

# A journey to health and wellness

Produced by the Institute for Solidarity in Asia

*Back in 2004, the City of San Fernando La Union (CSFLU) was chosen as one of the pilot dream cities for the Performance Governance System (PGS). It was then envisioned to be the Botanical City of the North and the Premiere Capital City of Ilocandia. However, after revisiting its vision in 2013, it has positioned itself to become “Northern Luzon’s Center for Health and Wellness by 2020”.*

## Mapping the route ahead

Upon reflecting on their strength compared to others, CSFLU realized that it is the home of the most advanced educational and medical institutions in the North: St. Louis College San Fernando La Union (SLC-SFLU), one of the prestigious schools for higher education in the region, Lorma Medical Center, which has provided excellent healthcare services since 1934, and Bethany Hospital Incorporated, which has given quality tertiary medical and surgical hospital services for 90 years. Thus, it would be best to test the waters in developing CSFLU as the hub of health and wellness. No other city in Northern Luzon is in pursuit of such a vision – and this placed CSFLU in a unique position of creating the best conditions to attract health and wellness related enterprises, as its strategy for local economic development.

Following the Six Dimensions of Wellness Model by Dr. Bill Hettler, co-founder of the United States National Wellness Institute (NWI), CSFLU has embarked on a voyage to Health and Wellness in its various scopes: Occupational, Physical, Social, Intellectual, Spiritual, and Emotional. To achieve this, the City Government of San Fernando La Union (CGSFLU) focused on two: (1) the provision of health and wellness services and programs that go beyond the basic needs provided by other cities and municipalities in Northern Luzon, and (2) the provision of a well-planned environment and infrastructure to attract health and wellness enterprises to come into the City and to facilitate the growth of the business sector of the City. The

investments and expenditures generated by these businesses will also directly affect the local citizenry and will increase the revenues for the City, leading to more funds for programs that cater to the needs of its residents.

## Plotting the target destinations

In pursuit of its vision of becoming Northern Luzon’s Center for Health and Wellness by 2020, CGSFLU has pledged to achieve two breakthrough goals which embody the socio-economic thrust of its strategy: (1) to institutionalize a culture of Health and Wellness among CSFLU residents, and (2) to position the city as the ideal location for Health and Wellness enterprises through its Investments Incentives Code. Under each goal, three strategic initiatives are put in place.

Ever since Mayor Pablo C. Ortega’s first term, he has already emphasized the importance of the barangay as his starting point in pursuing good governance. As a result, both breakthroughs use the barangay level as the primary unit of measurement for progress.

## Choosing the right starting point

The performance indicator set by the CGSFLU for the first breakthrough is the number of barangays that will become Model Health and Wellness Barangays. To qualify for this, the following criteria have to be met: (1) E-HSAS certification, (2) a positive net from each of the barangay’s respective Income Generating Projects (IGPs), (3) an upgraded H&W



A Barangay Health and Wellness Personnel conducts a seminar with some residents

Clinic in terms of infrastructure, medical supplies and equipment, (4) capable Barangay Health and Wellness Volunteers (BHWVs) that passed skills upgrade trainings, and (5) personnel meeting the 1:20 household ratio and is a beneficiary of the expanded City Health Office (CHO) visitation schedule.

The Extending High Standards to Schools (E-HSAS) Certified Barangay Program ensures that all 59 barangays in CSFLU comply with the International Standards Organization-Environment Management System (ISO-EMS) and the Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Specification (OHSAS). Adhering to these international standards will guarantee that proper management of programs on environment, health, and safety is in practice. The City Government also established City and Barangay ISO Pollution Control Officers (PCOs), Safety Officers (SOs), and Committees (Atmosphere, Chemical, Energy, Water, and Waste) so that monitoring and guidance in these areas will remain in place.

