

***OF DREAMS AND HOPES: THE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE  
LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF ABRA, PHILIPPINES***

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**Abstract**

*"Governance is most visible where it is most needed"*. This study examines how localized governance influences the delivery of social services and employs an embedded mixed methods design. Findings show that service delivery is generally effective, but several challenges remain. These include limited resources, logistical constraints, and low public awareness. A significant correlation between service effectiveness and the presence of challenges suggests that local offices may succeed through resilience and innovation. The study emphasizes the importance of community-based and participatory approaches that can enhance equity, improve delivery systems, and promote sustainable development.

**Keywords:** social services, governance, local government units

**I. Rationale/Background of the Study**

*"A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members."* This timeless principle emphasizes the importance of social services in promoting fair and compassionate societies worldwide. Social services, which include health, education, housing, welfare, and disaster response, are fundamental tools for governments to protect human dignity, promote fairness, and ensure sustainable development.

Social service delivery is recognized as a foundation of good governance. The Sustainable Development Goals pointed out that universal access to quality social services helps in eliminating poverty, reducing inequalities, and creating resilient communities. A functional social service systems not only address community needs but also breaks the cycle of poverty (World Bank, 2020). In developing countries, services remain uneven, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas where there is inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, and insufficient planning, which often obstruct effective service delivery (UNDP, 2021). These challenges occur in countries with decentralized governance systems since local governments are expected to fulfill national mandates even without adequate support.

In the Philippines, decentralization positioned local government units (LGUs) as the primary bodies responsible for providing essential services. LGUs are tasked to deliver programs in health, education, social welfare, livelihood, and disaster preparedness. Services being offered are expected to improve community well-being (DILG, 2020). Decentralization was conceptualized to bring governance closer to the people and to ensure that these services are more appropriate to local needs.

The local effectiveness of service delivery varies among local government units. Reyes and Mandap (2020) highlighted that the provision of basic services is impeded in the Philippines due to inadequate resources, lack of technical knowledge, and scarce infrastructure. Brillantes and Fernandez (2018) also noted that while a few LGUs have succeeded in modernizing service delivery, there remain issues or barriers. These conditions of the LGUs result in disparities,

particularly in rural and remote areas. The Province of Abra is faced with this situation. With its terrain, the province experiences difficulties in fulfilling its responsibilities. There are national programs and funding mechanisms, but there is limited research on how these services are delivered at the local level and how these barriers are solved in the local level.

This study seeks to address the gap by looking into the current situation of social services in Abra. This research provides a deeper understanding of how social services are experienced at the grassroots level. It aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges in the current system. Through this, it will provide evidence-based recommendations to improve the service delivery in Abra and may also be applied to other regions. It also emphasizes the importance of ground-level improvement in local governance and advocates for solutions at the local level that are not just top-down but also community-driven, which is aligned with SDGs 10 and 16 (Reduced Inequalities and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). In addition, the study evaluates the effectiveness, transparency, and responsiveness of local governance structures. An essential aspect of this study is its emphasis on gender equity in social service delivery through looking into how existing programs respond to the specific challenges faced by men and women. The title “*Of Dreams and Hopes*” reflects the aspirations of the people of Abra for a governance that would meet their needs, through which social services are not only delivered but also embody the hope for equality, inclusivity, and a better quality of life.

## II. Theoretical Framework

A Multidimensional approach may be used to understand the importance of social service delivery in the local area. This study focused on Decentralization Theory, the Capability Approach, and Participatory Governance Theory. These theories would determine how local governance affects the quality, equity, and responsiveness of services in the Province of Abra and, at the same time, provide a comprehensive basis for assessing its performance, citizen empowerment, and improvement in service delivery.

