

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF BATANGAS CITY: BEST PRACTICE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

The success of Batangas City in the area of good governance may still be very young but having achieved such status in the whole world is something every Batangueño should be aware of and be proud of. This study aimed to analyze the adherence of Batangas City to the criteria set by the LivCom Awards that reflected the ideals of Good Governance. This study used qualitative-documentary analysis. Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) was used based on an interpretative philosophy in examining the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. The researcher employed interview and focus group discussion to substantiate the documents of this research. This paper concluded that the local government of Batangas City received various awards as Seal of Good Housekeeping 2012, Pamana ng Lahi 2012, Top 5 Luminaries ng Meralco 2012 and two international awards being the Most Liveable Community in 2011 and 2012. With the criteria set by international standards on Live Com Awards, Batangas City adheres to the criteria as Enhancement of the Natural and Built Landscapes, Arts, Culture and heritage, Environment Best Practices, Community Participation and Empowerment, Healthy Lifestyle and Strategic Planning. The impact of these international awards given to the Local Government of Batangas City is a manifestation of the best practices on good governance in as far as its responsibility with the national government with the advancement of economic prosperity, social well-being and environmental integrity.

Keywords - Local Government, Batangas City, Best Practice, Culture, Heritage, Environment

INTRODUCTION

Responsible government remains committed in valuing the principles of performance, accountability, transparency and inclusivity. It shares the responsibility with the national government the advancement of economic prosperity, social-well being and environmental integrity.

The Local Government of Batangas City envisions itself as “A well

diversified agro-industrial center and international gateway, with tourist-friendly and safe environment and quality infrastructure, powered by a globally-competitive citizenry. Inspired by transparent, firm and fair leadership”, this mission is guided by the political leaders in shaping what Batangas City is today.

The city is presently classified as a Regional Growth Center and identified as one of the sites for the Regional Agro-Industrial Center and Special Economic Zone as mandated by the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan and the Ecozone Act of 1995. This capital city is one of the nation’s top revenue earning cities and the site of one of the biggest refineries in the Philippines. It is also known as the “Industrial Port City of CALABARZON”. Recognizing its role as a leading contributor to the national economic growth, political actors and the civil society work hand in hand in achieving sustainable development programs that embodied its vision.

Together with the 105 barangays comprising the whole of Batangas City, the Local Government’s efforts were recognized by different local and international organizations. Among these awards are the Most Liveable International Community award for 2011 and 2012, The Seal of Good Housekeeping 2012, Gawad Pamana ng Lahi Regional Award 2012 and the Top 5 Luminaries Award ng Meralco 2012. These awards represent the numerous achievements Batangas City has garnered in the past 4 years and are considered as reflections of good governance being implemented in the locality.

This study aimed to analyze the adherence of Batangas City to the criteria set by the LivCom Awards that reflected the ideals of Good Governance. It presented the ideas of how shared goals and private-public partnerships can be fully utilized in achieving the best results that can benefit the local and international image of Batangas City in terms of Sustainable Development. Being considered one of the Most Liveable Communities in the whole world is something to be proud of and had set a standard amongst Local Government Units not only within the Province of Batangas but the entire Philippines. Thus, making this research presented Batangas City in a perspective that is geared towards development and progress. The success of Batangas City in the area of good governance may still be very young but having achieved such status in the whole world is something every Batangueño should be aware and be proud of.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study presented the best practices of the Local Government

of Batangas City that reflects good governance. More specifically, it presented the various awards of Batangas City from 2010 – 2012, the adherence of the Local Government to the criterion for being the Most Liveable Community in terms of Sustainable Environmental Projects, and its implications to public service and good governance to improve the quality of life.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Philippine- Australia Community Assistance Program (PACAP)'s mission is to support community-initiated development projects, which are economically sustainable, ecologically sound, and gender-responsive. These projects are geared to raise the standard of living of poor marginalized Filipinos by providing employment and opportunities for income generation, delivery of health services, improvement of nutrition, increased agricultural productivity, and environmental awareness and conservation.

In PACAP's 12 Best Practices in Community Development (2002), The Integrated Beekeeping Project reported the pro activeness of women in setting-up home-based beekeeping projects. The project gave due consideration to the other responsibilities of women, especially mothers when scheduling project activities. Beekeeping as an income generating activity, particularly for women, is a fairly novel idea.

