

Capacity of Local Government Units in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector

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Abstract. The measurement of the performance of municipal local government units (MLGUs) in devolved functions mandated in Section 17 of the Local Government Code of 1991 is challenging due to the existing complex relationships between national and local governments, coupled with insufficient documented, comparative, and disaggregated data nationwide. This study sought to investigate the status of implementation of devolved functions in the agriculture sector and the capacity of MLGUs in six (6) pillars (structure, competency, management systems, enabling policies, knowledge and learning, and leadership). A descriptive design was used through a quantitative method of data collection from 59 Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) in the 2nd district of Pampanga, Philippines. To analyze and interpret the data gathered, the researcher used frequency, percentage, weighted mean, Pearson product-moment correlation, point-biserial correlation, and ranking. Findings indicated that extensionists are predominantly composed of young adults between 26 and 30 years of age and middle-aged individuals between 36 and 45 years old, and are predominantly male. The majority completed tertiary education with a specialization in agri-related courses and are holders of CSC Eligibilities and/or PRC Licenses. Most AEWs are relatively new to government work, with less than a decade of government service and agri-extension work experience, serving 1 to 3 barangays. Furthermore, the results showed that MLGUs partially implement devolved functions, and their capacity in the six pillars is basic. Furthermore, the socio-demographic profile of respondents has no significant relationship with the status of implementation and capacity. However, an important relationship exists between the status of implementation and capacity. This implies that partial implementation of functions is influenced by the level of capacity, which is generally basic. Therefore, there is an urgent need for MLGUs to understand and take responsibility to be self-reliant and capable of discharging the functions devolved to them. Further, an action plan was proposed to address development opportunities and capacity gaps.

Keywords: Agriculture; Capacity; Devolved functions; Municipal local government.

1.0 Introduction

In the Philippines, the Local Government Code (LGC), passed in 1991, promoted local autonomy through a system of decentralization. The publicly known concept and understanding of decentralization is that it involves spreading out the control of the national government and reinforcing the influence of local governments by passing on various functions. The underlying principle behind the Code is to have an accountable local government structure responsible for providing the priority and service requirements of the communities within its jurisdiction. Thus, local governments are accorded more authority, accountability, and resources to fulfill the functions and responsibilities previously delegated to National Government Agencies (NGAs) and Offices. Decentralization, through devolution, is believed to provide better service delivery, grounded in the notion that

local governments can gather firsthand information on the needs and demands of their constituents within their jurisdictions due to their geography and proximity (Canare & Francisco, 2019). Recent issuances complement the Code and aim to strengthen decentralization in the Philippines. The Mandanas-Garcia Ruling, issued by the SC in 2019, expanded the tax base of Local Government Units (LGUs) to address the financial limitations that impede the implementation of devolved functions. Further, the signing of Executive Order (EO) 138 in 2021 provided guidelines that will promote the “effective and efficient transition of devolved functions”.

Following more than three (3) decades since the enactment of the LGC of 1991, surveys were undertaken to assess satisfaction with public service delivery and performance of LGUs. According to Brillantes et al. (2020), gains have been achieved at the local level through the Galing Pook Program. However, the modest gains, benefits, and patterns of development have not been attributed solely to decentralization alone (Maddawin et al., 2023). Many LGUs are still dependent on the support of NGAs, citing budgetary constraints and a lack of workforce as the main reasons. The fiscal independence of the local governments to generate revenues to finance expenditures is positively correlated with “per capita income and Human Development Index (HDI)”. This relationship is weaker among low-income provinces and stronger with better governance (Canare, 2021a). LGUs still struggle to keep up with the functions devolved to them. The enactment failed to address the budgetary constraints due to the inability to assign sufficient spending and revenue generation at the lower levels. Thus, local governance and autonomy, concerning full implementation of the 1991 LGC, are yet to be realized. Experts in local governance even recommended and supported the request of LGUs to extend the implementation of full devolution to 2027, rather than 2024 (Atienza & Go, 2023). In this regard, the researcher aimed to determine whether the devolved functions as mandated under Section 17 of LGC 1991 are implemented, and the capacity of MLGUs in terms of six (6) pillars defined by Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) namely: i) “structure”, ii) “competency”, iii) “management systems”, iv) “enabling policies”, v) “knowledge and learning”, and vi) “leadership” (LGA, 2016). It is with the highest hope that this study contributes to the body of knowledge and provides solutions to the gaps identified in the literature and existing studies.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The researcher employed a quantitative descriptive research design, in which the capacity of MLGU is described through quantitative methods of data collection. To analyze and interpret numerical data, the researcher used the following statistical techniques: Frequency and Percentage to determine the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, and Weighted Mean to answer the status of implementation and identify the level of capacity of MLGUs in the six pillars. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Point Biserial tests were used to assess the significant relationship between the status of implementation and the capacity of the MLGUs to implement devolved functions.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in six MLGUs in the 2nd district of Pampanga, with varied income levels and classes, namely: Florida Blanca, Guagua, Lubao, Porac, Sasmuan, and Sta. Rita, represented by Agriculture Extension Workers (AEWs) in the Municipal Agriculture Office (MAO), respectively.