Decentralization Theory asserts the importance of delegating authority and responsibility from the central government to the local government (Brillantes & Tumanut, 2021). In the Philippine context, this theory finds grounding in Republic Act 7160, which mandates local government units to provide important services to the people. However, as Dumlao and Santiago (2023) pointed out, localization does not guarantee an improved service delivery if it is not supported by adequate resources, capacity building, and most importantly, political will. This indicates its effectiveness depends on the challenges faced by local units.

Building on the structural insights offered by Decentralization Theory, the Capability Approach shifts the focus toward individual well-being and empowerment. Introduced by Sen and expanded by Nussbaum, this theory emphasizes the importance of enabling people to live lives they value (Robeyns, 2021). Applied to social services, it encourages governments to consider not just the availability of services, but whether these services expand people’s capabilities. Research by Balanon et al. (2022) supports this view, revealing that locally adapted services in rural LGUs significantly enhance access to education and health. This perception balances devolution by giving importance to the human impact of implementing policies.

However, empowering communities may not be possible without their involvement in decision-making processes. This brings us to the third framework: Participatory Governance Theory. This theory would give importance to the involvement of the people in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (Medina & Soriano, 2023). He mentioned that when communities

are actively involved, services become more transparent and effective. In rural areas like Abra, where top-down approaches often miss localized concerns, participatory governance offers a mechanism for aligning services with what the people really need. This serves as a corrective way to address their potential limitations.

These theories address practical governance challenges. For example, a World Bank (2022) report mentioned that success remains inconsistent due to a lack of funds for the LGUs, poor infrastructure, and weak coordination. This gap is clear in the province of Abra, where some remote barangays still experience limited access to basic services. These findings underline the need to assess how local government units really work. Additionally, the issue of equity remains a concern about service delivery. Indeed, decentralization does not fully address inequalities in gender, income, or even geography. The Capability Approach helps close this gap by stressing that services must account for the specific challenges faced by local government units. A study by Santiago and Lopez (2021) found that women also continue to face unequal access to reproductive health, education, and livelihood support. This highlights the importance of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into local governance.

Closely related to equity are the possible solutions to overcome social services challenges. Recent work by Villanueva and Reyes (2022) documents how local activities in Cordillera communities, including locally organized disaster preparedness programs, outpaced local interventions. These case studies highlight the value of Participatory Governance in resilience. These also demonstrate that people can be a partner of the local government units in improving the basic services in the community.

Drawing from the Capability Approach and Participatory Governance, the present study emphasizes that the involvement of local stakeholders can improve service delivery. This bottom-up approach may be a positive procedure for making social services effective and sustainable. In examining these themes, the study contributes to national and international development goals. Specifically, it aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 10 and 16, which emphasize the need to eliminate inequalities and promote improvements in institutions. By analyzing how services are distributed and experienced at the local level, this research advances the discourse on how governance can be reimagined to work for all. This theoretical framework strengthens the study by providing a balanced analysis of structures, human outcomes, and participatory mechanisms. Decentralization Theory would look into the macro-institutional lens, while the Capability Approach focuses on the human impact of governance, and Participatory Governance Theory would emphasize the need for local government units and their citizens to collaborate. Together, they guide the investigation into how LGUs in Abra can better deliver social services that are not only efficient but also just, inclusive, and community-led.

### **III. Statement of the Problem**

This study aims to explore the following:

1. What is the level of efficiency and quality of social service delivery in LGUs based on key service delivery indicators?
2. What is the level of evaluation on the effect of social service delivery on the well-being of residents in the local government units?
3. What is the level of challenges encountered in the delivery of social services in LGUs?
4. Is there a significant relationship between effectiveness and challenges in the delivery of services by selected local government offices in Abra?

5. Is there a significant correlation between the perceived challenges and the overall quality of services provided by local government offices?

#### **IV. Methodology**

This study used an embedded mixed methods design, mainly relying on quantitative data to evaluate the efficiency, quality, and impact of social service delivery in the local government units (LGUs) of the Province of Abra, while including qualitative data to gain deeper insights into community-level experiences and perceptions. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of local governance, especially in the rural and geographically isolated municipalities of Abra.