The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment. The issues concerning the environment had been an age-old problem that became alarming during the last stretch of the 20th century. The depletion of the ozone layer, natural calamities, melting of the polar ice caps and global warming are some of the challenges that the modern world faced. So many scientists predicted the unstable situation our environment was facing during that time that numerous fora and summits were organized to review what the world is facing in the near future. Environmental activists took the front row seats in informing and disseminating data and facts about the status of our world. Indeed, the once unmindful attitude of people regarding nature took a 180-degree turn and soon everyone was aware of the implications of modernization and unscrupulous usage of natural resources.

Several researches on Best Practices Governing Nature and Communities were done in different parts of Northern Luzon such as Nagtipunan, Quirino Province and Quezon, Nueva Vizcaya. The Philippine Environmental Governance Project reported the local innovations and cooperative undertakings in addressing problems of open access, illegal

logging, conversion of forestlands to other uses and low forest productivity. It highlights gains from strengthening collaboration among forest decision-makers and stakeholders.

Other best practices posted include the strengthening of local organizations like Kadikitan Association for Community Development (KAFCD) of Nagtipunan, Quirino Province; they linked them to support institutions as part of the municipality's thrust to develop local managers who can assume the responsibility of managing, protecting and developing the forestlands. In May 2006, the municipality of Quezon on the other hand, pioneered a local initiative in forest management when it forged a co-management agreement with the DENR for this critical watershed. The co-management agreement paved for the creation of a multi-sectoral steering committee to formulate policies for integrated resource management.

Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point out that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision making. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand.

Severino (2008) examined how the implementation of environmental protection initiatives can be undermined by the responses of local "stakeholders" whose interests and livelihoods are affected by specific forest protection programs and projects. Following a brief assessment of attempts by the government of the Philippines to reverse forest destruction and promote community-based forestry, the author presented four case studies which focus on very different types of forest protection initiatives and sets of actors. They include large commercial interests which use political and bureaucratic connections to subvert government attempts to curb unsustainable logging and conserve watersheds; NGOs that do not have the necessary community organizing skills; and grassroots organizations that lack cohesion and external support. The author also showed how institutional reforms associated with decentralization can undermine environmental programs in contexts where, for example, local authorities attach relatively little importance to conservation and waste human and other resources that have been devolved for forest protection.

The role of the local stakeholders from the civil society up to the local government units determines the success or failure of such programs. However, participation is not only limited to the two. Non-gov-

ernment organizations and the private sector also took initiatives in the implementation of programs and some even became front runners in the quest for environmental sustainability. This multi-sectoral representation has produced major effects in the adherence of the government to the clamor of civil society to take bold steps in the cause for environmental protection.

In September 2000, member states of the United Nations gathered at the Millennium Summit to affirm commitments towards reducing poverty and the worst forms of human deprivation. They adopted the Millennium Declaration which embodies specific targets and milestones in eliminating extreme poverty worldwide. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set within 2015, affirm and reinforce the agreements on the goals and targets reached at the global conferences of the 1990s.

The MDGs goals include: eradicate extreme poverty; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria & other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.

The Philippines being a signatory in this summit started introducing measures and plans in order to ensure that the requirements of this declaration be met. One of which is the creation of the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD). It sets into motion the Philippine Agenda 21 in compliance with its commitments under the Rio Declaration. The Philippine Agenda 21 (PA 21) is part of the country's response to fulfill its commitments in the historic Earth Summit in 1992 where government and key sectors of the society agreed to implement an action agenda for sustainable development.

The impact and extent of implementation of the PA 21 have been assessed through the reports of key informants from the concerned Departments and institutions in the government sector. The Agenda's major impacts include growing sustainable development consciousness and the popular acceptance of consensus building as a critical part of Philippine Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals decision making.

The constituency of sustainable development advocates must be broadened among sectors and levels of governance. There is also a need to anchor activities along specific institutional and agency mandates.

Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who

will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.

In October 2012, the Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2012, a joint publication of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) presented the “Asian-Pacific Regional MDG Report: Accelerating Equitable Achievement of the MDGs”. Of the seven MDGs, the country got failing grades in four – eradicating extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality and sustaining maternal health. On the other hand, it received favorable scores in gender equality, reducing tuberculosis and HIV-AIDS prevalence and ensuring environmental sustainability. Clearly, the Philippines had surpassed the expectations of the United Nations as far as environmental sustainability is concerned. It cited the country for being an “early achiever” in gender equality, the campaign against TB and environmental issues like forest cover, protected areas, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions, basic sanitation and use of safe drinking water.