On the other hand, the IGP sa Barangay Program was formulated as a means for the 59 barangays

to develop local products and services depending on the natural, human, and other resources that are abundant and available to the barangay. The City provides financial assistance for these programs and the IGP of the 59 barangays were determined during the Barangay Development Strategy (BDS) meetings, in which individual business plans per barangay were created. The City provides marketing and promotion opportunities, capability building activities, trainings and other essential interventions in partnership with national government agencies (NGAs) to develop, enhance, and ensure the successful implementation of the different IGPs. The City will also assess the impact of these programs not just to the barangays but more importantly to the families, particularly those unemployed and impoverished – those that undergo the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) to assist them towards social and occupational wellness.

For instance, families that are participants of the 4Ps undergo free services such as marriage consultation, the Responsible Parenthood Program, and the Mass Wedding Program. They are also given Prenatal Consultations, Immunization Programs,

Birthing Assistance Programs, Registration of Live Births, Family Planning Programs, especially the expectant mothers, which are assisted from pregnancy to delivery.

Meanwhile, the Health and Wellness Facilities Upgrade Program takes a holistic approach when it comes to infrastructure support, medical supplies and equipment management, operations and management of Health and Wellness facilities. To convert the CHO Lying-in Clinics and Barangay Health Stations to a more equipped, efficient, and operational Health and Wellness Center (HWC), Barangay Health and Wellness Clinics (BHWC), and Barangay Health and Wellness Stations (BHWS), the following needs were identified: the skills upgrade of barangay health and wellness volunteers, an incentive scheme program, and the recruitment of additional manpower.

In terms of upgrading the skills of the BHWVs, they undergo trainings on First Aid, Basic Life Support (BLS), and the Healthy Lifestyle Program (HLP). Additional monthly honorarium are also given to acknowledge the hard work, commitment and dedication of the BHWVs in rendering primary health care services in the barangays. Health and wellness summits are to be conducted and shall be institutionalized to convene the BHWVs to focus and integrate the health and wellness efforts in the barangays. An expanded personnel schedule and staffing pattern have been developed and implemented to ensure wider coverage of health care providers. Other health and wellness activities conducted by the City include medical consultations, physical activities, and Clean and Green Programs.

### **Locating areas for repair**

To date, the city has only one Model Health and Wellness Barangay – Barangay Bangbangolan. Some issues encountered in achieving this goal include the lack of health volunteers. A total of 520 health volunteers cater to 120,647 residents. Residents comprise 27,901 households in the City, which require additional 1,252 BHWVs to make all 59 barangays compliant. Approaches currently studied to address this problem are developing a partnership with the Private Sector and Expanding

the Coverage and Duties of the Current Personnel in order to meet the standards.

Another challenge is the upgrading of facilities to balance personnel expansion. This is very important to ensure functionality and effective management of health and wellness facilities in order to deliver quality health care services for the 12 Pilot Model Barangays. However, this cannot be met due to Personnel Services (PS) limitation – no funds are allocated for the hiring of new Health and Wellness personnel within the implementation period.

The success of the IGP aims not only to help the barangay but more importantly, to uplift the lives of the impoverished residents. As of this year, the 12 Pilot Model Barangays have accomplished 44% of their targets at the end of the first quarter of this year. All barangays are E-HSAS certified, and three IGPs have produced a positive net income. Although there is only one full Model Barangay, others are moving and completing the requirements and are on track to meet the target by the end of 2015.

### **Looking at the bigger picture**

Apart from fostering a culture of health and wellness among its people, CSFLU promotes an inclusive and sustainable means for its residents to enrich their lives and to reap the benefits of their work fully. As such, environment preservation programs, procedural reforms, and marketing exposures are done to facilitate the development of the external conditions that affect the citizens. The second breakthrough leans more to the economic aspect of the City Government's vision.

In order to position itself as the ideal location for health and wellness enterprises through its Investments Incentives Code, CSFLU has set three strategic initiatives: the Walk Green, Breathe Clean Program, Let's Go San Fernando, and Business Process Improvement (BPI).

