



PPSA

Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture



**EAST-WEST SEED
FOUNDATION**

Gulayamanan

Building a Sustainable Community Garden Model



2025

Philippines Partnership for Sustainable Agriculture (PPSA)

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Acknowledgments

PPSA would like to thank the East-West Seed Foundation Philippines (EWSF) for participating in the development of this compendium of best practices of the Gulayamanan Project. We thank EWSF's senior leaders and staff who supported the review and editing process, and to the Gulayamanan farmers and partners who participated in the interviews and focus group discussions. Finally, we would also like to acknowledge the interns from the University of the Philippines Los Baños' College of Economics and Management-Department of Agribusiness Management and Entrepreneurship—Noli Macadangdang, Kriztel Shane Singh, and Gemimah Dana Villar—for their contributions to this compendium.



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Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	4
II. The Project Implementer: East-West Seed Foundation	5
III. The Gulayamanan Project	5
Project Milestones	7
Project Design and Development	8
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact	15
IV. Best Practices	21
V. Learnings for the Future	24



Executive Summary

In the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to food was a major challenge. Transport and movement restrictions highlighted gaps in the food system, especially in urban areas where dependence on external food sources was high. Community gardens were seen as a solution to close the gap between communities and the food that they eat. It banked on the idea that the closer you are to the source of your food, the more sure that families will get to eat it. These gardens empower local communities to grow their own food, reduce reliance on external food systems, and create opportunities for economic growth.

East-West Seed Foundation Philippines (EWSF) launched the Gulayamanan Project during the height of the pandemic to help address food security challenges through cluster vegetable gardens that enhance access to nutritious food, provide livelihood opportunities, and foster community resilience. The Gulayamanan Project empowered 175 farmers across four key sites—Batangas, Bulacan, Cebu, and Leyte—by establishing cluster vegetable gardens that provided reliable access to fresh produce and created new income opportunities.

On average, farmer households increased their vegetable consumption by 60%, with each garden yielding up to 100 kilograms of vegetables monthly. Farmers reported using the surplus for debt repayment, additional income, and household savings, contributing to community resilience and reduced food insecurity. By leveraging multi-stakeholder partnerships, the project not only improved family nutrition but also fostered sustainable farming practices. The key learnings from the project include:

- Food security - increased access to fresh vegetables, contributing to improved family nutrition and reduced dependency on market-bought food products. Farmers shared that having a vegetable garden closer to their homes provided them with convenience and healthier options.
- Economic empowerment - farmers reported increased income and savings, enabling improved financial stability and growth. Some of the farmers shared that it helped them settle their debts while the training on financial literacy helped them keep track of their income and resources better.
- Sustainability - the project capacitated farmers on environmentally sustainable farming practices such as composting and natural farm practices. Through the training, the farmers recognized the importance of sustainable farming practices to both the environment and food safety.

Read the full compendium to learn how EWSF's Gulayamanan Project makes an impact in the lives of farmers and demonstrates a replicable model for improving food security and sustainable livelihoods while contributing to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

<https://wwf.org.ph/resource-center/story-archives-2020/communal-gardening-food-crisis/>



In photo: East-West Seed Foundation Philippines with Gulayamanan farmers in Lian, Batangas.

The Project Implementer: East-West Seed Foundation Philippines

East-West Seed Philippines is one of the leading seed companies in the country and part of the East-West Seed Group. Its mission is to provide innovative seeds and services that help improve the livelihood of tropical vegetable farmers and promote sustainable farming and business practices. In 2012, the company set up the East-West Seed Foundation Philippines (EWSF) as the corporate social responsibility arm of the company.

The Foundation envisions a future where all Filipinos enjoy food security and healthier lives through increased appreciation, availability, and consumption of vegetables. Guided by the belief that growing and consuming food locally is key to addressing the Philippines' food security challenges, EWSF empowers communities with the tools to thrive: high-quality seeds and greater knowledge about vegetable production and its health benefits. The Foundation's vision is clear—**Food Security for All**—with a mission to ensure that **vegetables are part of every meal**.

The Gulayamanan Project

Food insecurity remains a persistent challenge in the Philippines, exacerbated by poverty and inequality, climate change, lack of access to nutritious food, rising food prices, climate change, and agricultural challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic made it even more difficult for families and communities to access affordable, fresh, and nutritious food. This highlighted gaps in the food systems across the country, highlighting the dependence on sourcing food outside their localities. Initiatives like community vegetable gardens play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by empowering local households to produce their own food and reducing the community's dependence on external food systems. These gardens not only improve access to food but also create social and economic opportunities, especially for vulnerable populations such as women and unemployed individuals.

According to the 2022 World Food Program report, one in ten households in the Philippines is food insecure. This number increases to a quarter among agricultural households when compared to only 9 percent for non-agricultural households, reflecting the systemic challenges faced by farming communities.

The Gulayamanan Project was conceptualized to help address these challenges to empower communities to grow and consume healthy, and locally produced food, in line with the principle “grow locally, consume locally”. The project aims to promote food security through the establishment and maintenance of cluster vegetable gardens that will help increase access and consumption of vegetables and create additional income opportunities for the community.

EWSF designed Gulayamanan as a multi-dimensional program that generates livelihood for the project beneficiaries and stimulates the local economy. It makes fresh and nutritious food accessible within the community for improved food security and family nutrition. Moreover, the project also promotes environmentally sustainable practices, focusing on natural farming and food waste composting.

The Gulayamanan Project also aligns with and contributes to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals, addressing critical challenges through its multi-dimensional approach. Key contributions include:



By integrating a livelihood component, the project provides participants with income generating opportunities through vegetable production and sales, helping reduce poverty in the communities;



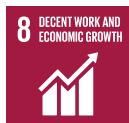
The establishment of cluster gardens directly addresses food insecurity, helping ensure that both the farming families and communities will have consistent access to nutritious food, thereby reducing hunger and malnutrition;



The increased consumption of fresh and naturally-grown vegetables promotes better nutrition and can help reduce the risk of diet-related illnesses;



The project encourages the participation of women in the community and empowers them through training, better health, and livelihood opportunity;



The project empowers the Gulayamanan farmers to sell their vegetable produce to the community, thereby contributing to decent work and stimulating the local economy.

Additionally, the project promotes environmental sustainability (SDG 13: Climate Action and SDG 15: Life on Land) through natural farming practices and composting. It also encourages responsible production and consumption (SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production), builds sustainable communities by enhancing local food systems (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities), and fosters multi-stakeholder and community partnerships (SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals).

Through its multi-dimensional and impact-driven approach, the Gulayamanan Project serves as a model for community-driven initiatives that help advance multiple SDGs, creating sustainable and inclusive development pathways.

