

# INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION THROUGH PUBLIC SPACE AND POLICY INTERVENTION: A CASE STUDY ON THE DAP- AYAN SYSTEM OF PINILI, ILOCOS NORTE, PHILIPPINES

Floper Gershwin E. Manuel<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Instructor, Baguio Christian Mission International College, Baguio City, Philippines  
*flop.gershwin@gmail.com*

## ABSTRACT

In the Philippines, particularly in some rural areas, a particular town is composed of various *barangays* and these are politically and geographically subdivided into various *puroks*. Each *purok* has their *purok* centers or *dap-ayan* which is a simple structure built in strategic place within the *sitio*. Each *dap-ayan* is usually headed by one or two barangay officials who are in-charge of the particular *purok*. In this regard, the members of the *purok* use their own resources in building, decorating and maintaining the beauty of their own *dap-ayan*. This research aimed at looking at the efficiency of the *dap-ayan* in the development process of a community. It is hoped to further analyze the use of the *dap-ayan* as a public space strengthened by a policy and how this has affected the community particularly in issues of community participation. The findings of the study showed that the common activities done in the *dap-ayan* include *barangay* meetings, *purok* meetings, dispute settlements and "The Clean and Green Program". Some of the informants perceived that consultations in the *dap-ayan* are more effective since people get to have the chance to really discuss the different issues that they encounter within their *purok*. It is also notable that the *dap-ayan* has been serving as a mini "Hall of Justice" where minor issues like family feuds and small arguments are already settled in the *dap-ayan*. The "Clean and Green Program" is an annual competition of the municipality and the institutionalization of the *dap-ayan* has even made a tougher competition on the clean and green project. People's group initiative on making their own *dap-ayan* beautiful has become a manifestation that people's participation was greatly encouraged. It is then opined that due to the institutionalization and activities in the *dap-ayan*, people's participation in community development has been greatly encouraged. This also implies that public spaces within the community can be maximized to improve people's participation.

**Keywords** : community participation, policy, public space, self-governance

## INTRODUCTION

United Nations defines community development as a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of these communities into the life of a nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (Kishindo, 2000). Basing from its definition, community development as a field of practice requires great participation from the community members and a good relationship with the people who are in authority.

In the Philippines, the system of governance is arranged from national, regional, municipal, barangay, and, in some areas, sitio or purok. This study looked at the town of

Pinili particularly on the interplay between local governance and public space in this town that has contributed to an enhanced participation among community members.

A particular town, like Pinili, is composed of various barangays and each barangay is politically and geographically subdivided into various puroks. Each purok has its own purok centers or dap-ayan which is a simple structure built in strategic place within the purok. Each dap-ayan is usually headed by one barangay councilor (kagawad) who is in-charge of the particular purok. In this regard, the members of the purok use their own resources in building, decorating and maintaining the beauty of their own dap-ayan. Most dap-ayans are structures that are made of bamboos and resemble the structure of a nipa hut.

This dap-ayan system formed part of the cultural practices by various towns in Ilocos Norte; however, as political structures became more formal, the use of dap-ayan has been reduced. In the past, some people have been considering the dap-ayan as chatting (*pagtutungtungan*) or drinking (*paggi-inuman*) place and other uses were not noticed. As such, the Pinili Local Government Unit passed Resolution Number 070-9598 in 1995 institutionalizing dap-ayans as permanent purok centers for development and progress. In other words, the resolution declared the dap-ayans as formal structures. This was done in order to increase community participation since people are considered to have been living their own lives now, which means that they do not have much time to participate in the government or community activities (DILG, 2001). Only the town of Pinili has made a resolution which institutionalized the dap-ayan aimed at bringing closer relationship among community members leading to increased community participation.

This paper looks at the interplay between public space and policy intervention in community development. Sociologically, it has been known that public spaces serve as one of the major contributors to the increased participation among various members of the society. Grodach (2010), in his study about public spaces, said that “an analysis of the public space characteristics is useful because it encourages consideration of sometimes overlooked issues, particularly the effect of the physical environment on outcomes related to community development.”



**Plate I. Photo of a dap-ayan in Barangay Sto. Tomas, Pinili, Ilocos Norte (February 2011)**

The main goal of this research was to look at the role of the dap-ayan system in the development of a community particularly in the town of Pinili in Ilocos Norte. This banked on the speculations that the dap-ayan, through the different activities done in this structure, draws the community closer to each other. Concomitant with this, this research had the following specific objectives:

1. To characterize the different social activities undertaken in the dap-ayan;
2. To identify laws and policies enacted for the operation of the dap-ayan;
3. To know the role of the dap-ayan in increasing community participation in the town of Pinili;
4. To identify problems encountered by the purok in the operation of the dap-ayan

The data used were taken from the interviews from the purok officials from the different barangays of Pinili, Ilocos Norte. They were the ones chosen for the interviews since they

are more knowledgeable in managing their own dap-ayans. Moreover, the Municipal Planning and Development Officer in the municipality was also interviewed regarding the institutionalization and over-all implementation of this dap-ayan as a municipal ordinance. Some literatures regarding the dap-ayan were also used particularly from the Department of Interior and Local Government.

## CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DAP-AYAN

### DESIGN AND LOCATION

*“Mushroom-shaped ti dadduma, adda met ti daytay, kanya-kanyang design ti dap-ayan.”* (Most are mushroom-shaped, but others have their own designs as well.)

Originally, according to some residents, the shape of the dap-ayan is mushroom-shaped and it uses *pan-aw* or *anahaw* leaves as its roof. The entire structure can be compared to a nipa hut. The chairs are made of bamboo and it is usually hexagonal in shape. Moreover, originally, there were no fixed dimensions of the structure and people build the dap-ayan depending on the available area (See Plate I).

However, after the institutionalization of the dap-ayan, people have become more innovative with the design and structure of the dap-ayan. Some dap-ayans are now also using other materials, such as wood or concrete, in the construction of dap-ayan, including its chairs.

Aside from the changes in the materials used and structure, purok members have also included various features of the dap-ayan such as cabinets, public restrooms (Plate II), and a garden. Moreover, a fence is also built around the dap-ayan to prevent some animals from destroying the plants that were planted within the dap-ayan. This beautification and variations in its design has been influenced by the annual competition that the municipality is conducting in relation to the best dap-ayan in the entire town. Aside from this, after the institutionalization of the dap-ayan, it was agreed that the dap-ayan should now have an area of at least 5 square meters including the fence. Moreover, according to some informants, in some cases, they also need to submit to the municipal local government unit the plan of the dap-ayan that is needed to be constructed for the first time.

The location of the dap-ayan is dependent on two factors. First, it is highly dependent on the location of the available lot or space. Secondly, the dap-ayan, nevertheless, should also be situated in a strategic location which is near the houses of the purok members or at least majority of the purok members are in proximity to the dap-ayan. In most cases, the dap-ayan should also be seen by the majority of the purok members for easier management and to encourage more purok members to stay in the dap-ayan, which would later on, encourage more participation among members of the purok.

### FUND SOURCE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF DAP-AYAN

The construction of the dap-ayan and the sources of the materials used are all based on the initiative of the purok members. Most materials are readily available in the area.

All of the informants mentioned that most of the needed materials in the construction of the dap-ayan are from the community members. The quantity of the bamboo they will bring, for instance, also depends on each member. On the other hand, some community members can also be generous enough to donate other materials that are needed to be bought such as nails and paints. Moreover, the plants that are needed in the beautification of the dap-ayan are also donated or brought by the purok members. The plants, on the other hand, are the responsibility of the women.

Purok Sais in Barangay Buanga has a revolving fund which also serves as their source of funds for the renovation of their dap-ayan. The purok members will still bring some of the materials needed, but those which will require buying are handled by the purok. In this

case, the barangay kagawad for this purok is not “obliged” to shell out some money on their pocket. However, this is only one case. In most cases, the barangay kagawads also shell out some amount from their own pockets in order to provide the dap-ayan with the other materials needed for the construction. Some things that are included in their expenses are the *merienda* of the purok members who are working for the construction of dap-ayan.



**Plate II. Photo of the purok members renovating their dap-ayan and building other facilities around the dap-ayan. (January 2011)**

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

Public space has been considered as an open space which means that this place is publicly owned and any member of the community can go there (Tonnelat, 2008). Moreover, public space is also regarded as having various significant roles in the cultural, social and political functions for the community (Orum and Neal, 2010). The dap-ayan can, thus, be considered as a public space since it qualifies the two aforementioned definitions.

The dap-ayan already exists in some barangays in the town of Pinili even before its institutionalization in 1995. However, the problem was that not all barangays have dap-ayans and the activities in the dap-ayan were not properly identified; therefore, the dap-ayan was only considered as a resting place (*paginanaan*), a gambling area, and an area for settling inter-family disputes (*pagsasaritaan*). The local government officials were able to see how the dap-ayan can be maximized, especially on the implementation of various projects, they have institutionalized it in 1995. After the institutionalization, the uses of the dap-ayan have been set and it turned out to be a more functional space within the purok.

Consultations and meetings. According to some informants, most barangays conduct their general assembly at least twice a year. For some barangays, they conduct it quarterly; however, for others, it is done at least one or two times a year only. On the other hand, consultations and meetings within the purok are conducted on a more regular basis. This is usually scheduled on Sundays as it is deemed the most convenient time for most members. Some barangays formally conduct their purok meetings at least once a month. On the other hand, some have their meetings more often on an irregular basis. For instance, some community members take a nap in the dap-ayan after lunch or before dinner. In this case, they already discuss about some issues that are needed to be discussed within the purok. With these meetings, immediate needs are discussed.

Inter-family dispute settlements. One of the main functions of the Dap-ayan is in solving various issues within the purok especially inter-family disputes issues. The types of cases solved here include simple family feuds, quarrels and other simple issues. Other more serious cases are discussed at the barangay level where they will now decide which should be filed at the higher courts. In most of the respondents, there have not been any issues solved in the dap-ayan as they consider their purok as relatively peaceful.

