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Protecting the Poor and Vulnerable against the Pandemic

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Introduction

Cases of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the Philippines went from a single confirmed case on 30 January 2020 to more than 5,400 cases and nearly 350 deaths 2 months and a half later. Authorities presented the alarming report amid the limited testing capacity. An interagency task force convened to tackle the pandemic subsequently declared community quarantines nationwide—which adversely affected people's jobs and livelihoods. The public was hit hard by the pandemic.¹

The government responded by passing a law to provide social assistance (cash transfers) to 18 million poor and vulnerable families, with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) leading the delivery of the program. Expectations were high for DSWD to deliver. While DSWD was experienced in delivering cash transfers and providing emergency assistance, it had not encountered anything like a pandemic. This case study explores the implementation challenges, successes, and lessons learned from a nationwide shock-responsive social protection intervention in the Philippines.

Background

The rapid spread of COVID-19 placed a heavy strain on the Philippines' health system and pressured the government to respond quickly. Cases began to grow exponentially after January 2020. In March 2020, after discussing measures for countering rising cases with

¹ Community quarantine is a strict stay-at-home policy adopted by the Philippine government. It can cover a specific area or a comprehensive nationwide coverage.

the emerging infectious diseases task force,² the government enforced strict quarantine measures to contain the spread of the virus—first for the National Capital Region (NCR) and then for the entire northern island of Luzon.³ The task force announced a national action plan for averting new infections, facilitating the detection, identification, and isolation of COVID-19 carriers, and mitigating the impact of the disease on social, economic, and personal security.

The Philippines achieved a steady decline in poverty from 25.2% in 2012 to 16.6% in 2018. In 2020, the pandemic seriously impacted poverty and inequality due to (i) loss of livelihoods; (ii) significant disruptions of supply chains, which included many micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); (iii) massive increase in personal and MSME debt; (iv) families' loss of a primary income earner due to illness or death; and (v) decrease in remittances from overseas workers. Without substantial financial support to poor and vulnerable families, the Asian Development Bank estimated that the poverty rate would increase to 20.7% in 2020 with an additional 5.5 million Filipinos falling into poverty (ADB 2020). Providing the much-needed financial assistance to affected people in a timely manner, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, was critically important to mitigate the severe health, social, and economic impact caused by the pandemic.

On 24 March 2020, the Bayanihan Law⁴ was passed to implement a ₱205 billion (\$4 billion) social amelioration program (SAP) for low-income and vulnerable families affected by the pandemic. The SAP provided grants ranging from ₱5,000 (\$98) to ₱8,000 (\$157) per month to 18 million households for 2 months (Box 1).⁵ The Bayanihan Law also expanded and enhanced the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) (Box 2) and the provision of cash assistance through local governments or to directly identify households including informal workers and those who were not recipients of 4Ps at the time of the crisis.

The Bayanihan Law designated DSWD to lead SAP implementation in collaboration with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and local governments. The task force created a working group to formulate a plan that would identify eligible beneficiaries and execute the cash distribution, including monitoring and reporting to the President and Congress on implementation progress and to make sure that the funds are safeguarded from fiduciary risks.

DSWD issued detailed guidelines on the identification of beneficiaries and provision of grants drawing from the existing social protection program infrastructure. A comprehensive list of beneficiaries was prepared and validated against the national database of the poor and vulnerable, referred to as Listahanan, to expedite the distribution of grants. Where supported by existing payment infrastructure, cash transfers were made directly through DSWD's partner banks, money

² The Inter-Agency Task Force for Emerging Infectious Diseases was created in 2014 to assess, monitor, contain, control, and prevent the spread of any potential epidemic in the Philippines.

³ Luzon is the largest island. The island represents more than 50% of the country's population and about 70% of the country's total economic activity.

⁴ This law is referred to as Bayanihan 1. On 11 September 2020, the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act also known as Bayanihan 2, was passed, extending the President's power to reallocate and realign regular appropriations and savings in the national budget. An appropriation of ₱165.5 billion (\$3.2 billion) was allocated for Bayanihan 2.

⁵ The annual per capita poverty threshold for a family of five is estimated at ₱25,813 (\$516) (Philippine Statistics Authority 2020).

transfer facilities, and service partners. For beneficiaries not previously covered by the 4Ps, DSWD personnel made direct cash payouts with strict tracking and reporting requirements. The DILG issued guidelines to local governments to comply with the consistent identification of beneficiaries and distribution of grants.

Box 1: The Social Amelioration Program

The Bayanihan Law provisions related to the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) are as follows:

1. Provision, through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and other government agencies, of a cash subsidy of ₱5,000–₱8,000 to 18 million households in two tranches. The exact subsidy per household is based on the regional minimum wage and the conditional cash transfer and rice subsidy for eligible households.
2. Provision of cash subsidy in addition to the monthly cash subsidy for existing Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries.
3. Creation of an oversight committee reporting to the President and to Congress every week on implementation progress. The report includes the amount and utilization of funds used, augmented, reprogrammed, and reallocated, and realignment of government funds.
4. Delivery of the cash subsidies of two tranches from March 2020 to November 2020. DSWD leads the SAP implementation and chairs its interagency committee.

The 18 million households, or about 90 million individuals, comprise 82% of the country's 110 million total population. SAP beneficiaries includes senior citizens, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, solo parents, distressed overseas Filipino workers, indigenous people, the homeless, farmers, fisherfolk, the self-employed, and informal settlers.

