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### Research Article

## Sources of Living: A Community Needs Assessment for Livelihood of Panaytayan Community in Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro

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### About Article

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### ABSTRACT

This Community Needs Assessment (CNA) explores the livelihood dynamics of the Panaytayan Community in Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro. Home to over 11,500 indigenous Hanunuo Mangyan people (Municipal Community Development Office, 2024), Panaytayan is endowed with picturesque landscapes but faces persistent livelihood insecurities. The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews from Mansalay Community Development Office assigned personnel and community members from four selected sitios within the community, and observations through actual community immersion. Results revealed the various livelihood sources of the community, including kaingin, ramit weaving, handicraft production, and high-value crop cultivation such as kaong, cacao, and coffee. Some households also raise native chickens and pigs, and goats as an additional source of income, along with carabao for transportation and farm work. Despite these diverse activities, the community needs support for the different challenges they are facing, such as the lack of organized weaving communities, productivity limitations of older artisans, and the absence of standardized tools affecting product quality. Moreover, financial management and inclusivity issues add to the mentioned challenges, alongside broader concerns of inadequate infrastructure, limited education, and health services, which are all interrelated barriers to having sufficient income.

On the other hand, the Panaytayan community exhibits a robust willingness to engage in collaborative livelihood projects, tapping into a pool of artisans and utilizing the rich local raw materials available in the area. The study underscored the need for structured interventions, including organizing weaving communities, enhancing skills in handicraft production, networking, creating market platforms, implementing financial education programs, and advocating for infrastructure development. These recommendations aim to empower the Panaytayan community, fostering sustainable livelihoods that interlink economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Conducting a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) is crucial for effectively delivering interventions that address the specific needs of any targeted community, particularly when focusing on livelihood improvement initiatives (Garcia, 2017). This is especially true for indigenous communities in Panaytayan, Mansalay who often face common vulnerabilities related to income insufficiency such as limited access to resources, technology, markets, among others (World Bank, 2018; Smith & Smith, 2020). By understanding the unique challenges and aspirations of a community through a CNA, stakeholders can design and implement interventions that are culturally appropriate, sustainable, and truly address the root causes of their livelihood insecurity (Pretty *et al.*, 2018; UNDP, 2017).

Panaytayan community in Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro is a vibrant barangay with more than 11,500 community members (Municipal Community Development Office, 2024). It is the home to the indigenous Hanunuo Mangyan people. Beneath its rich natural resources, potential for tourism, agriculture, and other income-generating activities lies the persistent need for sustainable livelihood opportunities for its residents. The MIMAROPA Department of Social Welfare and Development (2023) reported that Mansalay municipality in Oriental Mindoro has the highest poverty incidence, in which a larger part is from Mangyan households. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the specific livelihood needs and aspirations of its diverse population may lead to the development of effective interventions and perpetuate a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities (Olsson *et al.*, 2014).

This study aims to bridge this gap through a Community Needs Assessment (CNA) focused on Panaytayan's livelihood landscape. The study identified existing sources of income and analyzed disparities, assessed the major challenges faced by residents, and evaluated the potential of existing resources and opportunities. By understanding the existing economic activities, resource limitations, and cultural nuances, this CNA may help to structure livelihood mechanisms for the community. This research is a commitment to understanding the unique challenges and aspirations of Panaytayan and the collaborative approach for economic prosperity and cultural vibrancy.

### 1.1. Objectives of the study

Generally, the study aims to assess the livelihood needs, challenges, and opportunities within the Panaytayan community, informing the development of culturally appropriate and sustainable interventions that empower residents to achieve economic prosperity and well-being.