2.3 Research Participants

The research participants are the entire population of AEWs, regardless of tenurial status (Plantilla Holder and Job Order/Contract of Service). Out of sixty-four (64) AEWs in the MAO, the researcher was able to gather the perceptions of fifty-nine (59) AEWs who voluntarily participated. The tabular presentation of the total number of MAO-AEWs as of January 2025, along with the study respondents per municipality, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Distribution of Respondents per Municipality*

Municipality	No. of MAO-AEWs	Total Respondents
Florida Blanca	11	8
Guagua	12	11
Lubao	18	18
Porac	11	10
Sasmuan	6	6
Sta. Rita	6	6
Total	64	59

2.4 Research Instrument

The perceptions of AEWs were gathered through a researcher-made survey questionnaire. Before constructing the questionnaire, the researcher reviewed relevant literature, applicable laws regarding the delivery of agricultural services in the Philippines, and organizational capacity assessment tools, and drafted the questionnaire accordingly. The questionnaire consisted of three (3) parts. The first part focused on the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The second part focused on how the respondents described the current status of the MLGU's implementation of devolved functions as provided in Section 17 of RA 7160, based on an adjectival rating ranging from 'Fully Implemented' (FI) to 'Partially Implemented' (PI) to 'Not Implemented' (NI). The third part focused on the level of capacity (e.g., strong, moderate, basic, and low) of the MLGUs in terms of the six identified Capacity Pillars. The research instrument also included criteria for assessment to guide the respondents. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to examine the reliability of the research instruments. Based on the results, the values for the status of implementation of devolved functions was (0.707), for the capacity of MLGUs to implement the devolved tasks in terms of structure (0.811), competency (0.827), management system (0.832), enabling policies (0.828), knowledge and learning (0.815) and leadership (0.834). These values imply that the indicators in the questionnaire are reliable. The 3-part questionnaire was subjected to the validation pool of experts in the field of agriculture and social programs, both locally and internationally.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study used specific steps to gather data. As soon as the questionnaire was validated by the pool of experts and ethical clearance was obtained from the University, the researcher secured endorsements from the Local Chief Executives before administering the questionnaires to the AEWs. The AEW respondents were convened at a time convenient to them and asked to respond to a structured sequence of questions. The survey was conducted both face-to-face and online for those who were unavailable during the scheduled time. Questionnaires were personally delivered and/or electronically sent to the email addresses of respondents, as applicable, to ensure that the correct individuals completed the questionnaire. The researcher guided the respondents in completing the questionnaire items to ensure that all items were answered and completed thoroughly.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher conducted the study responsibly and ethically, taking into consideration the principle of autonomy, with strict adherence to the rights of self-determination and full disclosure. The respondents were informed about the nature and importance of the study and that they had the right to decide whether or not to participate. The researcher guaranteed the respondents' anonymity by ensuring that no names and information concerning their responses were revealed that could link them to the local government to which they belonged.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

As shown in Table 2, 25% of the total respondents, or 15 out of 59, were between 26 and 30 years old. The following largest groups are those between 36 and 40 years of age and between 41 and 45 years of age, with both having nine responses, or 15% of the total respondents, respectively. The results of the study imply that AEWs in the 2nd District of Pampanga who provide technical assistance in the field are composed of middle-aged and young adults between 26 and 45 years of age. This finding corroborated the study conducted by Declaro-Ruedas (2019a), which showed that AEWs in the southern municipalities of Occidental Mindoro had an age range from 23 to 62 years. Similarly, the study of Delgado and Villacruel (2023a) showed that the majority of the AEWs in the 3rd district of Laguna belong to the 26-35 and 36-45 age brackets.

Table 2. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Age*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-25	3	5.00
26-30	15	25.00
31-35	6	10.00
36-40	9	15.00
41-45	9	15.00
46-50	5	8.00
51-55	4	7.00
56-60	7	12.00
61-65	1	3.00
Total	59	100.00

Table 3 indicates that 56% of the AEW respondents were male and 44% were female. The survey results suggest male dominance in the field of extension services. Agriculture is a male-dominated sector in the Philippines; therefore, the proportion of male workers in agriculture is significantly higher (Briones, 2017).

Table 3. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Sex*

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	33	56.00
Female	26	44.00
Total	59	100.00

Table 4 shows that 27% (16 out of the total respondents) are Agricultural Technicians. The next largest group is Farm Supervisors with a frequency of 9 or 15% of the respondents, followed by Agricultural Technologists with a frequency of 8 or 14%. This means that many respondents assume technical roles. As can be seen in the table, the positions and designations of extension agents were those of agriculture generalists who responded to various agricultural-related problems in their respective municipalities.

Table 4. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Position/Designation*

Position/Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Municipal Agriculturist	4	7.00
Staff	7	12.00
Admin Aide	6	10.00
Agriculturist	3	5.00
Agricultural Technician	16	27.00
Agricultural Technologist	8	14.00
Farm Worker	5	8.00
Farm Supervisor	9	15.00
Farm Foreman	1	2.00
Total	59	100.00

The results in Table 5 showed that fifty-one (51) of the total 59 respondents completed tertiary education. Out of the respondents who have a Bachelor's degree, six (6) have a master's degree, while none have a doctorate. Five (5) or 8% of the respondents had finished vocational courses, and three (3) or 5% were secondary education graduates. The study's results indicate that the majority of AEWs in the 2nd District hold a college degree, while only a few have pursued advanced studies. The standards for selecting extension agents vary from one country to another, depending on the specific needs. The majority considers a university-level education as the minimum requirement for extension work, as it is generally expected that the higher the level of education, the better the service delivery.

Table 5. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Educational Attainment*

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Doctorate Degree	0	0.00
Master's Degree	6	10.00
Tertiary	45	77.00
Secondary	3	5.00
Vocational	5	8.00
Total	59	100.00

As shown in Table 6, nineteen (19) respondents, or 32%, have Skills Eligibility – Category II. In comparison, eighteen (18) or 31% have passed the Board Eligibility (RA 1080), followed by those with Career Service Professional Eligibility, with sixteen (16) responses, or 27% of the total respondents. This implies that most AEWs are board passers and are eligible for the Civil Service Commission (CSC). Furthermore, AEWs in the 2nd District of Pampanga met the minimum qualification standards set by the CSC. According to Declaro-Ruedas (2019b), the value of agricultural extension work greatly depends on the availability of extension professionals who are qualified and capable of providing technical assistance in the field.