The barangay kagawad in-charge of the purok is usually the mediator. In some cases, he is assisted by the members of the lupon (barangay peacemakers) who are members of the purok. At the same time, the presence of barangay captain in the dispute settlement is not really needed in most cases, unless requested by any of the parties involved.

As stated in the RA 7160, The Revised Local Government Code of the Philippines, the indigenous forms of dispute settlement or resolution shall be honored. However, the dap-ayan has created a counterpart of the Lupong Tagapamayapa stated in the Local Government Code of 1991, which they have called as Lupong Tagapagkasundo, which is, of course, headed by the barangay kagawad (barangay councilor). Contrastingly, there were really no trainings given to the barangay kagawads regarding the proper way of handling various disputes and they simply believe that any person can be a mediator in any dispute settlement issues. In the past, the elderly used to be the mediators for a particular dispute especially if it is simple inter-family disputes. However, the kagawad now plays a great role in the mediation or dispute settlement process.

*“ SEC. 384. Role of the Barangay. - As the basic political unit, the barangay serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programs, projects, and activities in the community, and as a forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, crystallized and considered, and where disputes may be amicably settled.*

*SEC. 399. Lupong Tagapamayapa. - (a) There is hereby created in each barangay a lupong tagapamayapa, hereinafter referred to as the lupon, composed of the punong barangay as chairman and ten (10) to twenty (20) members. The lupon shall be constituted every three (3) years in the manner provided herein.” (<http://www.chanrobles.com/localgov3.htm>)*

Thus far, in the resolution of inter-family disputes, nine out of ten conflicts in the barangays were resolved at the purok level, as stated in the Galing Pook Evaluation of the Department of Interior and Local Government. According to the respondents, the unresolved cases in the purok level are usually the cases where the involving parties opt to have it resolved at the barangay level through the Lupong Tagapamayapa.

Livelihood activities and trainings. Given that the dap-ayan's location is very near the houses of the purok members, this place has also served as a gathering area for people during various trainings offered by various organizations. One of the most common trainings conducted are for livelihood trainings such as cosmetology or gardening. However, not all the barangays have had livelihood trainings. In most cases, it is also the barangay council or purok's initiative to organize some training for their own purok members. Only three of the informants mentioned about some trainings that were done in their puroks.

In some of their responses, it shows that the dap-ayan serves as a venue for some seminars. These seminars include family planning and waste management seminars. Moreover, these aforementioned seminars can be in line with the activities of the Municipal Population Program Office wherein they conduct reproductive health seminars, gender sensitivity trainings, food processing and women's forums in different barangays of the municipality.

Social gatherings. The dap-ayan also serves as an area where people can stay during special occasions or the purok members can also organize some activities or events for their purok. One of the common occasions is what the community calls as *padaya* (feast), where an important occasion is to be held and many visitors are expected to attend the feast.

Various social gatherings of the purok members also contribute in strengthening the relationships of various purok members. For instance, Christmas program of the purok is held in the dap-ayan and this occasion gives the members a chance to enjoy and share each other's blessings. The funds used for this event are dependent on the initiative of its

purok members. In some cases, the funds are taken from the solicitations given by the balikbayans within the purok, or in some cases, voluntary contributions by the purok members are being done. In most cases, it is voluntary because the decision to have such activity is also the decision of the purok members. Organizing of these activities are not required by the government, but these are own initiative of the purok members especially the purok officers.

Basing from the interviews from the informants, not all the dap-ayans organize social gatherings such as Christmas programs. In the previous year, only two of the informants said that their respective puroks has organized a Christmas program which allowed the members to celebrate and interact with each other. The decision to conduct various social gatherings is dependent on the initiatives of the *pumurok* especially the barangay kagawad. Taking for instance, Purok Sais in Barangay Buanga, the fund used in their Christmas program was also taken from their revolving funds and some contributions from its members.

In some cases, the dap-ayan also serves as *pagbisitaan ti pumurok* where the visitors from the local government unit or other visitors of the purok can stay. For instance, the municipal government officials (collectors) sometimes go to the different barangays to collect *milyar* (land taxes) and the collectors often stay in the dap-ayan and the people can just go there.

Aside from these, some religious activities are also conducted in the dap-ayan especially when some priests or pastors conduct religious activities in the purok. Pastors and priests can go to the dap-ayan and conduct their religious activities for the community members there.

Barangay Tanod Outpost. The dap-ayan is located in places near the houses of majority of the purok members or along the streets. According to some informants, in most situations, the barangay tanods who patrol at night use the dap-ayan as their outpost. In this way, it is considered that it would be easier for them to check and ensure the safety within the particular purok. According to them, a particular dap-ayan does not really need to have a tanod to make sure of the community's safety. In some cases, it is the members themselves, who volunteer to secure the safety of their own purok by staying in the dap-ayan. Moreover, some purok members prefer to have the dap-ayan as *pagtutungtungan* even at night, which allows them to check the security within their community even at night.