#### **Research Locale and Participants**

The study was conducted to select barangays within the municipalities of Lagangilang and Dolores, Abra. There were 28 male and 22 female respondents of which they were barangay officials, barangay secretaries, treasurers, and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) chairpersons who are directly involved in planning, monitoring, and implementing social services at the community level.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who have direct knowledge and experience in delivering or observing the delivery of social services. Their responses would provide valuable insight into both the administrative and community-level realities of service provision.

#### **Data Collection Methods**

The quantitative component of the study is composed of a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure three major aspects: the efficiency and quality of social service delivery; the effect of these services on residents' well-being; and challenges encountered in service delivery. To complement the survey findings, qualitative data were embedded through open-ended questions included at the end of the questionnaire for respondents to elaborate on the issues they observe in service delivery. A short key informant interview (KIIs) with selected barangay leaders and frontline workers was also conducted. This embedded approach ensured that the numerical results were supported and contextualized by actual narratives and experiences from the barangays.

#### **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data were processed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed to describe the general trends and levels of perceived service delivery. The following scale guided interpretation:

- 4.21 – 5.00: Very High / Excellent
- 3.41 – 4.20: High / Good
- 2.61 – 3.40: Moderate / Fair
- 1.81 – 2.60: Low / Poor
- 1.00 – 1.80: Very Low / Inadequate

To answer the correlational research questions, Pearson's  $r$  was used to determine the relationship between service delivery effectiveness and the challenges encountered. The

qualitative responses were analyzed through thematic analysis. By coding recurrent patterns and insights on implementation challenges, gender equity, local efforts, and institutional gaps, emerging themes were found. The quantitative results were explained and enhanced by these qualitative findings, particularly in areas where scores were low or groups differed significantly.

**Ethical Considerations**

The study ensured ethical compliance by securing informed consent from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. The purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of participation were clearly explained. No identifying personal data was recorded in the final analysis.

**V. Results and Discussions:  
 On the Efficiency and Quality of Social Services Delivered to the LGUs**

Table 1a. Level of Efficiency and Quality of Social Services Delivered to the LGUs on Social Welfare Development

A. SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT	Means
1. The financial assistance programs of DSWD have improved the well-being of families.	4.2000
2. DSWD livelihood programs have contributed to poverty reduction.	4.0400
3. DSWD’s social services are accessible to all who need them.	4.1000
4. DSWD effectively delivers relief and assistance during crises.	4.2600
5. The cash assistance programs of DSWD are fairly distributed.	3.8800

Legend:

- 4.21 – 5.00 Highly Efficient
- 3.61 – 4.20 Efficient
- 2.41 – 3.60 Moderately Efficient
- 1.81 – 2.40 Slightly Efficient
- 1.00 – 1.80 Not Efficient

The data indicate that local government stakeholders perceive the social welfare services provided by the DSWD as generally effective, particularly in their crisis response and financial assistance programs. Among the five evaluated indicators, the highest score was achieved for the DSWD’s efficiency in delivering relief and aid during crises (M = 4.26), indicating a "highly efficient" designation. This underscores the agency’s important role and prompt action during emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health crises. It concurs with previous research, which emphasizes the responsiveness of social welfare institutions in times of calamity (Reyes & Mina, 2020). Such elevated ratings exemplify considerable trust in the government's capacity to respond expeditiously in urgent situations.

However, while the financial and livelihood programs received positive ratings, they still fall into the "efficient" category, which means that although these services are functional and helpful, there is still room for improvement. The fairness of cash assistance programs (M = 3.88) received the lowest rating among the indicators, which showed concerns among beneficiaries regarding equity and consistency in implementation. Virola et al. (2021) noted that social protection programs in the Philippines often face delays. Supporting this, some respondents shared that there is inequality sometimes in giving cash assistance and observed instances where households perceived to be less in need received aid while others were left out. These insights

reinforce the findings and highlight the need for more transparent and equitable delivery mechanisms.