Project Milestones

	2020	EWSF designed the Gulayamanan Project to promote food security through the establishment and maintenance of cluster vegetable gardens that will increase access and consumption of vegetables and create additional income opportunities for the community.
	2021-2022	EWSF piloted the Gulayamanan Project in Tacloban City, Leyte. The project was implemented through the support of Pilipinas Shell Foundation and the local government.
	2022-2023	A second site for the Gulayamanan Project opened in Lian, Batangas with the support of BDO Foundation, the Municipal Agriculturist Office, and the local government of Lian.
	2023-2024	A third site for the Gulayamanan Project opened in San Ildefonso, Bulacan with the support of Metrobank Foundation and the Municipal Agriculturist Office.
	2024	A fourth site for the Gulayamanan Project opened in Mojon and Kampingganon, Bantayan, Cebu in partnership with the local government of Bantayan.
	2025	175 beneficiaries have been trained on vegetable production. EWSF, the local government of Bantayan, and Metrobank Foundation scales up the Gulayamanan Project, covering two additional barangays.



In photo: A Gulayamanan farmer in San Ildefonso, Bulacan carefully examines her vegetable crops.

Project Design and Development

The Gulayamanan Project was carefully designed to address critical issues of food insecurity by promoting food security through establishment and maintenance of cluster vegetables gardens. This initiative aims to increase access to and consumption of vegetables while simultaneously increasing income opportunities for the community. The project employed a strategic approach in selecting the project's beneficiaries, fostering partnerships ensuring its relevance, effectiveness, long-term impact, and scalability.

Project Design and Development

The Gulayamanan Project follows a structured, phased approach to ensure efficient and impactful implementation. Each phase is meticulously planned, with the active involvement of stakeholders at every step to maximize the project's reach and sustainability.



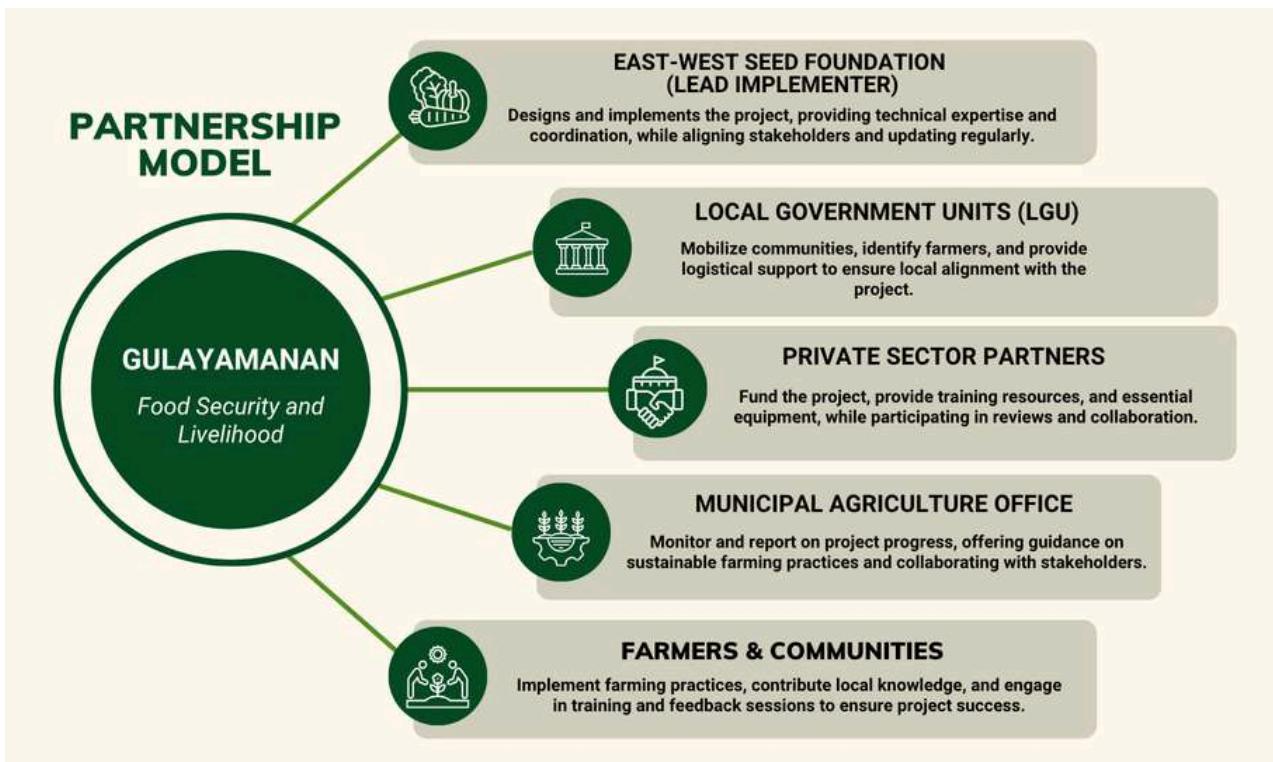
Partnership Formation and Coordination. The implementation begins with the establishment of a partnership through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among key stakeholders, including the Local Government Units (LGUs) of the respective municipalities, their Municipal Agriculture Offices, and the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arms of private sector organizations such as BDO Foundation, Metrobank Foundation, Inc. and Pilipinas Shell Foundation, Inc.



Collaboration and Oversight through the Technical Working Group (TWG). To coordinate efforts, a Technical Working Group is formed, consisting of members from the LGUs, private sector representatives, and the EWSF team. TWG meetings are held at each stage of the work plan to review the completion of the previous phase and discuss the steps for moving forward.

Partnership Model

Collaboration is a key component of the Gulayamanan Project, with each organization playing a critical role in ensuring its success. EWSF believes that collaborative partnerships work best in scaling-up development approaches that make a sustainable impact on individuals and communities. The partnership model combined the expertise and resources of the stakeholders, fostering a multi-sectoral approach to addressing food insecurity, economic empowerment, and sustainability. The diagram below highlights the key roles and contributions of the organizations involved in the project.



As the lead project implementer, EWSF provides technical expertise in the design, development and implementation of the Gulayamanan Project. The foundation led the design and execution of the training program, supported the development of the cluster gardens, facilitated linkages between the farmers, the local government units, the Municipal Agriculture Offices and the private sector partners, and provided regular updates to the project partners.



Local government units played a pivotal role in the Gulayamanan Project, particularly in community mobilization and ensuring that the project is aligned with the LGU's priorities. They supported EWSF in identifying the project's farmers and provided logistical support and resources such as the planting site for the cluster gardens and training venue.



Corporate partners like BDO Foundation, Inc., Metrobank Foundation, Inc., Pilipinas Shell Foundation, Inc., and Tacloban City Business Club provided funding support, financial literacy training, and other important resources like water pumps.



