

Philnet-Rural Development Institute-Cebu and Leyte: Understanding the Organization and Gearing for Capability-Building for Advocacy

EDNA ESTIFANIA A. CO*

Philnet's aim is to push for a process of rural democratization and development in partnership with the rural poor and the marginalized through their organizations. Philnet-RDIs adopt a strategy through which their objectives are translated in the following core programs, namely: (a) Rural Economic Development Program, (b) Asset Reform, and (c) Area Development Planning and Project Development and Management. Depending on the specific characteristics/requirements of an area, local organizations may identify and develop their respective plans. An RDI garners support from its own network—the Philnet Central Office and Secretariat and the rest of the RDIs. The RDIs gather and learn from each other's experiences and through the Regional Centers, RDIs are able to collect lessons, inspirations and ideas for innovation. By way of donor links, RDI Cebu and Leyte are funded by Christian Aid. Training and other capacity-building interventions among the RDI staff were supported by Philnet or through Philnet's endorsement. In effect, new demands for skills development vis-à-vis capacity building refer to an alternative perspective in dealing with NGO leadership and performance and in responding to the challenges of governance. Philnet highlights the following types of skills development that it finds useful for its work: (1) leadership development such as building capacities of farmer leaders and RDI staff; (2) negotiation skills of local leaders and RDI staff; (3) scholarship program for RDI and Philnet staff; and (4) mentoring/coaching/consultancy by academic people who could extend guidance in Philnet-RDI activities. Further implied in Philnet-RDI's capability building requirements are skills related to managing their actions and dealings with government agencies especially at the local government level.

Introduction

This study is partly brought about by the need to understand nongovernmental organization (NGO) partners of Christian Aid in order to assess their potentials for effective advocacy. In doing this assessment, the study also tries to pinpoint what skills need to be enhanced so that partner organization may be better equipped to carry out advocacy. Such skills may

*Associate Professor, National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines Diliman.

not only be useful for advocacy but may also be an enabling tool for effective management.

This study focuses on the Philippine Network of Rural Development Institutes, Inc. (Philnet), its history, structure, capacities, skills, resources, and advocacy efforts on behalf of the sugar farm workers and its pursuit of agrarian reform and development particularly among sugar farm workers. The study zeroes in on two member institutes of Philnet, namely, the Rural Development Institute (RDI) in Cebu and in Leyte. Towards the end of this article are recommendations for capacity building that need to be addressed both by Philnet and Christian Aid, either together or in collaboration with other partners of Christian Aid in the Philippines.

Historical Overview and Mandate of Philnet

The Philippine Network of Rural Development Institutes, Inc. is a network of provincial and rural development institutes (RDIs) that used to compose the rural development projects under the Philippine Peasant Institute (PPI). These RDIs coordinated their functions and approaches to respond to development needs of the rural poor in the Philippines. Philnet was established in 1996 and was fully operational by January 1997. It is registered with the Philippine Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) with registration number ANO96-01701. Philnet refers to the central office, while Philnet-RDI refers to a member of the network located at the project site.

As the socioeconomic and micro-enterprise development arm of the PPI then, rural development institutes were not formally structured to attend to the growth and expansion of the socioeconomic development work in PPI areas. During one of the general assemblies following a thorough consultation and assessment of PPI, it was agreed upon by both the PPI and partner institutes in the provinces that it was necessary to provide focused and specialized attention to the project sites. The formation of Philnet as an autonomous entity was suggested. The RDIs would focus on *area development at the local level*, while the PPI would revert to its original work of research and advocacy. However, an unwritten agreement exists between PPI and Philnet to complement each other's efforts. PPI provides high profile advocacy and solid research support, while Philnet strengthens and expands work at the base among peasants and farm workers.

Although the RDIs collectively constitute Philnet, each RDI is autonomous in its operation, as well as in fund generation. An RDI is engaged in what Philnet calls "rural democratization and development," which is translated at the barangay, municipal, and provincial levels. The Philnet complements the RDI through efforts at the national level. By virtue of a

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), Philnet and the RDIs bind themselves to the implementation of integrated, area-focused development programs and services.

The RDIs operate in the following areas of the archipelago: Occidental Mindoro, Pampanga, Camarines Sur, Cebu, Bohol, Leyte, Panay, Antique, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental, Davao del Norte, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Norte, and Zamboanga del Norte.

