



Case Study II

HR/OD Intervention Focus: Organisational Assessment and Interventions

Effective Cascade of Agency Programs

The Province of Romblon is made up of seven islands and composed of 17 municipalities that are mostly categorised as either 4th or 5th class. The geographic and socioeconomic makeup of the Province makes supervision a challenge for any local government worker, and Levi Fiestada

is all too familiar with this challenge. An employee of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Romblon for 25 years who has been serving as Cluster Director for around 18 months, Fiestada is tasked to supervise the municipal local government operations and assist the Provincial Director in attaining their agency's goals.

Fiestada first heard of PAHRODF in early 2012. He recalls, "It was the facility that initiated the first intervention. They coordinated with the DILG Provincial Office. They were the proponents and they came up with these programs."

The objective of the very first intervention, according to Fiestada, was to assess the agency targets in order to help municipal local government officers (MLGOO) achieve them which, in turn, will boost their morale. It was a one-day workshop in Romblon and Fiestada assumed that the short duration was due to limited funds. "I think it was conducted for only one day because we did not have the funds. We could not afford the activity. PAHRODF gave – I am not sure – 15 thousand pesos. Nevertheless, that would not suffice. The Province of Romblon consists of seven islands so we had to give transportation and accommodation allowance to the MLGOOs," he explains.

The second activity, according to Fiestada, was conducted a year after in Manila and was attended by cluster leaders from the different provinces. Likewise held for just a day, he thought that this was ample time to do the intervention as it was basically just an evaluation of their REAPs. He injects, though, "I was not able to attend the whole day because I attended a conference. I attended for almost half the day."

A few months thereafter, a third intervention, this time for three days, was held in Laguna for cluster leaders. Sounding unsure, he relates that this was held as a means to check their progress. “It was almost like a follow-up on what was conducted in the first two activities,” he says. Fiestada also thinks that he and other Local Government Operations Officer (LG00) VI personnel were probably asked to attend since they had to supervise the MLG00s in the implementation of their projects and also possibly because they were assigned to handle the training and activities that the agency needed to implement after the elections. Fiestada noted that the third activity seemed to be the best intervention among the three as there was more time to help them formulate strategies regarding their programs.

Shrouded with uncertainty

Although fortunate to have attended the three activities, Fiestada seemed to have joined them blindly. He shares that for the first intervention, he only took the place of another LG00 who had attended the two previous training programs. Along with this, he was also given the responsibility of handling the budget to pay for the venue, allowances, transportation and other expenses. “In most cases, if there are some activities conducted in the Province of Romblon, I am the one asked by the provincial director to manage the finances, so yun yung naging participation ko talaga doon (that was really my participation),” he says.

For the second and third activities, Fiestada explains that he was merely asked by his superiors to attend. “I left Romblon not having any idea of what the activity will be about,” he discloses. Even if he was not too sure what he was getting himself into, he obeyed and only familiarised himself with the objectives during the start of the activities. “For the second activity, I just do not know but the materials came from PAHRODF. The order just came from the Regional Office.

The personnel in front explaining the activities were actually from PAHRODF and the DILG Central Office. The third one I think is in coordination with DILG and PAHRODF. The materials have the logo of PAHRODF. I just do not know who funded our transportation, food, and accommodation. It was not explained to us where the funds came from,” he reasons.

Fiestada admits that he is actually unsure of what Learning Service Providers (LSPs) were or what PAHRODF might be about. “To be very honest, we were not informed who were the service providers. We learned that PAHRODF is part of the service provider during the actual date, during the training proper. We were not informed kung sino talaga (who they were). The order to attend just came from the Regional Office which supervises us,” he discloses.

Facing the obstacles

Trying to recall his own REAP, he mentions that this focused on coming up with a strategy on how DILG’s programs could be better communicated to their Local Government Unit (LGU) clients – appointed officials from the provincial, municipal governments and the barangays. They needed to make it appealing and easily understandable, so that DILG’s programs can be appreciated, especially in areas where there are no field officers. “Kailangan naming mag-strategise (We needed to strategise),” he says. Using the cluster team approach to implement his REAP meant engaging the field officers to cover island municipalities other than their own. “Thankfully, since morale is high due to the PAHRODF activities, though over-extended, they seemed ready to take on the challenge and were all set to try and attain the seal of good housekeeping for their 17 municipalities.”

He admits, though, that it had not been easy. Limited personnel, funds, and resources are major hindrances. He also notes how the poor internet connectivity in their province and lack of equipment such as laptops and cameras have hampered their work. He adds that they have had to spend on phone bills when unable to e-mail their reports. With only one laptop and one camera available per cluster, time was wasted just waiting for these equipment to be available.

Fiestada further cites how difficult it had been to get participants to attend conferences. Many participants are from other island municipalities and are hard-pressed to come up with funds to cover sea transportation and accommodation. Occasionally, he says, they have been able to sponsor participants whenever the regional office, aware of their Romblon's situation, gives them budgetary support. Fiestada shares that to maximise learning, programs should ideally be held away from the participants' municipalities to avoid distractions.

Fiestada also hopes that their field personnel be given a chance to benchmark against other provinces such as Iloilo, Cebu, and Bohol and to observe good practices elsewhere. "Palagay ko hindi pwede sabihin na basahin mo na lang kung anong gagawin (I think it is not enough that they ask you to just read about what needs to be done)," he explains.

Learning despite the odds

Despite all the uncertainty and the odds, Fiestada appears to have managed to pick up a few things from the PAHRODF activities. He says, "It helped me assess how to implement my programs and my functions as LGO VI." He relates that because these were conducted very differently from what he was used to, it piqued his interest, made listen more intently and,

eventually, learned more. "Para bang iisipin mo paano ico-connect ito sa function namin, para ma-attain yung mga projects ng agency namin (It makes you think of how you can apply it to your functions, to attain the projects of the agency)," he explains. He then realised that there are many things they can change to be more effective. "Bakit ba natin pinapahirapan, pinapahaba pero pwede naman ipaiksi, mapadali, mas maa-appreciate (Why do we sometimes make it more difficult or longer when it is possible to shorten it, make it easier, and better appreciated)," he remarks. Further to this, he also says that these interventions have boosted their morale which is proving beneficial to their cluster-type organisational structure.

In addition, Fiestada shares that by trying to replicate the workshops or the activities, it has become easier for them to connect with their target clients, especially the barangay personnel. Fiestada feels that activities with interesting instructional materials, a relaxed setting, games that engage participants rather than just passively involving them, allow them to learn more. "Para bang more challenging sa mga tao and siguro sa learning process, palagay ko, mas naiintindihan, mas naa-appreciate nila (It is more challenging for the participants and perhaps with this learning process, they understand and appreciate things better)," he opines.

Though the number of DILG programs has increased since 2012, with some extremely difficult to execute, and with the same number of staff, Fiestada feels they have accomplished much. He boasts of the province's number 2 ranking, up from being 3rd or 4th. He credits PAHRODF's and the DILG Regional Office's assistance. "Palagay ko napaka-laking tulong yung mga interventions na ginawa. (I think the interventions have been a big help). Actually early part of this year, 2014, naka-experience na kami na first kami despite the fact na nagka-problema kami sa internet connection. (Actually in early 2014, we already experienced being first despite the fact that we had an internet connection problem)," he declares. At the end of the

day, whether he was initially aware of the objectives of the interventions or not, Fiestada has certainly come out of them feeling more motivated, better prepared and more hopeful about the province.

Levi Fiestada, Cluster Director - DILG, was among the participants for the HR/OD Intervention on Leadership Development for Cluster Leaders of DILG.