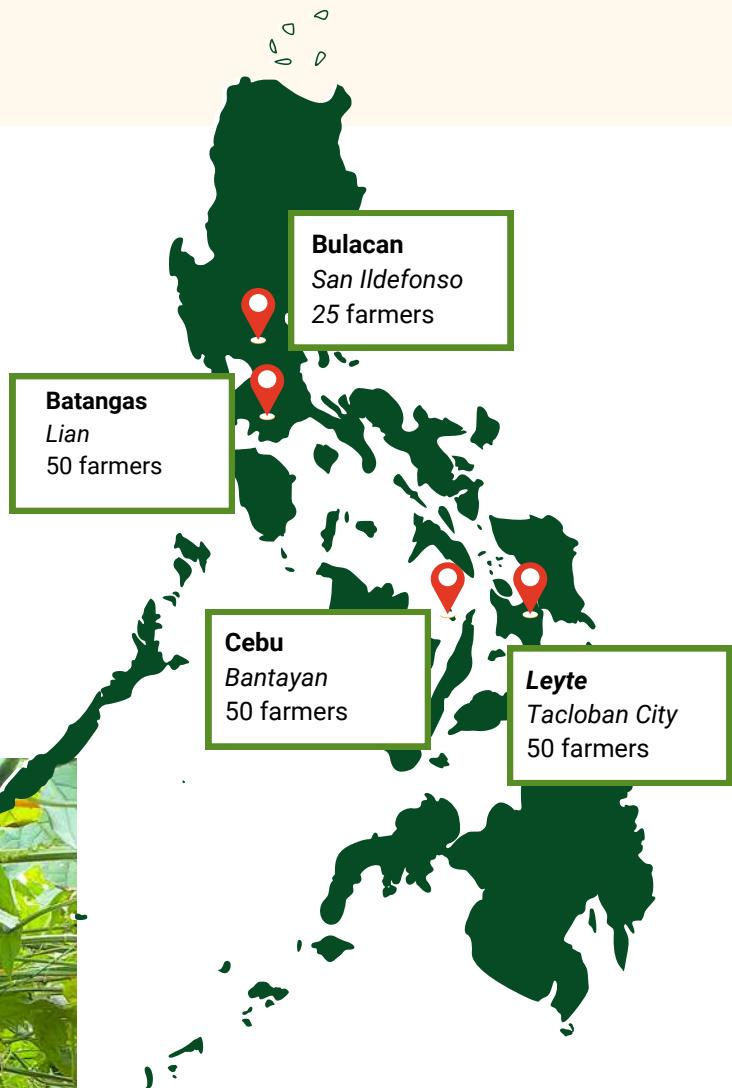
Municipal Agriculture Offices assisted in the project monitoring and reporting. They also offered guidance on sustainable farming practices and their input helped ensure that the project remained adaptive to local challenges.



Farmers and Communities received training, farming inputs and implemented farming practices learned through the program, while also providing feedback to ensure project success.

Project Sites

The Gulayamanan Project is implemented across four key locations in the Philippines—Batangas, Bulacan, Leyte, and Cebu. The project strategically addresses the unique needs of each community by tailoring interventions to these areas, which ensures that the initiative is being maximized to improve the impact on the well-being of the communities.



Tacloban City, Leyte

In collaboration with the Pilipinas Shell Foundation, Inc. and the local government of Tacloban City, the project engaged **50 households, 86% of which were women-led**. This site emphasized empowering women in agriculture while improving household nutrition and income generation. Tacloban's selection was based on its history of vulnerability to food insecurity, particularly after Typhoon Yolanda.



Lian, Batangas

In partnership with the BDO Foundation, Inc. and the local government of Lian, Batangas, the project involved 50 community members. This site primarily targeted individuals without stable livelihood opportunities, aiming to uplift the community by combining food security initiatives with sustainable income generation.

San Ildefonso, Bulacan

Despite initial challenges in site selection and participant identification, the project successfully engaged 25 beneficiaries in Basuit. EWSF partnered with the Metrobank Foundation, Inc. and got support from the local government and the Municipal Agriculturist of San Ildefonso, Bulacan. The initiative focused on training beneficiaries in sustainable gardening practices and fostering a sense of community through shared responsibility in vegetable production.



Mojon and Kampingganon, Bantayan

The Gulayamanan Bantayan project was designed to benefit informal women growers and vulnerable households in Barangays Mojon and Kampingganon in Bantayan Island. These beneficiaries include women engaged in backyard and small-scale vegetable production, many of whom serve as household heads or primary caregivers.



In photo: A Gulayamanan farmer in Tacloban tends to her okra plants.

The project prioritized women-headed households, elderly women, and women with limited or no stable sources of income, solo parents, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities (PWDs). These demographics reflect a high level of need and a strong potential for impact, as many of the women balance multiple roles within the home while striving to secure food and livelihood sources for their families. The Gulayamanan initiative aims to strengthen their capacity through sustainable farming systems tailored to their realities.

Farmer Selection

The selection process of the farmers onboarded into the Gulayaman Project was designed around an inclusive yet selective approach to maximize the program's impact. By targeting motivated individuals with the greatest need, the project could foster a sense of ownership among participants while ensuring the sustainability of the gardens and the broader community benefits. This process included the following phases:

- 1 Community Assessment.** Initial assessments were conducted in potential project areas to identify communities with high levels of food insecurity and limited livelihood opportunities. Local government units (LGUs) and community leaders were consulted to validate the community's needs and challenges. For example, Barangay North Kawayan Ville in Tacloban, Leyte—a relocation site for households affected by Typhoon Yolanda—has essential facilities but still lacks sustainable solutions to improve food security and household income.
- 2 Application and Screening.** Interested individuals or households were invited to apply. Screening interviews or consultations were held to assess their eligibility, motivation, and capacity to participate in the program.
- 3 Finalization of Participants.** After the screening process, a final list of participants was drawn up based on the criteria and alignment with the project's objectives. Selected participants were then oriented about their responsibilities and the expectations for their involvement.

Aside from this selection process, a demographic survey was conducted to identify the most suitable participants for the program. The following criteria were used in selecting the Gulayamanan farmers:



Unemployment of the primary participant in the family. Priority was given to individuals or households with limited or unstable income sources.



Willingness to engage in vegetable gardening. Participants had to demonstrate a strong willingness to engage in the program, including attending training sessions, maintaining their gardens, and participating in group activities. A commitment to the project's long-term sustainability was also considered a key factor.



Support from at least one other family member to help maintain the garden. This is to ensure that participants had the necessary assistance to sustain the gardening efforts, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the garden.



Malnutrition within the household. As based on the school listing, households with significant nutritional needs were prioritized. This is to address food insecurity directly by targeting families with limited access to nutritious food such as fresh fruits and vegetables.



Proximity of the household to the designated planting area (distance from cluster gardens). Households located near the designated planting area were considered to ensure easy access to the gardening space and also promote higher chances of participation in the program.

This structured selection process of the project sites and farmers serves as a model for ensuring that similar community development projects are equitable, impactful, and sustainable.





Training and Capacity Building

The Gulayamanan Project helps improve food security, enhance livelihoods, and empower individuals, particularly women, through skills development and economic opportunities. Central to this is the project's Theory of Change, which combines both the VeggiEskwela with the Gulayamanan to create a lasting impact in the community.

The Theory of Change of the project envisions that the establishment of cluster gardens in the community can help create livelihood opportunities, support local food production, improve health and nutrition by increasing awareness about the health benefits of vegetables, while also enhancing the availability, accessibility, and affordability of nutritious food. This awareness will drive improved food security, higher family consumption of fresh produce, and better overall nutrition.