The results imply that there is a need to maintain effective crisis response mechanisms and ensure that transparency and accessibility are maintained in support services, such as cash and livelihood assistance. LGUs and national agencies like DSWD may strengthen their target systems, improve communication at the barangay level, and adopt digitized beneficiary tracking tools to make sure of quality service delivery (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Furthermore, this would improve fairness in the distribution of assistance and could help gain citizen trust, engagement, and satisfaction in public social welfare programs.

Table 1b. Level of Efficiency and Quality of Social Services Delivered to the LGUs on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM)

B. Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM)	
1. The LGU provides adequate disaster preparedness training and information to the community.	4.18
2. Early warning systems for disasters are reliable and effective.	4.08
3. Disaster relief and emergency response services are delivered in a timely and efficient manner.	4.00
4. Evacuation centers are safe, accessible, and well-equipped	4.34
5. There is strong coordination between the LGU and the community during disasters.	4.32

Legend:

4.21 – 5.00	Highly Efficient
3.61 – 4.20	Efficient
2.41 – 3.60	Moderately Efficient
1.81 – 2.40	Slightly Efficient
1.00 – 1.80	Not Efficient

The LGUs have established an effective procedure for managing and reducing disasters, as shown in Table 1b, particularly in making sure that evacuation facilities are secure, accessible, and equipped. A strong collaboration between LGU and the community during emergencies was rated highly efficient, which also shows that local administrations are doing their responsibility of encouraging good relationships. These strengths imply that local government units (LGUs) are giving importance to community involvement and physical readiness, which are important aspects for disaster risk management.

Respondents affirmed that local government units (LGUs) manage evacuation and coordination effectively during emergencies. However, some noted delays in the release of early warnings and the limited frequency of training programs. These observations support the numerical data and point to the need for more timely communication systems and sustained capacity-building efforts to enhance overall disaster readiness.

**Table 1c. Level of Efficiency and Quality of Social Services Delivered to the LGUs on Rural Health Unit (RHU)**

C. Rural Health Unit (RHU)	
1. The RHU provides accessible and adequate health services for all residents, including low-income families.	3.9800
2. Vaccination programs and disease prevention efforts are well-implemented.	4.2000
3. Medicines from the RHU are sufficient, affordable, and readily available.	3.7400
4. Maternal care services, such as prenatal and postnatal care are accessible.	4.0800
5. Health education campaigns and public health programs are active and effective.	4.1400

Legend:

4.21 – 5.00	Highly Efficient
3.61 – 4.20	Efficient
2.41 – 3.60	Moderately Efficient
1.81 – 2.40	Slightly Efficient
1.00 – 1.80	Not Efficient

The results confirm that the rural health units are generally effective in delivering essential health services, especially in vaccination programs and disease prevention efforts. These are not only well-implemented but also perceived as reaching more people in the community, and this means that there a strong preventive care strategies. Health education campaigns and maternal care services were also seen as accessible and impactful, indicating that RHUs are addressing both awareness and specialized care needs within communities. The availability of basic services across income groups further implies that health access is not overly limited by economic status.

However, the relatively lower rating for medicine availability points to a gap in resource consistency, especially in terms of supply and affordability. Respondents shared concerns over stock shortages and limited options, which can hinder treatment continuity for many residents. While RHUs perform well in outreach and education, the adequacy of actual medical supplies remains a challenge. These findings indicate that strengthening logistics and procurement systems could significantly improve overall service delivery, especially for those relying solely on public health resources.

**Table 1d. Level of Efficiency and Quality of Social Services Delivered to the LGUs on the Assessor’s Office**

D. Assessor’s Office	
1. Property assessments in my LGU are conducted fairly and accurately.	4.1600
2. The Assessor’s Office provides clear guidelines on property taxation.	3.8400
3. The process of securing property documents is fast and efficient.	3.8200
4. Staff in the Assessor’s Office are approachable and accommodating.	3.6600
5. I am satisfied with the transparency of land valuation in my LGU.	

