



Quality of Life of Indigenous People in Villa Espina Lopez, Quezon: Input for Sustainable Intervention Program

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ABSTRACT

The government has begun prioritizing the welfare of Indigenous communities, aiming to integrate them more fully into society. Considering this, it becomes crucial to assess the Quality of Life (QoL) of these communities to tailor appropriate support and assistance provided by different organizations. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies, involving 40 members of the Aeta community, and utilizing the WHOQoL-BREF tool. Pearson correlation analysis was utilized to explore relationships among different domains, while structured interviews delved into participants' experiences, challenges, and aspirations. Among the various domains examined, environmental health scored the lowest, yet still indicating a good quality of life, consistent with other domains. Moreover, while six pairs of domains showed statistical correlation, the strength of association was found to be minimal. Financial struggles were identified among participants, leading to challenges such as insufficient livelihoods, food insecurity, unstable housing, and limited access to education. Overall, the study highlighted the community's desire for sustainable support across various areas, including livelihood, education, healthcare, social assistance, infrastructure, and community development and empowerment. As a response, the study proposed a three-year extension plan titled "Accessible Education Transforming Aetas Lives" (AETA Lives), aimed at addressing these identified needs.

Keywords: *Indigenous people, intervention program, mixed method, needs assessment, WHOQoL-BREF*

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous World 2023 says that between 10 and 20 percent of the population of the Philippines is Indigenous. Most of them live in settlements that are geographically separated and culturally different from the rest of the country. The Igorot live in the northern mountains of Luzon, the Lumad live in the southern mountains of Mindanao, and minor groups like the Mangyan live in Mindoro. There are other distinct groups in the Visayas and Luzon. Most of these communities keep up with their traditional ways of life, such as farming, hunting, and making things. They also keep up with their social groupings and cultural events. Their cultural identity is deeply tied to how they live, which shapes how they see the world, their social life, and their ideas about health. Most of these communities live in remote places where they have limited access to formal education, healthcare, and job opportunities. This persists to have an impact on their quality of life.

Furthermore, the communities employ their unique ethnolinguistic identities to tell who they are. The NCIP and NCCA's official publications give access to up-to-date demographic and cultural statistics, such as population numbers, language groups, and cultural identities (NCIP, 2022).

As promulgated in Republic Act 8371, also known as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) in 1997, the Philippine government makes much of its support and respect for these people. Further, section 2.b of this act stated that rights' protection shall be ensured as well as on matters pertaining to economic, social, and cultural well-being. Likewise, Chapter VI Sec. 30, provision of equal access to education in any form or level should be enjoyed by these people that might be provided by public or private institutions and other entities that might be of good help in providing this educational opportunity.

On this note, as one of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines, we are committed to supporting this group to the best that we can by providing them access to education, health care, and livelihood. HEIs, particularly the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), are mandated to help uplift the quality of life of the community through sustainable social development programs and projects. Hence, in responding to this Institutional thrust, the researchers aimed to address the University Extension Agenda, such as social enterprise, business, health, wellness, environmental conservation, education, culture, and sustainable development. These harmonize the WHOQOL-BREF since it addresses four domains that pertain to social relationships, physical, psychological, and environmental health.

Knowingly, there are members of the Indigenous People (IP) from the locale of Lopez in the fourth district of Quezon who are partially deprived of developmental opportunities. So,

to reach these people and help them to have equitable access to everything they need, the researchers aim to assess the quality of their lives and design a sustainable program, project, and activities that are beneficial for community development.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study aims to determine the Quality of Life (QOL) of the IP community in Barangay Villa Espina, Lopez, Quezon.

Specifically, this would like to:

1. Assess the QOL of IPs in the context of:
 - Physical health
 - Psychological health
 - Social relationship
 - Environmental health
2. Evaluate the quality of life (QOL) by employing paired comparison methodology to compare various domains within the following context:
 - Physical health & Psychological health (Pair 1)
 - Physical health & Social relationship (Pair 2)
 - Physical health & Environmental health (Pair 3)
 - Psychological health & Social relationship (Pair 4)
 - Psychological health & Environmental health (Pair 5)
 - Social relationship & Environmental health (Pair 6)
3. Determine the respondent's profile in terms of:
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Civil Status
 - Highest educational attainment
 - Number of family members
 - Number of studying members
 - Source of Income
4. Discover the community's means of sustenance, their collective experiences, current life circumstances, their expectations from various institutions, and their aspirations for improving daily life.

