RESEARCH BRIEF

Local Systems Practice (LSP) Activity

LOCAL WORKS PHILIPPINES | TUBLAY WATER MANAGEMENT

September 2019

This research brief presents the initial findings and lessons learned from a study of the stakeholder relationships and key success factors for the water management network in the municipality of Tublay in Benguet, Philippines.

In 2018, LSP participated in a Broad Listening activity with the Local Works Philippines team. This activity involved open-ended conversations with a diverse array of local stakeholders from several regions throughout the country to identify and better understand development issues in and across their communities. Qualitative data analysis (QDA) of the documentation from stakeholder discussions uncovered several emergent issues – access to water being among the most prominent, specifically in the municipality of Tublay, Benguet.

The Local Works/Philippines team requested support from LSP to pilot a systems assessment in Tublay to answer several questions about collaboration among key actors operating with formal or informal mandates to support water management in the municipality. LSP conducted a social network analysis (SNA) supported by qualitative research including focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) to answer these questions. This research will inform next steps toward improving water access for residents of Tublay.

Research Questions

1. Who are the existing actors in Tublay that manage or respond to issues related to community access to water resources?
2. What are the primary issues community members face related to water resources?
3. How do existing actors in Turblay collaborate/communicate on water management and access issues?
4. What, if any, are the most significant barriers to effective collaboration between actors in Tublay?
5. Can collaboration be improved between existing actors to better manage and/or address issues related to community access to water?

PROCESS

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS
March 2019, staff from LINC, local partner AKAP, and USAID/Philippines traveled to Tublay to meet with local stakeholders to better understand water scarcity root causes and both current and previous activities to improving access.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS
April - May 2019, five FGDs conducted with 61 community members to identify key actors in the water management network for their inclusion in the network analysis.

FINALIZE ROSTER
May 2019, all actors were included in an initial roster for the SNA, based on input from AKAP, USAID/Philippines and SP.82 actors were identified.

ADMINISTER SURVEY
In June 2019, a Network Analysis survey was administered to the 82 actors on the roster, 71 completed the in-person survey, with 66 indicating they had a relationship with someone else on the roster, thus a part of the water management network and of the network map analysis.

ANALIZE NETWORK
Data was analyzed using Kumu.io online software and all of the network metrics provided.

VERIFY DATA WITH COMMUNITY
On August 2019, the high-level findings were shared with community members in Tublay.

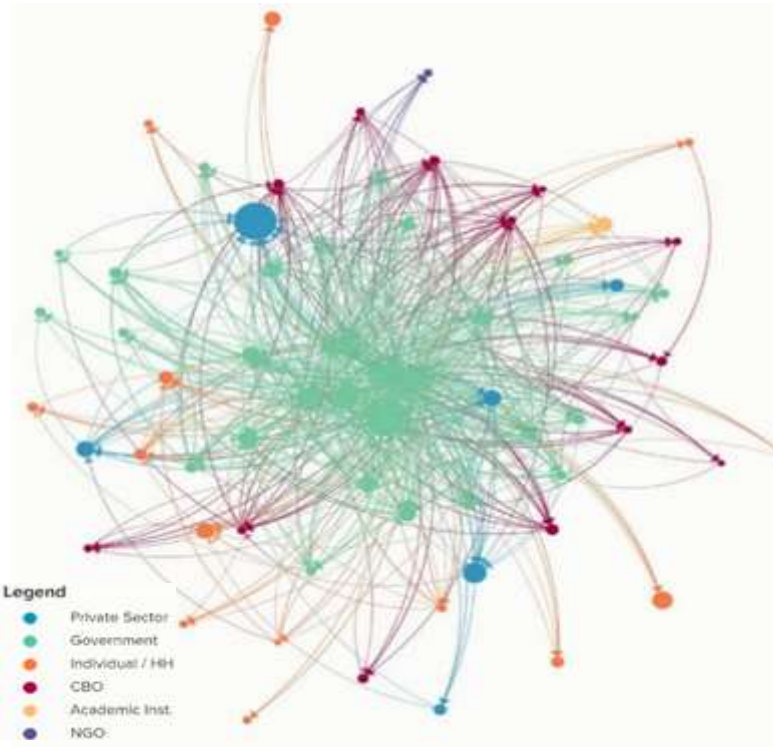
FINDINGS

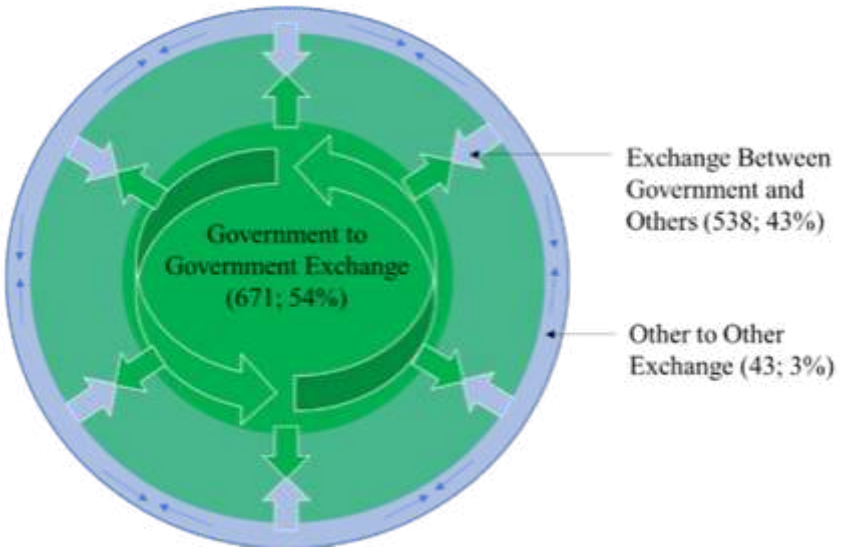
The following are a sample of key findings that resonated with stakeholders and demonstrate the types of insights that arose from the analysis. More detail is provided in the full report.

