

Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) Zambales Training and Capability-Building Activities Quality toward Sustainability Plan Enhancement

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the quality of training and capability-building activities under the Micro-enterprise Development (MD) Track of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), focusing on the Seed Capital Fund (SCF) modality in the municipalities of Santa Cruz, Iba, Cabangan, San Marcelino, and Olongapo City Province of Zambales. It evaluated the program in terms of training design and relevance, content quality, delivery and methodology, adequacy of resources, trainer competence, post-training support, and sustainability and human capital development outcomes. It also examined differences in program assessment when respondents were grouped according to selected profile variables. Using a descriptive-comparative design, data were collected from one-hundred (100) respondents through a researcher made questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and inferential statistics.

The respondents were predominantly female, middle-aged, mostly married, and largely high school graduates, with most engaged in buy-and-sell and agriculture-related activities and having active micro-enterprises. Results showed that respondents agreed that the program is generally effective across all dimensions. However, lower ratings were observed in training relevance to local markets, adequacy of training time, post-training mentoring, and long-term sustainability outcomes. Significant differences were found when grouped according to age, highest educational attainment, nature of micro-enterprise, and enterprise status, while no differences were observed across gender, civil status, and duration of participation.

The study recommends enhancing training relevance to local market demands, strengthening post-training mentoring systems, improving time allocation and contextualization of training content, and adopting differentiated interventions based on age, educational attainment, type of livelihood, and enterprise status to support sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Keywords: Sustainability, Training, Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), Zambales, Microenterprise Development

INTRODUCTION

Poverty alleviation and inclusive growth remained vital priorities of the Philippine government's long-term development plan. To achieve these objectives, various livelihood and skills-enhancement programs has been implemented to empower marginalized sectors and promote economic self-sufficiency among poor households. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) articulated this aspiration through AmBisyon Natin 2040, a long-term vision that envisions Filipinos living a "matatag, maginhawa, at panatag na buhay" a strongly rooted, comfortable, and secure life by 2040 (National Economic and Development Authority [NEDA], 2016). Central to this vision is the creation of decent jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities, and sustainable livelihoods that allow every Filipino family to move toward middle-class status (Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS], 2022).

Among the various poverty reduction initiatives of the government, the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) plays a critical role in providing poor households with access to income-generating opportunities and entrepreneurial development. The Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) is a capability-building program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) that is committed to improving the socio-economic well-being of vulnerable, marginalized, and disadvantaged households by providing them with resources and skills development for microenterprise development (MD) and gainful employment.

The (Department of Budget and Management [DBM], 2023) emphasized that livelihood and employment programs are vital to enabling Filipinos to achieve sustainable growth and resilience, allocating substantial public resources to support these initiatives under the national budget. These efforts are aligned with broader national strategies to reduce poverty and improve social protection mechanisms across communities.

However, while the SLP continues to be implemented nationwide, concerns have been raised about the quality of its training and capability-building activities in achieving intended outcomes. Previous studies and reports have pointed out that training programs must be responsive to local economic contexts, participants' capacities, and the evolving labor market to ensure meaningful and sustained impact (World Bank, 2016). This highlights the importance of periodically assessing whether the SLP's training interventions effectively enhance participants' skills, confidence, and ability to generate stable income sources. These international findings highlighted that the quality of training programs depends not only on technical content but also on contextual relevance, participant engagement, and sustained post-training support. Given this context, it becomes essential to evaluate the quality of the SLP's training and capability-building activities as perceived by its beneficiaries.

Hence, this study aims to assess the quality of the Sustainable Livelihood Program's training and capability-building activities among the participants enterprise, contributing to evidence-based improvements in the delivery of livelihood services in the Philippines and mainly the SLP Sustainability Plan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies continue to underscore the transformative potential of well-structured training and capability-building activities within sustainable livelihood programs. For instance, an evaluation of the Department of Labor and Employment Integrated Livelihood Program in Cebu Province, Philippines, found that the program positively impacted beneficiaries' income and employment (Davis, 2025). The study recommended targeted enrichment programs in entrepreneurship, marketing, management, and financial planning to further strengthen livelihood assets and contribute to sustainable socio-economic status (Davis, 2025).