To coordinate and integrate the projects of these areas, development institutes are organized as follows:

- Negros Center for Rural Development and Democratization (NCRDD)
- Panay Rural Development Center, Inc. (PRDCI)
- Rural Development Institute-Leyte (RDI-Leyte)
- Negros Institute for Rural Development (NIRD)
- Cebu Institute for Rural Development (CIRD)
- Bohol Institute-Sultan Kudarat (RDI-SK)
- Davao Provinces Rural Development Institute (DPRDI).

In the absence of an RDI in an area, Philnet provides services on agrarian reform and rural development (ARRD) through the Area Teams. There are Area Teams in Pampanga, Occidental Mindoro, Camarines Sur, Lanao del Norte, and Zamboanga del Norte.

The Philnet Secretariat engages in special projects through piloting, application, or enhancement of the ARRD as special projects. Philnet implements special projects as follows:

- Village-level Coconut Oil Mill Pilot Projects (Leyte and Lanao). – These are pilot projects of a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) scheme for the setting up of a cooperative-owned and managed industrial enterprise. These are testing grounds for rural industrialization.
- Agrarian Reform Project in banana plantations. – These projects focus on research and organizing that seek to identify a specific approach to ARRD in the field of commercial farming.
- Agrarian Reform Project in the sugar lands. – In collaboration with the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), this project aims to fast-track the implementation of agrarian reform in the sugar lands.
- Kalaut Agrarian Reform Project in Zamboanga del Norte.

Vision, Mission, and Goals

Philnet vows to work for the “attainment of self-determining rural communities whose development is founded on equity, ecological sustainability, gender fairness, respect for people’s rights and culture, as well as the economic, sociocultural and political empowerment of the marginalized rural sector” (Philnet Manual).

Philnet’s mission is to push for a process of “rural democratization and development” in partnership with the rural poor and the marginalized peoples through their organizations. To realize its vision, Philnet assists the marginalized sectors in the formulation of area development programs, in gaining access and control over productive resources, and in forging a more responsive and efficient governance. Philnet commits to assist the marginalized rural people to develop alternatives that promote the principles of equity, ecological sustainability, respect for diversity, and gender sensitivity.

To achieve this mission, Philnet defines its thrust as follows:

- area-focused development program through a process of organizing, planning, and implementation always in partnership with marginalized communities and their organizations;
- capability building for the rural poor to enhance their participation in rural development;
- research and advocacy efforts at the local as well as the national levels in support of area development efforts. Research and advocacy are focused on harnessing support for the implementation of sustainable agriculture and production, rural enterprise, rural industry development, and links to the market.

Philnet subscribes to a tripod approach that brings together what it calls “asset reform, sustainable agriculture/crop diversification, and rural enterprise.” This means achieving development and self-reliance through direct access and control over the primary resources of land, water, sustainable production, and the formation of economic enterprise. Furthermore, Philnet encourages the formation of cooperatives as venues by which these goals may be attained.

Strategies: Programs and Projects

Philnet-RDIs adopt a strategy through which vision and goals are translated in the following core programs: Rural Economic Development

Program, Asset Reform, Rural Governance, and Area Development and Project Development and Management.

Rural Economic Development Program

Philnet-RDIs recognize that major problems facing the marginalized rural sector are landlessness, lack of access to credit and support services, and unemployment. To respond to these problems, Philnet-RDIs zero in on programs involving formation of rural cooperatives, including education and organizing.

The basic and main form of organizing is the formation of cooperatives, which express cooperative members' commitment to collective efforts and responsibilities. Cooperatives, being economic units, are means by which people pool their assets and build up their economic capacities through projects, for mutual benefits.

Asset Reform

Asset reform is achieved by securing access to and control over productive resources such as land.

Rural Governance

This is a program that allows engagement with government in claims-making, specifically on the issue of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL). Advocacy and constant negotiation with government agencies and local government units for land acquisition and occupation including the integration of people's organizations into the local development processes constitute RDI efforts on rural governance.

Area Development Planning and Project Development and Management

Depending on the specific characteristics and needs of an area, the local organizations may identify and develop plans. Philnet-RDIs facilitate such plan formulation through the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach. Plans may involve contiguous barangays in a municipality.