Table 6. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Eligibility*

Eligibility	Frequency	Percentage
Board Eligibility (RA 1080)	18	31.00
Career Service Professional Eligibility	16	27.00
Skills Eligibility – Category II	19	32.00
N/A	6	10.00
Total	59	100.00

As presented in Table 7, 25% or 42% of the total respondents have been in the government for 1 to 5 years, and 17% or 29% have been in the government for 6 to 10 years. Respondents with 11 to 15 and 16 to 20 years of government experience have frequencies of 5% and 8%, respectively. The rest of the respondents have been working in the government for 21 years or more. The result of the study means that most AEWs in the 2nd District of Pampanga are relatively new to government work. The finding corroborates the study by Delgado and Villacruel (2023b), which found that 41.9% of the AEWs in the 3rd District of Laguna have a length of service ranging from 1 to 5 years.

Table 7. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Years in the Government*

No. of years in government	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 5	25	42.00
6 – 10	17	29.00
11 – 15	5	8.00
16 – 20	5	8.00
21 – 25	3	5.00
26 – 30	3	5.00
31 – 35	0	0.00
36 – 40	1	3.00
Total	59	100.00

The results in Table 8 showed that most respondents have 1 to 5 years of working experience as extension workers in the LGU-MAO, making up 27 or 46% of the total respondents. The next largest group consisted of those with 6 to 10 years of experience, accounting for 17% or 29% of the respondents. Frequency of 7 or 12% of the total respondents had 11 to 15 years, and the remaining 8 or 13% of the respondents worked in the agriculture office for 16 years or more. This means that most AEWs have spent relatively less than a decade providing extension services to the agricultural sector, similar to Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, where extension agents have 5 to 10 years of experience (Okorie & Nkeme, 2024a). However, the result contrasts with the average of 18.14 years of first-hand experience among AEWs in Occidental Mindoro (Declaro-Ruedas, 2019c).

Table 8. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of Years as AEWs*

No. of years in government	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 5	25	42.00
6 – 10	17	29.00
11 – 15	5	8.00
16 – 20	5	8.00
21 – 25	3	5.00
26 – 30	3	5.00
31 – 35	0	0.00
36 – 40	1	3.00
Total	59	100.00

Table 9 indicated that 21 or 36% of the total respondents handle three barangays, 15 or 25% cover two barangays, while 11 or 19% provide extension services to only one barangay. Twelve (12) or 20% of the respondents handle four barangays. The result means that most AEWs in the 2nd District of Pampanga are responsible for handling a small number of barangays (2-3), ensuring focused service. Similar to the SAMARICA Area in Occidental Mindoro, 60 AEWs were distributed across barangays, indicating that a “small number of AEWs are working with a large number of farmers and fishers” (Declaro-Ruedas, 2019d).

Table 9. *Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in terms of the Number of Barangays Covered*

No. of barangays covered	Frequency	Percentage
Municipal wide	7	12.00
6 Barangays	2	3.00
5 Barangays	2	3.00
4 Barangays	1	2.00
3 Barangays	21	36.00
2 Barangays	15	25.00
1 Barangay	11	19.00
Total	59	100.00

3.2 Status of Implementation of Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector

The respondents were asked to respond to various statements regarding whether devolved functions, as mandated in Section 17 of the Local Government Act 1991, were implemented entirely, partially, or not at all. Results in Table 10 showed that devolved functions, including extension and on-site research services and facilities, were partially implemented by the MLGUs. The grand mean of 1.90 indicates that MLGUs face significant challenges in implementing devolved agricultural functions, with most areas classified as partially implemented.

Table 10. *Status of Implementation of Devolved Functions in terms of Extension and On-site Research Services and Facilities*

Indicators	Mean	V.I.	Rank
Dispersal of livestock and poultry	1.88	PI	4
Dispersal of fingerlings, and other seeding materials for aquaculture	1.92	PI	3
Dispersal of palay, corn, and vegetable seed farms	2.25	PI	1
Establishment/Operation of demonstration farms	1.85	PI	5.5
Improvement of local distribution channels through cooperatives	2.07	PI	2
Inter-barangay irrigation systems	1.63	PI	8
Water and soil resource utilization and conservation project	1.78	PI	7
Enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters	1.85	PI	5.5
Grand Mean	1.90	PI	

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 2.50 – 3.00 – Fully Implemented (FI), 1.50-2.49 – Partially Implemented (PI), 1.00-1.49 – Not Implemented (NI)

The results in Table 11 show the status of devolved functions in terms of local infrastructure facilities. The grand mean of 1.59, falling under "Partially Implemented," reflects the overall status of devolved local infrastructure facilities. This average indicates that, collectively, the full implementation of these functions remains largely unfulfilled. A study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) assesses LGU functional assignments across critical sectors, including infrastructure, and notes that despite over three decades since the devolution agenda was set, significant challenges persist in fully realizing decentralized governance (Juco et al., 2024).

Table 11. *Status of Implementation of Devolved Functions in terms of Extension and On-site Research Services and Facilities*

Indicators	Mean	V.I.	Rank
Communal irrigation	1.81	PI	1
Small water impounding projects and other similar projects	1.56	PI	2
Fish ports	1.41	NI	3
Grand Mean	1.59	PI	

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 2.50 – 3.00 – Fully Implemented (FI), 1.50-2.49 – Partially Implemented (PI), 1.00-1.49 – Not Implemented (NI)

The grand mean of 1.90 and 1.59 indicates that the implementation of devolved functions, services, and facilities (e.g., extension and on-site research, and local infrastructure) as mandated under LGC 1991 in the 2nd district of Pampanga is Partially Implemented, after more than three decades. Partial implementation, as used and interpreted in the study, means that the funding and provision of basic services and facilities enumerated in Section 17 of the LGC 1991 serve as a complement to resources between and among DA and other National Agencies, the Provincial Government, and the LGU.

A report published by DBM (2016) mentioned that while LGUs are in the best position to know local preferences and development needs more than the national government, 2 decades since the LGC was enacted, LGUs are still reliant on the national government in the delivery of local services. The findings support the study by Delgado & Villacruel (2023c), which indicates that the national government continues to fund agricultural and fisheries programs and projects. Furthermore, the survey conducted by Gallanosa and De Castro (2023) revealed that awareness of LGUs regarding the functions to be devolved is partial.

