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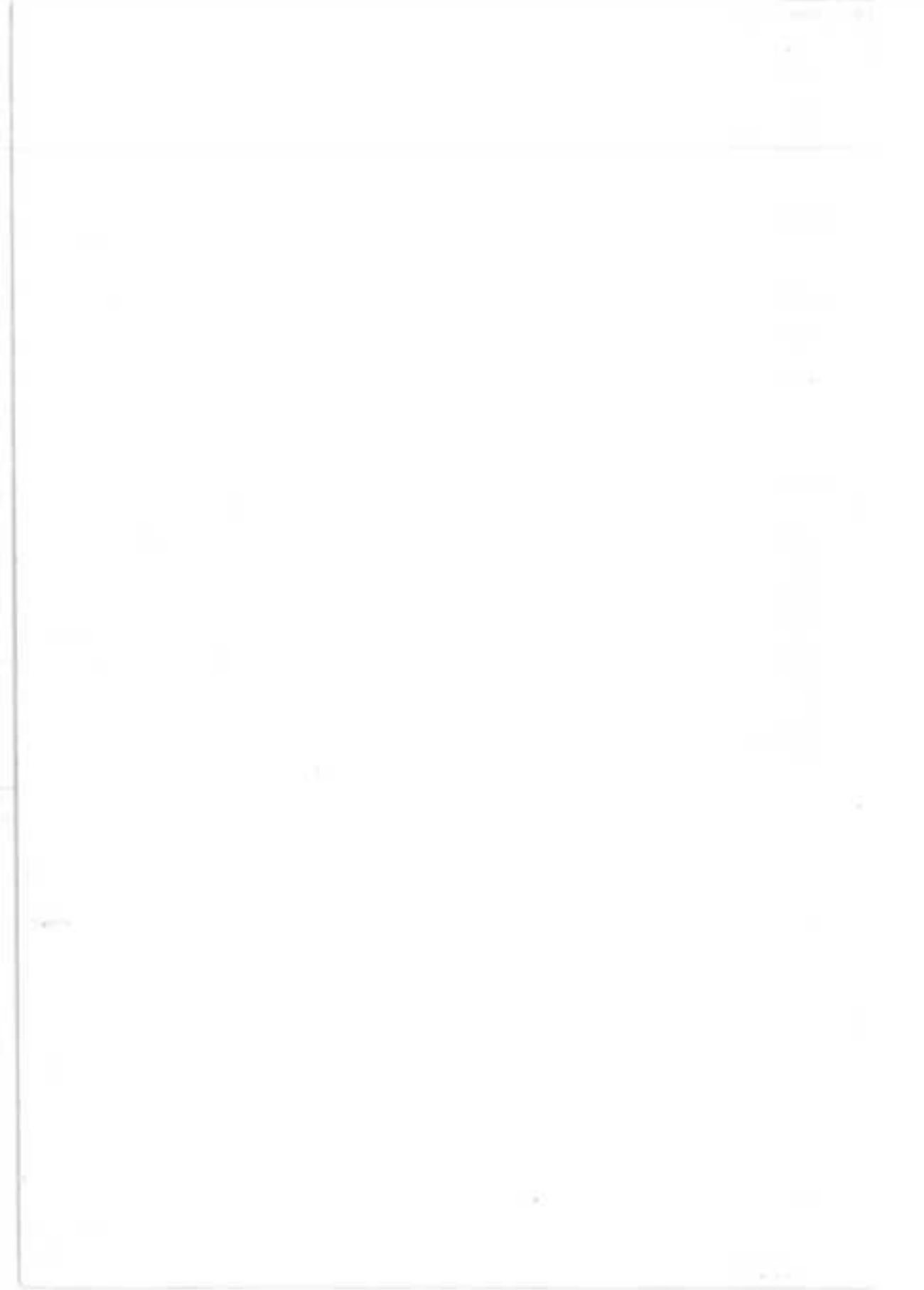
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Pansig'dan: Promoting Well-being
in an Agricultural Community in Northern Luzon, Philippines



UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE
in the Context of Cash Crop Farming



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Understanding Suicide in the Context of Cash Crop Farming

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FOR ETHICAL REASONS, the name of the community has been deliberately dropped. This should be observed at all times when citing and quoting any part of this report. Most of the photographs used were taken from the different vegetable farming communities of Benguet. Pesticides mentioned were listed according to their chemical names.

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4.1 Profile of Suicide Cases

Data on the number of suicide cases in the study site were obtained from reports of barangay officials, recollections of elders, interview from suicide survivors and records of admitted patients in local clinics and hospitals.

Suicide in history

The first case of suicide recalled by the elders was in 1961. From 1961 to 2010, a total of 52 suicide cases were recorded; majority of which occurred in 2008-2009. The succeeding tables and figures specify the number of suicide cases according to demographic characteristics and methods used.

The first documented case of suicide, as obtained from the FGDs with the elders, happened in 1961 when a 26 year old single businessman killed himself by ingesting an insecticide. According to the elders, he was a successful store owner. Since he did not show any obvious signs that he was experiencing serious personal problems, some people speculated that a weak spirituality was the underlying cause of his self-inflicted death.

Few isolated cases have been documented until 2006 while a suicide cluster⁵ is evident in 2008 to 2010 when 38 cases were documented to have transpired in a 36-month period.

The next account happened sometime in 1961 when a woman committed suicide by hanging herself. No further details were obtained for the said case. Another woman killed herself in 1965 because of marital problems. According

to the reports, this young woman's husband was a drunkard and a wife-beater. Her request for separation was repeatedly rejected by the elders during that time. The elders had been carrying out *tongtong*, a traditional form of conflict resolution in Benguet, to reconcile the couple but to no avail. Frustrated, the young wife drank an insecticide.

More isolated cases have been recounted in the next decades with about two to four cases happening in a ten-year period. However, the figures drastically increased in 2008 when suicide incidents have been reported to happen in the barangay within a very short time-frame. As seen in Table 7, more than half of all suicide occurrences in the barangay, took place in just a year.

Of the 38 cases recorded from 2008 - 2010, 95% were committed using pesticides.

The monthly frequency distribution of suicide during the last half of 2008 and first half of 2009 is shown in Figure 1. As indicated in the graph, at least one case of suicide occurred monthly (except in September 2008), with the peak of the cluster apparent in February 2009.

As reflected in Table 6, there is a sudden rise in the rate of suicide as observed between 2000

⁵Suicide cluster refers to either multiple simultaneous suicides or a series of suicides occurring close together in time and space (CDC, 1988). Coleman (1987, cited in Ystgaard, 1997) describes it as an uncommonly high number of suicides during a brief period of time within a restricted geographical area. Using these definitions, the suicide incidents that happened in study site from 2008 to 2009 can be considered a suicide cluster.

and 2010. The increase in these suicide rates must be interpreted with caution since it will reflect the risk of exposure of the population to committing suicide.

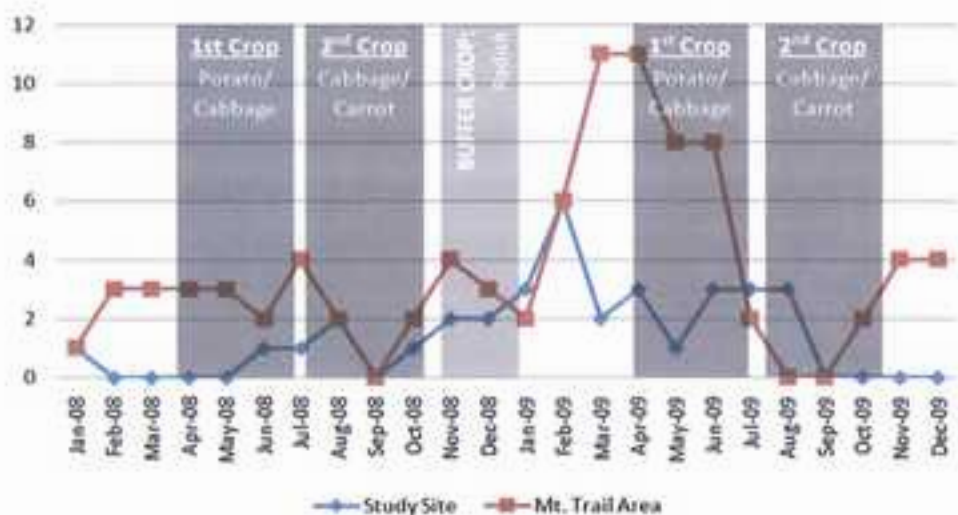


Figure 1. Monthly frequency of suicide cases in 2008-2009 in the study site and in the Mt. Trail area (with the study site's cropping calendar)

Demographic profile of suicide victims

Some groups may be more vulnerable to suicide than others. To understand what demographic variable may be associated with suicide, the trend in terms of demographic characteristics of suicide victims is presented in this section. Variations may exist when compared with suicide cases in other areas.

