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SUSTAINABILITY OF PEOPLES ORGANIZATIONS IN UPLAND COMMUNITIES: A RAPID LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT
Research has provided a variety of frameworks to manage sustainability in organizations. As a development matter, the impact of sustainability in organizations depends on how they focus and perceive sustainability as a concern. In this paper, the researcher will discuss the different approaches to sustainability, as well as the assessment and measurement of sustainability of organizations in upland communities. It is revealed that existing frameworks highlight sustainable peoples organizations as one of the strategies for attaining sustainability in upland communities. While this is the case, studies also argued that there is little regard for the participation of the people in the sustainability efforts. It is observed that for most, if not all, cases and situations, the creation of peoples organizations play a vital role in achieving sustainability in upland communities, yet studies are only focused on sustainability in general and not on the actors of sustainability. Thus, the sustainability of peoples organizations shall also be assessed and measured.

Keywords:
Sustainability, Sustainable Development, Peoples Organizations, Communities

INTRODUCTION

The truism of the sustainability paradigm as a pressing development issue urged agencies, both public and private, to initiate shifts within their respective organizations and collectively as a society. Innovation and change, as perceived key drivers for sustainability, play a crucial role and have proved to lead transformations in communities. Despite the said developments, adapting to innovation and change is considered complex, dynamic, and uncertain (Anderson, 1999; Utterback, 1994; and Freeman, 1982 as cited by [16]). To fully achieve sustainability, organizations must recognize it as an outcome, a process, and a mindset. The more organizations, and the individuals that compose them, grasp the idea, the greater their opportunities for sustainability [6].

Sustainability was once again challenged since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participation of the community is decisive in addressing a pandemic [9]. With the variety of compliances and the limitations in mobilizing essential resources, localizing and diversifying the response is considered the optimum strategy to keep the systems running – enter peoples organizations as agents in identifying problems and solutions, providing insights to gaps, and are strategically stationed to perform and respond collectively in their respective communities.

Participation and inclusivity are among the most prominent approaches in the Philippines, along with community organizing and education strategies as leading interventions toward sustainable development in communities [14]. Government and non-government organizations utilize the said strategies to empower communities. Peoples

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organizations are formed to address gaps in the community level, but this does not give them immunity to various factors that have inevitable effects on their realities.

Organizations focused on their ability to sustain is reflected in their ability to perceive sustainability as an organizational concern [13]. While [5] argue that it is crucial for organizations to adapt in order to achieve sustainability, unprecedented and unexpected hurdles challenge organizations' ability to sustain [1].

In the newsletter of [20], it is stated that inclusivity and environment-driven development toward poverty reduction and shared goals for the present and future generations are the core of sustainability. They have identified the pillars of sustainable development. These are 1) economic growth, 2) environmental stewardship, and 3) social inclusion which are considered veins of the said paradigm. These pillars are derived by researchers into various methodologies in order to manage sustainability at the organizational level. The different approaches to sustainability provided by related literature and how sustainability is assessed and measured are discussed in this paper.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a rapid review of literature composed of studies on sustainability, organizations, and upland communities. This rapid review is intended to provide urgent data on the dynamic field of sustainability in the most time and the most resource-efficient way by streamlining a variety of methodologies to come up with evidences for the stakeholders [10].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

[2] developed a sustainability assessment tool in the context of the UN SDGs by accumulating a multi-faceted directory and the current global ranking of sustainability. The tool managed to assess socio-economic development strengths and weaknesses and crucial environmental factors. The method follows a step-by-step process: 1) careful identification of viable indicators in addressing the UN SDGs; 2) collection of relevant data; 3) sorting the data into the pillars of sustainable development (economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social inclusion); and 4) normalization of common metrics and accumulation of the 26 indicators by pillar and by a multi-faceted directory. This process cited the recommendation of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators [2] which is compiled in figure 1.