The household target is based on data from the Philippine Statistics Authority, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and DSWD. The rationale is that the community quarantine affects not only the poor, but also the nonpoor who have lost their jobs. The statistical bases are as follows:

1. About 14.3 million workers in the informal sectors or about 2.7 million families (DOLE Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns estimate, 2017).
2. About 5.2 million poor households, a further 7.5 million near-poor households, and 2.3 million more nonpoor but low-income households (DSWD National Household Targeting Survey of 15 million households, 2015).
3. About 3.7 million poor senior citizens (60 years old and above), some of whom are heads of families or living alone (DSWD estimates).

To identify eligible beneficiaries for SAP,

1. local governments issue a Social Amelioration Card (SAC) form to families in its community;
2. the head of the household fills up the SAC and submits it to the local government; and
3. DSWD transfers resources to the local government. The local government, with the support of the social worker at the community level, will distribute the cash transfer to eligible beneficiaries.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

Box 2: The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program

Launched by the government in 2008, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a conditional cash transfer program that helps poor households invest in the education and health of their children so that they can transition out of poverty. Households below the poverty line with children 14–18 years old and/or with pregnant women were enrolled in the 4Ps, as identified by the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction in 2009 (Listahanan 1).

The conditional grants have been adjusted with effect from December 2019: health and nutrition grants have been increased from ₱500 to ₱750 per month for 12 months. The education grant per child (for a maximum of 10 months per year) enrolled in day care and elementary school programs will remain at ₱300 per month. The grant for junior high school students has been increased from ₱300 to ₱500 per month, and that for senior high school students from ₱500 to ₱700 per month.

Households exit from the 4Ps when children receiving education grants reach 18 years old and/or have graduated from senior high school. Nationwide program coverage increased from more than 330,000 households in 2008 to 4.28 million in the first quarter of 2020 (World Bank 2018).

Source: Asian Development Bank.

Challenges

Implementing the SAP was complex. Several key challenges emerged related to the program scope, beneficiary identification, security and health risks, travel restrictions, coordination and communication, and program monitoring.

Huge scope of the program. The Bayanihan Law had an ambitious target of distributing cash assistance to 18 million households in two tranches over 9 months. The details on how the cash was to be distributed were left with the government agencies. Although DSWD was experienced in distribution of cash grants to 4.28 million households under the 4Ps, it remained to be seen whether DSWD could be equally successful in reaching nearly five times this number of beneficiaries across the country over a short period time.

Lack of a single database for identifying beneficiaries. There was no single database to readily determine household eligibility as prescribed by the Bayanihan Law. DSWD, DILG, and local governments had to rely on beneficiary targeting protocols used by different government agencies, which included the DSWD lists for the 4Ps, livelihood assistance grants,⁶ other social assistance packages, and the list of overseas workers administered by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration of DOLE.⁷ Some of these databases were based on surveys done 5 and 12

⁶ In addition to SAP, DSWD was tasked to provide livelihood assistance grants to low-income families in the informal sector whose livelihoods were affected by the imposition of the community quarantine (DSWD 2020a).

⁷ See guidelines in Department of Labor and Employment, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). Advisory on DOLE – AKAP Cash Assistance.

years ago, rendering the information outdated. The government agencies had to urgently update, consolidate, authenticate, and validate the information from these various sources.

Security and health risks. Delivering the SAP grants across the country, particularly in rural and remote areas, posed logistical challenges and personal and health safety concerns for DSWD and local government staff. There are conflict-affected areas in some parts of the southern Philippines as well as the presence of communist rebels and high criminality in certain locations. Many of these places do not have banks or financial institutions to facilitate the transfer of cash assistance. This required direct delivery of cash to beneficiaries. Being on the frontlines of cash delivery, government staff were exposed to risks of COVID-19 infection. Cases of infections among staff required them to undergo 14 days of quarantine. This resulted in the reduction of staff and affected cash distribution. By November 2020, DSWD reported over 6,700 quarantined personnel (nearly 26% of total staff), of whom 367 tested positive for COVID-19 and three died.

Restrictions on movement and travel. The strict community quarantine led to difficulties in crossing local government boundaries. Moving from one city or municipality to another required quarantine passes and prior approval of the receiving area. Quarantine pass requirements at the barangay level also varied, causing operational delays when quarantine permits were not provided to SAP personnel.

Constrained communication coordination. The transfer of cash benefits from DSWD to local governments and ultimately to beneficiaries necessitated effective coordination among various national and subnational agencies. Policy decisions affecting operations were made at the central offices of government, led by DSWD. Given the scale of operations, it was difficult for central office decision makers to get real-time feedback from the field offices. Adjustments to improve implementation tended to lag. Public criticism had to be responded to quickly to manage reputational risks that could erode the credibility of the program.

Arduous monitoring, reporting, and audit of fund disbursements. The Bayanihan Law mandated DSWD to provide weekly reports to the President and Congress, to ensure that fiduciary responsibility was upheld by participating government agencies. Continuous monitoring and oversight as well as swift actions were required to get updated information from the field and to ensure no misuse of cash or fraud was committed.

Overcoming the Challenges

To overcome the challenges, the implementing agencies focused on strengthening public communication, preventing leakages, enhancing management and coordination, and expanding partnerships with financial service providers.

