

# Unveiling Civil Society Organizations' Engagement and Responsiveness in Local Development Planning: A Descriptive Quantitative Design

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## Abstract

The research investigated Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) engagement and responsiveness in local development planning across two districts in Negros Island Region, Philippines. Guided by Bolleyer's *Multidimensional Framework on Civil Society's Contributions to Democracy*, Fung and Wright's *Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG)* model, and Putnam's *Social Capital Theory*, the research situates CSO participation within institutional, organizational, and relational dimensions of democratic governance. A descriptive quantitative design was utilized, with data collected from seventy (70) respondents through a validated researcher-made questionnaire. Independent variables included age, sex, and years of CSO involvement. Findings revealed that most respondents were younger, male, and had shorter years of involvement. Engagement was consistently rated High across all phases of local development planning -situational analysis, goal and objective setting, investment programming, and monitoring and evaluation - while responsiveness was likewise rated High, underscoring CSOs' adaptability and sustained commitment. No significant differences were observed in engagement across demographic groups, though responsiveness varied significantly by sex. Results confirmed a strong positive relationship between engagement and responsiveness, indicating that active participation enhances the quality of CSO responses to community needs. Taken together, findings highlight the growing influence of younger CSO leaders, the importance of gender-sensitive strategies, and the necessity of institutionalized participatory mechanisms. By integrating EPG, Bolleyer's multidimensional lens, and Social Capital Theory, the study demonstrates that CSO engagement and responsiveness are mutually reinforcing, making them central to inclusive, accountable, and community-driven local development planning in the Philippine context and relevant to broader discourses on democratic deepening worldwide.

**Keywords:** *Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Local Development Planning, Engagement, Responsiveness, Participatory Governance, Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG), Multidimensional Framework on Civil Society, Descriptive quantitative design*



## I. INTRODUCTION

### Nature of the Problem

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Philippines are formally recognized as indispensable partners in local development planning. They are expected to amplify grassroots voices, advocate for inclusivity, and strengthen accountability in governance (DILG MC 2013-70; People in Need Philippines, 2021). However, despite these frameworks, their participation often falls short of being genuinely meaningful. Many CSOs encounter barriers such as limited access to planning documents, unfamiliarity with technical language, and lack of orientation on planning protocols. These constraints reduce their contributions to symbolic gestures rather than substantive influence, weakening their role as co-creators of development priorities (Manasan, 2015).

Resource limitations and uneven organizational capacity further compound the problem. Smaller CSOs, often closest to marginalized communities, struggle with inadequate funding, limited training, and weak institutional support. Political resistance also persists, where local officials may perceive CSO involvement as a challenge rather than a partnership. As a result, engagement becomes fragmented, and responsiveness to community needs is diluted. This disconnect erodes trust between citizens and government, leaving development priorities vulnerable to being shaped by administrative convenience rather than genuine community aspirations (Pasamonte, 2024).

Globally, CSOs are recognized as drivers of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, and SDG 17 on partnerships for sustainable development (United Nations, 2016; WHO, 2021). In the Philippine context, *AmBisyon Natin 2040* underscores CSOs as vital bridges between communities and government, promoting participatory governance and accountability (NEDA, 2016; Asian Development Bank, 2019). Yet, the reality on the ground reveals a gap between policy recognition and practical implementation. While CSOs are present in local special bodies and planning councils, their ability to influence decisions and ensure accountability remains inconsistent (Manila Bulletin, 2021).

This study confronts the pressing issue of whether CSOs in Central Philippines are genuinely empowered to engage and respond within local development planning. It seeks to uncover whether their participation is substantive or merely procedural, and whether responsiveness to community needs is strengthened or weakened by existing governance structures. The problem lies not only in measuring levels of engagement and responsiveness but in understanding their relationship.

### Current State of Knowledge

A thorough understanding of Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) role in the Philippines goes beyond their formal recognition in governance structures. It encompasses their ability to meaningfully engage in local development planning and to remain responsive to the evolving



needs of communities. CSOs are expected to amplify grassroots voices, advocate for inclusivity, and strengthen accountability in governance (DILG MC 2013-70; People in Need Philippines, 2021). Their participation is seen as vital in ensuring that development priorities are not merely administrative but grounded in lived community experiences.

However, existing literature highlights persistent challenges. Many CSOs face barriers such as limited access to planning documents, unfamiliarity with technical language, and lack of orientation on planning protocols. These constraints often reduce their participation to symbolic gestures rather than substantive contributions (Manasan, 2015). Resource limitations, uneven organizational capacity, and political resistance further weaken their responsiveness, undermining their potential to transform governance into a shared responsibility (Pasamonte, 2024).

In the Philippine setting, current knowledge points to a tension between aspiration and reality. While CSOs are envisioned as co-creators of inclusive development, their actual participation is often constrained by structural, political, and resource-related challenges. This study builds on existing scholarship by examining whether CSOs in Central Philippines are genuinely empowered to engage and respond in local development planning, and whether their participation is substantive or merely procedural.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This study rests on three interconnected theories that together explain how Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) engage and respond in local development planning: Bolleyer's Multidimensional Framework on Civil Society's Contributions to Democracy (2024), Fung and Wright's Empowered Participatory Governance (EPG) model (2003), and Putnam's Social Capital Theory (1993).

Bolleyer's framework reminds us that CSOs cannot simply be present in governance—they must practice democracy within their own structures, represent diverse community interests, and remain responsive to changing social realities. Intra-organizational participation ensures that their advocacy carries legitimacy, interest representation amplifies marginalized voices, and societal responsiveness keeps their work relevant. This lens highlights that engagement is not just about attending meetings but about ensuring that CSOs' contributions are credible, inclusive, and adaptive.

The EPG model deepens this perspective by showing how democracy thrives when ordinary citizens and organized groups are directly involved in shaping decisions. It emphasizes three principles: participation, deliberation, and institutionalization. Participation means CSOs actively engage in problem-solving; deliberation ensures decisions are reached through open and reasoned discussion; and institutionalization embeds these practices into formal governance structures. In short, EPG insists that CSO involvement must move beyond tokenism—it must be woven into the very fabric of decision-making.



Finally, Putnam's Social Capital Theory highlights the relational side of engagement. It explains how trust, networks, and reciprocity built through civic participation strengthen democratic institutions. For CSOs, this means that the more they engage, the more responsive they become. Trust fosters collaboration, networks amplify community voices, and reciprocity sustains cooperation with local governments. In the Philippine context, this theory is especially relevant to Local Development Councils, where CSOs embedded in communities can quickly respond to pressing issues such as disaster resilience, youth participation, or livelihood concerns.

