COMMUNITY HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN THE NURSING ACADEME: PERSPECTIVES IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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Purpose: This paper intends to present the community extension initiatives of a higher education institution in a developing country.

Background: The Nursing Health and Development Program (NHDP), previously known as the Mobile Nursing Clinic, is the longest running community extension service arm of Saint Louis University, School of Nursing, Philippines. It was initially financed by the government of West Flanders, Belgium but with the termination of the grant and its continuing success, the program was institutionalized by SLU for its financial and administrative support in line with the higher education trilogy function of instruction, research and extension. The program was one of the responses of the School of Nursing to the dismal health situation such as inadequacy of health manpower, facilities and services to the underserved and far flung areas of Benguet Province. It is envisioned as a prime mover in the cooperative response to the global and national call of utilizing Primary Health Care as an approach to community self-reliance.

Brief Description: It is manned by 3 full time community health nurses, a nurse supervisor and the School Dean as the Project Director. The services are jointly rendered with the volunteer nursing faculty and student nurses in close coordination with the local government. The current core catchment areas are the far-flung and under-served communities in five (5) municipalities of Benguet Province namely: Atok, Bokod, Buguias, Kapangan, and Kibungan that are currently in different phases of Community Organizing and Participatory Action Research (COPAR) implementation (pre-entry, entry, organization building phase, consolidation and strengthening phase, phase out). Once a community is assessed as self-reliant in their health needs, phase-out is done. Its program components include: a) health service delivery which include clinic or home-based nursing services that focuses on the promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative care to individuals of all age groups and families, referral of cases, health missions, setting up of herbariums, and community pharmacy among others; b) capability building to assist the communities become independent and self-sustaining through trainings of community health workers and leaders of organizations and committees, building of genuine and functional people’s organizations and mass health education campaign; c) formal and informal linkages and networks with government and non-government agencies, institutions, organizations and individuals in the pursuit of a sustainable and a self-reliant community; and d) participatory action researches and impact-evaluation researches and documentation. The continuing success of the program led to benchmarking activities by other nursing schools and receipt of awards such as the “Everlasting Award” given by the Provincial Government of Benguet in 1981 and the “Regional Kabisig Award” with a cash award given by the President of the Philippines.

Outcomes Achieved: Since its initial implementation, there are 6 communities in 2 municipalities that already achieved self-reliance in managing their health needs. The NHDP staff has also been well integrated in the local government by being designated roles in the local health committees.

Conclusion: The school’s commitment to community health development and the use of innovative, participatory, developmental and responsive strategies contributed to the continuing favorable outcomes of the program. Impact evaluation needs to be done before phase out from a community.