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Harboring Hope: A Comprehensive Assessment of NavoBangka-Buhayan's Effectiveness for Fisherfolk

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Navotas, recognized as "The Fishing Capital of the Philippines," heavily relies on its fishing industry, engaging over 90% of its residents in fishing related occupations (Resourcefulness Innovation Lab, 2020). Despite the sector's cultural and economic importance, many fisherfolks lack access to boats and necessary equipment, affecting their livelihoods. In response, the City enacted Ordinance No. 2018-20, titled "An Ordinance Approving the Fisherfolk Livelihood Assistance NavoBangka-Buhayan Program Entitled 'Bangka Mo, Gawa Mo.'" This initiative is integral to fortifying the fishing industry and enhancing fisherfolk's well-being. The policy brief extensively analyzes the ordinance, utilizing the Easy Evaluation Framework. The program aims to uplift fisherfolk's livelihoods through fiberglass boats, fishing equipment, and financial and technical seminars. However, challenges still persist. While the program positively impacted fishing duration and earnings, the findings underscore the necessity for proactive measures from the local government to ensure sustained benefits. Addressing challenges and refining the program's implementation in response to the analysis will contribute to its long-term success, supporting Navotas' vital fishing industry and improving fisherfolk lives. Beneficiaries recommend providing complete materials for the NavoBangka-Buhayan program, changing the ordinance to have one beneficiary per boat, and addressing broader issues like climate change impacts. Proponents suggest strengthening the City Agriculture Office's evaluation mechanism. Safety measures for fishermen during boat creation are also crucial. In conclusion, the NavoBangka-Buhayan Program's evaluation highlights positive impacts on fishing duration and earnings alongside notable implementation challenges. Recommended improvements emphasize addressing broader issues, refining the evaluation mechanism, and ensuring safety and comprehensive support for fishermen, which are essential for sustained success and the well-being of Navotas' fisherfolk.

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BACKGROUND OF THE POLICY

The City Ordinance No. 2018-20: An Ordinance Approving the Fisherfolk Livelihood Assistance NavoBangka-Buhayan Program Entitled “Bangka Mo, Gawa Mo” is an ordinance that puts the program on the priority list of the Navotas City government’s financial budget allocation. It was initiated by its city mayor, John Rey Tiangco, to strengthen the fisherfolk livelihood assistance of the Navoteño. It was cascaded down to the Sangguniang Panglungsod, explicitly sponsored by the Committee on Fisheries, to process the legislation. To elucidate, the program is a joint initiative of the city government of Navotas and the Department of Agriculture - Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), which aims to help the Navoteño fisherfolks achieve sustainable livelihood (Paunan, 2023). The NavoBangka-Buhayan program differs from the other “Bangka Mo, Gawa Mo” programs as the local government has provided unique qualifications and provisions to Navotas. Beneficiaries of the program are the indigent Navoteño fisherfolks who will meet the qualification requirements deemed by the local government. Qualifications for applying are as follows:



These qualifications provide Navoteño fisherfolks the needed screening for the program to effectively support the indigent fisherfolks of Navotas. This also prevents any forms of poor implementation of the NavoBangka-Buhayan. An estimated 330 indigent Navoteño fisherfolks are the program's beneficiaries (Paunan, 2023), and ongoing applications are still in the process, according to the Head of the Navotas City Agriculture Office.

CONTEXT AND ORIGINS OF THE PROBLEM

Due to the heavy dependence of Navoteños on fishing as their primary source of income, Navotas has gained recognition as the nation's leading hub for fishing activities. With a population of around 250,000 residents, approximately 70% derive their livelihood from various fishing-related endeavors, contributing significantly to 60% of the Philippines' total fish production (Lumaque, 2015). Renowned for overseeing the country's second-largest fish port, the Navotas Fish Port Complex, and its products like fish sauce (Patis) and shrimp paste (Bagoong), the city has

solidified its position in the fishing industry.