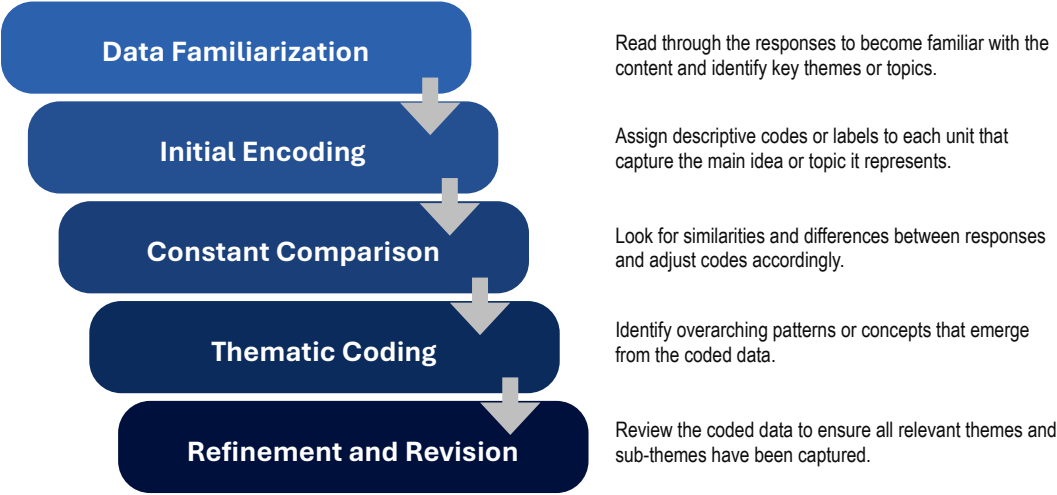
METHODOLOGY

A mixed method was utilized where a quantitative design adopted the WHO Quality of Life Instrument (Gholami et al., 2013), (World Health Organization, 2012), and a structured interview on the qualitative side was used. Additionally, Pearson correlation was used in determining the correlation of the different domains in the context of physical, psychological, environmental health, and social relationships. Also, the study looked at how people in the community thought about their quality of life in relation to their own cultural and social background. Focus groups and interviews were some of the participatory qualitative methods used to do this. These strategies were meant to be polite and consider indigenous worldviews so that people in the community may talk freely about their experiences, cultural values, and goals. To build trust, thorough understanding, and respect among people in a community, leaders and elders get involved before data collection, following the rules and ethical practices.

Qualitative data were encoded manually and observed the diagram below:

Figure 1

Qualitative data encoding flow chart



Participants

This study encompasses a total of forty IP households, with 33 being female-headed households and 7 being male-headed households. The highest percentage of participants falls within the age bracket of 18-20 years old, and these individuals typically have 3-5 members in their families. Most participants have not received formal or non-formal education

themselves, but there is a notable trend in their households, as many household members have currently started attending formal education. Specifically, 22 individuals are in primary education, 10 are in secondary education, and 1 is pursuing tertiary education.

Instrument and Data Gathering

WHOQoL-BREF revised 2012 was used in this study in which four domains with a total of 26 items were applied, such like: Domain 1 (physical health) with 7 items, Domain 2 (psychological health) consisting of 6 items, Domain 3 (social relationships) having 3 items, and Domain 4 (environmental health) with 8 items. Additionally, the WHOQoL-BREF instruments presented elements encompassed within domains:

- Physical health- activities of daily living, dependence on medical substances and medical aids, energy and fatigue, mobility, pain and discomfort, sleep and rest, and work capacity.
- Psychological health – bodily image and appearance, negative feelings, positive feelings, self-esteem, spirituality, thinking, learning, memory, and concentration.
- Social relationships – personal relationships, social support, and sexual activity.
- Environment health – financial resource; freedom, physical safety and security; health and social care: accessibility and quality; home environment; opportunities for acquiring new information and skills; participants in and opportunities for recreation/ leisure activities; physical environment (pollution/ noise/ traffic/ climate); and transport.

