

Empowering the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative through Cooperative Development



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ABSTRACT: The Cooperative Development (Coop Dev) Project, spearheaded by the Bachelor of Science in Cooperative Management Program of the Mariano Marcos State University - College of Business, Economics and Accountancy (BSCMMMSU-CBEA), in partnership with the Philippine Rice Research Institute – Batac Branch (PhilRice-Batac), was established with the goal of empowering the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative (ZSNAC) in Barangay Bugasi, Banna, Ilocos Norte by providing development interventions to the human resources of the agriculture cooperative such as technical assistance and capacity building activities which include trainings, seminars, and workshops to enhance their knowledge and strengthen their skills on intellectual capacity, governance, and management to achieve efficient and effective operations and performance for long-term survival and sustainability. The Coop Dev Project was regarded as very much relevant to the ZSNAC, PhilRice – Batac Branch and the BSCM-MMSU-CBEA. The project was able to empower the officers, employees and members through the different capability enhancement trainings and activities. It strengthened and enhanced their knowledge and skills in governing the operations and managing the business endeavors of the cooperative, including their democratic control and decision-making abilities. For the PhilRice-Batac, the project is considered as very much relevant because it serves as an arm to capacitate the cooperatives on organizational building to successfully help the cooperatives manage and operate as agro-enterprise ventures. The project is very much relevant to the BSCM program of MMSU-CBEA because it serves as an arm of the university to achieve one of its seven-point agenda which is high impact and transformative extension and outreach program. Specifically, the project helps the BSCM program to accomplish its program outcome of establishing strong linkages and partnerships with local cooperatives and related agencies in the formulation and implementation of development programs. The relevance of the extension project lies in the capacity to empower the human resources, promote inclusivity, and foster sustainability of the agriculture cooperative. To ensure the sustainability of the Coop Dev Project, its implementation is reflected in the approved 2024-2028 CBEA Research and Extension Development Agenda (CREDA) to continue assisting and helping cooperatives in the province for developmental needs. Lastly, the Coop Dev project recommends continuous support to the agriculture cooperative by providing assistance and other developmental needs, continue to establish a strong partnership with PhilRice-Batac Branch to help and assist other cooperatives in the province, continue to generate information, education, and communication (IEC) materials with ISSN, and to undergo impact assessment.

KEYWORDS: Cooperative, development, capacity building, intellectual capacity, governance, management

I. INTRODUCTION

Cooperatives have existed for centuries, playing a pivotal role in shaping socio-economic development by fostering community empowerment, equitable wealth distribution, and sustainable economic growth. Cooperatives are globally recognized as powerful catalysts for financial and economic growth in developing nations, particularly in transnational economies where access to capital, vocational training, and technical expertise is scarce. By promoting collective entrepreneurship and resource sharing, cooperatives enhance economic resilience, empower communities, and drive sustainable development. According to Figueiredo and Franco (2018), they stand out as promoting equality, community development and their members' well-being.

Cooperatives recognize the primacy of people and work over capital and are flexible and innovative to address changing social and economic circumstances. They incorporate the principles of solidarity, mutuality, reciprocity, cooperation, and proximity and emphasize the importance of social capital in producing healthy societies. Moreover, cooperatives highlight the

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complementarity of the social, socio-political, and economic dimensions and foster voluntary participation, member empowerment and commitment (Schwettmann, 2014).

The cooperatives are envisioned to contribute to the achievement of short-term development goals particularly (SDGs) in the areas of eradication of poverty and hunger; quality education; decent work and economic growth; reduce inequalities;

responsive production and consumption; climate action; peace, justice, and strong institution; and gender equality (Castillo & Castillo, 2017). Cooperatives focused on the less-privileged members of society to uplift their livelihood, welfare, economic and social status (Cooperative Development Authority, 2015).

The Province of Ilocos Norte alone, as of December 31, 2018, had a total of 309 registered cooperatives but only 118 (38.19%) were considered reporting cooperatives while in December 2019, it has 341 registered cooperatives but only 133 (39.00%) were reporting (Bitonio, 2021). This situation contributed to the regional situation having an increased number of registered and reporting cooperatives.

The National Confederation of Cooperatives, Inc. (NATCO) identified causes of failures of cooperatives that included poor or unprofessional leaders and managers due to lack of proper education; no development plans; mismanaged projects; poor systems and procedures; overexposure to loans; and organizing for wrong reasons (Sibal, 2011).

It was also found that the cooperatives in Region 1 have no continuous education program or human resource development program for its officers, members and employees or the cooperatives do not conduct pre-membership education seminar (PMES) for new members (Bitonio, 2016).

To mitigate these problems encountered by the cooperatives, education through capacity building and enhancement of the human resources of the cooperatives is necessary.

In the study of Valdez (2019), it was concluded that the intellectual capacity helps the cooperatives to perform efficiently and excellently in providing the needs of their members, customers, suppliers, and other external entities through their business activities to create their wealth and to increase their performance. In addition, proper governance and management elevates their status as solid and unique business entities, a robust long-term approach to build competitive enterprises and economies and become a bona fide catalyst for national development. Further, when critically important factors are developed or enhanced as shown in the performance models, it will result in outstanding social and financial performances.

