

EVALUATING DOLE INTEGRATED LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IN SOUTH COTABATO: BASIS FOR MONITORING AND FEEDBACK PROGRAM



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Evaluating DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program Implementation in South Cotabato: Basis for Monitoring and Feedback Program

Louie M. Esparagoza,* Sonia F. Pimentel
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

This study examined how the Department of Labor and Employment's Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP) is being implemented in South Cotabato, to provide recommendations for an effective monitoring and feedback plan. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the review drew on DOLE's available accomplishment reports and interviews with key program actors and beneficiaries to understand how the program operates on the ground. Findings show that while DOLE has been consistent in delivering livelihood assistance, several constraints continue to hinder smooth implementation. Limited personnel, weak institutional capacity, and the absence of a regular monitoring and evaluation system were identified as major bottlenecks. Challenges in procurement and disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic further slowed program processes. Despite these issues, the study highlights that active stakeholder participation remains crucial for ensuring transparency, accountability, and sustained support for livelihood projects. Overall, the assessment emphasizes the need to strengthen staff capacity, clarify roles during implementation, and institutionalize continuous monitoring and impact evaluation. These improvements can help DILP become more responsive to local needs and better contribute to its broader goals of inclusive growth and poverty reduction, particularly for vulnerable communities.

Keywords: *DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program, implementation, stakeholder participation, qualitative descriptive research*

Introduction

Livelihood programs remain a key strategy for supporting vulnerable workers and promoting inclusive growth in the Philippines. Their effectiveness, however, depends on how well they are implemented and monitored at the local level. Contemporary implementation studies highlight that program success is influenced by resources, institutional capacity, and stakeholder coordination (Saetren, 2016). Likewise, evaluation frameworks emphasize the importance of continuous monitoring and feedback to ensure that services respond to community needs (Patton, 2015).

In this context, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), through the Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns, implements the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP), a national initiative that provides livelihood assistance to marginalized workers to help improve income security and reduce economic vulnerability (BWSC, 2021). While the program has been rolled out across regions, its implementation outcomes may vary based on local capacity, resource availability, and administrative practices.

Although previous studies have explored DILP's sustainability and beneficiary outcomes, there is limited qualitative research examining how the program is implemented in specific localities, including South Cotabato. This gap is significant because implementation challenges, such as limited personnel, logistical constraints, or weak monitoring mechanisms, can affect the program's overall effectiveness.

The study's goal is to examine the DILP's implementation in South Cotabato for fiscal year 2020, with a focus on the program's relevance, challenges, and issues encountered by program implementers, stakeholders, and beneficiaries. The importance of reviewing a program implemented by a government agency is that it helps determine which loopholes, primary factors, and strategies are lacking, and that actions can be repeated and formulated based on the review's results and outcomes. Evidence-based evaluation is a modern approach to ensuring the quality of services provided to stakeholders.

Using a qualitative approach, the study draws on interviews with key informants and documentary data from DOLE Region XII. The findings are expected to inform the development of a monitoring and feedback framework to strengthen program delivery and enhance the responsiveness of livelihood interventions in the province.

Research Questions

The research aimed to evaluate the implementation of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP) in South Cotabato through a monitoring and feedback plan. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the status of the implementation of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program in South Cotabato in terms of:
 - 1.1. adequacy and utilization of the budget;
 - 1.2. clarity and efficiency of standard operating procedures;
 - 1.3. sufficiency and capacity of the personnel complement; and
 - 1.4. availability and adequacy of facilities, supplies, and equipment?

2. What are the challenges besetting the implementation of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program in South Cotabato?
3. Who are the key stakeholders involved in or affected by the implementation of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program in South Cotabato?
4. What possible monitoring and feedback program can be formulated based on the results of the study?

Literature Review

Definition of Livelihood

A livelihood is simply a means of subsisting. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development defined livelihood as “adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs” (Chamber & Conway, 1991). However, Chambers and Conway modified this definition in 1991, citing the definition of livelihood as “the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims, and access), and activities required for a means of living.” Furthermore, households used tangible assets such as stores (food stocks, ornaments, and savings) and resources (land, water, trees, livestock, farm equipment, and tools) as well as intangible assets such as claims (demand for material, moral, and other practical support) and access (opportunity to use a resource, service, or technology) to improve their well-being (Chambers & Conway, 1991).