The participants were convened in a single room to facilitate the organized administration of data gathering. In this session, they received a comprehensive orientation detailing the purpose, instructions, and content of the data collection instrument, emphasizing the importance of maintaining data privacy. The voluntary nature of the survey cum interview was communicated, and consent forms were distributed and collected. Participants who were literate had the opportunity to affix their signatures, while those unable to write utilized a thumbmark as an alternative method of consent.

Ethical Consideration

In undertaking this research among Indigenous People, the researchers strictly complied with the guidelines set by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) through their Coordinator in the Barangay. Before it was implemented, the research instrument was reviewed and approved by the NCIP Coordinator along with other members to ensure conformity with the national policy on Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests. In

addition, the researchers supported the FPIC process of the community—a necessary aspect of ethically interacting with Indigenous people—by presenting an in-depth explanation of the purpose, scope, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. The process was in the local language and was culturally responsive to avoid any misunderstanding or coercion. The researchers recorded the FPIC as ethical compliance, highlighting respect for the sovereignty and self-determination of the community during the conduct of research.

Additionally, participants received an Informed Consent form prior to their involvement in the study. Subsequently, the researchers thoroughly explained all the details outlined in the form. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they had the option to withdraw at any time. The confidentiality of participants’ information was strictly maintained for the sole purpose of the study, and no disclosure of this data occurred.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Local Government of Lopez.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of transformed scores (4-20) of QoL of IPs in Villa Espina, Lopez, Quezon

Domain	RS Mean	Transformed Score Mean (4-20)	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Interpretation
Physical	29	16.68	2.18	Good QoL
Psychological	25	16.43	2.31	Good QoL
Social relationship	12	16.30	4.01	Good QoL
Environmental health	30	15.15	2.50	Good QoL

According to Hadning’s and Aini’s study in 2021, the community experienced a positive Quality of Life (QoL) across the four domains outlined by WHOQoL. However, the domain of environmental health exhibited the lowest transformed score of 15.15 ± 2.50 . As per WHOQoL-BREF, environmental health encompasses aspects such as financial security, freedom, physical safety, access to health and social care, home environment quality, opportunities for skill development, engagement in various activities, physical surroundings, and availability of transportation. The results revealed that the community’s social organization and cultural identity affect how they see their quality of life. For instance, their traditional roles as elders and community leaders always stress and look into the importance of cultural continuity and the well-being of the whole community. Likewise, they linked their focus on education and helping people make a living to achieve their goals in making themselves and the community better.

Table 2

Correlation of the Different Domains (Physical, Psychological, Social Relationship and Environmental Health) in the Context of the QOL of IPs in Villa Espina, Lopez, Quezon

Domain	N	Correlation	Sig
Pair 1	40	.544	.000
Pair 2	40	.247	.125
Pair 3	40	.561	.000
Pair 4	40	.360	.022
Pair 5	40	.585	.000
Pair 6	40	.175	.281

(Pair 1-Dom1-Dom2; Pair 2-Dom1-Dom3; Pair 3-Dom1-Dom4; Pair 4-Dom2-Dom3; Pair 5-Dom2-Dom4; Pair 6-Dom3-Dom4)

The table shows the correlation between domains of QoL in the context of IPs in Villa Espina, Lopez, Quezon. Pair 1 (Dom1- Dom2) and Pair 5 (Dom2-Dom4) were interpreted as moderately and positively correlated, having .544 and .585 correlation, respectively. This means that when one’s physical health is in good condition, their psychological health tends to be likewise, and vice versa. Also, when psychological health is good, environmental health tends to follow suit. Pair 2 (Dom1-Dom3) and Pair 4 (Dom2-Dom3) were weakly and positively correlated with .247 and .360 correlation, respectively. These 2 pairs having the same directions cannot be stated that they are correlated, although they have the same directions, which reflects that when physical health is good, it likewise goes to social relationships and vice versa. On the other hand, Pair 3 (Dom1-Dom4) and Pair 6 (Dom3-Dom4) were interpreted as very weakly and positively correlated with .561 and .175 correlation, respectively. This means that they are statistically correlated, but the strength of association is minimal. Also, since the relationship was faint, it may not be practically significant in making conclusions .