Further, the study has recommended the micro and small multipurpose cooperatives to adopt the performance models and implement the capacity building framework; to conduct evaluation on the relevance of the performance models and capacity building framework three to five years after adoption and implementation; and to identify updates that are needed by the micro and small multipurpose cooperatives. Further, a similar study could be conducted in other parts of the country.

A needs assessment survey in the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative (ZSNAC) was conducted by the Philippine Rice Research Institute – Batac Branch (PhilRice-Batac) and found that there were several needs of the cooperative which included the following: computer literacy, bookkeeping, mandatory training for cooperative board of directors and officers, training on good governance and fundamentals of parliamentary procedures, minutes of meeting preparation, policy preparation, and values reorientation. These findings generally fall into categories of intellectual capacity, governance, and management of the cooperative.

Based on the results of the needs assessment survey, the following were recommended: technical assistance for computer literacy, bookkeeping, and other business-related operations; and provide capacity building activities such as trainings, seminars and workshops on intellectual capacity, governance and management for the members, officers, and staff of the cooperative.

Thus, the Cooperative Development (Coop Dev) Project with its component entitled “Empowering the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative through Cooperative Development” was established. This extension project is a collaboration between the Bachelor of Science in Cooperative Management program of the College of Business, Economics and Accountancy of the Mariano Marcos State University (BSCM-CBEA-MMSU), the Philippine Rice Research Institute – Batac Branch (PhilRiceBatac), and the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative (ZSNAC) located in Barangay Bugasi, Banna, Ilocos Norte.

The Coop Dev Project intends to empower the ZSNAC by providing development interventions to the human resources of the agriculture cooperative such as technical assistance and capacity building activities to include training, seminars, and workshops to enhance their knowledge and strengthen their skills on intellectual capacity, governance, and management to achieve efficient and effective operations and performance for long-term survival and sustainability.

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II. RESEARCH METHODS

The Coop Dev Project Framework in Figure 1 followed the Input-Process-Output-Outcome (IPOO) model that served as a guide for the BSCM of CBEA-MMSU to establish a long-term and sustainable extension project. The framework is composed of five phases to include the research component (Phase I), conceptualization (Phase II), implementation (Phase III), monitoring and evaluation (Phase IV), and impact assessment (Phase V).

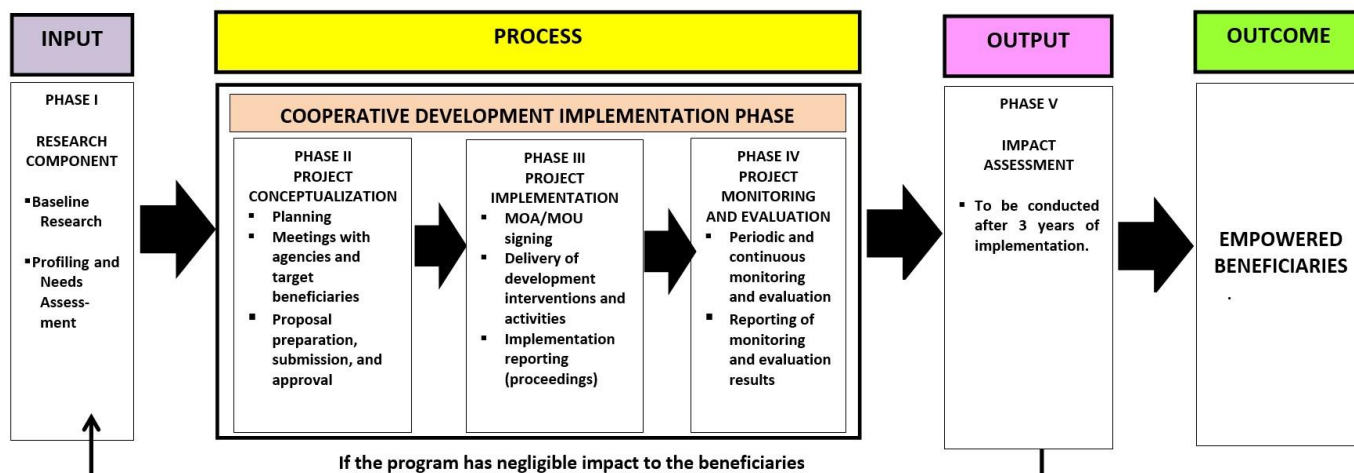


Figure 1. Cooperative Development Project Framework

Phase I is the research component, wherein the study of Valdez (2019) entitled “Development of Performance Models and Capacity Building for Micro and Small Multipurpose Cooperatives in Ilocos Norte, Philippines” was used as the baseline research. The capacity building framework of the study was adapted. A needs assessment survey was also conducted to assess the needs of ZSNAC on the 27th day of July 2021.

Phases II, III and IV are the cooperative development phase that was based on the model adapted from Enactus International (2015). Phase II comprised the project conceptualization that included planning, meetings with partner agency and the target beneficiary, extension project proposal and training proposal preparation, submission, and approval.

Phase III is the project implementation phase that began with the forging of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the BSCM-MMSU-CBEA PhilRice-Batac, and ZSNAC, delivery of development interventions, and project implementation reporting by submitting activity proceedings and other extension-related documents to the Extension Directorate of the University.

