

## Application Form

### CATEGORIES IN WHICH YOU WANT TO APPLY THE EXPERIENCE

**1: TYPE OF EXPERIENCE:** *choose the most important element (choose only one element which you consider the most outstanding of your practice).*

<b>A) Deliberation</b> Citizen assembly / deliberation workshop / lottery / legislative theater / participatory planning	
<b>B) Decision</b> Participatory budget / referendum / consultation / participatory process with vote	
<b>C) Citizenship</b> Citizenship / <u>community action</u> / permanent council / civic education / associationism / other initiatives to reinforce local democracy	✓

**2: TYPE OF GOVERNMENT:** *choose one only.*

<b>A) Up to 50,000 inhabitants</b> (towns, small cities, rural areas).	
<b>B) Cities between 50,000 and 250,000 inhabitants.</b>	90 000 inhabitants
<b>C) Cities between 250,000 and 1,000,000 inhabitants.</b>	
<b>D) Large cities or urban areas of more than 1,500,000 inhabitants.</b>	
<b>E) Supralocal, regional, provincial governments ....</b>	

**Experience data:** *complete the information below in a clear and concise manner.*

<b>Title of the experience:</b> Sustainable Technology on Ecological Preservation and Horticultural Engagement (STEPHEN)
<b>Name of the city or region:</b> City of Passi in the Western Visayas Region of the Philippines
<b>Inhabitants of the city or territory:</b> Passinhons and Ilonggos
<b>Country:</b> Philippines

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<b>Institution presenting the candidacy:</b> Local Government Unit - City of Passi		
<b>Website of the experience or institution:</b> None		
<b>Profiles in social networks of the experience or the institution:</b> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/lgupassicity">https://www.facebook.com/lgupassicity</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/rsulpico">/https://www.facebook.com/rsulpico</a>		
<b>Start date of the experience:</b> 2011 - 2019 Hardin sa Panimalay (Garden in the Home)   2020 - present Sustainable Technology on Ecological Protection and Horticulture Engagement (STEPHEN)		
<b>End date of the experience:</b> Ongoing		
<b>Budget of the experience:</b> Php 1,500,000.00		
<b>Type of candidacy</b> <i>(mark with an X in the right column)</i>	New experience	
	Innovation on an existing experience	x
	Continuity of an experience	
<b>Type of experience</b> <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	Participatory budgeting	
	Participatory planning	
	Standing council	
	Workshop / meeting for diagnosis, monitoring, etc.	
	Public hearing / forum	
	Poll / referendum	
	Assemblies / Citizen juries / Deliberation spaces	
	E-government / Open government / Digital platforms	
Citizen initiative	x	

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	Other (specify):		
<b>Objective of the experience</b> <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation		x
	Including diversity as a criterion for inclusion		
	Community empowerment		x
	To empower non-organised citizens		x
	To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation		x
	To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"		x
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		x
	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy		x
	To improve the evaluation and accountability of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		x
To improve any public policy through the active participation of the public		x	
<b>Territorial area</b> <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	All the territory	Local	x
		Regional	
	District		
	Neighbourhood		
	Governance		x
	Education		
	Transport		

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<b>Thematic area</b>  <i>(mark with an X in the right column, you may choose more than one)</i>	Urban management	
	Health	x
	Security	
	Environment / Climate change and/or urban agriculture	x
	Civic associations, grassroots and new social movements	x
	Culture	
	Housing	
	Job creation	x
	Decentralization	
	Local development	x
	Training / learning	x
	Economy and/or finances	x
	Legal regulations	
	Social inclusion	x
All		
Other (write the topic) farmer empowerment and love of the culture		
<b>Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) associated with the practice</b>  <i>(mark with an X in the right column, more than one option)</i>	SDG 1 - No poverty	x
	SDG 2 - Zero hunger	x
	SDG 3 - Good health and well-being	x

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<i>can be chosen, you can also add the specific target)</i>	SDG 4 - Quality education	
	SDG 5 - Gender equality	x
	SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation	x
	SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	
	SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	x
	SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure	x
	SDG 10 - Reduced inequality	x
	SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	x
	SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production	x
	SDG 13 - Climate action	x
	SDG 14 - Life below water	
	SDG 15 - Life on land	x
	SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	x
SDG 17 - Partnership for the goals	x	

## PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

*Fill in the following fields clearly and concisely. You can add links, images or graphics if you consider it appropriate.*

### **Context:**

The City of Passi, formerly one of the oldest towns in Iloilo province, is currently the only component city in the island of Panay in the Western Visayas region of the Philippines. Over the years, it has developed into a significant trading and industrial hub, leading to the acceleration of urbanization in the area. As the population grew, so did the demand for basic services, amenities, and food resources.