Taken together, these theories provide a holistic foundation for this study. Bolleyer shows us the organizational and representational dimensions of CSO work, Fung and Wright emphasize the institutional embedding of participatory practices, and Putnam explains the relational dynamics that sustain responsiveness. Together, they reveal that engagement and responsiveness are not separate - they reinforce each other. When CSOs are empowered to participate meaningfully, practice internal democracy, and build trust with communities, they become more responsive to local needs. This synergy is what makes local development planning truly inclusive, accountable, and community-driven.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to determine the level of CSOs' engagement and responsiveness in local development planning in the two districts in Negros Island Region, Philippines during the calendar year 2025. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions: What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex and number of years of CSO involvement? What is the level of CSOs' engagement in local development planning in the following areas: Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase, Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase, Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase, and Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase? What is the level of CSOs' responsiveness in local development planning in the aforementioned areas? Is there a significant difference in the level of CSOs' engagement in local development planning when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables? Is there a significant difference in the level of CSOs' responsiveness in local development planning when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables? Is there a significant relationship between the levels of CSOs' engagement and responsiveness in local development planning?

## **II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section presents the study's methodology, including the research design, the study's locale, respondents, data gathering instrument, data gathering procedure, validity and reliability of the research instrument, analytical schemes, and statistical tools.

### **Research Design**

This study used a descriptive research design to determine the levels of CSOs' engagement and responsiveness in local development planning in the two districts in Central Philippines for CY 2025. The descriptive study design is a methodological approach that focuses on systematically observing, characterizing, and recording traits, behaviors, or circumstances of a population or phenomenon without manipulating variables. Its primary aim is to provide a comprehensive and accurate snapshot of the subject under study by identifying patterns, frequencies, trends, and relationships within the data (Scribbr, 2023).

### Study Respondents

The study's respondents were seventy (70) individuals directly involved in local development planning within two districts of the Negros Island Region. A purposive sampling technique was employed, as the research required participants with specific roles and expertise in the planning process. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is a non-probability method where the researcher deliberately chooses individuals who are most relevant to the objectives of the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This approach ensures that the sample reflects the perspectives of stakeholders who play critical roles in local governance and civil society engagement.

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Respondents*

LGU	Population (N)	Percentage (%)
1	7	10
2	7	10
3	7	10
4	7	10
5	7	10
6	7	10
7	7	10
8	7	10
9	7	10
10	7	10
Total	70	100

### Instrument



The researcher employed a self-made questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument, carefully designed to capture the perspectives of respondents with precision and reliability. This tool was structured into three (3) major parts: (1) the profile of respondents, which provided essential demographic and professional background; (2) a survey on CSO engagement across the four phases of local development planning - Pre-planning, Planning, Plan Implementation, and Monitoring & Evaluation; and (3) a survey on CSO responsiveness within the same phases. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of four items to gather the member's demographic information according to the data needed, such as age, sex, highest educational attainment, and number of years of CSO Involvement. The name of the respondent is optional to maintain their confidentiality and privacy. Part II and III consisted of a survey instrument on CSOs' engagement and responsiveness. There were 11 items concentrated on assessing the level of CSOs' engagement and responsiveness using a five-point scale: 5 as the highest and 1 as the lowest.

The research instrument underwent validation, during which five experts were asked for their opinions on whether the device measures the intended concept. The validators were professionals known to be competent and experts in their field of specialization. Validation followed the criteria of Good and Scates, with interpretation ranges from Poor to Excellent. The instrument obtained a validation mean of 4.80, interpreted as Excellent, indicating high validity.

The reliability index for the level of CSOs' engagement in local development planning is 0.970, interpreted as "Excellent," while the reliability index for the level of CSOs' responsiveness in local development planning is 0.968, also interpreted as "Excellent." These results indicate that the instrument is highly reliable.

### **Data Gathering and Procedure**

After administering the validity and reliability tests, and upon approval of the DILG Regional Director and the LCEs concerned, the questionnaires were administered to the target respondents. The questionnaires were gathered, recorded, and analyzed. The data gathered from the responses of the respondents were tallied and tabulated using the appropriate statistical tools. The encoded data were processed using SPSS.

### **Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment**

Objectives 1 to 4 employed a descriptive analytical scheme, using frequency counts and percentages as statistical tools to assess the profile of respondents, mean to assess the level of CSOs' engagement and responsiveness across the four phases of local development planning. Objectives 5 to 7 utilized a comparative analytical scheme, applying the Mann-Whitney U test to determine significant differences in the levels of CSOs' engagement and responsiveness in local development planning. Lastly, objective 8 used Spearman rho to examine the significant relationship between the levels of CSOs' engagement and responsiveness.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The study strictly observed ethical research standards by ensuring the protection of respondents' rights and welfare throughout the research process. The researcher secured written informed consent from the respondents prior to data collection. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were clearly informed of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. To minimize potential harm, the confidentiality of all responses was guaranteed, and the anonymity of the respondents was maintained during data gathering, analysis, and reporting. Moreover, the study complied with the provisions of Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which mandates the lawful, fair, and secure processing of personal and sensitive information.

### III. RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered to carry out the predetermined objectives of this study.

**Table 2**

*Profile of the Respondents*

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	Younger (below 47 years old)	38	54.3
	Older (47 years old and above)	32	45.7
Sex	Male	42	60.0
	Female	28	40.0
Number of Years CSO Involvement	Shorter (below 6 years)	35	50.0
	Longer (6 years and above)	35	50.0
	Total	70	100.0

As shown in Table 2, thirty-eight CSOs (54.3%) were younger than 47, while thirty-two (45.7%) were aged 47 and above. This near balance between generations is significant, as it allows the study to capture perspectives from both seasoned leaders and younger actors. The older group contributes institutional memory, long-term governance experience, and familiarity with established processes, while the younger group often brings adaptability, innovation, and responsiveness to emerging participatory practices.

Out of the seventy participants, forty-two (60%) were male and twenty-eight (40%) were female. This distribution reflects the continuing trend of men holding leadership positions in



local development planning and CSO participation. At the same time, the significant presence of women ensures that female perspectives are meaningfully represented. Male-led CSOs often emphasize authority and structured leadership, while female-led CSOs tend to highlight inclusivity, collaboration, and community-centered approaches. The participation of both genders enriches the study by preventing a single dominant viewpoint and instead capturing a wider range of insights across gender lines.