3.3 Capacity of the MLGUs in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector

The assessment of the capacity of MLGUs to implement devolved functions, in terms of structure, competency, management systems, enabling policies, knowledge and learning, and leadership, is presented using descriptive statistics such as mean and ranking. Respondents were asked to respond to various statements indicating their level of capacity (e.g., low, basic, moderate, and high).

LGA identified six capacity pillars (structure, competency, management systems, enabling policies, knowledge and learning, and leadership) and defined as follows: Structure refers to the “presence of appropriate organizational structures such as office, committee, or work group vested with defined authority and accountability in the performance of functions.” Competency pertains to the “expertise and skills of people performing assigned functions in the program, which include but are not limited to technical and program management capabilities”. Management systems refer to the “systems, processes, and procedures installed to plan and budget, design and develop, implement, and monitor and evaluate programs”. Enabling policies pertain to the “existence of policies and legislation that support planning, developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating service delivery functions, programs, and projects”. Knowledge and learning refer to the “ways for generating, analyzing, and utilizing data and information for rational and evidence-based decision-making”. Leadership pertains to the “existence of systems that define the vision, mission, goals, and values within an organization. It includes setting a strategic direction that promotes transparency and accountability in government operations, as well as participatory mechanisms, partnerships, collaboration, and sponsorships.

The grand mean of 2.30, as presented in Table 12, showed that the capacity of MLGUs in implementing devolved functions in the agricultural sector, in terms of structure, is generally basic capacity (BC). Basic capacity, as defined in this study, implies that the organizational structure is formally established, documented, but incomplete or outdated, and based on partially defined lines of authority, clear roles, responsibilities, and functions. Furthermore, the current structure is not typically followed, the written staffing plan is weak, and the staffing and workforce complement require updating. This finding supports the study by Fernandez (2023a), which suggests that the personnel currently at the Davao City Agriculturist Office are inadequate to implement full devolution beginning in 2024. He noted that a considerable budget must be allocated for salaries and wages of personnel who will be hired as subject matter experts to produce the required outputs.

Table 12. Capacity of the MLGUs in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector in terms of Structure

Indicators	Mean	V.I.	Rank
Dispersal of livestock and poultry	2.31	BC	5
Dispersal of fingerlings, and other seeding materials for aquaculture	2.39	BC	4
Dispersal of palay, corn, and vegetable seed farms	3.10	MC	1
Establishment/Operation of demonstration farms	2.47	BC	3
Improvement of local distribution channels through cooperatives	2.53	MC	2
Inter-barangay irrigation systems	2.22	BC	6
Water and soil resource utilization and conservation project	2.20	BC	7
Enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters	2.14	BC	8
Communal irrigation	2.05	BC	9
Small water impounding projects and other similar projects	2.02	BC	10
Fish ports	1.92	BC	11
Grand Mean	2.30	BC	

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.50 – 4.00 – High Capacity (HC), 2.50– 3.49 – Moderate Capacity (MC), 1.50-2.49 – Basic Capacity (BC), 1.00-1.49 – Low Capacity (LC)

The grand mean of 2.43, as shown in Table 13, indicates that MLGUs' competency in carrying out devolved agricultural functions is marked as having a basic capacity (BC). Basic capacity implies that the people performing devolved functions have fair experience in basic management/ technical knowledge, and skills. Many AEWs need to improve their capacity substantially, and most of them rarely receive appropriate training. Further, developmental needs are not sufficiently identified.

Regular and continuous retooling and capability building of AEWs is imperative to enhance knowledge and skills. Obsolete knowledge would result in the collapse of the extension service. The lack of career development plans and opportunities, as well as inadequate human resource development programs, hinders the quality and efficiency of service delivery. AEWs have become generalists who address all agri-related issues, rather than commodity or subject matter specialists.

Table 13. *Capacity of the MLGUs in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector in terms of Competency*

Indicators	Mean	V.I.	Rank
Dispersal of livestock and poultry	2.53	MC	3
Dispersal of fingerlings, and other seeding materials for aquaculture	2.42	BC	6
Dispersal of palay, corn, and vegetable seed farms	3.20	MC	1
Establishment/Operation of demonstration farms	2.69	MC	2
Improvement of local distribution channels through cooperatives	2.51	MC	4
Inter-barangay irrigation systems	2.20	BC	9
Water and soil resource utilization and conservation project	2.27	BC	7
Enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters	2.37	BC	5
Communal irrigation	2.17	BC	10
Small water impounding projects and other similar projects	2.22	BC	8
Fish ports	2.10	BC	11
Grand Mean	2.43	BC	

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.50 – 4.00 – High Capacity (HC), 2.50– 3.49 – Moderate Capacity (MC), 1.50-2.49 – Basic Capacity (BC), 1.00-1.49 – Low Capacity (LC)

In terms of management systems, the grand mean of 2.39, as shown in Table 14, indicated that MLGUs' capacity to carry out devolved agricultural functions remains basic. The basic capacity implied that MLGUs' written guidance, manuals, flowcharts, protocols, and Standard Operating Procedures are inadequate and require significant changes. Forms and approval processes are not usually followed. Effective decentralization in the agricultural industry requires well-organized management systems, which include transparent protocols, technological support, and adequate staff coordination. However, local governments are unable to fully carry out their delegated duties, possibly due to inadequate administrative and managerial structures. According to Abualous et al. (2018), management infrastructure had a positive effect on the knowledge management process. Therefore, to improve capacity, LGUs need to upgrade office technology and establish clear systems and procedures that will guide their workforce complement.