Philnet-RDIs provide services through careful research and information regarding sustainable agriculture and production, rural enterprise, rural industry development, and links to the market. Research and information collection are therefore oriented towards the technical facet of a project.

Researches are not only useful for project development but also for advocacy with government agencies at the regional and national levels.

Beneficiaries

The project beneficiaries of Philnet-RDIs are farmers and farm workers. In Cebu and Leyte, these are mostly sugar farm workers working for years, even generations, on huge estates of sugar lands under landowners. The RDI works with and services the farm workers who are supposedly the agrarian reform beneficiaries under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP). Land distribution and ownership of these lands are precisely the hurdle of most, if not all sugar farm workers in several barangays and municipalities of Ormoc in Leyte and in the outlying municipalities of Cebu.

Organizational Structure

Philnet's highest policymaking unit is the General Assembly (GA). The GA is composed of rural development institutes and individual advocates who share Philnet's vision. It sets the direction of the organization. Any change in the organization's vision, mission, and goals requires the approval of the GA. Regular meetings of the GA take place every three years. Special GA meetings may be convened only when there are special matters to be decided upon. Members of the GA have rights and are entitled to some privileges, as well as duties and responsibilities to the organization. These entitlements and obligations are spelled out in the Philnet by-laws and organization documents.

The Board of Directors (BoD) is organized from among the GA members. The BoD's most important role is monitoring the work of various units and programs of Philnet. Next to the GA, the BoD assumes the most important responsibility of deciding on matters pertinent to the organization in between GA meetings. The BoD also appoints the Executive Director and confirms appointments of the heads of various units such as the Program Management and Development (PROMAD), Institutional Building and Development Unit (IBDU), and the Regional Center (RC).

The BoD holds its meetings annually. Special meetings may be called by the Chair when necessary or upon petition of at least one-third of the general membership.

Another crucial decisionmaking unit is the Executive Board (EB) which meets in between BoD meetings. The EB monitors program implementation and ensures that the program is consistent with the thrust and vision of the organization. Its Executive Committee consists of the Regional Coordinators who have direct supervision over the program operation.

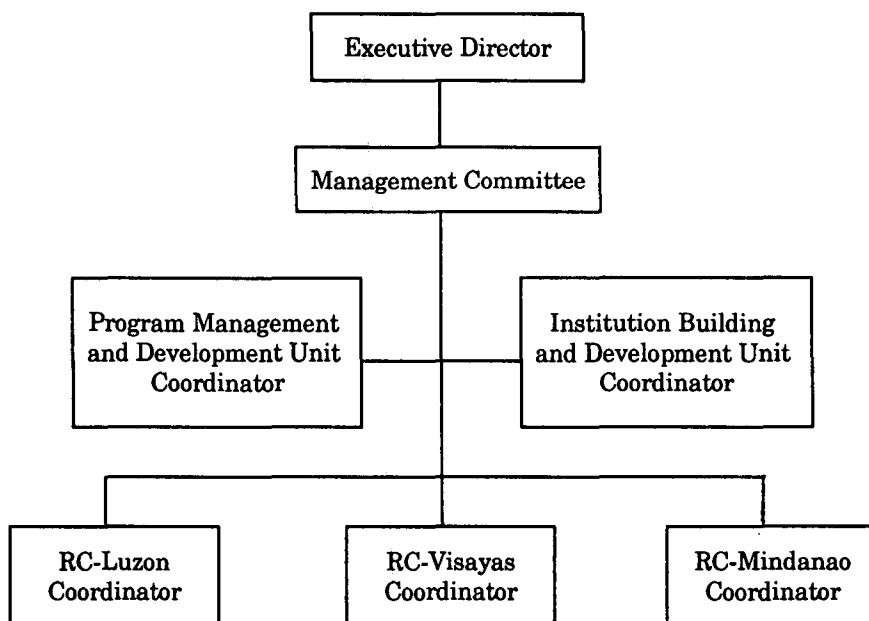
The Secretariat carries out programs and services that reflect the three main program functions of the organization relating to *economic development, training and education, and research and advocacy*. The Secretariat is also responsible for the promotion and growth of the staff welfare fund and institutional fund. The Secretariat is based in Metro Manila, but part of it is in the regions, operating as the Regional Centers.

