

Sulong Kabuhayan: A Gad-Initiated Livelihood Program for Empowering CSU Employees

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Abstract:

This study explored how a Gender and Development (GAD) initiated Livelihood Program has been developed to strengthen the Economic Resilience and Empowerment of Cagayan State University (CSU) employees. With recent trends in a growing number of financial pressures faced by university personnel, the Sulong Kabuhayan Livelihood program provides a pathway for employees to develop skills that will allow them to generate income. Participants in the program is trained in Food Protection and Processing, Electronics Repair, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Maintenance, Sewing and Fashion Design, Automotive Repair, and Safe Driving. The study employed a Descriptive Research Design and Data were analysed using Descriptive Statistics and Chi-square analysis to determine CSU Employees' Employment Profiles, Preferred Livelihood Activities, Primary Requirements for Starting a Livelihood Activity, and the Rationale for Enrolling in the Livelihood Program. The findings of the Data are to be utilized in the Development of an Action Plan for the implementation and sustainability of Sulong Kabuhayan Program for CSU Employees. This study has emphasised the importance of Institutional Support for the Development of Livelihood for the provision of Inclusive, Gender-Sensitive, Self-Sufficiency and Growth Opportunities for CSU employees.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

As the global economy faces uncertainty and prices continue to rise, many Cagayan State University (CSU) employees seek ways to make additional money to assist their families with financial woes. While these public servants have demonstrated their dedication to the job, they often struggle with their finances and do not verbalize it.

At this time, no formalized or systematic program exists to help CSU employees develop their own livelihood skills and to use the skills they already possess in order to produce a profit for themselves through entrepreneurial ventures or paid service opportunities. Many of these employees rely solely on fixed income and live with the stresses that create.

The proposed project *Sulong Kabuhayan: A GAD Initiated Livelihood Program for Empowering CSU Employees* attempts to address the economic need of CSU employees as well as provide them with opportunities to develop and nurture their otherwise untapped skills, creativity, and determination so that they can experience greater life satisfaction by participating in positive sustainable change. The Livelihood Development Program provides CSU members with hands-on training in the following areas: food processing, basic electronics, air-conditioning repair, tailoring, automotive maintenance, and safe driving. All of these skill areas are relatively straightforward to learn, have a high degree of current market demand (there are not enough qualified individuals to fill these positions), and represent a significant amount of potential earnings.

Currently, CSU does not have any type of structured or formal employee skill development program

for "livelihood skills." This means that CSU employees do not have the ability to develop or utilize the skills they currently possess and cannot gain additional experience or knowledge in an area that could potentially result in a new business/service income opportunity in the future. As a consequence of this gap in services and support, many CSU employees remain vulnerable to financial pressures and are therefore limited to fixed incomes and low levels of security and morale.

Sulong Kabuhayan is not just a skills development program. It is a movement for self-reliance, dignity, and economic empowerment. This program is designed to: (1) develop and provide CSU employees with the skills and competences that represent practical high demand, (2) assist CSU employees in creating micro-businesses or service-based businesses, (3) increase productivity, morale, and self-relational stability of employees, and (4) to establish a sustainable livelihood hub on campus. *Sulong Kabuhayan*, as an initiative, is built on the principles of gender responsive and inclusive growth. Its vision is to not only make CSU a site for learning but to empower all members of the campus community through the establishment of livelihood development resources.