SDG Indicator	*Definition*	*Source*	*UN GOAL*
SOCIETY			
SDG 1	Population below $1.25 (PPP) per day, percentage	WDI / MDGs	1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
SDG 2	Undernourished population, percentage	MDGs	2. End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
SDG 3a	Physician density (per 1000 population)	WDI	3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
SDG 3b	Healthy Life Expectancy (HALE) at birth (years)	WHO	
SDG 4	Literacy rate of 15–24 year olds, both sexes, percentage	UNESCO / MDGs	4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all
SDG 7	Access to electricity (% of total population)	WDI	7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
SDG 10	Palma ratio	PovcalNet (WB)	10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
SDG 16	Corruption Perception Index	TI	16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
ENVIRONMENT			
SDG 6	Proportion of total water resources used	MDGs	6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
SDG 7a	Share of electricity from renewables	WDI	7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
SDG 7b	Rate of primary energy intensity	IEA	
SDG 9	Total energy and industry-related GHG emissions over value added	IMF / CAIT	9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
SDG 11a	Mean urban air pollution of particulate matter (PM2.5)	WDI	11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
SDG 11b	CO_2 intensity of residential sector over energy volumes	IEA	

SDG Indicator	*Definition*	*Source*	*UN GOAL*
ENVIRONMENT			
SDG 13a	Net GHG emissions in the agriculture, forestry and other land use (AFOLU) sectors (weighted by total land)	FAO / WDI	13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
SDG 13b	CO_2 intensity of power and transport over energy volumes	IEA	
SDG 14	Proportion of terrestrial and marine protected areas	MDGs	14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
			15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
SDG 15a	Forest area (% of land area)	WDI	
SDG 15b	Share of endangered and vulnerable (animals and plants) species (% of total species)	IUCN	
ECONOMY			
SDG 8a	GDP per capita growth	IMF & WDI	8. Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All
SDG 8b	GDP per person employed (PPP)	IMF & WDI	
SDG 8c	Public debt as share of GDP	IMF	
SDG 8d	Employment-to-population ratio, percentage	MDGs / ILO	
SDG 9a	Manufacturing value added (MVA) as percent of GDP	WDI	9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
SDG 9b	Gross domestic expenditure on R&D as share of GDP	WDI	
SDG12	Direct Material Consumption over GDP	IMF + GMWD	12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Source Acronyms => WDI: World Development Indicators; MDGs: Millennium Development Goals; WHO: World Health Organization; WB: World Bank; TI: Transparency International; IEA: International Energy Agency; IMF: International Monetary Fund; CAIT: WRI Climate Data Explorer; FAO: UN Food and Agriculture Organization; IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature; ILO: International Labor Organization; GMWD: SERI/WU Global Material Flows Database.

Figure 1. Compiled Viable Indicators in Addressing the UN SDGs

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For the normalization of indicators to have an effective data-gathering tool, an indicator-specific stepwise benchmarking function was developed (shown in Figure 2). The given values of the said function are derived from policy targets and trends. The benchmark of indicators is identified as fully sustainable conditions and unsustainable conditions. On the other hand, the polarity of indicators is divided into two categories: 1) positive polarity/direction where higher scores denote higher performance and 2) negative polarity/direction where higher scores denote lower performance. For definitions, indicators that belong to category 1 suggest that when a score is below its critical threshold value x, then it is defined as fully unsustainable, while scores above its critical threshold value $\bar{x}$ are defined as fully unsustainable. On the other hand, the normalization of indicators that belong to category 2 goes the opposite process. This approach provides a way to compare countries, assess their sustainability levels, and monitor their sustainability progress.

SDG Indicator	*Type*	$\underline{x}$	$\bar{x}$
SOCIETY			
Population below $1.25 (PPP) per day, percentage	*b*	40	0.5
Population undernourished, percentage	*b*	*20*	5
Physician density (per 1000 population)	*a*	2	3
Healthy Life Expectancy (HALE) at birth (years)	*a*	55	70
Literacy rate of 15–24 years old, both sexes, percentage	*a*	85	99
Access to electricity (% of total population)	*a*	5	99
Palma ratio	*b*	2	1.2
Corruption Perception Index	*a*	3	6
ENVIRONMENT			
Proportion of total water resources used	*b*	30	5
Share of electricity from renewables	*a*	5	60
Rate of primary energy intensity	*b*	*10*	*3*
Total energy and industry-related GHG emissions over value added	*b*	*2*	*1*
Mean urban air pollution of particulate matter (PM2.5)	*b*	*25*	*5*
CO_2 intensity of residential sector over energy volumes	*b*	*3*	*0*
Net GHG emissions in the AFOLU sector over total surface	*b*	*3*	*2*
CO_2 intensity of power and transport over energy volumes	*b*	*3*	*0*
Proportion of terrestrial and marine protected areas	*a*	*5*	*20*
Forest area (% of land area)	*a*	*10*	*50*
Share of endangered and vulnerable (animals & plants) species (% of total species)	*b*	10	5
ECONOMY			
GDP per capita growth	*a*	0	7
GDP per person employed (PPP)	*a*	5	50
Public debt as share of GDP	*b*	70	20
Employment-to-population ratio, percentage	*a*	40	80
Manufacturing value added (MVA) as percent of GDP	*a*	5	15
Gross domestic expenditure on R&D as share of GDP	*a*	0.5	3
Direct Material Consumption over GDP	*a*	0.5	2