Table 14. *Capacity of the MLGUs in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector in terms of Management Systems*

Indicators	Mean	V.I.	Rank
Dispersal of livestock and poultry	2.54	MC	2
Dispersal of fingerlings, and other seeding materials for aquaculture	2.47	BC	4.5
Dispersal of palay, corn, and vegetable seed farms	3.08	MC	1
Establishment/Operation of demonstration farms	2.47	BC	4.5
Improvement of local distribution channels through cooperatives	2.51	MC	3
Inter-barangay irrigation systems	2.19	BC	9
Water and soil resource utilization and conservation project	2.32	BC	6
Enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters	2.29	BC	8
Communal irrigation	2.14	BC	10
Small water impounding projects and other similar projects	2.24	BC	7
Fish ports	2.08	BC	11
Grand Mean	2.39	BC	

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.50 – 4.00 – High Capacity (HC), 2.50– 3.49 – Moderate Capacity (MC), 1.50-2.49 – Basic Capacity (BC), 1.00-1.49 – Low Capacity (LC)

The grand mean of 2.33, as illustrated in Table 15, indicated that MLGUs' capacity to carry out devolved agricultural tasks through enabling policies is basic. Basic capacity implies that while MLGUs' policy and legislative support are in place, they require significant adjustments. Furthermore, these policies are often not followed and are rarely disseminated to all personnel.

Table 15. *Capacity of the MLGUs in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector in terms of Enabling Policies*

Indicators	Mean	V.I.	Rank
Dispersal of livestock and poultry	2.41	BC	4
Dispersal of fingerlings, and other seeding materials for aquaculture	2.34	BC	5
Dispersal of palay, corn, and vegetable seed farms	3.15	MC	1
Establishment/Operation of demonstration farms	2.51	MC	2
Improvement of local distribution channels through cooperatives	2.46	BC	3
Inter-barangay irrigation systems	2.05	BC	10
Water and soil resource utilization and conservation project	2.19	BC	7
Enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters	2.25	BC	6
Communal irrigation	2.08	BC	9
Small water impounding projects and other similar projects	2.17	BC	8
Fish ports	1.98	BC	11
Grand Mean	2.33	BC	

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.50 – 4.00 – High Capacity (HC), 2.50– 3.49 – Moderate Capacity (MC), 1.50-2.49 – Basic Capacity (BC), 1.00-1.49 – Low Capacity (LC)

It is more difficult for LGUs to deliver effective agricultural services due to antiquated regulations and lax

enforcement. While National policies are cascaded to the MLGUs, the frequency and duration of field visits of AEWs to ensure effective and efficient program implementation are limited. Hence, the incomplete monitoring data and limited mobility of extension workers often restrict them from conducting fieldwork due to insufficient operational funds for travel and field visits. Despite the crucial role of the agri-extension service, it remained ineffective and received modest support from the government. The issue lies in the establishment of effective extension services that can be attributed to a lack of a realistic or unbalanced policy framework between the national and local levels.

The grand mean of 2.37 indicates that MLGUs still have considerable room for improvement in knowledge and learning regarding the performance of devolved functions in the agricultural sector (see Table 16). Basic capacity implies that MLGUs do not collect sufficient baseline data before implementation. Stakeholder views are rarely incorporated and considered in program or project implementation. Generating accurate baseline data and hiring skilled staff who can analyze information and utilize it effectively, thereby ensuring better decision-making and improved services for local farmers, is crucial for ensuring the responsiveness and efficiency of government operations.

Table 16. Capacity of the MLGUs in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector in terms of Knowledge and Learning

Indicators	Mean	V.I.	Rank
Dispersal of livestock and poultry	2.56	MC	2
Dispersal of fingerlings, and other seeding materials for aquaculture	2.37	BC	5
Dispersal of palay, corn, and vegetable seed farms	3.07	MC	1
Establishment/Operation of demonstration farms	2.54	MC	3
Improvement of local distribution channels through cooperatives	2.53	MC	4
Inter-barangay irrigation systems	2.14	BC	9
Water and soil resource utilization and conservation project	2.24	BC	8
Enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters	2.27	BC	7
Communal irrigation	2.03	BC	11
Small water impounding projects and other similar projects	2.29	BC	6
Fish ports	2.07	BC	10
Grand Mean	2.37	BC	

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.50 – 4.00 – High Capacity (HC), 2.50– 3.49 – Moderate Capacity (MC), 1.50–2.49 – Basic Capacity (BC), 1.00–1.49 – Low Capacity (LC)

Based on the responses of AEW respondents, the capacity of MLGUs in terms of Leadership is basic, as evidenced by the grand mean of 2.43. Results indicated that MLGUs encounter difficulties in effectively guiding the implementation of devolved agriculture functions. Basic capacity in terms of Leadership implies that MLGUs' vision and mission statements are unclear and generalized. The Head provides weak administrative and technical support, as well as limited two-way communication. Further, the decision-making process has little staff involvement.

Northouse (2019) emphasizes the importance of effective leadership in achieving organizational performance, especially in local government, where clear vision and decision-making are critical. Fernandez (2023b) argues that weak leadership, along with bureaucratic inefficiencies, frequently impedes the successful delivery of agricultural initiatives. To overcome these difficulties, local governments should focus on enhancing the capacity of leaders and agrarian extension workers, as well as ensuring adequate communication among staff.

Table 17. Capacity of the MLGUs in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector in terms of Leadership

Indicators	Mean	V.I.	Rank
Dispersal of livestock and poultry	2.53	MC	4
Dispersal of fingerlings, and other seeding materials for aquaculture	2.44	BC	5
Dispersal of palay, corn, and vegetable seed farms	3.05	MC	1
Establishment/Operation of demonstration farms	2.66	MC	2
Improvement of local distribution channels through cooperatives	2.58	MC	3
Inter-barangay irrigation systems	2.25	BC	9
Water and soil resource utilization and conservation project	2.39	BC	6
Enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters	2.32	BC	7
Communal irrigation	2.10	BC	11
Small water impounding projects and other similar projects	2.31	BC	8
Fish ports	2.15	BC	10
Grand Mean	2.43	BC	

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.50 – 4.00 – High Capacity (HC), 2.50– 3.49 – Moderate Capacity (MC), 1.50–2.49 – Basic Capacity (BC), 1.00–1.49 – Low Capacity (LC)

AEW respondents in the 2nd district of Pampanga believe that their MLGUs' capacity in the six pillars is basic. As

shown in Table 18, the study's results suggest that, more than three decades after decentralization, considering recent developments that strengthen devolution (i.e., the Mandanas-Garcia Ruling and E.O. 138), the MLGUs' capacity to implement devolved functions mandated by the LGC 1991 remains basic. The lack of funds at the local level, low priority for agricultural programs, and partisan politics greatly influenced the potential benefits and advantages of decentralized services.

