

MODULE 2:

ASSESSING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTEXTS



3 hours and 35 minutes



Module OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this module, you are expected to:

- Describe the importance of analysis of the various contexts of the local government in order to assess the readiness to pursue mainstreaming
- Demonstrate the ability to identify the planning processes, institutions, actors and mandates, policies and other factors that influence positively or negatively the mainstreaming effort
- Utilize the socio-economic and environmental information of the local government towards the identification of entry points for mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages.

Module SESSION AND ACTIVITIES:

Session 1:	
JUSTIFYING THE ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTEXTS	
Activity 1:	Understanding the importance of assessing the local government contexts
Session 2:	
ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTEXTS	
Activity 1:	Informational analysis of the contexts
Activity 2:	Assessment of the socio-economic and environmental situation



READING MATERIALS

GOVERNMENT CONTEXTS

There are some concepts that you need to be familiar with in assessing socio-economic, political, institutional and environmental contexts of your local government unit. These are listed below:

Planning processes

Planning processes shape a municipality or provincial's development and environmental priorities. Relevant processes might include strategies (municipal development plans, municipal sustainable development strategies, MDG strategies, sector strategies), action plans (provincial/municipal environmental action plans, provincial/municipal adaptation programs of action) and budget processes

Institutions and actors

This includes the various institutions and actors in government, the non-governmental sector and the broader development community and their activities. Included also are partners that can provide technical, financial and political support to the mainstreaming effort.

Mandates and decision-making processes

Concerned with how the local government develops and approves policies, budgets and related measures. It also includes information on how the environment sector or office is involved in the development of policies initiated by other offices that have significant environmental implications (the agricultural sector plan is one such policy). Informal power relations are also part of it.

Existing policies and initiatives

This concerns with major existing provincial/municipal and sectoral (e.g. agriculture, health, education, industries, cleaner production and environment) development policies, programs and projects, and climate change-related initiatives, that are relevant to the poverty-environment mainstreaming effort, and the possible conflicting priorities.

Governance and political situation

Natural resources typically are important sources of national wealth, and different institutions and actors often have conflicting priorities concerning access to or control of their use. This aspect concerns with the political factors that may affect the mainstreaming effort either positively or negatively. These factors include the transparency and accountability of decision-making concerning natural resource management and the resulting distributional impacts. It also includes the legislative and judicial systems, the rule of law and corruption control in the local government. In addition are the short-term political drivers such as upcoming elections, changes in mandates or roles, possible competition among agencies or departments and other governance factors.

State of the environment

This refers to the conditions of the environment and current and emerging environmental challenges such as climate change.

Socio-economic situation

These are baseline data on poverty and population’s socioeconomic status, including data disaggregated by demographics such as age, sex and geographical location.

Poverty-environment linkages

These are the linkages between poverty and the environment (e.g. main ecosystem services, food security, vulnerability to effects of climate change, deforestation, livelihoods of men and of women), focusing on national development priorities.

Poverty-environment sector linkages

This focuses on the relevance of the environment to human well-being and pro-poor economic growth and development sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, water and sanitation, industrial development, health, trade, transport, energy, education and tourism.

Benefits and costs of action and inaction

These are the benefits obtained from investing in better environmental management for the poor and for the economy overall; the costs incurred due to poor environmental management and resulting environmental degradation. It also covers the benefit-cost ratio for investments in environmental management or the return on investment, and the loss of revenue to the government.

Point of Emphasis:

All individuals and groups working on mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages should rely on existing environmental assessments and available facts, figures and studies. They should build on the knowledge of local and provincial stakeholders, non-governmental actors and local communities.

WHY CONDUCT ASSESSMENT OF CONTEXTS?

- Assessment of governmental, institutional and political contexts helps develop a thorough, shared understanding of the situation, which in turn provides the basis for finding the most effective entry points for mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages in local government development planning.
- It also enables local governments to identify potential partners and champions for poverty-environment mainstreaming.
- Without the understanding of the contexts, government key persons or offices leading a poverty-environment mainstreaming effort could seriously underestimate the local government’s readiness to engage in the process.

HOW DO WE APPROACH THE ASSESSMENT OF CONTEXTS?