Specifically, the study will:

1. Identify the existing income sources within the Panaytayan community. This will provide a baseline understanding of the current economic situation and expose any disparities between different groups.
2. Assess the major challenges and constraints faced by residents in securing sustainable livelihoods.
3. Evaluate the potential of existing resources and opportunities for livelihood development.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indigenous communities in the Philippines exhibit a rich tapestry of livelihood strategies, intricately linked to their surrounding environment and natural resources. The majority engage in farming and fishing activities, serving as the cornerstone for their basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing (Gaillard *et al.*, 2009). These subsistence practices, according to Gaillard *et al.* (2009), are not merely traditional but essential for the survival and well-being of these populations.

However, a study by Hirai (2015) sheds light on the significant economic challenges faced by indigenous households. Their average income ranges from a meager 250 pesos to 5,000 pesos, constituting a minuscule fraction of the general average household income within each region. Specifically, the average income across all provinces falls between 1,036 and 1,899 pesos, representing a mere 8-15 percent of the national average. This stark disparity underscores the economic marginalization of indigenous communities in the Philippines.

Like marginalized communities worldwide, those in the Philippines face a multitude of social-ecological stressors that severely threaten their biocultural resources and livelihoods. These stressors encompass environmental degradation, climate change, and socio-political challenges. Collaborative learning has emerged as a promising strategy to bolster livelihood resilience amidst such challenges. This approach fosters knowledge sharing and joint problem-solving, potentially leading to more sustainable and adaptable livelihood strategies. To enhance the livelihoods of ethnic rural households, a thorough understanding of their livelihood strategies is paramount. Mao *et al.* (2020) emphasized the importance of a detailed analysis, particularly focusing on livelihood diversity, to significantly enrich the body of knowledge on sustainable livelihoods. Their research offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners, aiding them in designing effective programs for regional sustainable development and ecological protection. By recognizing and supporting the diversity of livelihood strategies, we can empower rural ethnic communities to build resilience and achieve sustainability.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach to gain in-depth understanding of the Panaytayan community's livelihood needs, challenges, and opportunities. Researchers utilized local transportation (*habal-habal*) to access different sitios within the community. In each sitio, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse range of community members, including *gurangons* (elders), women, and men, to capture a variety of perspectives. The interviews focused on participants' current sources of income, various natural resources for livelihood, the challenges they face in securing sustainable livelihoods, and their aspirations for the future.

To ensure diverse representation, interviews were conducted with community members from three strategically chosen sitios: Kalibang, Tanawan, Ether, and Sinugbuan. These sitios represent different geographical locations, socio-economic backgrounds, and livelihood activities within the broader Panaytayan community. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants based on their age, gender, and



occupation, ensuring a rich and nuanced understanding of the community's experiences.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to facilitate flexible data collection across participants. The guides covered key themes related to income sources, livelihood challenges and opportunities.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the conducted community needs assessment, the following information are presented:

**Table 1.** Existing Livelihood

| Sector      | Livelihood  |
|-------------|---|
| Agriculture | Staple Food: Kaingin crops –grains, root crops, vegetables, and legumes (rice, corn, sweet potato, cassava, taro, ube, kadios, beans, among others) |
|             | High-value crops: Kaong and coffee  |
|             | Animal raising: native chicken, native pigs, and goat,  |
| Industry    | Textile: ramit weavings   |
|             | Basketry: baskets, bags, wallet, and bay-ong and ayupit(containers), mats, and other accessories (made from buri, nito, abaka, and bamboo)          |
|             | Natural Materials: tambo, uway  |
| Services    | Transportation: Habal-habal   |
|             | Retail: Sari-sari store   |

##### *Existing livelihood resources*

The community sustains itself through a variety of livelihood activities. They primarily engage in kaingin- cultivating root crops- bundo, gabi, kamote, and ube; upland rice, corn, legumes such as kadios, and sitaw and other vegetables such as squash, among others. Kaingin for them is a source of income and source of their staple food. High-value crops like coffee and kaong are cultivated and sold. The community cultivates coffee, opting to harvest and sell as raw cherries rather than processed coffee. When other household members manage kaingin, men often turn to habal-habal, using motorcycles for transportation. Additionally, they create ramit weavings and handicrafts like baskets, bags, wallets, and accessories from materials such as buli, tambo, uway, and other forest resources. Some households within the community are also selling goods from the lowland market, particularly grocery goods. This blend of agricultural practices, traditional crafts, and entrepreneurial activities reflects the community's economic landscape. The variety of livelihood sources are shaped by factors like age, gender, and civil status, highlighting the diverse skills and resources within the community.

