

**SUC-LGU PARTNERSHIP IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION: PROMOTING  
INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN REMOTE BARANGAYSO OF SAN MATEO, ISABELA**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper presents the establishment of partnership of one of the members of State Universities and Colleges (SUC) and one of the Local Government Units (LGU) in the Philippines. The main objective of this paper is to address the issues encountered in offering Diploma in Agricultural Technology (DAT) in an unequipped campus of Isabela State University (ISU) system and to address the request of the LGU-San Mateo to support the vision of the municipality to be the Agro-Ecological City of the Philippines to sustain and improve agriculture in order to make every constituent economically-sufficient. The processes involved in the conceptualization of SUC-LGU Partnership (SLP) Framework for Public Higher Education were also discussed in this paper to sustain the offering of DAT program to the smallest campus of ISU System. The SLP Framework for Public Higher Education is composed of three main players namely: 1) ISU San Mateo campus, 2) Cooperating Agencies and, 3) the LGU-San Mateo. Through collaboration of stakeholders, responsive local leaders of the community, development-oriented administration of the municipal mayor and technical experts from ISU, the DAT program was realized in an unequipped and financially deprived campus. Furthermore, the SLP Framework for Public Higher Education doubled the planned initial target of enrollees and contributed 33.8% increase in the total enrollment for SY 2015-2016 of ISU San Mateo campus. The implementation of SLP Framework for Public Higher Education have clearly shown initial step in attaining inclusive growth by helping unequipped and financially-deprived campus to increase its enrollment and later produce agriculture experts who will help the community to be agriculturally productive to contribute in the total development of the municipality, in particular and to the whole province of Isabela, in general. Lastly, the SLP Framework for Public Higher Education opened doors for future strategic plans to ensure that the issues and challenges will be addressed and shall attain the vision of both SUC and LGU in developing human capability who will be the vital key in the realization of inclusive growth, not only for the municipality but also to national economic growth of the country.

**Keyword:** Inclusive Growth; State University; Local Government Unit; Framework

### **Introduction**

In all Medium Term Development Plan of the Philippines, it is good to note that full attention is given in strengthening agriculture industry in the country. Having rice as staple food of the Filipinos, the Plan continuously aims to generate technology in producing agricultural products, which the government believes will alleviate poverty. As a matter of fact, Medium-Term Agriculture Development Plan is regularly created to address the needs of the country in combatting the challenges of sustaining agriculture industry.

Unfortunately, not all members of the society contribute to the objective or aim of the Plan, hence, until now the latter failed to attain the objective of Medium Term Development Plan 2011-2016 in attaining Competitive and Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries Sector. A number of impoverished people still failed to experience abundant harvest of agricultural products. People in the barangay, especially those who are in rural areas are still experiencing large disparity of income gap for those engaged in agricultural industry compared to those having blue collar jobs or of those in the higher echelon of society. Rich millers and enterprising agents or middlemen earn more than the farmers who are the backbone of agriculture industry. Municipalities in rural areas still need the helping hands from private organizations, higher education institutions, non-government organizations and other government organizations to strengthen their agriculture industry particularly in maximizing the farmers' produce every cropping season.

### ***Inclusive Growth and Agriculture Education***

Inclusive growth is the essence of providing equal opportunity to access and contribute to a stable economy regardless of individual status in the society (Felipe, 2012; Ali & Son, 2007). Several strategic approaches are being applied in attaining inclusive growth. It is a common belief that a revolutionized agriculture industry will uplift the way of living. According to Briones (2013) agriculture, rural employment and inclusive growth interplay with each other. By strengthening agricultural industry, it will increase employment of unskilled labor and keep cost of food affordable. Furthermore, Briones argued that the "development of rural economy is a key factor in achieving inclusive growth", but how will this be achieved? Briones emphasized that the government shall provide support in increasing agricultural production through research and development, irrigation and other infrastructure.