There are Regional Centers (RCs) each in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The RCs are primarily responsible for managing and supervising programs and services in the regions. Each Center has a Regional Coordinator with support staff that deliver services to and carry out programs/projects in partner organizations in the community. These coordinators are also BoD members. The RC engages in advocacy, especially at the regional or subregional level as a support to RDI initiatives.

A Management Committee, which meets monthly, coordinates the functions of the Secretariat and the RC. The Management Committee intends to institutionalize collective leadership and management.

Figure 1 shows the flow of responsibility and the relationship between the Secretariat and the RC as well as between the Secretariat and the different RDIs.

Figure 1. Flow of Authority at the Philnet Secretariat



Philnet-RDI Inc. distinguishes the functions between two main units, namely, the Central Office (Philnet), and the rural development institutes or RDIs which are based in the provinces.

The Central Office, particularly the Office of the Executive Director, coordinates the various activities of the Philnet secretariat and engages in advocacy and network-building. The other two important units at the Secretariat are the Program Management and Development Unit (PROMAD) and the Institution Building and Development Unit (IBDU). The PROMAD coordinates program implementation and designs information exchange. The IBDU helps the RDIs in broadening contacts and fund generation.

The RDIs perform substantial functions on rural development and reform. These are autonomous units that implement programs/projects in the community. Each RDI concentrates on one area-focused intervention (AFI) site composed of three to five contiguous communities which have the potential for integrated development. Other RDI interventions include claims-taking assistance, cooperative formation and organizing, economic support and training, and development research.

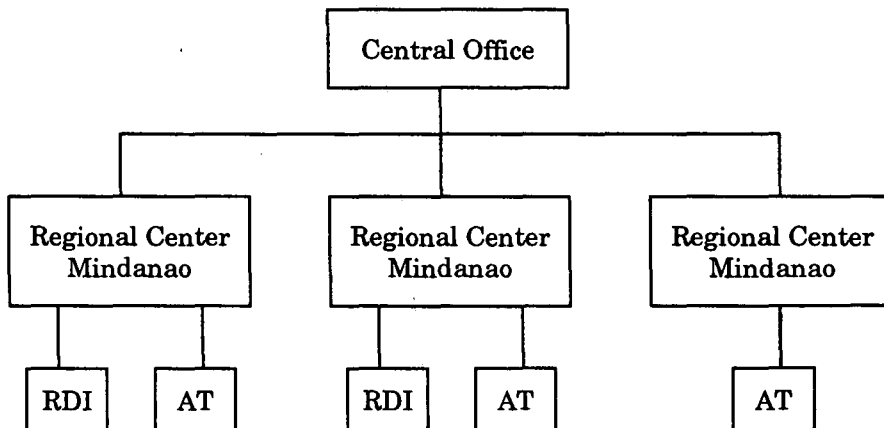
These interventions come in various forms and levels depending on the needs of the community. A typical RDI structure consists of a skeletal staff of two or three community organizers (CO), a research/advocacy staff, socioeconomic/enterprise staff, an office-based clerk, and a bookkeeper/accountant, all of whom are led by an RDI Director or Coordinator.

The RDI setup is quite lean and compact, and in most cases, the staff of the institute perform double or multiple tasks. The reason for such structure has to do with financial consideration. The policy within the Philnet-RDI network is basically self-reliance. The RDI should be able to generate its own fund sources and become self-sustaining.

In the absence of an RDI, Area Teams (AT) work in partnership with rural cooperatives, peasant organizations, education volunteers or ARRD alliances whenever any of these organizations exists in the area. An Area Team leader is usually supported by trainers /organizers who implement the projects in an area.

An organizational chart indicating the line between the Central RDIs is seen in Figure 2.

Each RDI has a Board that sets out the policies and directions, as well as the management system of the institute in its area of operation. Most Board members come from within the structure of Philnet, thus ensuring that there is consistency between operations and Philnet's vision. Such composition can be a source of in-breeding, however.

Figure 2. The Secretariat and the Member RDIs

The Philnet has a bureaucratic layer at the top, where strategic direction, key decisions, monitoring, and coordination are assumed by the General Assembly, the Board of Directors, the Executive Board, and the Executive Committee. The organization operates through the bureaucratic tiers to ensure division of functions, accountability, and responsibility. Philnet sees an advantage in setting up such structures of accountability because the system defines as clearly as possible the responsibilities and roles of each unit and member. On the other hand, this arrangement brings to question how much flexibility and initiative the staff can exercise within the organization and how strongly the organization invokes the principle of commitment, which the NGO has as its cutting edge. Furthermore, the tiers and their corresponding responsibilities tend to preoccupy the organization with meetings.