Despite their substantial contributions to the nation's fish supply, a sizable portion—38%, roughly 15,904 out of 41,717 households—resides within the urban poor bracket. These households sustain an average yearly income of Php 60,000.00 for a family size of 4.65. The 2007 Population Census also indicates a 15% poverty rate in Navotas. Additionally, the National Competitiveness Council revealed that the city was the weakest and poorest performer in Metro Manila (Badilla, 2018). According to the stakeholders during the data gathering period, most of the fishermen in the city do not have their boats nor the capabilities to procure one, forcing them to make agreements with official boat owners. These circumstances prove to be a disadvantage, with less earnings and less time to fish in the sea as they continuously adjust to the routines of the ones possessing the boat.

With this, the city acknowledged the need to initiate actions toward improving the overall well-being of its fisherfolks. In line with their dedication to supporting the primary income source of the community, they developed the NavoBangka-Buhayan Program aimed at ensuring the livelihood security of fishermen, particularly during the mentioned challenging economic period.

CRITIQUE OF THE POLICY

Inaccessibility of the Full Document Online

The online inability to access the complete document of City Ordinance No. 2018-20, including its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), poses a substantial challenge. While the Navotas Local Government Unit does have a Facebook page, what's posted regarding the

ordinance is merely about the qualification requirements, thus reflecting a limited scope of information dissemination. Many government agencies in the Philippines have embraced online accessibility for public documents, fostering transparency and efficiency. Recommending the incorporation of such practices by Navotas City would benefit researchers and empower the community with readily available information.

Limited Researchability of Stakeholders

The challenge of obtaining complete and accessible information about stakeholders without a physical visit to the city hall is also evident. Knowing who to contact for concerns or inquiries about the program is essential for its smooth implementation. However, relying solely on in-person visits creates a barrier for citizens who may not have the means or opportunity to go to city hall personally.

Problematic Qualifications for Program Eligibility

The qualification criteria outlined for program eligibility present several challenges. In particular, the requirement of having three or more dependents appears illogical, as the number of dependents may not accurately reflect the level of poverty or their needs. Proposing a more inclusive approach that considers the economic status of the dependents rather than their number could enhance the program's fairness. Additionally, the condition of finding a qualified partner as a co-owner of the boat raises questions about practicality and feasibility. A one-to-one ratio of boats to fishermen may be more in line with the program's goal of livelihood assistance. This allocation reduces dependencies, empowering beneficiaries to independently manage and utilize the provided resources for economic well-being. Lastly, the financial burdens associated with

community records and drug tests may inadvertently exclude those in need.

POLICY EVALUATION

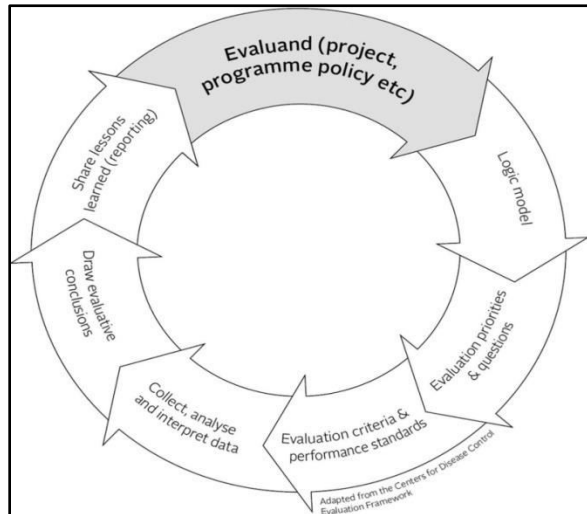


Figure 1. Easy Evaluation Framework

The Easy Evaluation Framework combines several established approaches where each phase consists of a participatory dimension, which includes the engagement of key stakeholders and beneficiaries. This framework was chosen because it assesses the program based on its intended goals, making it possible for the stakeholders to determine which aspect is successful and which aspect needs improvement. Hence, this evaluation will be divided into six parts.