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The City of Passi has the largest land area among all the cities in Iloilo Province, covering approximately 25,139.13 hectares or 251.3913 square kilometers. The city's topography is characterized by rolling hills and narrow valley plains, with steep mountain ranges, rolling hills, and flat land scattered across specific areas. With a population of around 90,000, Passi City is politically divided into 51 barangays (small administrative divisions the equivalent of villages). This division drives the city's development as a commercial, industrial, and agro-industrial center.

Agriculture plays a crucial role in the City of Passi's economy. The fertile land and favorable climate make it an ideal location for agricultural activities. Farmers in the city cultivate various crops such as rice, corn, sugarcane, vegetables, and fruits. Additionally, livestock and poultry farming are also significant contributors to the city's agricultural sector.

The City of Passi's central location on Panay Island makes it easily accessible by land transportation. The Nautical Highway, a major road network, connects the city to other parts of the island, facilitating the movement of goods and people. This accessibility enhances the city's potential for trade and commerce, attracting businesses and industries to establish their operations in the area.

*(See Annex A)*

### **Precedents:**

What is now known as Sustainable Technology on Ecological Preservation and Horticultural Engagement, or STEPHEN, originated as Hardin sa Panimalay (Garden in the Home) in 2011 under the leadership of Mayor Jesry T. Palmares. The inspiration for Garden in the Home came from a school-based initiative where parents engaged in vegetable gardening on the school grounds while waiting for their children's classes to end. The produce from these gardens was used in the feeding program of the five pioneering village schools, providing nutritious meals for the students and also serving as an income-generating project for the parents. In 2019, agriculturist Ricky Sulpico was appointed as the program coordinator of Hardin sa Panimalay, with the primary objective of ensuring food self-sufficiency in the majority of households in the City of Passi through backyard gardening. Initially, the program focused solely on distributing vegetable seeds to parents, aiming to provide sufficient food for each family and address malnutrition among children, particularly in remote areas. After engaging in discussions with homeowners, Mr. Sulpico recognized that the program needed to go beyond seedling distribution and also provide additional income opportunities for the families. Thus, the STEPHEN Program was established in 2020, named after the current Mayor of Passi City, Stephen Palmares. While maintaining its focus on achieving food sufficiency, the program also considered the potential for large-scale commercial production.

What is now known as Sustainable Technology on Ecological Preservation and Horticultural Engagement, or STEPHEN, originated as Hardin sa Panimalay (Garden in the Home) in 2011 under the leadership of Mayor Jesry T. Palmares. The inspiration for Garden in the Home came from a home-based gardening focusing on the Food Always in the Home (FAITH) where members of households are encouraged to grow vegetables from their backyard to make food available in every home. Then it was expanded to schools where parents did vegetable gardening on the school grounds while waiting for their children's classes to end. The produce from these gardens was used in the feeding program of the five pioneering village schools, providing nutritious meals for the students and also serving as an income-generating project for the parents. In 2019, agriculturist Ricky Sulpico was appointed as the program coordinator of Hardin sa Panimalay, with the primary objective of ensuring food self-sufficiency in the majority of households in the City of Passi through backyard gardening.

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Initially, the program focused solely on distributing vegetable seeds to parents, aiming to provide sufficient food for each family and address malnutrition among children, particularly in remote areas. After engaging in discussions with homeowners, Mr. Sulpico recognized that the program needed to go beyond seedling distribution and also provide additional income opportunities for the families. Thus, in the last quarter of 2020 the STEPHEN Program was established, named after the current Mayor of Passi City, Stephen Palmares. While maintaining its focus on achieving food sufficiency, the program also considered the potential for large-scale commercial production in which farmer recipients were provided with farm inputs such as vegetable seeds and fertilizers, skills and values enhancement to empower farmers and lessen the production costs; thus, increasing the farmers' productivity, purchasing power and generation of local employment.

*(See Annex B and Annex C)*

### **Objectives of the experience:**

The main objective of STEPHEN Program is to promote equal opportunities for individuals to participate in decision-making processes, regardless of their background to ensure they yield meaningful outcomes and deliver desired results. Specifically, it aims to: 1) Create a cohesive framework and platforms for citizen participation, facilitating seamless communication and collaboration; 2) Enrich the decision-making process by incorporating diverse perspectives and inputs from the public, leading to more informed and inclusive policies; 3) Enhance the formulation and implementation of public policies by actively involving the public, leveraging their expertise, experiences, and insights; and, 3) Ensure food security and access to nutritious food for all individuals.

