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Asset-Based Community Development: Assessment of Community Assets and Resources of Diocesan Shrine and Parish of San Isidro Labrador, Talavera, Nueva Ecija - Basis for Sustainable Livelihood and Development Programs

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Abstract

This study assessed the community assets and resources of the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of San Isidro Labrador in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) framework as the basis for sustainable livelihood and development programs. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, data were gathered through workshops, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews with parish leaders, organizations, and community members. Results revealed that the parish community is rich in agricultural assets, local knowledge,

and active spiritual and social programs, yet faces challenges such as limited market access, vulnerability to disasters, and inadequate financial support. Proposed interventions include entrepreneurial training, cooperative marketing, agri-tourism initiatives, digital literacy, and environmental sustainability projects. Findings underscore that leveraging existing community strengths, coupled with targeted interventions, can foster inclusive development, strengthen resilience, and promote long-term sustainable livelihoods within the parish community.

Keywords: Asset-Based Community Development, Sustainable Livelihood, Community Assets, Parish Development

Introduction

In the vibrant landscape of community development, the paradigm of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) has emerged as a transformative approach to fostering sustainable growth and empowerment within localities. Embracing the fundamental notion that every community possesses inherent strengths and resources, ABCD offers a lens through which to view communities not as repositories of needs, but as reservoirs of assets waiting to be identified, harnessed, and nurtured (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003) ^[7].

By highlighting the assets and strengths within a community, members are empowered to take ownership of their own development. When people recognize what they are good at and what resources they have access to, they are more likely to take initiative and become actively involved in finding solutions to their own challenges (Green & Haines, 2016) ^[4].

The ABCD model, originating from the collaborative work of John Kretzman and John McKnight, founders of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute in 1988, is built on four foundational principles. It pivots away from focusing solely on problems and needs, instead directing attention to community assets and strengths. ABCD seeks to identify and mobilize individual and community assets, skills, and passions, placing communities at the forefront of decision-making processes (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993) ^[5]. Furthermore, it operates on the principles of being community-driven and relationship-driven, fostering sustainable development through the active participation and collaboration of community members (Kretzman, 2010; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003) ^[6, 7].

Moreover, ABCD promotes inclusivity by involving community members from the outset of the development process. This participatory approach fosters trust, community buy-in, and support, setting the stage for sustainable and community-driven economic development.

The Diocesan Shrine and Parish of San Isidro Labrador in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, stands as a microcosm of potential and possibility. Nestled within the heart of this dynamic community lies a tapestry of assets—both tangible and intangible—that

hold the keys to unlocking a future of sustainable livelihoods and holistic development. From its rich cultural heritage to its resilient populace and natural endowments, the Parish of San Isidro Labrador embodies the essence of community strength and resilience.

This assessment endeavors to delve into the intricate fabric of assets and resources woven throughout the Parish of San Isidro Labrador. By embarking on this journey of exploration, we seek to illuminate the pathways towards sustainable livelihoods and development programs rooted in the collective ingenuity and abundance of the community. Through a comprehensive examination of these assets, the study aims to lay the foundation for actionable initiatives that empower community members, enhance local capacities, and foster a flourishing ecosystem of prosperity. As we embark on this collaborative endeavor, we embrace the spirit of partnership and co-creation, recognizing that the true essence of development lies not in external interventions, but in the collective agency and resilience of the people themselves.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research is to employ an asset-based approach to explore the community, serving as a basis for identifying necessary interventions and designing effective development programs aimed at initiating and enhancing sustainable livelihood initiatives within the community.

1. Assessing the community's existing assets and resources, often overlooked, and establishing connections between these micro-assets and the broader macro-environment.
2. Providing an overview of the livelihood status and living conditions of both households and individuals residing in the community.
3. Recommending initiatives and intervention strategies for the development of sustainable livelihood programs by leveraging the inventory of assets and capacities, while also identifying areas for improvement within the community.