Improving public communication. Shortly after the Bayanihan Law was passed, the Office of the President announced the cash subsidy to 18 million families. To provide more detailed information to the public, DSWD launched a media campaign with the support of the Office of the Press

Secretary.⁸ To guide DSWD regional offices and local governments, a series of memorandum circulars issued by DSWD and DILG provided program implementation details. These provided consistent information and a legal basis for program-implementing agencies nationwide.

Given the scale of operations and families' urgent need, DSWD and local governments were bombarded with queries and complaints. Common issues included (i) families who believed they should be eligible but were excluded from the list of beneficiaries, and (ii) irregularities committed by public officials in the prioritization of potential beneficiaries and in cash delivery. By mid-April 2020, DSWD established a grievance redress system to address these issues and to provide feedback to improve implementation (DSWD 2020b).

Targeting beneficiaries and preventing fraud. Producing the list of beneficiaries was the task of local governments and DSWD, through the existing database of 4.3 million households used for the 4Ps.⁹ But the original SAP target was more than four times this number, made more complicated by an announcement that 5 million more families would be included, bringing the new target to 23 million families (DSWD 2020c). Beyond DSWD, other agencies also distribute cash through existing programs, such as the departments of labor and agriculture and the social security system.

To prevent duplication of assistance and ensure a single system of identification, a social amelioration card (SAC) was issued to registered beneficiaries. DSWD was responsible for authentication and validation of the SAC. If it was found that a certain family received cash subsidy more than the maximum allowed in the SAP guidelines, then the local government should return the money to DSWD. In many instances, the issue was an information mismatch between SAC records and the personal identification cards of the cash recipient, so no payout was made until recipients provided additional proof that matched their SAC.

To fast track the registration, the ReliefAgad online system was established to provide clear registration guidelines to local governments and the public (Box 3).¹⁰

DSWD established the area operation center to monitor real-time progress. The center provided data to and informed DSWD management on delays in the delivery of cash and other problems encountered during implementation. It was also tasked to process the liquidation documents submitted by local governments. These documents provided proof that the cash subsidies were received by the beneficiaries, which were then validated by DSWD to declare the transfer closed. Only after this would the local government be given funds for the second tranche of cash payments.

⁸ Government PH. DSWD Cash Assistance for Two Months.

⁹ Continuous improvement in the 4Ps database, referred to as Listahanan 3, began in October 2019, but owing to COVID-19-related disruptions, there have been delays. Of the total 15.7 million households to be covered, 14.5 million (92%) were assessed as of June 2021. Field validation is expected to be completed in October 2021 and the application of the proxy means test done in November. Re-surveys are being conducted on a sample basis to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on the data collected to date.

¹⁰ The Relief Agad registration system set a deadline of 24 June 2020 for registration. <https://reliefagad.ph/>.

The center's information from the field provided valuable input to the weekly reporting to the President and Congress.

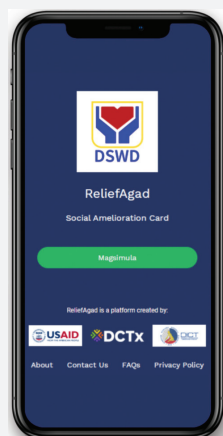
Strengthening program management and coordination. Being a disaster-prone country, national and local government agencies in the Philippines are experienced managing disaster response and organizing relief operations. With the pandemic, the disaster protocol was activated nationwide as if multiple disasters occurred in all regions at the same time, which made the task of coordination and attending to unique circumstances of each region extraordinarily complex and at times overwhelming.

Following basic protocols in disaster response, DSWD set up a command center, chaired by the secretary, and met every evening to go through the reports received from the regions, assess the situation, and undertake necessary actions. These nightly sessions facilitated the issuance of a series of circulars to guide and strengthen SAP implementation. These meetings tackled a wide range of issues, including security and health challenges confronting field personnel. These sessions proved critically important in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the SAP operations.

Working with more financial service providers. During the early days of the SAP, DSWD relied on the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP)—the 4Ps bank—in the delivery of cash assistance. By June 2020, DSWD was receiving mounting complaints on the slow pace of cash delivery through LBP branches. LBP's reach had been limited to urban areas and its operations were constrained by work stoppages whenever there was a confirmed COVID-19 case in its branches. By mid-July, DSWD worked with additional financial service providers such as GCash and PayMaya (fintech companies specializing in mobile payment systems) and other commercial and rural banks. This significantly improved the speed of cash distribution (Interaksyon 2020).

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the central bank, played a key role in bringing in other payment service providers to fast track the process of distribution. With mounting public complaints, DSWD sought BSP assistance. BSP responded by identifying qualified financial service providers for digital electronic disbursement. The relationship was formalized through a multilateral agreement for the electronic payment of subsidies.

Box 3: Digital Solutions to Deliver the Social Amelioration Program – The ReliefAgad System



The ReliefAgad is a quick-relief system that would enable DSWD to expedite capturing social amelioration card details and interface with any electronic payment systems (photo by DSWD).

Jesson Galvez is a 26-year-old father of two from Trece Martires, Cavite, whose family felt the brunt of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis in the Philippines. As street sellers, he and his wife lost their main source of income due to the community quarantine enforced by the government.

The ReliefAgad website enabled the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to expedite the capture of Social Amelioration Program (SAP) beneficiary data through a self-registration web application to expedite disbursement of cash assistance through electronic payment systems. Using smartphones, SAP beneficiaries were able to register their social amelioration cards on the ReliefAgad system.