Creating livelihood + Growing local food + Healthy communities + Clean environment

Barangay Economy

Food Security

Family Nutrition

Environment Protection



Development of
home/school/community
vegetable gardens

Awareness
Availability
Accessibility
Affordability
of nutritious food

Increased food security, family
consumption and nutrition



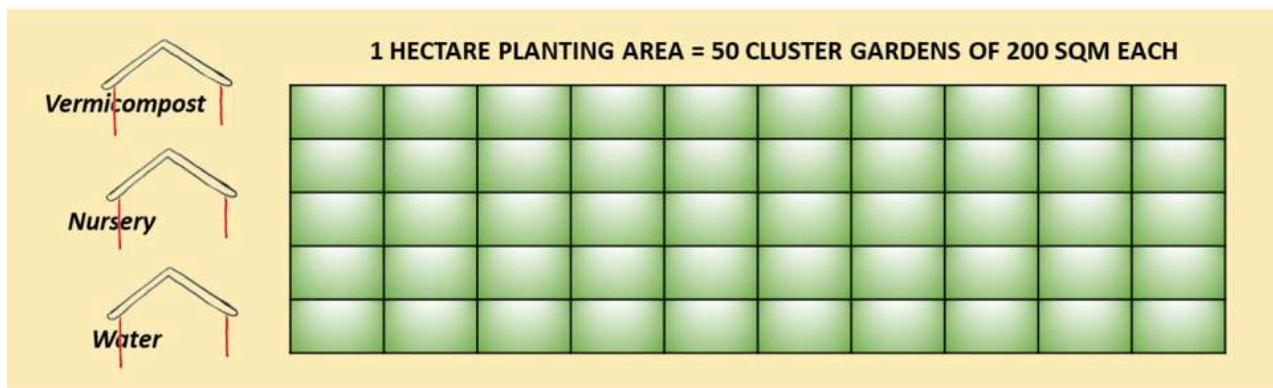
1	Establishment of cluster vegetable gardens
2	Project beneficiaries develop and sustain their own organic vegetable gardens
3	Beneficiaries gain revenues from sales of vegetables
4	Self-regulating association formed



In photo: The Gulayamanan cluster garden in San Ildefonso, Bulacan.

The project integrates EWSF's 3-month training program, the VeggiEskwela, which provides the Gulayamanan farmers with the knowledge and skills in vegetable farming. It also guides the development of their own vegetable gardens.

After the VeggiEskwela training, the Gulayamanan Project establishes cluster vegetable gardens, engaging beneficiary families in vegetable production. Each Gulayamanan farmer is assigned a 200 sq. m. planting area in the project site. To avoid overproduction of the same vegetables, the Gulayamanan farmers are designated different crops, ensuring a diverse range of produce. The gardens provide vegetables for both home consumption and income generation.



Each cluster garden is designed to yield 100 kilograms of organic vegetables monthly. This initiative ensures a steady supply of diverse crops. Each 1 hectare planting project site directly supports the Gulayamanan farmer families and benefiting an additional 400 families in the wider community. Additionally, the project promotes environmental sustainability through the adoption of vermicomposting and integrated pest management practices.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact

Project Monitoring was essential to track the progress of the planned activities and assess the achievement of intended outcomes. Key Performance Indicators were tracked and closely monitored through activity reports and other monitoring tools developed for validation purposes, with monthly updates shared among the project partners.

A Post-Project Implementation Review was carried out upon completion of all project activities to assess project performance and provide recommendations. Meanwhile, a Project Completion Report was prepared and shared with relevant parties.

Project Outcomes

The Gulayamanan Project has made significant strides in contributing to food security, providing economic empowerment, skills development, and environmental sustainability. The communities in the project sites in Batangas, Bulacan, Cebu, and Leyte have seen many positive changes. Farmers have continued to apply the training provided by EWSF, using the knowledge to sustain their cluster gardens. Many of those who were trained remain active in vegetable farming, ensuring a steady supply of fresh and healthy produce for their families.

Food Security and Nutrition

The Gulayamanan Project made a significant impact in improving food security and nutrition by providing a reliable source of vegetables not only to the farmers but also for the community. Community members, especially mothers, were also encouraged to grow their own vegetables in the small spaces in their homes upon seeing the impact of the Gulayamanan project to the farmers. The program also promoted physical activity, as gardening has encouraged many to become more active and engaged in planting, contributing to healthier and more dynamic lifestyles.

"Yes ma'am, napakalaki [ng tulong]. Instead of going to the market or going somewhere to [get] their vegetable, doon lang sila pupunta sa [Gulayamanan garden]. Plus, nung nakikita po ng mga taga community na pwede palang magtanim sa ganito lang kaliit na area, somehow, hindi lang yung 50 [farmers] ang namo-motivate. Pati yung mga ibang nanay na gusto palang magtanim ng ilang pirasong okra sa paligid-bahay niya."

Gulayamanan Farmer in Tacloban City



In photo: Gulayamanan farmers sell their produce during the Harvest Festival.