Methodology

The study employed descriptive qualitative research methodology, aiming to depict and understand the characteristics of a phenomenon, specifically focusing on the living conditions and development pace within the community of the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of San Isidro Labrador. Descriptive qualitative approaches are particularly suited for understanding community contexts in depth (Sandelowski, 2000) [9]. Drawing on workshops utilizing the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Model,

data collection centered on capturing participants' perspectives through narrative descriptions (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993) [5].

Additional methods such as focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) were utilized to gather diverse insights, both of which are standard qualitative tools for participatory research (Creswell & Poth, 2018) [2]. The selection of participants followed a purposive sampling strategy tailored to the study's objectives, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the information obtained (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015) [8].

Collaboration with the Parish Pastoral Formation Team

The study involved beneficiaries chosen from the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of San Isidro Labrador, organized into five groups based on the subdivision of the barangay made by the Parish Pastoral Formation Team (Parish Pastoral Formation Team, 2024). Each cluster underwent a series of workshops following the ABCD Model, accompanied by FGDs and IDIs, all facilitated by the researchers.

The researchers also interviewed leaders of different religious organization sectors within the Parish, as well as the current parish priest, to gather qualitative insights on the community's spiritual and social assets.

Results and Discussion

This section provides an overview and analysis of the discoveries about the community's assets and strengths, the current livelihood status, and living conditions within the community. Additionally, it outlines the suggested measures and intervention strategies aimed at fostering the development of sustainable livelihood programs.

1. Community Assets and Strength

Every community has specific needs and deficits that require attention. A community asset resource, a term used interchangeably, refers to anything that can be utilized to enhance the quality of life within the community. Understanding the community's strengths allows for a clearer insight into the types of programs or initiatives that could effectively address these needs.

An Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) assessment was conducted to uncover various assets and strengths within the community. This assessment aimed to develop tailored plans that leverage both recognized and unrecognized assets. Researchers employed workshops following the ABCD model to identify the available resources in their respective areas. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of maximizing the community's potential and effectively addressing its needs.

Table 1: Workshop 1: Kayamanan, Kalakasan, Kakayahan ng Komunidad (Wealth, Strength, Community Capacity)

Clusters	Kayamanan, Kalakasan, Kakayahan ng Barangay/Komunidad
<p>Cluster 1</p> <p>a. Tabacao</p> <p>b. Pulong Balbido</p> <p>c. Sicsican Matanda</p> <p>d. Lomboy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A large percentage of the livelihood comes from farming and vegetable cultivation. ▪ Many business owners hire workers or employees from their own barangay. ▪ Knowledgeable residents in livelihood businesses such as farming, food products ▪ There are factories producing pork chicharrón, kropeck, and macaroni, and the workers are from the barangay itself. ▪ Many people invest in transporting agricultural products such as corn, rice, and vegetables. ▪ Livelihood and employment abilities ▪ Numerous individuals are engaged in selling a variety of products, including food, wet and dry goods, and everyday household items. ▪ Active spiritual faith upliftment program and health program ▪ active collection of nonbiodegradable waste ▪ Active Barangay Officials in Cleaning Public Areas in the Barangay ▪ Active youth ministry organization ▪ Presence of pizza store ▪ The Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) has many active programs. ▪ presence of local knowledge and traditional farming practices, combined with emerging agricultural technologies
<p>Cluster 2</p> <p>a. Campus</p> <p>b. Burnay</p> <p>c. Valle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A large percentage of the livelihood comes from farming and vegetable cultivation. ▪ Backyard gardening activities of some households ▪ Presence of various stores ▪ Knowledgeable residents in livelihood businesses ▪ Active spiritual faith upliftment program and health program ▪ Unified and hardworking community ▪ There is a large plantation of saba bananas ▪ Active programs of barangay (sports, health, clean up drive, peace and order) ▪ Presence of material recovery facility ▪ Presence of reselling businesses and buy and sell ▪ The Barangay are situated in fertile agricultural lands ▪ Supportive Local Government Initiatives ▪ well-maintained farm-to-market roads ▪ Potential for Agri-tourism
<p>Cluster 3</p> <p>a. Sampaloc</p> <p>b. Gulod</p> <p>c. Dimasalang SUR</p> <p>d. Dimasalang Norte</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ livestock raised in holdings or backyard farms ▪ production of dairy products ▪ Hybrid rice production ▪ Active spiritual faith upliftment program and health program ▪ Vegetable Crop Production ▪ Presence of bakery and pizza store ▪ A large percentage of the livelihood comes from farming and vegetable cultivation. ▪ Vast rice fields and vegetable plantations. ▪ Active barangay health program ▪ Active program for daycare centers and children ▪ The barangay has a well-maintained and large facility. ▪ Presence of poultry raising and piggery ▪ The Barangay are situated in fertile agricultural lands ▪ presence of local knowledge and traditional farming practices, combined with emerging agricultural technologies
<p>Cluster 4</p> <p>a. Bantug Hacienda</p> <p>b. Sibul</p> <p>c. Bugtong Na Buli</p> <p>d. Collado</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A large percentage of the livelihood comes from farming and vegetable cultivation. ▪ Large Farming Areas ▪ presence of poultry raising production ▪ Active spiritual faith upliftment program and health program ▪ Vegetable Crop Production ▪ There is a good flow of irrigation ▪ There are many job opportunities related to agriculture ▪ Presence of recycling activity ▪ The Barangay are situated in fertile agricultural lands ▪ presence of local knowledge and traditional farming practices, combined with emerging agricultural technologies ▪ Supportive Local Government Initiatives