Legend:

4.21 – 5.00	Highly Efficient
3.61 – 4.20	Efficient
2.41 – 3.60	Moderately Efficient

1.81 – 2.40 Slightly Efficient  
 1.00 – 1.80 Not Efficient

The data show that property assessments are viewed as fair and accurate (4.16), which shows positive on the credibility of the Assessor’s Office. Respondents confirmed that valuations were generally consistent and aligned with market expectations. Some shared that assessors explained the process during transactions, which helped build trust in the system. This supports previous findings that transparency and fairness contribute to higher public confidence in local tax systems (Gupta & Martinez-Vazquez, 2018). However, lower satisfaction with the clarity of taxation guidelines and the speed of processing property documents suggests areas where service delivery could still improve.

Several respondents shared that staff members were “respectful and willing to explain” and that the office environment felt “organized and easy to approach.” These responses show that there is a positive working environment within the Assessor’s Office, which makes the service delivery appreciated by the people. Such firsthand accounts reinforce the quantitative data which indicates that while there is a big chance to improve work efficiency, the professionalism and effectiveness of staff continue to foster public satisfaction and trust.

**Table 1e. Level of Efficiency and Quality of Social Services Delivered to the LGUs on Agriculture Services**

E. Agriculture Services	Means
1. The LGU provides sufficient support for local farmers.	4.2000
2. Agricultural training and seminars are regularly conducted.	3.9000
3. Farmers have access to financial assistance and subsidies from the LGU.	3.6400
4. There are enough irrigation and farming support projects in my community.	3.7200

Legend:

4.21 – 5.00 Highly Efficient  
 3.61 – 4.20 Efficient  
 2.41 – 3.60 Moderately Efficient  
 1.81 – 2.40 Slightly Efficient  
 1.00 – 1.80 Not Efficient

The results reveal that among the agricultural services provided by local government units (LGUs), the highest-rated aspect was the sufficient support extended to local farmers (M = 4.20). This indicates that there is strong approval of the assistance provided to the people. In contrast, the lowest-rated service was access to financial assistance and subsidies (M = 3.64), which means that there is a need to improve the services to ensure that farmers receive adequate and timely financial support.

Insights gathered from short interviews have reinforced these observations. Respondents noted visible employees' efforts to provide the farming needs, such as seeds and fertilizers, and conduct training sessions that would support more productivity in agriculture. Some shared that these programs have had an impact on their communities, most specifically in improving farming practices. However, there were concerns were raised about delays in the distribution of financial support and the limited number of irrigation projects. This indicates the need for the local government unit to address these issues regarding the delays. These findings are consistent with

existing literature on the role of LGUs in enhancing local agricultural development through direct interventions and programmatic support (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011; Reyes et al., 2018). Although the respondents rated farming support and training as an effective strategy, there is still a need to improve the service delivery in the local government unit. If these gaps are addressed, this would lead to improved agricultural outcomes and inclusive service coverage.

Table 1f. Level of Efficiency and Quality of Social Services Delivered to the LGUs on Natural Resources and Environmental Services

F. Natural Resources and Environmental Services	Means
1. LGU actively promotes environmental protection programs.	4.2000
2. Waste management and recycling programs are well-implemented.	3.9000
3. Tree-planting and reforestation programs are regularly conducted.	3.6400
4. The community follows proper waste segregation and disposal practices.	3.7200

Legend:

4.21 – 5.00	Highly Efficient
3.61 – 4.20	Efficient
2.41 – 3.60	Moderately Efficient
1.81 – 2.40	Slightly Efficient
1.00 – 1.80	Not Efficient

The findings suggest that local government units (LGUs) are perceived as performing effectively in the delivery of natural resources and environmental services, with the most favorable observation centered on their active promotion of environmental protection programs (M = 4.20). Respondents viewed the implementation of waste management and recycling programs positively (M = 3.90), while tree-planting and reforestation efforts (M = 3.64) received the lowest rating, indicating some variability in perceived effectiveness across service areas. Community compliance with waste segregation and disposal was also moderately rated (M = 3.72), suggesting that while awareness exists, consistent practice may still be a challenge.