Importance of Livelihood Program

According to Caverzasio (2001), livelihood programs aim to increase households' and individuals' capacity to provide for themselves by protecting or improving their income, skills, and assets in ways that support their own priorities and goals. Advocacy can also be incorporated into livelihood programs to encourage the government to prevent or stop abusive practices, restore personal dignity, ensure adequate living conditions, and foster an environment conducive to the respect for individuals' rights in accordance with relevant bodies of law.

Furthermore, according to the operational guidelines for UNHCR's livelihood programming (2012), the key objectives for livelihood programming will be employment promotion and small enterprise development, which will be accomplished through a combination or sequencing of interventions such as formal and informal technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship training, microfinance, and value chain development, capacity building of cooperatives and job placement.

Interventions in the field of livelihood can help with a variety of goals. Some have an immediate and direct impact, while others have a longer-term, indirect impact on people's abilities and livelihood options. In most cases, short-, medium-, and long-term goals in livelihood programming are mutually reinforcing. Collaboration with established public and private sector institutions is critical for creating long-term opportunities.

Despite the existence of national assessments and regional studies on livelihood interventions, no recent research (2015–2021) has specifically reviewed the implementation of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program in South Cotabato, particularly regarding operational issues, personnel capacity, monitoring practices, and resource adequacy. Addressing this gap is essential to developing a context-specific monitoring and feedback plan that supports more effective program execution.

Social Protection

Social protection (SP) schemes have proven effective in reducing poverty in most countries, including the Philippines. SP programs shield vulnerable households from the negative effects of natural disasters, financial shocks, and other shocks (Acosta & Avalos, 2018).

The Philippines' 2017-2022 Philippine Development Plan (PDP) emphasizes the importance of a social protection system in building resilience among Filipinos (NEDA, 2017). Governments are also increasingly designing active labor market programs to encourage and support employment, thereby accelerating the further reduction of poverty. These programs are increasingly linked to or integrated with safety net programs to create synergies between transfers and productive inclusion interventions, such as skills- and capacity-building programs, within a larger SP system (Acosta & Avalos, 2018).

It has been demonstrated that combining grants with interventions to improve livelihoods and productive inclusion (e.g., access to productive assets, training, financial services, and so on) can help households increase their income (Banerjee et al., 2015). This can lead to long-term benefits from productive investment by beneficiaries, paving the way out of poverty.

This scheme consists of programs that aim to reduce poverty and vulnerability by improving people's ability to manage economic and social risks, such as unemployment. The primary goal of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNDP) is to prevent, manage, and overcome situations that negatively impact people's well-being (en.wikipedia.org, 2021).

Only 45 percent of the world's population is effectively covered by at least one social benefit, according to new data presented in the "World Social Protection Report 2017/19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals," leaving the remaining 55 percent of 4 billion people unprotected.

Denying this human right to 4 billion people worldwide is a significant impediment to economic and social development. While many countries have made significant progress in strengthening their social protection systems, substantial efforts are still required to ensure

that the right to social protection is realized for all," said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder. It highlights the significance of universal social protection in eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, promoting economic growth, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (ILO, 2017).

Feedback & Monitoring

In management theory, feedback is a widely used concept. It is used in management decision making (Bogart, 1980; Brehm & Bryant, 1976; Cantley, 1981; Connolly & Miklausich, 1978; Welford, 1972), planned organizational change (Cartwright, 1951; Katz & Kahn, 1966), management control (Ashton, 1976; Hofstede, 1968), organizational design as well as training, performance evaluation, and motivation (Herold & Greller, 1977; Kim & Schuler, 1979; Nemeroff & Consentino, 1979; Sorensen & Franks, 1972).

A monitoring system, according to Leitwood, Aitzken, and Jantzi (2001), is defined as a concise description of objectives and processes that specifies the procedure and its status.

Fitz-Gibbon (1996) cites monitoring as a method of examining quality or performance, primarily through the use of outcome-focused indicators. Monitoring, on the other hand, shall generally entail the use of regularly collected performance indicators, which are reported back to the units responsible. This definition frequently uses terms such as performance, outcomes, and feedback.

Monitoring is also defined by Greany and Kellaghan (1996) as systematic and regular procedures for interpreting assessment data on important aspects of the matter.

Monitoring, as described by the World Health Organization (2018), is the gathering and use of data on program implementation to ensure programs are performing successfully and make necessary adjustments. It further said it often uses administrative data to track inputs, procedures, and outputs, as well as program outcomes and impacts.

A strategy for tracking the quality of implementation regularly by recording inputs, outputs, and outcomes. The monitoring system includes relevant indicators, the standards on which quality measurements are based, and data collection for the subject being monitored (Liong, 2005).