Medicinal/vegetable crop production. In line with the beautification projects of the purok especially the dap-ayan, some puroks have also maximized the spaces in their dap-ayan by planting some seedlings in order to make a vegetable garden or a medicinal garden. Medicinal gardens and vegetable gardens are considered as ideal part of the dap-ayan. In some cases, medicinal plants are also planted so that the members of the community can freely get some plants that they need for free. The medicinal garden is usually situated beside other ornamental plants that are planted around the dap-ayan. In this case, these do not only serve as medicinal plants, but also for aesthetic purposes within the dap-ayan.

The plants planted in the dap-ayan were all donations from the community members. Every member of the purok can donate whatever plant is deemed necessary to be put in the dap-ayan. Taking care of these plants around the dap-ayan are either scheduled or voluntarily. For some dap-ayans, taking care of the plants which usually includes weeding and watering are scheduled. The purok members make a schedule depending on their available time. For other dap-ayans, cleaning the dap-ayan including watering the plants can be voluntarily handled by the purok members who are in the vicinity of the dap-ayan which is almost part of their *paraangan* (lawn).

Education and recreation. One of the things that the judges also check in during the dap-ayan competition is the other features of the dap-ayan. In this case, most dap-ayans also have their own cabinets where some books or first aid kits are stored. These features were built as it aimed at catering the immediate needs of the purok members including the children.

The dap-ayan serves as a reading center for children especially if there are some organizations that would be willing to teach in the area during weekends. The reading center also aimed at helping the adult members of the community who were unable to read and to

read to learn the basics of reading and writing. This is in line with the statement mentioned in the municipal ordinance

The dap-ayan as a place for *pagtutungkungan*, *paginanaan* is considered as one of the “traditional” or common uses of the dap-ayan even before it was institutionalized. Given the physical structure of the dap-ayan, an open area and uses *pan-aw* as its roof, the place is cooler than staying inside the houses (*pagpalammissan*). At this point, while sitting in the place, they can also feel relaxed while simply chatting with the other people who are in the dap-ayan.

Moreover, some dap-ayans also create some playgrounds, so that there is a space where children can also play. Most of the materials used in making the playground are also indigenous materials which are readily available within the community.

## **LAW/POLICY ENACTED FOR THE OPERATION OF THE DAP-AYANS**

### **RESOLUTION NUMBER 070-9598 SERIES OF 1995**

On October 30, 1995, a municipal ordinance institutionalizing the dap-ayan was passed by the Sanguniang Bayan members of Pinili, Ilocos Norte. The Resolution Number 070-9598 Series of 1995, entitled “Resolution Institutionalizing Dap-ayans as Permanent Purok Centers for Development and Progress in the Twenty-five Barangays of the Municipality of Pinili, Ilocos Norte. Based on the copy of the ordinance, the local government unit expected that the dap-ayan could serve as a venue where people can be empowered by allowing them to govern themselves through the dap-ayan. Moreover, it recognizes the practice of the purok on democracy at the grassroots level.

The dap-ayan already exists in some municipalities in Ilocos Norte including the town of Pinili. One informant mentioned that the dap-ayan was seen as a good method for people to participate and cooperate with the activities of the town. The dap-ayan was institutionalized in order to guide the people on how to use the dap-ayan and to make the people feel that they have the responsibility over their own communities, since before it was institutionalized; the local government felt that there was a little participation among people as manifested by the peace and security within the community.

This was similar to the response of one informant who mentioned that the dap-ayan was strengthened by the ordinance because people could not really see the dap-ayan as a significant structure. Most people used to consider the dap-ayan only as a physical structure, and these structures were not also maintained very well. Compared with the past, the dap-ayans, at present, are now renovated and its roles are now redefined annually and are maintained the whole year.

Number of dap-ayans. The excerpt from the ordinance, it clearly mentions the number of dap-ayans that should be built in every barangay.

“WHEREAS, every barangay of the Municipality of Pinili, Ilocos Norte has seven dap-ayans in the seven puroks under the seven barangay Kagawads of the barangay” (Municipal Resolution No. 070-9598 Series of 1995)

It says that one barangay should have seven dap-ayans which would be handled by every barangay Kagawad. Moreover, this also means that one purok should have their respective dap-ayans. In an interview with some informants, they have mentioned that before the dap-ayan this ordinance was passed, they have mentioned that the number of dap-ayans in every barangay were not definite. Before 1995, one of the informants mentioned that their barangay had only five dap-ayans whereas some have only two or three. In this regard, the institutionalization of the dap-ayan has clearly defined the number of dap-ayans and the construction of the dap-ayan was clearly delegated to be the initiative

of the barangay council particularly the barangay kagawads, with the assistance of the barangay captain.

Activities undertaken in the dap-ayan. It was mentioned by some informants that not all barangays before have a clear number of dap-ayan and this dap-ayan was usually used as *paginanaan* (a place to rest) and *pagtutungtungan* (a place to chat) only. In connection to this, these activities have become part of the dap-ayan only after this resolution was passed. The integration of the dap-ayan as a formal structure also paved way to an increase in the number of activities undertaken in the dap-ayan.

