

MASARIG NA IRIGUEÑO (IRIGA CITY RESILIENCY AND RECOVERY PROGRAM)



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
4. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

**RESILIENCE, WELL-BEING, IDENTITY, HERITAGE,
TRADITION, EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH, CULTURAL RIGHTS,
NATURE, COVID**



1. Iriga and culture

Iriga is a 4th class city in the province of Camarines Sur, Bicol Region, Philippines, also known as the “Conscience of Bicol” and “the City of Springs”. It is about 478 km south of Manila, it has a total area of 16,712.56 hectares, and a total population of 114,757, spread over the 36 barangays.

Bicol Region is an extended peninsula oriented towards the Pacific Ocean and the internal seas of the central islands of the Philippine archipelago. The position of Iriga City approximately at the centre of the Bicol Peninsula, where the Bicol cultural, economic, and political facets are concentrated, is relevant to understanding the City’s endeavours in defining, cultivating, and projecting its identity.

Cultural Heritage is central to protecting Iriga City’s sense of identity that distinguishes it from others through its unique dialect, dances, practices, and food. Preservation and safeguarding the sustainability of these intangible properties is of utmost priority as the city strives to be a culture and arts haven of the country. Food has been a part of the City’s culture, from organically-produced vegetables to spicy-flavoured viands, which Bicol Region is well-known for. But, Covid-19 came unexpectedly and hit the cultural life of communities.

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2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, Iriga City has launched the Iriga City Resiliency and Recovery Program, composed of innovative initiatives aimed to address the adverse impact of Covid-19, at the same time, promoting cultural rights



and resiliency of Irigueños. Among the measures under the Program, the “Vegetable on Wheels” and “e-Tinagbakal” were launched and implemented which produced a greater impact on the lives of the people, including their cultural needs. Specifically, these were aimed at creating and sustaining livelihoods of local farmers and local MSMEs, and in turn helping in the economic recovery efforts of the City.

2.2. Project development

The “Vegetables on Wheels” aimed to assist farmers, including cultural groups, to earn and maintain their livelihood by selling produce to households during the community lockdown. The concept came up due to the need to strictly observe the Community Quarantine where residents are prohibited from going out of their homes. Trucks loaded with fresh vegetables, rice, and fruits, among others, served as mobile stores that visited 36 communities of the city. The city bought the vegetables directly from the farmers and were sold at a low price to ease the plight of poor households. On the other hand, vegetable seeds were distributed for free to the households to encourage and enjoin them in adopting backyard organic gardening, one advocacy of the City Mayor, for food bounty and sustainability. There were about 500 local farmers who benefited from these initiatives.

Another initiative is the e-Tinagbakal, an online cultural event that showcases and helps market products made by local businesses, including cultural groups, in the city. Members of the city’s indigenous peoples and their agricultural produce were featured, as well as the products of local MSMEs. Tinagba Festival, celebrated every February 11th, is a reenactment of an old pagan ritual of offering the best produce of the land through parades of colourful costumes and floats, dances, and mass offering of agricultural harvests. But because of the pandemic, large social gatherings were prohibited, thus, the need for alternative ways of celebrating the festival that formed the e-Tinagbakal concept.

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3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

With the Iriga City Resiliency and Recovery Program, the City, through the “Vegetables on Wheels”, has achieved the Sustainable Development Goal of attaining food security during the community lockdown by ensuring safe access to food supply, improved nutrition, and promoted sustainable agriculture, at the same time, emphasizing cultural rights and resiliency of Irigueños. The city made it possible for its 20,000 households to have fresh vegetables while under community quarantine.

Initiatives on livelihood and agriculture, such as the e-Tinagbakal, have also contributed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and productive employment. It provided an opportunity for the local businesses, including cultural groups and organisations in the city, to showcase and help market their quality products and produce. These initiatives shared the hopes and support of the city government for local economic development and growth despite the dark times brought about by the pandemic.

THE CITY HAS ACHIEVED THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL OF ATTAINING FOOD SECURITY DURING THE COMMUNITY LOCKDOWN AND AT THE SAME TIME, EMPHASIZING CULTURAL RIGHTS AND RESILIENCY OF IRIGUEÑOS.



3.2. Assessment

The distribution of vegetable seedlings as a component of the “Vegetable on Wheels” initiative was monitored and evaluated on a household basis. Personnel from the City Agriculture Office visited these households to oversee if indeed the vegetable seedlings have grown and produced harvests. They also provide assistance in its cultivation and maintenance, if necessary. Photographs were taken and documentations prepared in relation to such an initiative.

3.3. Key factors

The essence of ownership, co-ownership and co-creation became the foundation of the initiatives’ success.

The City Mayor, Madelaine Y. Alfelor, effectively and efficiently led and joined the different offices of the local government unit and stakeholders. She was direct and firsthand in the entire process of the Iriga City Resiliency and Recovery Program, from planning, policy-making, implementation, and monitoring.

The implementation of the community quarantine and restrictions on the movement of people was also seen as an opportunity for the formulation of an innovative way of bringing healthy food directly to the households.

The persons, groups, and stakeholders (including the indigenous/cultural communities) involved each played an important role in the program’s and initiatives’ success. They have strong partnerships and collaborative efforts towards achieving the goal of better change– to the new normal.

3.4. Continuity

To ensure continuity, the initiatives under the Iriga City Resiliency and Recovery Program were already incorporated in the City Development Plan, the City’s Tourism Development Plan, in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) and other developmental plans of the City. It is also founded on the City’s vision of becoming a “culture and arts haven of the country”, and “agro-ecotourism hub in the Bicol Region”. It shows the commitment of the city to sustain culture heritage and promote cultural rights by assisting cultural groups during and even after the Covid-19 crisis.

4. Further information

Iriga was a candidate for the fifth "UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21" International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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