



# Fostering Community: An Examination of the Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative as an Academe Extension Program

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**Abstract :** This study investigated the impact of capacity-building initiatives implemented by members of the Letran-Calamba Graduate School Society (LGSS) in collaboration with the Community Extension Services Department of Colegio de San Juan de Letran-Calamba on the empowerment and skill development of Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HMPC) members. Through mixed methods, results revealed the program's significant contribution to individual and community well-being.

Participants perceived the majority of capacity-building initiatives provided as highly satisfactory. Skills development led to job opportunities and improved income generation. HMPC members reported increased confidence and entrepreneurial spirit, fostering personal growth. Knowledge sharing among participants fostered a collaborative learning environment and community support. The achievement of the TESDA certification boosted participants' confidence and opened new opportunities for them.

Participants expressed a strong desire for continued and expanded livelihood training programs to reach a wider audience. Broader community outreach was suggested to include more individuals. Participants voiced interest in further engagement through the reactivation of HMPC, potentially as trainers or mentors in future initiatives.

The training programs have demonstrably empowered HMPC members and the wider community. By addressing identified skill gaps and providing relevant support, the program has fostered confidence, entrepreneurship, and community development. Recommendations to conduct the evaluation for all training components, implement continuous learning opportunities, foster peer learning and mentorship, reactivate the Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative due to the positive results of the training programs, and expand community engagement.

**Keywords:** *empowerment, skill development, livelihood programs, cooperatives, community extension*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become a rallying point for initiatives aimed at achieving a more sustainable future for all. One of these goals (SDG 8) focuses on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. In this context, it becomes evident that the creation of a multipurpose cooperative aligns harmoniously with UN Sustainable Development Goal 8. By embracing cooperative principles and fostering a supportive environment for entrepreneurship and community participation, this model holds the potential to drive positive change while contributing to the broader objectives of sustainable development.

The Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HMPC) stands as a meaningful initiative under the broader umbrella of the Community and Extension Services Department (CESD), encapsulating the livelihood component of the Hayuma program. The HMPC represents a tangible example of CESD's commitment to spearheading sustainable and participatory community development endeavors for marginalized partner communities. In alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goal 8, the HMPC embodies the essence of creating opportunities for meaningful and dignified work. By empowering individuals through skill development and fostering entrepreneurship within disadvantaged communities like Brgy. Masili, the HMPC contributes to the overarching goal of facilitating economic growth, fostering employment opportunities, and promoting sustainable development for a more inclusive society.

The inception of HMPC can be traced back to AY 1999-2000 when the Makipamuhay or what is technically known as an immersion activity of Theology 4 and Sociology courses started. The activity has given the students of Letran–Calamba an opportunity to learn and understand the lives of the members of partner communities by residing with them for three days. Through this partnership activity, linkages with the partner communities were established and the students benefited from the experience. Hence, the then CESD head felt the ethical need to give something back to the partner communities in the form of sustainable projects and programs. The concern was addressed by the succeeding director of the Department in 2003. He requested the Center for Research and Development (now known as the Research and Development Department) to disseminate the need to conduct a study on the possibility of setting up livelihood projects for the partner communities.

In AY 2004-2005 the marketing students heeded the call and conducted the project feasibility study focused on putting up a printing and sewing business. The study was later repackaged by CESD and submitted to the One Body One Spirit (OBOS) Archdiocese of Seoul in South Korea for potential funding. In January 2006, the application for the grant was approved, marking a significant milestone. Following the approval, CESD invited key individuals to form an organization and manage the enterprise. It was during this process that the decision was made to establish Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative in January 2007. The cooperative started with only 20 members and has grown to nearly 50 members including several employees of Colegio de San Juan de Letran Calamba. The cooperative structure was chosen as it embodies the principles of collaboration, shared responsibility, and collective decision-making, all of which align with the goals of the HMPC (Ladislá, 2011).