DSWD launched ReliefAgad in May 2020 with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to speed up the distribution of financial assistance to Filipinos affected by the pandemic, particularly for the disbursement of the second tranche of the cash grants. DSWD and USAID worked with the Department of Information and Communications Technology and its partners and networks on ReliefAgad.

The system improved the collection of beneficiary data by taking advantage of mobile phone technology. USAID supported the development, deployment, and operationalization of the ReliefAgad system, and provided advisory support in the implementation of digital payments for the second tranche cash grants. USAID also helped eliminate duplicates in beneficiary data obtained from both the ReliefAgad system and local governments. It developed ReliefAgad instructional materials, set up a contact center to respond to queries on the web app, and provided strategic communications support leveraging digital communication technologies during the SAP implementation. More than 4.3 million beneficiaries registered through ReliefAgad.

True Relief with ReliefAgad

For Jesson, the digital registration and disbursement of cash through the ReliefAgad system was safe, quick, and convenient. Myla, a mother from Morong, Rizal, echoed Jesson's positive sentiments: "I heard about ReliefAgad through Facebook. I was curious about it as I knew everything was already going online. I followed the instructions on Facebook and was able to register to ReliefAgad easily. I opened a PayMaya account to receive my cash subsidy online through ReliefAgad. I was happy because I received my payout early and easily on PayMaya without having to line up. It was safer and more comfortable."

Myla used some of the funds to restart her egg and cooking oil business. Like Myla and Jesson, Joyce also learned about ReliefAgad online: "We found the instructions easy and we did not have a difficult time registering. We chose to receive the money through GCash because I already had a GCash account. When I finally got the notice that the second tranche was already in my account, I was happy. It was very convenient, automatic, safer for me and I was able to access the money immediately."

Jesson said that registration with ReliefAgad and receiving his grant on Gcash was hassle-free.

Source: DSWD.

Results

By the end of November 2020, the cash benefits had reached 98% of the target households. The original target of 18 million (which later increased to 23 million due to an executive directive to add beneficiaries to SAP) was reduced to 14.3 million for the second tranche, due to the following: (i) duplication of records leading to return of money received; (ii) ineligible beneficiaries (242,494 households); and (iii) discrepancy between the figures submitted by the local governments to DILG and DSWD, requiring reconciliation.

Despite problems, the first tranche release was quick, with full disbursement realized by May 2020. By August, 2 months after the start of distribution of the second tranche, the program had covered 13.3 million families or 94% of target beneficiaries, with disbursement of about ₱80 billion (Figures 1 and 2).

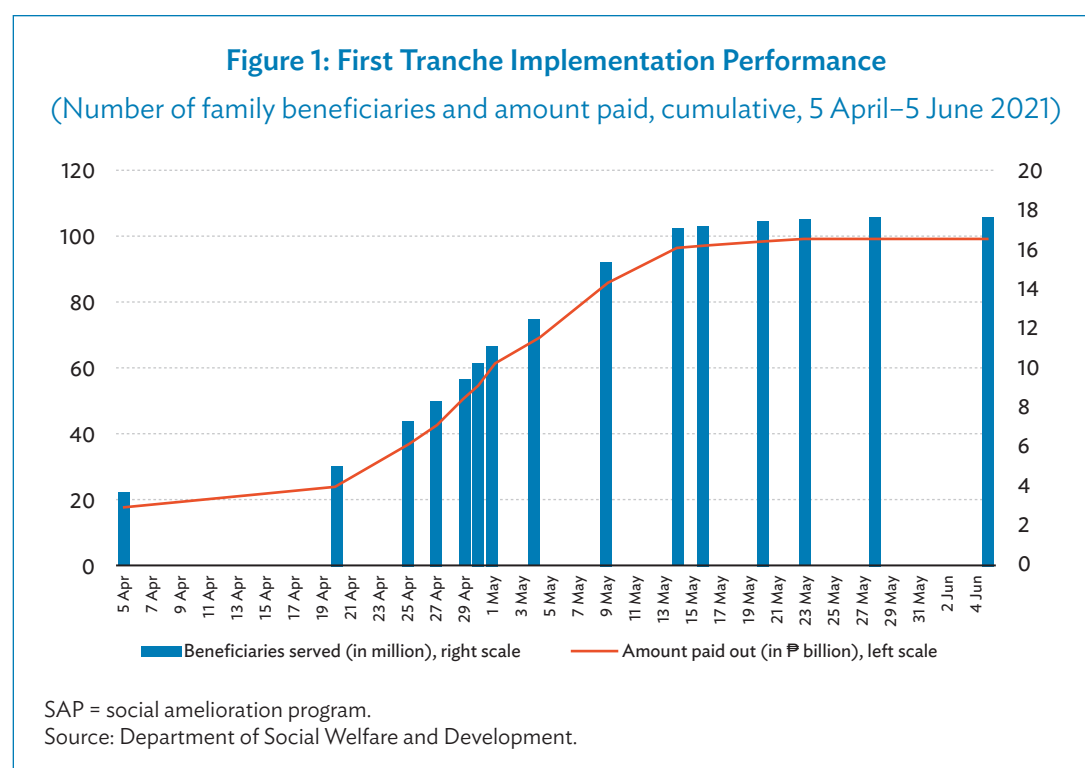
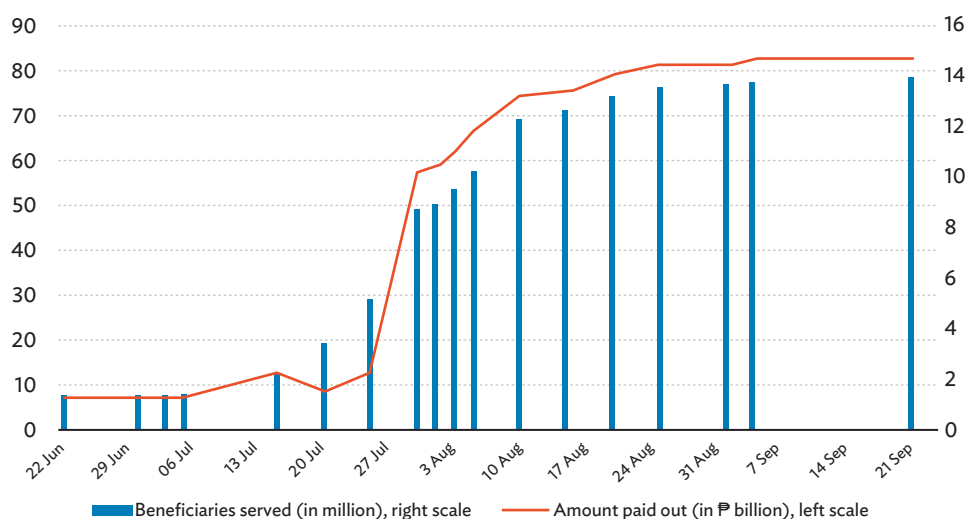