Table 1 outlines the community capacities of various barangays within specific clusters, focusing on their wealth, strength, and skills. Each cluster highlights common themes such as a strong reliance on agriculture, local business activities, and active community programs that promote health and spiritual upliftment. Most barangays benefit from fertile lands, fostering livestock and crop production. Additionally, there are local initiatives for waste management, youth engagement, and support from local government, suggesting a collaborative and resourceful community structure aimed at enhancing livelihoods and promoting sustainable practices.

2. Livelihood Status and Conditions

Livelihoods are essential for human survival, supporting households and communities. Sustainable options, especially in rural areas, are vital for economic development. Economic growth broadens livelihood choices, and sustainability depends on various forms of capital—human, social, financial, and natural. Diversifying income sources enhances security and resilience, but livelihoods face threats from natural disasters, crises, and disease outbreaks. The ABCD assessment highlighted the need for strategies to protect and strengthen livelihoods against these challenges.

Table 2: Workshop 2: Livelihood Status and Conditions of Barangays



Clusters/Parish of San Isidro Labrador, Talavera, Nueva Ecija		
<i>Livelihood Status and Conditions Barangays</i>		
		
Cluster 1 TABACAO PULONG BALBIDO SICSICAN MATANDA LOMBOY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities for leadership roles - Willingness to develop skills - Supportive management and leadership - Active participation in religious activities - Financial assistance, donations, and income-generating projects (IGP) - Knowledge transfer from livelihood training - Enthusiasm and diligence in work and livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Struggles to promote and market products/services - Difficulty reaching potential customers - Limited access to online platforms - Need for partners and suppliers - alternative livelihood products
Cluster 2 CAMPUS BURNAY VALLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong agricultural and farming activities - Cooperative livelihood efforts - Accessible infrastructure for local markets - High levels of community cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate financial and business support for small entrepreneurs - Limited skills in advanced marketing and online sales platforms - enhancement and sustainability of livelihood programs
Cluster 3 SAMPALOC GULOD DIMASALANG SUR DIMASALANG NORTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverse agricultural production (rice, vegetables) - Traditional and local farming practices - Availability of land for farming and livestock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vulnerability to natural disasters like floods and droughts - Lack of diversification in livelihood activities - Dependence on seasonal farming
Cluster 4 BANTUG HACIENDA SIBUL BUGTONG NA BULI COLLADO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large percentage of livelihood from farming and vegetable cultivation - Presence of poultry raising - Strong community programs for health and spiritual upliftment - Good flow of irrigation - Fertile agricultural land - Use of emerging farming technologies - Recycling activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited market access for produce - Lack of advanced storage and transportation facilities - Insufficient partnership with external businesses - enhancement of livelihood products