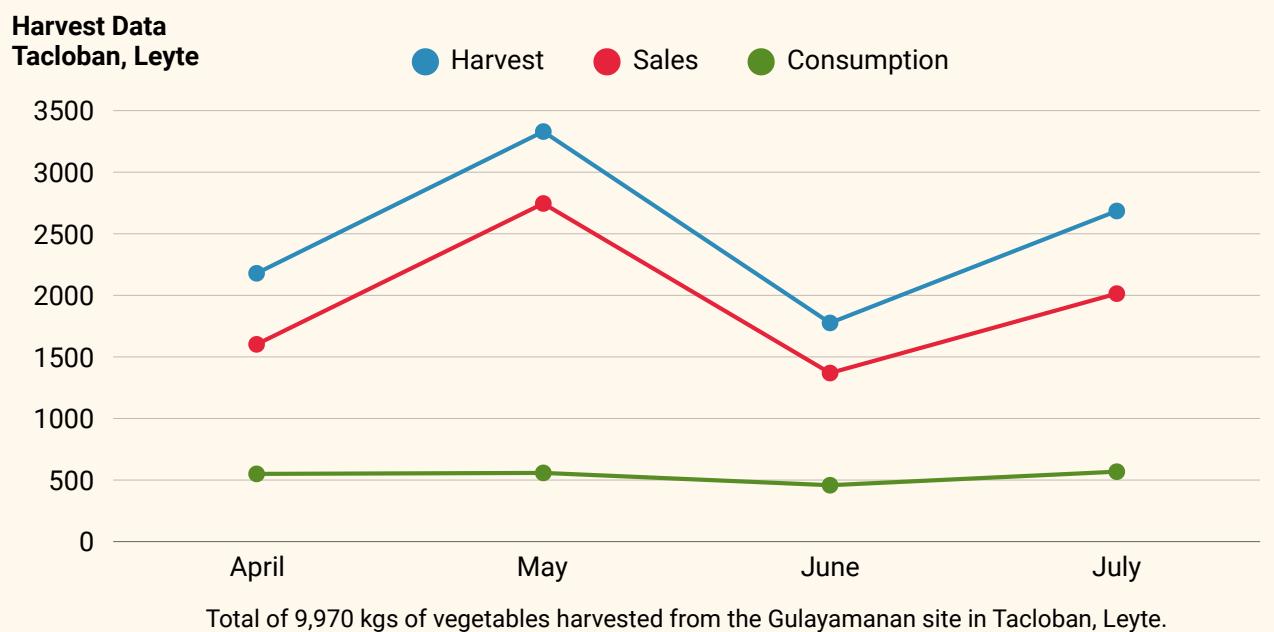


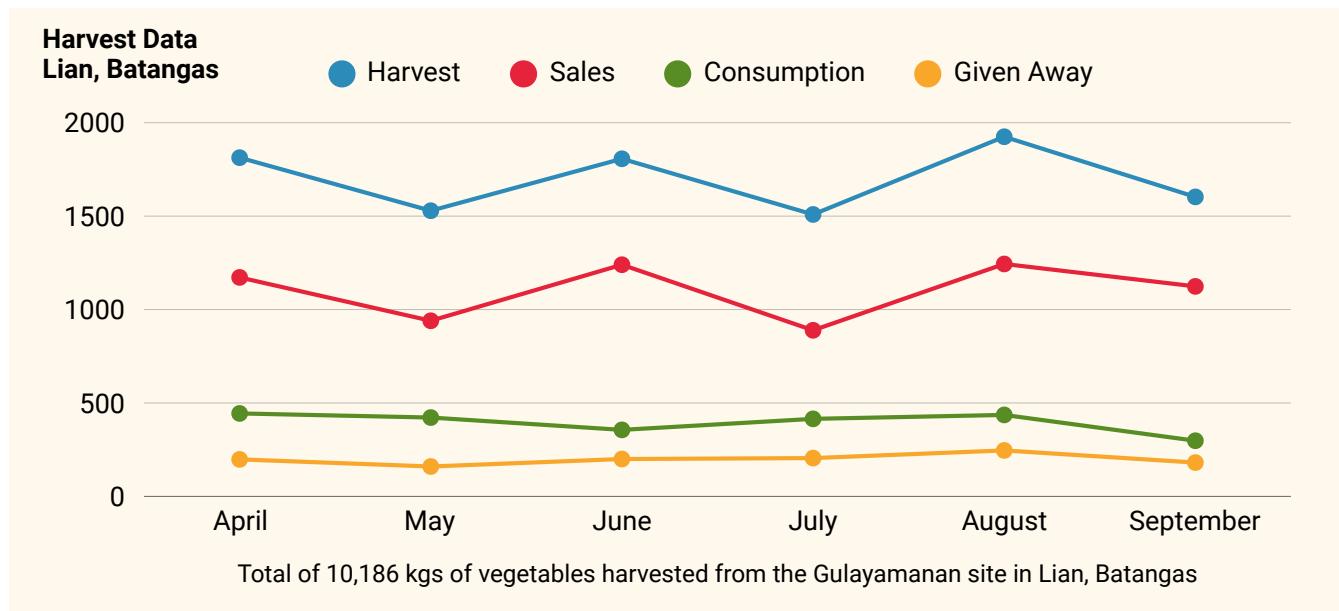
In photo: Gulayamanan farmers prepare dishes using their harvested vegetables.

The Gulayamanan project also observed significant improvement in the vegetable consumption habits of the participating farmers and their households. On average, they consumed 10 kilos of vegetables per month, marking a 60 percent increase compared to their consumption before the project began. This increase highlights the project's impact not only on enhancing food security but also on health and nutrition. By growing vegetables, the Gulayamanan farmers were able to incorporate more fresh and nutritious vegetables to their diets regularly, reducing reliance on processed food. This shift highlights how accessibility to vegetables can help transform a community's nutritional landscape.

Economic Empowerment

The monitoring of the project and data collection highlighted the project's success. The EWSF tracked the Gulayamanan farmers' harvest in kilos, the sales in pesos, and how the harvests were distributed in the community. The tables below show the harvest breakdown during the implementation stages of the project in each of the Gulayamanan sites.



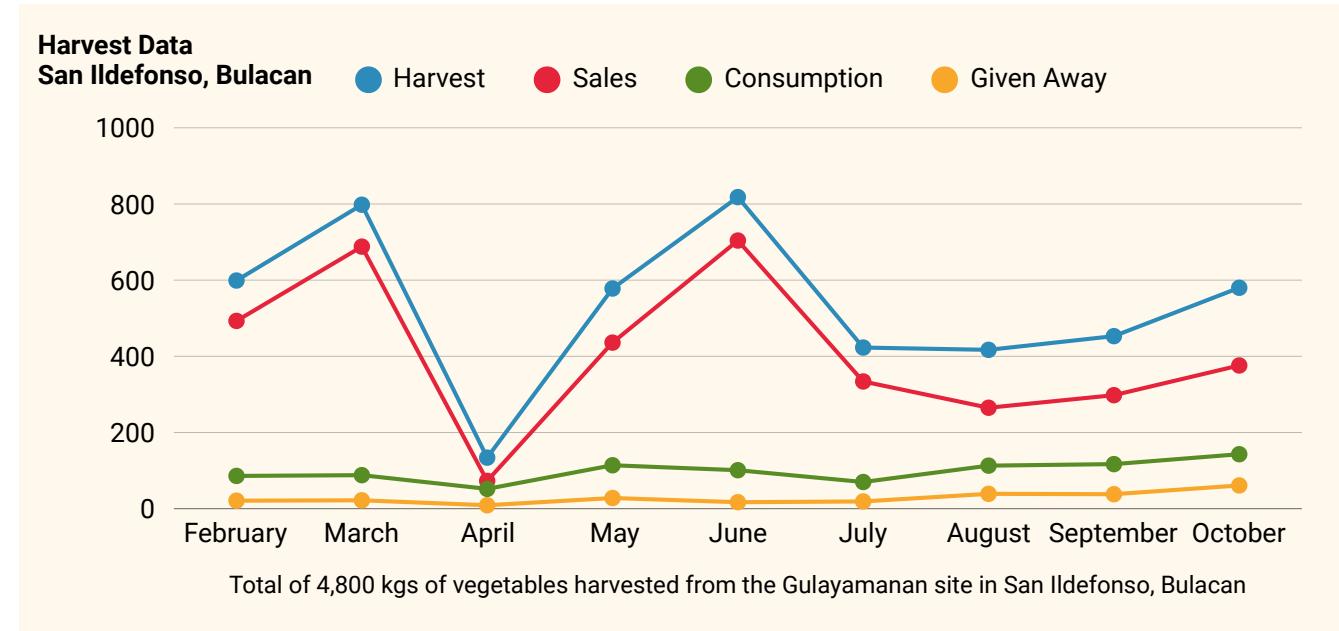


The Gulayamanan farmers also reported that the savings generated through reduced spending on vegetables allowed them to redirect funds toward essential household expenses. By harvesting vegetables from the cluster gardens instead of purchasing them, the farmers were able to free up a portion of their household budget, which they used for other necessities like rice, fish, and other essentials. Moreover, it helped them earn additional income by selling the surplus of the harvested vegetables they produced to the community. It also helped the farmers to save a portion of their income for future needs.