Sustainable livelihood programs globally utilize training and capability-building activities as core strategies to empower individuals and communities. Research consistently shows that such interventions, when effectively implemented, can significantly enhance socio-economic well-being (Caingcoy, 2024), improve financial literacy, and develop essential technical and business management skills (Caingcoy, 2024). These enhanced capabilities are crucial for individuals to improve their livelihoods and contribute to the long-term sustainability of their communities (Caingcoy, 2024). However, a critical gap exists between program design and actual implementation outcomes. A qualitative case study of the Sustainable Livelihood Program implementation in Barangay Bonbon for Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program beneficiaries revealed persistent organizational challenges, including issues in selection processes, monitoring mechanisms, and partnership cultivation that affect program effectiveness (JETIR, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study, anchored on four theoretical foundations: Human Capital Theory, The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model, and Adult Learning Theory. Human Capital Theory, developed by Becker (1964) and Schultz (1961), posits that investments in people's knowledge, skills, and abilities enhance their productivity and earning potential. This theory suggests that investments in human capital, such as education, training, and skill development, enhance an individual's productivity and earnings potential. In the context of the SLP, training and capability-building activities are considered

investments that increase the beneficiaries' knowledge, skills, and abilities, thereby improving their human capital. This enhanced human capital is then expected to lead to better employment opportunities, increased income, and overall socio-economic well-being, contributing to the sustainability of their livelihoods (Abubakar et al., 2024).

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DFID, 1999; Chambers & Conway, 1992) provides a holistic lens for understanding how individuals and communities draw upon different assets: human, social, financial, physical, and natural to pursue livelihood strategies within a broader context of risks, opportunities, and institutional structures. The framework highlights that sustainable livelihoods depend not only on skills and knowledge but also on enabling environments, access to resources, support systems, and resilience to vulnerabilities.

Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model (1959) provides a systematic approach to assessing training effectiveness. The four levels are: (1) Reaction - participants' satisfaction with the training; (2) Learning - the extent to which participants acquire knowledge and skills; (3) Behavior - the application of learned skills in real-world contexts; and (4) Results - the tangible outcomes of training on organizational or societal goals. This model is instrumental in evaluating the SLP's training activities as it offers a comprehensive framework for measuring effectiveness across multiple dimensions, from immediate participant satisfaction to long-term livelihood outcomes. The study utilizes this model to assess various aspects of training effectiveness, including design, delivery, and impact.

Adult Learning Theory, also known as Andragogy, was developed by Malcolm Shepherd Knowles (1973, 1980), which emphasizes that adults learn differently from children due to their accumulated experiences, self-concept, and practical orientation toward learning. The theory posits that adult learners are self-directed individuals who bring prior knowledge and life experiences that serve as valuable resources in the learning process. According to Knowles, adult learning is most effective when it is problem-centered, relevant to real-life situations, internally motivated, and immediately applicable to personal or occupational needs.

This study aims to assess the quality of the Sustainable Livelihood Program's training and capability-building activities among the participants enterprise, contributing to evidence-based improvements in the delivery of livelihood services in the Philippines and mainly the SLP Sustainability Plan.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design, complemented by purposive sampling techniques, to systematically evaluate the quality of training and capability-building activities implemented under the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP).

Sample/Population of the Study

The respondents of the research consisted of one hundred (100) beneficiaries who were involved in the implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP). These respondents were purposively selected to provide relevant information regarding the training and capability-building activities related to the proposed or existing micro-enterprises under the program.

The respondents were geographically distributed across five (5) municipalities and cities within the Province of Zambales. These areas included the municipalities of Santa Cruz, Iba (capital), Cabangan, and San Marcelino, and Olongapo City.

These localities were selected because they represent key implementation areas of the Sustainable Livelihood Program where program respondents have undergone various capacity-building and livelihood development activities. The inclusion of respondents from different municipalities and a highly urbanized city allowed the study to capture diverse perspectives and experiences regarding the quality and relevance of the program's training.

Data Gathering Tools

The primary data collection instrument used in this study is a researcher-made structured survey questionnaire designed to evaluate the quality of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) training and capability-building activities. The questionnaire was developed based on established frameworks for training and livelihood evaluation, specifically the Human Capital Theory, developed by (Becker, 1964) and (Schultz, 1961), Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model (Kirkpatrick, 1959) which provides a comprehensive approach to assessing training effectiveness across reaction, learning, behavior, and results, Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DFID, 1999; Chambers & Conway, 1992) which emphasizes human capital development, asset building, and sustainable livelihood outcomes and Adult Learning Theory, Knowles (1973, 1980).

The internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which measures the extent to which items within each dimension consistently measure the same construct. The survey questionnaire composed of two (2) main parts: Part I (Profile of the Program Enterprise) this section will gather demographic and enterprise-related information including: Age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, duration of participation in the SLP, nature of the micro-enterprise/activity, and status of the micro-enterprise. Part II (Evaluation of Training and Capability-Building Quality), this part had seven (7) assessment dimensions composed of (1) Training Design and Relevance, (2) Content Quality and Comprehensiveness, (3) Training Delivery and Methodology, (4) Adequacy of Resources, (5) Trainer Competence, (6) Post-Training Support and Mentoring, and (7) Sustainability and Human Capital Development Outcomes. The respondents assessed the seven (7) dimensions with specific indicators using a four-point Likert scale 4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, and 1-Strongly Disagree.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data collection process was carried out in accordance with recognized ethical research standards and through proper coordination with the concerned authorities. Initially, the researcher prepared and secured a formal request letter for data gathering, which was duly signed by the researcher, the research adviser, and the Dean of the Graduate School of President Ramon Magsaysay State University Graduate School. This document served as the official authorization for the conduct of the study. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher strictly adhered to the ethical principles of research and the provisions of the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). All information obtained from the respondents was treated with the highest level of confidentiality and used solely for the purposes of the study. Personal identifiers were excluded from the data analysis, interpretation, and presentation of findings to safeguard the privacy and anonymity of the participants. Furthermore, all electronic records and research data were securely stored and protected through appropriate security measures, with access restricted only to the researcher. These measures were implemented to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and protection of respondents' personal information throughout the conduct of the study.

Treatment of Data

Since this study employed a quantitative research design, the collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to ensure objective and accurate interpretation. Frequency and percentage were used to describe the demographic and enterprise-related characteristics of the respondents, including age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, duration of participation in the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), nature of the micro-enterprise, and enterprise status. Mean was computed to determine the respondents' perceived quality of SLP training and capability-building activities across the seven dimensions, using a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1.00–1.75) to Strongly Agree (3.26–4.00). Furthermore, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized through SPSS to test the significance of differences in respondents' perceptions when grouped according to selected profile variables and to evaluate the study's hypotheses regarding the quality of training and capability-building activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation on the Quality of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) Training and Capability-Building Activities.

The overall findings show that the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) training and capability-building activities were generally perceived as effective by the respondents. This suggests that the program is able to deliver its training components in a way that supports learning and participation. The results indicate that different aspects of the training, such as delivery, content, resources, and facilitation, work together to provide a meaningful learning experience for the respondents (**Table 1**). This supports the idea that livelihood programs are more effective when their key components are properly implemented and aligned with the needs of beneficiaries (Micabalo, 2022; Anoos et al., 2026).

However, the findings also show that there are areas that need improvement, particularly in ensuring that the benefits of training are sustained over time. While respondents are able to gain knowledge and skills, it is not always easy for them to maintain or expand their livelihood activities in the long run. This may be due to limited follow-up support or challenges in applying training to actual livelihood situations. Similar concerns were noted by (Castillo and Mantillas, 2024) and (Erana et al., 2025), who pointed out that sustaining livelihood outcomes remains a challenge in program implementation. Studies also suggest that long-term success depends not only on training but also on access to resources and support systems (Guo et al., 2023; He & Ahmed, 2022).

Table 1 Summary table of Evaluation on the Quality of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) Training and Capability-Building Activities.

Assessment Dimensions	Overall Weighted Mean
1. Training Design and Relevance	2.72
2. Content Quality and Comprehensiveness	2.93
3. Training Delivery and Methodology	2.94
4. Adequacy of Resources	2.92
5. Trainer Competence	3.02
6. Post-Training Support and Mentoring	2.72
7. Sustainability and Human Capital Development Outcomes	2.52
Grand Mean	2.82

Note: 3.26 - 4.00 Strongly Agree; 2.51 - 3.25 Agree; 1.76 - 2.50 Disagree; 1.00 - 1.75 Strongly Disagree

Table 2 Test of significant difference in the Perceived Quality of the Sustainable Livelihood Program Training and Capability-Building Activities when grouped according to Profile Variables

Assessment Dimensions	ANOVA	Profile Variables						
		Age	Gender	Civil Status	Highest Educational Attainment	Duration of Participation in the SLP	Nature of the Micro-Enterprise/ Activity	Status of the Micro-Enterprise
	F	2.222	1.870	0.834	2.357	0.630	5.942	8.007