The first part contains the Logic Model, which depicts the causal mechanisms by which the program is anticipated to effect change and yield desirable results. As seen in Figure 2, several aspects must be determined: (1) Purpose, (2) Context, (3) Inputs, (4) Activities, (5) Outputs, (6) Outcomes, and (7) Impacts. The main intention behind the program's creation will be discussed under purpose. Meanwhile, the situation before the program's passage will be described under context. Next, Input aims to determine the materials- both

tangible and intangible- that were used for the program. This is followed by activities that present the actions done with the raw materials included in the Input part. Combining these yields the output part, as combining the resources with appropriate actions is the outcome. The existence of the output means there is an outcome, whether positive or negative. Since the logic model is primarily based on the statements of stakeholders, the effect will be considered as expected effects to differentiate the answers given by the stakeholders and the beneficiaries in the other parts of the Easy Evaluation framework. Impacts, the last part of the Logic Model, are the intended impacts after achieving the outcome.

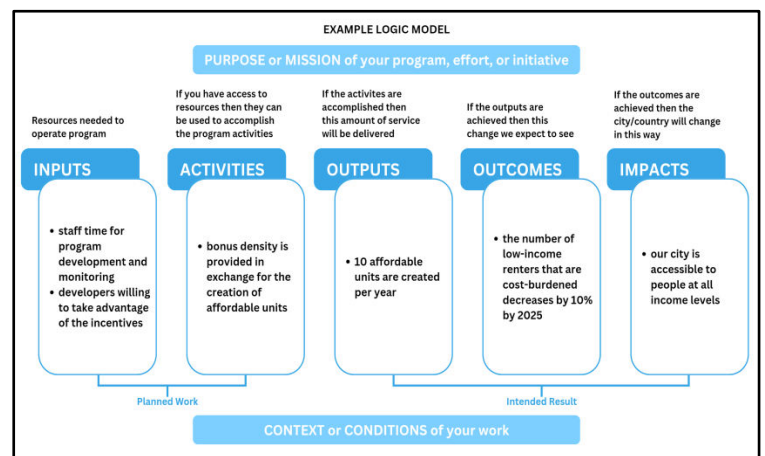


Figure 2. Logic Model Framework

Moving on to the second part of the Easy Evaluation Framework, the Evaluation Priorities and Questions focus on determining how the stakeholders evaluate the program. Moreover, the result of the program based on their evaluation will be determined. The third part, Evaluation Criteria and Performance Standard aims to determine precisely the criteria that can determine the program's success. The criteria that will be stated in the third part will be the criteria assessed in the fourth part, which is entitled Collection, Analyze, and Interpret Data. This will be done by

creating instruments to determine whether the criteria are theoretically present and practical, which will be proven by the beneficiaries. The fifth part will discuss the key points to conclude all data gathered from the stakeholders to the beneficiaries. The last part, Share lessons learned, shall be considered the overall report.

a. Logic Model

Purpose

The NavoBangka-Buhayan program is designed to empower the city's fisherfolk who need help to acquire their own fishing boats. Moreover, fishermen with significantly damaged boats can also acquire new ones. Both types of possible beneficiaries must have a family depending on them as the program explicitly wants to help the most in need. Besides the allocation of free boats, the program's objective is to equip the beneficiaries with the necessary knowledge to enhance their livelihoods through training on utilizing fiberglass in products and financial literacy seminars.

Context

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' program "Bangka Mo, Gawa Mo" existed even before the ordinance of Navotas. However, the government is not a direct beneficiary of these boats. Navotas relied on support from BFAR's regional office in Cavite. However, it became evident that the aid extended to Navotas fishermen was insufficient, with reports indicating the provision of materials only enough for constructing 2 to 3 small fishing boats at a time. Due to dissatisfaction with this limited support, the mayor and councilors initiated the NavoBangka program ordinance.

The NavoBangka-Buhayan Program integrates diverse inputs, activities, outputs, and effects to uplift the socio-economic well-being of beneficiaries. Inputs can be

categorized into **Financial**, **Administrative**, and **Other Resources**.

Regarding financial resources, the program started with an **initial budget** of 2 million pesos in 2018. This financial resource is allocated to administrative and logistic resources, serving as the cornerstone for the program's operational activities. The budget is used to procure materials needed to build the boats and recompense the staff involved. The steady flow and allocation of financial resources ensure the program's sustainability.