In terms of the value of agricultural education in rural economy, Briones also argued on the impact of educating farmers, the more educated they are, the more it will lead to higher crop yields as in the case of India. Strengthening agricultural education is not a new issue anymore, as a matter of fact, the team of Smith et. al (1988) of Pragma Corporation

conducted a study entitled “Strengthening Tertiary Agricultural Education in the Philippines: Analysis and Recommendations for Designing USAID/MANILA’s Agricultural Education Improvement Project (AEIP). Using the Medium-Term Development Plan (1987-1992) of the Philippines, priority is given to developing agriculture and increasing rural productivity, employment and incomes. The latter also stressed the importance of improving quality and relevant agricultural education. As a result of the scholarly work, Smith’s Team suggested that Unilateral Aid Support to higher education institution with agriculture involvement should be provided, wherein, Isabela State University was cited and included in the plan of the team.

Several medium of instruction were already conducted in agriculture education. The latter is not only being offered in formal school but also in informal school. It is currently being offered “on-air” spearheaded by the University of the Philippines Open University, the pioneer in offering the Open and Distance Learning (ODL). The Farmers’ School of-the-Air in 1952 aired in Iloilo with an initial of 150 students that jumped up to 700 students having Pacifico Sudario as broadcaster/lecturer. The radio program was replicated by University of the Philippines Los Baños, Radio DZLB “Ang Tinig ng Kaunlaran in 1964, an oldest existing rural educational non-commercial broadcasting entity in the Philippines (Flor, 2010).

The same medium was also replicated in Isabela under Agricultural Training Institute Regional Training Center 02 (ATI-RTC 02) as School-on-the-Air (SOA) on palayamanan in Region 2, a collaborative undertaking with the Cagayan Valley Agriculture and Resources Research and Development (CVARRD) Consortium. This informal schooling in agriculture education is growing fast being offered in different provinces of the country to ensure farmers in isolated places specifically in the rural areas.

### ***Agriculture Education in Public Higher Education***

Although farmers can possibly be educated through informal schooling by means of SOA, “hands-on, mind-on approach” is still best achieved in formal education. Theories and technical knowledge taught in formal school are best learnt inside the classroom while hands-on learning and actual implementation are required to be done in the field. However, issues and challenges are being encountered in offering agriculture courses or programs especially in state universities and colleges (SUC), thus it is recommended to establish innovative leadership and institutional reform to strengthen agriculture education. Inter-agency, stakeholders’ alliances and collaborative strategies are being emphasized to keep pace with the accelerated scientific advancement in agriculture (Anquilo-de Asis, 2013).

According to Valdez (2011) both the Higher Education Institutions (HEI’s) and the

Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shared same sentiments in facing major challenges in higher education which includes (1) lack of overall vision, framework and plan for higher education; (2) deteriorating quality higher education; and (3) limited access to higher education. Based on numerical figures of CHED, agriculture is one of the most undersubscribed programs as compared to teacher education, information technology, nursing which are some of the oversubscribed programs of CHED, which shows decline in the quality of higher education from result of licensure examinations and mismatch of employment after graduation, like for example: nurses who became business process outsourcing (BPO) agents, Information and Technology graduates who became cashiers and sales persons or teachers who became domestic helpers.

Despite the fact that the Philippines' major industry is agriculture and strengthening human capital development in agriculture will boost the economy (Ortega-dela Cruz, 2015), the existence of agriculture program offered in higher education institutions is not sufficient to support the economy. Though agricultural program existed in state universities and colleges, the lack of facilities, equipment and required land area are still among the issues and challenges in bringing student in the agricultural field to practice their agricultural technical skills.

### ***The SUC as Public Higher Education***

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is mandated to promote relevant and quality higher education; ensure that quality higher education is accessible to all who seek it particularly those who may not be able to afford it. These are just some of the mandates that a State Universities and Colleges (SUC) member must provide to the community.

Isabela State University (ISU) as a member SUC of CHED also have its own specific mandate wherein ISU shall provide advance instruction in the arts, agriculture and natural sciences as well as in technological and professional fields. In accordance with Presidential Decree Nos. 1434 and 1437, issued on June 10, 1978 by the tenth President of the Republic of the Philippines, His Excellency Ferdinand E. Marcos, Isabela State University was established. It is located in Isabela province in the Cagayan Valley Region (Region II). Isabela is the second largest province of the Philippines in terms of land area, wherein agriculture is the major industry, thus supports the establishment of the agricultural program in the university.

ISU is one among five (5) SUCs in Region II. It is composed of nine (9) campuses plus two (2) extension sites with a total population of 37, 471 students as of June 30, 2015. It is also the base agency of Cagayan Valley Agriculture Resources Research Development

(CVARRD), a Regional Consortium of seventeen (17) member agencies like SUCs, Private HEIs, NGOs and line-agencies. ISU established its name in the field of agriculture having its agriculture experts and scholars.