The study of Zarate (2015) revealed that Hayuma members need to acquire managerial skills to better govern the operations of the cooperative. Through a thorough gap analysis, Zarate identified several key areas that require immediate improvement within the cooperative. Firstly, the group struggled with meeting delivery timelines, which affected the overall efficiency of their operations. Secondly, there was a lack of standardized production times, leading to inconsistencies in output. Zarate also noted the necessity for skill development within the sewing team to enhance their performance. Moreover, the report pointed out that sewers lacked awareness regarding the costs of materials, wastage, and overhead linked to their work, highlighting a need for better cost management practices. Additionally, the presence of rework in the production process was identified as a significant hindrance to productivity. Lastly, the absence of an effective inventory management system posed challenges in keeping track of resources and materials.

To enhance the cooperative's efficiency and success, it is imperative to address these critical issues promptly. By focusing on continuous improvement in these areas, HMPC can elevate its operations and work towards achieving its goals effectively. To address the gaps identified, the Master's in Business Administration (MBA) students collaborated with the Letran Graduate School Society and developed a Personal Empowerment Plan (PEP). This self-assessment tool aims to evaluate the potential and limitations of HMPC members, ultimately empowering them through capacity-building initiatives. Throughout AY 2016-2021, a series of impactful seminars, training sessions, and workshops were organized by the MBA/LGSS students for the benefit of HMPC members. These initiatives covered a wide range of essential topics including the Conscientization/Account Ability Seminar, an exploration of the Dynamics of Cooperatives and the Role of the Members, Business Management strategies, Quality Matters assessments, T-shirt Silk Screen Making techniques, as well as TESDA Training programs for Skills Assessment Review. Additional programs focused on Process and Quality Enhancement for Customer Satisfaction, Home-Based Production of Personal Protective Equipment like Isolation Gowns and Masks, Homemade Hand Soap Production, and the implementation of an E-commerce Platform.

The proposed research assessed the impact of the Personal Empowerment Plan (PEP) and training initiatives led by Master's in Business Administration (MBA) students and Letran Graduate School Society (LGSS) in enhancing the managerial and technical proficiencies of Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HMPC) members. This study is centered on evaluating the enduring impact of these programs on the cooperative's livelihood endeavors and the empowerment of its constituents.

Building upon Llenares and Deocaris' (2018) examination of livelihood programs in higher education and Research Gate's (2018) framework for assessing community extension initiatives, this study draws upon established methodologies to gauge the potential impact of PEP and training programs on HMPC. Furthermore, insights from Academia.edu's (2019) exploration of the Delphi Method application in evaluating community projects offer a promising avenue for assessing these initiatives' impact.

By bridging a gap in existing literature, this study offers a holistic evaluation of the enduring impact of PEP and training programs on HMPC's livelihood activities. While prior studies have underscored the short-term benefits of similar community outreach efforts, scant attention has been paid to their sustained influence on beneficiary empowerment and skill enhancement. Thus, this research fills a void by furnishing empirical evidence on the long-term impact of such programs within a small-scale livelihood setting.

The primary beneficiaries of this research are the HMPC members, poised to gain from heightened skills and empowerment fostered by the PEP and training programs. This study holds significance as it bolsters ongoing endeavors to fortify HMPC's capacity to tackle operational challenges. Moreover, it promises valuable insights into the impact of these initiatives, guiding future interventions aimed at refining cooperative operations. Additionally, this research contributes to the realm of interdisciplinary studies and community-based projects, showcasing the potential synergy between academic institutions and community entities in addressing global issues.

In synthesizing these scholarly works, this research not only enriches our understanding of community extension programs but also informs the design and execution of future studies aimed at enhancing cooperative sustainability and member empowerment.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study generally aimed to determine the impact of capacity-building initiatives on members of the Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HMPC). Specifically, this study aimed to:

- Determine the perception of HMPC members regarding the capacity-building initiatives provided by the Colegio.
- Measure the improvement in skill proficiencies of cooperative members.
- Examine changes in members' confidence, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial mindset after undergoing capacity-building training.
- Investigate changes in members' income status as a result of capacity-building initiatives.
- Formulate recommendations based on the capacity-building initiatives provided.

### Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this research (Figure 1) is anchored on the assessment of the enduring impact of the capacity-building initiatives led by Master's in Business Administration (MBA) students and Letran Graduate School (LGSS) on the technical proficiencies of Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HMPC) members. This study sought to provide a holistic evaluation of the long-term efficacy of these programs in enhancing cooperative livelihood activities and member empowerment.

The input centered on the capacity-building initiatives that came from the Personal Empowerment Plan (PEP) crafted for the HMPC members. This includes the resources, tools, and methodologies utilized in the design and implementation of the empowerment plan, such as capacity-building initiatives and mentorship support provided by LGSS members and MBA students to enhance the managerial and technical skills of HMPC members.

For the process, it involves the implementation of PEP through the training programs provided. This phase involves the delivery and execution of the empowerment plan and training initiatives by LGSS members and MBA students, including the dissemination of knowledge, hands-on learning experiences, and mentorship support provided to HMPC members. It also considers the level of participation and engagement of HMPC members in the PEP and training activities as crucial for the success and effectiveness of the programs. Factors influencing participation may include accessibility, relevance, and perceived benefits of the programs.

The outcome of these were enhanced entrepreneurial and technical proficiencies and sustainable livelihood activities. The primary outputs of the training programs are the improvement of HMPC members' managerial and technical skills, including areas such as financial management, marketing strategies, product development, and cooperative governance. As a result of participating in the PEP and training initiatives, HMPC members are expected to experience increased confidence, autonomy, and decision-making capabilities, leading to greater empowerment and agency in their livelihood endeavors.

The outcome of the PEP and training programs is the sustainability and growth of HMPC's livelihood activities. This includes increased productivity, profitability, and resilience in the face of challenges, ultimately contributing to the socio-economic development of HMPC and its members. By enhancing the managerial and technical proficiencies of HMPC members and fostering empowerment, the PEP and training programs aim to strengthen the overall capacity of the cooperative in effectively managing its operations, addressing challenges, and seizing opportunities for growth and development.

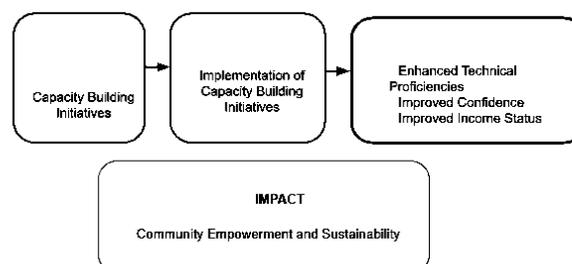


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The impact of this study is community empowerment and sustainability. The long-term impact of the PEP and training programs extends beyond HMPC to encompass broader community empowerment and sustainability. By building capacity, fostering empowerment, and promoting cooperative principles, these initiatives contribute to the socio-economic development and resilience of the community at large.

Through this conceptual framework, the research seeks to assess the enduring impact of the PEP and training initiatives on HMPC's livelihood activities and member empowerment, while also contributing to the broader discourse on community-based projects, cooperative sustainability, and the synergy between academic institutions and community entities in addressing global issues.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The mixed methodologies employed in this study were chosen to delve deep into the intricacies of individuals' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors within the context of the research subject. Through open-ended interviews and document analysis, these approaches captured the richness and nuances of participants' viewpoints, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the underlying motivations and meanings associated with the phenomena under investigation.

#### 3.2 Population and Sample

There were only four HMPC members who participated in the study. The four respondents of the study were interviewed to determine how the capacity-building initiatives helped them. All four participants were residents of Barangay Masili. They joined the HMPC in 2007 and were members until 2019 when the pandemic started.