Moving to administrative resources, **City Agriculture** takes center stage as the primary implementer. The activities, encompassing verification of fisherfolk applications and on-site evaluations, underscore the dedication to thorough program oversight. The process ensures that the fisherfolk accepted and added to the list are the most deserving of benefiting from the program. This is instrumental to the program's success as it increases the likelihood of creating a positive impact on the lives of the beneficiaries. Additionally, City Agriculture is responsible for closely monitoring and evaluating the program's overall effectiveness. The reports about the interviews conducted during the process allow the implementing stakeholders to identify and address the needs and issues of the beneficiaries. Similarly, the **engagements of BFAR** impart technical expertise. Through technical training sessions and boat-making workshops, beneficiaries acquire essential skills for their livelihood activities. Due to the transferability of these skills, the opportunity to acquire them allows the fisherfolk to expand their means of livelihood beyond fishing. The **Committee on Fisheries** is a key stakeholder in planning as it ensures financial prudence by spearheading the budget appropriation

process. Updating the budget allocation for the program allows them to account for any shift in financial responsibilities among implementing stakeholders. Meanwhile, acting as a liaison between stakeholders and beneficiaries, **FARMC** plays a crucial role in program planning by facilitating consultations for each fisherman's boat size, shape preferences, and other unique needs. FARMC ensures the boats the beneficiaries receive suit their needs and preferences. Considering comfort encourages a productive environment for the fisherfolk. The **Hanapbuhay Center** contributes significantly to the beneficiaries' financial literacy. By creating tailored financial learning materials and holding financial literacy seminars, the center empowers participants with essential knowledge, fostering a sense of financial independence. Financially literate beneficiaries ensure that the resources they receive are not wasted and will take an opportunity for financial growth when it arises.

Finally, other inputs include **raw materials and human resources** to facilitate the construction of fiberglass boats, an essential activity central to the NavoBangka-Buhayan Program. Raw materials, including fiberglass, are locally provided by BFAR and LGU, ensuring a readily available supply for the boat construction process. On human resources, the responsibility for the construction is delegated to the beneficiaries. Modernized fishing boats are durable and last longer than conventional wooden boats; as such, an increase in mobilized fishing units in Navotas is expected at any given time since its implementation, as downtime for the boats becomes less persistent. The **roles and responsibilities between parties** in the program are defined through the creation and meetings surrounding the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Acknowledging its stipulations, signing,

and notarizing the agreement legally obliged both parties to be accountable for keeping their sides of the agreement. Another critical input is the information and the dissemination of informative materials, which are critical activities in fostering transparency and community participation. By physically and online disseminating details or information about the program, stakeholders promote active engagement and encourage other fisherfolks to apply.

With these efforts in place, the NavoBangka-Buhayan Program would generate a spectrum of overall impacts, spanning short to long term. Beyond immediate benefits, the program envisions elevating the overall quality of life for the Navotas fisherfolk by providing resources and skills training. Moreover, an invigorated fishing industry is also anticipated, driven by the increased mobilization of fishing units. The long-term vision of modernizing the Navotas fishing industry, specifically transitioning from traditional wooden boats to fiberglass, underscores the program's strategic foresight. This shift is not only a material change, it signifies a commitment to embracing contemporary approaches for enhanced efficiency, safety, and competitiveness, aligning to achieve "world-class" standards

b. Evaluation Priorities & Questions

The stakeholders clarified that they do not have a designated evaluative framework. However, they monitor the beneficiaries by visiting the coastal areas. During these visits, the representatives ask questions about the state of the boats. Moreover, the improvement of the livelihood of the beneficiaries is also reviewed. Nonetheless, the head of City Agriculture, the principal agency involved in implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, is aware that

the monitoring and evaluation of the program are not thoroughly done as the visits are not regular and not everyone is being visited. This lacking aspect is due to constraints in the workforce. Despite the lack of information, all stakeholders said yes when asked if the program was successful.