Feedback from respondents supports these results, noting that LGU-led environmental campaigns and information drives have become more visible in recent years, especially in schools and barangays. Several observed improvements in waste collection schedules and the availability of recycling facilities. However, concerns were also raised about the irregular conduct of tree-planting activities and the lack of long-term maintenance for reforested areas, which may contribute to the lower ratings in this aspect. Similarly, while some residents follow proper waste segregation, others pointed out the need for stronger enforcement and continuous education to sustain environmentally responsible behavior.

These findings align with prior research emphasizing the critical role of LGUs in environmental governance through education, regulation, and community involvement (Alampay, 2014; Magno, 2016). The relatively high ratings for promotional and waste management efforts suggest that awareness and basic systems are in place. However, the lower scores for reforestation and public compliance indicate a need for more integrated and sustained interventions. Enhancing environmental outcomes may require a combination of policy enforcement, participatory programs, and long-term resource planning.

Table 1g. Level of Efficiency and Quality of Social Services Delivered to the LGUs on Business Permit and Licensing Office

G. Business Permit and Licensing Office	Means
1. The process of obtaining a business permit in my LGU is easy and efficient.	4.0800
2. Business owners receive adequate guidance on licensing requirements.	4.0200
3. The LGU provides fair and transparent business regulations.	4.0200
4. The processing time for business permits is reasonable.	4.0000

Legend:

4.21 – 5.00	Highly Efficient
3.61 – 4.20	Efficient
2.41 – 3.60	Moderately Efficient
1.81 – 2.40	Slightly Efficient
1.0 – 1.80	Not Efficient

The results indicate a generally positive assessment of the efficiency and quality of services delivered by local government units (LGUs) through their Business Permit and Licensing Offices. Respondents rated the ease and efficiency of obtaining a business permit highest (M = 4.08), closely followed by adequate guidance on licensing requirements and the fairness and transparency of regulations (both M = 4.02). The processing time for permits was also viewed favorably (M = 4.00), which suggests that the system is functioning smoothly and meets the expectations of business owners. This reflects a level of consistency and reliability in the administrative processes involved in business registration.

These findings are reinforced by observations shared by respondents who noted improvements in customer service and clearer procedural steps. Some highlighted the importance of LGU personnel in clarifying requirements. The perception of fair and transparent business regulations also aligns with studies that underlined the importance of predictability and clarity in local governance (Llanto, 2012; Aldaba, 2014). To sustain this level of service, continued investment in digital systems and frontline staff training may be done to ensure that LGUs remain responsive to the evolving needs of local entrepreneurs.

Table 2. Level of Evaluation on the Effect of Social Service

Indicators	Means	DR
Social services provided by the LGU have improved access to healthcare services.	3.8200	Effective
Availability of social services has contributed to overall health and well-being.	3.8000	Effective
Social services in the LGU help in providing essential medical support when needed.	3.7000	Effective
Social services offered by the LGU have improved economic situations (e.g., through financial assistance, employment support).	3.5800	Moderately Effective

Availability of social programs has helped maintain a stable source of income for families.	3.6600	Moderately Effective
Social services provided have enabled access to resources that improve living conditions (e.g., housing, food aid).	3.5600	Moderately Effective
Social services provided by the LGU have strengthened community relationships and social networks.	3.8000	Effective
Social services have increased the sense of belonging and connection with others in the community.	3.7800	Effective
Availability of social services has reduced stress and anxiety related to personal or family challenges.	3.5800	Moderately Effective
Social services have provided emotional support through counseling or mental health programs.	3.8200	Effective
	3.7100	