Figure 2: Second Tranche Implementation Performance

(Number of family beneficiaries and amount paid, cumulative, 21 June–22 September 2021)



Source: Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Lessons

SAP implementation benefited from the following key actions:

- (i) The enactment of the Bayanihan Law provided the legal mandate (i.e., declaration of calamity and allowing emergency powers) for the timely mobilization, allocation, and use of public funds, including designation of responsible government agencies.
- (ii) The activation of the interagency task force on emerging infectious diseases as the overall coordinating body to formulate and execute responses to the pandemic contributed to achieving overall organizational and operational efficiency.
- (iii) Close monitoring, real-time feedback, and prompt actions by the SAP working group led by DSWD helped ensure successful outcomes. The nightly meetings of central and regional offices, the grievance redress mechanism, the learning-by-doing approach, and the series of circulars to provide policy and operational guidance were useful in making implementing agencies more agile in carrying out their tasks.
- (iv) Reaching out to a wider set of partners for support, including the private sector, development partners, civil society, and business groups demonstrated that an inclusive approach and effective stakeholders' cooperation were essential in achieving results.

SAP implementation experience underscored the critical importance and urgent need for a comprehensive, up-to-date, and reliable database for targeting beneficiaries of social assistance

programs, particularly on a large scale. The Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS), which has been used by local government units to identify their poor and vulnerable population groups, could have complemented the 4Ps database. With some alignment across regions and local government units, the CBMS could have strengthened evidence-based decision-making and mechanisms for identifying and reaching beneficiaries.

Social distancing protocols and contactless cash delivery could have mitigated the risks to SAP personnel and avoided infections and deaths among them. Remote and conflict-affected areas exposed SAP personnel to security risks. The use of financial service providers and financial technology from the start could have mitigated health and security risks.

This case study has been developed solely as a basis for class discussion. It is not intended to serve as a historical record, a source of primary data, or an illustration of effective or ineffective management.

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Annex 1: Emergency Subsidy Program Timeline

Date	Government Policy Circulars	Key Events and Actions
30 January 2020		First COVID-19 case recorded in the country.
18 March 2020		Confirmed cases: 187 with 12 deaths.
15 April 2020		Confirmed cases: 5,453 with 349 deaths.
11 March 2020		First recorded death from local transmission.
12 March 2020		The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) raised the COVID-19 threat to highest alert level (Code Red Sublevel 2), due to evidence of sustained community transmission of the disease.
15 March 2020		The Philippine President approved the recommendation to declare a community quarantine in the National Capital Region (NCR).
17 March 2020		Luzon placed under Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), under Presidential Proclamation no. 929, Series of 2020, declaring a state of calamity throughout the Philippines.
24 March 2020	Republic Act 11469 “Bayanihan to Heal as One” Act declaring state of national emergency and declaring the urgent need to immediately mobilize assistance in the provision of necessities to affected families and individuals	<p>Sec. 4.c (Authorized Powers) Provide an emergency subsidy to 18 million low-income households: Provided, that the subsidy shall amount to a minimum of ₱5,000 to a maximum of ₱8,000 a month for 2 months; Provided further, that the subsidy shall be computed based on the prevailing regional minimum wage rates; Provided finally, that the subsidy received from the current conditional cash transfer program and rice subsidy shall be taken into consideration in the computation of the emergency subsidy as provided for in this act. (Note: the act did not specify a timeline of disbursement, it only refers to two tranches of cash subsidy delivery.)</p> <p>Sec. 4.cc Implement an expanded 4Ps, whether in cash or noncash. Where the secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) or the secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), shall transfer cash, cash voucher, or goods through the local government units (LGUs) or directly to households.</p> <p>Sec. 5 (Creation of Oversight Committee) The President during Monday of every week shall submit a weekly report to Congress. The report includes amount and utilization of funds used, augmented, reprogrammed, reallocated and realignment pursuant to this act.</p> <p>A joint Congressional Oversight Committee is created composed of four members of each house to be appointed by the Senate President and the House Speaker. This committee shall determine whether such acts, orders, rules, and regulations are within the restrictions provided herein.</p> <p>The ECQ period from 17 March 2020 to 12 April 2020 was cited in Proclamation no. 929 dated 16 March 2020.</p>