Training Design and Relevance	Sig.	0.072	0.175	0.507	0.037	0.642	0.000	0.000
Content Quality and Comprehensiveness	F	1.913	0.182	0.861	2.830	0.743	7.683	11.632
	Sig.	0.114	0.671	0.490	0.014	0.565	0.000	0.000
Training Delivery and Methodology	F	1.697	0.268	0.728	2.893	0.599	7.790	11.061
	Sig.	0.157	0.606	0.575	0.012	0.664	0.000	0.000
Adequacy of Resources	F	1.548	0.495	0.731	2.854	0.735	8.610	12.597
	Sig.	0.195	0.483	0.573	0.013	0.570	0.000	0.000
Trainer Competence	F	1.943	0.143	0.963	2.931	0.756	7.065	12.493
	Sig.	0.110	0.706	0.432	0.012	0.556	0.000	0.000
Post-Training Support and Mentoring	F	1.768	0.134	1.402	3.301	0.851	6.469	6.488
	Sig.	0.142	0.715	0.239	0.005	0.497	0.000	0.000
Sustainability and Human Capital Development Outcomes	F	2.768	0.400	0.949	2.993	0.098	3.901	4.804
	Sig.	0.032	0.528	0.439	0.010	0.983	0.006	0.004

Note: 0.05 level of significance

Results indicate that respondents' perceptions of the quality of Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) training and capability-building activities significantly vary according to certain profile variables. Specifically, significant differences were consistently observed across all six assessment dimensions—training design and relevance, content quality and comprehensiveness, training delivery and methodology, adequacy of resources, trainer competence, and post-training support and mentoring—when respondents were grouped according to **highest educational attainment, nature of the micro-enterprise/activity, and status of the micro-enterprise**, as evidenced by p-values below the 0.05 level of significance. Furthermore, significant differences in perceptions regarding **sustainability and human capital development outcomes** were found when respondents were grouped according to **age, highest educational attainment, nature of the micro-enterprise/activity, and status of the micro-enterprise**, with corresponding p-values of 0.032, 0.010, 0.006, and 0.004, respectively. These findings suggest that respondents' educational background and enterprise-related characteristics significantly influence their assessment of the quality and outcomes of SLP training and capability-building interventions, while age specifically affects perceptions of sustainability and human capital development outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) training and capability-building activities were generally perceived by the respondents as effective across all assessed dimensions, including training design and relevance, content quality and comprehensiveness, training delivery and methodology, adequacy of resources, trainer competence, post-training support and mentoring, and sustainability and human capital development outcomes. However, the findings further reveal that respondents' perceptions significantly vary according to their highest educational attainment, nature of the micro-enterprise/activity, and status of the micro-enterprise across all dimensions. In addition, age was found to significantly influence respondents' perceptions of sustainability and human capital development outcomes. These results suggest that participant and enterprise characteristics play a crucial role in shaping the perceived effectiveness of SLP interventions, highlighting the need for more responsive and context-specific training and capability-building strategies.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) implementers in Zambales further strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of capability-building interventions by aligning training topics with locally viable livelihood opportunities, particularly in agriculture, fisheries, and small-scale trading, through enhanced coordination with local government units (LGUs), Public Employment Service Offices (PESOs), and local market stakeholders. Training modules may be enriched with practical and simplified lessons on budgeting, pricing, inventory management, and financial record-keeping that are directly applicable to the respondents' micro-enterprises. To improve learning outcomes, facilitators may adopt more participatory and community-based approaches, including demonstrations, peer learning, coaching sessions, and the use of the local language to accommodate varying educational backgrounds. Program coordinators may also consider extending training schedules and conducting follow-up sessions within barangays and municipalities to reinforce learning and provide greater flexibility for active entrepreneurs. Furthermore, trainers are encouraged to incorporate local livelihood experiences and invite successful entrepreneurs and former SLP beneficiaries as resource persons to enhance the practical relevance of training activities. Strengthening post-training support through regular monitoring, on-site coaching, mentoring sessions, and community-based support groups is likewise recommended. To promote sustainability and long-term enterprise growth, stronger linkages with cooperatives, suppliers, market outlets, and additional funding opportunities may be established, complemented by continuous skills development programs. Given the significant differences observed across educational attainment, age, and enterprise characteristics, SLP implementers may adopt a differentiated and needs-based approach in designing training, mentoring, and support services. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies on the long-term impacts of SLP interventions, particularly on enterprise sustainability, income improvement, and the effectiveness of differentiated capability-building approaches.

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