### **Building blocks of growth**

The Walk Green, Breathe Clean Program involves the revitalization of the City Business District (CBD) measured by the CBD area refurbished or enhanced to meet the standards set by the completed master



Mayor Pablo Ortega together with P/Supt. Julius Suriben, city police chief, tries out the view from a newly-installed Police Assistance Box in the Street near a mall in Pagdaraoan, San Fernando last January 2014

plan. This also includes urban planning programs for the city focused on establishing a living and working environment that is conducive to health and wellness for the City's constituents as well as visitors. This is comprised of the Urban Master Plan, and the Drainage and Walkable City Master Plan. Other contributory projects to the program include the establishment of Close Circuit Television (CCTV), traffic signals, drainage construction, sidewalk rehabilitation, the Police Assistance Box in the Streets/Schools (PABS) and the creation of a North Terminal, where an organized loading and unloading system for Public Utility Vehicles (PUVs) shall be established to facilitate decongestion of traffic in the CBD. By 2016, it is expected that the revitalization of its CBD is completed.

A third initiative in achieving the second breakthrough is the Business Process Improvement (BPI). This program is guided by the idea that one of the major functions and responsibilities of an LGU is to promote the general welfare of inhabitants and their respective units in order to accelerate economic development, and upgrade the quality of life of its people. All city units are required to complete the BPI. To ensure that all city work units complete BPI, the measure is the number of City Work Unit Processes revised per BPI and with final draft procedure indicative of the City's efforts to revisit all of its offices' procedures and operations and improve and enhance them. In partnership with Ancilla Enterprise Development Consulting, the City developed and conducted the BPI which resulted to the revision and registration of procedures. With

a firm commitment and dedication to meeting the needs of its people, CSFLU bravely deviated from the typical 42-step process in permitting business operations and simplified it into three easy steps: Agaplikar (to file), Agbayad (to pay), and Alaen (to claim). By 2016, it is envisioned that all City work units' processes will be reviewed and revised due to the results of the conducted FGDs, assessment surveys, customer mapping and walkthroughs, and competency build-up sessions.

### Riding through the bumpy road

For the Walk Green, Breathe Clean initiative, an engagement with third-party experts has been done and it is expected that this will be completed and implemented in time to meet the 2015 target of having 50% of the CBD revitalized.

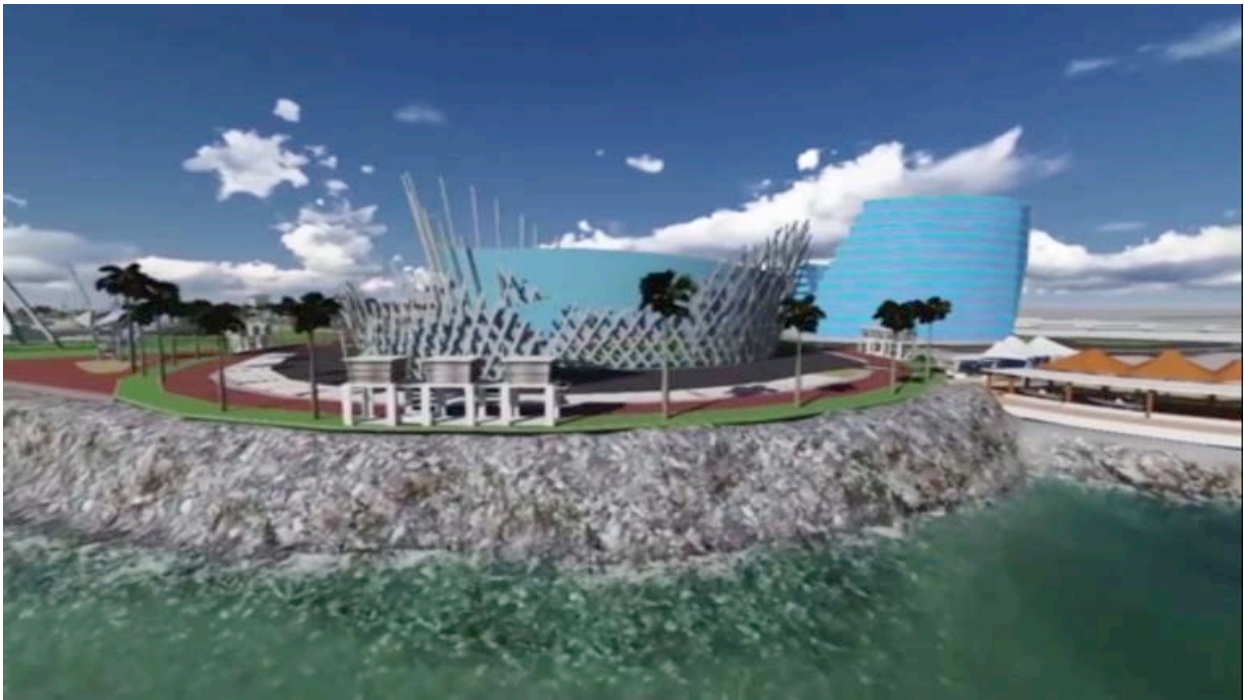
Recent achievements for these objectives are on track with all 23 processes targeted in 2014 were completed, while 15 of the 29 targeted for 2015 has already been accomplished. Another achievement by the City is the revisions to the Public Assistance Complaints and Feedback Management Control