Policy and Legal Basis of DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program

Administrative Order No. 142, signed by then-President Corazon Aquino on October 9, 1989, paved the way for the implementation of policies and guidelines governing livelihood programs and projects outlined in Cabinet Resolution No. 29 (November 9, 1988), which amended, rationalized, and coordinated all livelihood development programs and projects undertaken by the government in order to direct government activities and resources toward the efficient and cost-effective implementation of its programs and projects.

The International Labour Organization also stated that the Guidelines were created to assist the government in focusing resources and streamlining projects by coordinating all livelihood programs aimed primarily at the underemployed and unemployed. Encourages private sector participation and specifies agency responsibilities for specific sectors; establishes reporting, monitoring, and evaluation procedures (ILO, 2014).

In order to achieve inclusive growth through massive job creation and significant poverty reduction, Secretary Baldoz issued D.O. 137-14, or the Guidelines on the DOLE Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program, on March 28, 2014, to simplify and expedite access to the DOLE's livelihood programs. On May 15, 2014, the guidelines were published in a major newspaper.

According to D.O. 137-14, all DOLE livelihood programs, including Women Workers Employment and Entrepreneurship Development (WEED), Promotion of Rural Employment through Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship Development (PRESEED), and Tulong Alalay sa Taong May Kapansanan (TAMK), are prohibited (TULAY). The Workers Income Augmentation Program (AMP), the Working Youth Center (WYC), and the Youth Entrepreneurship Support (YES) were incorporated into the DILP/Kabuhayan Program. DOLE regional offices implement the DILP/Kabuhayan and TUPAD programs either directly or through an ACP, using simple, step-by-step procedures for accessing funds, actions taken, and timelines for availing applications (DOLE, 2014).

Baldoz stated in a press release that the majority of DILEEP beneficiaries were informal-sector workers, particularly self-employed and unpaid family workers in vulnerable employment. "Vulnerable employment is a serious aspect of the Philippine labor market," Baldoz added. The DILEEP is the DOLE's contribution to the government's inclusive growth agenda through massive job creation and poverty reduction. According to Baldoz, the DILEEP is part of the DOLE strategy to reduce poverty and the vulnerability of poor, vulnerable, and marginalized workers to risks (DOLE, 2014).

This policy modifies DO 137-14 on eligible beneficiaries by extending it to the following groups of disadvantaged workers, with a corresponding fund allocation of at least 1% of regional DILEEP funds for each sector to ensure program access: PWDs, senior citizens, distressed returning OFWs, Indigenous People (IPs), rebel returnees, and victims of armed conflict (DOLE, 2016).

Labor and Employment Secretary Silvestre H. Bello III carried out President Duterte's marching orders by citing aspects of DOLE's service, projects, and programs that must be anchored on the Eight-Point Labor and Employment Agenda to ensure inclusive development, prosperity, and labor justice for Filipino workers and their families. The second item on the labor and employment agenda

is to address the long-standing issues of unemployment and underemployment caused by a lack of job opportunities. In his message, President Duterte pledged to make the bureaucracy an honest, efficient, effective, transparent, and accessible institution that serves the people of the Philippines (DOLE, 2016).

Secretary Bello issued Department Order No. 173-14 on 13 February 2017 as part of the government's agenda of inclusive growth through massive job creation and significant poverty reduction. The order established clear standards and transparent procedures for funding availability and release, as well as reporting, monitoring, and evaluation. It also detailed the requirements for co-partner accreditation, including both local government units and other ACP types (DOLE, 2014).

In addition, President Duterte signed Republic Act 11291 into law on April 12, 2019, also known as the "Magna Carta of the Poor." The Magna Carta embodies the State's stated policy of "raising the standard of living and quality of life of the poor and providing them with sustained opportunities for growth and development." It instructs the government to "adopt an area-based, sectoral, and focused intervention to poverty alleviation in which every poor Filipino must be empowered to meet the minimum basic need through collaboration between the government and the basic sectors" (Business Mirror, 2019).