"To measure progress and success, we gather information on harvest in kilos, the blue line and how it was distributed. Whether it was sold, consumed, given away."

Ma. Elena Primicias van Tooren, EWSF Executive Director

The vegetables also became a valuable resource for debt repayment, with the Gulayamanan farmers finding an innovative way to leverage their vegetable yields to settle outstanding debts. One farmer recounts how the vegetables were used to pay off what they owed at the local sari-sari store.

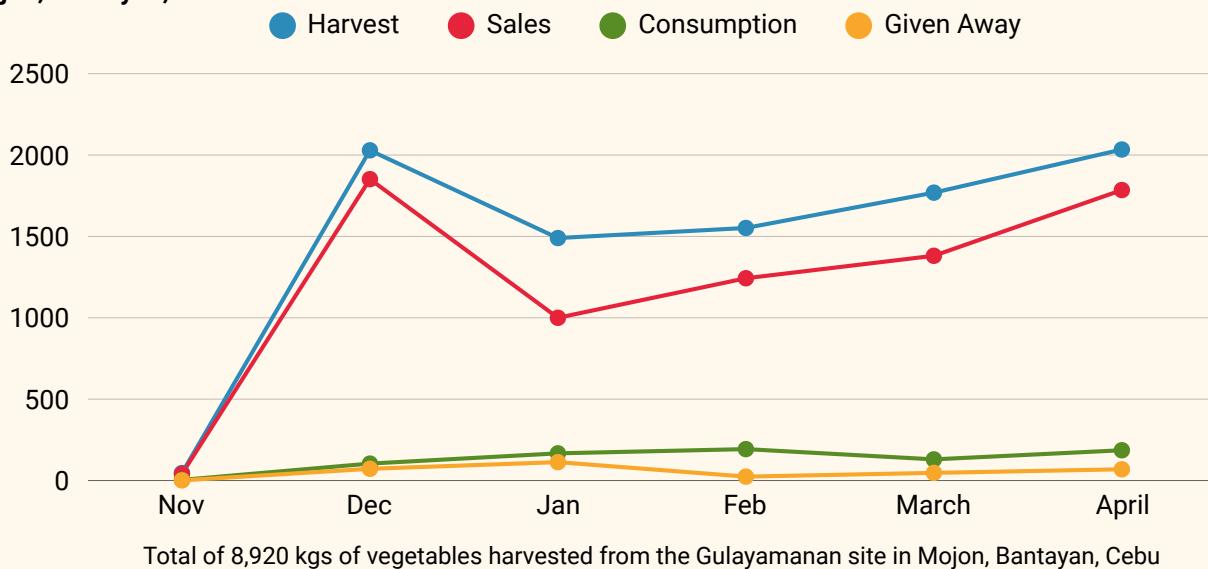


Bantayan's Case: Surpassing the Daily Minimum Wage

The impact of the Gulayamanan Project in Bantayan Island, particularly in the barangays of Mojon and Kampingganon, has been both transformative and empowering. Beneficiaries from these areas reported earning as much as ₱600 per day from selling vegetables—a figure that is 50% higher than the local daily minimum wage of ₱400.

Harvest Data

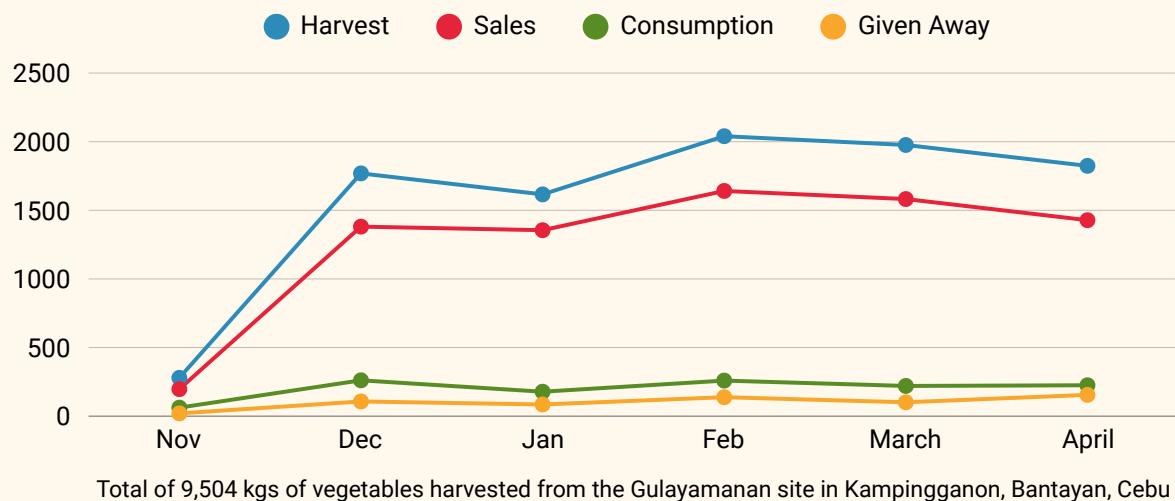
Mojon, Bantayan, Cebu



This increase in income is especially meaningful considering that many of the participants were previously unemployed, underemployed, or belonged to vulnerable sectors. For many, the opportunity to grow and sell vegetables not only provided financial relief but also restored a sense of dignity and purpose. Some beneficiaries shared that their earnings allowed them to invest in home improvements, install water connections, and better provide for their families' daily needs.

Harvest Data

Kampingganon, Bantayan, Cebu



Skills Development and Environment Sustainability

The Gulayamanan farmers were empowered with a diverse range of agricultural skills, equipping them to sustain and improve their farming practices while adopting environmentally-conscious methods. Training sessions emphasized practical techniques such as water management through mulching, integrated pest management, and composting to produce organic fertilizers. These skills not only increased yields but also supported healthier ecosystems and reduced reliance on synthetic inputs.

"Sa akin yung paggawa ng concoction, yung pang fertilizer. Kasi dapat yung mga kinakain natin dapat organic. Yung paano magpataba kasi karaniwan yung ginagamit natin yung mga binibili na fertilizer, yung madali. Ito medyo mahirap kasi kailangan subaybayan mo kasi ang iba nga pag organic naghahakot ng insekto parang lumalapit yung [mga insekto]."

Gulayamanan Farmer in San Ildefonso, Bulacan

The program also taught farmers to adopt diverse crop production, ensuring year-round harvests, and to meticulously record monthly production and sales data. This organized approach not only enhanced their farming capabilities but also fostered accountability and continuous improvement.