Participant 1 (P1) is a 60-year-old, female, who is a widow with 4 children. She used to manage the operation of HMPC. Participant 2 (P2) is a 61-year-old, female, college undergraduate who is also a single parent with a child. She was a member of HMPC from 2007-2019. She was a seamstress and was in-charge of packaging completed orders in the HMPC. Participant 3 (P3) is a 50-year-old, female, college undergraduate who is married with two (2) children. She joined HMPC in 2007 and was a member until 2019. She was the cutter in the HMPC. Participant 4 (P4) is a 54-year-old, single, female, high school graduate. She worked as the sewer and cutter in the HMPC.

The study also encompassed interviews with a total of four (4) customers. This comprised two (2) previous customers and two (2) current customers, aimed at evaluating the extent to which members of HMPC were able to apply the skills acquired through capacity-building initiatives. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with the former director of CESD to acquire historical data on HMPC and to authenticate the information contained in the analyzed documents.

#### 3.2 Data Sources

The research study was conducted in Barangay Masili, situated in the City of Calamba, within the Province of Laguna, approximately 5-6 kilometers away from Letran - Calamba. Over the years, Barangay Masili has been a collaborative partner community of Colegio de San Juan de Letran-Calamba in various community extension initiatives from 2015 to 2020. Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HMPC) was established with the primary objective of empowering the residents of Barangay Masili to foster self-sustainability. Notably, a significant proportion of the cooperative's membership comprises locals who call Barangay Masili their home.

#### 3.3 Data Collection Technique

The study adopted qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, encompassing the gathering of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were garnered through key informant interviews (KIIs), while secondary data were acquired via document analysis. The secondary data comprised the project background reports from AY 2015-2020 and the TESDA Training records, providing a comprehensive insight into the research subject.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis Method

The data collected from the key informant interview and document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis to summarize the participants' responses. The findings from both the primary and secondary data analysis were triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the training programs on the HMPC (Table 1).

#### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical aspects of the study relate mainly to the confidentiality of information and privacy of participants. Following the data privacy act, the consent of the participants was secured first, and data confidentiality were considered and anticipated before conducting the study. Ethical considerations were considered when the questionnaire was created, avoided leading questions and conflicts of interest, and conducted interviews with the participants with integrity. Based on the results of the interview, the data analysis was carefully checked to ensure unbiased opinions on the research issue.

Table 1. Methodological Matrix

| Context   | Project Objectives   | Data Source  | Data Collection Technique     | Methods of Data Analysis |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| The Impact of an Academic Community Extension Program | 1. determine the perception of HMPC members regarding the capacity building initiatives provided by the Colegio; | Secondary Data: Summary of results of training evaluations from Community and Extension Service Department's records | Secondary Data Collection     | Quantitative Analysis    |
|   | 2. measure the improvement in technical proficiencies of cooperative members;                                    | Customers  | Key Informant Interview (KII) | Thematic Analysis        |
|   | 3. examine changes in member's confidence after undergoing capacity-building training;                           | HMPC members; CESD head  | Key Informant Interview (KII) | Thematic Analysis        |
|   | 4. investigate changes in members' income levels as a result of capacity building initiatives                    | HMPC members   | Key Informant Interview (KII) | Thematic Analysis        |
|   | 5. identify areas for improvement in the capacity building initiatives provided                                  | HMPC members   | Key Informant Interview (KII) | Thematic Analysis        |

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Perception of HMPC members towards the capacity building initiatives provided