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative descriptive design, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the real-life implementation of the DILP/Kabuhayan Program from the perspectives of beneficiaries and key personnel. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding processes, challenges, and contextual factors that cannot be captured through quantitative methods (Sandelowski, 2015). A qualitative design also facilitates the development of rich, detailed descriptions that inform practical recommendations, such as a monitoring and feedback framework for program improvement. Furthermore, to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed multiple strategies. Triangulation was used by gathering data from interviews with key stakeholders and reviewing secondary documents, including DOLE accomplishment reports on DILP (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking allowed key informants to verify the accuracy of interpretations, while an audit trail documented all decisions and procedures throughout data collection and analysis, ensuring transparency and rigor (Nowell et al., 2017). The combination of interviews and document review provided a comprehensive understanding of program implementation and supported the development of evidence-based recommendations.

Participants

The study employed a purposive, key-informant sampling technique to select participants with direct knowledge and experience in implementing the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program in South Cotabato. This approach ensures that the data collected are rich, relevant, and specific to the research objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Furthermore, participants included one (1) DOLE XII–South Cotabato Field Office Head, one (1) DOLE XII Regional DILP focal person, one (1) DOLE XII Provincial/Field DILP focal person, one (1) Regional Budget Officer, one (1) Procurement Officer, three (3) Public Employment Service Office Managers, two (2) DILP recipients, and other concerned provincial government employees involved in program implementation. A semi-structured interview guide with open-ended and projective questions was used to allow participants to freely share their insights, experiences, and perspectives regarding program processes, challenges, and outcomes. This method provided the flexibility to probe further on relevant issues and ensured that diverse viewpoints from both implementers and beneficiaries were captured.

Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from the Regional Director of DOLE Region XII, the DOLE XII–South Cotabato Field Office Head, and the selected respondents to conduct interviews and access relevant program documents. Semi-structured interviews and document review provided comprehensive insights into the implementation of the DILP. For data analysis, the researcher conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to organize and interpret the findings in line with the study's objectives. Interview responses and documentary evidence were coded thematically, grouping information under key categories such as budget, personnel, procedures, and facilities. This process allowed patterns and themes to emerge, providing a clear qualitative summary of program implementation, challenges, and potential areas for improvement. The findings were synthesized to support recommendations for a monitoring and feedback plan to enhance program effectiveness.

Results and Discussion

Demography and Socioeconomics in the Study Area

South Cotabato, located in Mindanao's SOCCSKSARGEN region, with Koronadal as its provincial capital, is home to 915,289 residents across 10 municipalities and one city (PSA, 2015). The province has experienced modest population growth, highlighting a steadily increasing demand for employment and livelihood opportunities.

Unemployment remains a pressing concern in the region. The 2019 Regional Social and Economic Trends reported 71,000 unemployed individuals in SOCCSKSARGEN, an increase from 67,000 the previous year (PSA, 2019). The regional economy also faced significant

challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 4.3% contraction in 2020, amounting to an estimated P20 billion economic loss (PSA XII, 2021). Recovery to pre-pandemic levels would require at least 4.4% growth in 2021.

These socioeconomic indicators underscore the critical need for livelihood programs in the province. The DILP/Kabuhayan Program provides vital support by creating income-generating opportunities, particularly for low-income and vulnerable households, thereby mitigating unemployment and promoting economic stability in South Cotabato.

Status of DILP implementation in South Cotabato

Budget Utilization in line with

Between 2016 and 2019, DOLE Region XII reported 19,288 beneficiaries under the DILP/Kabuhayan program. In 2020, the South Cotabato Field Office exceeded its target, serving 673 individual beneficiaries and achieving a total fund utilization of PHP 9,389,939.50. The findings indicate that the program successfully reached its intended target population, promoting inclusive growth by supporting marginalized and vulnerable workers through livelihood projects.

Standard Operating Procedures

Through a convergence scheme, DOLE Region XII incorporated DILP/Kabuhayan Program processing into its Core Process to provide technical and livelihood assistance in promoting entrepreneurship and community enterprises. The procedure covers the entire application process, from project identification to submission of required documents, financial assistance, and monitoring and evaluation of project implementation.

Before implementing the DILP/Kabuhayan Program, the South Cotabato Field Office Livelihood Focal Person provided an orientation/advocacy on DO 173-17 to all DILP beneficiaries in cooperation with the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) of any Local Government Unit in South Cotabato.

According to the DOLE XII 2020 livelihood monitoring matrix, eligible beneficiaries include dependents of overseas family workers, people involved in illegal drugs, people with disabilities, parents of child laborers, single parents, and displaced workers due to retrenchment (operations affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic). The beneficiaries receive a package of assistance that includes training and a monetary grant to purchase equipment, tools, and raw materials for their livelihoods.