c. Evaluation Criteria & Performance Standards

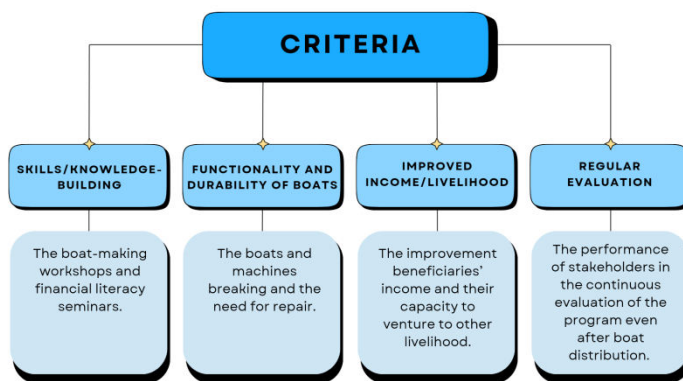


Figure 3. The Criteria Given by Stakeholders

The stakeholders gave four criteria to gauge the program's success. The criteria and their definition are displayed in Figure 4. These criteria collectively serve as benchmarks for evaluating the program's success in fulfilling its objectives.

The criteria presented above are what the stakeholders have elucidated as the key points of success for the NavoBangka-Buhayan Program during their separate FGD. These criteria were then utilized as the basis for the discussion questions for the beneficiaries' FGD. The first criterion provides that the beneficiaries' training of "Bangka Mo, Gawa Mo" yields substantial learning on how to furnish a fiberglass boat as well as the basic methods of repair. In addition, aside from the basic training of the boat-making process, no other training/seminars were conducted, and

other uses of the fiberglass material for other products aside from the boat itself were not included in the training. Withal, the fishermen may know how to repair their boats, but their knowledge of fiberglass is insufficient for producing other materials. Moreover, only the first batch of beneficiaries had financial seminars, elucidating that the program failed to be consistent with its original mandate.

As for the second criterion, beneficiaries asserted that the fiberglass boats can indeed last for up to 20 years or more. They added that it will mainly depend on the usage of the boat owner, particularly on the frequency of repairs. Over the years that the NavoBangka was given to the beneficiaries, most of the repairs were minor, such as repainting and regular maintenance of the motor machine. The beneficiaries also added that they had spent an estimated amount of PHP10,000 for the complete fishing equipment before they could use the NavoBangka because the boats provided by the Navotas government do not have fishing equipment and other vital parts of the boat, such as the 'katig.' This entails that while the actual boat is indeed durable, the other parts that were not given have no assurance that it will last as long as the fiberglass boats.

Regarding the third criterion, the fishermen have experienced an overall income increase and gained a sustainable livelihood as the program progressed. Due to changes in ownership, they can now fish much more often and bring home a larger share of their earnings to their families, which then provide substantial support in their respective families' education and assistance in additional sources of income. However, there are persisting hindrances, such as the ongoing rehabilitation program in Manila Bay, which causes a decrease in their fishing area, a decrease in the quantity

of fish to bring home, and an increase in the hours spent at sea. Moreover, they are constantly at risk of getting penalties for fishing in areas outside Navotas' reach. While the beneficiaries may have a better chance of building a better life, the problem now is beyond boat ownership. This emphasizes that having their boat is insufficient to ensure high income, as external factors must be considered.

The fourth criterion reveals no regular evaluation from the local government regarding the program's overall progress. In five years, half of the respondents only experienced around two or three unexpected visits from officials. Worse, the other half denies even experiencing visitation. During these surprise drop-ins, the officials frequently inquire about the boats' performance, usage, fishermen's earnings, or the quantity of fish caught. Additionally, they ensure that the provided boats are being actively used by the fishermen and not sold to others. The interviewed beneficiary is randomly selected on a random day and is rarely conducted, indicating the lack of an evaluative system. This poses a problem as they fail to interview every beneficiary at least once.

e. Draw Evaluative Conclusions

Based on all the information gathered from the stakeholders and beneficiaries of the NavoBangka-Buhayan Program, several key points to consider have been observed, which aids in evaluating the whole policy/program. For a systematic process, the aforementioned criteria will be utilized as points of comparison.

Skills/Knowledge-Building

Public announcements on the applications for the NavoBangka have been placed and made available digitally through Facebook and posted physically in barangay halls.