Table 2 reveals that while the barangays exhibit strong agricultural foundations and community cooperation, they face significant challenges in market access, financial support, and vulnerability to external risks. Key opportunities lie in skill development, cooperation, and the use of technology. Addressing these challenges through enhanced partnerships, marketing strategies, and diversified

livelihoods could lead to improved economic resilience and sustainability for the communities.

3. Proposed Initiatives and Intervention Plans for the Development and Enhancement of Sustainable Livelihood Programs

Table 3: Workshop 3: Panukalang Gawain (Proposed Projects)

Clusters	Panukalang Gawain (Proposed Projects)
Cluster 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurial livelihood project - Establishment of cooperative marketing groups to improve product visibility and sales. - Workshops on digital marketing and e-commerce platforms for local businesses. - Training sessions on value-added agricultural products.
Cluster 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurial livelihood project - Development of community gardens to enhance food security. - Organizing agricultural fairs to connect producers with consumers. - Financial literacy programs to empower local entrepreneurs.
Cluster 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurial livelihood project - Disaster preparedness training to mitigate natural disaster impacts. - Diversification workshops for alternative livelihood options. - Establishment of a local produce exchange network.
Cluster 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurial livelihood project - Installation of cold storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses. - Collaborations with NGOs for technical support in modern farming practices. - Promotion of organic farming to tap into eco-friendly markets. - Agri-tourism initiatives to attract visitors and generate income.
Cluster 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurial livelihood project - Capacity-building programs for youth in agriculture and entrepreneurship. - Regular community clean-up and recycling drives to enhance environmental sustainability.

Table 3 outlines a series of proposed initiatives designed to enhance sustainable livelihood programs within the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of San Isidro Labrador community, with each cluster targeting specific projects to leverage local strengths and address key challenges.

In Cluster 1, the focus is on fostering entrepreneurship through initiatives such as establishing cooperative marketing groups to improve product visibility and sales, conducting digital marketing workshops to help local businesses reach wider audiences, and offering training on value-added agricultural products to enable farmers to diversify their income streams. Cluster 2 continues this entrepreneurial emphasis by encouraging local entrepreneurship and developing community gardens to enhance food security while promoting collaboration among residents. Agricultural fairs facilitate direct connections between producers and consumers, and financial literacy programs empower local entrepreneurs with essential management skills.

Cluster 3 also prioritizes entrepreneurship development by providing disaster preparedness training to equip the community with skills to respond to natural disasters, thereby protecting livelihoods. Diversification workshops encourage exploring alternative income sources to reduce dependency on a single livelihood, while a local produce exchange network strengthens economic ties within the community. In Cluster 4, initiatives promote local entrepreneurship through the installation of cold storage facilities to minimize post-harvest losses and collaborations with NGOs for technical support in modern farming practices. The promotion of organic farming targets eco-conscious consumers, potentially improving market prices

and sustainability.

Cluster 5 focuses on agri-tourism initiatives aimed at attracting visitors to provide additional income for local farmers. It continues to encourage entrepreneurship among community members and includes capacity-building programs for youth to equip them with skills in agriculture and entrepreneurship, fostering future leaders. Regular community clean-up and recycling drives promote environmental sustainability while engaging residents in active participation.

These initiatives collectively aim to strengthen community resilience, diversify income sources, and promote sustainable practices. By emphasizing entrepreneurial development, enhancing collaboration, and addressing specific community needs, the proposed projects encourage active involvement from residents, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment within the community.