Table 2. Perception of HMPC members towards the capacity building initiatives provided

| TITLE OF ACTIVITY  | DATE               | EVALUATION RESULTS | VEREAL INTERPRETATION                   | REMARKS     |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|---|-------------|
| Quality Matters: Assessment on Quality Output  | May 18, 2018       | 4.0                | Lubos na Sumasang Ayon (Strongly Agree) |             |
| Skills Assessment Review Program   | February 3, 2019   | 4.0                | Lubos na Sumasang Ayon (Strongly Agree) |             |
| Process and Quality Enhancement Towards Customer Satisfaction  | September 13, 2019 | 60 %               | Lubos na Sumasang Ayon (Strongly Agree) |             |
|  |                    | 40%                | Sumasang-Ayon (Agree)                   |             |
| Silk Screen Printing, A New Product Line   | February 8, 2020   | 4.0                | Lubos na Sumasang Ayon (Strongly Agree) |             |
| Home-Based Production of Face Masks: A Livelihood For Hayuma Community   | June 13, 2020      | -                  | -                                       | No data     |
| Home Based Production of Personal Protective Equipment Isolation Gowns   | November 28, 2020  | 4.0                | Lubos na Sumasang Ayon (Strongly Agree) |             |
| Homemade Hand Soap Production for Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative An Alternative Livelihood (Community Engagement Proposal) | April 16, 2021     | 4.0                | Lubos na Sumasang Ayon (Strongly Agree) |             |
| Home-Based Production and E-Commerce Of "A Pouch for a Cause (Nartel)": A Hayuma Cooperative Livelihood Project              | August 10, 2021    | 80%                | Highly Satisfied                        | Google form |
|  |                    | 20%                | Satisfied                               |             |

Table 2 Numerous capacity-building initiatives were successfully executed to enhance the skills of HMPC members. A comprehensive feedback analysis from the trainings highlighted that the majority of HMPC members strongly agreed (rated 4.0) on various aspects such as the clarity of training objectives, successful attainment of objectives, expertise of the speakers, training organization, appropriateness of the venue, time management, materials provided, and smoothness of the training flow conducted by Letran-Calamba's CESD and GS departments. However, only 60% of HMPC members expressed strong agreement (lubos na sumasang-ayon) with the Process and Quality Enhancement Towards Customer Satisfaction training. Whereas, 80% of HMPC members reported high satisfaction with the Home-Based Production and E-Commerce training focusing on "A Pouch for a Cause (Nartel)": A Hayuma Cooperative Livelihood Project. Regrettably, there was no available data for the training session centered on Home-Based Production of Face Masks: A Livelihood for Hayuma Community (Table 2). The members of HMPC were highly appreciative of the diverse capacity-building initiatives conducted, as these significantly contributed to their daily sustainability and well-being. Strengthening community capacity is vital for fostering community participation and ensuring the successful execution of community development initiatives (Atinga et al., 2019, Howard-Grabman et al., 2017, Laverack, 2014).

### 4.2 Improvement in technical proficiencies of cooperative members

Table 3. Codes and Theme regarding Technical Proficiency

| Codes  | Theme              | Interpretation                 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Acquisition of skills</li> <li>● Improvement of sewing skills</li> <li>● Expansion of own skills</li> </ul> | Skills Enhancement | Improved Technical Proficiency |

Table 3 shows that before the inception of HMPC majority of the members were seamstress from a factory that closed. It was their motivation to join the HMPC. Despite the trainings provided, feedback from customers were unsatisfactory. Remarks by previous customers before the Skill Assessment Review Program were:

*“Pang kurtina lang sila other than that di na” and “ Nagpagawa kami costumes para sa faculty follies parang di kami nasukatan may masikip may maluwag kaya pina repair pa rin namin sa iba.”*

Following the training and receiving the NCII Certificate, all participants successfully elevated their sewing skills which ensured the high quality of their products. HMPC members who are the participants of the study unanimously reported a notable enhancement in their technical proficiency, particularly in sewing, even though they had prior knowledge of the craft before

undergoing the trainings. This improvement was corroborated by both the positive outcomes they achieved in the NC II certification from TESDA issued on June 22, 2019, and their current customer stated as:

*“Ok naman ang tahi hanggang ngayon nagagamit pa naman ang mga uniforms na pinatahi naming.”*

Despite having prior knowledge in sewing, P1 emphasized the significant impact of the livelihood programs on further refining their skills and abilities. Participant 1's experience aligns with research on the positive impact of livelihood programs in fostering skill-sharing, knowledge exchange, and mutual support within communities (Sanyal & Dias, 2020; Singh et al., 2023).