Given that there are plenty of livelihood sources for the community, it is undeniable they are lacking still to sustain their necessities. The community needs assessment highlighted the areas of livelihood concerns.

**Table 2.** Major Challenges and Constraints

| Livelihood  | Challenges and Constraints  |
|---|---|
| Staple Food: Kaingin crops –grains, root crops, vegetables, and legumes (rice, corn, sweet potato, cassava, taro, ube, kadios, beans, among others) | The staple food produced is primarily to secure their food. These products are barely sold to lowland markets due to low market prices and high cost of transportation.   |
| High value crops: Kaong and coffee  | Kaong and coffee harvests are periodic and not able to sufficiently provide income for their basic needs. Post-harvest knowledge and practices to ensure quality and high market value is lacking. Poor road infrastructure and transportation affect the income and quality of the products. |
| Animal raising: native chickens, native pigs, and goats,  | Limited production due to lack of feed resources. Infestation incidence and mortality Majority of the community members are use to cultivate crops.   |
| Textile: ramit weavings   | No organize group of artisan in the area Limited number of artisan known to weaving Low market value of the ramit that they opt to produce it for personal use  |
| Basketry: baskets, bags, wallet, and bay-ong and ayupit(containers), and other accessories (made from buri, nito, and bamboo)                       | Inconsistency on the quality of products Threats to deterioration due to humidity in the area and lack of good storage facility   |
| Natural Materials: tambo, uway  | Infestation of the tambo (rodents) Poor weeding practices Low market value  |
| Transportation: Habal-habal   | Poor road infrastructure Weather conditions- during the rainy season, habal drivers are not able to transport goods to lowland markets and provide services to tourist/visitors.  |
| Retail: Sari-sari store   | Lack of capitalization and poor transportation that other fragile basic commodities cannot be transported.  |
| Other challenges and constraints affecting the livelihood   | Poor road infrastructure, lack of education access, health, and social services.  |

##### *Major challenges and constraints on livelihood*



1. *Challenges in agriculture products.* The community primarily relies on staple crops like rice, corn, and root vegetables from slash-and-burn agriculture for their own food consumption, with limited surplus for market sale due to low prices and high transportation costs. While kaong and coffee have potential for higher income, their periodic harvests and inadequate post-harvest knowledge restrict their effectiveness in meeting basic needs. The community faces limitations in animal production due to insufficient feed resources, disease risk, and lack of experience in livestock rearing compared to crop cultivation. Poor road conditions and transportation options further hinder income generation and product quality for both crops and livestock.

2. *Challenges and constraints in ramit weaving.* One of the first challenges for ramit weaving is the absence of a structured weaving community or organization hinders effective coordination and collaboration among weavers. This lack of organization poses a challenge to the development and sustainability of ramit weaving within the community. The next one is the health limitations of older artisans, who possess valuable weaving skills, prevent them from actively participating in the craft. Although willing to guide younger members, the community faces a hurdle in creating a formal training structure to transfer the expertise of these experienced weavers. The last is that tools traditionally used by older weavers have disappeared over time, leading to a scarcity of essential equipment. Some active weavers resort to improvised tools, resulting in a lack of standardization that may affect the overall quality of the produced ramit weavings.