Age. Age has been a widely investigated variable related to suicide in many suicide literatures. While statistics maintain that older adults aged 65 and above are also highly at risk of suicide (NIMH, 2007), the World Health Organization listed self-inflicted death as the third leading cause of death for young people under 25 worldwide. Almost a quarter of suicides, about 250,000 suicides each year, are committed by teenagers and young adults, making suicide the leading cause of premature death (IASP-WHO, 2009).

A similar picture is presented in the study of Ullalim-Pasiwen (2010), on three vegetable farming municipalities in northern Benguet. The said study revealed that majority (55%) of suicide cases in the three areas comprise of young adults, within the 15 to 24 age range.

This trend is evident in the suicide cases in the study site, as seen in Table 5. Data shows that the incidence of suicide is highest among young adults aged 15 to 24 years old compared to the other age groups, accounting for more than half of the recorded incidents. Moreover, about 75% of the suicides that occurred in the cluster from 2008 to 2009 were committed by persons below 25. The fact that young people were dying of suicide one after the other during this period was most likely the reason why the community

captured the attention of concerned local government officials, health workers, and even members of the academe.

Studies and theories on human development would describe adolescence and emerging adulthood as a period of transition from the immaturity of childhood and the maturity of adulthood. In this stage, adolescents and young adults are confronted with physical, cognitive and social changes and adjustments that are often associated with distressing emotions such as tension, confusion and uncertainty. These increase vulnerability of young people to social stressors.

G. Stanley Hall (1904; cited in Rice, 1998) attributed the "storm and stress" of adolescence to the physiological changes associated with sexual maturation, which result in emotional instability in the adolescent. Added to these are the pressures caused by the need for identity (Erikson, 1950; cited in Santrock, 2005), to establish mature relations with peers, and prepare to take on the functions and responsibilities of adulthood as expected in their culture (Arnett, 2004).

In this stage, young people deal with a wide range of concerns which include risky sexual practices, substance use, delinquent behavior and suicide. Hughes (2002) summarizes the reasons why normal adolescents engage in risk-taking behavior. For young adults, particularly adolescents, risk-taking activities are instruments to obtain peer acceptance, enhance their self-esteem, and gain a sense of independence since risk behaviors usually go against the advice of parents.

Table 5. Number of suicide cases by age group, 1961-2010

AGE GROUP	15 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44	45 – 54	TOTAL
SUICIDE CASES					
Number	34	12	3	3	52
Percentage (%)	65.38%	23.08%	5.77%	5.77%	100%

TABLE 6. Suicide cases according to decade, gender and marital status, 1961-2010

YEAR	CASES	GENDER		MARITAL STATUS	
		Male	Female	Married	Single
1960s	3 (5.36%)	1	2	2	1
1970s	2 (3.57%)	1	1	1	1
1980s	2 (3.57%)	2	0	0	2
1990s	4 (7.14%)	3	1	2	2
2000-2010	41 (80.36%)	31	10	14	27
TOTAL	52 (100%)	38 (73.08%)	14 (26.92%)	19 (36.54%)	33 (63.46%)

Gender. Table 6 presents a comparison of suicide rates between males and females. Of all 52 cases investigated, 38 or 73 % were committed by men showing a higher rate than those of women.

This is consistent with the findings of other studies on gender and suicide. In the study of Ullalim-Pasiwen (2010), 75% of the recorded suicide incidents in the three farming municipalities in Benguet were committed by males. According to the World Health Organization (2000), more males than females commit suicide in the majority of countries, although the male-female ratio varies by country. In the Philippines, local survey findings reveal that suicide ideation (thoughts of committing suicide) is higher among females but males are more likely to actually commit suicide (YAFS 3 Data Sheet, 2002). Moreover, fatal suicide attempts are higher in males which, in part, is attributed to male's preference for more lethal methods of suicide (Redaniel et. al., 2011). Men are also more apt to commit suicide by avoiding detection. Women, in contrast, use less lethal means of suicide which allows a higher chance of survival and rescue.

Earlier explanations for these gender differences in suicide rates and methods highlight biological and psychological aspects of men and women. However, other studies suggest identification to socially constructed gender differentiation and gender role expectation as more plausible explanations. A review of literature by Swami et. al. (2008) emphasizes that the difference in suicide

methods stems from the way in which suicidal behaviors are used to demonstrate gendered identities – definitions of oneself as a man or a woman. For instance, men's choice of more violent and lethal means is consistent with masculine prescriptions of aggression and strength (Wannan & Fombonne, 1998; cited in Swami et. al., 2008). Furthermore, while stigma is attached to suicide attempts, surviving a suicide act is more likely to be perceived as "inappropriate" for men (White & Stillion, 1988; cited in Swami et. al., 2008). This may explain why in the study site, survivors have become targets of ridicule by peers. One survivor was even nicknamed "insecticide" by his peers.

In times of economic difficulty, working men are more susceptible to suicide than women, possibly due to higher societal pressures to succeed (Chang et. al., 2009, cited in Redaniel et. al., 2011). Moreover, women more commonly express supplication for help and therefore better able to get social support from friends and family members regarding difficulties. In contrast, men are less likely to consult for most conditions, particularly emotional problems (Canetto & Sakinofsky, 1998; cited in Swami et. al., 2008). Courtenay (2000 in Swami et al, 2008) explains that asking for help, even in the face of possible suicide, may be viewed as feminine behavior, and if men are to live up to expectations of strength and independence, they are required to deal with their mental and physical problems on their own.

Table 7. Suicide cases, 2008-2010

NO	DATE	AGE	SEX	CS	PERCEIVED REASON	MEANS OF SUICIDE	REMARKS
1	January 2008	39	F	M	Scolded by supplier and culture related cause	Hanging	Dead
2	June 6, 2008	16	F	S	Scolded by parents	Phosphoglycine	Survived
3	July 6, 2008	20	M	S	Drunk poison "offered by a spirit"	Paraquat	Survived
4	August 27, 2008	23	M	S	Depressed and was "called" by a friend	Pyrethroid	Dead
5	August 29, 2008	22	M	S	Drunk, offended from taking	Paraquat	Dead
6	October 30, 2008	16	F	M	Misunderstanding with husband	Paraquat	Dead
7	November 9, 2008	24	M	M	Family problems, unresolved issues with family	Pyrethroid	Dead
8	November 14, 2008	40	M	M	Scolded by wife, family related cause	Pyrethroid	Survived
9	December 24, 2008	25	M	M	Scolded due to unresolved family issue	Paraquat	Dead
10	December 8, 2008	19	M	S	Drunk, thought pesticide is bottled water	Pyrethroid	Survived
11	January 1, 2009	24	F	M	Misunderstanding with husband	Organophosphate	Survived
12	January 24, 2009	16	M	S	Scolded by parents	Pyrethroid	Survived
13	January 29, 2009	14	M	S	Matters of love	Paraquat	Survived
14	February 4, 2009	19	M	S	Misunderstanding with drinking mates	Organophosphate	Dead
15	February 5, 2009	17	F	S	Dreamt of a dead friend who offered the pesticide	Paraquat	Dead
16	February 5, 2009	25	M	M	Scolded, offended from taking	Organophosphate	Survived
17	February 10, 2009	16	M	S	Dreamt of being "called by a friend"	Paraquat	Dead
18	February 10, 2009	32	M	S	Depression	Paraquat	Dead
19	February 11, 2009	21	M	S	Matters of love	Pyrethroid	Survived
20	March 17, 2009	24	M	S	Due to taking after a drinking session	Pyrethroid	Survived
21	March 24, 2009	26	M	S	Family problem	Organophosphate	Survived
22	April 3, 2009	19	M	S	Dreamt of a friend who committed suicide	Paraquat	Dead
23	April 5, 2009	29	M	S	Dreamt of a friend "calling for him"	Paraquat	Survived
24	2008 & April 2009	23	M	S	Matters of love	Pyrethroid	Survived
25	May 31, 2009	26	M	M	Got offended from taking	Pyrethroid	Survived
26	July 5, 2009	27	M	M	Family problem	Pyrethroid	Survived
27	July 2009	19	M	S	Scolded by parents	Organophosphate	Survived
28	July 29, 2009	16	M	S	Matters of love	Paraquat	Survived
29	August 5, 2009	19	M	S	Committed after taking during drinking session	Organophosphate	Dead
30	September 22, 2009	22	M	S	Done after taking during drinking spree	Organophosphate	Survived
31	2009	35	F	M	Family misunderstanding	Triazole	Survived
32	2008 and 2009	18	M	S	Frustrated after losing in a local election	Detergent	Survived
33	2010	15	F	S	Scolded by someone	Glazing	Survived
34	January 9, 2010	27	F	M	Family misunderstanding	Pesticide: **u.d	Survived
35	April 14, 2010	21	M	S	Depression, suspected that it was due to taking	Phosphoglycine	Survived
36	May 23, 2010	31	F	M	Family misunderstanding	Pesticide: **u.d	Survived
37	July 29, 2010	22	M	S	Scolded by parents	Organophosphate	Survived
38	November 26, 2010	27	M	M	Suspected due to taking	Paraquat	Survived

*civil status

**unreconstructed data

Marital status. Also in Table 6, data shows that more suicide attempts were done by those who were not married than those who were married. In the Benguet study of Ullalim-Pasiwen, a similar trend is shown, where 64% of suicide victims were single. Although this trend varies across countries, explanations for suicide rate differences in marital status point to the role of social integration as an important determinant (Cutright et. al., 2007).