“WHEREAS, every Dap-ayan has become the center of programs and activities of the purok; purok meetings/conferences, purok library and reading center, purok NFE learning resource center, purok data information center, purok herbal garden and purok planning center;”  
(Municipal Resolution No. 070-9598 Series of 1995)

Participation at the Grassroots Level. So that the dap-ayan is managed by the purok members, the dap-ayan ordinance has also a set of members who would help the barangay kagawad to implement various projects and activities of the purok. The members are chosen by all of the purok members and the lengths of their terms are also dependent on the decisions of the purok members. In most cases, according to the informants, the people who were elected or chosen as heads of the purok remained the same for quite a long period already since the purok members feel that they are quite doing well. In the dap-ayan ordinance, this set of officials is clearly stated:

“WHEREAS, the people of the purok have duly elected the officials of their own purok thereby exercising democracy at the grassroots level”  
(Municipal Resolution No. 070-9598 Series of 1995)

The officials of the dap-ayan are usually comprised of: (1) President, (2) Vice-President, (3) Secretary, (4) Treasurer, (5) Auditor, (6) P.I.O. and the (7) Adviser- who is the barangay kagawad. The numbers of households per purok are usually from 10-15 households and one representative from each household is expected to attend meetings.

Furthermore, the laws and policies of regarding the proper use of dap-ayan also vary from each dap-ayan. The most common rule set is not to use the dap-ayan as a gambling area or as a drinking area since this limits the number of people who can freely go to the dap-ayan. However, in some cases, drinking in the dap-ayan can be permitted for particular occasions as long as majority of the purok have agreed on it. It is the responsibility of the purok officers and the barangay kagawad to set rules and activities for their respective dap-ayans; however, the purok members should agree with these decisions as well. With this ordinance, the Municipal Local Government Unit of Pinili expected that the dap-ayan will serve as the medium for teamwork of the people.

## **INCREASED COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AS INFLUENCED BY THE DAP-AYAN**

### **CONSTRUCTION/RENOVATION OF DAP-AYAN**

The construction and renovation of dap-ayan before the institutionalization was completely the initiative of the community members who want to have a purok center or a place where people can gather and chat. However, after the institutionalization, the number of dap-ayan for every barangay was set to seven dap-ayans representing every purok and handled by every kagawad. In this regard, more purok members have participated in the construction because they have also wanted to see that their purok has a particular purok center like what other areas were doing. After the institutionalization, all members have been participating through the leadership of the barangay kagawad assigned for every purok.

The materials used in the construction of the dap-ayan are voluntarily given by the community members. All of the informants said that the materials are brought by the community members, except for some materials that are really needed to be bought such as nails and wires. The most common situation is that one each household can bring few pieces of bamboo and *pan-aw* (common grass/sans grass) which is needed for the roof. Moreover, the nails can be bought by the barangay kagawad, or in some cases, one household can volunteer to buy some nails that are needed in the construction.

Furthermore, given that the every purok has only a limited number of members, organizing these people for the construction of the dap-ayan was not an issue. First, considering that most members of the community are farmers, and these people do not really have a fixed schedule on the things that they need to do. Nevertheless, coming up with a consensus regarding the schedules for purok activities became easier since only few members are needed to be considered and consulted before coming up with a common decision. For instance, deciding on when to renovate or improve the dap-ayan can be dependent on the available and agreed schedule among the purok members. This situation has greatly encouraged the community members to join in the activities such as construction of the dap-ayan. In most cases, at least one representative for every household helps in the construction, but some purok members who are willing to help can also go there.

This contribution of materials and labor in the construction and beautification of the dap-ayan implies a certain level of participation among the members of the purok. The voluntary act of constructing their respective dap-ayans shows the initiative of the members of the purok to build a structure that really represents their community or their organization as a purok. The people talk with each other and discuss the things that could be done to really improve their dap-ayan.

While the purok members are constructing or renovating the dap-ayan, they already get the chance to talk with each other different things that may seem interesting for them. These simple conversations can already be considered as a form of social interaction among the purok members which may improve the relationship among them especially that the construction of the dap-ayan does not take only one day, but it can take one week or two. Moreover, this also allows them to practice their creativity and to make decisions democratically especially when they try to decide on the design of the dap-ayan.

#### BEST DAP-AYAN CONTEST/CLEAN AND GREEN CONTEST

The "Best in Dap-ayan" contest in the Municipality of Pinili, Ilocos Norte only started after the dap-ayan was institutionalized. This is an annual competition that is part of the municipality's annual fiesta. The aim of this is to make sure that every purok has constructed their dap-ayan and to see the initiative of the people as well. This "Best in Dap-ayan" contest has also created an increased participation since people feel the desire to win and they try to help each other to make their dap-ayan one of the best each year.

This competition has no clear criteria, but various things are taken into consideration. According to the Municipal Planning and Development Officer, who is one of the judges for the Best in Dap-ayan competition, the budget is considered as one of the important considerations. According to her, a very expensive dap-ayan may not be very good. In this regard, they usually ask the purok members to explain the source of funding that they have used in the construction of the dap-ayan. The judges are expecting that the construction is the result of *bayanihan* where people donate the resources that they have.