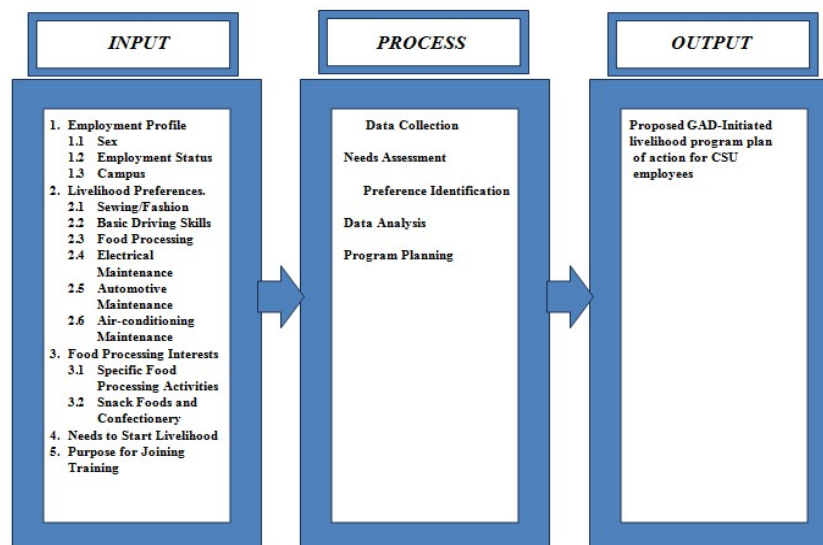
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study's conceptual framework is based on the premise that when institutional support, appropriate training and employee engagement work together to create self-sufficiency and economic resilience, the outcome will be empowerment of livelihoods. The framework is based upon the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) and the concepts of Gender and Development (GAD). Both approaches promote inclusion, building capacity, and empowering individuals as ways to achieve sustainable development.

By utilizing five types of capital (human, social, natural, physical, and financial), the Department for International Development has established that sustainable livelihoods is achieved through effective management of all five types of capital. Access to training and resources that build these capitals provides individuals with tools needed to identify and pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities as well as deal with the challenges posed by adverse economic conditions.

To empower people under the GAD Framework, everything must be inclusive of every person and all genders. There needs to be equal access to all support systems, as well as access to all resources, skills development, and income-generating opportunities for both sexes. In this study, the GAD approach ensures that livelihood training is sensitive to the needs and capacities of all employees, promoting equality and shared benefits.

CONCEPTUAL PARADIGM



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The conceptual framework of the study is anchored on the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model. The inputs include the respondents' employment profile, preferred livelihood activities, food processing interests, needs in starting livelihood activities, and their purpose for joining livelihood training. These inputs undergo processes such as data collection, needs assessment, preference identification, and data analysis. The results of these processes serves as the basis for developing a proposed Gender and Development (GAD)-initiated livelihood program plan of action aimed at enhancing the economic resilience, self-sufficiency, and practical income-generating skills of CSU employees.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to serve as basis how can a GAD-initiated livelihood program empower CSU employees by enhancing their economic resilience, self-sufficiency and access to practical, income-generating skills? Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the employment profile of the respondents in terms of:

1.1 Sex

1.2 Employment Status

1.3 Campus

2. Which livelihood activity respondents are most interested in?

2.1 Sewing/Fashion

2.2 Basic Driving Skills

Food Processing

2.3 Electrical Preventive Maintenance and Troubleshooting

2.4 Automotive Preventive Maintenance and Troubleshooting

2.5 Basic Air-conditioning Maintenance and Cleaning

3. Which food processing livelihood activity respondents are most interested in?

4. Which snack foods and confectionery respondents are most interested in

5. What do the respondents need most to start the livelihood activity?

6. What is the purpose of the respondents in joining the livelihood training program?

7. What plan of action can be developed to ensure effective implementation and sustainability of a proposed livelihood project?

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a descriptive-correlational research design to understand how a GAD-initiated livelihood program can support the economic empowerment of Cagayan State University (CSU) employees. The descriptive aspect of the research focused on profiling the respondents in terms of their employment status, department or unit, and previous exposure to livelihood training programs. It also identify which livelihood activities, such as food processing, electronics repair, sewing, automotive maintenance, and others, are most appealing to them, as well as how important they perceive these opportunities to be in improving their financial well-being.

RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

The respondents of the study were administrative and support personnel from various departments and units of Cagayan State University. They were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring participation from employees who has an interest in or potential need for livelihood development. Respondents' diverse backgrounds provided a more thorough picture of the university's capacity to sustain and train for a living.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

To gather the data, we used a researcher-made questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire has four major sections:

1. Profile Information-Most of the information collected was related to respondents' current employment status, department/unit, and any previous experience in livelihood training.
2. Livelihood Activity Preferences-Respondents were asked to respond to proposed areas of training within the livelihoods program. Potential training areas included food processing, electronics repair, air conditioning service, sewing/fashion, automotive maintenance, and driving.
3. Perceived Importance-This section utilized a four-point Likert scale (4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree) to measure levels of agreement with statements pertaining to the feasibility, relevance and potential benefits of the livelihoods program.
4. Plan of Action Input-This section contained input related to identifying priorities for training and for recommendations to support the sustainability of the program.

This instrument had been validated and had established reliability by undergoing a review process performed by experts in gender and development, livelihood training, and social research. A pilot test was also conducted before the formal data collection process to refine items for clarity and accuracy.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

With the approval of the university administrators, the questionnaires were sent out during business hours so that they could be returned via email. Researchers informed participants of the purpose of the study, and all potential participants were advised that they did not have to participate in any way if they chose not to. All participants were told that they would remain confidential and anonymous. After receiving the completed questionnaires back from the participants, researchers reviewed them for any errors or omissions, and then compiled the data into tables for further statistical analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the profiles and preferences of respondents using frequency, percentage, mean, and ranking. A Chi-square Test was then used to test whether a significant relationship existed between respondent profiles and respondents' perceptions of the importance of livelihood programs. These results were then used to develop an Action Plan for the implementation and sustainability of the *Sulong Kabuhayan* Livelihood Program as part of the GAD initiative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Employment Profile of the Respondents

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Female	129	67.54
Male	62	32.46
Total	191	100.00

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Table 1 contains the breakdown of the genders of the participants in the study. Of the total number of male and female participants, the share of females (129) was greater than that of males (62). Therefore, this information suggests that the majority of those completing the survey were female employees.

The increased number of females completing the survey may also indicate that they are more likely to take part in training and other forms of skill development related to income generation than are males. Furthermore, it may indicate that female employees are looking for ways to increase their income, gain new skills and improve their overall financial condition or stability. Additionally, while the number of males taking part in the study was relatively small (about a third), it would still be important for livelihood training to include activities of interest to both sexes.

Research has shown women are more likely than men to actively engage in a variety of Livelihood & Skills Training Programs; Women often want to improve their ability to create an income for themselves and support their families financially. Additionally, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2021), states that providing women with Livelihood & Skills Training positively influence the overall Economic and Community Development of a Household.

Table 2: Distribution of Employment Status of Respondents by Frequency and Percentage

Employment Status	Frequency	Percent
Casual	4	2.09
Contract of Service	42	21.99
Job Order	2	1.05
Permanent	143	74.87
Total	191	100.00

According to the information contained within Table 2, the employment status of respondents are represented by: Permanent Employees (n= 143; 74.87%), Contracts of Service (n=42; 21.99%), Casual Employees (n=4; 2.09%), and Job Order Employees(n=2; 1.05%).

According to this outcome, those who expressed an interest in being involved in livelihood type activities were mainly permanent employees. The fact they are permanently employed however does not prevent them from looking for opportunities to be involved with programs available to help with earning money, improving employability skills, and achieving financial security in the future. The presence of contracts for service, casual employment or job orders, indicates that these types of employees are also finding alternatives to earn additional income and improve financial stability.

The outcome supports the objectives of the research as it illustrates that permanent employees perceive the benefits associated with participating in these types of program opportunities. The ILO (2021) notes that due to the changes happening within the economies globally, there has been an increase for individuals to seek additional educational or training opportunities to improve their economic resilience by participating in continued learning and the creation of earned income.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Campus

Campus	Frequency	Percent
Andrews	56	29.32
Aparri	16	8.38
Central Administration	22	11.52
Gonzaga	11	5.70
Lallo	2	1.05
Lasam	40	20.94
Option 11	1	0.52
Piat	28	14.66
Sanchez Mira	12	6.28
Solana- Lara	3	1.57

Total	191	100.00
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Table 3 contains data regarding campuses and their participant distribution. The largest group of participants, 29.32% or 56 participants, was from Andrews Campus; 20.94% or 40 participants were from Lasam Campus; 14.66% or 28 participants were from Piat Campus, and 11.52% or 22 participants were from Central Administration. All other campuses (Aparri, Sanchez Mira, Gonzaga, Solana-Lara, and Lallo), has fewer participants.