Legend:

- 4.21 – 5.00 Highly Effective
- 3.61 – 4.20 Effective
- 2.41 – 3.60 Moderately Effective
- 1.81 – 2.40 Slightly Effective
- 1.0 – 1.80 Not Effective

The social services delivered by local government units (LGUs) reveal a positive perception among respondents. The most important result highlights that social services have improved access to healthcare (M = 3.82), along with emotional support through counseling or mental health programs, which received the same highest rating (M = 3.82). These findings suggest that healthcare and psychosocial assistance are key strengths in LGU service delivery. One respondent shared, *“The LGU provided quick health assistance when my child got sick—it made a big difference knowing help was close by.”* This reflects the need for timely and accessible medical and emotional support, as reinforced by the findings of Reyes et al. (2014), who underlined the effectiveness of decentralized local health services in improving community outcomes.

In contrast, the least-rated aspect was the impact of social services on improving living conditions through resources such as housing and food aid (M = 3.56), rated only as "Moderately Effective." This implies that their reach or consistency may be lacking. Some respondents noted inconsistencies in assistance, with one stating, *“We receive food assistance, but it’s not consistent. Sometimes we’re left to manage on our own.”* Such observations point to challenges in sustaining support systems that address economic vulnerabilities. This aligns with Porio (2011), who argued that fragmented implementation of social programs often leads to uneven benefits across communities. The findings affirm that LGUs perform well in healthcare and emotional support, and investment in resource-based services is necessary to enhance their impact on overall well-being.

### Challenges Encountered in the Delivery of Social Services in LGUs

Table 3. Challenges Encountered in the Delivery of Social Services in LGUs

	Means	DR
The budget allocation for social services may influence the delivery of services.	3.84	A Slight Challenge
There is a lack of coordination among the various departments involved in social services.	3.40	A Moderate Challenge
The demand for social services exceeds the resources available in my LGU.	3.60	A Moderate Challenge
There is insufficient awareness in the community about available social services.	3.38	A Moderate Challenge
Bureaucratic red tape hinders the efficient delivery of social services.	3.34	A Moderate Challenge
The local government lacks adequate monitoring and evaluation of social service programs.	3.28	A Moderate Challenge
The quality of social services in the LGU may be impacted by issues related to corruption or mismanagement.	3.60	A Moderate Challenge
There is insufficient community involvement in the planning and delivery of social services.	3.50	A Moderate Challenge
Social services are often poorly communicated to the people who need them most.	3.60	A Moderate Challenge
Providing additional training and capacity-building opportunities for social service providers may have an effect on service delivery.	3.80	A Slight Challenge
Overall	3.53	A Moderate Challenge

Table 3. Challenges Encountered in the Delivery of Social Services in LGUs

Legend:

- 4.21 – 5.00 Not a Challenge
- 3.61 – 4.20 A Slight Challenge
- 2.41 – 3.60 A Moderate Challenge
- 1.81 – 2.40 A Challenge
- 1.00 – 1.80 A Strong Challenge

The results indicate that local government units experience a moderate level of challenges in delivering social services. In the context of the Province of Abra, these challenges show the current situation where some municipalities struggle with service accessibility, inadequate manpower, and program implementation. For instance, some barangays still lack timely access to welfare programs, while awareness about available services remains low, especially in geographically isolated areas. Although the provision of services is ongoing, these barriers suggest that the effectiveness and efficiency of social programs are compromised by systemic gaps in governance and planning.

These findings emphasize the need for focused interventions in the local government units of Abra. This supports the statement of Brinkerhoff and Wetterberg (2016) that social

accountability and citizen engagement are important in overcoming delivery constraints and improving governance outcomes. Moreover, the slightly lower challenge ratings in areas such as budget allocation and staff training suggest that some basic structures may already be in place in Abra, but they require strengthening through consistent monitoring, better communication strategies, and inclusive policy development. Investing in these areas may not only reduce existing challenges but also build long-term institutional capacity for responsive and equitable service delivery across the province.