The demographic profile of CSOs, balanced across age groups and inclusive of both male and female perspectives, offers a strong basis for examining engagement and responsiveness. The combination of seasoned experience and emerging viewpoints, together with gender diversity, ensures that the study presents a comprehensive picture of participation in local development planning. This diversity reinforces the credibility of the findings and emphasizes the necessity of intervention plans that draw on established practices while remaining adaptable to evolving forms of participation.

Half of the CSOs reported shorter involvement in CSOs (less than 6 years), while the other half indicated longer involvement (6 years and above). This even distribution offers a balanced mix of perspectives. Those with fewer years of experience often bring fresh ideas, openness to new approaches, and adaptability to evolving participatory practices. In contrast, CSOs with longer involvement contribute institutional knowledge, continuity, and a more profound understanding of established processes. The presence of both groups strengthens the study by capturing insights from emerging voices alongside seasoned leaders, resulting in a more comprehensive view of CSO engagement and responsiveness in local development planning.

**Table 3**

*Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase*

<b>Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. CSOs are adequately informed about local development issues before planning begins	4.30	High
2. The LGU provides accessible data and information for CSOs during pre-planning	4.20	High
3. CSOs actively participate in identifying community needs and priorities	4.19	High
4. There are clear mechanisms for CSO consultation in the pre-planning stage	3.96	High

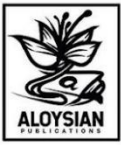


5. CSOs are responsive to invitations for pre-planning activities	4.39	High
6. The LGU values CSO input in situational analysis	4.40	High
7. CSOs have the capacity to analyze local issues effectively	4.11	High
8. Pre-planning sessions encourage inclusive participation from different sectors	4.37	High
9. CSOs are able to articulate community concerns during pre-planning	4.13	High
10. The LGU provides sufficient time for CSOs to prepare inputs	4.20	High
11. CSO engagement in situational analysis contributes to more responsive planning	4.27	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.23</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 3 presents data on the Level of CSO Engagement in Local Development Planning during the Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase, where the overall mean score is 4.23, interpreted as High Level. From the items, Item 6: “The LGU values CSO input”, obtained the highest mean score of 4.40 which indicates High Level. In contrast, Item number 4, “There are clear mechanisms for CSO consultation”, obtained the lowest mean score of 3.90, also interpreted as High Level.

The low score on item 4 is worth noting. While there are channels for dialogue, the rating shows that these are not yet firmly in place or consistently practiced across local governments. In many situations, CSO participation still depends on informal arrangements or the discretion of officials rather than clear, standardized procedures. To make participation more meaningful, these consultation processes need to be strengthened and formally recognized. Doing so will ensure that CSO involvement is regular, transparent, and inclusive. When CSOs and LGUs have clearer ways to engage with one another, trust can grow, participatory planning can improve, and development projects are more likely to reflect community needs and be grounded in solid evidence.

This mirrors the findings of Cañares (2011) in his study “Civil Society Participation in Local Governance in the Philippines: A Study of the Local Special Bodies in Bohol”, where consultation mechanisms were found to exist but were weakly institutionalized, limiting the actual influence of CSOs in decision-making. Both studies highlight the same implication: valuing CSO input is not enough unless consultation mechanisms are clear, consistent, and embedded in governance practice. This reinforces the idea that genuine participation requires



more than recognition—it demands structured processes that guarantee CSOs a meaningful role in shaping decisions. Without these mechanisms, engagement risks becoming tokenistic, undermining both responsiveness and trust. Strengthening consultation frameworks is therefore not only a technical necessity but also a democratic imperative, ensuring that CSOs can move from being passive participants to active partners in local development planning.

**Table 4**

*Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase*

<b>Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. CSOs are given equal opportunity to propose development goals.	4.13	High
2. The LGU facilitates consensus-building among CSOs during planning	4.33	High
3. CSOs are responsive in aligning their sectoral goals with LGU priorities	4.34	High
4. The LGU provides technical guidance to CSOs in formulating objectives	4.26	High
5. CSOs are able to articulate measurable objectives during planning	4.31	High
6. The LGU ensures that CSO goals are documented in planning outputs	4.39	High
7. CSOs are consulted in setting timelines for achieving objectives	4.27	High
8. The LGU encourages CSOs to harmonize goals across sectors	4.43	High
9. CSOs are responsive in providing feedback on draft objectives	4.31	High
10. The LGU values CSO participation in refining development strategies	4.39	High
11. CSO involvement in planning strengthens ownership of	4.37	High



development goals

**Overall Mean**

**4.32**

**High**

Table 4 presents data on the Level of CSO Engagement in Local Development Planning during the Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase, where the overall mean score is 4.32, interpreted as High Level. From the items, Item 8: “The LGU encourages CSOs to harmonize goals across sectors”, obtained the highest mean score of 4.43, interpreted as High Level. On the other hand, item number 1, “CSOs are given equal opportunity to propose development goals”, received the lowest mean score of 4.13, also interpreted as High Level.

The lower mean score in Item 1 implies that although opportunities for CSO participation are recognized, they are not yet consistently realized across local government units. This means that some CSOs may still feel excluded or limited in shaping development priorities. For local governments, the result points to the need for more inclusive and transparent spaces where all CSOs—regardless of size, sector, or influence—can put forward their goals on equal terms. In practice, this could involve setting clearer guidelines for proposal submission, establishing regular consultation platforms, and actively encouraging participation from both well-established and emerging CSOs.

The results of the study of Pasamonte (2024) reinforce this finding. She examined CSOs engagement in planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation and found a moderate level of engagement overall, with planning rated highest but equal opportunity and influence in decision-making weaker. In her study, she also highlighted a discrepancy between policy and practice, where compliance with legal requirements often drives CSO participation rather than genuine inclusivity.

The finding also reinforces the study by Nabatchi & Leighninger (2020) on Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy where they explored how civil society organizations and citizens engage in local governance processes and found that collaboration and harmonization of goals are often promoted by local governments, but equal opportunities proposed priorities remain limited. Thus, participation tends to be shaped by existing institutional structures, meaning that some CSOs have more access and influence than others. In their study, they emphasized the need for formalized, transparent mechanisms to ensure inclusivity and prevent tokenistic participation.