### **Methodology:**

To get support and increase participation, the STEPHEN program provides technical assistance through trainings, seminars, and related activities. Financial schemes and the provision of essential farm inputs are also made available to vegetable growers.

Methodological evaluations are conducted to address any issues or concerns that may arise from the STEPHEN Program. Program members, the community, and all stakeholders gather to assess and evaluate the overall impact and effectiveness of the program. This enables the program to continuously improve and enhance its initiatives based on suggestions, criticisms, and responses from the beneficiaries. It is also a process of helping farmers help themselves.

The methodology employed in the Hardin sa Panimalay (Garden in the Home) project and its subsequent evolution into the STEPHEN Program aims to empower communities through sustainable agriculture. The project consists of phases and participation channels to ensure its success.

Garden in the Home addressed malnutrition and poor family income. It targeted those on the welfare system, individuals who have surrendered to the government such as rebels and addicts, and areas with schools. To recruit participants, project proposals with budgetary requirements were signed and approved by the city mayor. Building on the success of Garden in the Home, STEPHEN provides agricultural inputs, technologies, and

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facilities to farmers, households, and community. It includes three major projects: the Rural-Based Project, Urban Poor Project, and High-Value Commercial Crop Growers Project.

The Rural-Based Project promotes communal and individual vegetable production, fostering food security and economic growth in rural communities. The Urban Poor Project offers innovative solutions for urban households to engage in vegetable production despite limitations in space and resources. The High-Value Commercial Crop Growers Project targets rural areas suitable for commercial vegetable production, aiming to boost agricultural productivity and economic opportunities.

### **Innovation:**

The innovation of the STEPHEN Program lies in its focus on transforming individuals through value enhancement and community involvement that led to productivity in the home gardens and farms. In contrast to other programs that primarily concentrate on developing individual skills, the STEPHEN Program places emphasis on enhancing values and attitudes so that farmers can also help transform themselves. It instills in its members the importance of their role in the community, particularly in providing a healthy and sustainable food supply, not only for their own households but also for the entire community. The STEPHEN Program actively engages all sectors of society, ranging from educated farmers to marginalised groups such as individuals who have surrendered to the government due to drug addiction and out-of-school youth. It aims to make every individual feel significant and important by acknowledging people from diverse backgrounds. By involving such a diverse group, the program unites them with a shared goal of addressing the issue of sufficient food production and promoting economic stability.

### **Inclusion:**

Hunger is common in developing countries and even in agricultural areas. To combat this scourge in the City of Passi, diverse groups took the lead in the STEPHEN Program and in the previous Garden in the Home. These are farmer organizations, 4-H clubs, Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) or youth councils from the city's 51 villages, and the Green Heart Catalyst Youth Environment Steward (YES). The STEPHEN Program organized and mobilized these diverse populations and recognized their collective ability to create and reinvigorate positive social change and channeled their time and energy towards ornamental and vegetable production. This was done by seeking out unorganized groups or bringing in individuals and teaching them effective farming strategies, monitoring their progress, and giving them rewards for productivity and good performance.

### **Communication:**

To reach out to the target population, different strategies were employed. For the recipients from urban areas, the use of social media is maximized. Call and text is also used to speed up information dissemination, on top of meetings, information drives, and sending out personal letters. For geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs), home and farm visit extension approaches are employed to reach out to recipients and provide them with ample time to air their sentiments and assess their individual needs. Group meetings are also done to enhance active participation among recipients in the planning and implementation of services based on their assessed needs.



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### Articulation with other actors:

Key individuals play important roles in achieving the goals of the program. The farmers, as the target beneficiaries, are gathered and assessed to obtain necessary information and identify their needs. A needs assessment is conducted through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), facilitated by Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) with the assistance of Barangay Agricultural Workers (BAWs), to list their priorities. Project proposals are then developed based on the issues and concerns identified by the farmers. The City Agriculture Office submits the proposed programs and projects to the City Officials, who create measures through resolutions or ordinances to strengthen the program and provide necessary funds for project implementation. The City Mayor then approves the proposed plans and budget. Once approved, the plans are delivered to the target beneficiaries through seminars and training sessions that focus on experiential learning and technology transfer.