Table 18. Overall Capacity of the MLGUs in Implementing Devolved Functions in the Agriculture Sector

Indicators	Mean	V.I.
Structure	2.30	BC
Competencies	2.43	BC
Management Systems	2.39	BC
Enabling Policies	2.33	BC
Knowledge and Learning	2.37	BC
Leadership	2.43	BC
Grand Mean	2.37	BC

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI): 3.50 – 4.00 – High Capacity (HC), 2.50– 3.49 – Moderate Capacity (MC), 1.50-2.49 – Basic Capacity (BC), 1.00-1.49 – Low Capacity (LC)

3.4 Significant Relationship between the Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents and the Status of Implementation of Devolved Functions.

The results shown in Table 19 illustrate that there is no significant difference between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and the status of implementation of devolved functions in all variables except the designation or position. The results suggest that factors such as age, sex, highest educational attainment, eligibility, years in government service, and extension worker status, including the number of barangays covered, do not significantly influence the implementation of devolved functions. This could imply that the current status (i.e., partial implementation) is not affected by these varying characteristics of the sample population, hence it failed to reject the null hypothesis. However, only the designation/position of MLGUs' agriculture personnel has a significant relationship with the items tested, which implies that only this variable rejected the null hypothesis.

Table 19. Significant Relationship of Socio-demographic Data and Status of Implementation of Devolved Functions

Variables		Pearson r-test value	P-value	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Status of	Age	-0.015	0.910	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Implementation of devolved functions	Years in Government Service	-0.034	0.798	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years as AEW	-0.073	0.583	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Designation/Position	-0.258	0.049	Reject	Significant
	Educational Attainment	-0.038	0.778	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Eligibility	-0.191	0.146	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Barangay Covered	0.107	0.419	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Point Biserial r – test value				
	Gender	-0.091	0.495	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

The study of Delgado and Villacruel (2023d) similarly suggested that “age, sex, and employment status have no significant differences” in the performance-related functions. Similarly, the age of extension workers in Punjab, Pakistan, had a minor effect on the discharge of duties and responsibilities (Magsi et al., 2024a). However, according to Ahmed & Prativa (2024), compensation and job promotions simultaneously had a “positive and significant effect on performance”. It requires specific skills and expertise to efficiently and effectively carry out tasks and fulfill commitments assigned to an individual within an organization, leading toward a common goal. However, a hierarchical structure that determines the lines of authority and level of responsibility is linked to decision-making and accountability.

Nani and Safitri (2021) reported that “age and working experience have a significant and positive relationship with the performance of their functions”. Gocal (2021) also highlighted that the long years as permanent public servants and attendance to various trainings and seminars generally equipped devolved workers with outstanding and quality service extended to their respective clients. Furthermore, the extensive experience of the extension workforce in Punjab, Pakistan, in farm extension has significantly influenced the services they provide to their farmers (Magsi et al., 2024b). According to Kurniasari and Herlina (2022), the level of education, infrastructure, and capacity building have a positive and significant influence on the performance of agricultural extension workers. The variables such as “age distribution, years of experience, educational attainment, and chain of command” greatly influence the organization’s succession planning and development strategies to ensure non-disruption of service delivery (Castillo et al., 2023a).

Based on the results (see Table 20), all variables obtained a p-value greater than 0.05, which implies that the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that there is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and capacity in terms of structures. The result contradicts the study of Castillo et al. (2023b), which confirmed that organizational structures such as departmentalization, specialization, and hierarchy had “a significant positive relationship with the performance of functions”. A correlation was found between organizational structure and personnel performance, which proved to be statistically significant. The quantity of workload and the number of extension workers directly influence the performance of agriculture extension workers (Indraningsih, 2023a).

Table 20. *Significant Relationship of Socio-demographic Data and Capacity in Structure*

Variables		Pearson r-test value	P-value	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Capacity of MLGUs in Implementing of devolved functions	Age	-0.147	0.267	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years in Government Service	-0.135	0.308	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years as AEW	-0.187	0.156	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Designation/Position	-0.153	0.248	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	-0.05	0.707	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Eligibility	-0.287	0.128	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Barangay Covered	0.099	0.453	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Point Biserial r - test value					
	Gender	-0.095	0.473	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Table 21 showed the test of the significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and the capacity of the MLGUs in implementing devolved functions in terms of competency. The results show that the p-value of all relationships is greater than 0.05, which means that there is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and the capacity of the MLGUs in implementing devolved functions in terms of competency. The result of the study is not in tandem with the study by Wong (2020), which concluded that “socio-demographic profile such as age, educational attainment, length of service, position, and number of trainings attended” greatly influence capacity and competence. Furthermore, the length of service is correlated with the level of expertise. According to Ronoh (2019), education level is also a determinant factor in the acquisition and application of skills and knowledge, as graduates usually have a higher intellectual capacity due to their level of education. Human resource flexibility and competencies built over time are great indicators and “have a significant impact on performance.” Work specialization was found to have the highest correlation to employee performance (Salman et al., 2020; Castillo et al., 2023c).