The organizational structure indicates work relationships between and among units of Philnet that aim for professionalization and formalism.

The so-called *training on values* could probably balance the formal and well-defined structures of relationship. Rather than be weighed down by too many tiers in the organization, Philnet could also consider a structure that is simple but effective and performance-oriented.

Personnel Management: Policies and Practice

Philnet has a "Manual of Policies and Procedures" that guides the staff in the management and utilization of office equipment, facilities, supplies, and general administration. Some of these policies have to do basically with

discipline and the enhancement of ethical standards and code of conduct in the dispensation of efficient and effective services.

Philnet's efforts to define the rules of the house and to set the tone for a careful stewardship over resources are commendable. The organization also strives to promote accountability and transparency in its operation through its well-defined guidelines and policies.

The first part of the said manual relates to personnel policies regarding Philnet's commitment to the effective participation and utilization of human resources. The policies embody the values of the organization with regard to the promotion of full employment, i.e., respect for the dignity of each one in the organization, equitable compensation and benefits based upon merit and competence for as long as the financial resources allow them. The policies also uphold the staff opportunities for growth through enhanced capabilities acquired through formal education, training, and conferences, and the respect for women's effective participation and representation at every level of the organization. On the other hand, the organization promotes fairness through sanctions and discipline based upon due process. There is also a provision regarding voluntary arbitration in the settlement of any dispute or grievance.

The Central Office ensures that personnel policies are thoroughly disseminated and understood by everyone at the RDI.

At the level of the region, the RC closely monitors the operationalization of these policies. Although the RDIs are autonomous from the Central Office, the latter encourages the RDIs to become financially self-reliant. The RDI's self-sustainability is crucial in promoting staff welfare and providing as much benefits to staff as possible.

Even as RDI staff find the compensation low relative to other jobs, the sense of fulfillment they feel in performing RDI work is a strong motivating factor for them to stay. Being able to serve, to get as close as possible to the poor, and sometimes winning little victories in the agrarian reform struggle are great rewards for their hard work and tough life in the field. From time to time, some people complain about poor compensation, not enough pay to support their families, and much less time for their loved ones. Some were forced by circumstances to move on to find better paying jobs, but most of them have chosen to hang on. The work is itself the motivation.

Some of them, specially the senior staff members, have grown into the work from way back during the PPI years in the early 1980s. They have endured organizational changes and the awkward transition from PPI to Philnet-RDI. Illness, ageing, personal and domestic problems, including political/ideological battles, have all contributed to pin them down, but many continue to take on the challenge of making a difference in the lives of the

rural poor through agrarian reform. They remain committed to the cause of helping the peasants and farm workers, in spite of the shortage of funds or the threat of the loss of donor support. Their commitment has been sharpened by their constant exposure to the lives of the rural poor.

Just like many NGOs, Philnet has begun to feel the pinch of fund scarcity from external sources. The challenge to Philnet is to constantly seek other sources of funds, to diversify its sources, and to engage in cooperative rural enterprises that will eventually pay off and lead to self-sustainability.

Resources Available

The people or the staff of RDIs, the greatest resource of the organization, is imbued with a mission and the dedication to do their share to alleviate the plight of the poor.

Philnet also has donor partners who have been loyal and who share the vision for agrarian reform and rural development.

The RDIs in Cebu and Leyte have allied institutions that provide support and collaborate with them in their activities, especially when such support is needed. In Cebu, the RDI counts on some members of the Catholic Church and human rights groups among its avid supporters on agrarian reform. In Cebu and Leyte, some employees and officials of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) have links with the RDI. The RDI in Cebu is also in touch with media people who help Philnet clarify issues on agrarian reform. Certainly, the Regional Center with whom RDI Cebu shares office, is a big source of support for the RDI Cebu staff.