Marriage provides social and emotional stability and may therefore serve as protection from self-inflicted death. While the unmarried suicide victims were living with family members during the time they committed suicide, they may not have experienced the same social integration and support within their families. However, dearth of details still necessitates further investigation on this variable.

Notions of suicide

From what is evident in Table 8, the "reasons" of suicide can be read as heavy on emotional states brought about by unrequited love, scolded by parents, teasing, "being called" or *inayagan da* through dreams with *da* or they as either a friend previously committing suicide; family problem and the others such as husband-wife conflict, honor and shame, misunderstanding with drinking mates, and depression.

However, these identified reasons of self-inflicted injuries, are not to be taken singly. What is evident is that the act usually happens when an individual is intoxicated. When one is supposedly enjoying a shared teasing and drinking spree, this suddenly turns into self-inflicted violence. When trivialized, the reasons of the self-inflicted deaths and injuries are just that – being scolded, being frustrated with love, being teased, to name a few; but closer examination shows that there are different emotional trajectories and self-actions. In an attempt to find out the deeper reasons for the high incidence of suicide in the local context, an understanding of the community's notions of suicide and the meanings they attached to

suicide are important. From the findings, the community considers suicide a taboo, but a familiar phenomenon.

A common theme that can be drawn from the data is the notion of *man-i-innayag* that is, "the spirits have been calling for them". Probing would show that this notion of *man-i-innayag* comes through dreams or at anytime one is left alone. It is commonly heard, for instance, that while one is walking home, one encounters his neighbor who died of suicide as literally calling and walking him through. Another story would tell of a friend giving him (the suicide victim) something to drink – and when he drunk it, he realized it was poison. It should be noted that most of these stories would come from intoxicated individuals who committed suicide or who were about to – based on the recollection of the respondents.

In one focus group discussion with the elders, one woman elder raised the issue about *man-i-innayag* (the unseen calling for the living) and traced it back to the older ancestors who started this tradition. An earlier account recalled by the elders also tells of a bachelor committing suicide in 1961 and the only explanation to this was that he was called through his dreams. Other members of the group started telling stories about how one has not properly died or how the community failed to perform the appropriate ritual so that no one may be called to follow the dead. One elder however was quick to say that the dead do not wish bad luck for the living and so one cannot blame them, too.

Perhaps, this is what Cannel would say of the rituals among "the living for the dead" – that if it is not properly done, then someone else will follow. Cannel concluded that among Filipinos, one does not problematize whether one's soul is going to heaven or not – but whether the ritual is properly done so that the separation between the living and the dead does not leave any remorse (Cannel, 1996). These rituals of the living for the dead would later be performed in the community in an attempt to stop the series of suicide cases.

The desire to be "well", if the community is inflicted with something undesirable, is a unique characteristic of an indigenous community. While the study site is largely a heterogeneous community, this collective desire was still manifested in many ways by its concerned sectors. With the local barangay official serving as facilitators, the Christian sector conducted ecumenical service. When their effort did not seem to "solve" the problem, the barangay officials convened the remaining community elders and performed the necessary ritual. Still, when all means were exhausted to no avail, the elders with the help

of the barangay council called for a well-known *manbunong* or native priest outside the community to teach them how to perform the proper ritual.

Data shows that bereaved families are still on the "healing stage". Also, the culture of silence is apparent. When asked why, respondents say, "they cannot understand why things are like that"; "that perhaps there is too much preoccupation in farm work". In another informal discussion, it was articulated that "suicide can be a natural phenomenon" or that it is, a trial in life or simply, a destiny.

Table 8. Notions of suicide

RESPONDENT'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE SUICIDE VICTIM	THOUGHTS ABOUT SUICIDE (Translated responses)	REASONS (Translated responses)
Brother, Nephew and Cousin	Perhaps, it is hereditary? Until now, I cannot fathom and I am still nervous and anxious every time I remember them.	The parents are very busy; there is no time for their children.
In-law	I am still thinking why things happened so fast; the way he drunk paraquat keeps coming back. He was under the influence of Satan.	Perhaps, family problem that's why he resorted to drinking the herbicide.
Son	Paraquat is very powerful since he did not express any ill feelings before. "Ay, inayagan da ngata?" (Did somebody "call for him"?)	I do not know why. Maybe because he's drunk?
Daughter	I do not know why things are the way they are. Until now, I cannot accept what happened. My daughter said she never thought of doing it and she even said she was sorry and wanted to live. I saw it in her face and almost half of me died with her. I cannot blame her. Perhaps, she was also called by those who previously committed it.	No reason; although she keeps on having "big" dreams and she was telling me that, every time we talk; even when she was dying.
Nephew and Grandson	Work of the devil. Only God knows why they were not able to keep their self-control strong. My advice is to resist the work of the devil. It's only by grace that we can be saved.	We just attended the burial of my nephew. My grandson, who was intoxicated with alcohol, was following me. Suddenly, I heard shouts that he drunk paraquat. Someone said he was called by the unseen. After that, he never talked about it but, I think it is the lack of care in parenting.

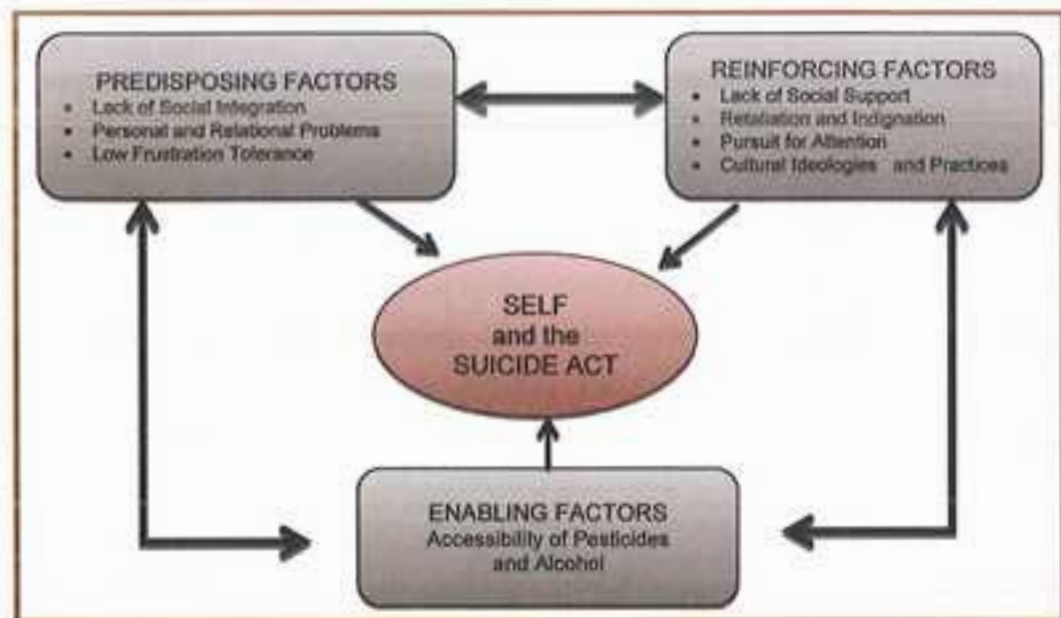


Figure 2. A model of suicide in a cash crop economy

4.2 Suicide Correlates

Suicide is a crucial public health concern and youth suicide has received increasing attention as a significant social issue. According to WHO (2000), suicide is among the top 10 causes of death in every country and one of the three leading causes of death among young adults. In the Philippines, results of the nationwide Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study in 2002 (YAFS3) revealed that the Cordillera Administrative Region has the highest incidence of suicide ideation and suicide attempt compared to the other regions in the country (Diaz, et. al., 2008).

Suicide cannot be attributed to just one determinant since it is a result of a multiplicity of factors, located both within the person and in his/her environment, and the interaction among these. Green and Kreuter (1991, cited by Clarke et. al., 1997) laid down in their PRECEDE-PROCEED model a conceptual framework for planning health education and health promotion programs and policies. In this model, the determinants of outcomes (in this case, suicide) are categorized as predisposing, reinforcing and enabling factors.

According to Green and Kreuter, predisposing factors refer to the knowledge, attitudes, values and experiences that provide the motivation for suicidal behaviors. The decision to commit suicide is rarely impulsive. Rather, there are person-level as well as relational issues and experiences that operate as trigger factors for suicidal behaviors.