By integrating environmental sustainability into their daily practices, participants not only boosted their agricultural skills but also contributed to a more sustainable food system and healthier environment.

Best Practices

The Gulayamanan Project has demonstrated significant success in addressing food security and promoting sustainable livelihoods within its target communities. Key to its success are the best practices employed in the project which can serve as a model for similar initiatives, demonstrating how collaborative and innovative solutions can help create meaningful impact to local agri-food systems and vegetable gardening programs.





Improved consumption of healthy food

By enabling them to grow their own vegetables, the Gulayamanan farmers significantly increased their access to fresh and healthy food. They noted a significant shift in their consumption habits, as growing their own vegetables made them the family's primary source of food. This practice not only encouraged healthier eating habits but also promoted better nutrition for the families and taught their children to eat more vegetables.

Moreover, the project's Harvest Festival included cooking contests that encouraged the Gulayamanan farmers to innovate and create enjoyable, vegetable-based recipes, enhancing their appreciation for delicious and nutritious food, and encouraging them to include more vegetables in the dishes they cook at home.

Financial literacy

To complement the training on vegetable production, the project incorporated financial literacy sessions. Moreover, the farmers were taught to keep a record of their monthly progress, which included their yield, income, and expenses incurred. This helped enable the Gulayamanan farmers to effectively manage the income from their vegetable sales.

The financial literacy sessions helped the Gulayamanan farmers learn how to budget their earnings, prioritize savings for future seedling purchases, and plan for better financial stability to sustain their vegetable gardens.

"Ang maganda nga po sa Gulayamanan, from seeds down to marketing, itinuturo po nila. It's a holistic approach hanggang sa financial management [at] financial literacy."

Gulayamanan Farmer in Lian, Batangas

Strengthened farmer and community engagements

The project helped foster stronger relationships among the Gulayamanan farmers and their respective communities by creating shared goals around vegetable gardening and food security. It also provided an opportunity for the farmers to engage with the local government and the Municipal Agriculture Office. The project helped strengthen the local food systems by enabling community members to source and purchase vegetables directly from the Gulayamanan farmers.

"Challenge din po na ma-motivate sila, lalo na at wala pa naman silang nakikita na harvest. Pero noong una lang namin na-experience "yon, nung nakakatikim na silang kumita, sila na mismo talaga ang nagtatanong. 'Yong inisyatiba na puntahan 'yong project nila ay nandoon."

Gulayamanan Farmer in Lian, Batangas

They became local suppliers, with vendors in the public market choosing to source produce directly from them due to the freshness and lower prices. In some cases, residents preferred going straight to the garden rather than the market.



Incentive-based Approaches

One of the key drivers of sustained farmer engagement in the Gulayamanan Project, particularly in Bantayan Island, was the thoughtful integration of incentive-based mechanisms. These approaches played a vital role in maintaining motivation throughout the program cycle—especially among farmers from vulnerable backgrounds who often lacked access to basic resources.

To sustain participation, the project implemented various forms of non-monetary rewards, including:

- Provision of tools and supplies – Upon completion of training and graduation, farmers were given gardening kits, including 200-liter drums for water storage, harvest baskets, rubber boots, and even solar lights for safety during early morning or late-night farming.
- Basic needs support – Each farmer also received 25 kilos of rice as a token of appreciation for their hard work and commitment.
- Recognition and visibility – Farmers were acknowledged during graduation ceremonies and visits by local officials, reinforcing the sense of pride and accomplishment.

The local government of Bantayan emphasized the importance of sustaining the Gulayamanan farmers' commitment to the project. And these small but meaningful incentives helped communicate to farmers that their efforts were seen, valued, and supported, while reinforcing community ownership and the long-term sustainability of the project.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

The project leveraged multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensure efficient implementation and monitoring across the four project sites. Collaborative efforts among the government and private sector helped provide the Gulayamanan farmers with technical expertise, training, and essential resources such as planting sites, water pumps and seedlings.

"Food security means there's available food, accessibility ng household na dapat makarating sa buong pamilya and the health of the individual. Mahirap i-achieve eto on our own, kaya naghanap kami ng mga NGO who can help us, like East-West Seed Foundation."

H.E. Arthur E. Despi, Mayor of Bantayan, Cebu

These partnerships provided the Gulayamanan farmers with the knowledge, skills, and capacity to establish and sustain cluster gardens, highlighting the value of collective action for collaborative impact.



In Bantayan, the partnership model demonstrated how collaboration can drive growth beyond pilot sites. The local government contributed land, solar lights, and construction materials, while EWSF provided technical guidance and tools. Community members, in turn, invested their time and labor, creating a shared ownership model. This synergy is enabling the expansion of Gulayamanan to additional areas, including the planned rollout in Poblacion to make fresh produce more accessible to more households and laying the foundation for peer-to-peer learning and farmer-led training, further amplifying the project's reach.



Learnings for the Future

While the Gulayamanan Project has achieved significant successes, its implementation also presented some challenges that provided valuable insights for improvement. Understanding these challenges is crucial in improving the project's planning and implementation and ensuring its long term sustainability and scalability. Addressing these hurdles and incorporating the lessons learned can help guide future replications and scaling up of the project.

Values formation

One critical learning from the project and feedback from the Lian Gulayamanan farmers is the need to emphasize values formation, particularly on the importance of the cluster garden as a long-term asset of the community. Instilling a sense of ownership, responsibility, and commitment can help minimize farmer dropouts and ensure continued engagement, even after the cluster gardens have been turned over at the end of the project. Some farmers were initially hesitant or disengaged, expecting immediate material support or holding on to dole-out mindsets, which made sustained involvement difficult. Others doubted the viability of the gardens due to previous unsuccessful experiences in agriculture, or were discouraged by the lack of immediate income.



To address this, the project team emphasized clear orientation, continuous encouragement, and goal-setting during the training phase. Once the first few harvests came in and income started to flow, farmer motivation significantly increased. Celebrations such as graduation ceremonies, harvest festivals, and non-cash incentives (e.g., rice, tools, solar lights) were also introduced to recognize effort and reinforce commitment.

Additionally, the San Ildefonso Gulayamanan farmers identified challenges in coordination within their respective farmer teams and their respective roles. They recognize that it is crucial for them to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities among the members of the farmers teams. They also acknowledged that there were communication and coordination challenges among them. This can be minimized and addressed by encouraging and teaching to hold regular check-in meetings—whether formal or informal—to address any pressing issues, share ideas, and make plans for future activities and sustainability of the cluster gardens. This approach will help the Gulayamanan farmers foster a more cooperative and supportive environment among themselves for long-term success.

Continuous learning

Continuous learning was one of the identified challenges by the Gulayamanan farmers. Post-training materials can help reinforce the knowledge and skills acquired during the training sessions. This will also offer the Gulayamanan farmers readily accessible reference materials for addressing challenges they may face in the cluster gardens.

"Nakalimutan na po. Kasi (kung) ituro ngayon bukas natulog na kami; bukas di na namin maalala. Kailangan may kopya kami. Hindi na gaanong ka-active yung memory namin. Makalimutin na."

