges impact the project implementation and decrease the trust of stakeholders. Overall, the collaboration of the LGU and people's organizations remained weak because of existing structural and political issues. The possibilities of LGU-PO partnerships in spurring inclusive development can be unexploited unless there are long-term reforms and accountability to each other.

However, the study also displays the significant barriers that keep limiting the complete achievement of LGU-PO cooperation. Insufficient Budget limits the implementation of the project and weakens the PO's motivation. Delays due to Complex procedures create confusion and delays in approvals. Perceived Political Bias Undermines Trust and Fairness, destroys the trust, and raises concerns about fairness and access to opportunities. Moreover, the declining member participation weakens organizational engagement, and mixed institutional coordination between LGU offices obstructs responsiveness and policy implementation. Therefore, the need to strengthen trust-building, streamlining processes, fair resource distribution, and enhanced institutional alignment to support collaborative governance in Panabo City is critical.

Furthermore, this result hinged on the theory of the Collaborative Governance framework (Ansell and Gash, 2008), which emphasized mechanisms that can be used to strengthen partnerships through the promotion of trust, transparency, and active participation. These theoretical principles are manifested in the research results that (1) leadership alignment facilitates smooth program execution, (2) flexible collaboration adapts to local realities, and (3) streamlined processes encourage greater participation. The framework highlights how structured dialogues, trust-building, and shared decision-making can foster effective partnerships. From another theoretical standpoint, Ostrom's Collective Action Theory (1990) explains how resource users can overcome barriers to collective action. Her foundational work demonstrated that common-pool resources need not succumb to the tragedy of the commons in situations where government intervention is absent or insufficient. This theoretical principle is reflected in the finding that (1) shared goals and collective action strengthen governance.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Ethical Approval

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study

Competing interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability

Data will be made available by the corresponding author on request.

REFERENCES

1. Abubakar, A. H. (2024). Evaluating the Impact of Training and Skill Development Programs on Employee Performance in Banking Sector / Financial Institutions.
2. Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research.
3. Aktar, S., & Alam, M. M. (2021). Workers' Satisfaction with Grievance-Handling Procedure: A Study on the Selected Garment Factories in Bangladesh.
4. Alberca, R. N., & Salapa, A. (2024). Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Panabo City: A baseline study.
5. Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative governance in theory and practice.
6. Arai, Y., Maswadi, Oktoriana, S., Suharyani, A., Didik, & Inoue, M. (2021). How Can We Mitigate Power Imbalances in Collaborative Environmental Governance?
7. Balouch, M. A., Alamu, O., & Marcos, Z. A.-S. (2024). Sustainable project management: Transforming futures through eco-conscious practices.
8. Benedikt, A., Susło, R., Paplicki, M., & Drobnik, J. (2020). Mediation as an Alternative Method of Conflict Resolution: A Practical Approach.
9. Bhagavathula, S., Brundiers, K., Stauffacher, M., & Kay, B. (2021). Fostering collaboration in city governments' sustainability, emergency management and resilience work.
10. Besana, M. D., Palmares, K. D. P., & Diocos, C. B. (2025). Capacity building and organizational development.
11. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: A practical guide.
12. Bunte, M., & Weiss, M. L. (2023). Civil Society and Democratic Decline in Southeast Asia.
13. Capuno, J. J. (2010). Incumbents and innovations under decentralization.
14. Cayabyab, B. A. G., Quimbo, M. A. T., Serrano, & Calalo, F. C. (2024). Effectiveness of application of knowledge of agricultural training among farmer-scientist training participants in the Philippines.
15. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2021). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.
16. Emerson, K., & Nabatchi, T. (2021). Collaborative governance regimes.