Figure 2. Indicator-specific stepwise benchmarking function

While the said tool is designed to address national-level sustainability, [11] argued that there is a neglect of comprehensive sustainability considerations at the organizational level. To address this gap, they identified sustainability management features through the lens of organizations from literature that produced sustainability assessment elements categorized into four, relevance-wise: assessment process integrity, strategy, normative and contextual, and participation of stakeholders (shown in Figure 3).

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No.	Concepts
1.	Stakeholder Engagement:
(i)	central element for sustainability assessment
(ii)	involve stakeholders (seek needs, knowledge and expertise of stakeholders through cyclic dialogue)
(iii)	involve stakeholders throughout the management and assessment cycle
(iv)	take stakeholder feedback at the end of each cycle to improve the performance in subsequent cycle
(v)	manage influence of stakeholders, respect opinions and integrate perspectives
2.	Strategy
(i)	consider holistic view of sustainability during assessment
(ii)	consider holistic view of organization during assessment
(iii)	identify, assess and analyse alternative options
(iv)	identify best available practices and compare with sustainability initiatives
(v)	ensure compatibility and integration of the sustainability initiative with other initiatives and the management models in place
(vi)	focus should not be minimizing negatives rather encouraging positives and avoiding significant losses
(vii)	promote creativity and innovation
(viii)	reflexive or adaptive management
(ix)	principle of precaution (acknowledge and accommodate uncertainty)
3.	Contextual and Normative
(i)	understand sustainability and implement initiative in context of business operation
(ii)	define vision, scope and scale
(iii)	establish sustainability values and principles
(iv)	identify and prioritize sustainability issues
(v)	assess risks and opportunities
(vi)	establish trade-offs based on trade-off rules
(vii)	identify (non-negotiable) decision criteria and minimum threshold
(viii)	define long and short term goals
(ix)	identify relevant (quantitative and multidimensional) indicators
4.	Integrity of Assessment Process
(i)	ensure transparency of SA processes (quantifications preferred)
(ii)	develop robust methodology of SA (scientific robustness)
(iii)	systematic and reliable data collection
(iv)	review the effectiveness of initiative and the complete SA process
(v)	disclose information (report)
(vi)	continuous improvement
(vii)	seek compliance/scrutiny and accountability (audit)

Figure 3. Four categories for sustainable organizations and their corresponding elements

These elements are maximized through the framework developed by Sala et al (2015; as cited by [11]) further dividing the categories into two: 1) principles of sustainability assessment which highlight an organization's sustainability resource and 2) procedures of sustainability assessment which emphasize an organization's commitment towards sustainability management (shown in figure 4). The framework promotes the use of tools such as life cycle assessment and costing, cost-benefit and risk analyses, social life cycle and sustainability impact assessments, and multi-criteria analysis. Since it is impossible to address all dimensions of sustainability using a lone method, the tools to be used shall be carefully and appropriately selected.

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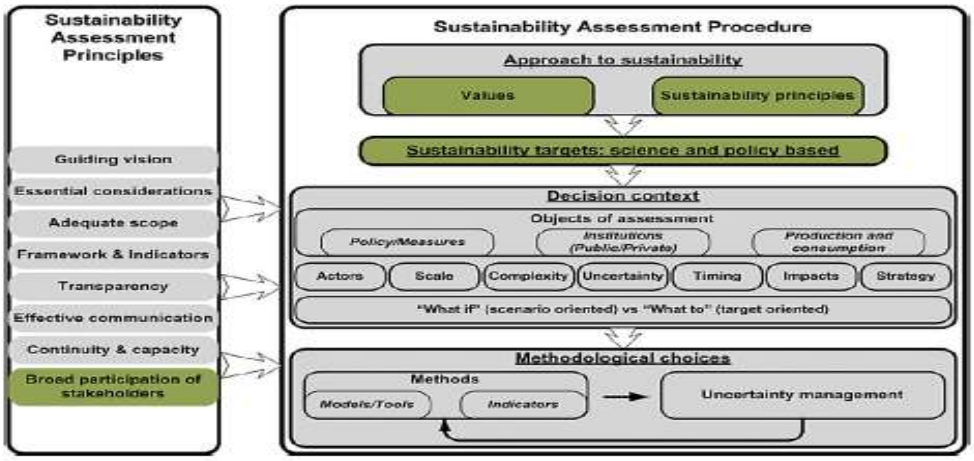