The paper of Rosas (2000) emphasized that an educated and well-trained government workforce is one of the underlying elements of good governance. For this reason, the CSC is steadfast in its commitment to adopt interventions that will upgrade the knowledge, skills and expertise of government personnel, especially middle-level managers, and equip them with new ones, in keeping with the principle that “tomorrow’s jobs cannot be done with yesterday’s skills.”

METHOD

Research Design

This study used qualitative-documentary analysis. Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) is the range of processes and procedures whereby researcher collected documents, explain, understand and interpret situations (Taylor, 2010).

Participants

Participants interviewed include 5 representative department heads from the City Environment and Natural Resources Office, Department of Interior and Local Government, City Health Office, Secretary to the City Mayor and Office of the City Veterinary and Agricultural Services, 35 employees and 50 selected community residents in Batangas City. Photos and video and video clips were also used to substantiate research results.

Instrument and Procedure

The instrument used was taken from the City Environment and Natural Resources Office, Office of the City Mayor and Department of Interior and Local Government. Interview and focus group discussion were also done among department heads, employees and selected community residents in Batangas City.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) was used based on an interpretative philosophy in examining the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. The researcher employed interview and focus group discussion to substantiate the documents of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Awards of Batangas City Local Government Unit

The following are the various awards received by the Local Government of Batangas City:

Seal of Good Housekeeping

Batangas City received the Seal of Good Housekeeping in 2012 as a testimony of Good Governance because of its performance in Good Planning, Sound Fiscal Management, Transparency and Accountability at Valuing of Performance Monitoring for the year 2011. Among the recipients of this award are Marikina City, Roxas City, Province of Capiz and Batangas Province. This award includes a Php35M cash prize that will be used by the recipients for various projects and programs in their locality. The Department of Interior and Local Government, through its Seal of Good Housekeeping, is committed to aggressively push the valuing of the fundamentals of good governance essential in local public administration and development. The Seal advances the primacy of performance, accountability, transparency and participation. After all, such principles are crucial in building the strategic foundation of a responsible local government system in the country.

Gawad Pamana ng Lahi

Batangas City was awarded with the Gawad Pamana ng Lahi in 2012 besting other cities in Region IV-A. Cavite Province and Carmona won in the Provincial and Municipality Category respectively. In its Local Governance Performance Management System Report for PY 2011, Batangas City garnered a very high percentage of passing in the 4 areas of governance. It was recognized by the Department of Interior and Local Government as one of the top performing cities in the region.

The Gawad Pamana ng Lahi recognizes the invaluable contributions in the realization of a rooted development with a voice of the Local Government Units in the country. This award is a total award concept and is conferred to a Province, City or Municipality for reason of exemplary performance in Administrative Governance, Social Governance, Economic Governance and Environmental Governance.

Top 5 Luminaries ng Meralco

The Meralco Luminaries Awards is an annual event celebrating the achievements of partners of Meralco Corporation for progress. The awards highlight partnerships with both the public and private sectors that have served to inspire and energize the nation. It recognizes organizations that have displayed creativity, leadership, and innovation in managing their energy resources – from local government units, to small and medium enterprises, to corporations.

Batangas City, being one of the clienteles of Meralco Corporation, was recognized as one of the Top 5 Luminaries ng Meralco. The award was based on good governance, revenue generation, and socio-economic programs in partnership with Meralco Corporation. This award benefited 185 school children in Isla Verde. They received for the school solar panels that will be the source of electricity while using their computers. Other awardees were Makati City, Mandaluyong City, Dasmariñas City and Valenzuela City.

Livcom Awards

The LivCom Awards were launched in 1997 and are endorsed by the United Nations Environment Programme, (UNEP), with which it shares a Memorandum of Understanding. The LivCom Awards is the world's only Awards Competition focusing on International Best Practice regarding the management of the local environment. The objective of LivCom is to develop and share International Best Practice, with the further objective of improving the quality of life of individual citizens through the creation of „liveable communities“. LivCom is non-political, embracing all nations and cultures, and over 50 countries have been represented within the Awards. Each year communities that have met at the Finals of The LivCom Awards have exchanged Best Practice and practical experience and have joined forces to address mutual challenges. These partnerships have inevitably lead to mutual technical advances and more effective use of resources, including finance, and the improvement of the quality of life within a community.