Phase IV is the project monitoring and evaluation phase that requires periodic and continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Coop Dev Project. This also included reporting by submitting the results of monitoring and evaluation to the Extension Unit of CBEA and the Extension Directorate of the University.

Phase V will measure the output of the project. Impact assessment will be conducted after three years of implementation to determine the development of the targeted agriculture cooperative. If the results of the impact assessment show negligible improvements on the part of the agriculture cooperative, Phases II, III, and IV should be revisited and studied to determine the factors that caused the negligible change to the agriculture cooperative. Adjustments to plans and activities in the implementation should be made.

It is expected that the ZSNAC will be empowered after three years of implementation of the Coop Dev Project.

Activity proceedings and other project-related documents are submitted to the Extension Directorate of the University. Scanned copies of the documents are saved and maintained in a database that is served as ready reference and can be accessed by other degree programs in the University through a link or QR code. Extension project proponents can view the documents but cannot be downloaded to prevent unauthorized printing, reproduction, and distribution of the extension reports.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Establishment of the Cooperative Development Project. The Coop Dev Project was conceived through a request from PhilRice-Batac. A consultation meeting was conducted, after which plans were laid out. A need assessment survey of the ZSNAC was conducted to determine their needs for development. Based on the results of the needs assessment, and the adaptation of the capacity building framework in the study of Valdez (2019), an extension project proposal and training series proposals were prepared, reviewed, and submitted to the Extension Directorate of the university.

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The extension project proposal and the training series proposals were endorsed by the College Extension Coordinator, Dean of CBEA, and the Director for Extension, recommend approval by the Vice President for Research and Extension, and approved by the University President of the Mariano Marcos State University.

The Coop Dev Project has its Technical Working Group (TWG) composed of four core faculty members and the students enrolled in the BSCM Program. The faculty members are responsible for coordinating activities with PhilRice-Batac and the ZSNAC and provide overall supervision for the implementation of the extension project, while the students serve as task force to help in the pre-, during and post documentation and serve as facilitators during the capability enhancement activities. Lastly, faculty members from CBEA were tapped as resources persons to discuss the different topics in the capability enhancement trainings.

Strengthening Partnership. To strengthen the partnership between the BSCM-CBEA-MMSU, PhilRice-Batac, and the ZSNAC, two (2) Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) were forged to cover the implementation of the Coop Dev Project and its activities from August 2021 to December 2024. The MOA explicitly stated the responsibilities of each party in the implementation. Cost-sharing was also practiced defraying the expenses to be used in implementing the extension project.

Implementation of the Cooperative Development Project and Delivery of Development Interventions. The Cooperative Development (Coop Dev) project with its component was officially and formally launched on the 8th day of October 2021 at the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative (ZSNAC) in Barangay Bugasi, Banna, Ilocos Norte.

The project was implemented through the approved extension project and four training series proposals, namely, Capability Enhancement Training Series on Cooperative Intellectual Capacity; Capability Enhancement Training Series on Cooperative Governance; Capability Enhancement Training Series on Cooperative Management; and Capability Enhancement Training on Development and Operational Planning. The training series was actively participated by the officers, employees, and members of the agriculture cooperative. Table 1 presents the capability enhancement activities that the Coop Dev Project implemented from October 2021 to April 2023.

Table 1. List of capability enhancement activities conducted.

Date of Conduct	Title of Training	No. of Participants	Overall Training Evaluation (Based on participants' satisfaction)
Capability Enhancement Training Series on Cooperative Intellectual Capacity for Officers, Employees, and Members of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative			
October 21, 2021	Series: Human Capital	28	Highly Satisfied (4.89)
November 12 and 26, 2021	Series 2: Relational Capital	26	Highly Satisfied (4.91)
December 10 2021	Series: Structural Capital	23	Highly Satisfied (4.73)
<i>Capability Enhancement Training Series on Cooperative Governance for Officers, Employees, and Members of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative</i>			
January 14, 2022	Series 1: Rights, Powers, and Obligations of the General Assembly	17	Highly Satisfied (4.96)
February 4, 2022	Series 2: Cooperative Policy, Policy Formulation and Parliamentary Procedures	25	Highly Satisfied (4.89)
February 24, 2022	Series 3: Entrepreneurial. Business, and Records Management	19	Highly Satisfied (4.92)
March 25, 2022	Series 4: Bookkeeping, Standards and Internal Control, and Financial Management	17	Highly Satisfied (4.99)
April 1, 2022	Series 5: Effective Business Communication and Report Preparation	18	Highly Satisfied (4.96)
May 6, 2022	Series 6: Program and Project Planning and Proposal Preparation	23	Highly Satisfied (4.89)
June 3, 2022	Series 7: Election Guidelines, Rules and Regulations, Audit, and Inventory Management	16	Highly Satisfied (4.98)
June 24, 2022	Series 8: Mediation, Conciliation and Conflict Management	18	Highly Satisfied (5.00)