The thoughts and motives for suicide may be further reinforced by the person's environment. Reinforcing factors include absence of social support, the behavior of peers, caregivers, and other significant others. The reactions of family members, friends and the larger community to the attempted suicide may be perceived as rewards or incentives for the behavior and promote its persistence or repetition.

Also present in the environment are enabling factors, such as availability and accessibility of lethal means, which facilitate the motivation to be realized. Green and Kreuter further described predisposing and enabling factors as antecedents and reinforcing factors as subsequent to suicidal behavior. The attempts to prevent suicide therefore necessitates that

each of these multiple factors that surround the problem be examined and addressed.

Following Green and Kreuter's determinants of suicide discussed above, Project Pansigdan arrived at a model of suicide in the context of a cash-crop economy. This model provides a framework for understanding the incidence of suicide considering the factors present in a commercial farming community such as the study site.

Predisposing factors

In this section, the psychological and socio-cultural variables associated with suicide in the study site are discussed. These antecedents of suicide are otherwise known as risk factors or elements that lead to or are associated with suicide (SPRC, 2001). Possessing these risk factors increases an individual's susceptibility to suicidal behavior, making some members of the community more vulnerable to committing suicide than others. Variations may exist when compared with suicide cases in other areas.

The psychological explanation recognizes that the cause comes from the person herself or himself and that such persons show some manifestation of psychological problems before they commit suicide (Joiner et. al., cited in Bradatan). It is from this that suicide is committed by individuals and not by a community. However, personal state is not separated from the everyday social events. Masaryk and Durkheim in separate studies were able to show that suicide rate changes with important social transformations such as war, economic crisis, dislocation, and the like. Thus, the psychological disturbance is importantly influenced by social events.

The money economy, commercial vegetable farming and lack of social integration. Social integration is the degree to which people are bound to their social group. It is a means by which people interact and connect with other members of their community.

The study site is largely a farming community and most families in the barangay are engaged in commercial vegetable production. The intensification of vegetable farming changed not only the physical outlook of the place but altered some traditional values, perceptions, beliefs, and relations. Obvious of these is the new source of wealth among the locals. Profit from vegetable farming has made many families in the community monetarily wealthy, to the envy of other barangays of the municipality. As Malanes (2002) put it, "...is a good example of a community built by the cash economy." The monetary profit challenged the traditional concept of wealth among the residents and wherever they came from. For them, land ownership does not any more qualify wealth. Money does.

With cash from the vegetable farming venture almost each household has their own vehicle, considerably big houses not only in the locality but also in La Trinidad and elsewhere, and other properties acquired through profits from vegetable farming. For those who did not have farms, it was also easy to earn money with the constant need for farm laborers or *oblantes* around the area. However, this emphasis on wealth from farming led to the residents' preoccupation to farm activities. In an FGD the research team conducted in August 2009, a resident responded to an observation that it is a rich barangay in their municipality by saying that "...but people have to work like carabaos to have a better life."

In the discussions with community members, the elders and parents have made a connection with farm preoccupation and the lack of integration that young people have in their families, particularly the lack of bonding and moral support that they receive from their parents. One of the elders noted that many parents, because they spend most of their time in the farm, focus more on satisfying their children's material needs and do not anymore attend to their children's other needs. Some parents admitted that they give their children large amounts of money for allowances but

do not spend time to help them in their schoolwork or even just to have conversations with them because of stress and exhaustion from farm work.

With vegetable farming as the primary source of wealth, the vegetable gardens became the hub of everyday life. Throughout the year, vegetable farmers spend their time in the farms and very few distractions could uproot them from these farms. As long as there are still vegetables growing, farmers cannot just leave them for two days, or even a day or else the vegetables would go to waste or be destroyed by pests. This is the reason why few parents and residents join activities that rival their time for the farm. Just before the research team's visit, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) conducted a training on the rights of children in the community. A few, mostly women, attended. An elderly lady articulated for the farmers that such kind of training is deemed unimportant to farmers, and because they expected that they are just going to listen in a seminar, they sent their wives to attend as the farm demands more than listening. Similarly, when the research team sought an audience with farmers, only a handful came, mostly women. Accordingly, the kind of invitation that male farmers usually attend in good numbers are those that have something to do with enriching farming productions, such as those sponsored by pesticide companies.

Child labor is an important help in the farm. Farmers' children normally help during their school breaks, such as Saturdays, Sundays and early in the morning before class and after class late in the afternoon. In the call for a stop to child labor by the CHR, farmers think it is ridiculous as they saw nothing wrong with having children help in the farm. After all, they are part of the family and farming is a family interest and to many, a family affair where parents can teach their children the value of hard work.

Russell (1986) describes commercial vegetable farming as a "boom-bust income cycle." Many farmers like to compare this venture

to gambling. Sometimes they earn nothing, therefore lost the gamble. Sometimes they "hit the jackpot" and rake enough earnings with high prices of their products. Russell did her work in the study site in the early years of the 1980s and her observation remained valid these days.

"After a season of low prices, most farmers need a financing source before they can replant. The extensive use of agricultural inputs (seed, inorganic and organic fertilizer, chemical pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides) is necessary in temperate vegetable production to sustain high yields."

This shows that many farmers rely on credit to sustain their vegetable farms and this justifies their full time attention to their work. This "boom-bust" situation forced farmers to invest more time on the farm in an effort to establish good timing for harvest and condition the farm for the "jackpot" price.

If there is a break in such farm routine, it is when they bring their products to La Trinidad Trading Post. Although it is essentially part of the farming-trading schedule, the trip to La Trinidad is perceived by the farmers as a "vacation". Such break covers two to four days but not more than a week for the farmers to dispose of their vegetables, buy necessary seeds, fertilizers, and implements for the next cropping period. This also includes a visit to family members in town and, to many, an opportunity visit the drinking bars in nearby Baguio City.

In the community, wedding ceremonies and school graduations are taken as the only reasons for a farmer to take a break. These opportunities provide the only context for the family to get together and to socialize with the larger community members.

Such is the preoccupation of farmers in their vegetable gardens. This fixation is obvious to some of the locals. They partly blame parents' lack of attention to their children for the spate of teen suicide because they spent so much time in the farm. One teacher-participant in the



FGD pointed that farmer-parents thought that their obligation to their children is confined only by giving their children money.

Children are liberally allowed to go to school, especially for basic (elementary) education. There is, however, an uncommitted attitude for continuing education. A child who drops out of school are not seriously coaxed back. Instead, the child is encouraged by his/her parents to participate and learn the "trade" of farming. After all, farmers have seen many college graduates return in the community to become farmers like their parents because of unemployment. Contrary to what most Filipinos believe that schooling can "improve" one's life, farmers in the study site see farming coupled with hard work as the most pragmatic means of achieving such.

Commercial vegetable farming, therefore, provides the necessary context for social disintegration, which further resulted to other social dysfunction.

Life stressors and low frustration tolerance.

Studies and theories on human development would describe adolescence and emerging adulthood as a period of transition from the immaturity of childhood and the maturity of adulthood. In this stage, adolescents and young adults are confronted with physical, cognitive and social changes and adjustments that are often associated with distressing emotions such as tension, confusion and uncertainty. These increase the vulnerability of young people to social stressors.

Some common sources of stress experienced by young people include situations such as family conflict, a breakup with a boyfriend or girlfriend, or school difficulties. These very same "normal" life stressors can heighten the risk of youth suicide. Noted from a focus-group discussion with some parents and elders are the complaints of young people that "life is hard". By this, they referred to the "personal problems" that average young people experience as life stressors. These include being rejected by a love-interest (*na-busted, napa-ay*) or embarrassed by friends.

A mother of a suicide victim related that prior to committing suicide, her daughter dropped out from school because she did not think she was good enough. The daughter complained that her brain cannot comprehend what was being taught in school ("Baken kaya'n din otek ko" or "My brain cannot take it"). Another suicide victim was reported to have been mocked by his peers as ugly (*lawlaw-a*), which was reinforced by his parents when they told him "Indeed, you are different." A day after the incident, the teenager committed suicide.

Although these are anecdotal reports, it is clear that those who are easily frustrated and affected by threats to one's self-esteem are more likely to be motivated to commit suicide.

Depression is another most frequently cited factor associated with suicide in young people, which could be triggered by the frequent mood changes normally experienced in adolescence (Petersen, et. al., 1993; in Hughes, 2002).

Adolescents who experience a profound sense of hopelessness are at greater risk of committing suicide (Diaz, et.al., 2008). The inability to deal with frustration and life problems may also be indicators of depression. However, the prevalence of this among the suicide victims in the study site is difficult to establish.