The result shows that there are many different campuses with a number of employees that participated in this study, with Andrews Campus representing the most. Different responses among the different campuses may be related to differences in the size of the population, how accessible it is to the campus, and the level of interest in the livelihood training programmes. It can also be inferred that because of the representation of employees from all the campuses that the livelihood training initiatives should be implemented throughout all the campuses so that employees has an equal opportunity for training.

Included in the World Bank (2020) report on inclusive development, geographic distribution should be taken into account when creating inclusive development programmes. This finding demonstrates that Livelihood Training Programmes should be implemented by taking into consideration all campuses in order to provide equal participation and access to Skill Development Opportunities.

2. The Livelihood Activity That Most Interests Respondents

Table 4: Respondents' Most Interested Livelihood Activity Frequency and Rank Distribution

Livelihood Activity	Frequency	Rank
Sewing/Fashion	87	2
Basic Driving Skills	92	1
Electrical Preventive Maintenance and Troubleshooting	40	3
Automotive Preventive Maintenance and Troubleshooting	33	4
Basic Air-conditioning Maintenance and Cleaning	19	5

Table 4 shows the livelihood activities respondents are most interested in. The results reveal that Basic Driving Skills ranked first with 92 responses, followed by Sewing/Fashion with 87 responses, Electrical Preventive Maintenance and Troubleshooting with 40 responses, Automotive Preventive Maintenance and Troubleshooting with 33 responses, and Basic Air-conditioning Maintenance and Cleaning with 19 responses.

The findings indicate that respondents prefer livelihood activities that involve practical and technical skills that can potentially generate income or provide additional employment opportunities. The high interest in basic driving skills suggests that respondents may see driving as a viable skill for part-time employment or service-related work. Similarly, sewing and fashion remain popular because they allow individuals to create products that can be sold or used for small-scale business ventures.

The findings are directly related to the objective of UNESCO (2021), technical and vocational education and training (TVET) which is to equip individuals with practical skills that enhance employability, productivity, and entrepreneurship opportunities

3. Preserved and Processed Foods Respondents are Most Interested In?

Table 5: Frequency and Rank Distribution of Preserved and Processed Foods Respondents are Most Interested In

Food Processing Livelihood Activity	Frequency	Rank
Meat Processing	100	1
Fish Processing	58	4

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Fruit Preservation	81	2
Vegetable Preservation	74	3

Table 5 shows the types of food processing activities respondents are interested in. Meat processing ranked first with 100 responses, followed by fruit preservation with 81 responses, vegetable preservation with 74 responses, and fish processing with 58 responses.

The study findings show that participants demonstrated a higher than average level of interest in food-based ways to make money (livelihood), especially through meat processing. The reason meat processing typically represents a way to earn a living is because the resources needed to operate will probably be available to most people. Also, meat processing is one of those types of businesses that can easily be created as small-scale companies. The interest in preserving fruit and vegetables may also represent another opportunity for value-added income by creating additional income-generating opportunities from agricultural products.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO; 2022) supports this assertion based on their assertion that food processing and preservation strategies can help increase revenue generation and reduce food loss, as well as support small entrepreneurs in their communities.

4. What are the most popular snack foods and confections among respondents?

Table 6: Frequency and Rank Distribution of Snacks Food and Confectionery Respondents are Most Interested In

Product-Based Livelihood Activity	Frequency	Rank
Native Delicacies	99	1
Chips Production	67	1.5
Chocolate and Cocoa-Based Products	67	1.5

Table 6 shows how often respondents expressed interest in snack food/confectionery production. Based on this table, the most popular snack produced by the respondents was native delicacies, as 99 respondents indicated an interest in native delicacies. In addition, 67 respondents expressed interest in both chips and chocolate/cocoa products (tie for 1.5).