17. Haas, N. (2023). Be Explicit: Identifying and Addressing Misaligned Goals in Collaborative Research Teams.
18. Hennink, M. M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research.
19. Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Marconi, V. C. (2017). Code saturation versus meaning saturation: How many interviews are enough?
20. Kamarudin, K. A., Kassim, S., & Ghazali, R. (2023). Dynamics of power in collaborative governance: Insights from local governments.
21. Kim, S. (2016). The workings of collaborative governance: Evaluating collaborative community-building initiatives in Korea.
22. Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing.
23. Lah, O. (2025). Breaking the silos: Integrated approaches to foster sustainable development and climate action.
24. Lambert, V. A., & Lambert, C. E. (2022). Qualitative descriptive research: An acceptable design.
25. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Sage handbook of qualitative research.
26. Lisao, G. M., Nuñez, K. D., Lopez, J. M., Huelva, R., More, N., Pelaez, I., & Jardin, R. (2024). Roles of NGOs and Local Government Units: The Case of Pasil, Cebu City.
27. Luna, A. M., Dizon, J. T., Corpuz, J. T., Flordeliza, M. A., & Espiritu, P. J. S. (2023). Beyond COVID-19: The future of festivals in Calabarzon, Philippines.
28. Mansuri, G., & Rao, V. (2014). Localizing development: Does participation work?
29. Mashuri, F., Sarib, M. R., Alhabsyi, A., & Ruslin. (2022). Semi-structured interview: Methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies.
30. McGrath, R. (2021). Journalling and memoing: Reflexive qualitative research tools.
31. McKim, C. (2023). Meaningful member-checking: A structured approach to member-checking.
32. Min, B., Arima, E., Backer, D., Hicken, A., Kollman, K., & Selway, J. (2023). Local partisan biases in allocations of foreign aid: A study of agricultural assistance in India.
33. Morelos, L. P. C., & Ybañez, R. P. (2025). Challenges encountered in business permit approval for SMEs in Dumaguete City.
34. Munthali, G., & Kandasamy, L. (2024). Prospects and challenges of budgeting in project management: An explorative review of CCEI Malawi.
35. Noardo, F., Guler, D., Fauth, J., Malacarne, G., Ventura, S. M., Azenha, M., Olsson, P.-O., & Senger, L. (2022). Unveiling the actual progress of Digital Building Permit: Getting awareness through a critical state-of-the-art review.
36. Nyataya, I. P. K. (2020). Conflict mediation committees spurring development of communities in Rwanda.
37. Oliveira, R. (2021). Cultural festivals and community cohesion in rural Brazil: The case of Festa Junina.
38. Ong, D. U., & Gabriel, A. G. (2018). Linking Transparency and Accountability to Local Legislative Performance in the Province of Nueva Ecija in the Philippines.
39. Rutagand, E. P. (2024). The role of cultural festivals in promoting social cohesion and cultural understanding.
40. Rutledge, P. B., & Hogg, J. L. C. (2020). In-depth interviews.
41. Scott, I., & Gong, T. (2021). Coordinating government silos: Challenges and opportunities.
42. Shaikh, S., Hasan, M., & Khan, A. (2022). Trust and governance: A study of stakeholder collaboration in community development.
43. Sivashankar, P., & Malkanthi, P. (2021). Impact of agricultural training on farmers' technological knowledge and crop production in Bandarawela agricultural zone.
44. Teehankee, J. (2014). The Study of Politics in Southeast Asia: The Philippines in Southeast Asian Political Studies.
45. Thatchenkery, S., & Piezunka, H. (2024). Competition in collaboration: The problem of (mis)aligned perception.
46. Ubungen, R., Ramos, V., & Casimiro, R. (2020). Analyzing Bottom-Up Budgeting and Assistance to Disadvantaged Municipalities Program: Toward Participatory Budget Implementation in the First Legislative District of Nueva Ecija in the Philippines.

47. Uvarova, S. S., Orlov, A. K., & Kankhva, V. S. (2023). Ensuring efficient implementation of lean construction projects using building information modeling.
48. Wiles, R. (2022). Managing ethical challenges in qualitative research: Reflexive and ethical practice.
49. Zid, C., Kasim, N., & Soomro, A. R. (2020). Effective project management approach to attain project success, based on cost–time–quality.