Table 21. *Significant Relationship of Socio-demographic Data and Capacity in Competency*

Variables		Pearson r-test value	P-value	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Capacity of MLGUs in Implementing of devolved functions	Age	-0.198	0.133	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years in Government Service	-0.147	0.267	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years as AEW	-0.143	0.280	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Designation/Position	-0.164	0.213	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	0.087	0.513	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Eligibility	-0.202	0.125	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Barangay Covered	-0.026	0.845	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Point Biserial r - test value					
	Gender	-0.159	0.228	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Table 22 showed that there is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and the capacity of the MLGUs in implementing devolved functions in terms of the management system. The result contrasts with the findings of Bastan et al. (2020), which suggest that personnel dynamics within an organization facilitate a feedback mechanism for improving systems. The most important feedback usually comes from personnel with higher levels of education, thus shaping the overall dynamics of processes and protocols within an organization. The demographic variables (e.g., “gender, age, job title, educational qualification, and years of service”) have a positive relationship with the development of the system for optimum performance (Agbenyegah, 2019).

Table 22. Significant Relationship of Socio-demographic Data and Capacity in Management System

Variables		Pearson r-test value	P-value	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Capacity of MLGUs in Implementing of devolved functions	Age	-0.172	0.193	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years in Government Service	-0.113	0.394	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years as AEW	-0.116	0.382	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Designation/Position	-0.104	0.432	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	0.113	0.394	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Eligibility	-0.153	0.247	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Barangay Covered	-0.065	0.626	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Point Biserial r – test value					
Gender		0.130	0.327	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

The result in Table 23 showed that the p-value for all relationships is greater than 0.05. This means that the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis. It means that there is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and the capacity of the MLGUs in implementing devolved functions in terms of enabling policies of the municipal agriculture office. Demographic factors in any organization can help top management ensure compliance with policy support (Chua et al., 2019).

Table 23. Significant Relationship of Socio-demographic Data and Capacity in Enabling Policies

Variables		Pearson r-test value	P-value	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Capacity of MLGUs in Implementing of devolved functions	Age	-0.089	0.503	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years in Government Service	-0.160	0.226	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years as AEW	-0.082	0.537	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Designation/Position	-0.213	0.106	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	-0.002	0.990	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Eligibility	-0.219	0.095	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Barangay Covered	0.367	0.783	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Point Biserial r – test value					
Gender		-0.072	0.586	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

The results shown in Table 24 indicate that the p-values for all relationships are greater than 0.05. This means that the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis. It means that there is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and the capacity of the MLGUs in implementing devolved functions, specifically in terms of knowledge and learning within the municipal agriculture office.

The study of Sürücü et al. (2018a) suggested that factors such as gender, size of organization, level of education, and length of experience are significantly associated with perceived “ethical culture in investigating and applying data and information for decision-making”.

Table 24. Significant Relationship of Socio-demographic Data and Capacity in Knowledge and Learning

Variables		Pearson r-test value	P-value	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Capacity of MLGUs in Implementing of devolved functions	Age	-0.114	0.390	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years in Government Service	-0.104	0.433	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years as AEW	-0.092	0.488	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Designation/Position	-0.151	0.253	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	0.070	0.598	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Eligibility	-0.230	0.080	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Barangay Covered	0.055	0.679	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
Point Biserial r – test value					
Gender		-0.052	0.693	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

As shown in Table 25, the p-value for all relationships is greater than 0.05. This means that the researcher failed to reject the hypothesis. It means that there is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and the capacity of the MLGUs in implementing devolved functions, particularly in terms of leadership within the municipal agriculture office. The finding contradicts the study by Sürücü et al. (2018b), which suggested that a significant relationship exists between socio-demographic characteristics and perceived leadership styles (e.g., transactional, transformational, charismatic, and paternalistic leadership). The demographic variables of employees (e.g., age, gender, and work experience) of people within an organization have a significant relationship with how they perceive leadership attributes. However, the same study is in parallel with the finding that no meaningful relationship exists between the level of education and perception of leadership.

Table 25. Significant Relationship of Socio-demographic Data and Capacity in Leadership

Variables		Pearson r-test value	P-value	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Capacity of MLGUs in Implementing of devolved functions	Age	0.020	0.880	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years in Government Service	0.038	0.775	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Years as AEW	0.035	0.792	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Designation/Position	-0.070	0.598	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Educational Attainment	0.027	0.837	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Eligibility	-0.185	0.160	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
	Barangay Covered	0.160	0.226	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
		Point Biserial r – test value			
	Gender	-0.015	0.913	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Based on the previous Tables, results show that socio-demographic profile such as age, sex, highest educational attainment, position/designation, eligibility, number of years in the government service, and as extension workers, including the number of barangays covered, do not significantly influence MLGUs capacity to implement devolved functions in terms of structure, competency, management systems, enabling policies, knowledge and learning and leadership. All variables obtained a p-value of greater than 0.05, which implies that the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis, meaning that the data collected provides sufficient evidence to support the null hypothesis.

The overall findings are not in tandem with various studies, which suggested that a significant relationship exists between socio-demographic factors and the capacity to perform functions. According to Alenazi et al. (2018), the level of education had the most significant influence and impact on leadership roles among all other demographic characteristics. As discussed in the paper of Kimosop et al. (2016), “tenure” was found to be the “most predictive of capacity and performance.” Furthermore, strategic capabilities (e.g., management, information, and technology) and structure have a positive and significant relationship with performance.

Table 26 presents the significant relationship between the status of implementing devolved functions in the agricultural sector and the capacity of MLGUs. Based on the results, the p-value for all relationships is less than 0.05, which implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. It has been proven that there is a significant relationship between the status of implementing devolved functions in the agricultural sector and the capacity of MLGUs. It also indicates that r-values range from 0.4 to 0.6, suggesting a moderate positive correlation between the two variables.