### Evaluation:

The evaluation and monitoring process in the STEPHEN Program involved community engagement through Pulong-pulong sa Barangay (the local equivalent of town hall meetings) and visits to home or communal gardens. These approaches ensured active community participation in the evaluation process. Additionally, evaluation forms were distributed to program members, with assistance provided to help them complete the forms. Village meetings were conducted to gather the community, where open forums and discussions took place, and their responses were duly recorded. This enables the program to continuously improve and enhance its initiatives based on suggestions, criticisms, and feedback from the beneficiaries.

### Impacts and results

What started out in 2011 with only five villages organized into farming communities in the City of Passi has now become the STEPHEN Program in 2023 with 55 participating farmer associations that has 4,981 farmers as members from 51 villages. Moreover, there are also 36 farms contributing to 31.30 hectares of commercial production.

With regard to impacts on public policies – the City Council, after seeing the success of the Garden in the Home and STEPHEN, initiated more policies encouraging the public to engage in backyard gardening including the youth, schools, and village councils. More importantly, the City Council created the Food Security Section in 2020 to handle the STEPHEN Program with its own budget appropriation and separate fund allocation. Its precursor, Garden in the Home formerly relied on General Fund of the City for funding. In year 2021, the budget allocation for STEPHEN was institutionalized to ensure the continuity and progress of the said Program.

With the success of the STEPHEN program, the administration was encouraged to engage the farmers for increased productivity, employability, and sustainability of farmer's projects. It has also become more sensitive to farmer participation. Seeing this, national agencies of the Philippines recognized this success and donated farming implements and machineries. The Department of Agrarian Reform has also appropriated funds of Php 50 Million for farm-to-market roads, Php7 million for Tissue Culture Laboratory with Greenhouse, and Php14.5 million for farm machineries and equipment.

The Citizens of Passi City on the other hand, are assured of affordable and steady food supply right in their own communities and need not go far to the markets to buy vegetables.

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### PART 3: EXPERIENCE SUMMARY

Sustainable Technology on Ecological Preservation and Horticultural Engagement (STEPHEN) is a home gardening and community empowerment initiative designed for food security and the generation of family and community income for the City of Passi, a component city in the Western Visayas region of the Philippines. In contrast to other programs that primarily concentrate on developing individual farming skills, the STEPHEN Program places emphasis on enhancing values and attitudes aimed towards increasing farm productivity.

The program aims to provide equal opportunities for all individuals to engage in decision-making processes, achieving meaningful outcomes. Its objectives include establishing platforms for citizen participation, incorporating diverse perspectives in policy-making, actively involving the public in policy formulation and implementation, and ensuring food security for all.

To garner support and encourage participation, the STEPHEN program offers technical assistance through trainings, seminars, and related activities. It also provides financial schemes and essential farm inputs to vegetable growers.

The methodology used in the STEPHEN Program aims to empower communities through sustainable agriculture. The project comprises phases and participation channels for success. Garden in the Home addressed malnutrition and low family income. It targeted welfare recipients, government surrenderees (such as rebels and addicts), and areas with schools. Participants were recruited through signed and approved project proposals with budgetary requirements from the city mayor. Building on its success, STEPHEN provides agricultural inputs, technologies, and facilities to farmers, households, and communities. It includes three major projects: the Rural-Based Project, Urban Poor Project, and High-Value Commercial Crop Growers Project.

The Rural-Based Project promotes communal and individual vegetable production, fostering food security and economic growth in rural communities. The Urban Poor Project offers innovative solutions for urban households to engage in vegetable production despite space and resource limitations. The High-Value Commercial Crop Growers Project targets rural areas suitable for commercial vegetable production, aiming to boost agricultural productivity and economic opportunities.

The STEPHEN Program, which initially began in 2011 with five villages organized into farming communities in Passi City, has now grown in 2023 to include 55 participating farmer associations with 4,981 members from 51 villages. Additionally, there are 36 farms contributing to 31.30 hectares of commercial production.

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In terms of its impact on public policies, the City Council established the Food Security Section, allocating its own budget and separate funds to oversee the STEPHEN Program whereas this was not so in the past.

The success of the STEPHEN program has led to increased support from the government. The Department of Agrarian Reform allocated several million in 2023 for farm-to-market roads, a Tissue Culture Laboratory with a Greenhouse, and farm machinery and equipment.

The evaluation and monitoring process of the STEPHEN Program engaged the community through Pulong-pulong sa Barangay (local town hall meetings) and visits to home or communal gardens. These methods ensured the community actively participated in the evaluation. Evaluation forms were distributed to program members, with assistance offered to aid in completion. This enables the program to continuously enhance its initiatives by considering suggestions, criticisms, and feedback from the beneficiaries.