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Capability Enhancement Training Series on Cooperative Management for Officers, Employees, and Members of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative			
November 8, 2022	Training in SWOT Analysis preparation, business competition, purchasing power, and spending patterns	20	Highly Satisfied (5.00)
Capability Enhancement Training on Development and Operational Plan Preparation for the Officers and Employees of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative.			
February 17, 2023	Series 1: Training in Development Plan Preparation	10	Highly Satisfied (5.00)
April 5, 2023	Series 2: Training on Operational Plan Preparation	10	Highly Satisfied (5.00)

Legend: Ranges of Mean Values Descriptive Interpretation

4.51 – 5.00	Highly Satisfied
3.51 – 4.50	Satisfied
2.51 – 3.50	Neutral
1.51 – 2.50	Dissatisfied
1.00 – 1.50	Highly Dissatisfied

Capability Enhancement Training Series on Cooperative Intellectual Capacity for Officers, Employees and Members of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative. This capability enhancement training was intended to strengthen and empower the cooperative officers, employees, and members in effectively providing the needs and services of their members, customers, suppliers, and other external entities and for the cooperative to become competitive, profitable, and sustainable. Three training courses were delivered along human capital, relational capital, and structural capital.

The training on human capital, which was conducted on October 21, 2021, aimed to enhance the human capital of the cooperative by providing the cooperative officers, employees, and members with the necessary learnings to become effective in providing the products and services to both members and customers, and other entities having transactions with them.

The training was attended by 28 participants to include the officers, employees, and members of the agriculture cooperative. Three (3) resource persons were invited to discuss the topics on social organizations, the importance of human capital and personality development.

The participants were highly satisfied (4.89) based on their evaluation on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (4.92), adequacy of information (4.84), competence of the speakers (4.96), usefulness of the training (4.92), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (4.92), effectiveness of the methods used (4.96), venue (4.96), foods (4.88), accommodation (4.96), overall rating for the whole training (4.88), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (4.72), and quality of service of the training management team (4.84).

The training on relational capital conducted on November 12 and 26, 2021, aimed to enhance the relational capital of the cooperative that would lead to a strong relationship between the cooperative officers, employees, and members to their customers, suppliers, and other external bodies to ensure responsiveness and achieve efficient quality in providing products and services and expand their business endeavors.

The training was participated by 26 officers, employees, and members of the agriculture cooperative. Four (4) resource persons shared their expertise on the importance of relational capital, customer satisfaction and loyalty, supply chain management and cooperative branding and image.

The participants were highly satisfied (4.91) with the conduct of the training. The participants' evaluations were based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (4.87), adequacy of information (4.87), competence of the speakers (4.87), usefulness of the training (4.91), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (4.91), effectiveness of the methods used (4.87), venue (4.95), foods (4.95), accommodation (4.91), overall rating for the whole training (4.95), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (4.91), and quality of service of the training management team (4.91).

The training on structural capital was conducted on December 10, 2021, aimed to enhance the structural capital of the cooperative by equipping the cooperative officers, employees, and members, the capabilities to establish, improve and reformulate the processes, procedures, system, databases, work culture, and other aspects of the cooperative.

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The training was attended by 23 participants to include the officers, employees, and members of the agriculture cooperative. Two (2) resource persons were invited to discuss the topics on the importance of structural capital and formulation of vision, mission, and strategic objectives of cooperatives.

Generally, the participants were highly satisfied (4.73) based on the following specific criteria: relevance of the topics covered (4.57), adequacy of information (4.35), competence of the speakers (4.57), usefulness of the training (5.00), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (4.57), effectiveness of the methods used (4.78), venue (4.78), foods (4.78), accommodation (5.00), overall rating for the whole training (5.00), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (4.78), and quality of service of the training management team (4.57).

Capability Enhancement Training Series on Cooperative Governance for Officers, Employees and Members of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative. This training series was intended to equip the cooperative officers, employees, and members with the skills of governing the cooperative to become a solid, competitive, profitable, and sustainable enterprise. This series was composed of eight (8) trainings to include the rights, powers, and obligations of the general assembly; cooperative policy, policy formulation and parliamentary procedures; entrepreneurial, business and records management; bookkeeping, standards and internal control, and financial management and budgeting for cooperatives; effective business communication and report preparation; plan, program and project proposal preparation; election guidelines, rules and regulations, audit and inventory management; and mediation and ethics.

The training on the rights, powers, and obligations of the general assembly conducted on January 14, 2022, aimed to orient and inculcate in the minds of the cooperative members, officers and employees about their rights, powers, and obligations to the cooperative.

The training was participated by 17 officers, employees, and members of the cooperative. Three (3) resource persons were invited to share their expertise on the topics about the implementing rules and regulations of certain provisions of RA 9520 known as the Cooperative Code of the Philippines (RA 9520), fundamentals of cooperatives, and the value of teamwork in the organization.

The participants were highly satisfied (4.96) with the conduct of the training. The evaluation was based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (4.94), adequacy of information (4.94), competence of the speakers (5.00), usefulness of the training (4.94), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (5.00), effectiveness of the methods used (4.94), venue (4.88), foods (5.00), accommodation (4.94), overall rating for the whole training (4.94), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (4.94), and quality of service of the training management team (5.00).

The training on cooperative policy, policy formulation and parliamentary procedures that was conducted on February 4, 2022, intended to strengthen the capabilities of the cooperative's human resources to formulate policies for the cooperative and to properly follow the parliamentary procedures.