The university have won five times in the search for “Ugnay Award” for the past 15 years and just recently received the 2015 Tanglaw Award, the Most Outstanding Research Institution in the country due to its research and development in agriculture. It has strong linkages with government agencies such as Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Agricultural Research (DA-BAR), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Bureau of Fish and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) and Department of Science and Technology (DOST) as well as with other international linkage such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and other foreign universities such as Soka University in Tokyo, Japan and Lincoln University in New Zealand as a step towards ASEAN integration and internationalization.

Above all the awards received and external linkages established by ISU, the current budget of the university is still not enough to cover the need to provide quality education in terms of equipment, tracts of land and facilities. Though the university has number of external funding for research in agricultural development, some campuses of ISU is still not properly equipped to provide the minimum required agricultural facilities for agriculture students. Lack of land area for field experimentation and minimum agricultural technical facilities is still experienced by the university. Not to mention the labor cost needed to maintain the farms for field experimentation and additional agricultural experts to educate more students in the field of agriculture. Lastly, additional infrastructure in setting-up classrooms still hinders the offering of agriculture courses in other campuses of the university.

### ***The Local Government Unit***

Good governance is the driving force in promoting inclusive growth in ones own country. Although, ideal plans usually come from the top officials of the country, these plans shall be implemented and materialize to the grassroots level of the society specifically the families, being the smallest component part of the community, through the effective leadership, good governance and implementation of the municipality.

The Local Government Unit (LGU) of San Mateo Isabela is just one among the municipalities pushing to strengthen the agricultural industry in the country. The LGU-San Mateo is an award-winning 1<sup>st</sup> class municipality located in the southwestern part of Isabela,

with a total land area of 12,059.83 hectares and has a current total population of 60,792 having 5 persons per hectare as population density. The municipality has 33 barangays (4 urban and 29 rural areas). LGU-San Mateo is committed to sustain and improve agriculture; make inhabitants economically-sufficient in food; and provide needs that are inclined to make every constituent financially-abundant and live in a well-managed environment.

The municipality's soil-type is 49.89% sta. rita clay loam suited for lowland crops like rice, tobacco and munggo. It is blessed with long mighty Magat river, the biggest tributary of the Cagayan river lies in the vast planes devoted to agriculture in the area. As an addition, it has Tao-tao river and 4 creeks tapped to supply water to elevated positions of agricultural lands through the use of water pumps. The municipality is engaged in crop production such as rice, corn, and munggo as the primary One Town One Product (OTOP) of the municipality; live stock production and fish and aquaculture production. Having fertile lands and abundant agricultural production, the municipality is lucky to have 6 agricultural government offices namely: PhilRice, Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), Bureau of Plant Industry – National Seed Quality Control Services (BPI-NSQCS), Bureau of Fishery and Aquatic Resources (BFAR), National Irrigation Administration (NIA) and National Food Authority (NFA).

Through the effective leadership and dynamic partnership of Honorable Mayor Dr. Crispina R. Agcaoili and Honorable Vice-Mayor Roberto C. Agcaoili, a former mayor of the municipality, numerous awards are received by the municipality. To name a few, LGU-San Mateo received the award of 2015 Seal of Good Local Governance conferred by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) for providing exemplary performance in providing better services to the people of the community. Excellence Award in Disaster Management “Gawad Kalasag”, Outstanding Ecological Solid Waste Management Municipality, Most Outstanding Governance in the Philippines, thus proclaimed as the Agro-Ecological Destination in the Cagayan Valley in 2008.

LGU-San Mateo is also a hall of famer awardee of Rice Achiever Award in 2011, 2012 and 2013. As an addition, the municipality awarded as the Champion of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) – International Level, recognizing the innovative initiatives in MDG achievement in 2012. The municipality was also recognized as the Munggo Capital of the Philippines through the Administrative Order No. 23 series of 2011 by Agricultural Secretary Proceso J. Alcala due to its average yield of 800 kilograms of munggo per hectare from a total of 7,385 hectares devoted to munggo production. LGU-San Mateo became a top producer of quality seeds of munggo in the region which host to seed laboratories catering the whole region. Having all the awards received by the municipality in terms of agricultural and environmental management the municipality now envisioned to be the 1<sup>st</sup> Agro-Ecological City in the Philippines.