Adolescents turn to their peers for attention and emotional support. Although peers are significant sources of approval, support and understanding, inappropriate behavior, such as vices, absenteeism, disrespect for authority and other rule-breaking behaviors may also be learned and reinforced by peers. A retired teacher and longtime resident pointed out that school delinquency has always been a problem of the community. Many children reportedly skip classes and go elsewhere for alcohol drinking. At times, members of the PTA, Tanod, and some volunteers are tasked to patrol areas where students possibly used as rendezvous for drinking and other activities. In the case of young suicide victims, anecdotal evidence show that most of the suicide attempts were done while the person was in a drinking spree with his/her friends or *barkada*.

It is presumed that teenagers in the study possess individual emotional structure and are also clearly subjected to the same adolescent issues confronting this development stage. Their individuality and their status as adolescents condition their responses to everyday social interactions.

Reinforcing factors

The quality of interaction that one has in the family, peer group and the larger community may promote suicidal behaviors. This reinforcing effect is particularly manifested after the suicide attempt has occurred as these factors act as incentive to the suicidal behavior, thereby contributing to its continuance.

Ba-es (idiom of resistance) and the suicide as a way of getting attention. The occurrence of suicide engenders social and psychological

effects on family members, peers and the community. The death of the friend of a family member, especially if self-inflicted, brings in grief and distress even to the larger group. On the other hand, responses to both successful and unsuccessful suicide attempts may create a situation for suicide to assert itself.

For one, suicide has been interpreted as a way of getting back lost attention of significant others. One victim attended a wake of an earlier suicide victim. He commented later that he likes the attention being given by friends, neighbors, and family members to the dead. He went home and drank poison killing himself. It is obvious that he killed himself not just to copy the act. He probably is also undergoing some emotional turmoil perhaps similar to the friend who took his life earlier. His statement during the wake poses a significant meaning of what he is probably going through, and parent's attention seems to be one of them. He probably thought he could get back the attention by taking his own life.

Another victim, Ena, remarked in a wake of an earlier suicide victim that the dead is beautiful in a coffin. Ena had problems with her mother on issues like school, her continual avoidance to help in the farm, and her drinking behaviors. His father has always been away in another farming area. Just after she ingested paraquat, she asked forgiveness of her misdemeanors and asked that there is no need for her to be brought to the hospital.

In other words, if one is to believe the psychological theories on adolescent behaviors, delinquency on this stage is a call for attention. In many instances, these were not heeded by busy parents.

Toknang: the bite of satirical humor. The local folks are also known to be adept in a type of discourse called *toknang*. This is a local way of teasing, challenging, criticizing and sort of shaming another in the presence of a group, usually men. Among young people, conversations including joking and giving of pieces of advice are done in the tradition



of *toknang*. Even personal problems (such as break-up with a girlfriend) of one group member may be dealt with as a joke. Since *toknang* can be a cause of embarrassment, some elders hypothesized that the youth who committed suicide did so because they were *na-toknang* by their friends. In fact, survivors of a suicide attempts may also become objects of *toknang*, such as the case of an attempter whose peers name-called him with the brand of pesticide he used to commit suicide.

A lighter form of *iyew* would be *kantiyaw* (teasing humor) and can be seen as the art of speaking in riddles. *Toknang* can take the form of cheering to light chiding to jeering – while trying to outwit the other or even lambast the other. At another level, it can be in its lighter form - a verbal art of communications. *Toknang* is a cultural marker of the community folks, and often it creates misunderstanding as what can be humorous to them can be an insult to another. Community folks are aware of this and admittedly gained certain reputation for it in the surrounding communities. Yet, it persists.

Literatures point to the social uses of humor. Humor or loud laughter or even satirical humor can “open up spaces where it is possible to speak of matters that are naturalized,

unquestioned, silenced” (Goldstein, 1993). In the same manner, *toknang* becomes a vehicle for discussing anything under the sun where participants can laugh out loud, and be silly. At another level, the boundary between the old and the young gets blurred when in a state of *tinoknangan* providing the young some leeway to say straight to the face what one’s sentiment is. Another feature of *toknang* is that participants speak in riddles. One can discern then that language can reveal, as much as it can also conceal. To Freud, laughter can also be a sublimated aggression.

Still another layer of language use is seen in the context of the farm itself. *Toknang* language can be ushered in farmer’s everyday talk – in topics where pesticide becomes the concern in the farming trade secret, “*Kapsob ka ay, man-paraquat din kaurubam, sik-a yan maga.*” (You are not smart. You are not using paraquat, yet your neighbors are.) From this statement, one can glean pressure and tension if one does not follow what everyone is into. Masculinity even is challenged. In an account of the local officials, *toknang* can take the form of eventually pushing someone to swallow poison. One respondent lamented that while the neighborhood was still mourning the death of someone, through *toknang*, one young man was pushed to “show-off” his masculinity by

drinking paraquat.

Literature has it that among gender differentials in suicide lies in the definition of masculinity. The strength and fatality of the poison taken in and its certainty of the act becoming successful is one criteria of masculinity (Tousignant et. al., 1998).

Toknang can also bridge age differences. In normal circumstance, it is awkward for a young person to make fun of an older person, but with *toknang*, everybody can have equal voice. But while *toknang* defined the manner in which the community stages their humor, with the recent episodes of suicide, it is now being questioned. As some respondents say, "Is this the backlash of how we present ourselves to others?"

Ginnuyod and the contagion effect. Some adolescent suicides are triggered by exposure to the suicide attempts of others. According to the Center for Disease Control (1998), suicide clusters may very well be the result of a contagion effect or imitation as persons who commit suicide later in a cluster may have been influenced by suicides earlier in the cluster. In the study area, the suicide of teenage girl in June 2008 appeared to have triggered a series of suicide, mostly teenage, for the next 10 months. There is a persistent theme among the folks that the rate of suicide is compounded by some unexplained pull factor. The statement, "Nangiginuyyod da," (They pulled each other.) to refer to the phenomenon where earlier cases of suicide serve to prompt the suicide attempts that followed.

In the field of suicide studies, this explanation falls under the contagion theory, that suicide, like diseases, become contagious so that the start of a single case of suicide would have the effect of prompting others to commit the same.

"When a particular suicide becomes widely known, similar suicides or attempted suicides, in terms of the means used or otherwise, draw disproportionately more attention from the community, thus

prompting copycat behavior." (Cutler, cited in Cheng, 2009)

Copycat suicide is a reality in the community. It appears to be a reasonable explanation to the sudden increase of suicide rate starting in 2008. A single case of suicide attempt by a 16 year old girl from one sitio in June 2008 set off a series of suicide up to the second quarter of 2009 totaling to 32 cases of which 12 were dead and 20 survived. All of these have, in one way or another, known each other or have heard of earlier suicide cases.

Andy and Randy were neighbors and friends in a sitio. In February 2009, Randy drank paraquat while intoxicated with alcohol. In April 2009, Andy did exactly the same. It was noticed on hindsight that Andy had exhibited some kind of melancholic behavior weeks after his friend died and before he killed himself. In another case, in October 2008, Ena killed herself for unverified reasons. Four months after in February 2009, a neighbor and niece of Ena did the same. Before she actually drank paraquat, she related that she dreamt of St. Peter throwing her off to hell.

In the community, probing revealed that the pull explanation of *ginnuyod* is understood within the context of the village after life. In its simplest discourse, dead people are categorized based on the nature of their deaths. Those who committed suicide are a category of dead who are most unwelcome in the dead world. Accordingly, the after world of dead avoids the suicide victims and in ways prohibits the interaction of the rest of the dead and the suicide victims. In many rituals observed by the local folks, local priests often have indifferent attitudes versus the dead via suicide. In fact, even in the ritual performed to "resolve" the suicide problem in the study area, the *mambunong* required the offering of two pigs, one for the souls of those who died of natural causes (including accidents) and one for the soul of those who died of suicide. Elders would often explain that the *kakading* or souls of the dead would not want to eat with the suicide



victims because they have foul odors, just like the pesticides they used to kill themselves.

Consequently, people who died of suicide and who are unwelcome in the world of the dead continue to stay among the living, among their family members and friends they abandoned in their deaths. And so contact between the living and the suicide victims remain constant. In most cases, the dead manifest themselves in dreams of the living. Some of those who committed suicide in the community following the death by suicide of friends and family members are reported to have been encountering their dead friends and family members in their dreams. It appears, too, that dead people join alcohol drinking activities and do their influence on drunken individuals.

In many cases of suicide in the community, the victims were allegedly drunk before drinking poisonous pesticides. In traditional practices, rituals of appeasement usually follow persistent dreams involving the dead. It is by these rites that the dead who continually manifest themselves in dreams are appeased and consequently save the dreamer from possible danger. It is in this context that they understand the contagious nature of suicide. In very recent memory of people, suicides

followed earlier suicides, almost monthly in 2008 until the first quarter of 2009. Most of those who committed suicide belong to same peer group and/or family. No wonder some folks in the community believe in the notion that suicidal tendency is genetic.