The assessment begins with identifying and understanding the various processes, institutions, actors, mandates, existing policies and other factors that affect the poverty-environment

mainstreaming effort. The handbook on Mainstreaming Poverty-Environment Linkages (UNDP-UNEP) suggests the following:

Planning processes

- Understand the planning processes that shape the area's development and environmental priorities.
- Relevant processes might include strategies (poverty reduction programs, development plans, sustainable development strategies, MDG strategies, sector strategies), action plans (municipal/provincial environmental action plans, adaptation programs of action) and budgeting processes

Institutions and actors

- Identify the various institutions and actors (planners, budget officers, chiefs, etc) in government, the non-governmental sector and the broader development community and understand their activities.
- Identify partners that can provide technical, financial and political support to the mainstreaming effort
- Solicit the services of these partners, if needed

Mandates and decision-making processes

- Know thoroughly how the government develops and approves policies, budgets and related measures.
- Particularly, know the extent to which the environment department can be involved in the development of policies initiated by other agencies that have significant environmental implications (the agricultural sector plan is one such policy)
- Understand also the informal power relations in the area

Existing policies and initiatives

- Assess or inventory the major existing national, provincial and sector (e.g. agriculture, health, trade, education, industrial development, cleaner production and environment) development policies, programmes and projects, and climate change-related initiatives that are relevant to the poverty-environment mainstreaming effort, and to identify possible conflicting priorities.

Governance and political situation

- Be aware and know the political factors that affect mainstreaming like the transparency and accountability of decision-making concerning natural resource management and its impacts
- Assess the quality of the legislative and judicial systems, the rule of law and corruption control in the local government
- Consider the short-term political events such as upcoming elections, changes in mandates or roles, possible competition among agencies or departments and other governance factors

WHAT QUESTIONS CAN GUIDE YOU IN ASSESSMENTS OF THE CONTEXTS?

Processes

- What **possible entry points** will influence local government processes? How can these entry points be fully leveraged in trying to influence local government planning processes later in the poverty-environment mainstreaming effort?

- What are the **components** of the relevant local government planning processes?
- What are the **timetable and working arrangements** for revising or drafting the relevant development planning processes? When and how are objectives and priorities set or revised, policy measures developed, costing and budgeting accomplished and the monitoring framework developed?
- How are the local government planning processes **linked** to sectoral planning processes?

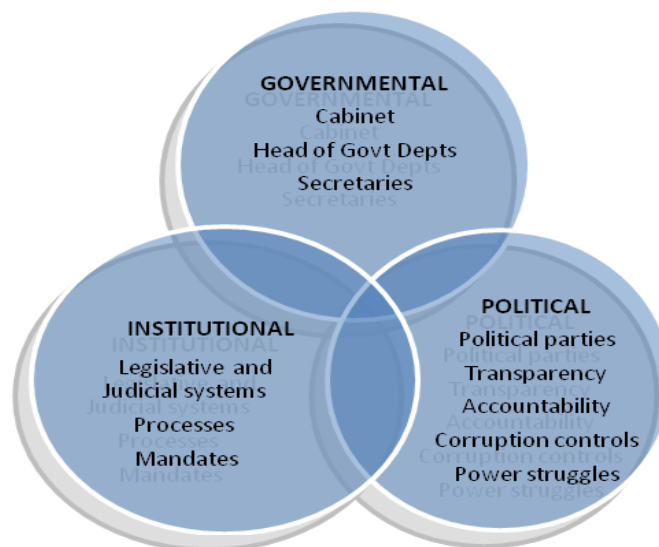
Institutions and Actors

- Which **government institutions** are leading the provincial or municipal local government and sector planning processes? How is their work organized?
- What are the mechanisms (e.g. working groups, consultations, development assistance coordination mechanisms) through which **other government institutions** participate? What about non-governmental actors? Is there a need to help mobilize other actors?
- How effective are the existing **mechanisms**? Is there a need to further develop or improve these?
- Does the **environment department** have a mandate to be involved in the development of policy with environmental implications initiated by other government institutions (e.g. the agriculture department)?
- Who are the potential **local government development partners**? How could they contribute to poverty-environment mainstreaming?