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Annex 1 continued

Date	Government Policy Circulars	Key Events and Actions
28 March 2020	Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 1, Series of 2020 – the Special Guidelines on the Provision of Social Amelioration Measures by DSWD, DOLE, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Agriculture, Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to the Most Affected Residents of the Areas under ECQ	<p>Background of JMC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On 12 March 2020, the IATF-EID raised the COVID-19 threat to highest alert level (Code Red Sublevel 2), due to evidence of sustained community transmission. On 15 March 2020, President Duterte approved the recommendation to declare a community quarantine in NCR. On 17 March 2020, ECQ was declared in Luzon. People feel compelled to provide for their families, evading quarantine protocols in the process. This risky behavior will continue until clear and established support and social amelioration measures are implemented by the government. The Bayanihan to Heal as One Act empowers the national government to provide an emergency subsidy to 18 million low-income families as defined in this JMC. This JMC shall guarantee that basic needs of the affected individuals and communities during and after the implementation of ECQ shall be provided by the government to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. <p>Para. 5.1. Emergency Subsidy Program – A social amelioration program (SAP) to provide cash or noncash subsidy to 18 million household beneficiaries, as defined in this JMC, in the amount of at least ₱5,000 to a maximum of ₱8,000 per month for 2 months, for basic food, medicine, and toiletries.</p> <p>Para. 5.2: Social Amelioration Card (SAC) – A form, distributed at the barangay level, that captures the family profile, which will be the mechanism for the affected families to access the government's SAP.</p> <p>Para 5.3: DSWD shall provide food packs during the quarantine period as an augmentation to the LGUs, as agreed by the IATF-TWG on social amelioration.</p> <p>Para 5.4: Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) – Provision of integrated services by DSWD to individuals and families in crisis or difficult situations that serve as social safety nets or stop-gap measures to support their recovery.</p> <p>Para 5.7: Target Beneficiaries – The families that belong to either the poor or informal sector who are at risk of not earning a living during the ECQ, who may have at least one member belonging to any of the following vulnerable or disadvantaged sectors: senior citizens, persons with disability, pregnant and lactating women, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in distress, indigent indigenous peoples, among others.</p>

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Annex 1 continued

Date	Government Policy Circulars	Key Events and Actions
		<p>Para 11: Operationalization of Cash Distribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The national government, under the Emergency Subsidy Program (ESP), shall provide top-up funds so that each eligible family shall get from ₱5,000 to ₱8,000 in cash or kind from various national government agency (NGA) and LGU programs. In no instance shall there be a duplication of cash beneficiaries. The LGU shall identify the beneficiaries and DSWD shall issue the SACs. The SAC shall be the basis of the cash transfers.
30 March 2020	<p>DILG issued Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 2020-065 – Guidelines for Local Government Units in the Provision of Social Amelioration Measures by the National Government to the Most Affected Residents of the areas under ECQ</p> <p>DSWD issued MC No. 004, Series of 2020 – Special Guidelines on the Provision of Social Amelioration Measures by the DSWD to the Most Affected Residents of the Areas Under Community Quarantine and Continuation of the Implementation of the Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens and the Supplementary Feeding Programs</p> <p>DOF and DBM issued their Joint Circular No. 1 – Guidelines on the Collection and Utilization of the Pooled Resources to Fund Social Amelioration Measures under RA 11469 Bayanihan to Heal as One Act</p>	<p>DILG directed all LGUs to submit the target beneficiary list in their areas not later than 3 April 2020.</p> <p>Sec. XI. Role of the LGUs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide list of target beneficiaries Facilitate distribution, accomplishment, and encoding of SAC forms Facilitate preparation and approval of payroll Facilitate delivery of cash to beneficiaries based on the payroll Submit liquidation report within 15 days <p>The payout pertinent to the Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens Program and the implementation of the Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP) shall be continued.</p> <p>DOF and DBM directed all NGAs and state-owned enterprises to remit all unutilized funds to the single treasury account to fund the SAP.</p> <p>NGAs implementing the SAP shall submit a special budget request to DBM, which shall form the basis for the special allotment release order (SARO). SARO is a specific authority issued to identified agencies to incur obligations not exceeding a given amount during a specified period for the purpose indicated.</p>