Studies on imitative suicides point to the impact of the mass media on suicidal behavior. Significant increases on suicide rates were known to follow broadcasts of suicide stories (WHO, 2008). But in the case of the study area, the early cases in the cluster were not publicized. In May 2009, the provincial government of Benguet and municipal government under study considered the sudden increase in suicide cases in the area as alarming and have decided to create a taskforce to address the concern. Only then that the suicide cluster became apparent and the efforts of various sectors, including that of Project Pansigdan, received attention from the media.

Enabling factors

Suicide is seldom committed on impulse. A person may have considered suicide over a long period of time but the actual implementation of the plan to commit it is made possible by the available methods. These are the enabling

factors as these facilitate the realization of the motivation and the plan to commit suicide. Without these, the thought of suicide may not be successfully executed. In this study, the availability and accessibility of alcohol as a disinhibiting factor and of pesticides as lethal means are considered as enabling factors.

Alcohol as Disinhibitor. Intoxication is another frequently mentioned factor for suicide in the community as most suicide attempts were done while the victims were under the influence of alcohol. Like other Filipino communities, alcohol drinking is also part of this farming area. It has been observed that of the short period of time they saved with the use of pesticides, they spent it on alcohol drinking. Recently, videoke bars where alcohol is being served were set up in the area and are now patronized by some male farmers. Described as having women "sit on laps of customers", it is known in the study site as *saklatan*.

The barangay officials admitted that while a barangay ordinance regulating the sale of liquor to minors is in place, some storeowners still sell liquor to minors and even allow these to carry out their drinking sessions inside the stores.

It is public knowledge that alcohol intake has always accompanied youth congregation. High school students escaped from their classes and find some secret places like *daykong* (mountain curves) and *bilig* (hillsides) to engage in drinking. Since many victims were under the influence of alcohol when they took their own lives, it is interesting to delve into the actual drinking sessions of this age group. Youth drinking is a venue for companionship. Peer members take alcohol drinking as the normal form of interaction, where they share stories, open up secrets and problems, give and receive advice, joke among themselves, and ultimately affirm their peer relations. If at all, the peer group provides a venue for physical comfort plus alcohol to keep them together.

Racquel developed a rough relation with her mother after she dropped out of school and frequented peer drinking sessions. Her father

works in another farm outside the province.

Since then, Racquel appeared to have found more comfort with friends, who were also her cousins. They would go places to drink, even in nearby communities along the Halsema highway, La Trinidad, and even Baguio City. As a result, her mother could not do anything more than censure the girl who, according to her mother, never responded when scolded. On the day that she drank paraquat, she just came from one of these peer drinking sessions. She died, leaving a mother who had to bear the social reproach of being called an irresponsible parent.

Drinking, in the Philippine context, is perceived as stress-relieving as it provides a venue for releasing pent up emotions via sharing with others one's troubles and pains in a day or in life. In the absence of family venues for sharing and unburdening, drinking groups allow for a similar mechanism. And yet, it is also true that intoxication alters thought processes and consequently impairs problem-solving capacity. Because the nervous system gets depressed with alcohol, it also promotes whatever emotional depression there is already.

While an intoxicated person loses inhibition and becomes one with the drinking group, the same inhibition may tempt the same to do extraordinary things, including the courage to kill oneself. The balance, then, of drinking, relief, and suicide is on a delicate plane so that if the relief function fails the result for a highly depressed, suicide-prone individual is disastrous. It is here where a number of cases probably fell prey to suicide's invitation. This entails, though, that there is a deeper source of suicide than just intoxication, that being drunk is just another aggravating point in the series of stages that a victim goes through. Not all who are intoxicated took their own lives, but almost all cases of suicide in the study area were precipitated by intoxication.

Intoxication is publicly acknowledged as an important antecedent to suicide in the study site. As a result, many of those the project

team talked to, especially women, agree that regulating alcohol use is a key to repressing suicides. But even this view is tentative if not remote, at least for the barangay officials who appear reluctant to strictly implement the supposed ordinance banning the open sale of alcohol in the community. A check on the barangay record failed to bear any ordinance versus alcohol sale but *kagawad* members do remember there is one, adopted sometime in 2001. Despite the recognition that intoxication is contributory to suicide, the barangay officials appear cold on amending the ordinance in accordance to this extraordinary situation. According to one official, it might just increase accidents as young people would drive to buy liquor in nearby stores along the highway.

Pesticides as lethal means. Lino, according to her grandmother, was drunk when he attempted to kill himself. Before that, he tended to his family's farm by applying some paraquat. He kept the chemical in the stock room after. He joined his peers drinking as they attended a wake. He was accordingly involved in a problematic relation with a girlfriend, which her grandmother referred to as "puppy love". After their drinking "session", he went back to where he remembers he kept the paraquat and drank it in an attempt to kill himself.

The given nature of parent-child relation in the study site, as earlier described, is perhaps not exclusive as there are many young people elsewhere in adverse relation with their parents. There are young people whose parents do not have time for them. And yet they do not all commit suicide. There are numerous suitors elsewhere who got rejected and do not take their own lives. Alcohol intake has been a part of the culture of the Filipino youth and yet not everybody commit suicide. In the study site, though such situation makes them vulnerable to suicide, it is apparent that it is aggravated by the accessibility of the means of suicide.

Because of the nature of their family's occupation as farmers, the victims readily have the means to commit suicide at hand. In the community, pesticides are usually stored either



inside the family house or in a storeroom near the house. Hence, these are easily accessible for someone who is determined to take his/her life. This may explain why almost all suicide cases recorded until 2009 was done through chemical ingestion, particularly pesticides. Only one case was committed using detergent.

Accessibility to a means of self-harm has shown to affect the method of suicide. Suicide victims who have used guns had easy access to guns. Studies on rural suicide, especially on farming areas, show that pesticides have been used as a means of killing oneself (SMHAI, n.d.). In Japan, the number of suicides hit a high 34, 427 in 2003 after it was well known through the chat rooms and news reports that carbon monoxide is a possible means of committing suicide (Cheng, 2009).

As to why pesticide is recorded as the leading (if not only) means of suicide, it is basically because these are very accessible to the population. As a vegetable farming community, the farmers in the study site excessively use a variety of pesticides. The market for the produce of vegetable farmers are varied, some dispose of their produce in local markets, and

in the trading posts located in La Trinidad and in Baguio City. Some would even bring their harvests to Metro Manila. Because of the increase in the demand for the vegetables, the farmers needed to cultivate more to produce more surpluses for the market. In this case, modern technology was desirable, since most of the lands suitable for farming were already cultivated and that some agricultural lands are converted into residential lots because of the increase in population. Given that modern technology – pesticides – are available and accessible, the farmers employ different types of these. The farmers use pesticide in the cleaning of weeds, during the growth of the crop, up to the very day these crops are harvested.

Among the farmers interviewed, the most prevalent reasons for using pesticides are economic. Pesticide-use increases production which also increases the profit of the farmers. In an income analysis, it takes three to five farm workers to work seven days to clear a hectare of land. Each worker is paid PhP 100 daily. In addition to the cost of labor are three meals and two snacks amounting to PhP 150 per worker. With the use of herbicides, labor is reduced to one to two persons who would only

work for one to two days. In place of labor is 1.5 - 2 liters of herbicide, which costs PhP 500 per liter to clear the same land area. Pesticide-use seems to be a more practical means of land preparation, considering the amount of savings that farmers could get from it. The use of insecticides and fungicides likewise increases profit as it reduces the risk of crop diseases.

In the 2008-2009 suicide clusters, the most favored chemical used by suicide victims was paraquat, a herbicide distributed in the area since 2004. The folks in the community commented that the chemical is very effective in eliminating farm weeds. Based on records of the suicide cases, paraquat has the highest casualty with almost 100 percent of those who drank it succumbing to death. Pyrethroid has been placed next to paraquat in terms of usage and casualty.

The study site is basically a mountain of semi-temperate vegetables garden with the virtual absence of trees. An inspection of these gardens would expose oneself to empty canisters and bottles of various kinds of pesticide. As shown in Figure 3, half of the farmers store purchased pesticides inside their

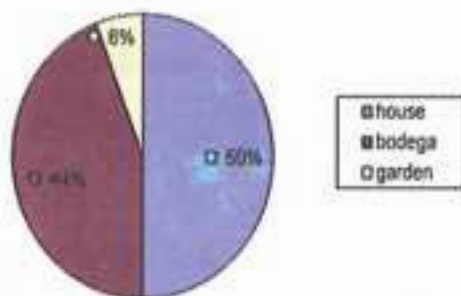


Figure 3. Place of pesticide storage



houses. This is so because their houses are located within their farm lots and therefore not really distant from their vegetable gardens. In some cases, small shelters that served as *bodega* (stock rooms) for implements and pesticides are erected either beside the house or in the gardens. The point is that these pesticides are very accessible to anyone, especially to depressed individuals intending to take their own lives. No wonder the distributor of paraquat thinks the solution to paraquat-related suicides are locks and keys of poorly prepared wood boxes purposely to keep the product out from death-seeking individuals.