Governance

- What is the **governance and political situation** in the local government, and how might it affect the mainstreaming effort? Are there tensions or conflicts over natural resources? Is there freedom of the press? Do the poorest have a voice?
- Are the policy- and decision-making **processes effective and transparent**? Are there accountability mechanisms? What is the quality of the legislative and judicial systems? How is the rule of law enforced? How is corruption controlled?

COMPONENTS IN GOVERNMENTAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS



The diagram presents the specifics of the three contexts and also points of convergence among them.

WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS FOR ASSESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS?

Livelihood and Health

- What is the size of the resident **population depending for their livelihoods on natural resources and ecosystem services**? How many employment or informal income earning opportunities do natural resource sectors (e.g. forestry and fisheries) and other productive sectors relying on the environment (e.g. hydropower, agriculture and tourism) provide, particularly to the poorest?
- What are the **direct health and productivity impacts of air, soil and water pollution** and the associated costs of inaction? What needs to be done to reduce these costs? What would be the investments required to undertake action?

Environmental Risks and Climate Change

- Are the **local government's population and economy vulnerable to environmental risks** such as floods, droughts and climate change? What are the effects and costs of environmental hazards (such as floods or pollution) in terms of health, livelihoods and vulnerability?
- How **vulnerable is the local government to the effects of climate change**? Do the local government and resident population have the capacity to adapt to environmental changes that could accompany climate change? What work (if any) has been done to assess potential impacts and adapt to climate change? Does the local government have a disaster risk reduction policy that incorporates climate change concerns?

Economic Development

- How much do the local government's main **natural resource sectors contribute to growth**?
- How do natural resources contribute as inputs into other productive sectors? What percentage do these sectors represent in terms of gross domestic product? Does this take into account informal markets, and how large are these?
- Are local government's growth and **poverty reduction targets at risk from the impacts of persistent and insidious environmental degradation**? This could include, for instance, the long-term decline of crop productivity from soil erosion.

Overall Understanding of the Linkages

- Is there an **explicit understanding of poverty-environment linkages** (such as in terms of food security or access to shelter and clean water) within the local government?

- How do various **demographic groups** (men and women, different age groups, different income-level groups) benefit from, or how are they affected by, these questions and linkages (in terms of their health, resilience, livelihoods, income opportunities, employment?)

COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING SYSTEM

What is CBMS and how does it differ from other poverty-monitoring instruments?

What is CBMS?

- An organized way of collecting information at the local level for use of local government units, national government agencies, non-government organizations, and civil society for planning, program implementation and monitoring.
- A tool for improved governance and greater transparency and accountability in resource allocation.

What are CBMS' five objectives?

- diagnose the extent of poverty at the local level;
- formulate appropriate plans and programs to address problems;
- provide the basis for rational allocation of resources;
- identify eligible beneficiaries for targeted programs; and
- monitor and assess the impact of programs and projects.

