

Youth action research points towards community learning hubs for interaction, sharing, and learning

28-29 May 2017, Capul, Northern Samar, Philippines



The youth action research workshop in the Philippines brought together young women to enable them to have access to complete education, skills development, and learning opportunities within their community.

Capul is a small island municipality in Northern Samar, a province in the central part of the Philippines. It is a two-hour boat ride from the nearest city.

From this coastal municipality, a group of young women, aged 16-35, mostly young mothers, conducted an action research to seek out solutions that will enable girls and young women to have access to complete education, skills development, and learning opportunities within their community. Since May 2016, they have done a survey with more than 150 youth respondents and conducted focus group discussions as well as interviews with local government officials.

In the process of their work, not only have they gathered data, stories, and suggestions from the youth themselves, the young women researchers started a process of questioning and storytelling in a municipality, where everyone knows everyone. Asking questions is not easy in Capul, it is small town polarised by allegiances to two political parties.

After months of hard work, the young women collated, analysed, and put together opinions and recommendations they gathered from the youth. They deliberated on how they will present their research to the community and thereafter prepared their speeches as well as the programme for the validation. Together with SPPI (Center for Local Economy Development), they invited the youth, parents, barangay (village) government officials, the Mayor and officers from the Mayor's office, the police, teachers and officials from the Department of Education and Department of Social Work and Development for a dialogue.

On 29 May 2017, ASPBAE and its partners, E-Net Philippines and SPPI, traveled to Capul by boat and were met by researchers on the shores. The "Youth Dialogue with the Community" was inaugurated by the Vice Mayor who expressed his appreciation to the youth researchers on their work. More than 70 community members packed the hall and amidst the intense heat, eagerly awaited the presentations.

The young women presented the key findings and asked the participants to validate them. There were two ways of validating the findings. First, the participants were asked to indicate YES or NO to the key findings written on the craft papers which were posted on the walls. Second, the participants discussed in small groups (i.e. youth, barangay officials, parents, teachers, officers from the Mayor's office and police) their opinions - why YES? Why NO? - and what steps need to be taken to address the findings.



Apart from gathering data, stories, and suggestions from the youth themselves, the young women researchers started a process of questioning and storytelling, not easy initiatives in the small town of Capul.

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The key findings validated were on – (1) available education and learning opportunities and key sources for information in the community for the youth and the gaps in education provision; (2) aspirations and recommendations from the youth on programmes that will develop knowledge and skills for livelihoods, citizenship, continuing learning, and building camaraderie among the youth in the community; and (3) politics and patronage that impede access to education subsidy and scholarships for marginalised youth.

The most controversial finding was on the youth's views on politics and its impact on access to education. The survey showed that many respondents questioned

the skewed distribution of the conditional cash transfer for education as well as scholarships for college students. Many noted that the beneficiaries of the cash transfer included students from families who have means to send their children to school while other poor families were left out. Similarly, for the scholarships, the young women reported the shared view that most of the scholars belong to the ruling political party and many of them are relatives of those close to the government.

In the first round of validation, all participants in the dialogue, including those from the government, indicated YES to all the findings. The government officials said there is a need to review and update the list of beneficiaries in the cash transfer programme. On the scholarships, an official from the Mayor's office opined that limited funds for the scholarships also deters the local government from providing scholarships to more college students.

A recommendation from the action research, which gathered the most enthusiasm, was the need for a community learning hub where the youth can gather, share stories, read books, watch films, and engage in recreational activities. The local government urged the *barangay* officials to discuss the possibility of building a cluster of community learning hubs in the town. With the forthcoming "fiesta" or town celebration in July, the participants also recommended a fund raising drive to be led by the youth. For this, the young women researchers will not be alone as several young people from the different villages volunteered to help.

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