RDI Leyte has office space that doubles up as a staff house for those who do not come from Ormoc City. By staying in the office-staff house, the staff save on the cost of accommodation, which helps them to cope with expenses despite their small salary. The RDI has very modest facilities. Both offices (Cebu and Leyte) are obviously operating with limited resources: two to four computer units with Internet service, office equipment, bulletin board, conference room, work area, and virtually just enough space for a very modest operation. Libraries do not seem to be major resources. Library materials are limited. Except for some newspapers and clippings, the e-mail seems to be the main access to the world outside. Indeed, it is difficult to see how a local organization too immersed in the problems of the rural poor, could still appreciate phenomena outside its own horizon. Gray is the color of the office walls; verdant hues are seen only when staff stay and live among the peasants amid the sugar fields and the hills. There is a need for a lively interpretation of reality, both inside and outside; a need for a wider access to what goes on across the miles and to see that there is life in the most grim realities.

An RDI's biggest and most valuable resource is its personnel. The staff are bursting with enthusiasm and dedicated to their work, moving about from the office to the communities, from one meeting to the next, and from meetings to field integration, transforming Philnet's vision into reality.

A case story on the life of a community organizer and how he contributes and grows into the work of rural empowerment is in Annex A. It is a story of a significant human experience.

Network and Links

An RDI obtains tremendous support from its own network, i.e., the Philnet Central Office and Secretariat and the rest of the RDIs. From time to time, the RDIs gather and learn from each other's experiences and, through the Regional Centers, RDIs are able to collect lessons, inspirations, and ideas for innovation. Philnet has its own family as a major network. The other important link at the national level is the PPI, particularly on advocacy and access to media. Since PPI decided to focus primarily on research and advocacy, it has been Philnet's biggest ally in liaising with national policy makers and media on policy advocacy. By virtue of its historical links, PPI is Philnet's most reliable ally.

The Philnet Central Office is the key link of the RDIs to national government agencies insofar as following through on specific project responses to agrarian reform and rural development concerns. Philnet, however, stays low key on political advocacy at the national level. The Philnet Central Office is best appreciated for its technical support to the RDI's rural enterprise and rural development projects. Philnet brings in scientists and experts to do technical studies or to map the area in preparation for rural development at the RDI sites.

At the local scene, RDIs work with the provincial and municipal offices of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the Provincial Agrarian Reform Committee (PARCOM), the Planning and Development Office, and even with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP). In the case of Leyte, the RDI assumes a leading role in the PARCOM. RDIs usually engage the barangay, more than the municipal level of government, on issues of advocacy, rural development, and in some cases, on land occupation by poor farmers.

RDI Leyte has useful links, though not on a sustained basis, with a number of agencies such as the Coalition of Women in Ormoc, City Cooperative Development Council, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Agriculture (DA), Visayas State College of

Agriculture, Pearl S. Buck Foundation, VICTO (Visayas Cooperatives Development Center, Inc.), Cooperative Development Authority, St. Peter's Parish, and St. Benedict's School.

RDI Cebu has the following supporters and allies: (1) Cebu College of Science and Technology and (2) Cebu Federation of Peasant Organizations.

The work of an RDI inevitably requires a relationship with government virtually at all levels, and especially at the local level. The RDI has well-established links with these agencies especially from the barangay to the provincial level, in most cases, through the assistance of sympathetic and/or open-minded individuals such as the barangay school teachers.

By way of donor links, RDI Cebu and Leyte are supported by Christian Aid, the main source of funds for these two institutes. Christian Aid support gets RDI Leyte moving in at least five barangays. PARFUND, which is a local funding mechanism involved in agrarian reform fund support, also puts in contributions for another five barangays. RDI Cebu gets additional, though small, grant support from the Save the Children Fund-United Kingdom particularly for a one-off research on children and their contributions to family and local economy.

Philnet, on the other hand, has the Dutch Inter-Church Organization for Development and Cooperation, popularly referred to as ICCO, as a major donor partner. Another contributor to Philnet's programs is Oxfam America for small-scale project partnership.

The operation of RDI Cebu in two municipalities is mainly supported also by Christian Aid. In addition to this international aid, RDI Cebu gets modest support from the Technical Education and Skills Department Authority (TESDA), the Director of which is a former NGO personality. TESDA's contributions are for a one-off training not exceeding P10,000.00 per training. The partnership with TESDA is quite beneficial although support is focused on technical skills training assistance.

The RDI tries to expand its linkages based upon trust and confidence of agencies and individuals. It is still largely reliant on known and trusted allies, and relates with government agencies and other nongovernmental groups either on a selective or unsustained basis. The biggest alliance formed so far is the so-called "Task Force Bagasse," which brings in common efforts and interests in the sugar lands of Central Visayas. While strong linkages are forged among known and trusted allies, in the long-term RDI links need to expand beyond habitual or comfortable links.