**Table 5**

*Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase*

<b>Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. CSOs are invited to participate in prioritizing investment projects	4.21	High
2. The LGU provides clear guidelines for CSO project proposals	4.34	High
3. CSOs are responsive in submitting proposals aligned with community needs	4.26	High
4. The LGU considers CSO capacity in project implementation	4.07	High
5. CSOs are consulted in resource allocation decisions	3.77	High
6. The LGU provides financial transparency in investment programming	4.20	High
7. CSOs are responsive in collaborating with LGUs during project execution	4.01	High
8. The LGU ensures CSO projects are included in investment plans	4.03	High
9. CSOs are able to monitor resource utilization during implementation	3.96	High
10. The LGU values CSO contributions in project sustainability	4.09	High
11. CSO involvement in investment programming enhances accountability	4.21	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 5 presents the data on the Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase with an overall mean score of 4.11, interpreted as a High Level. From the items, Item number 2: "The LGU provides

clear guidelines for CSO project proposals”, obtained the highest mean score of 4.34, interpreted as High Level. In contrast, Item number 5: “CSOs are consulted in resource allocation decisions”, garnered the lowest mean score of 3.77, also interpreted as High Level.

The lowest mean score points to a continuing concern: CSO participation in budgetary processes remains limited and often takes a secondary role to LGU priorities. Decisions on how resources are allocated are still largely shaped by government discretion rather than shared discussion, showing that participatory fiscal management is not yet fully realized. This underscores the need to strengthen and institutionalize budgeting mechanisms so that CSO input is not treated as a formality but genuinely integrated into fiscal planning. Embedding CSO involvement more firmly in these processes can help create a budgeting system that is inclusive, transparent, and more responsive to community needs.

The study of Sintomer, et al., (2020) affirms these findings, for they believed that while participatory budgeting has spread to thousands of municipalities worldwide, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in resource allocation decisions remains uneven. Government discretion often constrains the influence of civil society organizations (CSOs), rendering their participation more symbolic than substantive.

**Table 6**

*Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase*

<b>Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. CSOs are invited to participate in project monitoring activities	3.94	High
2. The LGU provides training for CSOs on evaluation tools	3.60	High
3. CSOs are responsive in submitting monitoring data	3.94	High
4. The LGU considers CSO feedback in project evaluation reports	3.96	High
5. CSOs are consulted in identifying indicators for project success	3.86	High
6. The LGU provides opportunities for CSOs to present evaluation findings	3.80	High



7. CSOre responsive in validating project outcomes with communities	3.93	High
8. The LGU values CSO participation in accountability mechanisms	4.04	High
9. CSOs are able to recommend improvements based on evaluation results	4.06	High
10. The LGU integrates CSO feedback into future planning cycles	4.00	High
11. CSO involvement in monitoring strengthens transparency in governance	4.14	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 6 presents the data on the Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in in Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase with an overall mean score of 4.11, interpreted as a High Level. From the items, Item number 11: "CSO involvement in monitoring strengthens transparency in governance", obtained the highest mean score of 4.14, interpreted as High Level. On the other hand, Item 2:"The LGU provides training for CSOs on evaluation tools", received the lowest mean score of 3.60, also interpreted as High Level.

The low score shows that CSOs are still not fully involved in monitoring and evaluation. Without proper training, many struggle to use technical tools, which makes it hard to produce reliable evidence, check program results, and hold local governments accountable. This means LGUs need to go beyond short orientations and provide regular, well-structured training. When CSOs learn how to use clear evaluation methods, collect data, and analyze results, they can take part in governance in a more meaningful way. Building these skills ensures their role is not just symbolic but truly effective—helping them measure government performance, spot weaknesses, and suggest improvements based on solid evidence. By investing in capacity-building, LGUs can turn CSOs into strong partners in monitoring and evaluation, which will improve transparency, accountability, and trust in local governance.

The study of Buenaflor (2024) mirrors the result on the highest mean score, as her research emphasized that CSO participation in monitoring enhances accountability and openness in governance. In the lower-rated item, Buenaflor's study similarly found that CSO engagement was "uneven and capacity-constrained," with limited ability to contribute effectively due to lack of training and access to evaluation tools.

Another study by Pasamonte (2024) on "Empowering Grassroots Voices: Engagement of Civil Society Organizations in Philippine Local Governance" also conforms to the results, which found CSO involvement in Philippine local governance promotes transparency and

accountability. Her study emphasized that CSOs play a vital role in promoting inclusive governance, particularly by ensuring accountability and transparency in local government processes. This evidence directly supports your finding that CSO monitoring is highly valued.

**Table 7**

*Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase*

<b>Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. CSOs are adequately informed about local development issues before planning begins	3.46	Moderate
2. The LGU provides accessible data and information for CSOs during pre-planning	4.00	High
3. CSOs actively participate in identifying community needs and priorities	3.67	High
4. There are clear mechanisms for CSO consultation in the pre-planning stage	3.57	High
5. CSOs are responsive to invitations for pre-planning activities	4.07	High
6. The LGU values CSO input in situational analysis	4.09	High
7. CSOs have the capacity to analyze local issues effectively	3.91	High
8. Pre-planning sessions encourage inclusive participation from different sectors	4.20	High
9. CSOs are able to articulate community concerns during pre-planning	4.14	High
10. The LGU provides sufficient time for CSOs to prepare inputs	3.70	High
11. CSO engagement in situational analysis contributes to more responsive planning	4.06	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 7 presents the data on the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase with an overall mean score of 3.90, interpreted as a High Level. Among the items, Item number 8: "Pre-planning sessions encourage inclusive participation from different sectors", obtained the highest mean score of 4.20, interpreted as High Level. Meanwhile, Item 1: "CSOs are adequately informed about local development issues before planning begins", received the lowest mean score of 3.46, also interpreted as Moderate Level.

Even though the score is still considered high, the weaker rating shows that CSOs often don't get enough or timely information before planning starts. Without this, they can't fully prepare, study the issues, or give meaningful input during consultations. If CSOs enter planning sessions without background knowledge, their participation risks becoming more procedural than substantive, which weakens the quality of discussions and limits inclusivity. To address this, LGUs need to strengthen how they share information and communicate with CSOs. This could mean sending briefing materials in advance, holding orientation sessions, or making local development data easier to access before consultations begin.

The research of Bozzini, et al. (2025), conforms these findings. Their research emphasized that while civil society participation is increasingly valued for promoting transparency and inclusivity, responsiveness is often constrained by information gaps, limited preparation time, and weak institutional mechanisms. Bozzini's work at the international level reinforces your local findings by showing that the challenge of responsiveness is not unique to Philippine LGUs but is a broader governance issue.