1. Conclusions and Recommendations

The assessment of the Diocesan Shrine and Parish of San Isidro Labrador reveals a community rich in assets and potential, particularly in agriculture and local cooperation. Through the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, it is clear that leveraging these strengths can foster sustainable livelihoods and enhance community resilience. Despite facing challenges such as limited market access, vulnerability to natural disasters, and inadequate financial support, the community exhibits a strong willingness to engage in collaborative efforts for improvement. The proposed initiatives are well-aligned with the identified needs, providing a pathway for meaningful development.

Table 4: Proposed Initiatives and Intervention Plans for the Development of Enterprises and Sustainable Livelihood Programs

Intervention Needed	Goals/Objectives	Activities	Involved Persons/Unit	Time Frame
Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship	Foster innovative solutions and social ventures to address community needs.	- Organize innovation and entrepreneurship forums.	NEUST Talavera Off-campus, Local business leaders, Innovation Experts, Saint Isidore Parish	June 2025
advance Entrepreneurial skills and Development Program	Enhance local entrepreneurship and business skills.	- Conduct business skills training workshops.	NEUST Talavera Off campus, Local business leaders, and Saint Isidore Parish	June 2025
Bread and Pastry and Beverage Livelihood Training:	- Provide training in food processing to produce marketable products.	Food Processing Training: -Sweet Potato Loaf Bread, Donut, Candies, and other pasalubong food products.	NEUST Bread and Pastry Trainers, food and beverages trainers	June-July 2025
Digital Marketing Training	Enable local businesses to access broader markets.	- Organize workshops on e-commerce and digital marketing.	Neust Talavera Off Campus, Local business experts, trainers	June-july 2025
Financial Literacy Program	Empower local entrepreneurs with financial management skills.	- Provide financial literacy workshops.	Neust Talavera Off Campus and Financial experts,	August-September 2025
Recycling and Waste Management Initiatives	Enhance community sustainability and waste management.	- Conduct workshops on recycling practices.	Neust Talavera Off Campus, Barangay officials, Environmental organizations, local leaders	October-November 2025
Community Garden Establishment	Enhance food security and foster community cooperation.	- Develop and maintain community gardens.	Neust Talavera Off Campus, Community volunteers, Barangay officials	December 2025
Promotion of Organic Farming	Tap into eco-friendly markets and increase income potential.	- Provide training on organic farming practices.	Neust Talavera Off Campus, Barangay officials, Agricultural experts, local farmers	January-February 2026
Agri-tourism Development	Attract visitors and generate income for local farmers.	- Develop promotional materials for local agri-tourism.	Local tourism board, community leaders, NEUST Tourism and Hospitality Department	March-may 2026
Youth Capacity-Building Programs	Equip youth with skills in agriculture and entrepreneurship.	- Offer workshops and mentorship programs for youth.	Neust Talavera Off Campus, Barangay officials, Schools, local entrepreneurs	June july 2026
Technical Assistance and training in Improving and Enhancing Product Packaging and Labeling	- Enhance the marketability of inmates' products through improved packaging and labeling.	- Provide technical assistance and training to improve product packaging and labeling standards. seminar and workshop in product packaging and labeling, seminar-workshop in tourism souvenir design and creativity, and seminar-workshop in visual art and appreciation	NEUST Packaging specialists, quality control experts	August-October 2026
Local Produce Exchange Network	Strengthen economic ties and promote local products.	- Establish a platform for producers to exchange goods.	Neust Talavera Off Campus, Community volunteers, Barangay officials, Community representatives, local farmers	October-November 2026
Cold Storage Facilities Installation	Minimize post-harvest losses and improve product shelf life.	- Partner with NGOs for facility setup.	Talavera local government, Neust Talavera Off Campus, Barangay officials	October-November 2026
Cooperative Marketing Groups	Improve product visibility and sales for local farmers.	- Form cooperative marketing groups for local products.	Neust Talavera Off Campus, Community members, Barangay officials	November-December 2026

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