Native delicacies are seen as having potential in the marketplace. Since consumers have a continuing demand for these items at community celebrations, events, and local markets it makes sense that they would be a solid business opportunity (small). The same could be said about potato chip production and chocolate manufactured products. There appears to be a significant demand for these types of products which provides ample opportunity for innovation in product development and entrepreneurial activity in food production.

According to ADB (2021), traditional delicacies and local food products can be very successful entrepreneurial ventures with a proper supporting foundation consisting of appropriate training, effective marketing systems and good product development.

5. Entrepreneurship Support Services Respondents Need Most to Start the Livelihood Activity?

Table 7: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Entrepreneurship Support Services Respondents Need Most to Start the Livelihood Activity?

Entrepreneurship Support Services	Frequency	Percent
Business Registration	2	1.05
Capital Assistance	41	21.47
Marketing Support	2	1.05
Starter tools/ equipment	29	15.18
Technical Skills training	110	57.59
Total	191	100.00

As seen in Table 7, the entrepreneurs in this sample indicated the types of entrepreneurship support they needed. The most frequently identified support was for Technical Skills Training by the largest portion of respondents, with 110 respondents (57.59%) indicating this type of support was their highest need for entrepreneurship. Capital Assistance (41 respondents; 21.47%) and Starter Tools/Equipment (29 respondents; 15.18%) were also identified by respondents with the second greatest frequency and third highest frequency, respectively. A very small number of respondents indicated Business Registration (2 respondents; 1.05%) and Marketing Assistance (2 respondents; 1.05%) as their lowest-priority support service needs.

The findings show that acquiring technical knowledge and skills is most important to respondents before they start their livelihoods, followed by equipment and financial support. The survey results suggest that the foundation of all successful livelihoods is technical skills training.

As stated by the OECD (2020), the primary focus of entrepreneurship programs should be to train individuals in the technical skills necessary to create and sustain small businesses by providing them with knowledge and competence.

These findings support the need to prioritize technical skill training and capacity building in employment readiness programs before providing any type of funding.

6. Purpose of the Respondents in Joining the Livelihood Training Program?

Table 8: Total Frequency and Approximate Percentage of the Purpose of Respondents in Joining the Livelihood Training Program

Motivation for Participating in Livelihood Activities	Total Frequency	Approx. Percent
To Augment Monthly Income	103	53.9%
Personal Growth	71	37.2%
Upskilling and Reskilling	93	48.7%
Financial Stability	63	33.0%
Motivation and Engagement	67	35.1%

According to Table 8, a majority of the individuals who participated in the livelihood training program indicated that they wanted to receive additional monthly income. There were 103 individuals (53.9% of the total responses) who indicated income as the main reason for their participation. The second largest group (93 individuals or 48.7%) identified their upskilling or reskilling as the reason for their participation, while 71 respondents (37.2%) chose personal growth, 67 respondents (35.1%) cited motivation and engagement, and 63 (33.0%) indicated financial stability.

While respondents clearly indicated their motivation to increase their income and improve their financial position, they also cited opportunities to develop new skills (upselling/reselling) and personal growth. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that livelihood programs can provide income as well as development for both professional and personal purposes.

In addition, these results align closely with the World Economic Forum (2023) objective of providing opportunities for continuous skills development (reskilling) to create greater income opportunities and support long-term economic stability.

7. Plan of Action for the Effective Implementation and Sustainability of a Proposed Livelihood Project

Table 9: Plan of Action for the Proposed Livelihood Project

Objective	Activities	Target Participants	Time Frame	Expected Output	Responsible Unit
1. Provide	Conduct	Employees	1st–2 nd	At least	Extension