On the other hand, P2 talked about the transformative journey from having no prior knowledge in sewing to acquiring significant skills and recognition through participation in the capacity-building initiatives. P2 also highlighted the initial lack of sewing knowledge despite working in a garment factory, focusing primarily on material inventory management. However, upon joining the cooperative and participating in various livelihood trainings, including TESDA training, she was able to acquire sewing skills and eventually obtain an NC II certificate. The statement underscores the profound impact of training and certification on enhancing the participant's knowledge and skills as a seamstress, as well as the sense of pride and accomplishment derived from passing the TESDA exam. The program's emphasis on TESDA certification aligns with research highlighting the importance of skills recognition and accreditation in enhancing employability and income generation (Pasadilla et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

Likewise, P3 also initially had no prior knowledge in sewing but expressed a strong desire to learn. She diligently studied various sewing skills, such as measurement and cutting, to acquire the necessary expertise. Through participation in livelihood training provided by the cooperative and representing the group in TESDA training, the participant not only expanded her own skills but also shared her learnings with fellow members, contributing to the collective success in obtaining NC II.

The main theme of Participant 4's statement centered on the enhancement of sewing skills and confidence through participation in cooperative training and obtaining TESDA certification. The participant highlighted her prior experience as a seamstress in a garment company, followed by further skill development through cooperative training. The training facilitated the passing of the TESDA examination, leading to the acquisition of an NC II certificate. The statement emphasizes the significant impact of certification on personal skill development and confidence in the quality of products. Thus, the theme incorporates skill enhancement, certification achievement, and increased confidence in product quality through participation in structured cooperative training.

Thus, the theme encompasses self-directed learning, skill acquisition, collective success, and confidence-building through participation in structured training programs. Participant suggestions regarding program continuation and expansion echo calls for long-term support and wider outreach in livelihood initiatives to ensure lasting impact (Rahman et al., 2020; UNIDO, 2022).

## Changes in member's after undergoing capacity-building trainings

### 4.3 Changes in personal growth

Table 4. Codes and Theme Emerged regarding Personal Growth of Members after Trainings

| Codes   | Theme                 | Interpretation                                      |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of knowledge to other members</li> <li>• Trainings boosted members confidence</li> </ul> | Transformative skills | Fostering community development and personal growth |

Table 4 expresses that capacity building nurtures a feeling of ownership and empowerment, enabling community partners to have more influence over their own future progress (University of Memphis, 2023). Strengthened confidence, skills, knowledge, and resources that increase from capacity building efforts on one project may enhance a community partner's ability to envision and take action on other projects. (University of Memphis, 2023). Earning the NC II certification after participating in a series of capacity-building programs substantially boosted the confidence level of HMPC members. P1 highlighted the successful impartation of sewing knowledge to individuals like the wives of maintenance and security guards at Letran-Calamba. While, P2 highlighted the acquisition of new skills, particularly in sewing and T-shirt silk screening, which were not only valuable to their current responsibilities in managing the cooperative's inventory but also expanded their skill set.

On the other hand, P3 underscored the profound impact of training on their personal development, particularly in building self-trust and confidence in their abilities. She highlighted their proactive approach to learning, indicating a willingness to ask questions and diligently practice sewing procedures to master the craft. Specifically, she stated that:

*“Marami akong natutunan sa programang pangkabuhayan na ibinahagi sa amin. Ang malaki ang naging impluwensiya sa aking sariling kaalaman o malaking impak sa akin ng karanasan ko sa pagsasanay sa pangkabuhayan. Natuto akong magtiwala sa aking sarili at kakayahan. Dito din ako natuto ng pagtabas, pananahi, at iba pang kaalaman sa pananahi. Nagtatanong ako kapag hindi ko alam at sinisikap to na matutunan at magkarron ng abilidad at kakayahan na gawin ito. Dahil dito, nadevelop ang kumpiyansa ko sa aking sarili at sa abilidad ko bilang mananahi.”*

