

Evaluation of the Household Development Approach (HHDA) in the Philippines (2018/2019)

The Household Development Approach (HHDA)

The Household Development Approach (HHDA) emerged from informal discussions between a number of Fastenopfer Partner Organisations (POrg.) and Fastenopfer's Philippine Programme Coordinator in the late 1990s/early 2000s, ostensibly to develop an alternative to the so-called "traditional" approach to community organising (mainly building of people's organisations) that was seen to be deficient in realising substantive change (economic and otherwise). Since then, elements of the approach were implemented in various projects of Fastenopfer's Country Programme (CP). Fastenopfer commissioned the former CP coordinator Ervin B. More to write a guidebook of the HHDA that he completed in 2015 and has been under review since early 2018 to focus on the economic development side.

An evaluation of the HHDA carried out in 2011 failed to deliver evidence-based conclusions or recommendations regarding its effectivity, efficiency or impact. Thus, Fastenopfer's Programme Development Section (PRE) and the CP sought now an evaluation that would address these key dimensions by the comparison of projects of three POrgs (PINA, CERD and Agro-Eco) that have been using the HHDA in different ways and to different extent. In total, the projects that were part of the evaluation work with about 1800 households in the regions of Mindanao and Visayas and reach about 8300 persons directly.

The evaluation: objectives and methodology

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- Comparison of community development projects using the HHDA, both in terms of (a) impact at household and community levels (gender and economic) and (b) efficiency of the achieved results;
- Identification of HHDA elements that have contributed to the realisation of substantive changes, if any;
- Exploration of feasibility of disseminating the HHDA throughout the Philippines CP and/or other Fastenopfer CPs.

The formative evaluation focused on interrogating the soundness and practicability of HHDA as a development approach and on identifying strategic and operational issues that have emerged in the process of HHDA implementation. The emphasis was on collective learning among evaluation participants.

Fastenopfer launched an open call for offers to carry out the evaluation in June 2018 and received five expressions of interest. Based on a comparative analysis of these offers and selective interviews, Fastenopfer commissioned Roger Ricafort (Ex:Change Consultancy) and his team (Margarita Royandoyan, Genela Buhia, Tesa de Vela) to carry out the evaluation.

The evaluation was organised starting in October 2018 with an inception report. The field data-gathering was undertaken between December 2018 and February 2019. A learning workshop with the POrgs and Coordination Unit was held in March 2019. The evaluation is based on 204 individual informants, of which 117 (36 men and 81 women) were direct beneficiaries of the projects, the others being other inhabitants in the project regions (30), local government representatives (21), People Organizations' leaders and officers (18), and project staff members (18). The final report was delivered in May 2019.

Evaluation findings

The evaluation found that HHDA, as described in Ervin B. More's "Guidebook on the Household Development Approach", has not been implemented as such in any of the projects. I.e. both PINA and CERD merely and selectively implemented some of the elements of the HHDA in their community development projects. At the level of frontline staff, there is limited and even confused understanding of HHDA. Among local government officials, the evaluation found hardly any awareness of the HHDA.

The evaluation found positive changes in intra-family and gender relationships, with informants reporting a fairer sharing of chores and shared decision making. Members of households participating in the projects where elements of the HHDA had been applied, also reported an increased community engagement and, in some of the projects, a better preparedness for disasters. Also in the economic field, advancements were achieved, although the economic aspirations of the households were still not fully attained and incomes and livelihoods remained insecure and unstable.

Given the paucity of HHDA-specific interventions and the difficulty of isolating HHDA-specific work, the evaluation could not determine causation and attribution of changes reported by respondents specifically to HHDA, rather than to the broader work of the projects (and other actors) in the communities. The inquiry into the contribution of HHDA to improvements in the lives of HHDA participants also found a discrepancy between HHDA-participants' conception of wellbeing and the understanding of development and household development in HHDA.

Due to the limited evaluability of the HHDA as it was found to be implemented in practise, the evaluation could not address all of the evaluation questions to their full extent. However, the evaluation gathered a lot of relevant information about HHDA, and its elements respectively, and has led to an important learning process among the POrgs, the coordination unit, and Fastenopfer.

Recommendations and response

In their report, the evaluation team recommended Fastenopfer to review with the concerned POrgs their conceptualising of development as well as the programme strategies, theories and assumptions. Fastenopfer thus has engaged the POrgs in a common reviewing process of their theory of change and other elements of project implementation strategy. The evaluators also recommended clarifying the actual meaning of HHDA for Fastenopfer and The POrgs. In this regard, and based on the results of the evaluation and discussions with the POrgs, Fastenopfer now understand HHDA, more than as an approach, as a toolbox with different elements that can be applied at household level in a broader community-development project approach. Fastenopfer thus also refrains from seeking a full-fledged roll-out of HHDA as an approach. However, Fastenopfer continues to encourage POrgs in the implementation of specific tools or sets of the HHDA, if they fit to their specific strategy of community development.

The evaluation report can be requested from Fastenopfer via email to mandic@fastenopfer.ch, indicating the purpose of the request.

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