Paraquat has highlighted the suicide phenomenon in the community as fatal suicide increased with the use of this new herbicide. This is supported by the observation of some locals that there were many other earlier unreported cases of suicide using red label pesticides but many of them survived. With paraquat, a green label herbicide, almost all those who used it as a means of suicide died. Its fatality is attributed to paraquat, its active ingredients, which according to most medical doctors, has no antidote. The choice of the paraquat in suicide cases may be attributed to its odorless feature. Most farmers interviewed pointed out this characteristic. This is important as the stage of actually taking in the poison is also a crucial point of restraint. Although it is the last stage, suicidal person may retain some reluctance up to this stage.

Pains associated with the means to kill oneself (especially hanging, shooting) are the final barrier to suicide, and so is an offensive smell. As a matter of fact, in one farmers' assembly called for by the paraquat company distributor in the study site, farmers requested that the herbicide be reformulated with an "offensive" smell. However, the company personnel present pointed out that there must be something wrong with the farmers' noses as the herbicide has already a foul smell.

It is not occupation, *per se*, that determines the likelihood of suicide. Rather, it is the availability of resources that the suicide attempter can access through his or her occupation which enables the motivation to be realized. Hence, farmers tend to use pesticide as a means of suicide.

On the other hand, this issue has to be seen in the context of farmers being left on their own with extension services being taken over by pesticide agents even at the household level. One does not wonder then why pesticide becomes a ready instrument. This brings on the issue of education-information, which is the heart of extension work (de la Torre-Baconguis, 2009). In the study site, what was observed by de la Torre-Baconguis as "disproportionate distribution of goods and services" in this case pesticide distribution by pesticide technicians in farming communities, rather than training materials – seems to hold true.



The extension activities that the project implemented greatly influenced the formulation of the project's ethical guidelines. These were conducted simultaneously during the data gathering stage of the research team. Because the project is pioneering in nature and there is a dearth of tested framework upon which the intervention activities would be organized, Project Pansigdan adapted the widely applied PRECEDE - PROCEED model. This model developed by L. Green and M. Kreuter in the 1970s was first used in clinical and field experiments. Later, it was used in the

development of health promotion objectives in indigenous communities in the United States and Canada.

While the PRECEDE - MODEL's overall goal is to promote "quality of life", that quality is largely understood in the context of health. With the composition of the project team, it was understood that the suicide phenomenon would be looked into by various disciplines. The end goal then should be the promotion of general well-being or *pansigdan* in the study site's native language.

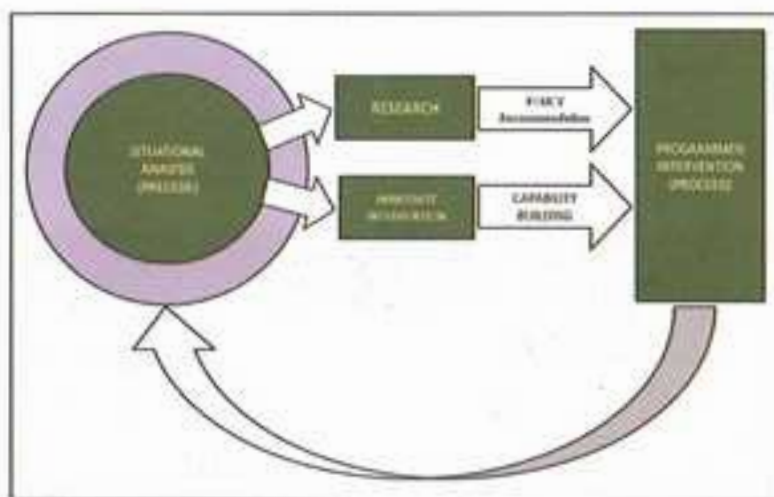


Figure 4. Project extension planning and implementation framework based on the PRECEDE-PROCEED Model

As shown in Figure 4, the PROCEED were the extension activities implemented and these were based on the assessment of the community's "quality of life" through the following steps under PRECEDE: social diagnosis; epidemiological diagnosis (in this project, suicide profiling was used); behavioral and environmental diagnosis; educational and organizational diagnosis; and administrative policy diagnosis.

The five diagnostic steps were integrated during the data gathering activities of the research. Thus, initial results of the data gathering done by the researchers were also the basis for the conduct of immediate interventions. So that while the results of the research would serve as the basis for policy recommendations, the immediate interventions in the form of trainings and advocacy campaigns were ways of enhancing the community stakeholders capacity to conduct effective "actions" necessary in building long term "solutions".

The steps outlined under PRECEDE take in the form of community diagnosis and this was conducted through community mapping with the elders and simulation workshops with the concerned stakeholders.

Observation and FGD were simultaneously done in the community planning done with the different sectors in the community. In order

to identify the needed support intervention activities per sector, the different groups represented by the farmers, barangay officials, elders, primary health workers, and educators were separately asked to discuss the following major questions:

- a. What are the activities that you think must be implemented to help you cope with the suicide problem in the community?
- b. How will this be conducted and or implemented?
- c. Who will lead its implementation?
- d. When will the activity be implemented?

The result of their answers outlined their training needs and these were further contextualized and expounded by the result of the community maps and FGDs conducted. In the mapping activity, the pattern in the development of the area as a farming community was revealed. The elders present were able to tell "stories" that made them realize the following:

- a. The sudden shift to commercial farming in the 1960s leads to the deforestation and the terracing of lands for vegetable gardens.
- b. There is a sudden increase of population as well as in-migration of people from the study site's surrounding areas. Inter-marriage among the members of the community with the migrants which included the *oblantes* or farm laborers from the lowlands was also noted.
- c. The watershed source is the only remaining forested area in the study site.



A lecture with the study site school teachers on how to effectively manage classroom behaviors - facilitated by Project Team member Mr. Raymundo H. Pawid Jr.



Project team member Dr. Jean Franette D. Sibayan also conducted psycho-educational activity with the community members during the project presentation and validation in September 2012.

As shown in Table 9, support intervention activities were delivered per sector. Parenting sessions were given to parents through *bugbaya* or counseling of elders and testimonies of model parents identified by the women's organization. Teachers, especially homeroom advisers, were given a lecture on alternative classroom management while students were given career guidance counseling and then later psycho-educational activity. Bereaved families who were interviewed by the research team were likewise provided with psycho-educational activity for grief and acceptance. Skills enhancement on how to further prevent suicide at the community level was also a recognized need. Hence, a briefing was given to primary health care workers by a known medical doctor and owner of the private clinic where most suicide victims were admitted.

Advocacy campaign regarding the adverse effects of pesticides to health and the environment was conducted through series of activities which include workshops facilitated by the project team and lectures delivered by invited subject matter specialists. Institutional

awareness campaign recognizing suicide as a social issue was easily channeled through the observance of the World Suicide Prevention Day scheduled by the International Association of Suicide Prevention every September 10. This was launched by the project team in BSU as a month-long commitment to accommodate more awareness campaign activities outside the study site. This also ushered the recording of "Pansigedan Tako Am-in" (Well-being for All), a magazine radio program that was aired for five days in a regional radio station in Baguio City.

Finally, the consolidated result of the researches conducted was first presented in the study area before it was publicly presented among invited agencies which include the provincial local government of Benguet, Department of Education, Department of Science and Technology, Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority, Commission on Higher Education, Benguet State University, and members of the media. Draft copies of the results were distributed to these agencies.

Table 9. Summary of extension activities implemented in 2009 and 2012.