Table 26. Significant Relationship of Status of Implementation of Devolved Functions and Capacity of MLGUs in 6 Identified Pillars

Variables		Pearson r-test value	P-value	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Status of Implementation of devolved functions	Structure	0.552	$p < .001$	Reject	Significant
	Competency	0.448	0.00037	Reject	Significant
	Management System	0.545	$p < .001$	Reject	Significant
	Enabling Policies	0.507	0.00004	Reject	Significant
	Knowledge and Learning	0.544	$p < .001$	Reject	Significant
	Leadership	0.499	0.00006	Reject	Significant

Note: Status of Implementation- Partially Implemented, Capacity in 6 Pillars-Basic

The finding of a significant relationship between capacity and the implementation of functions reinforces the study by Bwire (2018), which found that organizational structure had a moderate and significant association with performance. The existing structure within the organization had a profoundly positive impact on enhancing performance in the execution of functions. Further, “strategy implementation and performance of devolved ministries are related significantly” (Kato, 2019). Delgado & Villacruel (2023e) also proved the “strong correlation between the level of competency and the level of support of LGUs/MAOs” to the performance of extension service. Learning and development, as well as professional advancement, are levers that management must consider to achieve sustainable and optimal organizational performance (Aina & Atan, 2020).

Lam et al. (2021) confirmed that knowledge and management system strongly correlates with capability. A positive and significant association also exists between organizational culture and learning, which links and mediates sustainable organizational innovation (Abbas et al., 2020). Furthermore, the intellectual capital and absorptive capacity of human resources in the use of technology promote organizational ambidexterity (Mahmood & Mubarik, 2020). Choi (2021) reported that local governments are responsible for their localities;

hence, the presence of quality managerial government capacity determines their performance in developmental policies, such as local infrastructure development. The government's capacity to engage stakeholders has a significant and positive impact on devolved service delivery, as it strengthens the legitimacy of government operations and processes (Karama et al., 2019). Perceived organizational support and innovative work behavior have a significant impact on performance. The core domain for ensuring the learning and performance of human resources in any organization is support from top management. Policy support for continuous professional development ensures the long-term capacity enhancement (Akdere & Egan, 2020). "Leadership style" impacts workplace empowerment and administrative controls, with organizational capabilities significantly influencing organizational performance (Boamah et al., 2018). Managerial competencies promote valuable sharing of insights that contribute to employee job performance. Both knowledge sharing among staff and superiors are found to have a "direct effect on overall organizational performance" (Swanson et al., 2020; Vainieri et al., 2019). Hence, an improved strategy would enhance performance, as technology-oriented leadership fosters knowledge sharing.

Studies show that "empowering" and transformational leadership are positively and significantly related to work performance and mediate intrinsic motivation among personnel for them to deliver expected and significant outputs for the achievement of the outcome. The opportunity for employees to get involved, consulted, and have the power to make decisions is also a factor to be considered in an organization (Gašková, 2020; Khan et al., 2020). The effects of decentralization are "positively associated with organizational performance" (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). However, performance is confronted with difficulties attributed to the complex relationships among key actors. The challenges faced by agricultural extension agents included a lack of transportation facilities, limited extension materials, a shortage of extension agents, and inadequate funds to implement good farm practices (Antwi-Agyei & Stringer, 2021). Similar in Ethiopia, the weak and limited interactions, and partnership among actors, lack of adequate facilities and physical resources for mobility, lack of work motivation and intense supervision, lack of technical competence involvement of extension workers in the decision-making process contributed to the failure of the government to achieve desired benefits of decentralization (Hailu et al., 2020). A favorable working environment, professional relationships, the existence of rules and regulations, and the allocation of budgets are essential components of the effective and efficient delivery of extension services (Indraningsih, 2023b). Human capacity strengthening activities such as workshops on communication skills, skilled mentorship, and open communication channels between extension workers and supervisors, including adequate training materials, input supply, and funding support, were significant factors influencing the effectiveness of agricultural extension services (Okorie & Nkeme, 2024b). The failure of LGUs to fully implement devolved functions is attributable to factors such as the inability of extension workers to discharge their functions due to a lack of funding support, inadequate training and capacity development, salary disparities, partisan politics, and a lack of political will and support from LCEs.

4.0 Conclusion

Based on the summary of findings, AEWs in the 2nd District of Pampanga were between 26 and 30 years old, predominantly male, held technical roles as agricultural technicians, and had completed agri-related courses in College. Thirty-seven of the total respondents have CSC professional and skills Eligibility, while 18 AEWs are Board Passers. Forty-two respondents have been working in the government for 1 to 10 years, and 44 have between 1 and 10 years of experience as extension agents. The area of coverage was 1 to 3 Barangays per extension agent. Based on the responses, the status of implementing devolved functions in the agriculture sector, as specified in Section 17 of the LGC of 1991, in terms of Extension and On-site Research Services and Local Infrastructure Facilities, was partially implemented. Furthermore, the capacity of the MLGUs in terms of Structure, Competency, Management Systems, Enabling Policies, Knowledge, and Learning, as well as Leadership of the LGU-MAO, is basic. In the test of relationship, the results showed that there is no significant relationship between the socio-demographic profile of respondents and the status of implementation of devolved functions in all variables except for the designation or position. The socio-demographic profile of respondents and the capacity of the MLGUs have no significant relationship. However, there was a significant relationship between the status of implementation of devolved functions in the agricultural sector and the capacity of MLGUs in the six pillars.

Based on the study's results, there is an urgent need for local governments to understand and take responsibility for being self-reliant and discharging the functions devolved to them. MLGUs may explore ways to generate funds to augment the costs of delivering effective agricultural support services by increasing fiscal resources, local revenues, and securing funding assistance from various national and international agencies and other

private stakeholders through counterpart schemes and partnerships. Further, an Action Plan was formulated to address development opportunities and capacity gaps of MLGUs (Structure, Competency, Management Systems, Enabling Policies, Knowledge and Learning, and Leadership) to discharge devolved functions as mandated by the LGC of 1991 fully.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

All authors discussed the results and contributed to the preparation of the final manuscript. M.S. took the lead in carrying out the study, analyzing the results, and writing the manuscript. C.M. provided critical feedback and helped shape the research in its final form.

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7.0 Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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