In calendar year 2020, the Local Government Units of South Cotabato were among the qualified ACPs that facilitated the program's implementation, during which eligible beneficiaries received interventions. The ACPs identified beneficiaries using criteria targeting vulnerable workers, then prepared the proposal or business plan, which was evaluated and reviewed by the DOLE XII Regional Project Monitoring Team. (DOLE XII-RPMT) endorsed for approval to the Regional Director. According to the DILP Regional Focal, the proposal received a rating of at least 80% based on the criteria for evaluating submitted project proposals that qualify for funding.

Furthermore, implementation followed a three-stage process: pre-implementation training, provision of startup inputs, and post-implementation advisory services. Interviews with DILP focal personnel and beneficiaries highlighted that while SOPs were generally clear, delays in document processing and procurement occasionally hindered the timely delivery of support. Despite these challenges, beneficiaries appreciated the structured training and provision of tools, which enabled them to initiate or enhance income-generating activities.

Personnel complement

The program's personnel capacity was identified as a key bottleneck. DOLE Region XII designated a single focal person to oversee program implementation across multiple field offices, whereas most LGUs had only two staff members managing the PESO network. Stakeholders reported that this limited personnel capacity led to excessive workloads and delayed monitoring, affecting post-implementation support for beneficiaries.

Availability of facilities, supplies, and equipment

One research topic of concern is the status of DILP implementation regarding the availability of facilities, supplies, and equipment. The DOLE XII procurement unit presented records showing that the majority of procurement methods use Negotiated procurement, as requests for livelihood procurement through direct administration are less than 1 million of the Approved Budget.

One shortcoming in the delayed procurement item release is the supplier's availability and the lack of information (description) in the purchase requests submitted by the relevant field offices. Typically, not all suppliers registered in PhilGEPs per Republic Act 9184 and GPPB Resolution No. 18-2017 must be registered in the system and present their certificate of registration to procuring entities to secure government contracts. Also, before preparing the request for quotation, the purchase request order will be returned to the field offices for correction, which delays the procurement process.

The procurement of the necessary raw materials, equipment, tools, and jigs as specified in the approved project proposal is the responsibility of the proponent, in accordance with DO 173-17. All equipment purchased is the property of DOLE and shall be turned over to the proponent-beneficiary/proponent ACP through a Deed of Donation after one year from the start of project implementation,

provided that the project is still operational; otherwise, the equipment shall be pulled out.

Challenges encountered by the stakeholders in relation to the implementation of DILP

Limited Personnel/Institutional Capacity

The DILP/Kabuhayan program is implemented under Direct Administration by the DOLE XII Regional Office and its Provincial/Field Offices, which manage all other programs. A volume of work is assigned to the DOLE XII Focal Person for DILP, and their functions and duties are divided into components based on the assignments. As a result, after beneficiaries received their inputs, monitoring of the livelihood projects was not conducted regularly. Beneficiaries must receive ongoing support services during the post-implementation stage. This problem stems from the realization that the DILP/Kabuhayan program's sustainability has not yet been established, nor have the program's objectives been met.

Given that the program guidelines allow LGUs to become ACPs, the same institutional constraint must be addressed: the personnel complement. As previously stated, the PESO Manager in each LGU ensured that no more than two (2) staff members oversaw the delivery of employment services and the provision of information on DOLE programs. In other cases, local governments fail to submit liquidation reports for completed livelihood projects.

The DILP focal person pointed out that incomplete or non-submission of liquidation reports disqualifies them from participating in the program again. These typically occur when the Local Chief Executive (LCE) is replaced at the end of the term. In some cases, the staff are either on job order, on contract of service, or coterminous, posing challenges to the continuity and monitoring of livelihood programs.

Procurement problems/supplier-related issues

Supplier-related issues are among the challenges the department faces during the procurement process. Given the complexity of purchase requisitions submitted by field offices, the procurement unit evaluates suppliers to determine whether they can provide the required goods. However, one common problem is that not all suppliers are registered in PhilGEPS, a fundamental requirement in obtaining government contracts. Furthermore, the most common risks encountered in procurement include the availability of goods, service delivery, and readiness. Lack of accurate data, such as unclear specifications and price variations compared to the approved budget, may delay procurement outcomes.

Lack of a Regular Monitoring and Evaluation System

A reliable monitoring system is critical for project management. Monitoring also serves as the foundation for assessing the intervention's impact. It will be impossible to conduct an impact evaluation without the necessary information, which can be gathered through regular monitoring (Hempel & Fiala, 2012).