3. *Challenges and constraints in production of handicrafts and other local products.* The community faces several challenges in local handicrafts creation, primarily stemming from the absence of an organized handicrafts group. The lack of a cohesive structure hinders effective collaboration among artisans, limiting their collective efforts. Furthermore, the community faces a shortage of skilled artisans and processors, restricting the full potential of local handicrafts creation and impeding the exploitation of its artistic talents. Recognizing the evolving market demands, there is a crucial need for skills enhancement among community members engaged in crafting these products, emphasizing continuous training and skill development. The absence of standardized tools and raw materials poses a challenge in maintaining consistency and quality across local handicrafts, risking variations that may affect overall market competitiveness. Challenges also arise from limited production capacity and market availability, constraining economic opportunities for artisans and restricting the accessibility of these unique products. Additionally, the undervaluation of the market for local handicrafts contributes to sales challenges and economic sustainability.

4. *Challenges and constraints in financial management and financial inclusivity.* The challenges and constraints in financial management and financial inclusivity within the community are multifaceted. A primary issue stems from the limited foundation of financial literacy among community members. This lack of understanding about basic financial concepts and practices hampers effective financial management, hindering the community's ability to make informed decisions about

savings, investments, and overall financial responsibility.

Despite the local government's efforts to introduce various livelihood programs to the community, these initiatives are observed to be non-sustainable. The programs may lack the necessary structures for long-term success, including comprehensive training, ongoing support, and adaptation to the changing needs of the community. As a result, the community faces difficulties in sustaining the economic benefits derived from these programs, limiting the long-term impact on financial well-being.

A critical constraint involves the limited availability and accessibility of financial products and services tailored to the Indigenous Peoples (IP) community. The absence of financial instruments designed to meet the unique needs and cultural context of the community contributes to financial exclusion. This lack of access to banking services, credit facilities, and other financial tools prevents community members from fully participating in the broader financial system, impeding their economic growth and development.

5. *Other major challenges.* Other major challenges that significantly affect the livelihood of the community are the inaccessibility and road infrastructure, lack of basic education, and limited social and health services. In terms of accessibility, inadequate road infrastructure hampers connections to essential services and economic opportunities. Basic education faces obstacles due to a lack of resources, number of hired teachers, and appropriate teaching-learning facilities. The scarcity of social and health services further impacts residents' well-being, with limited access to healthcare facilities and community support systems.

#### 4.1. Resources and opportunities for livelihood development

The IP community of Panaytayan exhibits a strong interest and willingness to engage in livelihood development projects in collaboration with various partner agencies. Within the community, there exists a pool of skilled artisans who are eager to share their expertise by training fellow community members, thereby fostering a transfer of valuable skills. Moreover, the area is rich in raw materials necessary to produce local products, providing a sustainable resource base for livelihood initiatives. Notably, the community will benefit from a range of capability training programs offered by the University and other partner agencies. These training programs encompass a broad spectrum, including production techniques, processing methods, marketing strategies, branding, distribution, and costing. Such diverse training opportunities play a pivotal role in equipping community members with the essential skills and knowledge needed to ensure the sustainability of their livelihood endeavors. The collaboration between the community and external agencies not only taps into the existing skills within the community but also facilitates a comprehensive approach to livelihood development, leveraging external expertise and resources for a more holistic and sustainable impact.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

- This community faces significant vulnerability due to a reliance on subsistence farming and limited income



diversification.

- The low marketability of their staple crops, insufficient income from high-value crops, and challenges in other livelihood activities like animal husbandry, weaving, and basketry restrict their economic potential.
- Despite the existing challenges, the community exhibits untapped potential in various livelihood activities.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide training and resources on post-harvest handling, processing, and value addition for high-value crops like kaong and coffee.
- Collaborate with local agricultural cooperatives or NGOs and other concerned partnering agencies to secure necessary equipment and market connections for processed products.
- Introduce and train community members in sustainable livestock-rearing techniques, focusing on improved feed management and disease prevention. Offer seed funding for small-scale animal projects.
- Organize community artisan groups for ramit weaving and buri basketry, providing access to shared workspace, storage facilities, and marketing platforms.

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