### Table 8

*Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase*

<b>Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. CSOs are given equal opportunity to propose development goals.	3.91	High
2. The LGU facilitates consensus-building among CSOs during planning	4.07	High
3. CSOs are responsive in aligning their sectoral goals with LGU priorities	4.23	High
4. The LGU provides technical guidance to CSOs in formulating objectives	4.06	High

5. CSOs are able to articulate measurable objectives during planning	4.13	High
6. The LGU ensures that CSO goals are documented in planning outputs	4.17	High
7. CSOs are consulted in setting timelines for achieving objectives	3.96	High
8. The LGU encourages CSOs to harmonize goals across sectors	4.21	High
9. CSOs are responsive in providing feedback on draft objectives	4.16	High
10. The LGU values CSO participation in refining development strategies	4.07	High
11. CSO involvement in planning strengthens ownership of development goals	4.24	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 8 presents the data on the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase with an overall mean score of 4.11, interpreted as a High Level. This suggests that CSOs are not only present but are contributing meaningfully to shaping priorities and directions. From the items, Item number 11: CSO involvement in planning strengthens ownership of development goals", obtained the highest mean score of 4.24, interpreted as High Level. While, Item number 1, "CSOs are given equal opportunity to propose development goals", received the lowest mean score of 3.91, though still interpreted as High Level.

The lower-scored mean suggests that some CSOs may still face barriers in putting forward their own priorities, which can limit the diversity of perspectives shaping local development. When civil society groups don't get a fair chance to speak, the story of local development loses its depth and meaning. Then, participation could become a symbol instead of a real force for change. Local governments need to create real spaces that are fair, open, and welcoming. These spaces should have clear rules for proposals, conversations should be handled with care, and contributions should be accepted with honesty. When CSOs are treated as equal partners, they don't just join in; they feel like they own the process. That sense of ownership builds trust, makes it easier to work together, and makes development a shared journey shaped by the people it is meant to help.

The study of Bezdrob (2019) supports these results. The findings of his study show that while CSOs are present and engaged, their proposals are not always given the same weight as those of other stakeholders, limiting the diversity of perspectives in shaping priorities. This suggests that participation can risk becoming symbolic when opportunities are uneven. Bezdrob concluded that governments must establish clearer procedures and transparent validation of CSO inputs to ensure their contributions genuinely influence development planning. This evidence suggests that local government units need to strengthen mechanisms that guarantee fair and equitable opportunities for CSOs to actively shape local development goals.

**Table 9**

*Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase*

<b>Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. CSOs are invited to participate in prioritizing investment projects	3.96	High
2. The LGU provides clear guidelines for CSO project proposals	4.33	High
3. CSOs are responsive in submitting proposals aligned with community needs	4.21	High
4. The LGU considers CSO capacity in project implementation	4.07	High
5. CSOs are consulted in resource allocation decisions	3.73	High
6. The LGU provides financial transparency in investment programming	4.11	High
7. CSOs are responsive in collaborating with LGUs during project execution	3.97	High
8. The LGU ensures CSO projects are included in investment plans	3.96	High
9. CSOs are able to monitor resource utilization during implementation	3.87	High
10. The LGU values CSO contributions in project sustainability	3.97	High

11. CSO involvement in investment programming enhances accountability	4.06	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>High</b>

This table shows the data on the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase with an overall mean score of 4.04, interpreted as High Level. Among the items, Item 2: "The LGU provides clear guidelines for CSO project proposals", obtained the highest mean score of 4.33, interpreted as High Level. While Item 5: "CSOs are consulted in resource allocation decisions", received the lowest mean score of 3.73, still interpreted as High Level.

Item 5's lower mean score indicates a gap in the engagement of civil society organizations during the setting of financial priorities. While their presence during implementation is evident, their voices in budget discussions remain limited. In practice, the result means local governments should open up resource allocation processes to be more participatory and transparent.

Velasco's (2025) study strongly supports the finding. His research on civil society participation in Philippine local development councils revealed that while CSOs are formally included in planning processes, their role in proposing and shaping goals is often limited. Velasco noted that CSO involvement tends to be procedural or symbolic, with their inputs not always given equal weight compared to government priorities.

### Table 10

*Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase*

#### Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase

Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. CSOs are invited to participate in project monitoring activities	3.66	High
2. The LGU provides training for CSOs on evaluation tools	3.61	High
3. CSOs are responsive in submitting monitoring data	3.71	High
4. The LGU considers CSO feedback in project evaluation reports	3.93	High



5. CSOs are consulted in identifying indicators for project success	3.61	High
6. The LGU provides opportunities for CSOs to present evaluation findings	3.67	High
7. CSOs are responsive in validating project outcomes with communities	3.83	High
8. The LGU values CSO participation in accountability mechanisms	3.84	High
9. CSOs are able to recommend improvements based on evaluation results	3.90	High
10. The LGU integrates CSO feedback into future planning cycles	3.90	High
11. CSO involvement in monitoring strengthens transparency in governance	4.06	High
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>High</b>

This table presents the data on the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase with an overall mean score of 3.79, interpreted as High Level. From the items, Items number 2: "The LGU provides training for CSOs on evaluation tools" and 5: "CSOs are consulted in identifying indicators for project success" garnered the lowest mean score of 3.61, interpreted as High Level. Meanwhile, item number 11: "CSO involvement in monitoring strengthens transparency in governance" obtained the highest mean score, interpreted as High Level. The low scores mean that CSOs are generally very responsive when it comes to monitoring and evaluation, but there are big gaps in training and consultation. For example, CSOs don't get enough help learning how to use evaluation tools and don't have enough say in setting success indicators. This suggests that they are there but not fully empowered when it comes to technical and decision-making issues. This makes them less sure of themselves and less able to make a meaningful contribution. Their participation would be more meaningful if capacity-building were strengthened and real consultation were guaranteed. This would improve transparency, accountability, and the overall quality of local government.

The study of Velasco (2023) on the Participation in Local Development Councils in the Philippines conforms to the finding. Researchers discovered that CSO involvement is often symbolic, with proposals and resource inputs not always receiving equal weight compared to LGU priorities. Similarly, the recent study conducted on participatory governance in Brazil by Donaghy (2023) resonated with the finding. He demonstrated that civil society participation

improves accountability but does not automatically guarantee influence over resource distribution.