Many business entities have already signified their willingness to put up processing plants in San Mateo for the processing of munggo beans into glass noodles and other munggo products but the LGU's annual produce is not sufficient to sustain the needs of these businesses so much so that the LGU is in dire need to increase its munggo production to sustain the needs of those prospective business partners and investors. In attaining this purpose, the LGU needs to predict the expected yield of munggo per cropping through strategic mapping using geographic information system (GIS) to identify the areas suitable for munggo production.

The stated process entails the expertise of ISU agriculturists and agriculture students. Once, the land mass of the LGU will be pinpointed as to the suitability of munggo production, the interplay of the ISU agriculture experts come into action. ISU will educate the people in order to maximize their yield in the areas identified as suitable for munggo production and also to present alternative crops to those areas not suitable for the production of munggo.

The municipality believes that in order to achieve self-sufficiency in agricultural produce and in strengthening agricultural industry, it will need to educate and empower the people of the community in terms of agricultural know-how. Despite the fact that the municipality is fortunate to have a campus of Isabela State University in the area, the latter has no agriculture course due to lack of facilities and equipment, financial resource and required land area for agricultural field experimentation of prospect agriculture students.

### ***SUC-LGU Partnership Framework***

Placing into action the mission of Isabela State University, which is committed to develop highly trained and globally competent professionals for people empowerment and sustainable development, maintain and enhance stronger partnerships under good governance to advance the interests of national and international communities, SUC-LGU Partnership (SLP) Framework was carefully tailored to fit for both entities to strengthen the agriculture industry by educating and empowering the people of the municipality.

Adapting the three critical policy pillars of inclusive growth which include Policy Pillar 1: High, efficient and sustained growth; Policy Pillar 2: Social inclusion to ensure equal access to opportunities; and Policy Pillar 3: Social safety nets to protect the most vulnerable and deprived individuals. This is taken from the Asian Development Bank, Framework of Inclusive Growth Indicators (2011) as shown in Figure 1. These pillars are considered in the conceptualization of SUC-LGU Partnership (SLP) Framework as shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1. Policy Pillar of Inclusive Growth

The first policy pillar was integrated in SLP Framework as end result of the collaborative effort between SUC-LGU and collaborating agencies. These end results are graduates that will return to the local community also referred to rural community to apply the agricultural technical know-how in the farm. The learning gained in appropriate agricultural practices are expected to produce high yield of agriculture production and be self-sustaining member of the community. It is also expected that graduates will practice and transfer the agricultural practices learned from the university to the members of the rural community, which will lead to the creation of productive agriculture job to the community and will open doors to economic growth and opportunity.

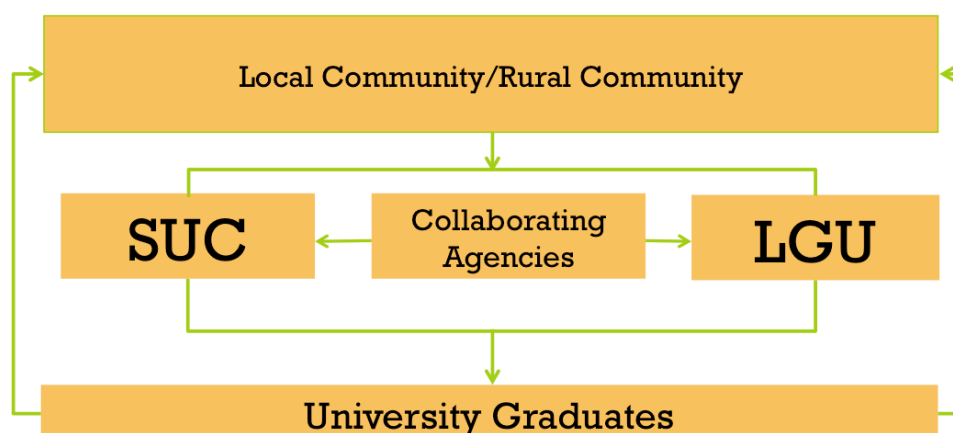


Figure 2. SUC-LGU Partnership (SLP) Framework of Inclusive Growth



Outcomes from local community/rural community will be an input again to SUC-LGU and collaborating agencies to enhance the created approach in educating students to become valuable and knowledgeable farmers of the community.