Prominence of Municipal Government

Government (green nodes in the center of the map) is the most central and influential sector in the water management network. There are 31 government offices involved in water management. 28 of the 31 offices are at the municipal, barangay, or sitio-level. This number is surprising given the population of approximately 18,000 in the municipality.

Additionally, the government sub-network is very densely connected compared to the network overall and compared to what would be expected. This suggests some redundancies or a lack of efficiency among government actors. There are two central actors in the municipal government who are connected to every other actor in the network. The centrality of one of these actors is due to the individual's informal role in supporting residents in obtaining water permits and not due to a formal role within the municipal government.



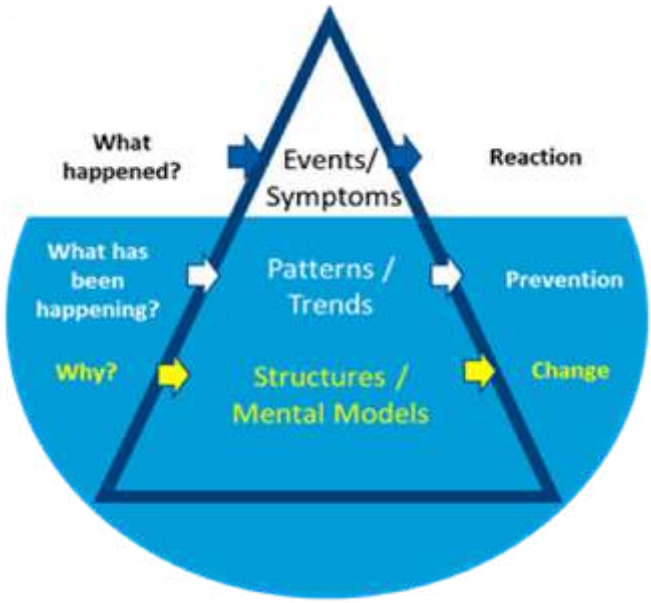


Peripheral Role of Community-Based Organizations

CBOs are not among the most central, connected, or influential actors in the network. They have few connections to other actors in the network, and the majority of these connections are with government actors, and not with other CBOs or households. However, the importance of CBOs was mentioned frequently by community members during our scoping visit, and during focus groups. This suggests that community members have a different perception of the role of CBOs and the role of various government offices in water management.

The Information Network - 66% of connections in the network are exchanges of information. The next largest category is "other" exchanges, comprising 16% of connections. This category consists mostly of advice and expertise. Therefore, 82% of this network is based on information and idea exchange. Financial, in-kind, and labor exchanges account for a minority of connections. It is worth noting that at the time of this study there were no significant water projects underway that were mentioned by any of the participants. It is reasonable to anticipate that the structure of the network would change during the implementation of a water project.

RECOMMENDATIONS



The summarized programmatic recommendations below are organized from high to low leverage based on the "iceberg model." The iceberg model identifies three basic levels found in complex situations: structures/mental models, patterns/trends, and events/symptoms.

The SNA and resulting data can be used as baseline for any resultant activities. Comparing key metrics such as the Density among government actors, changes in centrality metrics, and the amount of exchange between the government and community actors would be meaningful indicators of program efficacy. Comparing the baseline network map and metrics to future maps and metrics would reveal the emergence of new influential or central actors in the water management network, the evolution of relationships (strengthening/weakening) over time, and the degree to which collaboration and coordination has been streamlined.

STREAMLINE THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACTORS

High Leverage: A longer-term effort to clarify the function of each government office is needed to simplify the flow of information between government actors, especially at the municipal level to increase the network efficiency. There are different ways to accomplish this, one option is to create a central oversight body or water district. Other viable options are to clarify roles of current actors or to improve the support of barangay councils.

ADDRESS WATER SOURCE OWNERSHIP

Medium Leverage: Most water source owners do not have a legal permit securing their water rights. Of the 14 households / water source owners surveyed as part of the SNA only one had acquired legal rights to his water source. The rest of the owners inherited or have ancestral rights to their water sources. The contestation over water rights is an emerging issue in the community. Current water source owners risk losing access to their water sources.

ADDRESS PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE DIRECTLY

Low Leverage: Many of the issues noted by the community are related to physical infrastructure and water distribution. Community members identified several potential fixes including developing lowland sources, repairing existing damage on the distribution system, upgrading the materials, constructing new tanks, and other improvements. However, without addressing underlying structures, infrastructure problems are likely to continue to arise.

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About Local Systems Practice: Local Systems Practice (LSP) is a USAID-funded activity that directly assists multiple Missions, partners, and constituents to design and adaptively manage systems-based programs in complex environments. The concept has been designed to aid Missions and partners to overcome four specific challenges to effective Local Systems Practice through: a) Listening; b) Engagement; c) Discovery; and d) Adaptation. The Theory of Change underpinning the activity asserts that the application of systems tools to complex local challenges at multiple intervals throughout the program cycle will enhance the sustainability of programming, resulting in better-informed, measurable interventions that complement and reinforce the systems they seek to strengthen. The LSP team is composed of both development practitioners and research institutions to most effectively explore and implement systems thinking approaches with Missions, local partners and other local stakeholders. The activity is led by LINC LLC with five sub-implementers: ANSER, the University of Notre Dame, AVSI, the University of Missouri, and Practical Action.

For more information on LSP and additional resources, please visit: www.localsystemspractice.org