### Comparative Analysis on the Level of CSOs' Engagement

**Table 11**

Differences in the Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase According to Variables

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	p- value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	38	34.41	566.5	0.05	0.623	Not Significant
	Older	32	36.80				
Sex	Male	42	35.05	569.0	0.05	0.819	Not Significant
	Female	28	36.18				
Number of Years of CSO Involvement	Shorter	35	36.30	584.5	0.05	0.741	Not Significant
	Longer	35	34.70				

Table 11 shows that there are no significant differences in the level of CSOs' engagement in the situational analysis or pre-planning phase when grouped according to age, sex, or number of years of involvement. Younger CSOs (34.41) and older CSOs (36.80) display nearly similar levels of engagement, with the Mann-Whitney U test confirming the difference is not significant. Likewise, male CSOs (35.05) and female CSOs (36.18) report comparable engagement, again with no significant variation. Finally, those with shorter CSO involvement (36.30) and those with longer involvement (34.70) also show very close mean ranks, indicating that tenure does not substantially affect responsiveness in this phase. Overall, the comparative results suggest that CSO engagement in pre-planning is consistently high and uniform across demographic and experiential variables, implying that inclusivity and participation are broadly shared regardless of age, gender, or length of involvement.

Results suggest that CSO engagement in the pre-planning phase is broadly inclusive, with participation unaffected by demographic factors such as age, gender, or length of involvement. This uniformity indicates that LGUs have successfully fostered participatory spaces where diverse voices are equally valued, ensuring that situational analysis is not dominated by any single group. For governance practice, this means consultation and

capacity-building strategies can be designed collectively rather than tailored to specific subgroups, allowing resources to focus on strengthening overall participation. It also reflects the resilience of CSO networks, where both new and experienced members contribute meaningfully.

Medina-Guce et al's (2025) research on participatory governance closely mirrors your findings, indicating that CSO engagement in the pre-planning phase is inclusive and equitable across demographic lines. Their study found that people participate at similar levels no matter their age, gender, or how long they've been with their organization, indicating that LGUs have created spaces where different opinions are truly appreciated. This convergence affirms the conclusion that situational analysis is not dominated by any particular group and that consultation strategies can be designed collectively rather than tailored to specific subgroups. Medina-Guce further points out that such uniformity reflects the resilience of CSO networks, with both new and seasoned members contributing meaningfully, reinforcing the importance of transparent processes and open dialogue in sustaining equitable participation.

**Table 12**

Differences in the Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase According to Variables

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	P-value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	38	35.63	603.0		0.953	Not Significant
	Older	32	35.34				
Sex	Male	42	35.50	588.0	0.05	1.000	Not Significant
	Female	28	35.50				
Number of Years of CSO Involvement	Shorter	35	35.99	595.5		0.841	Not Significant
	Longer	35	35.01				

Table 12 shows that CSO engagement in setting goals and objectives during the planning phase is strikingly uniform—age, gender, and years of involvement make no real difference. Younger and older members, men and women, newcomers and veterans all report almost identical levels of participation.

The findings imply that CSO engagement in goal and objective setting is broadly inclusive, with participation unaffected by demographic variables such as age, gender, or years of involvement. This consistency indicates that LGUs have established participatory mechanisms that provide equitable opportunities for diverse actors to contribute, thereby preventing dominance by any particular subgroup. From a governance perspective, this suggests that resources can be more effectively directed toward enhancing the overall quality of engagement rather than designing differentiated strategies for specific demographics. The results also reflect the resilience of CSO networks, where both newer and more experienced members are able to participate meaningfully.

The same phenomenon occurred in the study of Medina- Guce et al. (2025) on participatory governance which align closely with these findings, as his study observed that CSO engagement in local planning processes remains consistent across demographic categories such as age, gender, and organizational tenure. They noted that participatory mechanisms established by LGUs create equitable spaces where diverse actors can contribute meaningfully, preventing dominance by any single subgroup. This mirrors the uniformity reflected in the results, affirming that inclusivity is embedded in the process itself rather than dependent on participant background. Medina- Guce et al. further emphasized that such consistency allows resources to be directed toward strengthening collective participation and improving the overall quality of engagement, rather than tailoring strategies to specific demographics, thereby reinforcing the resilience and adaptability of CSO networks.

**Table 13**

Differences in the Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase According to Variables

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	p-value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	38	33.96	549.5	0.05	0.489	Not Significant
	Older	32	37.33				
Sex	Male	42	32.39	457.5	0.05	0.116	Not Significant
	Female	28	40.16				
Number of Years of CSO Involvement	Shorter	35	36.43	580.0	0.05	0.702	Not Significant
	Longer	35	34.57				

Table 13 shows that CSO engagement in the plan implementation phase, specifically investment programming, is steady and inclusive, with no significant differences across age, gender, or years of involvement. Younger and older members, male and female, newcomers and long-time CSOs all report nearly the same level of participation. While female CSOs scored slightly higher than males, the difference was not statistically meaningful, and tenure also made little impact. This means that when it comes to turning plans into action, everyone is on the same footing: the process does not privilege one group over another but instead fosters a shared sense of responsibility.

The results suggest that CSO participation in plan implementation is genuinely inclusive and balanced, meaning LGUs do not need to design separate engagement strategies for different demographic groups. Since age, gender, and years of involvement do not significantly affect participation, resources can be directed toward strengthening the overall process of investment programming rather than tailoring interventions to specific subgroups. The slight but non-significant higher engagement among female CSOs suggests that inclusivity is working well and can be further reinforced by ensuring equal opportunities for leadership roles in implementation.

The study of Nabatchi et al. (2020) on collaborative governance affirms these findings, as their research shows that inclusivity in implementation processes is often maintained across demographic lines, with age, gender, and tenure exerting little influence on participation levels. They observed that when participatory mechanisms are well-designed, they foster a shared sense of responsibility among diverse stakeholders, ensuring that no single group is privileged over another in translating plans into action.

**Table 14**

Differences in the Level of CSOs' Engagement in Local Development Planning in Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase According to Variables

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	p-value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	38	35.24	598.0	0.906	0.906	Not Significant
	Older	32	35.81				
Sex	Male	42	32.83	476.0	0.05	0.178	Not Significant
	Female	28	39.50				
Number of	Shorter	35	35.94	597.0		0.855	Not



Years of CSO Involvement	Longer	35	35.06	Significant
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Table 14 shows that CSO engagement in monitoring and evaluation or the post-planning phase remains steady and inclusive across all variables tested (age, sex, and years of involvement). Younger CSOs (35.24) and older CSOs (35.81) report almost identical levels of participation, confirming that age does not influence responsiveness. Male CSOs (32.83) and female CSOs (39.50) show a slight difference, with women appearing somewhat more engaged. Similarly, CSOs with shorter involvement (35.94) and those with longer involvement (35.06) demonstrate nearly equal mean ranks, suggesting that tenure does not affect participation in monitoring and evaluation activities.