DATE	TITLE	STAKEHOLDERS	PROVIDER	LESSONS LEARNED/RECOMMENDATIONS
July 23, 2008	Best Practices on Parenting (Storytelling/Testimony)	Women's association members, Lubon and Barangay officials	Community elder and women's association officer	Can be adopted in PTA meetings and other community organizational assemblies of the same purpose
August 27, 2008	Baggage and Additional Notes on the Spiritual Aspect of Parenting (Bag- bagay Storytelling) Pesticide and the Web of Life (Workshop) Career Guidance Counseling (Lecture)	Women's association members, Lubon and Barangay officials Women's association members, Lubon and Barangay officials High school students	Project Team Project Team Project Team	Can be done by the community's spiritual church leaders Can be a needs assessment exercises during farmer's technical trainings Effective to motivate students to be optimistic regarding education
August 28, 2008	Managing Classroom Behaviors (Lecture)	Elementary and high school teachers	Project Team	Can be a pre-assessment for public and continuing training
September 10, 2008	Pesticide and the Ecosystem (Workshop and Lecture) Observance of the Suicide Prevention Day Morning Event: "Parangalng Alay sa Buhay" or "A Prayer for Life" (Prayer Rally) Afternoon Event: Barangay ng Kasapangan sa Buhay na Masustansiyal or Cognitive Malasakitang, Tawala a Maginglu'ng Life (Lecture Series)	Farmers, barangay officials including elders and women BSU students	Project Team Project Team and BSU students	Can be an introductory activity in organic farming trainings Recorded as the first observance of the event in the Philippines
September 18, 2008	Pesticide Safety Education and Cost Benefit Analysis (Lecture)	Farmers	Project Team and invited subject matter specialist	Can be regularly integrated in any kind of farmer's forum or planning
September 21 - 25, 2008	Suicide Prevention for Primary Health Care Providers (Lecture) Psychological Activity for Grief and Acceptance (Group Dynamics)	Barangay Health Workers and women's association members Survivors and bereaved family members	Project Team and invited subject matter specialist Project Team and invited panel of a private clinic near the area Project Team	Effective in educating women on basic skills to prevent suicide Must be a required activity before site gathering in social research
September 15, 2012	Parangal-ong-ay (BSU on-the-Air Special Episode) Topics: Overview of the Barangay Farming Community via a via Farming, Understanding Suicide: Overview of Suicide Cases Around the World, in the Philippines in the Cordillera Region, Pesticide types and Their Formulation, Pesticide and the Environment, Health, Cost-benefit Analysis, Pesticide Incidents in Barangay, Experiences and Comments, and Responsibilities and Advocacy	Project Team and invited speakers	General public	Effective in awareness campaign as part of the suicide prevention month
September 15, 2012	Observance of the World Suicide Prevention Day (Candle Lighting Ceremony)	BSU administration through Commission on Higher Education's Memorandum	BSU students and faculty members	Effective in awareness building
September 21, 2012	Community Validation and Presentation of Research Results (Public Presentation)	Project Team	Project Respondents, Women's association members, Barangay officials and others	Can be a standard official practice to all social researchers
September 28, 2012	Psycho-educational Therapy (Group Dynamics) Project Results Presentation and Policy Recommendation (Public Presentation)	Project Team	Project Bar's high school students All school stakeholders	Can be integrated in Values Education subject or can be done separately as part of Suicide Prevention Day commemoration Agencies and organizations adopt with the dynamics of their own institutions can determine the mechanisms where different themes and projects can be revisited as that information-education advocates engage in their work and programs



1. Suicide is taboo yet very familiar event and has to be taken in its own social context specifically so that the profile of suicide cases reveal that 90% are out-of-school-youth and are relatively young with ages ranging from 15 to 24.

2. Accessibility and availability of "means-of-suicide" like pesticides has been proven once again to facilitate self-inflicted injuries and yet the results show that this circumstance can be prevented.

3. Effects of family history and suicide clustering and peer pressure can be very serious. With regards to "impulsive suicides", one can draw from the perspective that there can be an unconscious embodied process of learning practices and habits. The perspective which holds that suicide can take the form of "resistance" as it implicates others, is somehow partially seen in the study. Community members express great concerns with what is

"causing suicide" and they propose a variety of reasons based on their ample knowledge of different suicide cases in the community. But seemingly, age matters (i.e., young people are less mature; older should be more discerning).

4. The controlling character of technology, in this case pesticide, has been implicated in the study. The material world somehow shapes the character and consciousness of the people. The ubiquity of pesticides is shaping a state of dependency in the farmer on this technology

5. Farmers are replete with practices and beliefs on pesticide use and safety that are putting them on risk as there are limited precautions taken. The mediatization and media hyping on pesticide effectiveness and power and the absence of strong extension-education work in local communities (*vis a vis* the everyday visibility of company pesticide technicians) is another defining character of cash crop farming.



General Recommendations:

Institutionalization of school counseling centers that are accessible and friendly to young people. This will maximize the use of existing resources such as church leaders, *lupon* members, and BHWs. This also entails equipping educators or youth volunteers with skills and knowledge on facilitating group dynamics, etc.

Conduct of community integration activities. The 2011 launching of the *Liga sa Barangay* can be a model of community integration where it is strongly participated not only by youth but also by parents. This can even be strengthened by engaging the *liga* (league) in inter-barangay sports festivals. Other activities can be in the form of family day in schools, among other similar activities and or planned occasions.

Comprehensive plan for the assessment of health and well-being situation as well as alternative farming practices. The initial farmer's planning facilitated by BSU-ISRD in 2010 can serve as the springboard for defining ways forward. Disposal area or stock rooms be designated and monitored; or recovery facility be established for pesticide containers including pesticide technicians initiating the education, collection and proper disposal of their pesticide containers. It is suggested that pesticide technicians should be in charge of collecting and disposing pesticide containers.

Restricted access to highly lethal methods as well as defining boundaries of the operation of 'sites-of recreation' such as videoke bars. This includes community's initiatives in addressing the use and overuse of pesticide, limiting alcohol intake, demonstrating proper disposal of pesticide bottles, etc. The women's initiatives on banning alcohol business as well as putting curfew hours for sites-of-recreation need political will and social support especially from husbands.

Community education and public awareness- on all fronts. These may include pesticide lethality, study results, health and well-being, what to guard on youth behavior such as early detection and warning signs, protective mechanisms,

organic farming, reiteration of the importance of indigenous worldviews and social restraints, building-a-home, etc. Reiteration of the importance of safety gears as well as checking of equipment used in applying pesticides is also imperative. This also entail requiring pesticide companies to provide the needed safety gears.

Reiteration of the importance of education. Formal education seems to serve as safeguard to self-inflicted injuries. Profile of suicide cases point to the out-of-school youth as the main actors; school-based education then seems to provide wider options and choices for young people.

Extension work in the form of information education communication (IEC) be deployed in farming communities. Farming communities are hungry of appropriate information and education and these needs are usually filled in by pesticide technicians. Alternative technologies and agricultural practices such as IPM can be initiated; proper handling, use and disposal of pesticides. Series of IECs specifically on breaking the myth of pesticide use and management; also knowledge management in relation to the complex belief associated with suicide with specific contextualization of the IECs to the needs of each sector, i.e., women, youth.

Intensified monitoring of chemicals being disposed in the market by the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority and the Department of Agriculture. This include inventory of banned pesticides and coming up with appropriate actions for violations. Respondents suggested that pesticides be packaged in dark bottles to distinguish them as poisonous. They also say that pesticides should not be packaged in plastic bottles or containers similar to liquid soap or beverage as they can be mistaken for something safe to consume. For FPA and DA to review policies on chemical use, distribution and disposition and integrate relevant policy changes including appropriate re-education of farmers and other stakeholders.

Specific Recommendations:

Community level. Strengthening the education and public awareness that can start from existing data; integration of indigenous worldviews and social values *vis a vis* improper pesticide use and disposal; self monitoring and reiteration of alternative farming systems; regular conduct of community integration activities such as *Liga sa Barangay*; spiritual and family recollections; family days in the schools; and for community organizations and LGU to work out areas on policy through ordinances and by providing teeth to the implementation of agreed policies at the community level.

Education sector/Department of Education.

To include in the on-going review of curriculum the item on values education and environmental concerns which can be topical (web-of-life; values found in the local language and in local history, etc.). Integrate in home room activities values education on caring for the environment; and in counseling activities the handling of emotions; communicating problems as well as alternative ways of handling problem of the young people.

Researchers and research institutions. To establish baseline data on pesticide use, pesticide poisoning and self inflicted injuries through pesticides and make it accessible for everyone by putting up a web-based database that can be linked to stakeholders' websites for easy access, retrieval and updating. The development of this database should involve LGUs, who are themselves the primary users of the data. To conduct qualitative studies that aims to bring out voices of women, children and the youth in relation to the phenomenon while at the same time seeking community perspectives and efforts in response to the situation

Extension workers/Community development workers. To include as part of their advocacy, a component on environmental education such as monitoring of pesticide poisoning, and pesticide misuse. Health and well-being discussion should also form part of module development on Integrated Pest Management

or organic agriculture.

Local Government Unit/Department of Health. Conduct of comprehensive planning and assessment on health and health-seeking behavior of communities; the need to conduct regular capacity building for health workers in terms of knowledge on warning signs; what to watch for; recording, monitoring and proper reporting of suicide cases. This can be integrated in the regular data updating done by barangay health workers or it can be integrated in on-going surveillance activities of BHWs at the barangay level and tie this up with the municipal as well as provincial level. At the municipal and provincial level, schemes of monitoring and reporting must be institutionalized.

Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority, Department of Agriculture, DOH, Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Inventory of pesticides being used; actual pesticide use, pesticide container disposal, among others, has to be monitored as part of the pesticide regulation activity and should be done in coordination with the FPA. In turn, for FPA to perform its function of 'regulation'; to review policies on chemical use, distribution and marketing and to integrate relevant policy changes including re-tooling and re-education of technicians, farmers and other stakeholders; the need to outline of ethical precautions for the marketing and disposal of pesticides is also imperative.

Pesticide companies/Technicians. To require them to provide appropriate protection gears to their consumers; continuous education on pesticide handling; proper disposal of pesticide containers by taking charge of gathering containers and its observance of marketing and packaging ethics in the promotion of their products.

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