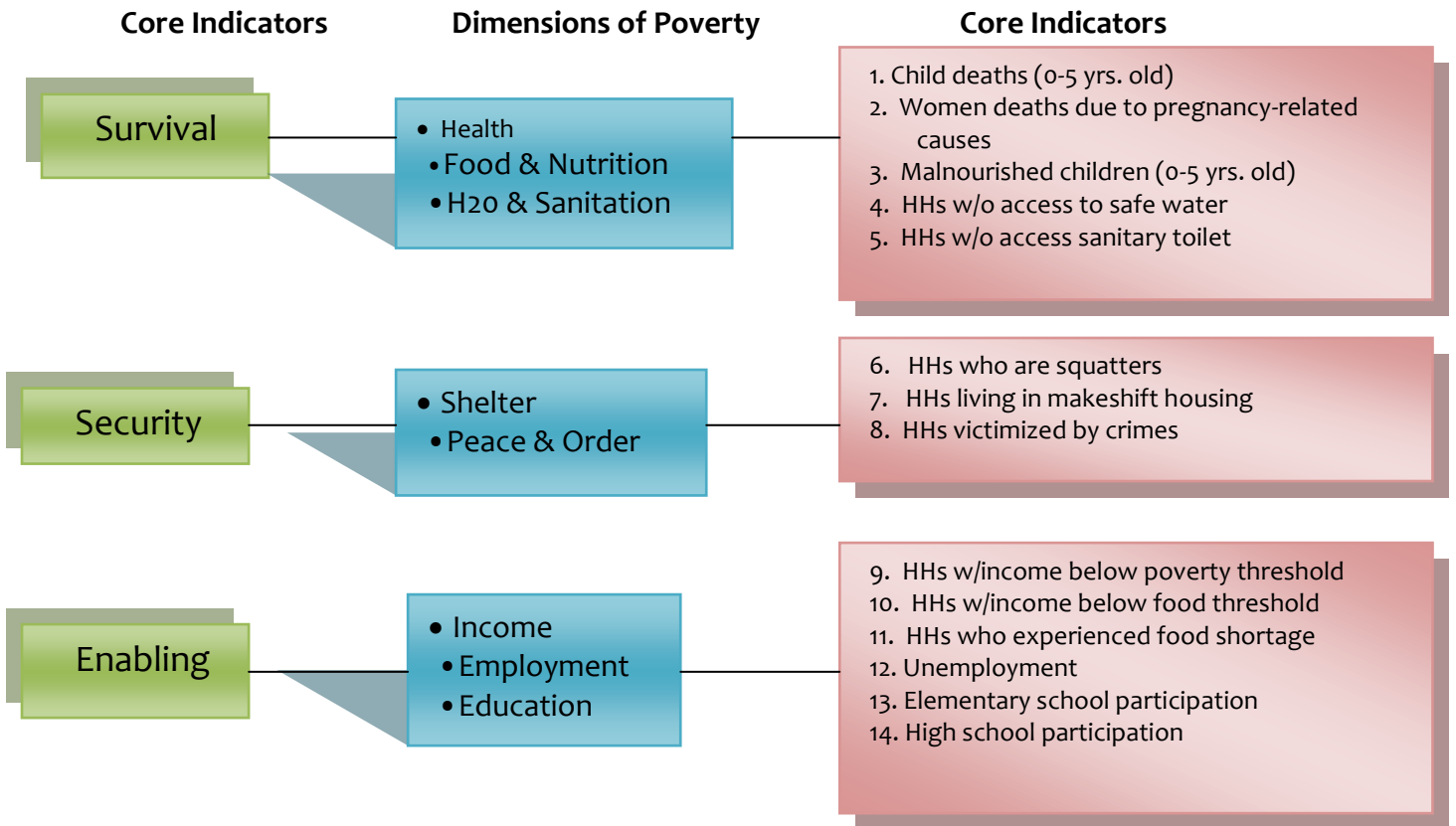
What are the Key Features of CBMS

- Covers all households
- LGU-Based while promoting community participation
- Taps existing LGU/community-personnel as monitors
- Has a core set of indicators but system is flexible enough to accommodate additional indicators
- Uses household and community questionnaires
- Conducted regularly – every 3 years
- Establishes a databank at all geopolitical levels

What data are generated from CBMS?

- Core set of indicators which covers the multidimensional nature of poverty
- Other LGU-specific indicators relating to: *Disabilities, natural calamities, migration, waste management, access to programs, electoral participation, community organization*
- Data can be disaggregated across population subgroups and geo-political levels (by barangay, municipality/city)

CBMS CORE INDICATORS



Points of Reflection

Think about the specific sector you are working directly on, how much does it contribute to the economic growth of your local government unit?

Based on your experience and area of work in your institution, how vulnerable is your area/sector to the impact of climate change? What works have been done to assess the potential impacts to climate change?

Please write your answers on the spaces provided at the end of this module and be ready to share them when the Facilitator/Trainer asks for it.



EXERCISES

1. **Considering your position/area of assignment/represented sector, what data or information do you think are critical to consider in developing projects, programs, activities or measures and policies that would successfully provide a case in mainstreaming poverty-environment linkages in your locality? Please be specific.**

Examples are given below.

Sector/Area: Agriculture

Data/Information: High rate of soil erosion (13 mm/year) that reduces agricultural productivity

Sector/Area: Tourism

Data/Information: Income or savings of nearly 2 million pesos/quarter and contributes nearly 5% of GNP generated from ecotourism and protected areas

Write your answers here:

Please submit a copy of your output of this exercise to the facilitator.



YOUR NOTES:

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, starting below the 'YOUR NOTES:' header and extending to the bottom of the page.