These results reinforce the idea that post-planning engagement is broadly equitable, with no demographic or experiential group showing dominance or exclusion. The slight but non-significant higher scores among female CSOs may hint at a growing confidence or stronger presence of women in monitoring roles, but overall, the data suggests that inclusivity is embedded in the system. Practically, this means LGUs can continue to design monitoring and evaluation mechanisms without needing to differentiate strategies by age, gender, or tenure. Instead, efforts should focus on strengthening collective accountability, transparency, and feedback loops, ensuring that all CSOs—regardless of background—remain equally empowered to assess and influence the outcomes of local development initiatives. This consistency highlights a participatory culture where collaboration in monitoring is a shared responsibility, sustaining trust and reinforcing the legitimacy of local governance processes.

This suggests that CSO engagement in monitoring and evaluation or the post-planning phase is consistently inclusive and equitable, with no significant differences across age, gender, or years of involvement. This uniformity suggests that LGUs have successfully fostered a participatory environment where diverse CSO members, regardless of background or experience, can contribute equally to accountability and assessment processes.

The study of Sintomeo et al. (2020) supports these findings, showing that CSO engagement in monitoring and evaluation during the post-planning phase is consistently inclusive across demographic and experiential groups. Their research found that age, gender, and tenure do not significantly influence participation, reflecting a participatory culture where accountability and assessment are shared responsibilities. Similar to your results, Sintomeo observed that younger and older members, men and women, and both new and long-time CSOs report nearly equal levels of involvement, with women sometimes appearing slightly more engaged though not at a statistically significant level.

### Comparative Analysis on the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness

**Table 15**

Differences in the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Situational Analysis or the Pre-planning Phase According to Variables

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	p- value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	38	33.14	518.5		0.289	Not Significant
	Older	32	38.30				
Sex	Male	42	32.39	457.5	0.05	0.116	Not Significant
	Female	28	40.16				
Number of Years of CSO Involvement	Shorter	35	36.26	586.0		0.754	Not Significant
	Longer	35	34.74				

Table 15 shows that CSO responsiveness in the pre-planning phase (situational analysis) with no significant differences across age, sex, or years of involvement. Younger CSOs obtained a mean rank of 33.14 and older CSOs gained 38.30, which reports nearly similar levels of responsiveness, suggesting that age does not shape how CSOs engage in early planning. Male CSOs (32.39) and female CSOs (40.16) show a slight difference, with women appearing somewhat more responsive, but the result is not statistically significant. Likewise, CSOs with shorter involvement (36.26) and those with longer involvement (34.74) demonstrate almost identical mean ranks, indicating that tenure does not affect their responsiveness in situational analysis.

This implies that CSO responsiveness in the pre-planning phase is genuinely inclusive and balanced, with no significant differences across age, gender, or years of involvement. This means that when CSOs engage in situational analysis, the process does not privilege one group over another—everyone, whether young or old, male or female, new or experienced, is able to contribute at the same level.

The study of Flores et al. (2025), resonates with these findings, showing that CSO responsiveness in the pre-planning phase is broadly inclusive and unaffected by demographic variables such as age, gender, or years of involvement. Their research observed that situational analysis provides equitable opportunities for diverse CSO members to contribute, ensuring no subgroup dominates or is excluded. Similar to these results, Flores et al. found that both newer and more experienced CSOs, as well as male and female, respond at nearly the same level, with only slight but non-significant differences.

**Table 16**

Differences in the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Goal and Objective Setting or the Planning Phase According to Variables

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	p-value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	38	32.78	504.5		0.217	Not Significant
	Older	32	38.73				
Sex	Male	42	31.43	417.0	0.05	0.038	Significant
	Female	28	41.61				
Number of Years of CSO Involvement	Shorter	35	35.99	595.5		0.840	Not Significant
	Longer	35	35.01				

Table 16 provides a very telling insight into CSO responsiveness during the goal and objective setting phase of local development planning. With age, younger CSOs (mean rank 32.78) and older CSOs (38.73) show no significant difference, meaning age does not influence how CSOs engage in shaping goals. With sex, a significant difference emerges. Male CSOs (mean rank 31.43) scored lower compared to female CSOs (41.61), with a p-value of 0.038, indicating that females are statistically more responsive in this phase. With the years of CSO involvement, shorter-tenured CSOs (35.99) and longer-tenured CSOs (35.01) show almost identical responsiveness, with no significant difference.

This implies that when CSOs sit down with LGUs to define the direction of local development, women's voices stand out as particularly strong and engaged. Males, younger and older members, newcomers, and veterans all contribute meaningfully, but females show a statistically higher level of responsiveness. This is a powerful reminder that inclusivity is not just

about equal seats at the table; it's about recognizing the unique energy and commitment different groups bring.

The study of Velasco (2018) resonates with these findings, particularly in emphasizing CSO responsiveness during the goal and objective-setting phase of local development planning. Velasco observed that while responsiveness is generally inclusive across age and tenure, women often demonstrate a stronger presence and higher levels of engagement in shaping priorities. This aligns with the data showing female CSOs as statistically more responsive than their male counterparts, suggesting that women's voices bring distinct energy and commitment to participatory processes. At the same time, Velasco confirmed that younger and older members, as well as newcomers and veterans, contribute meaningfully and at comparable levels, reinforcing the idea that inclusivity is embedded in the system.

**Table 17**

Differences in the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Investment Programming or the Plan Implementation Phase According to Variables

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	P- value	Interpretation
Age	Younger	38	34.93	586.5		0.799	Not Significant
	Older	32	36.17				
Sex	Male	42	31.98	440.0	0.05	0.075	Not Significant
	Female	28	40.79				
Number of Years of CSO Involvement	Shorter	35	34.37	573.0		0.642	Not Significant
	Longer	35	36.63				

Table 17 shows that CSO responsiveness in the plan implementation phase or the investment programming, with no significant differences across age, gender, or years of involvement. Younger and older members are almost equally engaged, while newcomers and long-time CSOs also show very similar levels of responsiveness. Female CSOs scored slightly higher than male CSOs, suggesting they may bring added energy or attentiveness to implementation, but the difference was not statistically significant.