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Annex 1 continued

Date	Government Policy Circulars	Key Events and Actions
31 March 2020	<p>DSWD issued MC No. 005, Series of 2020 – Supplemental Guidelines to MC no. 04, Series of 2020 on the Provision of Social Amelioration Measures by DSWD</p> <p>MC No. 006, Series of 2020 – Supplemental Guidelines for MC No. 04, Series of 2020 on the Provision of Social Amelioration Measures by DSWD to Provide Further Guidance on the Provision of AICS to the Most Affected Residents of the Areas under Community Quarantine</p>	<p>MC No. 005 highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of expanded 4Ps program to include homeless street families, indigenous peoples, and families in need of special protection as beneficiaries of the emergency subsidy program. • 4Ps has 4.4 million households; the new criteria will increase the number of families, but the MC does not specify. • The amount of subsidy per family per region is covered in the MC. <p>MC No. 006 highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines the assistance to DSWD AICS and provides clarity on the transfer of the AICS subsidy from DSWD to LGUs • AICS shall be provided to non-4Ps program beneficiaries only; the amount is defined in this MC. <p>Procedures in the transfer of AICS funds to LGUs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSWD field offices prepare a memorandum of understanding (MOA) with LGUs. • LGUs are required to submit a budget proposal to the field office along with the MOA. • Since the accomplishment of SAC takes time, submission of SACs shall only be required to monitor the distribution and receipt of AICS, and not a prerequisite for the transfer of funds to LGUs. • List of target beneficiaries shall no longer be required from LGUs prior to transfer of funds, but the same shall be submitted along with SAC forms within 48 hours after transfer of funds. • No additional funds will be transferred to LGUs until a liquidation report is submitted to DSWD of prior fund releases. <p>Role of DSWD field offices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensify monitoring of the distribution of the emergency subsidies. • Ensure that LGUs submit SAC and other documents. • Ensure that LGUs submit photos of beneficiaries receiving their subsidies. • Ensure weekly report is submitted to IATF, consolidating reports from LGUs.
2 April 2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DBM released ₱100 billion to DSWD on 2 April. • Then another ₱96 billion on 16 April.

continued on next page

Annex 1 continued

Date	Government Policy Circulars	Key Events and Actions
3 April 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 007, Series of 2020 – Amendment and Supplemental Guidelines to Pertinent Provisions of MC nos. 04, 05, and 06, Series of 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision includes fisherfolks and informal economy workers as beneficiaries; and those identified by the National Anti-Poverty Commission as vulnerable groups. Defines amount of subsidy per region to informal and poor/near poor. After receiving the budget proposal from LGUs, DSWD may refer to the National Housing Targeting System for Poverty Reduction database which may be used to match the eligible beneficiaries; however, this is not a prerequisite to the transfer of funds. This will be used by DSWD to monitor and check for duplication. <p>DSWD will also use all means to transfer the cash, through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> direct cash payouts, electronic/digital means, cash card payments, transfer of funds through other NGAs and/or LGUs, and any other mode to transfer assistance.
3 April 2020		<p>Emergency cash subsidy for 3.7 million 4Ps beneficiaries were transferred via cash/atm cards within 24 hours upon receipt of funds from DBM (DSWD AO, 29 April 2020).</p> <p>DSWD started transferring funds to LGUs for SAP, using budget received from DBM.</p>
7 April 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 008, Series of 2020 – Simplified data sharing guidelines	The MC provides guidance among NGAs and local governments in accessing specific DSWD databases, such as the UCT, Listahanan, Social Pension, 4Ps, or databases from other DSWD programs and services.
9 April 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 009, Series of 2020 – Omnibus guidelines for the implementation of the ESP	<p>This MC serves to harmonize MC nos. 04, 06, and 07 issued by DSWD relative to the implementation of the ESP. This also provides comprehensive guidelines to the implementation of AICS and the livelihood assistance grant (LAG).</p> <p>The MC defines further the ESP beneficiaries and those excluded from the program.</p>
10 April 2020		<p>Payout of ESP started for low-income family beneficiaries, and a total of 1,064,185 beneficiaries by 20 April 2020.</p> <p>Delays in the distribution of the emergency subsidy at the local level were noted and are attributed to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> constant changes in the policies, transparency and communication on the implementation of SAP, varying processes at the LGU level, lack of a reliable list and databases for SAP validation and accountability, and the need for other forms of targeting systems and corresponding responsive social protection program for different target disadvantaged groups (DSWD AO, 29 April 2020).

continued on next page

Annex 1 *continued*

Date	Government Policy Circulars	Key Events and Actions
13 April 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 010, Series of 2020	Amendments to MC No. 05, Series of 2020 on the Provision of Social Amelioration to Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) Households, defining adjustments to amounts paid.
20 April 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 011, Series of 2020	Supplemental guidelines to cover the implementation of AICS in relation to MC No. 11, Series of 2019. To allow additional distribution schemes of AICS to its beneficiaries in lieu of outright cash payment due to the prohibition against mass gatherings and the imposition of strict social distancing measures.
29 April 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 012, Series of 2020	Guidelines in the implementation of the SFP during the community quarantine period. This amends MC No. 03, Series of 2019. The SFP is the provision of food in addition to the regular meals to target children ages 3–4 years old enrolled in child development centers and 2–4 year old children in supervised neighborhood play. DSWD and the Department of Education (DepEd) are the lead agencies.
29 April 2020	DSWD Administrative Order (AO) No. 003, Series of 2020	The AO outlines the reformulation of the DSWD COVID-19 response and recovery plan from 2020 to 2022. It shall serve as guide to all bureaus, services, program management offices, and field offices of DSWD to implement their respective strategic deliverables. DSWD reported massive grievances, citing the exclusion of groups from the ESP during its 3rd week of implementation. With this, a reliable (cleaned and updated) database which includes the middle class (40% of the total population according to a 2018 study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies on profiling the middle class) is being prioritized (DSWD AO, 29 April 2020). The AO further noted that recalibration of DSWD programs is vital to ensure that social welfare and social safety net programs are being implemented to the current pandemic context (page 5 of the AO). And that presence of a responsive and timely strategic communication plan is needed (page 6 of the AO). Page 8 of the AO outlines DSWD metrics/scorecard on target beneficiaries, when to accomplish, and who are accountable.