Generally, there was significant and positive relationship between the environmental, psychological, physical, and social domains towards the quality of life in Malaysia (Siti et al., 2023). More so, there was a significant difference obtained in physical, social and environmental when the respondents were asked of their position in life relative to goals and expectations (Kaymaz, Ç. K., Kizilkan, Y., & Birinci, S., 2022).

Table 3*Summary of Cross-Tabulation and Statistical Analysis of Respondents' Profiles*

Cross-tabulated variable	Statistical test used	Value	df	P-value	Interpretation
Age Group × Sex	Chi-Square Test	1.79	7	.97	Not significant (age and sex are independent)
Family Size × Number of Studying Members	Chi-Square Test	5.89	8	.66	Not significant (family size not associated with number of studying members)
Educational Attainment × Age Group	Fisher's Exact Test	-	-	1.0	Not significant (no association between education and age)

Table 3 illustrates the demographics of the IP-respondents, with the majority falling within the 18 -23 age range, while only one respondent is aged 53 years or older. Females constituted the majority, and all respondents were married. The majority have not attained any level of education, as they chose not to respond to the question. Family sizes typically range from 2 to 4 members, which is not significantly different from families with 5 to 7 members. Most of these families have 2 members currently pursuing their studies. Using the demographic data, cross-tabulation was performed : Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 1.79$, $df = 7$, $p = 0.97$) shows that there is no strong link between sex and age group. This suggests that the distribution of male and female respondents is not affected by age group. These findings explained that gender distribution in community or household surveys is more likely to be random than systematic demographic trends, especially for small-scale or local-level investigations.

Family Size and How Many Members Are Studying also had 'no statistically significant link' ($\chi^2 = 5.89$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.66$). This means that the number of kids or family members who attend school does not always differ from the total number of people in the family in this sample. One possible reason is that households have varying age groups or that they prioritize their finances differently, regardless of family size, as shown in studies of household education investment (Orbeta, 2005). This revealed that household size may not matter as much as the money or circumstances when it comes to who would study in that household.

Age Group and Level of Education

Fisher's exact test indicated that the predicted frequencies were low and that there was no significant link between age group and amount of schooling ($p = 1.00$). This could mean

that people in the study site or sample have not had easy access to education over the years. Reyes et al. (2020) say that educational inequality in rural or poor areas of the Philippines tends to be passed down from one generation to the next because of structural problems, including lack of schools, insufficient money, and limited access to adult education.

So, in general, the lack of statistically significant cross-tabulations means that the demographic characteristics of the respondents are either quite similar or not related to each other. It also shows that the data set may have some problems, such as the fact that 72.5% of the responses for the educational attainment variable replied “no answer,” which may conceal important patterns.

Table 4

Source of Income

Themes	Responses
Agricultural Activities	Digging Farming Planting Weeding Gathering vegetables Fishing Gardening Collecting firewood Housekeeping
Coconut-related work	Coconut leaf thatching Hauling coconut lumber Copra (dried coconut meat)
Variety of work	Combination of various activities such as digging, coconut leaf thatching, and farming. Engaging in multiple tasks to sustain livelihood.
Part-time employment	Part-time work at a restaurant Laundry work
Specific job roles	AFP CAGU (Armed Forces of the Philippines - Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit)
Manual labor	digging, planting, and weeding.

Table 4 themes highlight the diverse range of livelihood activities and work roles performed by the respondents, reflecting the local economy, community practices, and individual engagement in various tasks to sustain livelihoods. In his research, Hirai (2015) revealed that 60 percent of the community surveyed lack formal education, potentially leading to a variety of low-income occupations.