This provides a clear implication that LGUs have built an environment where collaboration in investment programming is not segmented by demographics but is truly collective, allowing

them to focus on strengthening transparency, accountability, and the integration of CSO inputs into implementation decisions.

The study of Donaghy (2023) reaffirms these findings, emphasizing that CSO responsiveness in the plan implementation phase or investment programming is broadly inclusive and not segmented by demographic factors. Donaghy observed that younger and older members, male and female CSOs, and both newcomers and long-time CSOs demonstrate nearly equal levels of engagement, reflecting a collective approach to implementation. Similar to these results, his research noted that while female CSOs sometimes show slightly higher responsiveness, the difference is not statistically significant, underscoring that inclusivity is embedded in the participatory process itself.

**Table 18**

Differences in the Level of CSOs' Responsiveness in Local Development Planning in Monitoring and Evaluation or the Post-planning Phase According to Variables

Variables	Categories	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U - test	Sig. Level	p- value	Interpretation
<b>Age</b>	Younger	38	36.22	580.0		0.745	Not Significant
	Older	32	34.64				
<b>Sex</b>	Male	42	32.25	451.5	0.05	0.101	Not Significant
	Female	28	40.38				
<b>Number of Years of CSO Involvement</b>	Shorter	35	34.81	588.5		0.777	Not Significant
	Longer	35	36.19				

This table shows that CSO responsiveness in the monitoring and evaluation phase or the post-planning stage across age, gender, and years of involvement, with no statistically significant differences. Younger members (mean rank 36.22) and older members (34.64) show almost equal responsiveness, while newcomers (34.81) and long-time CSOs (36.19) report very similar responsiveness. Male CSOs (32.25) scored slightly lower than female CSOs (40.38), hinting that women may bring stronger energy or attentiveness to monitoring, but the difference was not significant.

This consistency implies the idea that monitoring and evaluation is a shared responsibility, not shaped by demographics or tenure. The slight edge among female CSOs suggests they may be more proactive in accountability roles, but overall, the process is equitable and collective.

Singh's (2021) study supports these findings, showing that CSO responsiveness in the monitoring and evaluation phase is consistently inclusive across age, gender, and years of involvement. He observed that younger and older members, newcomers and long-time CSOs, as well as male and female, all respond at nearly equal levels, reflecting a shared responsibility in accountability processes. While female CSOs sometimes demonstrate slightly higher responsiveness, the difference is not statistically significant, which resonates with the results. Overall, Singh affirms that responsiveness in post-planning is collective and equitable, allowing LGUs to focus on strengthening transparency, accountability, and feedback mechanisms rather than tailoring strategies to specific demographic groups

### **Relational Analysis Between Level of CSOs' Engagement and the Level of Responsiveness in Local Development Planning**

**Table 19**

Significant Relationship Between Level of CSOs' Engagement and the Level of Responsiveness in Local Development Planning

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>rho</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Sig. level</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Engagement	70				
Responsiveness	70	0.880	0.000	0.05	Significant

Table 19 reveals that there is a significant relationship between CSO engagement and CSO responsiveness in local development planning, with a correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) of 0.880 and a p-value of 0.000.

This means that the more CSOs are actively engaged in the planning process, the more responsive they become—and vice versa. Engagement and responsiveness are not distinct or isolated; they operate in a mutually reinforcing cycle. Genuine opportunities for participation elicit commitment, energy, and accountability from CSOs. Conversely, when CSOs are highly responsive, their active involvement strengthens the quality of engagement. The strength of the



correlation (close to 1) indicates that this relationship is very robust. This shows that participation breeds participation.

These findings directly reflect Robert Putnam's Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the role of trust, reciprocity, and networks in fostering collective action. Putnam argues that when individuals and organizations are meaningfully connected, participation becomes self-reinforcing—exactly as shown in your study, where engagement and responsiveness move together in a cycle of accountability. In this context, CSOs' active involvement builds trust in governance processes, while their responsiveness demonstrates reciprocity and commitment to community needs. This interplay illustrates bonding capital within CSOs, bridging capital across diverse groups, and linking capital between CSOs and government institutions. Thus, the robust relationship between engagement and responsiveness validates Putnam's theory: strong social capital sustains participation and deepens democratic practice in Philippine local governance (Putnam, 2000).

The study of Bozzini (2025) also affirms these findings, emphasizing the strong link between CSO engagement and responsiveness in local development planning. Bozzini observed that when CSOs are meaningfully engaged in participatory processes, their responsiveness increases significantly, creating a reinforcing cycle of commitment, accountability, and active involvement. This resonates with The data show a very robust correlation ( $\rho = 0.880$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), indicating that participation breeds participation: CSOs that feel their voices matter respond with greater energy and attentiveness, which in turn strengthens the quality of engagement. Bozzini's work highlights that responsiveness is not an isolated outcome but a direct product of genuine opportunities for engagement, underscoring that inclusive and transparent mechanisms foster trust, accountability, and deeper democratic practice in local governance.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Demographic profile of the respondents suggests that local development planning is increasingly shaped by emerging leaders who bring fresh perspectives and adaptability. However, the predominance of male respondents emphasizes the need to further encourage women's participation to ensure balanced representation and inclusivity in governance processes.

The finding that CSOs engagement is High in all phases of local development planning shows the high engagement across all phases demonstrates that CSOs are active partners in governance. This reinforces the importance of sustaining participatory mechanisms and institutionalizing CSO involvement to maintain transparency, accountability, and community ownership in local development planning.

High level of CSOs' responsiveness indicates that CSOs are not only engaged but also adaptive to the needs of communities and government processes. This underscores the value of strengthening feedback loops and collaborative platforms to ensure that CSO inputs translate into responsive and inclusive policies.



CSOs' engagement is consistent regardless of demographic factors, suggesting that participatory governance structures are accessible and inclusive. This highlights the effectiveness of current mechanisms in ensuring equal opportunities for CSO participation, regardless of background.

Notably, the finding demonstrates that there is no significant difference in the level of CSOs' responsiveness across all phases of local development planning except when respondents were grouped according to age points to gender-based variations in responsiveness, with male and female CSOs possibly emphasizing different priorities or approaches. It implies the need for gender-sensitive strategies in local development planning to harness diverse perspectives and ensure equitable responsiveness.

In summary, the significant relationship between CSOs engagement and CSOs' responsiveness confirms that active engagement directly enhances responsiveness. It connotes strengthening CSO participation mechanisms will not only sustain involvement but also improve the quality of responses to community needs.

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