Currently, the department's only indicator for the DILP/Kabuhayan program is the number of beneficiaries assisted and budget utilization. Although field offices and LGUs were directed to monitor the status of project implementation through PESO, neither can regularly evaluate all implemented projects due to limited personnel and numerous other responsibilities.

The DOLE-BWSC (2014) stated in a report that the lack of a sound monitoring system resulted in the delayed or non-submission of ACP liquidated reports. The COA emphasized that failure to monitor livelihood assistance projects is a waste of scarce government resources, as the program's goal of providing sustainable sources of income through livelihood endeavors has not been achieved.

Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic last year, all program implementers reported that program monitoring was not maximized. Border closures, a high number of COVID-19-related cases, and quarantine periods for secondary contacts prevented them from performing the necessary task, resulting in the identified institutional constraints not being met.

Stakeholders involved in or affected by the implementation of the DILP.

The Department of Labor and Employment's mandate is to protect Filipino workers and promote worker welfare through effective programs that increase productivity and worker well-being, and provide social protection to its client sector. To fulfill its mandate and effectively assist and support community enterprise, it implements a multi-sectoral strategy or convergence program by integrating with and collaborating with related DOLE programs and services, along with its partners—the business sector, labor groups, academe, and other Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (DOLE, 2016).

The guidelines for DILP implementation targeted the following stakeholders as primary recipients of the component program: (a) Self-employed with insufficient income, marginalized and landless farmers, marginalized fisher folks, unpaid family workers; (b) Vulnerable groups, including women and youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, parents/guardians of child laborers, displaced workers, senior citizens, rebel returnees, victims of armed conflict; (c) Workers displaced or to be displaced as a result of natural disasters or closure of establishment, retrenchment, termination; and (d) Low/minimum wage earners and seasonal workers.

SWOT Analysis

Based on the study's findings and objectives, the researcher conducted a SWOT analysis as a strategic planning tool to develop a



reliable, effective strategy and to improve programs to address circumstances encountered during the DILP/Kabuhayan program's implementation.

Table 1. *SWOT Analysis*

<i>S - STRENGTHS (INTERNAL)</i>		<i>W - WEAKNESSES (INTERNAL)</i>	
1. BUDGET	▪ Sufficient Funds	1. PEOPLE	▪ Limited number of personnel
2. INFRASTRUCTURE	▪ Fully equipped ICT	2. TECHNOLOGY	▪ Work overload
3. PEOPLE	▪ Competent, positive attitude, positive players, resilient, empowered staff	3. PROCESSES	▪ On-line system glitches/issues
4. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	▪ Strong linkage with partner agencies and other sectors	▪ Delayed processing of documents	
5. KNOWLEDGE	▪ Able to provide regular meetings, learning sessions,		
<i>O - OPPORTUNITIES (EXTERNAL)</i>		<i>T - THREATS (EXTERNAL)</i>	
1. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	▪ Strengthened partnership	i. POLICIES	● Limited ACPs due to unliquidated cash advances
	▪ Facilitative Field offices on Regional Activities	ii. PROCESSES	● Incorrect/incomplete data/documents submitted
2. KNOWLEDGE	▪ Increase awareness of clients on DOLE programs	● Late submission/non-submission of reports/documents for processing	
3. PEOPLE	● Hiring of outsourced personnel	iii. TECHNOLOGY	▪ On-line system crash/hacks; service provider down
4. POLICIES	● New policies or amendments to existing laws, rules, policies	iv. NATURAL AND MAN-MADE EVENTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE	▪ (Covid-19 pandemic)

This organization's strengths provide a distinct advantage in terms of effective program and service implementation, including sufficient funds transmitted from the central office to the regional office for disbursement. With fully equipped information and communication technology, it improved communication modes, paperless transactions, data and information security, and improved efficiency. People participating in the implementation are competent, positive, resilient, and empowered to undertake the needed activities as a result of extensive training and capacity building. The department also maintains strong relationships with various partner agencies and sectors to facilitate communication and implementation through regular meetings and learning sessions.

While it is true that people, resources, and a better system are most likely in place, the impact of flaws must be addressed. As a result, a limited number of workers will be affected by work overload, online system problems, and delayed document processing due to circumstances and processing loopholes, with a significant impact on the program's implementation and the achievement of its desired goals and objectives. These factors must improve for the organization to remain faithful to its aims; otherwise, it will not perform properly.