The Environmentally Sustainable Project Awards are open to both the Public and Private Sectors and Partnerships of both. The objective of the Project Awards is to encourage developers to have the same environmental objectives as communities. Batangas City was awarded

the Gold in the Projects Category for the Environmental Code (E-Code) and Silver in the Component City Category in 2011 in Busan, South Korea. In Al Ain City, UAE 2012, Batangas City won the Silver in the Projects Category for the 105 Communities, 1 City – Dangal ng Lungsod and Bronze in the Component City Category.

Adherence of Batangas City to the Criteria for the LivCom Awards

The following are the criteria and description for the LivCom Awards.

Criteria	Description
Enhancement of the Natural & Built Landscapes	This section should demonstrate how the landscape of the community has been enhanced to create an environment that generates civic pride, facilitates enjoyable recreational experiences and improves the quality of life within your community.
Arts, Culture and Heritage	This section should demonstrate how the community values and embodies its own unique culture through recognition of its languages, its unique arts and craft and cultural practices within their way of life and how it values its heritage both in its buildings and monuments ad its spiritual places or historic events through recognition, interpretation and protection.
Environmental Best Practices	This section should demonstrate how the community has adopted innovative environmentally sensitive practices and pursues initiatives that result in sustainable management of the environment. Examples of elements that should be described are sustainable development policies, programmes for waste management, water conservation and reduction, air quality, energy conservation and conversion programmes for efficient lighting and reduction light pollution.
Community Participation and Empowerment	This section should demonstrate the method and style of ongoing involvement of individuals, groups and organizations in the planning, development and management of the local community and how the local community is empowered and reacts to the opportunity of being involved in its development
Healthy Lifestyle	This section will need to demonstrate a clear understanding of the health issues that affect communities, supported by appropriate research and a commitment to making improvements.
Strategic Planning	This section should demonstrate how the community determines its future and what planning processes are developed and how they align to create action plans to deliver the stated outcomes that the community desires.

The Best Practice in Local Governance - LivCom Experience

The responsibility of the local government of Batangas to be aware of its best practice environmentally, politically and technically concretizes its participation in the LivCom Awards. It is the only forum in which International Best Practice may be observed and developed. The Award given to Batangas City as Most Liveable Community in the whole World 2011 and 2012 is a manifestation that the Local Government of Batangas City is an inspiration to the global community in as far as good governance is concerned. It is indeed committed in valuing the principles of performance, accountability, transparency and inclusivity as it shares the responsibility with the national government in the advancement of economic prosperity, social-well being and environmental integrity. There are five population categories in the LivCom Awards. Communities are not compared against each other within their population category but are judged as to how they are performing in respect of the judging criteria within the cultural, political, economic, geographic and climactic environment in which they are situated.

From this standpoint, the following criteria were achieved in the standards provided by the International Awards for Liveable Communities based in the United Kingdom.

Adherence to the Criterion on Enhancement of the Natural & Built Landscapes

In this category, the enhancement of the natural & built landscapes provided the judges and participants a glimpse of our surroundings. The lush greenery of the uplands and the beautiful clear waters of our coastal areas were but some of the reasons why we feel honored and proud especially when visitors come to our place. The Verde Island Passage, having been declared as the Center of the Center of Marine Biodiversity in the whole world, uplifts our pride of having been blessed with such natural resources. In addition to this, the city also has 3 natural landscapes that rural folks are very protective of; Mt. Banoy (City Watershed); Nagtuon Falls and Ilijan Falls.

Relatively, Batangas City remains to be one of the leading cities in Region IV-A in terms of economic development. Contributing to this are the Batangas City International Port which serves as the backdoor entrance and exit to the South, Kepco Ilijan Power Corporation, First Gas Power Corp., Pilipinas Shell, JG Summit Petrochemical Plant, SM City Batangas and other commercial and industrial establishments. And amidst the booming of the economy, the rapid progress and the influx of local migrants, the preservation of the Batangueño culture is still very much evident. In the City proper, still stand the significant historical places

which are renamed, preserved and rehabilitated yet in a manner that their original features are restored. Thus, the fusion of the old and the new edifices makes Batangas City interestingly beautiful.

Adherence on the Criterion on Arts, Culture and Heritage

This is an award focusing on the city's arts, culture and heritage. It presents the Museo Puntong Batangan situated in the heart of the city. This is where the history of the Batangas City is being narrated through the exhibit of pictures and details of people, places, events and things. A stone's throw away from the Museo is the Manuela Q. Pastor Auditorium situated at the century-old St. Bridget College. This auditorium had been in existence for more than 50 years and had been retrofitted to a world class modern building that can accommodate the needs of local and international performers.