Table 5

Everyday Life Experiences in the Tribe

Themes	Responses
Financial struggles	• Difficulties due to insufficient money • Lack of livelihood • Sometimes earning from various activities (e.g., selling coconut leaves, farming) • Managing, saving, borrowing
Livelihood and Food Security	• Insufficient livelihood • Sometimes able to eat three times a day, sometimes not. • Rice is sufficient, but life is tough. • Very frugal lifestyle, children eat well while adults struggle. • Able to eat three times a day, despite life’s difficulties
Contentment and Well-being	• Contentment despite challenges • Feeling okay or good despite financial struggles • Tough but happy
Challenges of Balancing Work and Education	• Difficulty managing work and studies
Housing and Stability	• Housing situation is not stable
Variability in Responses	• Mixed responses ranging from “okay” to “good” to “difficult” • Some respondents not providing a clear response or giving no response

The themes in Table 5 reflect the various experiences and perspectives shared by the respondents regarding their livelihoods, financial situations, well-being, and challenges they face. Observations indicate that participants expressed a range of emotions while responding to questions, as evident in Table 5, where negative sentiments regarding their daily experiences within the tribe were documented. They highlighted struggles, insufficiency, toughness, challenges, limited access to education, and life difficulties. Consistent with the findings of Abelgas (2018), Badjaos residing in Cebu City encountered difficulties in generating income and faced societal marginalization, contributing to their perception of life’s hardships.

Table 6

*Expectations of the Participants on the Support and Assistance
to be Provided by Various Institutions*

Themes per institution	Responses
Barangay:	
Social Assistance Program	• Assistance for medicine • Relief goods • Groceries • Food assistance • Healthcare
Infrastructure and basic needs	• Road maintenance • Education support • Livelihood support (e.g., animal care, agriculture) • Unity within the community
Economic support	• Stable livelihood • Opportunities for employment • Providing agricultural land
Local government unit (LGU)	
Livelihood support	• Various livelihood programs • Animal husbandry • Income-generating activities • Planting seeds for agriculture
Education and necessities	• Support for education (e.g., school supplies) • Household necessities provision • Vitamins and groceries distribution
Infrastructure and development	• Road improvements • Housing support
National Government	
Education and Healthcare	Support for education (e.g., free education) Medical treatment assistance Free hospitalization
Livelihood and economic support	Livelihood assistance Land provision for planting Economic assistance for childbirth
Non-government institutions	
Education Support	• Education assistance for children • Educational opportunities (e.g., PUP education) • Completion of education support

Themes per institution	Responses
Employment and Economic Assistance	• Permanent job opportunities • Assistance for job placement • Economic support for pursuing education
Community Assistance	• Free hospital services • Help with increasing prices of commodities • Aid in pursuing education

Table 6 themes reflect the various forms of support and assistance being expected from different institutions, ranging from social welfare programs to infrastructure development and economic support. Education, health and the economy are the primary concerns of these Indigenous people, who are expecting assistance from various institutions. In their examination conducted by Cornelio, J. S., and de Castro, D. F. T. (2016), it was found that despite the enactment of the Indigenous People’s Rights Act aimed at ensuring Indigenous Peoples (IPs) access to basic rights like healthcare and education, substantial shortcomings persisted in its implementation even after a span of two decades. Consequently, the intended goals of the law have yet to be fully accomplished or realized.

Table 7

Current life situations in the community

Themes	Responses
Perceived Difficulty of Life	• Expressions of life being difficult, challenging, or tough. • Mention of difficulties due to factors such as distance from town, lack of livelihood, and absence of schools. • Incidents of robbery adding to the difficulties faced.
Contentment and Satisfaction	• Responses indicating contentment or satisfaction with current circumstances. • Statements reflecting feelings of being okay, fine, or managing despite challenges.
Positive Outlook and Happiness	• Expressions of happiness or positivity despite adversities. • Respondents feeling good, well, or happy with their situation. • Mention of feeling good about safety and well-being.
Mixed Feelings	• Responses indicating a mix of emotions, such as feeling quite good or okay. • Statements reflecting a range of feelings from okay to fine.

Themes	Responses
Variability in Perceptions	• Wide variability in responses, ranging from difficulty to contentment to happiness. • Some respondents not providing a clear response or giving no response.