Whereas, P4 stresses how the training significantly influenced their personality, fostering trust in themselves and their abilities as a seamstress. This theme underscores the transformative power of skill-building programs in enhancing individuals' self-belief and competence in their chosen craft. Participant's experiences resonate with studies demonstrating the link between skill development programs and increased self-confidence, self-efficacy, and personal empowerment (Chowdhury & Das, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2024).

#### 4.4 Changes in income levels

Table 5. Codes and Theme Emerged regarding Changes in Income Levels

| Codes   | Theme            | Interpretation  |
|---|------------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional source of income</li> <li>• Major source of income</li> <li>• Establishment of a</li> <li>• business</li> </ul> | Source of income | Improved financial status through sustainable income. |

Following the implementation of capacity-building initiatives, the members of HMPC have been able to leverage their enhanced competencies to generate income. P1 highlighted that by effectively disseminating knowledge of sewing to various individuals, including the spouses of maintenance and security personnel at partner school, they have been instrumental in improving the financial well-being of their families (Table 5). Participant 1's journey aligns with studies highlighting the role of livelihood programs in empowering individuals, particularly women, to improve their income and support their families after facing economic hardship or loss of a spouse (Ahmed et al., 2021; Islam et al., 2020). The program's focus on mothers aligns with research emphasizing the importance of supporting women's economic participation for broader community development (Mitra & Nagaraj, 2023). Participants' experiences reflect trends of factory closures and job losses in the garment industry, pushing individuals towards alternative income sources like cooperatives (Ray et al., 2022; World Bank, 2020).

Participant 3 highlighted how the training significantly contributed to their personal growth and self-confidence, enabling them to support their children's education.

P4 shared that the learnings she gained from the capacity-building initiatives not only opened opportunities for her but also enabled her to share her knowledge with family members, including teaching her siblings how to sew. Subsequently, the participants seized the opportunity to own a tailoring shop, where sewing became their primary source of income.

#### 4.5 Recommendations based on the capacity building initiatives provided

Table 6. Codes and themes emerged regarding recommendations based on the capacity building initiatives provided.

| Codes   | Theme                                  | Interpretation            |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willingness to participate in future cooperative initiatives</li> <li>• Expressing interest in potential future involvement</li> <li>• Advocacy for the continuation of livelihood training to aid a broader audience</li> <li>• Recommendation for the continuation of livelihood training and workshops</li> </ul> | Continuation of the livelihood program | Re-activation of the HMPC |

Table 6 shows that codes and theme emerged from the key informant interview. Results showed that the main theme of Participant 1's statement is the recommendation for the continuation of livelihood training and workshops facilitated by the students of Letran for the benefit of the community.

Participant 1's suggestion resonates with research on the multiplier effect of successful livelihood programs, where participants share their knowledge and skills, empowering others within the community (Sanyal & Dias, 2020).

Participant 2 suggested the advocacy for the continuation of livelihood training to aid a broader audience. Participant 2's emphasis on broader reach aligns with studies calling for inclusive and equitable access to livelihood opportunities, particularly for marginalized groups (Mitra & Nagaraj, 2023).

For Participant 3, she appreciated the opportunities provided by livelihood training and the desire for their continuation, along with expressing interest in potential future involvement, Participant 3's interest in further involvement reflects growing recognition of the value of participant engagement in program design and implementation (Chowdhury & Das, 2022). This fosters ownership and increases the likelihood of program sustainability. Further, her desire to share knowledge aligns with research on the importance of peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange in skill development programs (Nguyen et al., 2024). This creates a supportive learning environment and empowers participants to become trainers themselves.