### On the Relationship between Effectiveness and Challenges in the Delivery of Services

Table 3. The Relationship between Effectiveness and Challenges in the Delivery of Services

	Effectiveness	Challenge
Social Welfare and Development	.740**	.402**
DRRM	.305	.202
Rural Health Unit	.457**	.402**
Assessor’s Office	.674**	.722**
Agriculture Services	.473**	.386**
Natural Resources and Environment	.483**	.381**
Business Permit and licensing	.733**	.519**
Overall	.731**	.575**

\*\*Relationship is significant at 0.01 level

\*Relationship is significant at 0.05 level

The findings reveal a positive relationship between effectiveness and challenges in the delivery of services across various local government offices. Offices that are perceived to be more effective also report encountering more challenges. This pattern suggests that effectiveness does not occur in the absence of difficulties but may instead result from the ability to manage and respond to them. It reflects a level of resilience and innovation among local offices where staff find ways to deliver quality services despite limited resources, complex procedures, or administrative constraints.

The implications of this relationship are important for strengthening local governance. It shows that challenges, when addressed properly, can push offices to improve their systems and strategies. This supports the findings by Grindle (1997), who emphasized that building capacity to employees helps governments perform well even if it is under pressure. The trend also aligns with the World Bank's view that responsive and accountable institutions are key to delivering public services effectively (World Bank, 2017). Through collaboration, staff development, and sharing successful practices from performing offices, other departments can improve both their effectiveness and their ability to handle challenges.

### Correlation between the Challenges and the Overall Quality of Services

Table 4. Correlation between the Challenges and the Overall Quality of Services

	SOCIAL WELFARE	DRRM	RURAL HEALTH	ASSESSORS OFFICE	AGRICULTURE	NATURAL RESOURC	BUSINESS PERMIT	QUALITY SERVICES
IMPACT	.740**	.305*	.457**	.674**	.473**	.483**	.733**	.731**
CHALLENGES	.402**	.202	.402**	.722**	.386**	.381**	.519**	.575**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results show a significant positive correlation between perceived challenges in service delivery and the overall quality of services provided by local government offices. This means that even when o, they can still provide quality services. This finding suggests that some departments have developed effective practices that allow them to perform well despite difficulties. Their resilience may be due to strong leadership, dedicated staff, or support from the community. The strongest correlation is found in the Assessor's Office, while the weakest and non-significant correlation is found in Disaster and Risk Reduction Management. This shows that the challenges may not influence the quality of service due to some mechanisms and established protocols followed during emergencies.

These findings have important implications for improving local governance. The ability of departments to deliver quality services despite challenges show the need to identify and share best practices. Offices that perform well can serve as models for others. This also shows that challenges should not always be viewed as barriers but as chances to improve and innovate. The result supports the idea that adaptability and commitment are essential in maintaining effective public service delivery.

Conclusion:

1. The local government units (LGUs) show a high level of efficiency in delivering social services, particularly in disaster response, healthcare, and business-related functions.
2. Social services have a positive impact on residents' well-being in terms of healthcare access and emotional support, while economic aid programs remain less effective.
3. There are challenges in the service delivery in the local government, especially on limited resources, logistical barriers, and difficult geographic conditions.
4. There is a significant relationship between effectiveness and challenges, which shows that local government units can maintain service quality despite difficulties.
5. A positive correlation between challenges and service quality suggests that adaptive governance enhances service outcomes.

Recommendations:

1. Address operational challenges by increasing resource allocation, enhancing staff capacity, and improving logistics.
2. Promote innovation and accountability through digital systems, regular monitoring, and active community engagement to sustain and improve service quality.

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