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technical livelihood skills training based on respondents' interests.	training workshops on: 1) Basic Driving Skills, 2) Sewing/Fashion, 3) Electrical Preventive Maintenance and Troubleshooting, 4) Automotive Maintenance, 5) Basic Air-conditioning Maintenance	across campuses	Quarter	70% of participants acquire basic livelihood skills	Office / Training Unit
2. Develop skills in food processing and product development.	Organize hands-on training on: 1)Meat Processing, 2)Fruit Preservation, 3) Vegetable Preservation, 4)Fish Processing	Interested respondents	2nd Quarter	Participants able to produce preserved food products	Food Technology / Trainers
3. Provide training on snack food and delicacy production.	Conduct livelihood workshops on: 1) Native Delicacies, 2) Chips Production, 3) Chocolate and Cocoa-based Products	Employees interested in food-based livelihood	2nd-3rd Quarter	Participants develop marketable snack products	Extension Office
4. Strengthen entrepreneurial knowledge and technical competence.	Conduct seminars on: 1) Technical Skills Enhancement, 2) Basic Entrepreneurship, 3) Product Pricing and Costing, 4) Business Planning	All participants	3rd Quarter	Participants gain entrepreneurial knowledge	Business/Entrepreneurship Experts
5. Provide entrepreneur-ship support services.	Facilitate access to: 1) Starter tools/equipment, 2) Capital assistance	Selected participants ready to start livelihood	3rd-4th Quarter	Participants able to start small livelihood	University / Partner Agencies

	programs, 3) Business mentoring			projects	
6. Promote livelihood products and marketing opportunities.	1) Organize product exhibit and trade fairs, 2) Provide digital marketing training, 3) Link participants to local markets	Participants with developed products	4th Quarter	Increased product visibility and sales	Marketing Unit / LGU Partners
7. Monitor and evaluate program impact.	1) Conduct follow-up evaluation, 2) Track participants who started livelihood ventures, 3) Assess income augmentation	All participants	End of Program	Report on program effectiveness	Research and Extension Office

Table 9 shows how respondents feel about their reasons to attend livelihood training programs. The majority of respondents (53.9% or 103 responses) indicated that they were interested in increasing their monthly income, followed by developing new skills (48.7% or 93 responses) and improving oneself personally (37.2% or 71 responses). Other reasons for attending were the need to feel motivated and engaged (35.1% or 67 responses), as well as wanting to achieve financial security (33.0% or 63 responses).

The reason that most respondents attended these training programmes is because they want to increase their income or improve their financial status. Many of these respondents want to acquire more skills and for this reason, they are engaged in self-development. This shows that these livelihood training programmes provide participants with an alternate income source, as well as an opportunity to develop their careers or become personally empowered.

According to the UNDP (2021) Empowerment, Confidence and Self-Reliance through Livelihood and Entrepreneurship Programs create Personal Empowerment, Confidence, and Self-Reliance provide the foundation for Economic and Social Development. Livelihood Programs enable Participants to Skill Development, Financial Security, and Personal Growth. The results presented in Table 9 confirm the Study's Objectives in that Participants believe Livelihood Training Programs will augment their income, expand their skills, enhance their Personal Development, and achieve Financial Stability.

CONCLUSION

The *Sulong Kabuhayan* initiative is more than just a series of workshops focused on helping people find new ways of making money - it is about how to empower people to take control of their financial lives. In conjunction with the Gender and Development (GAD), the *Sulong Kabuhayan* programme aims to equip employees at CSU with the skills and confidence to seek out and establish additional sources of income, thereby achieving financial independence.

The findings of this study provides CSU with a comprehensive overview of its employees' interests, needs and willingness to engage in income-generating activities. By supporting and institutionalising

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Sulong Kabuhayan, CSU establishes a workplace environment based on empowerment, inclusivity, and sustainability one that provides all employees with the opportunity to serve and be successful.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study gives recommendations to CSU based on the goals and anticipated results of the study:

1. To institutionalize Livelihood Development as a main GAD objective.
2. To conduct routine Skills Training which is related to both Employee Interest and Industry Demand.
3. To build Partnerships with Local Governments and Industry Experts in order to improve Training Quality.
4. To create a Livelihood Centre/HUB on Campus where Employee Developed Products or Services can be exhibited and sold.
5. To have Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms in order to sustain and measure the positive impact of Livelihood Development Programs on Employees.

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