While maintaining a digital platform is commendable, it is ineffective due to the low-technology literacy among beneficiaries, affecting the transparency and communication aspects of the program as well. Consistent with the statements of stakeholders and beneficiaries, the training provided the beneficiaries with basic knowledge regarding producing fiberglass boats. However, discrepancies occurred on the part of the absence of financial seminars in the program, with non-confirmation of beneficiaries to the statements of stakeholders. Additionally, the lack of safety gear during the boat-making process raises serious concerns about the well-being of the fishermen.

Functionality and Durability of Boats

In congruence with the stakeholders' statement, the beneficiaries have asserted that the longevity of the boats lasts up to 20 years or more, depending on their maintenance. Positive feedback has been observed on the fiberglass boats' functionality, such as the fiberglass material's effectiveness in sustaining its durability during rough collisions. However, concerns have been raised regarding the incompleteness of the NavoBangka. Without essential fishing materials and additional expenses to complete the boat, the program may burden the beneficiaries in acquiring the fiberglass boats rather than provide the expected assistance.

Improved Livelihood and Income

One of the program's primary goals is to help the city economy by providing fisherfolks with more livelihood opportunities. This progress can be seen through the increase in the overall fishing duration and share of earnings of beneficiaries, which largely supported the education and needs of their respective families. However, although not directly

under the program's jurisdiction, the impact of reclamation projects on fishermen's livelihoods, such as the dismantling of fishing structures and mussel farms, coupled with reduced catches and income, highlights the vulnerability of the NavoBangka-Buhayan Program to external environmental and economic factors.

Regular Evaluation

Similar to the stakeholders' assertions, a structured program evaluation and monitoring framework is lacking. In 5 years, fishermen only experienced occasional and infrequent visits. The scarcity of personnel diminishes the government's capacity to ensure the proper program implementation. Insufficient monitoring can lead to misuse of resources, such as the unauthorized selling of NavoBangka, hampering the intended benefits for the fishermen.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The recommendations to improve this ordinance will come from the beneficiaries and the proponents of this policy brief. For the beneficiaries first, the beneficiaries noted that the only materials given to them were the actual boat and the machine. While this is helpful, these materials alone can only be utilized with Katig and Paltik. The price of these materials is 10,000 pesos or above, forcing the fishermen to borrow money just for them to be able to utilize the free boat and machine given to them. It is recommended that the program also provide the other needed materials. Through this, the fishermen can immediately use the item, and they do not have to borrow money just to buy the lacking materials.

Second, the beneficiaries suggest changing the ordinance's provisions by changing the required number of beneficiaries per boat. This is because when it comes to expenses,

the other beneficiaries may opt to become a freeloader instead of sharing an equal amount of money when spending on materials needed for repair. Worse, the freeloader may demand equal income despite not giving equal contributions. This often leads to tension between the partners. Moreover, even if the partnership has no issue, it is still economically beneficial if only one owner exists.

Third, beneficiaries appreciate the program's impact on their livelihoods but highlight two significant issues affecting them. Climate change, especially recurring typhoons, damages materials and reduces coastal products. To address this measures to mitigate typhoon impacts or financial aid for affected fishermen are recommended. Additionally, the Manila Bay reclamation project forces beneficiaries to travel farther for fishing grounds, necessitating policy discussions to consider the voices of stakeholders and fishermen. Addressing these challenges and providing free boats to enhance the beneficiaries' livelihoods is essential.

Proponents recommend strengthening the City Agriculture Office's evaluation mechanism as it lacks a framework, regular evaluations, data gathering instruments, and sufficient manpower for monitoring. The City Agriculture should research and implement an appropriate program evaluation framework, creating materials like surveys for regular data collection from beneficiaries. Establishing a consistent monitoring date is crucial for reliable assessments. Allocating a larger budget to hire more staff is necessary, considering the agency's existing challenges in monitoring multiple programs. Proponents also emphasize the need to ensure fishermen's safety during NavoBangka creation, addressing reported instances of inadequate safety gear in hazardous conditions.

NOTICE:

The views expressed in this paper do not represent the official views of the authors' institutional affiliation. The findings and insights in this study are offered as means and resource to be considered by the respective stakeholders. The researchers are solely responsible for the errors.

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