Other criteria for this competition should be the creativity of the purok members to design their own dap-ayan. As what has been mentioned in the earlier discussions, the dap-ayan used to be a mushroom-shaped structure only and it is usually hexagonal in shape. However, at present, various dap-ayans have made their own designs as this signifies the creativity and collaborative efforts of the dap-ayan members. This initiative of the community

members to create and design their dap-ayan also encourages them to participate more in the dap-ayan activities.

This kind of competition has made the people to participate more because this gives them the sense of belongingness every time they win the competition since their efforts have been paid off. In addition, the visits of the local government officials to check the dap-ayans make them transparent to the local people and this allows the community members to be more active in the other government activities.

Moreover, this has paved way for the town of Pinili, to be consistently chosen as the cleanest and greenest municipality in the province. This competition has also given initiatives among the members to continually maintain the cleanliness and beauty of their dap-ayan. At the same time, this competition has encouraged the community members to continuously develop and renovate their dap-ayans, so that they will have more chances of winning this competition. The goal of the municipal local government to make the dap-ayan as a place for people to practice self-governance is also being met since it is the people's initiative that usually makes them work together in making their dap-ayan the best in the entire municipality. The price given to the winners of the dap-ayan usually serves as a purok fund, and the purok members are given their own capacity to decide on how they will be using the money.

## CONSULTATIONS AND MEETINGS

Mobilizing and organizing the community members to attend meetings can be one difficult task for barangay officials. As what has been mentioned above, barangay meetings are conducted only once or twice a month, and barangay officials also have regular sessions. The conduct of purok meetings has given the citizens to have more chances to discuss matters that directly affect them especially on their own puroks or areas.

According to some informants, the barangay assembly, which is held in their barangay basketball court or in the barangay hall, was deemed significant since people can get to understand the situation of other puroks and the issues of the barangay can be better discussed as people from different puroks can really express their ideas and more people can listen to it. However, the purok meetings were also considered as very good for two reasons. One is that it saves some of the time of the people; since they will not need to attend some meetings regularly and they will not need to go to the barangay hall which may be far from the areas. Moreover, the purok meetings will also allow the members of the purok to discuss the issues within their purok at a more detailed discussion. In most cases, a 100% attendance is noted in the purok meetings.

Following Tonnelat's qualifications for a public space, the dap-ayan also serves as an area of debate particularly on the "practice of democracy and other political actions" that may involve its people. The number of members within the purok is lesser compared with the entire barangay and this makes it easier for the members to join together as a group and discuss various issues that are needed to be discussed. Furthermore, given that the purok members are close kins or consider each member as relatives, the members may feel easier to express the ideas that may concern them. However, it can also be noted that the members of the purok still prefer to have a barangay assembly where all members of the barangay will join together as a group to discuss the larger issues that may affect them, their barangay and their locality as a whole. The common reason that they have given is that it would give them the opportunity to really learn and understand the situation or concerns of other citizens in their barangay. For them, barangay assemblies still serve as a better venue for the community members to see a more holistic view on the different concerns and problems of their barangay. In this way, each purok will also have the chance to learn from the situation of the other purok members. In relation to these, the dap-ayan, being a public space, is an 'accessible area' which is a good venue where people usually meet each other to discuss various issues that may affect them.

Green and Haines (2002) also mentioned that one issue in communication is that vague method of communication exists between the community members and the heads of

a particular community. In the case of the dap-ayan, two forms of communication exist. One is the purok meeting and the other is the house to house communication. In purok meetings, it is a general assembly where all the purok members, or at least one member from each household, can attend and express their opinions and ideas regarding the different issues that are needed to be discussed. These issues concern the entire purok or even the entire barangay or larger activities. In this case, since there is only few number of people in the meeting, and the relationships among the members are tightly knit, all members can have their chance to express their concerns and ideas and these are discussed by all the members of the entire purok as well. In this way, people can feel that they can express their ideas and that the people in authority are really looking at their concerns.

In some cases, people do not need to go to the barangay meetings or purok meetings since the barangay kagawads in charge of the particular purok will go to each house to disseminate the things that the purok members need to know. In this way, people or the members can also feel that the heads of the community have their own efforts on reaching out the members of their community.

Moreover, the structure alone symbolizes the efforts that the people have done in order to build the dap-ayan. The building of the dap-ayan is considered as an output for the bayanihan or cooperation among the community members considering that all of them can have the right to use the dap-ayan as long as it is used properly.

In this regard, the dap-ayan has served as which allows the purok members to go there anytime they want to. For this reason, the dap-ayan has allowed the people to feel that there is a space allotted for them, and in most cases, unconsciously allowing the members of the purok to discuss different issues that they may need to discuss as a single purok. These informal discussions will then be relayed to their kagawad, who can raise it to the barangay captain for further discussions.