Batangas City is also well known for various celebrations as city fiesta and the Sublian Festival. The week-long fiesta celebration every 16th of January provides local residents and tourists to feel Batangueño hospitality. The Sublian Festival on the other hand, is celebrated during the Founding Anniversary of the Cityhood of Batangas City. Here, the Subli Dance (native Batangueño courtship dance) is highlighted during the Sublian sa Kalye Street Dancing component of the Civic-Military Parade in the morning and during the Sublian Dance Contest in the afternoon.

Adherence to the Criterion on Environmental Best Practices

Being the Center of Marine Biodiversity in the whole world, Batangas City has lived up to the expectation in becoming a role-model in the preservation and protection of the environment. In 2010, the Sangguniang Panglungsod of Batangas City enacted Ordinance No. 16 series of 2010 otherwise known as the Environment Code of Batangas (E-Code). This contains environmental provisions on policies, programs, regulations and penalties for violations of the aforementioned.

Significantly, the city implemented various regulations relative to environmental protection. Among them are: Banning of Styrofoam and regulation on the use of plastic as food/beverage containers; Implementation of waste segregation at source; Closure of the open dumpsite and construction/operation of a sanitary landfill; Implementation of the Issuance of City Environmental Certificate and City Environmental Permit to Operate; Implementation of Green Building Design and Infrastructures; Implementation of Greening; Conduct of City-wide Clean Ups; Implementation of Energy Management and Conservation; Implementation of Wildlife provisions; and Creation of the Batangas City Environmental Council and the City Environment and Natural Resources Office.

These provisions consolidated the aims and goals of Batangas City LGU in promoting environmental awareness and protection among its constituents. The Environmental Code became the bible of each establishment and household with regards to these measures in attaining environmental sustainability. Even though there were apprehensions in the early part of its implementation, this provision became very successful that nearby towns and municipalities started to adopt the same measures.

Another projects of the City Government are the: Greening and Beautification; Food Production (Gardening); Operation of the Material Recovery Facility (MRF); and Community mobilization. These types of projects enable the civil society to participate and become their own implementers of environmental protection programs. These instilled Batangueños their common responsibility to the environment and the people; thus, give them the award as Dangkal ng Lungsod.

Adherence to the Criterion on Community Participation and Empowerment

The current leadership of Batangas City adheres to the ideals of the Philippine Constitution regarding democracy. With its slogan “Kay-ang-kaya Basta’t Sama-sama”, the Local Government recognizes the role of civil society in shaping up the whole city. It encourages various government and non-government organizations, public and private establishments and other stakeholders to participate in planning, executing and assessing the different programs and projects they are implementing. Women’s and Senior Citizens organizations were tapped by the City Social & Development Office in helping them with activities that benefit these sectors.

On the other hand, the Local Investment Office, the Finance Committee (Budget Office, Treasurer’s Office, Planning and Development Office and General Services), Business Permits & Licensing Office worked hand in hand with the USAID and Local Businessmen and Chamber of Commerce to come up with solutions to the needs of local and international establishments who are willing to invest in the city. The Planning & Development Office extended their functions and partnered with the Association of Barangay Captains in executing the Community Based Monitoring System that provides the Local Government the facts and profiles of every resident of each barangay.

Adherence to the Criterion on Healthy Lifestyle

The Local Government Unit of Batangas City prioritizes the well-being of its citizenry because it believes that healthy citizenry acts rightfully, brings productivity and economic growth, thus build a sustainable city. But being healthy in the context of the City Government is not just

good physique but all the well attributes of individual being.

Different programs that promote wellness and monitor health related activities are being implemented in the City of Batangas. With its idea “from womb to tomb”, the City Health Office adheres to the different programs of the National Government in ensuring good health. One major project of Batangas City LGU is the Health Card Program. This entitles poor individuals/families of free basic hospitalization in 3 major hospitals. There are also nutrition programs that are being supported by the City Social Welfare and Development Office and the Office of the City Veterinary and Agricultural Services that benefit most of the indigents. Each barangay also has health workers who directly monitor the status of the local residents in terms of illness and diseases. Free consultations and basic health services like medical and dental concerns in the Gusaling Pangkalusugan are readily available and is part of the daily responsibility of the City Health Office. The City Environment and Natural Resources Office also take part in this endeavor. It monitors the proper collection of garbage and its disposal, conducts regular air pollution tests and provides information dissemination regarding environmental hygiene and cleanliness.