The training was participated by 25 officers, employees, and members of the cooperative. Three resource persons were invited to discuss the topics on cooperative governance and leadership, direction-setting and policy formulation, and parliamentary procedures.

The participants were highly satisfied (4.89) based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (4.94), adequacy of information (4.88), competence of the speakers (4.94), usefulness of the training (4.76), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (4.94), effectiveness of the methods used (4.82), venue (4.94), foods (4.88), accommodation (4.94), overall rating for the whole training (4.88), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (4.88), and quality of service of the training management team (4.88).

The training on entrepreneurial, business, and records management conducted on February 24, 2022, aimed to strengthen the capabilities of the officers, employees, and members to conduct entrepreneurial activities and managing the business operations of the cooperative, including proper records management.

The training was participated by 19 officers, members, and employees of the cooperatives. Three (3) resource persons were invited to share their expertise on entrepreneurial and business management, records management, and basic computer applications.

The participants were highly satisfied (4.92) with attending the training. The overall evaluation was based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (4.94), adequacy of information (4.94), competence of the speakers (4.94), usefulness of the training (4.89), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (4.89), effectiveness of the methods used (4.94), venue (4.89), foods (4.94), accommodation (4.94), overall rating for the whole training (4.89), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (4.94), and quality of service of the training management team (4.94).

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The training on bookkeeping, standards and internal control and financial management was conducted on March 25, 2022, intended to equip the officer, employees, and members with the skills needed in bookkeeping, orient them to different cooperative standards and internal controls for cooperatives, and the skills in managing the financial resources of the cooperative.

The training was attended by 17 cooperative officers, employees, and members. Three (3) resource persons were invited to discuss the topics on standards and internal controls for cooperatives, financial management and budgeting for cooperatives and basics of bookkeeping for non-accountants.

The participants were highly satisfied (4.99) with the training based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (5.00), adequacy of information (5.00), competence of the speakers (5.00), usefulness of the training (5.00), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (5.00), effectiveness of the methods used (5.00), venue (5.00), foods (4.88), accommodation (5.00), overall rating for the whole training (5.00), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (5.00), and quality of service of the training management team (5.00).

The training on effective business communication and report preparation was conducted on April 1, 2022, aimed at equipping the officers, employees, and members of the cooperative the skills and knowledge for effective communication, both oral and written, and preparing mandated reports properly.

The training was participated by 18 cooperative officers, employees, and members. Three resource persons were invited to share their expertise in business communication and report preparation and basic computer application. A workshop was conducted to enhance the skills of the participants in using computers and basic computer applications like MS Word and MS Excel.

The training was attended by 18 cooperative officers, employees, and members. Two (2) resource persons were invited to share their expertise in preparing effective communication and using computer applications for word and data processing.

The trainees were highly satisfied (4.96) based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (4.94), adequacy of information (4.94), competence of the speakers (4.94), usefulness of the training (5.00), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (5.00), effectiveness of the methods used (4.94), venue (5.00), foods (4.83), accommodation (4.94), overall rating for the whole training (5.00), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (5.00), and quality of service of the training management team (5.00).

The training on program and project planning and proposal preparation conducted on May 6, 2022, intended to equip the officers, employees, and members with the skills and knowledge on how to formulate a unified hierarchy of plan and make programs and project proposals to be implemented by the cooperative for sustainable development.

The training was attended by 23 officers, employees, and members of the cooperative. One (1) resource person was invited to provide expertise on planning and preparation of program and project proposals.

The trainees were highly satisfied (4.89) with the conduct of the training. The evaluation was based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (4.85), adequacy of information (4.90), competence of the speakers (4.85), usefulness of the training (4.85), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (4.90), effectiveness of the methods used (4.90), venue (4.90), foods (4.90), accommodation (4.90), overall rating for the whole training (4.90), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (4.90), and quality of service of the training management team (4.89).

The training on election guidelines, rules and regulations, audit and inventory management conducted on June 3, 2022, aimed to equip the officers, employees, and members of the cooperative with the knowledge on the guidelines in conducting election of officers, orient them with the different rules and regulations, including policies governing the cooperative, how audits are being conducted, and managing inventories.

The training was attended by 16 officers, employees, and members of the cooperative. Two (2) resource persons were invited to discuss the topics on the election guidelines, and cooperative rules and regulations, auditing, and inventory management.

The trainees were highly satisfied (4.98) with attending the training. The evaluation was based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (5.00), adequacy of information (4.93), competence of the speakers (4.93), usefulness of the training (5.00), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (5.00), effectiveness of the methods used (5.00), venue (4.93), foods (5.00), accommodation (5.00), overall rating for the whole training (5.00), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (5.00), and quality of service of the training management team (4.93).

The training on mediation, conciliation and conflict management, and ethics conducted on June 24, 2022, intended to equip the officers, employees, and members of the cooperatives with the knowledge on how to conduct mediation, conciliation and managing conflicts, and oriented them the importance of ethics in governing the cooperative.

The training was participated by 18 officers, employees, and members of the cooperative. Two (2) resource persons were invited to share expertise on the conduct of mediation, conciliation and conflict management, and the importance of ethics in cooperatives.