Based on the definition of inclusive growth made by Felipe et al., each member of the society plays an important role in contributing to the economic growth of the community. The inter-linkages between SUC-LGU and collaborating agencies as well as the outer link between the university graduates and people of the rural community have shown equal opportunity to all members of the society to uplift the growth of the economy by strengthening agricultural industry by the LGU in terms of providing equal access to education and empowerment of the community to participate in the economic growth of the municipality.

Policy pillar 3, social safety nets to protect the chronically impoverished and mitigate the risk of transitory livelihood shocks has been considered in SLP framework using the strong partnership of SUC and LGU. The LGU ensures that all collaborating agencies will work together to reach the poorest member of the society to have equal access to education.

### ***SUC-LGU Partnership Process***

The problems faced by Isabela State University San Mateo campus being one of the State Universities and Colleges (SUC) and the smallest campus among the ISU system in opening an agricultural course for the people and inhabitants of San Mateo and achieving the vision of the Local Government Unit (LGU) of San Mateo Isabela to be the 1<sup>st</sup> Agro-Ecological City in the Philippines has come to its end. The latter submitted a formal request to the university president in the opening of an agricultural course in ISU San Mateo campus and the university academic council under the leadership of the president immediately addressed the request.

ISU San Mateo campus submitted an application to CHED applying for opening of Diploma in Agriculture Technology (DAT) program, unfortunately it was rejected due to non-compliance to the minimum requirements of the campus in offering the said program. Albeit, ISU system can extend the agricultural facilities and faculty experts in agriculture to ISU San Mateo campus, the required agricultural farm, which will serve as experimentation field of student, is hard to comply in a short period of time.

Hence, series of meetings and planning have been conducted to address the problem of ISU San Mateo campus to offer the DAT program. A feasibility study has been created to assess the feasibility of offering DAT program in San Mateo. Issues were raised by the

university in offering the course, this includes (1) agricultural facilities for instruction (land area and agricultural tools and equipment for laboratory); (2) salary/wages for additional faculty, farm-in-charge and farm utility; (3) completion of 2-storey classroom; and (4) the sustainable minimum required number of enrollees for the DAT program. The problem faced by ISU San Mateo campus became an opportunity for LGU San Mateo to educate the farmers.

The problems of ISU San Mateo campus were addressed using the SLP Framework as shown in Figure 3 applying the SLP Framework for Inclusive Growth shown in Figure 2.

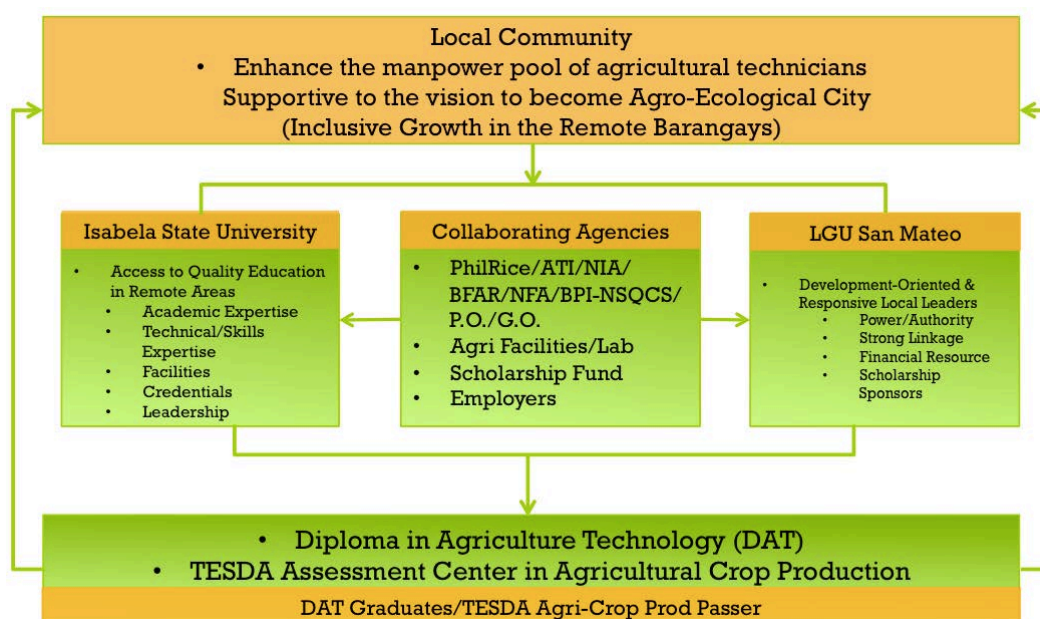


Figure 3. SUC-LGU Partnership (SLP) Framework for ISU San Mateo and LGU San Mateo