These themes capture the range of sentiments expressed by the respondents regarding their current life situations, highlighting both the challenges they face and the varying degrees of contentment or happiness they experienced. Participants demonstrated satisfaction despite facing challenges and financial hardships in their daily lives, which contrasts with the observations made by Yang, E. M., Kim, J., Biag, A., Mangulabnan, J., Dela Cruz, A., and Sarmiento, P. J. (2020) regarding the Aeta community in the province of Pampanga. Their research indicated that the tribe still lacks essential resources, including basic needs, education, and healthcare services.

Table 8

Aspiration in Improving the Quality of Life

Themes	Responses
Education Focus	• Desire for completion of education. • Emphasis on education for children. • Requests for assistance in education.
Livelihood Support	• Calls for livelihood opportunities. • Requests for permanent livelihood solutions. • Desire for sustainability of livelihood projects. • Teaching livelihood skills.
Combination of Education and Livelihood	• Requests for both education and livelihood support. • Desire for livelihood and education for children.
Community Development and Empowerment	• Calls for sustainability of projects. • Desire for projects to reach the national level. • Resolution for community issues like cemetery support. • Empowerment through livelihood skills training. • Striving for progress and self-reliance.
Specific Livelihood Activities	• Desire for assistance in finding livelihood opportunities at home. • Specific livelihood activities mentioned, such as planting, selling fish, and teaching livelihood skills.

Themes	Responses
Need for Resources and Support	• Desire for scholarships for children. • Requests for assistance in reaching the national level. • Calls for livelihood sustainability and support.
Empowerment through Education	• Desire to learn basic skills like reading and writing. • Teaching how to earn a living.
Individual Progress and Initiative	Emphasis on striving for progress and not relying solely on the government.

Themes in Table 8 reflect the diverse aspirations and needs expressed by the respondents, focusing on education, livelihood, community development, and individual empowerment. In summary, they anticipate support and assistance encompassing education, livelihood, self-sufficiency, and addressing community issues related to cemetery assistance, among other things. Research conducted by Cruz, A.E.D. (2020) found that one of the primary goals of Indigenous communities was an increase in the number of students pursuing education, with a particular emphasis on a Youth Camp Program offered by a Higher Education Institution in Central Luzon. Macusi, E.S. et al., (2023) also observed that Indigenous Peoples’ aspirations often centered around government support for their livelihoods, particularly in farming, where they lacked sufficient agricultural assistance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The IP community experienced good quality of life in all WHOQoL-BREF domains, but with the lowest transformed mean score in environmental health. On matters pertaining to correlation between domains, Pair 1 (Dom1- Dom2) and Pair 5 (Dom2-Dom4) were moderately and positively correlated; Pair 2 (Dom1-Dom3) and Pair 4 (Dom2-Dom3) were weakly and positively correlated; and Pair 3 (Dom1-Dom4) and Pair 6 (Dom3-Dom4) were very weakly and positively correlated. These means that they are statistically correlated, but the strength of correlation is minimal.

The 18-23 age range predominates among the participants, and they are particularly married females. Many of them did not provide their highest educational attainment, primarily due to a lack of formal education. However, it is worth mentioning that they are now receptive to the idea of pursuing education at different levels among their family members. The majority of this group relied on agriculture as their source of living, including but not limited to land cultivation and copra making.

These indigenous communities grapple with financial struggles, livelihood and food security issues, inadequate housing provision, and the challenge of balancing work and education. Nevertheless, amidst these difficulties, they find contentment. Moreover, they articulate their expectations from the Barangay to the national level, including non-governmental organizations. These expectations span various themes, encompassing social assistance, infrastructure development, livelihood enhancement, healthcare access, support for basic needs, agricultural assistance, education, and land provision. Presently, they find solace in simply enjoying their lives despite the myriad of problems, trials, and challenges they face. However, despite their contented outlook, they continue to seek improvements in the community. Their aspirations include better education, livelihood support, community development, empowerment, and the pursuit of sustainable living that can ensure self-sufficiency in the future.

