COSE

From Voice to Action: Older Persons Organizations Advancing Age-Friendly Communities in the Philippines

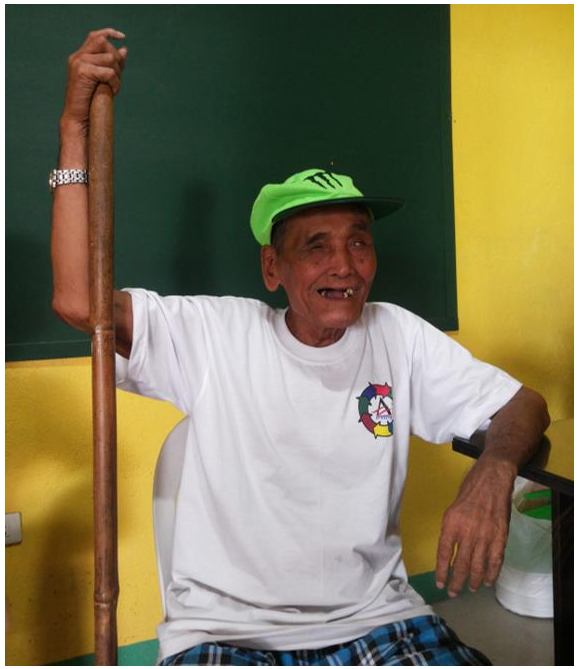
The Philippine Experience of Community Power, Participation and Partnership



Age-Friendly Communities Start with Older Persons

"Age-friendly communities cannot be built for older persons without older persons."

- Older persons are still viewed mainly as recipients or beneficiaries of programs.
- Philippines shows that older persons can be much more than beneficiaries.
- Older Persons are organized, informed and empowered, they become **rights-holders, advocates, community actors, monitors and partners of local government.**



The Philippines OPO Model

Older Persons Organizations (OPOs) provide a platform for older persons to organize themselves, identify their concerns and collectively engage with their communities and local government.

Older Persons → Barangay OPOs → Municipal/City Federations → Provincial/Regional/National Networks

OPOs are not simply organizations that receive services. They can *identify community priorities; participate in planning and decision-making; advocate for their rights and services; support other older persons; monitor programs and services; and work with government and other stakeholders to find solutions.*

From Organization to Community Power

ORGANIZE → ASSESS → PLAN → ACT → ADVOCATE → INFLUENCE

Organize: older persons build a collective voice.

Assess: they identify needs, gaps, risks and priorities in their communities.

Plan: they develop actions based on what they identified

Act: they work together with other community actors and local government

Advocate: they bring their concerns and recommendations to decision-makers.

Influence: their participation contributes to the changes in programs, services, plans, policies and resources.



COSE

COSE Experience: Building the Capacity of OPOs

COSE's approach is not simply to establish OPOs, but to **strengthen their capacity to act**. It includes:



- participatory OPO assessment and planning;
- leadership and organizational development;
- capacity building and training;
- community-level advocacy;
- engagement with local government;
- monitoring of programs and services; and
- supporting OPOs to develop and implement their own community actions.

How OPOs Advance to Age-Friendly Communities

1. **Voice and Participation -** OPOs bring older persons' perspectives into community consultations, planning and decision-making.

2. **Identifying Priorities -** help identify the needs, barriers and priorities of older persons within their communities.

3. **Access to Services -** help connect older persons with health, social protection and other services and identify gaps in service delivery.

4. **Social Inclusion and Mutual Support -** create opportunities for older persons to remain connected, participate and support one another.

5. **Community resilience -** identify vulnerable older persons and contribute to disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

Partnership: OPOs and Local Government

Community power does not mean replacing government. It means creating a stronger partnership between **organized communities and government.** OPOs are more effective when local governments:

- recognize them as legitimate partners;
- involve them in consultations and planning;
- listen and respond to their priorities;
- connect their concerns with local programs and resources; and
- create mechanisms for continuing participation.



OLDER PERSONS + OPOs + LGUs + CSOs + OTHER COMMUNITY ACTORS
= AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

What Have We Learned

1. Organization creates collective power
2. Capacity building must lead to action
3. Participation must influence decisions
4. Sustainability requires local ownership



From Voice to Action

FROM
Beneficiaries
↓

Consultation
↓

Services **for** older persons
↓
Project-led initiatives

TO
Rights-holders and community actors
↓
Meaningful participation and co-creation
↓
Services **with** older persons
↓
Community-government partnerships

From Voice to Action

The Philippine experience of COSE shows that when older persons are **organized, informed, empowered and meaningfully engaged**, they can become important partners in building communities that are more inclusive, participatory, resilient and age-friendly.





Thank You!

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