As shown in Figure 3, the university has the capability to provide quality education because of its pool of agriculture experts that will provide theoretical knowledge, expertise and technical know-how. It has the required technical facilities to learn the appropriate knowledge. Furthermore, the university has the authority to provide credentials to the graduates needed to be equipped in the agriculture industry. Lastly, the leadership skills in nurturing individual member of the community will help LGU to develop the human resource capability of the municipality.

The contribution of LGU San Mateo as shown in Figure 3 is the attitude of being a development-oriented and responsive leadership that serves as a driving force to address the need of the members of the community to uplift the whole municipality through

strengthening agriculture industry. Access to linkages, financial resources and scholarship sponsor ensures the sustainability of offering of DAT program in ISU San Mateo and later produce agriculture expert which will return to the rural community to help uplift the agriculture industry of the municipality.

Taken from the internal process from Figure 3, Figure 4 depicts the actual process undertaken for opening the DAT program. During the stakeholder's consultative meeting, problems of ISU were discussed which include 4 main problems (1) agricultural facilities for instruction (land area and agricultural tools and equipment for laboratory); (2) salary/wages for additional faculty, farm-in-charge and farm utility; (3) completion of 2-storey classroom; and (4) the sustainable minimum required number of enrollees for the DAT program.



Figure 4. Actual Process Undertaken by SUC-LGU  
in Opening DAT Program

To address problem 1, the LGU, being a hall of famer awardee of Rice Achiever Award for three consecutive years, the LGU cash prize was utilized to purchase an agricultural farm, which was shared to the ISU San Mateo campus that will serve as farm experimentation area of the students. Documents are being processed for the agricultural farm to be donated by the LGU to the ISU San Mateo campus. The collaborating agriculture government agencies such as ATI, PhilRice, BPI-NSQCS and BFAR pledged their commitment to support the DAT program of ISU San Mateo campus by opening their agriculture laboratories to faculty and students if the need arises.

Since ISU San Mateo campus is financially incapable in hiring additional agricultural experts to handle agriculture subject, the LGU committed to shoulder the salary of additional faculty, farm-in-charge and farm utility bound in the LGU resolution signed by all municipal board members. The completion of 2-storey building was also financed by the LGU to ensure that all incoming agriculture students will be accommodated to address problem 3.

Lastly, the LGU through a resolution, required all barangay captains to sponsor 2 scholars from each barangay every year to sustain the minimum number of enrollees of DAT program and to enable to comply with the CHED's minimum requirement of enrolled students in the program to have a continuous offering of DAT program. Sixty-six (66) students are expected to enroll per school year, however, due to the need of the agriculture education in the municipality, the enrollment for DAT program exceeded the expected number of DAT enrollees. A total of 159 DAT enrollees were accommodated which lead to scarcity of classrooms. The LGU immediately addressed the problem by converting the multi-purpose gym to 4 temporary classrooms.

After all the collective efforts made by SUC-LGU and collaborating agencies, all problems were individually addressed and the offering of DAT Program was a success. The partnership served as an initial step in the realization of inclusive growth not only in urban areas of the municipality but also to the large number of rural areas of the municipality.

### **Conclusion**

The SUC-LGU Partnership (SLP) Framework served as a guide in building an inclusive growth oriented society. Strong collaborative effort of SUC-LGU establishes the ground to let each member of the community to perform their vital role to contribute in uplifting the agricultural industry of the municipality. Using the SLP-Framework for inclusive growth, both SUC and LGU visualize their current status, required process, stakeholder involvement to address issues and concerns that will be encountered by SUC-LGU. The initial action of the ISU San Mateo campus and LGU San Mateo, Isabela served as a model to make every constituent economically sufficient and self-sustaining member of the society, which leads to the promotion of inclusive growth from the municipality down to each member of the society.

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