Figure 4. Procedure and principles framework for sustainability assessment

Despite how promising the tools were to fill the gaps in addressing sustainability in organizations, [15] exposed a major gap in sustainability performance assessment and measurement and stakeholders' involvement. In their paper, they argued that stakeholders' expectations towards assessing and measuring sustainability are not given high regard and consideration. Through systematic research, they identified the expectations of stakeholders on the six different roles in the assessment and measurement process of sustainability performance. Figure 5 shows the summary of expectations and the proposed framework to reinforce stakeholders' participation in the sustainability assessment process, which is 1) set-up and design; 2) implementation and application; and 3) communication and evolution. It is also argued that to achieve satisfaction among stakeholders in the measurement and assessment of the sustainability process, their expectations should be included.

Set-up and design		Implementation and application		Communication and evolution	
Standard setters	Process enablers	Impacted stakeholders	Information providers	Addressees	Decision makers
…aim for easy use and operability, while pursuing scientific, complete, robust approach …strive for relevant, practicable, and valid indicator sets …examine entire value chain …consider specific topics, e.g. gender and diversity	…expect process to be simple, widely usable, transparent, scientific, verifiable, controllable, and to provide regional differences and create marketable results (processual expectations) …involved in indicator selection, weighing and aggregation	…expect legitimate judgements …desire a respectful behavior towards themselves, e.g. balanced inclusion in weighing process …want a fair consideration of impacts and fair process … expect assessment of topics of intrinsic and/or instrumental value	…appreciate clear, simple, relevant, and explicit indicators …strive for diversity of inputs by different stakeholder groups to determine impacts, including for weighing / aggregation …require scientific criteria to be fulfilled during data collection	…require reliable, understandable information, which is accountable …desire accurate, complete, comparable, documented, and consistent data …expect transparency, communication of subjective judgements and external audits …require information on context for interpreting results	…require reliable information …need practicability and simplicity: Few indicators or even one aggregated, single measure
Overarching expectations include the consideration of other stakeholder roles' expectation, e.g. needs of decision makers throughout set-up and design phase					

Figure 5. Stakeholders' roles and expectations framework in assessing and measuring sustainability performance

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[18] argued that while the world seeks resiliency and adaptation in the local stratum, it failed to come up with systems to truly measure locally identified needs. Thus, the need to comprehend and craft effective measurement systems that root in cultural grounds is a manifestation of support towards sustainable management and resilience in view of socioeconomic and environmental change. [4] highlighted the roles of leadership, management, and organizations towards sustainability at the community level. The voices and choices of stakeholders should be considered in order to provide a dynamic system of problem-solving. Another implication is the formation of peoples organizations that help the community address societal issues through self-determination. Furthermore, social enterprises are particularly advantageous in addressing emerging hurdles within the community. Also, households play a vital role in shaping the capabilities of their members, such as how it influences women to have a job or to stay at home, and to what extent it contribute to sustainability and inclusivity.

The overarching concept of sustainability, despite the influx of top-bottom approaches in addressing the matter, also promoted the formulation of various grassroots-driven frameworks. In upland communities, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, and climate-resilient infrastructure development are among the highlights. [12] further argued that watershed management is the best course to undertake in sustaining the earth's resources while, at the same time, promoting the welfare of people. This is most especially applicable in communities located on higher ground.

The study of [19] analyzed the relationship of agricultural business models towards upland sustainability indicators among farmers in Northern Thailand to assess the effectiveness of the approaches of the government in addressing deforestation through the promotion of various sustainable farming methods. They found out that quality-driven target markets influence how farmers respond toward sustainable practices. This is because such markets pose an increase in the income of farmers and, at the same time, promote farming practices that are safe for the environment to sustain product quality. Furthermore, sustainable practices in forming farmer peoples organizations fortify the capabilities of farmers towards sustainability accordingly with the enforceability of environmental rules among the members. Group formation improved their trading skills and helped them develop skills to step up their farming management. Participation in huddles is also an advantage where they gained further knowledge on product development, organic farming practices and technologies, as well as marketing.