The main theme of Participant 4's statement is the advocacy for the continuation of livelihood training and the expression of willingness to participate in future cooperative initiatives. This theme underlines the significance of ongoing support for livelihood initiatives and the willingness of participants to engage in collaborative efforts for mutual benefit.

All participants' recommendations align with research emphasizing the importance of sustaining and expanding livelihood programs to maximize their impact on communities (Awais et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2020). Studies highlighted the need for ongoing support and resources to ensure program longevity and reach a wider audience (UNIDO, 2022).

### Summary of Significant Findings

The training programs implemented by members of the Letran-Calamba Graduate School Society (LGSS) and CESD have demonstrably empowered Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative (HMPC) members and the wider community. Majority of the participants were highly satisfied with the capacity building initiatives given with the exception of the training about home-based production of face masks which does not have any record of evaluation.

The technical expertise of HMPC members who engaged in the training courses experienced a remarkable improvement. They progressed from having no prior knowledge of sewing to successfully establishing their own businesses as skilled sewers.

A surge in confidence, self-reliance, and entrepreneurial spirit, fostering a sense of personal growth. This newfound drive translated into valuable skill development, with participants acquiring expertise in sewing, management, and other areas. These skills not only led to improved job opportunities and income generation but also empowered them to share their knowledge with others, contributing significantly to the overall development and economic well-being of the community.

While the program has achieved notable success, opportunities for enhancement are evident. Participants have communicated a keen wish for the ongoing provision and extension of livelihood training and workshops to cater to a broader audience, thereby impacting more individuals positively. They also proposed expanding the program to encompass more community members. Moreover, some participants have expressed genuine enthusiasm for increased involvement, indicating their dedication and suitability as future trainers or mentors. These perspectives offer invaluable direction for program advancement, guaranteeing the enduring empowerment of individuals and the sustainable progress of the community.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The effectiveness of the training programs was evident in several ways. Participants gained relevant skills and knowledge, enabling them to confidently secure jobs, launch their own businesses, or enhance their existing work. The achievement of TESDA certification further boosted their confidence and opened doors to new opportunities. This success was not just individual; participants actively shared their learnings, fostering a collaborative learning environment and a spirit of community support.

All participants expressed a strong desire for the re-activation of the Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative. continuation and expansion of livelihood training and workshops to reach a wider audience and benefit more individuals. Broadening the program's reach to include additional community members was also suggested. Additionally, several participants expressed a genuine interest in further engagement, highlighting their commitment and potential as trainers or mentors in future initiatives. These insights offer valuable guidance for program development, ensuring the continued empowerment of individuals and the sustainable growth of the community.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings presented, here are some recommendations for further enhancing the impact of the training programs and sustaining the empowerment of the HMPC members and the broader community:

1. Conduct evaluation for all training components. Implement an evaluation process for all training initiatives. Applying a participant-centric approach to continuously engage with participants and stakeholders through feedback mechanisms is crucial. Incorporating their suggestions into program development and implementation fosters a sense of ownership and ensures the program remains relevant and responsive to community needs.
2. Implement continuous learning opportunities. Establish a system for ongoing skill development and capacity building to support the long-term growth of participants. This could include advanced training sessions, refresher courses, or networking events to keep participants engaged and motivated.
3. Foster peer learning and mentorship. Encourage participants who have excelled in the training programs to become mentors or trainers for newer members. Peer learning can enhance knowledge sharing and create a sustainable support system within the community.
4. Reactivate the Hayuma Multi-Purpose Cooperative due to the positive results of the training programs, as there is a clamor from the former members.

5. Expand community engagement. Broaden the reach of the program to involve more community members and address a wider range of needs. Consider partnerships with other local organizations or institutions to access additional resources and expertise for comprehensive community development.

By incorporating these recommendations, the training programs can continue to empower HMPC members and the community, leading to sustained economic growth, skill development, and community progress.

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