Specific characteristics of an organization's external environment, on the other hand, enable it to develop and implement plans to improve its operations, such as strengthening partnerships with stakeholders and program partners. Better service implementation will be aided by a proactive field office that assists partners with their needs and promotes client awareness of DOLE programs. The hiring of additional personnel to meet demand would improve the efficacy and efficiency of implementation. The organization is always receptive to feedback and suggestions, which is why they established a tripartite system in which employees and employers are represented in the government's decision-making and policy-making bodies whenever new policies or adjustments to existing laws, rules, and policies are needed. Their contributions aid the success of programs and services.

Threats are external factors perceived as harmful to the organization and must be avoided. Such risks are unmanageable and threaten the organization's stability. The operation's limited number of accredited partners posed a threat due to unliquidated cash advances from key program partners. If they fail to liquidate, additional programs will not be accessible, and the department's disbursement percentage of accomplishment will be affected. Incomplete, erroneous, or late data or document submissions will delay the processing of beneficiaries' entitlements, putting the DILP/Kabuhayan program on hold and delaying the scheduled release period. Crashing or hacking an online system might put the operation at risk. Processing may halt, and potential problems can arise if the service provider goes down. Furthermore, the COVID-19 breakthrough has a significant impact on the system's performance and operation. The reduction of personnel due to the pandemic has a significant impact on the process. Those who show symptoms are placed in quarantine, resulting in reduced productivity, poor performance of duties, and a detrimental impact on program and service implementation.

Further, the SWOT analysis is used to conduct a thorough, systematic review of the department's operations. The approach gives department and program implementers a better grasp of potential adjustments and their potential impact.



In addition to the SWOT analysis, the following strategies may be used to capitalize on opportunities, mitigate the impact of weaknesses, protect key players from threats, and better implement the DILP/Kabuhayan program.

Table 2. Actionable Strategies

<i>Interested Parties</i>	<i>Needs and Expectations</i>	<i>Action Planning</i>
LGUs, PESOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders	Technical assistance/capability development;	Provide technical assistance, conduct of consultations/ meetings as needed; Provide feedback/updates
	A strong connection with stakeholders;	Provide information on DOLE programs, promotion of assistance for clients
Personnel	Mechanisms for monitoring and feedback are provided.	Close monitoring of DOLE Field Offices on DILP implementation
	Protection from the health risks of COVID-19 while ensuring service delivery.	Use appropriate PPE and other health related support; Strict observance of minimum health standards; Use of online platforms;
Suppliers	Prior to the delivery of goods/services within a reasonable/sufficient time frame, the purchase order must be served.	Ensure completeness of documents and specifications in the request

Proposed Monitoring and Feedback Program for DILP

Based on the findings of this study, a structured Monitoring and Feedback Program is essential to strengthen the implementation and sustainability of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP) in South Cotabato. The study revealed several challenges, including limited personnel, procurement delays, and a lack of a systematic monitoring and evaluation process, which hindered the program's effectiveness and the long-term success of livelihood projects.

The proposed program aims to address these gaps by providing a continuous and comprehensive system of monitoring and feedback. In the pre-implementation stage, the program will ensure that beneficiaries are carefully validated against DOLE's eligibility criteria and that project proposals submitted by Accredited Co-Partners (ACPs) are rigorously assessed. This step is crucial in guaranteeing that the proper beneficiaries, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, receive support (DOLE, 2017).

During the implementation stage, the program emphasizes regular monitoring through site visits and tracking of project inputs and activities. Checklists and standardized monitoring forms will be used to document the utilization of materials, adherence to project timelines, and compliance with financial and operational standards. The study's results highlighted delays in the procurement and distribution of inputs due to supplier-related issues and incomplete documentation, underscoring the need for systematic monitoring (Hempel & Fiala, 2012).

The post-implementation stage focuses on sustainability by conducting follow-up evaluations at 3, 6, and 12 months. These evaluations assess the operational status, financial performance, and continued viability of livelihood projects. Additionally, beneficiaries will receive ongoing technical guidance and advisory services, aligning with the study's recommendation for continuous support to enhance the success and sustainability of DILP interventions. This approach aligns with best practices in livelihood program management, where sustained mentorship and monitoring have been shown to improve project outcomes significantly (DOLE-BWSC, 2014).

To ensure efficiency and accuracy, the program also proposes the use of a digital monitoring system that allows DOLE and ACPs to track projects, budget utilization, and beneficiaries in real time. This aligns with the study's findings that limited personnel and workload constraints made manual monitoring challenging. Digital tools can facilitate timely reporting and reduce delays in identifying issues (COA, 2019).

