

Barangay Sanito

An Empowering Barangay Code

The sanity of the residents of Barangay Sanito was sorely tested when the population of their coastal village was more than doubled by the influx of informal settlers in their area. In a short time, Barangay Sanito became infamous as the “mother barangay of Ipil”—a place of squatters and lawlessness. The huge presence of informal settlers resulted in chaos; there was no zoning, no sanitation and criminality worsened.

After the Abu Sayaf raided Ipil in 1995, more people poured into Barangay Sanito as they sought the protection of the 102nd Brigade of the Philippine Army and the Provincial Police Office which were stationed there. But poverty remained pervasive, criminality was high and the sewage and garbage problem was worsening with the mismanagement of the municipal dumpsite.

Fed up with the dire conditions, the barangay’s leadership conducted a series of consultative meetings with its constituents in 2003 to try to impose order to the chaos. Together, they designed the program called *Avante Sanito* (Forward Sanito) which they later renamed to *Programang Pampatatag ng Barangay Sanito*.

The barangay’s finances were then in shambles and there was an urgent need to exact appropriate regulatory fees to increase funds for the delivery of basic services. The barangay officials also required a better mandate that would empower them to motivate and elicit the participation of the private sector in the governance of the barangay. Hence, the Sanito Barangay Government Code of 2004, which was later amended as

the Sanito Barangay Government Code of 2005 was introduced.

The barangay code called for the strengthening of the inter-office linkages and the barangay’s relationship with the private sector through the *Kapit-bisig* structure of governance. It also mandated the imposition of additional fees such as the Barangay Public Works Development Fee, Barangay Water Development Fee and the Coastal Resource Development Fee. Vagrancy was penalized. Solid waste management was improved. And the military and the police who were based in the barangay were compelled to be members of the different barangay bodies. Lastly, the various *purok* were made accountable for their actions.

With the implementation of the code, Barangay Sanito was able to nurture a business-friendly atmosphere. It began to restore peace and order and build the infrastructure of the barangay.

Barangay Executive Orders, backed by barangay resolutions implementing the provisions of the code, were issued. Barangay assemblies were held every six months while a consultative meeting with the *purok* officials is held every three months. This participative process ensured continual evaluation of the efficacy of the measures put in place.

Among the innovations adopted was the establishment of the Sanito Agro-Eco Tourism Park. The barangay was able to tap the resources of various government agencies and the private sector in implementing various programs such as aquasilviculture, seaweeds processing, construction of farm-to-market roads, environmental protection and coastal resource management. Farm trainings were conducted and seedlings were distributed to the initial batch of farmer-beneficiaries to encourage crop production. The barangay in association with the provincial government tapped the Department of Agriculture and established linkages with other agencies in the packaging, promotion and marketing of livelihood products. Marketing linkages were established region-wide through the *Barangay Bagsakan* (Barangay Market).

The barangay’s advocacy on environmental protection, coastal resource management, and global warming compelled the residents to practice recycling and composting. Open burning which used to be rampant is now rare. The Barangay Environment Code and Coastal Management measures have also proven effective in safeguarding the environment.

The increased income of the barangay enabled it to enter into counter-parting scheme. With



counterpart funds, the barangay was able to draw more funding from donor agencies such as the USAID and the World Bank-funded projects of the Department of Agriculture and other agencies.

Gender sensitivity was also mainstreamed through the Pag-asa Women and the Sanito Responsible Women Association and was a built-in mechanism in the “Mini Kibbutz” for women and the Women Agar-agar Crackers Producers, as well as the Sanito Mudcrab and Livelihood Association.

The new barangay code empowered the local leadership to motivate and elicit the participation of the private sector in the governance and improvement of the barangay

The behavior of the people turned from passive to pro-active. By imposing the barangay code through the participatory approach, the barangay was able to complete its projects, resuscitate its economy, improve its infrastructure and impose peace and order. The residents are now more receptive to training and seminars. They have also become more conscious of their social responsibilities and are motivated to improve their communities.

The success of the program stem from the willingness of the governed to comply with the barangay code. But their compliance was also ensured because of the multi-sectoral participatory process which involved the different stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the code.

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Eventually, Barangay Sanito’s success gained the recognition of the provincial government and encouraged the different national agencies to extend technical assistance and funding for the construction of more farm-to-market roads, the construction of a permanent Bagsakan Building and funding for the Sanito Agro-Eco Tourism Park which includes coastal resource management, wildlife protection and livelihood.

Today, it looks like the program will continue to be implemented even beyond the present barangay leadership because it is anchored on community participation which created a sense of ownership, responsibility and sense of belongingness among the stakeholders. Moreover, protective measures and programs have been institutionalized. All of these bode well for the continuing stability of the formerly chaotic barangay whose constituents’ energies were effectively redirected to achieve concrete community development goals.