The trainees were highly satisfied (5.00) on the conduct of the training based on the following criteria: relevance of the

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topics covered (5.00), adequacy of information (5.00), competence of the speakers (5.00), usefulness of the training (5.00), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (5.00), effectiveness of the methods used (5.00), venue (5.00), foods (5.00), accommodation (5.00), overall rating for the whole training (5.00), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (5.00), and quality of service of the training management team (5.00).

Capability Enhancement Training on Cooperative Management for Officers, Employees and Members of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative. This training was intended to strengthen the skills and knowledge of the officers, employees, and members of the cooperative to excellently manage the business operations of the cooperative to become a solid and unique business entity, competitive, profitable, and sustainable enterprise.

The training on SWOT analysis preparation, business competition, consumer purchasing power and spending pattern was conducted on November 18, 2022, and attended by 20 officers, employees, and members of the cooperative. Three (3) resource persons were invited to discuss the topics on Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis, business competition, consumer purchasing power and spending patterns, and economic environment analysis.

The trainees were highly satisfied (5.00) on the conduct of the training based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (5.00), adequacy of information (5.00), competence of the speakers (5.00), usefulness of the training (5.00), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (5.00), effectiveness of the methods used (5.00), venue (5.00), foods (5.00), accommodation (5.00), overall rating for the whole training (5.00), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (5.00), and quality of service of the training management team (5.00).

Capability Enhancement Training on Development and Operational Planning for the Officers and Employees of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative. The training aimed to equip and strengthen the skills of the cooperative officers and employees in crafting the development plan for FY 2023 to FY 2027 and operational plan for FY 2023.

The training on development plan preparation was conducted on February 17, 2023, and attended by 10 officers and employees of the cooperative. Two (2) resource persons were invited to discuss the process of formulating and writing a development plan. A workshop was also conducted to draft the development plan of the cooperative for FY 2023-2027.

The officers and employees were highly satisfied (5.00) with the activity. The evaluation was based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (5.00), adequacy of information (5.00), competence of the speakers (5.00), usefulness of the training (5.00), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (5.00), effectiveness of the methods used (5.00), venue (5.00), foods (5.00), accommodation (5.00), overall rating for the whole training (5.00), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (5.00), and quality of service of the training management team (5.00).

The training on operational plan preparation was conducted on April 5, 2023, intended to strengthen the skills and knowledge of the cooperative officers and employees in formulating the operational plan of the cooperative for FY 2023.

The training was attended by 10 officers and employees of the cooperative. Two (2) resource persons were invited to discuss the process of crafting an operational plan. A workshop was conducted to draft the operational plan of the cooperative for FY 2023.

The participants were highly satisfied (5.00) on the conduct of the training based on the following criteria: relevance of the topics covered (5.00), adequacy of information (5.00), competence of the speakers (5.00), usefulness of the training (5.00), appropriateness of methods such as discussion, lectures and workshop used (5.00), effectiveness of the methods used (5.00), venue (5.00), foods (5.00), accommodation (5.00), overall rating for the whole training (5.00), overall rating for the timeliness of the service delivery (5.00), and quality of service of the training management team (5.00).

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Cooperative Development Project. To determine the progress of the implementation of the Coop Dev Project, five (5) monitoring and evaluation activities were conducted. The project was able to capacitate the officers, employees, and members of the cooperative by providing them with a series of capability enhancement trainings on cooperative intellectual capacity, governance, management, development planning, and operational planning. The proponents of the project continued to coach and mentored the human resources of the cooperative. Technical assistance was rendered specifically on bookkeeping, financial statement preparation, records management, crafting of the organizational structure, development of the policies and procedures manual, development of the vision, mission, and strategic directions, and crafting of the development and operational plans. Training modules were submitted to the MMSU Extension Directorate for conversion to Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials.

Outputs of the Cooperative Development Project. Through the capability enhancement activities provided by the Coop Dev Project, the following were the noticeable outputs of the officers, employees, and members: formulated the vision, mission,

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and strategic directions of the cooperative until FY 2027; crafted the organizational structure of the cooperative; developed the policies and procedures manual of the cooperative; crafted the cooperative's development plan for FY 2023-2027; and crafted the cooperative's operational plan for FY 2023.

Moreover, all the training modules used in the different training courses were submitted to the MMSU Extension Directorate for the conversion to Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials. Four (4) IEC materials with ISSN were produced and provided to the agriculture cooperative. Others are still in the process of conversion.