Gulayamanan Farmer in San Ildefonso, Bulacan

Moreover, check-in or Q&A sessions with technical experts from EWSF or MAO will also help the Gulayamanan farmers address challenges in the farm, specifically on concerns why crops are not growing properly during certain seasons.

The Gulayamanan farmers value learning from each other. Encouraging peer-to-peer learning is a powerful way to strengthen the collaborative spirit among the Gulayamanan farmers while enhancing the transfer of locally-relevant knowledge. Facilitating sessions where experienced farmers will share their experience and knowledge, can inspire and guide new farmers, bridge knowledge gaps, strengthen skills, and promote innovation in the cluster gardens.

Training the Farmers to Become Trainers

Meanwhile, the local government of Bantayan highlighted that the project also envisions training Gulayamanan farmers to become farmer-trainers in their own communities. By partnering with purok offices, these trained farmers can eventually lead localized workshops, mentor new participants, and help cascade the Gulayamanan model throughout the municipality. While some farmers may still need to build confidence in public speaking and facilitation, this approach can help lay the foundation for a community-led training system. It also positions the Gulayamanan model as a locally-led initiative, where knowledge is passed on not just through institutions, but through the farmers themselves.

Maintaining the cluster gardens

As the Gulayamanan Project progressed, one of the most persistent challenges in sustaining the cluster gardens—particularly in Lian and San Ildefonso—was water scarcity, especially during drought seasons. For many farmer-participants, ensuring a consistent water supply became increasingly difficult as their gardens matured and the water demand grew.

“Nung maliliit pa lang [yung mga pananim], madali lang (yung pag-dilig), tabo-tabo pa lang. Ngayong namunga na siya, kung tabo lang din yung ipangdidilig mo, hindi kaya. Tapos napakahangin pa.”

Gulayamanan Farmer in San Ildefonso, Bulacan





In response, several low-cost and localized solutions were implemented to address water limitations:

- Water Pits – In Bantayan, shallow water pits were dug near the gardens to store water for daily use, particularly during periods of low rainfall.
- Drums and Storage Containers – Each farmer received a 200-liter water drum during the graduation as part of the incentive package. These were used to collect and store water for drip or manual irrigation.
- Rainwater Harvesting – Communities set up simple rain catchment systems using rooftop runoffs and gutters, allowing them to collect water during rainy days and store it for use during dry spells.

These water-saving practices not only supported the maintenance of the gardens but also promoted resource efficiency and climate adaptability, particularly critical in off-grid or water-insecure areas. Looking ahead, expanding training on affordable irrigation techniques—such as mulching and low-pressure drip systems—will be vital. Improving access to communal pumps and scaling rainwater harvesting models will strengthen the long-term viability of vegetable gardens, especially in areas most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Establishing new water sources, especially in Bantayan, would also be crucial for long-term sustainability and access to water.

Another challenge that emerged during implementation—particularly in Tacloban and Bantayan—was the risk of crop pilferage, particularly at night when gardens were unattended. As the produce gained value within the community, so did the need to protect it. The Gulayamanan Project promoted community-led protection strategies, emphasizing shared responsibility, collaboration, and mutual respect for the garden as a public good.

- Solar-powered Lighting: To deter theft and increase visibility during early morning and nighttime farming, solar lights were installed around the cluster garden. This not only made the site safer but also encouraged more farmers to tend their gardens during cooler hours of the day.
- Community Counterparting: A counterparting model was applied, wherein the LGU provided materials, and the farmers, supported by barangay and purok leaders, took charge of constructing protective structures like fencing or storage sheds.

- **Volunteer Rotations and Awareness Building:** In some areas, night watch rotations were organized on a voluntary basis. These efforts helped cultivate community pride and a shared responsibility to protect the garden's integrity.

By promoting a sense of collective ownership, the Gulayamanan garden became not just a food source but a shared community asset—one that residents felt invested in protecting. These low-cost, high-impact strategies can serve as replicable measures in other communities seeking to safeguard public or shared gardens.



Expanding community engagement

To support the long-term sustainability of the Gulayamanan farmers and their cluster gardens, especially after the community turnover, it is recommended to help them explore other market linkages and income-generating opportunities. The following recommendations aim to provide additional revenue streams while strengthening community involvement in the project:

Expanding community engagement

In Bantayan, the project recognizes the value of collaborating with barangay and purok offices as localized governance structures that could support both community mobilization and routine monitoring. These local offices have strong grassroots connections, enabling them to directly engage with households and oversee daily activities in the gardens.

Formalizing these partnerships with barangay councils and purok leaders can ensure that regular site visits, local data reporting, and issue resolution are conducted at the community level—without relying solely on project implementers or the municipal government. This embedded monitoring system strengthens local ownership and contributes to the long-term sustainability of the gardens.



Veggies in a basket

Introduce a system where community members can purchase a basket of assorted vegetables for a fixed price. This model is used by community gardening initiatives like Urban Farmers PH and the social enterprise Rural Rising. It provides community members with affordable, fresh produce directly from the farmers, fostering a deeper connection to the source of their food. For farmers, it ensures better planning of harvests and prevents food loss by allotting surplus harvests for the community's purchase and consumption.

Gulayamanan Food Festival

Host a food festival to celebrate and showcase dishes made using the produce grown by the Gulayamanan farmers. This food festival can feature the recipes of the Gulayamanan farmers, or collaborate with local restaurants to create dishes highlighting Gulayamanan vegetables. In addition to food offerings, the food festival can include cooking demonstrations, recipe sharing sessions, and other workshops focused on vegetable-based meals. Partnering with local governments and businesses can help increase the event's reach and open up further income opportunities for the farmers.

Community Garden Day

Collaborate with the local government, schools, and other stakeholders to organize a Community Garden Day, where Gulayamanan farmers can host farm tours, on-site gardening workshops, and educational activities promoting sustainable farming practices. This initiative provides an avenue to share knowledge, inspire others to adopt gardening while also generating additional revenue through workshop fees and produce sales.

Farmer's Market as a Community Access Point

In Bantayan, the establishment of a Farmer's Market provided an accessible and community-centered space where Gulayamanan farmers could directly sell their harvests. Initially set up after graduation ceremonies and harvest periods, these markets allowed residents to purchase fresh, affordable vegetables straight from the growers.

The model not only generated immediate income for the farmers, but also strengthened the relationship between producers and consumers. In some cases, the demand was so strong that produce was sold out on-site, reducing the need for distribution to larger markets.

As the project expands, institutionalizing the Farmer's Market model—either as a regular weekend market or tied to harvest schedules—can serve as a sustainable outlet for produce, reduce post-harvest losses, and increase community visibility and support for the Gulayamanan farmers.

By integrating these community engagement activities, the Gulayaman Project can strengthen community engagement, reduce food waste and food loss, provide cost-effective options for consumers, and secure additional income for the Gulayamanan farmers. These initiatives will also ensure that the project's impact is sustained, creating a more resilient, thriving and engaged community.

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