## RESOLUTION OF INTER-FAMILY CONFLICTS

The dap-ayan serving as an area for the resolution of conflicts has been one of the common functions of the dap-ayan in the community. However, before this institutionalization, the resolution of inter-family conflicts in the dap-ayan are usually mediated by the elderly or only the parties involved will talk with each other. In most situations, the conflicts are also brought immediately at the barangay level to be settled by the barangay captain. However, after the institutionalization, the formation of *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* has made the resolution of the conflicts to begin at the purok level before going to the barangay.

In the town of Pinili, the organization of the *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* in every purok's dap-ayan has enabled the purok members to independently solve different conflicts that may arise within the purok. The *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* is comprised of different members of the purok who serve as mediators in the resolution of conflict between the parties involved. This also shows that the issues within the purok are considered as public since members of the purok can go to the dap-ayan and serve as witnesses in the process. The initiative of the people to organize such organization implies that any purok member also has their roles which they can carry out in their community. Moreover, this shows the community members' willingness to solve different issues among themselves.

As what has been mentioned above, it is deemed that nine out of ten cases are being resolved in the dap-ayan. This implies that the people are very willing to have immediate resolution of the different conflicts within the purok. The attendance of the *pumurok* through the organized *Lupong Tagapagkasundo* and the other people who wants to listen proves that this resolution of conflicts within the dap-ayan validates the participation of the members of the community in such affairs.

The resolution of inter-family conflicts within the dap-ayan also allowed the community members to have more choice of solving their disputes. Instead of going directly to the barangay hall, they can solve their disputes among them through the dap-ayan with the assistance of the elderly and the barangay kagawad. Within the purok, the issues can be

resolved faster since they try to solve the issues among themselves, with the help of their neighbors or other purok members only.

## SOCIAL GATHERINGS

The dap-ayan, in some cases, serves as a place for social gatherings of the purok and it also serves as a *pagtarusan ti bisita* during special occasions especially during *padaya*. This situation is very common for the people who are living near the households.

Social interaction is seen as one of the best ways to create the feeling of social inclusion among the members of the community. Through regular social interactions, members of the community can feel that they are being involved in various community affairs and this gives them the feeling that their participation in the activities is significant.

In addition, social gatherings such as Christmas programs and other occasions that the purok organize or celebrate increases the camaraderie among the members of the community. Through these occasions, people feel that they are involved in different activities of the community. Unconsciously, people feel that relationships are strengthened and they try to collaborate with each other toward a common goal. Similar with the findings in Indonesia (Gadja Mada University), not all public spaces are used for the public need, but usually are used for social interaction. This kind of social interaction also gives the people a better sense of community since they have more common interactions that discuss their common matters of interest.

In addition, the kinds of activities that people do in relation to their community are also necessary to increase community participation. People want to see direct and real benefits from the activities that they are doing for their communities. These kinds of activities including the conduct of some religious activities in the dap-ayan makes the people think that the dap-ayan is more functional. This is in line with their belief of "*Diyak pati, diyak kita*" because they see the real direct benefits that they can get from building the dap-ayan and by participating in its different activities.

## LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES AND TRAININGS

One of the goals of the ordinance is to make the people manage their own communities make them self-sustaining members of the community. Livelihood trainings and seminars were not done in the dap-ayan prior to the institutionalization. The trainings, seminars and livelihood activities were considered to have started after the dap-ayan was institutionalized as a permanent purok center. Trainings such as cosmetology, better farming methods or seminars on waste management and family planning make the people more involved in different activities. People like to participate in activities that would highly benefit them. In this regard, knowing that these people benefit from these trainings, they would be very willing to attend. The different trainings and seminars also make the community members feel that the different government agencies are trying to reach out for them through these activities. While doing my interview with the informants, one of the residents sitting in the dap-ayan said that they wanted to have continuous seminars, so that they are continuously reminded of their responsibilities for their environment and to their family.

## EDUCATION AND RECREATION

One of the main uses of the dap-ayan, even before the institutionalization of the dap-ayan, is that it serves as a good place for people to take a rest and to chat with each other. The dap-ayan is an open space which is open for the members of the community regardless of their age or gender. As what has been mentioned before, people can go to the dap-ayan anytime they want to and some people can go there just to relax after work. While some purok members are in the dap-ayan taking a rest, other purok members can also go there and this starts a conversation among the community members. During these periods, people who are in the dap-ayan are not only taking a good rest, but also, they are discussing

different issues in their community that are directly affecting them. Some of these topics include family issues or some problems within their surroundings that need immediate actions. These simple conversations give them the chance to understand other members of the community and increases social relationships among the members of the purok. These conversations also make the members of the purok learn more from each other. Moreover, the continuous renovation of the dap-ayan can also be a factor that has encouraged the people more to stay in the dap-ayan.

## **PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE OPERATION OF THE DAP-AYAN**

There were two problems identified by the informants regarding institutionalization of the dap-ayan. The main problem identified was the budget allotted for the construction and/or maintenance of the dap-ayan. This budget is expected to be included annually in the local government unit's internal revenue allotment. Monetary problems are encountered in the implementation of the dap-ayan and on its maintenance.