Social Impact of the Cooperative Development Project. The Cooperative Development Project has had significant social impacts that contribute to the growth and sustainability of cooperatives and their communities. One major impact is the empowerment of members. Capability enhancement activities have strengthened cooperative officers, employees, and members by equipping them with essential skills and knowledge. This empowerment fostered active participation in decision-making processes, leading to increased self-confidence and a stronger sense of ownership that extended to other aspects of their lives. The project has also led to improved business operations. Training programs enhanced the capabilities of cooperative members, enabling them to perform their roles more effectively. This results in increased productivity and income, ultimately improving the economic well-being of members and their families, reducing poverty, and raising their standard of living. Another key impact is knowledge sharing. These capability enhancement activities encouraged the exchange of ideas and best practices among members, fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual support. This cooperative spirit extended beyond the organization, strengthening ties within the broader community. The project also promoted community development. Cooperatives play a vital role in local economies, and when their members are well-trained and the cooperative itself is strengthened, a positive ripple effect is created. This can lead to job creation, increased economic activity, and overall community growth. Social inclusion is another important benefit. The training programs provided opportunities for members, officers, and employees to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to actively participate in cooperative activities. This promoted inclusivity and helped reduce inequalities within both the cooperative and the wider community. Additionally, the project contributed to social capital building. Cooperatives naturally foster trust and a sense of belonging among members. By strengthening these relationships, the training initiatives created a more cohesive and supportive social network. Finally, the project enhanced economic resilience. By equipping cooperative members with the skills needed to navigate economic challenges, the cooperative became more adaptable and better prepared to withstand financial hardships. This resilience benefits not only cooperative members but also the broader community, which relies on cooperation for economic stability. Through these various social impacts, the Cooperative Development Project plays a crucial role in fostering stronger, more sustainable communities.

The capability enhancement training provided to the cooperative can have a multifaceted social impact, ranging from individual empowerment and improved livelihoods to community development and social inclusion. These outcomes align with the cooperative principles of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, and solidarity, and they contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable society.

The Economic Impact of the Cooperative Development Project. The return on assets was used to measure the financial performance of the cooperative. The ROA determines how efficiently the cooperative uses its assets to generate their profit.

According to Hargrave (2024), a return of assets of over 5% is generally considered good, thus the cooperative is considered good in its financial performance since in three consecutive years, there is an increasing trend from 5.56% in 2021 to 7.73% as of October 13, 2023. This is a manifestation that the officers, with the support of their employees and members managed their agriculture cooperative effectively and efficiently in generating their profits using their assets. This is considered impressive for a very young micro cooperative, considering the nature of their business operations.

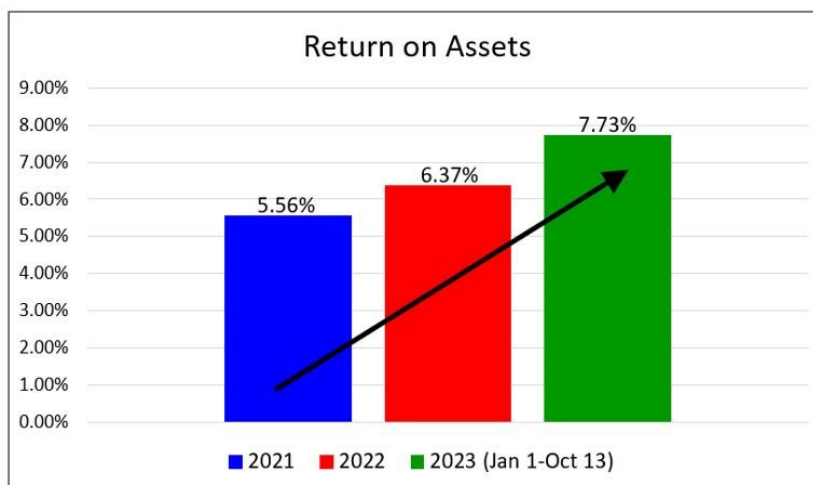


Figure 2. Return on Assets of the Zanjera Sto. Niño Agriculture Cooperative.

Best Practices of the Cooperative Development Project. The Coop Dev Project established the following best practices: the extension project was research-based and emanated from the study of Valdez (2019); consultation meeting with PhilRice-Batac and ZSNAC was conducted; needs assessment surveys were conducted before the preparation and approval of Extension Project and Training Proposals; Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) were forged to strengthen the partnership between the BSCM-CBEA-MMSU, PhilRice-Batac, and ZSNAC; extension project and training series proposals were reviewed by the Chief for Education and Training and Chief for Monitoring and Evaluation, submitted to the Director for Extension for endorsement, recommend approval by the Vice President for Research and Extension, before its approval by the University President; training modules prepared by the resource persons were reviewed by subject matter specialists before its utilization in the training; training modules were converted into IEC Materials with ISSN through the assistance of the University Extension Directorate and provided to ZSNAC, through the PhilRice-Batac; faculty and students were actively involved in the implementation of the extension project; extension activities were properly documented and portfolios were created and maintained; monitoring and evaluation activities were conducted and properly documented; activity proceedings and project-related reports were prepared and submitted to the Extension Directorate of the University; the implementation of the Coop Dev Project is reflected in the approved 2024-2028 CBEA Research and Extension Agenda (CREDA); active involvement of BSCM faculty and students in the project implementation; faculty members of CBEA were tapped as resources persons; and scanned copies of the all project-related documents are maintained in an online database to serve as ready references for other degree programs in the University.

Sustainability of the Cooperative Development Project. Through the capability enhancement training and activities on cooperative intellectual capacity, governance, management, and development and operational planning provided by the Coop Dev project of the BSCM-CBEA-MMSU, in partnership with PhilRice-Batac, to the ZSNAC, it is expected that they will be able to govern, manage and operate their agriculture cooperative efficiently and effectively.

After the implementation of the project in December 2024, the Coop Dev Project will continue to support the ZSNAC by providing them with technical assistance, coaching and consultation services. Other development interventions will also be provided upon the needs and request of the ZSNAC.