Adherence to the Criterion on Strategic Planning

The City Government of Batangas has been anchoring its activities and projects to formulated programs which have been products of collaborative strategic planning. The different Offices of the City Government perform their individual functions for individual and collective results. These functions are based on the self-defined and pre-defined responsibilities set by the National Government.

Basically, strategic planning in the city starts with the identification and establishment of a problem and the need to address such. Then the concerned offices will be called for a meeting and consultation with measures collectively presented and deliberated. Execution of such plans will then be based on a timeframe so that there will be lesser wastage of resources. Proper implementation of these measures was closely monitored to avoid major discrepancies and failure. Evaluation of these programs soon follows and end results will be disseminated to the concerned offices and individuals.

This planning and execution is not limited to the offices of the city government. Other actors play important roles in this process. The Sangguniang Panglungsod is delegated the tasks of legislation. Organizations from the Business sector, women, elderly and civil society are also being asked to participate and contribute to the implementation of these programs. National agencies such as DILG, COMELEC, DENR, POEA and the likes are also considered in the planning and execution. This multi-

sectoral endeavor adheres to the idea of participation in a government thus ensuring a result that is geared towards good governance. Such results on best practices as evidenced by this International Liveable Community Award exemplify good governance. In the best interest of the whole community, that perspective on what is needed for sustainable development and how to achieve the goals of such development were materialized.

Implications to Public Service and Good Governance

Many governance failures of the past have been attributed to the “command and control” ways of governments. The common historical experience was that governments were considered the supreme ruler and provider. As these roles spell power, they were protected from erosion by keeping an arm’s length and even adversarial relationships with other stakeholder groups. This stance and the resulting limited participation of the citizenry in various development matters, sowed mutual distrust between governments and their peoples, and bred discontentment amongst the citizenry. Government, civil society, and business sectors need to collaborate with one another and work with each other for an effective pursuit of society’s shared goal of a general improvement in human welfare for both present and future generations.

The political actors who play important roles in these achievements painstakingly guided the constituents in realizing such feat. The partnership between these stakeholders may be considered as a clear manifestation of best practices towards good governance. Batangas City’s best practices on good governance led to the reinvention of governance and a shift to a paradigm that promotes optimum participation and partnership among members of society. It must also be noted that political will is important.

Without the consent of the leader, an organization’s programs and projects, no matter how good they are, will not be realized. Being progressive and readily available to change characterizes a good leader. This means that he/she welcomes this sign as a path leading towards development. He/she sees the needs of the people based on the call of the time.

As part of the thrust of the National Government in enhancing decentralization with its positive effects, the Administration of Batangas City Local Government Unit exerts efforts in its delivery of the basic needs of the people. These needs are based on the concept that the common good is reachable and available. With the different programs being implemented, Batangas City remains faithful in its adherence to its mission and vision. Not only does Batangas City LGU anchor its development

and progress locally, it also projects its goal in the international scene since part of its vision is to promote a globally competitive citizenry. It somehow manages to provide the local residents with worthwhile activities, programs and projects that can open the doors towards economic prosperity and a bright future.

CONCLUSIONS

The various awards received by Batangas City are The Seal of Good Housekeeping 2012, Pamana ng Lahi 2012, Top 5 Luminaries ng Meralco 2012 and two international awards being the Most Liveable Community in 2011 and 2012. The Local Government of Batangas City adheres at par with criteria set by international standards as Enhancement of the Natural and Built Landscapes, Arts, Culture and heritage, Environment Best Practices, Community Participation and Empowerment, Healthy Lifestyle and Strategic Planning. The impact of these international awards given to the Local Government of Batangas City is a manifestation of the best practices on good governance in as far as its responsibility with the national government with the advancement of economic prosperity, social well-being and environmental integrity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Chief Executive of Batangas City may venture into other international awards as a commitment to encourage globally competitive citizenry. International benchmarking may be done with other countries of international standards on local governance. The Local Economic and Investment Promotion Office may establish international tie-up with other government and non-government organizations to share best practices and present Batangas City internationally for a as one of the Most Liveable Community in the world. The local stakeholders of Batangas City may continuously involve themselves in various socio-economic and environmental programs of the Local Government to sustain its status in the international community. Future researchers may do follow up study using other variables not covered by this research.

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