Given these findings, it is crucial to devise a proposed initiative aimed at potentially meeting the identified needs of the community. Therefore, it is suggested to execute the community development project presented below:

PROJECT DETAILS

Background and Justification

The Aeta are indigenous people who live in scattered, isolated mountainous parts of Luzon, Philippines. They are Negritos, who are dark to very dark brown-skinned and tend to have features such as small stature, small frame, curly to kinky afro-like textured hair with a higher frequency of naturally lighter hair color (blondism) relative to the general population, small nose, and dark brown eyes. They are thought to be among the earliest inhabitants of the Philippines, preceding the Austronesian migrations.

In Lopez, Quezon, particularly in Brgy. Villa Espina, there is an Aeta community. The barangay is 23.7 km from Lopez Población and has a total population of 1,029. The Aetas in Brgy. Villa Espina is around 40% of the total population. They said they are nomads who originated from the Bicol Region, moved to the village, and settled with their families. At present, they formed a small community in the barangay where there is an IP Hall and school intended for them. According to DSWD, several dole out projects were already given to them, including tools for farming and livestock to raise. Unfortunately, none was successful. To better understand their needs and culture, a focus group discussion was conducted to assess the quality of their lives. For their socio-demographic profile. Results showed that respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 54. As for their gender, 80% are female, and 20% are male. Most of the respondents are married (90%). Seventy-four percent (74%) of the respondents did not attend any schooling; 17% were elementary undergraduates; 5% were able to finish junior

high school, and 2% finished grade 12. For the community's source of income, most of them rely on farming, particularly from copra production. However, most of them work only as farm laborers. Some of them get their income from selling anahaw leaves. According to them, even though they are poor, they are contented and just hope that they will be given assistance, particularly in having permanent jobs and educational scholarships for their children.

With this scenario, this extension plan aims to help the Aetas address their needs, particularly in education and livelihood. Providing them with sustainable educational assistance will somehow make a difference in their lives. Furthermore, providing them with livelihood training, particularly utilizing the raw materials in their community, will uplift their lives and way of living.

Specific Objectives

- To make the community healthy and educationally adept (i.e., teaching Aeta adults who cannot read and write).
- To identify benefactors and linkages who will adopt a young Aeta to be his/her scholar.
- To teach the community to utilize and add value to the coconut products (i.e., making coconut vinegar from coconut water).
- To establish linkages with other government institutions to help Aetas with their packaging, labeling, and marketing.

Project Components and Expected Outcomes

Project Components / Mechanics / Strategies

1. Secure the permission of the President, VP for Finance, VP for Research, Extension, Planning and Development, and VP for Campuses through the Branch Director.
2. Coordinate with the Municipal Agriculture Office, Municipal Social Welfare and Development, Barangay council, and IPs Associations on the date of the trainings.
3. Coordinate with the Barangay on all of the scheduled trainings.
4. Briefings and dry-runs must be done a day before the community visit.
5. Preparation of the materials to be disseminated a week before the visit.
6. LECTURE/BRIEFINGS ABOUT THE PROJECT
 - Lecture and hands-on activities on "Pagbasa at Pagsulat Program para sa IPs".
 - Lecture and hands-on activities on making vinegar from coconut water, packaging, labeling, and marketing.

Expected Outcome: Non-reader IPs to reader and writer IPs, vinegar maker, and entrepreneur IPs

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

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Ethical Approval: This research was conducted in compliance with ethical research standards and protocols. Prior to the commencement of the study, the researchers sought approval from the Local Government Unit (LGU) through the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to ensure adherence to local policies and ethical considerations. Coordination was also made with the Indigenous Peoples (IP) Coordinator, the Barangay Chairman of Villa Espina, and the IP Chieftain, who reviewed and granted their approval for the study.

During the data-gathering process, the researchers thoroughly explained the objectives and specific details of the study to all participants. They were informed of their **voluntary participation**, with the assurance that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences. Furthermore, strict confidentiality measures were implemented to protect the participants' personal information and responses, ensuring that all data would be used solely for research purposes.

The researchers uphold the principles of **informed consent, respect for cultural sensitivities, and data privacy** in conducting this study.

Additional recommendations for future research should focus on the Co-creation of Indigenous Community Narratives through Participatory Mapping and Storytelling Approach for Better Understanding and Enhancement of Quality of Life and Cultural Heritage.

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