Procedure (PACU) –which is dedicated to handle customer feedback.

Other prospects for improving the lives of its citizens include the creation of the Friendship Bay Center, and the implementation of programs that yield to Social Development, Environmental Management, Local Economic Development, Infrastructure Development, and Governance. For Social Development, the City ensures the continuity of the Maternal/Child Health and Healthy Lifestyle Program and the Upgrade of Health Facilities. On the other hand, Environmental Management places a special focus to Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) & Safety Trainings, Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Plant for City Hall, Environmental Infrastructure and Equipment Support. When it comes to Local Economic Development, steps are taken towards the Improvement of Existing Economic Enterprise (Market), Establishment of New Economic Enterprises (Terminal and Pasalubong Center), and the Establishment of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for the Implementation of IGP sa Barangay. For Infrastructure Development, plans have been taken in building Green Buildings or the use of Power Efficient Equipment and Fixtures. Lastly, in



Mayor Pablo Ortega inspects an organic chicken, one of the income generating products at the Let's Go Negosyo Expo



The proposed Friendship Bay Center featuring a Performing Arts Theater and Hotel

its efforts to strengthen good governance, the City Government is pushing for the Wide Area Network Phase II (Barangays and Off-Site City Offices), and eGovernance (Efficiency, Urban Development & Management, and Service).

### **Finding their way to distant lands**

From its initiation in 2005 to its compliance in 2006, CSFLU has persevered and has successfully completed the Proficiency stage during the October 30, 2013 Revalida. It has become part of the Islands of Good Governance (IGG), in which it has pledged to present the 12 Model Barangays to the APEC Summit this coming November. More recently, CSFLU is now one of the three local government units that have been bestowed the Institutionalization status during the Public Revalida held last May 4, 2015. The City has been in a tough yet rewarding journey in the past few years and will continue to do so as they strive to reach the Hall of Fame stage.

As Mayor Ortega said in his Statement of the City Address 2015, “It is our role to reach out even beyond our city boundaries to share our ideals and successes in delivering expanded public services.” The City has been hailed as the center of the Metro La Union Development Coordinating

Council (MLUDCC), mainly in-charge of governance and policy development area. A memorandum of agreement has been signed by CSFLU with neighboring municipalities such as San Juan, San Gabriel, Bacnotan, Bauang, and Naguilian. Entering into this agreement means that CSFLU plays a vital role in delivering health and wellness services to all these municipalities, as well as transferring its good governance mechanisms.

Indeed, CSFLU has traveled far and hard, and the vast lands are very much welcoming as they are on their way to sharing the best practices they have in minimizing, if not fully eradicating, poverty, to other local government units. Despite the difficulties encountered in the journey, CSFLU has continued to walk and will continue to walk on, no matter how steep and hard the road to health and wellness is.

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