Skills Development and Implications on Capability Building

The RDI seems to be self-sufficient in terms of organizing and education work at the community level. With cooperative formation as a technique for organizing and for claiming social, economic, and political entitlements, the RDI has made some headway in collecting the interests of poor people together and in pursuing gains in the face of social adversity. The endurance of RDI people and the time-tested dedication to their commitment have capacitated them on basic education, organizing, community integration, and cooperative formation. The RDI staff are very experienced in their work.

The staff of RDI Leyte and Cebu underwent some types of orientation and training. These training and skills development activities include the following:

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| • Orientation on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development | KAISAHAN |
| • Para-legal training | DAR lawyers |
| • Documentation | DAR Province |
| • Monitoring and Tracking Movement of Land Transfer | Regional Center |
| • Participatory Rural Appraisal | Regional Center |
| • Enterprise Development | Philnet Central Office |
| • Sustainable Development | Philnet and UP Los Baños |
| • Gender Sensitivity Training | Philnet |
| • DARAB Rules and Procedures | DAR Legal Division. |

Training and other skills development among RDI staff were supported by Philnet, or through Philnet's endorsement. As far as possible, the expertise of local resource persons was also tapped. It is obvious from the early attempts at skills development that the RDI has been trying to learn about the ways of the bureaucracy (DARAB Rules and Procedures, Para-legal training, etc.)

New ways of doing things make RDI staff realize there are new and additional skills to learn and or reinvent. For example, advocacy and pressure work upon government agencies require more than a one-on-one relationship with individuals and personalities in the bureaucracy. It needs an institutionalization of the relationship through consistent engagement with local government units (LGUs). The RDI recognizes the need to connect with the system of governance. This requires knowing, being informed about, and understanding the processes of local decisionmaking at the level of the barangay, the municipality, and the province. This also means getting acquainted with the processes of the barangay development council to be able to identify the windows of opportunity for participation at that level.

Another arena for capacity building in advocacy (and in organizational strengthening) is a general retooling of Philnet-RDI staff through an organized educational program. As far as Philnet is concerned, the staff are in need of keeping themselves abreast with governance, management of their organizations, effective leadership in the NGO field, and style of work that leads to performance-based outcomes.

The methods of learning are suggested by Philnet itself, both the non-formal and the formal ways. The non-formal methods include skills training and orientation focused on specific skills related to governance such as barangay administration, LGU and NGO efforts in joint local development planning, and project implementation through short courses with workshops. The formal learning mode on the other hand, is expected to be in the form of scholarships for the pursuit of academic degrees.

The network has also expressed the need for an "external critic." This means involving an expert to make a critical analysis on the work and processes of Philnet-RDI, provide an outsider's assessment of the way things are going, and bring in the rigor of analysis and methodical work into the perspective of the NGO. Philnet believes these can be provided by the academe.

RDI Cebu specifically identified the need to develop skills on campaign administration and media campaign, which includes handling media materials and sustaining links with media. It also identified the need for negotiation skills involving NGOs and government agencies.

In effect, the new demands for capacity building refer to an alternative perspective in dealing with NGO leadership and performance and in responding to the challenges of governance.

In summary, Philnet straightforwardly identified the following types of skills development that it finds useful for its work, specially at the local level:

- leadership development such as building the capability of farmer leaders and the staff of RDIs to understand the processes of barangay administration which would enable them to participate in barangay development planning and implementation;
- negotiation skills of local leaders and RDI staff to deal with local government officials and government personnel;
- scholarship program for RDI and Philnet staff to enable them to grow in their NGO career and to equip them with the tools necessary and relevant for their work; and

- mentoring/coaching/consultancy by academic people who could extend guidance and walk through Philnet-RDI's analysis, planning, and strategic action.

Perhaps, further implied in Philnet-RDI's capability building requirements are skills related to managing their action and dealings with government agencies especially at the local government level where they try to make significant contributions. It is not so much on the substantive education and organizing of farmers and farm workers nor on the technical issues of enterprise development and the like that NGOs need assistance. It is learning to negotiate with government people within the processes where decisionmaking takes place that NGOs consider themselves strangers.