The dap-ayan needs to be renovated every year. This means some parts of the dap-ayan need to be changed annually since these are only made of wood. In this regard, the purok especially the barangay officials feel that there should really be a particular amount allotted for every dap-ayan to really make the dap-ayan good. At present, there is a budget for every dap-ayan and this is part of the internal revenue allotment for the barangay. The amount usually ranges from around Php8,000 to Php12,000 depending on how much the barangay allots for their respective dap-ayans. However, the barangay kagawads feel that this is not enough since these amounts are divided and distributed to the seven puroks. The rest of the other expenses are expected to be shouldered by the members of the purok. Thus far, this has been considered by some purok members and purok officials as a problem since money is still a significant factor in the establishment or maintenance of the dap-ayan. Although people are very willing to extend their help or services for the establishment and beautification of the dap-ayan, they feel that financial help is still necessary because not all members can afford to shell out some amount for the dap-ayan.

Another problem is that some purok members wanted to receive more trainings and seminars given by the local government because they mentioned that conducting of trainings has stopped few years ago. Some puroks have never experienced having some trainings or seminars from different organizations or at least from the different municipal local government agencies. According to some informants, some trainings and seminars are being given in the dap-ayans before, but they have stopped such activities few years ago. In this regard, they hope that the trainings and seminars will be offered to the different puroks. Some of the informants feel that these trainings and seminars are very helpful to the community members, so it should be done at least in a yearly basis.

## **CONCLUSION**

In relation to the aforementioned findings, it is concluded that:

1. Public spaces, like the dap-ayan, give the people to have a place for them to regularly interact with each other. People interact with each other through the different activities that they do in this public space.
2. Policy intervention can be significant to maximize the use of public spaces and make it more useful to the community members. The institutionalization of the dap-ayan as a formal structure has made the operation of the dap-ayan more organized and this has also increased the functions of this public space.
3. The different activities that people do in public spaces increase community participation. These activities allow the members of the community to have their own responsibilities and feel that they are part of the community.
4. A support from the local government is needed in the community development process, although the main goal is to make the community be able to manage

themselves. Decentralizing governance and bringing it to the grassroots level allowed the people to immediately answer their immediate needs.

5. Allowing the community members to have their own initiatives in making their community better improves participation and it makes the community members identify their own resources. However, problems on financial assistance may affect their level of participation.

The following were some recommendations based on the study's findings and conclusions.

1. The activities of one dap-ayan can also be adapted by the other dap-ayans if they are deemed necessary for their community.

2. The institutionalization of the dap-ayan through the municipal ordinance has paved way to promoting community participation and it has guided the community members to fully utilize the functions of their dap-ayans; therefore, a similar ordinance can also be implemented by other municipalities who have dap-ayans.

3. To enhance the capacity of the barangay officials in the mediation process, the barangay officials and members of the lupon should be given necessary training on how to properly handle amicable settlements or resolution of conflicts.

4. The barangay officials, with the assistance of the municipal local government unit, should continue to come up with different activities that would sustain a continuous participation among the purok members.

5. The barangay kagawads, in cooperation with the municipal local government unit, are also encouraged to organize more livelihood and capability trainings that would encourage their people to find more alternatives to improve their economic condition.

6. A specific amount of money, from the internal revenue allotment, should be allocated to ensure the continuous renovation of the dap-ayan.

7. A further study regarding the history of the dap-ayan can also be done in order to fully understand the beginnings of this practice.

8. Future researchers can also study other public spaces in other communities and how these are significant in the process of community development.

Community development should always be directed to the people and by the people. Public spaces provide a venue for people to interact with each other and the public policies serve as a good start to guide the people on how to maximize their available resources and to encourage participation. However, it is the government's role to support and guide these people. Over-all, making the people feel that they are being helped and allowing them to realize their own part in the improvement of their own communities is a significant factor that should be considered in the process of community development.

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## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

In order to fully understand the study, the following terms are operationally defined as they were used in the study:

**Purok.** This is an Iloco term which refers to the smallest political unit in the community. This can be referred to as a hamlet or village, but purok only includes around 10 to 20 household members.

**Barangay Kagawad.** This refers to the barangay councilor. In the discussions, they are referred to as the head of every purok.

**Barangay Tanod.** This term refers to the Barangay Police. These barangay police are tasked to maintain the peace of the barangay or purok.

**Pumurok.** This is an Iloco term which refers to the members of the purok or members of the community.

**Institutionalization.** For this study, this term refers to the process of making the dap-ayan as a formal structure through a policy, particularly through a municipal ordinance.

**Public space.** Public space refers to a publicly-owned area that people use in their daily activities and this is where people usually spend time together. For this research, the public space refers to the dap-ayan.

**Policy.** This term refers to the municipal ordinance that was used to institutionalize the dap-ayan and consider it as a formal structure where people can conduct various activities for their purok.

**Organizational Structure.** This refers to the organizational structure in the dap-ayan which is a set of officers duly elected or chosen by the members of the purok.

**Community Participation.** For this study, this term refers to the participation of the purok members in the different activities done in the dap-ayan.