These findings are supported by the study of [21] in upland communities in Vietnam in their investigation of the risk preference factors affecting the choice of farmers to adopt sustainable land management (SLM) practices. It was revealed that negative effects were shown in factors risk aversion and farming experience, while positive effects were shown in factors farming knowledge and farm size in terms of SLM practices adoption of farmers. One of the best options presented is participating in peoples organization. Farmers who adopted SLM practices are likely to have more knowledge and training despite having lesser farming experiences, have larger farm areas and labor force, risk-takers, and members of peoples organizations compared to farmers who did not adapt to SLM.

Another tool was highlighted in the study of [17]. A SMART tool for comparing and analyzing sustainability performance between smallholder coffee farms with organic farming practices and those not practicing organic farming in Uganda was developed, particularly synergies and trade-offs. One of the notable results is that organic farming certification is linked to the improvement of sustainability performance and enhancing goal-attainment through the influence of peoples organization, which also promoted positive results in other identified dimensions of sustainability.

On the other hand, [8] determined the level of sustainability of communities with upland farming practices in the Philippines based on their developmental paths in agroforestry. It was revealed that the said paths influenced high levels of social and political capitals compared to other capitals. The identified indicators for social capitals where community members' participation in various community-based activities, communication and interaction among the members of the community and linkages with partner organizations and external stakeholders. It was further identified

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that the formation of a peoples organization inspired farmers' participation in various activities regardless of what development path they take. The peoples organization also became the channel of assistance throughout the project implementation and promoted sustainable farming practices. Thus, creating opportunities for sustainability.

The results recommend collaboration among 1) people – through the formation of peoples organizations [4] and 2) the support of the local government in attaining sustainability in communities with upland farming practices [7]. With this, it is argued that sustainability can be achieved in upland farming communities.

While the world strives to achieve holistic rights towards natural resources, it is argued that there are barriers between investments and sustainable development as far as common-based enterprise is concerned. Investment readiness is coined as the process of investing in resources that are owned by the community where preliminarily, (1) a persisting problem drives the people to create organizations to enforce sustainable resources management plans under the government's oversight. Next, (2) social enterprises are established by the peoples organizations to (3) entice private investors through the strength and effectiveness of local social capital and enterprises. Diversification of services and expanded investment avenues are by-products of improving the capabilities of the community, leading to value-added global market competitiveness and compliant to environmental standards. Community rights nurture not only investments but also common ownership which are prerequisites of ROIs in terms of profit, social and environment. Social enterprises promote social innovation that helped in addressing socioeconomic and resource management issues which are proved to be difficult to solve by the state and market [3]. Mobilizing non-profit entities can help address gaps and limitations of government services, such as providing solutions to immediate problems and environmental preservation, serving as watchdogs to the government [4].

Indigenous Peoples (IPs) perspectives on sustainability also need to be considered. It was revealed that one of the most vulnerable sectors in the world is a little left out in the lens of IP culture, socio-philosophical experiences, and socialization and the need to have a deeper understanding of sustaining local interconnections should result in a review of policy mechanisms on inclusivity and universality, despite of the fact that most upland communities are inhabited by IPs. In the context of sustainability, it is suggested that IP governance, self-determination, and sovereignty should also be considered since IP structures and customaries abide by environmental relations, which are prerequisites of community-based sustainability [22].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Given the variety of approaches and tools in assessing and measuring sustainability cited in this paper, the types that showed more holistic and tailor-fitted processes and results are those that are localized. Sustainability assessments and measurements that were community-based gave results that helped in addressing particular concerns unique to the community. On the other hand, it is observed that for most cases and situations, the creation of peoples organizations play a vital role in achieving sustainability in upland communities through capability building in trading and product development, technology, and organic farming practices [19], adopting to sustainable land management [21], as well as for being channels of assistance from various support agencies [8]. Yet, research and existing studies are only focused on assessing and measuring sustainability in general and not on the actors of sustainability.

With all that were discussed, this paper recommends development of a sustainability tool for peoples organizations based in upland communities that will help to assess and measure organizations' direction and progress towards the identified sustainable development pillars [20] namely economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social inclusion. It shall be subject to testing to suitable respondents/participants to ensure its credibility for future research.

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