To ensure the sustainability of the Coop Dev Project, its implementation is reflected in the approved 2024-2028 CBEA Research and Extension Development Agenda (CREDA) to continue assisting and helping cooperatives in the Province of Ilocos Norte in addressing their developmental needs.

Relevance of the Cooperative Development Project. The Coop Dev Project has been in implementation for around two years and to determine the development brought by the project particularly its relevance to the ZSNAC and to its officers, employees, and members was gathered using the instrument adapted from the study of Valdez (2019). The extension project was evaluated by two (2) PhilRice-Batac representatives, six (6) cooperative officers, and six (6) cooperative members.

The result shows that the Coop Dev Project is very relevant (4.90) to the agriculture cooperative and to its officers, employees, and members. Specifically, the extension project is very relevant because it was able to orient the cooperative personnel on the importance of cooperative intellectual capacity, governance, and management to achieve desired goals and performance (4.87). In addition, the extension project is very relevant because the capacity enhancement activities were able to enhance the knowledge and skills of the human resources along intellectual capacity (4.93), governance (4.93), and management (4.73). Moreover, the extension project is very relevant because it was able to assist the human resources to identify initiatives

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that enhanced the cooperative's performance (4.93) and fortify its business operations (4.93). Lastly, the extension project is very relevant because it provided opportunities for the cooperative to develop leading to its sustainability (4.93).

According to the officers and members of the ZSNAC, the Coop Dev Project was very relevant because of the capacity enhancement activities that had been provided. They were able to strengthen and enhance their knowledge and skills in governing operations and managing the business endeavors of the cooperative, including their democratic control and decision-making abilities. By practicing the learnings acquired, they were able to create their vision, mission, and strategic objectives, crafted their rules and procedures manual, created their organizational structure, crafted their development and operational plans, and were able to make their financial statements properly as required by authorities.

Moreover, due to properly practicing their learnings, they were able to source out funds from government agencies to finance their projects as stated in their development and operational plans. As manifestations of their excellent governance and effective management, the cooperative was able to build their learning center that serves as their office and venue for trainings, workshops, and other activities, built a garage for their hauler and can also serve as small warehouse for their palay yield, purchased a hauler and a ripper to help their members during harvesting of yields, and in the process of building a pigpen that can accommodate 70 heads. These endeavors of the ZSNAC are positive signs of their development.

According to the PhilRice-Batac, as a rice research institution, the Coop Dev Project is considered very relevant because it serves as an arm to capacitate the cooperatives on organizational building. The partnership with the BSCM-CBEA-MMSU in this aspect is very important to successfully help the cooperatives manage and operate as an agro-enterprise venture.

For the BSCM-CBEA-MMSU, the Coop Dev Project is very relevant because of providing comprehensive capability enhancement endeavors and assistance to the ZSNAC to help them develop to achieve cooperative sustainability. In addition, the project serves as an arm of the university to achieve one of its seven-point agenda which is high impact and transformative extension and outreach program. Specifically, the project helps the BSCM program to accomplish its program outcome of establishing strong linkages and partnerships with local cooperatives and related agencies in the formulation and implementation of development programs. The project enables the BSCM program, through its faculty members and students, to transfer knowledge and skills on business management, entrepreneurship, marketing, recordkeeping, and other interventions. The project has been integrated for curriculum enhancement by serving as immersion for students in cooperative training and development. The faculty and students are exposed to the realities and trends in cooperatives which serve as baseline information in the development of sustainable extension projects and in curriculum enhancement.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Coop Dev Project spearheaded by the BSCM program of CBEA-MMSU, in partnership with PhilRice-Batac, played a major role improving the efficiency and overall operations of ZSNAC. It was able to enhance the governance and management aspects of the agriculture cooperative. Through the capacity enhancement activities, the knowledge and skills of the human resources of the cooperative were strengthened that helped them avoid risks, look for opportunities, make clear and informed decisions, and actively participate in all cooperative endeavors leading to their development and sustainability. In addition, the extension project promoted social cohesion and inclusivity by fostering a sense of belongingness and shared purpose among the officers, employees, and members of the agriculture cooperative. The collaborative efforts of the BSCM program of CBEAMMSU, PhilRice-Batac and the ZSNAC have built trust and confidence that foster camaraderie, open communication, and accountability that reduced disparity and enabled them to become resilient amidst challenges. Lastly, the relevance of the Coop Dev Project lies in the capacity to empower the human resources, promote inclusivity, and foster sustainability to the agriculture cooperative.

Based on the results of implementation and the relevance of the Coop Dev Project the following are recommended: continue to provide support, technical assistance, and other developmental needs to ZSNAC; continue to maintain the strong partnership with PhilRice-Batac to help capacitate and enrich the knowledge and skills on governance and management of human resources of other cooperatives in the Province of Ilocos Norte; coordinate closely with the MMSU Extension Directorate to continue generating information, education, and information (IEC) materials with ISSN which are to be provided to ZSNAC to serve as ready references and reading materials; the Coop Dev Project to undergo impact assessment in 2025 to determine and assess the effects of the project on the ZSNAC; and the proponents of the Coop Dev Project to undergo the Trainer's' Training conducted by the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) to become accredited cooperative trainers.

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