Feedback mechanisms will be incorporated to enhance learning and responsiveness. Beneficiaries will provide feedback on challenges and successes, while ACPs will submit quarterly and annual reports summarizing project performance. Stakeholder consultation meetings, focus group discussions, and online feedback channels are recommended to ensure that program implementers receive actionable insights. The study emphasized that these feedback loops are critical for improving program relevance, addressing bottlenecks, and ensuring accountability (Hempel & Fiala, 2012).

Finally, the program will assign clear roles to personnel, including Regional DILP Focal Persons, PESO Managers, and ACPs, to ensure ownership, accountability, and effective coordination at all levels. The proposed Monitoring and Feedback Program addresses the study's identified weaknesses—limited personnel, procurement delays, and inadequate monitoring—while leveraging the organization's strengths, such as sufficient budget, ICT infrastructure, and competent staff, as identified in the SWOT analysis.

Conclusions

The study on the implementation of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP) in South Cotabato highlights both the achievements and challenges of promoting livelihood opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized sectors. The program has been successful in reaching a significant number of beneficiaries, fully utilizing the allocated budget, and providing essential inputs, training,

and entrepreneurship support. This demonstrates the program's potential to create sustainable income-generating opportunities and reduce unemployment in the province. However, the study also revealed several challenges that hinder the program's optimal impact. Limited personnel and institutional capacity, delays in procurement, and the absence of a regular monitoring and evaluation system have affected the timely delivery and sustainability of livelihood projects. These challenges suggest that, while the program's framework and resources are substantial, operational and structural improvements are necessary to ensure it consistently meets its objectives. Key stakeholders, including DOLE personnel, LGUs, PESOs, and Accredited Co-Partners, play a critical role in the program's success. Their collaboration, technical capability, and active engagement are essential for effective implementation, monitoring, and feedback. Strengthening these partnerships, enhancing personnel capacity, and integrating systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will improve the program's efficiency, sustainability, and responsiveness to beneficiaries' needs.

In summary, the DILP in South Cotabato is a valuable initiative that addresses socio-economic challenges by providing livelihood support to those in need. Its effectiveness, however, depends on continued institutional capacity improvement, streamlined procurement processes, and robust monitoring and feedback systems. With these enhancements, the program can better achieve its goal of empowering marginalized workers and promoting inclusive economic growth in the province.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to improve the implementation of the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP) in South Cotabato. First, to address the limited personnel and institutional capacity identified, it is recommended that DOLE and participating LGUs allocate additional staff or hire qualified personnel to support program operations. The study revealed that field offices and PESO Managers often operate with only two staff members, limiting their ability to provide continuous monitoring and technical assistance to beneficiaries. Strengthening human resources will ensure livelihood projects receive the guidance and support needed to become sustainable and impactful. Second, procurement challenges such as supplier availability issues, unregistered suppliers, and incomplete or inaccurate purchase requests can be mitigated by establishing more straightforward procurement guidelines and maintaining a reliable database of pre-qualified suppliers. Field offices should ensure all specifications, price ranges, and documentation are accurate prior to submission. Regular staff training on procurement procedures can further prevent delays, allowing beneficiaries to receive necessary inputs promptly and start their livelihood projects on schedule.

Third, the lack of a systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanism requires urgent attention. The study found that current monitoring is limited to reporting the number of beneficiaries and budget utilization, with minimal follow-up on actual project outcomes. It is recommended that DOLE, LGUs, and Accredited Co-Partners adopt the proposed monitoring and feedback program formulated in this study. This system incorporates periodic site visits, progress reports, and impact assessments, using digital tools and online reporting platforms to streamline data collection and analysis. Utilizing this plan will allow timely identification of challenges, promote accountability, and ensure corrective measures are implemented promptly, ultimately enhancing the sustainability of livelihood projects. Lastly, enhancing stakeholder engagement and communication is crucial. The study highlighted gaps in information dissemination to beneficiaries, field personnel, and partner organizations. Regular consultations, learning sessions, and public awareness campaigns can strengthen partnerships, improve understanding of program benefits, and encourage active participation from all stakeholders. By directly addressing these challenges and implementing the proposed monitoring and feedback system, the DILP can operate more efficiently, respond more promptly to beneficiaries' needs, and continue empowering marginalized workers in South Cotabato.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Louie M. Esparagoza

Department of Labor and Employment XII – Philippines

Sonia F. Pimentel, MDMG, DPA

University of Makati – Philippines