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Annex 1 continued

Date	Government Policy Circulars	Key Events and Actions
1 June 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 014, Series of 2020	<p>A significant number of families appealed for inclusion in the ESP, the President directed DSWD to formulate guidelines for additional beneficiaries to SAP.</p> <p>This MC covers the provision of the emergency subsidy for the estimated 5 million eligible families which were not included in the initial 18 million (low-income) family beneficiaries of SAP for the first tranche. The total targeted beneficiaries now number 23 million families (or about 115 million individuals).</p> <p>The additional 5 million families may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> those with no income, low income, or no savings, and not presently under 4Ps; families who are part of the “vulnerable group”; families previously under 4Ps and were tagged “moved-out” of the program at least 60 days before the quarantine period; and families in 4Ps but have not received ESP so far.
9 June 2020	Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 2 – Joint Implementing Guidelines for the Implementation of the Social Amelioration Program for the Second Tranche	<p>The SAP for the 2nd tranche will be provided to the family beneficiaries of the first tranche that are still under ECQ. In addition, 5 million waitlisted family beneficiaries shall also be provided with an emergency subsidy. But only 3.5 million of them who are under ECQ will be given two counts of emergency subsidy; the remaining additional beneficiaries will be given only one count of emergency subsidy (page 2 and 3 of JMC No. 2). DSWD shall issue the guidelines.</p> <p>DSWD is tasked to check on possible duplication of SAP benefits to the same family. In determining duplication, an individual member of a family who received the ESP shall be considered receiving for his family despite the fact that they are physically separated from each other (page 8).</p> <p>Any family found to be receiving more than it should (duplication) is required to refund the amount to DSWD (page 11).</p> <p>The JMC retroacts to 1 June 2020.</p>
29 June 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 017, Series of 2020 – Guidelines on Deduplication Procedures in Line with the Provision of the Emergency Subsidy through the DSWD Social Amelioration Program	<p>MC nos. 9 and 14 necessitate the adoption of uniform “deduplication procedures” so that the “certified list” of beneficiaries may be produced for the next tranche payout that will be implemented by DSWD.</p> <p>The process aims to identify families who received more than one emergency subsidy program from various government agencies.</p>
17 July 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 018, Series of 2020	<p>Guidelines to ensure that the generation of certified/authenticated lists of beneficiaries and the release of funds are facilitated.</p> <p>Qualification of beneficiaries that “moved out” of 4Ps is also defined.</p>


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Annex 1 *continued*

Date	Government Policy Circulars	Key Events and Actions
27 July 2020	RA 11494: Bayanihan to Recover as One Act – An act providing for COVID-19 response and recovery interventions and providing mechanisms to accelerate the recovery and bolster the resiliency of the Philippine economy	The law codified the series of MCs issued by NGAs and provided further budgetary resources.
28 August 2020	DSWD issued MC No. 019, Series of 2020	DSWD's response to COVID-19 does not stop in providing ESP but will continue by providing recovery interventions such as the provision of the Livelihood Assistance Grant (LAG) to low-income families in the informal sector. The maximum amount of LAG per family shall not exceed ₱15,000 for microenterprise or employment-related projects and shall only be provided once per family.

Source: Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Annex 2: Sample Social Amelioration Card of a Beneficiary



Social Amelioration Card (SAC)

(Sumulat gamit ang MALALAKING TITIK)

PUNO NG PAMILYA (Kasalukuyan)

Pangalan: _____

Tirahan: _____ Kalye: _____

Barangay: _____ Lungsod/Bayan: _____

Probinsya: _____ Rehiyon: _____

Trabaho: _____ Buwanang Kita: _____

Pinagtatrabahuhan at Lugar: _____ Sektor: _____

☐ Benepisyaryo ng UCT
 ☐ Benepisyaryo ng 4Ps
 ☐ Katutubo (Grupo)
 ☐ Others _____

KOPYA NG BENEPISYARYO

Kasarian: ☐ Lalaki ☐ Babae

Uri ng ID : _____

Numero ng ID: _____

Petsa ng Kapanganakan: _____ mm-dd-yyyy

Cellphone No: _____

Kondisyon ng Kalusugan: _____

Miyembro ng Pamilya (Apelyido, Pangalan, Gitnang Pangalan)	Relasyon sa Puno ng Pamilya	Petsa ng Kapanganakan (mm/dd/yyyy)	Kasarian (M/F)	Trabaho	Sektor (A-F)	Kondisyon ng Kalusugan (1-5)

Paalala: Ang unang dalawang miyembro na nakalista ay magsisilbing alternatibong kinatawan ng inyong pamilya.


Sektor: A-Nakakatanda B-Buntis C-Nagpapasung Ina

D-PWD E-Solo Parent F-Walang Tirahan

Kondisyon ng Kalusugan : 1 - Sakit sa Puso 2 - Altapresyon

3 - Sakit sa Baga 4 - Diyabetis 5 - Kanser

"Pinapatotohanan ko na ang lahat ng mga impormasyong nasusulat dito ay tama at pawang katotohanan lamang. Batid ko na ako ay maaring makulong sakaling mayroong kahit isang impormasyon na hindi totoo o 'di kaya'y sadyang hindi ko ibinunyag."




Lagda/Thumbmark ng Puno ng Pamilya _____ Pangalan at Lagda ng Punong Barangay _____

Petsa ng Pagrehistro _____ Pangalan at Lagda ng LSWDO _____




Dapat sagutan ng Opisyal ng Barangay: Oo ☐ Hindi ☐

Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS)



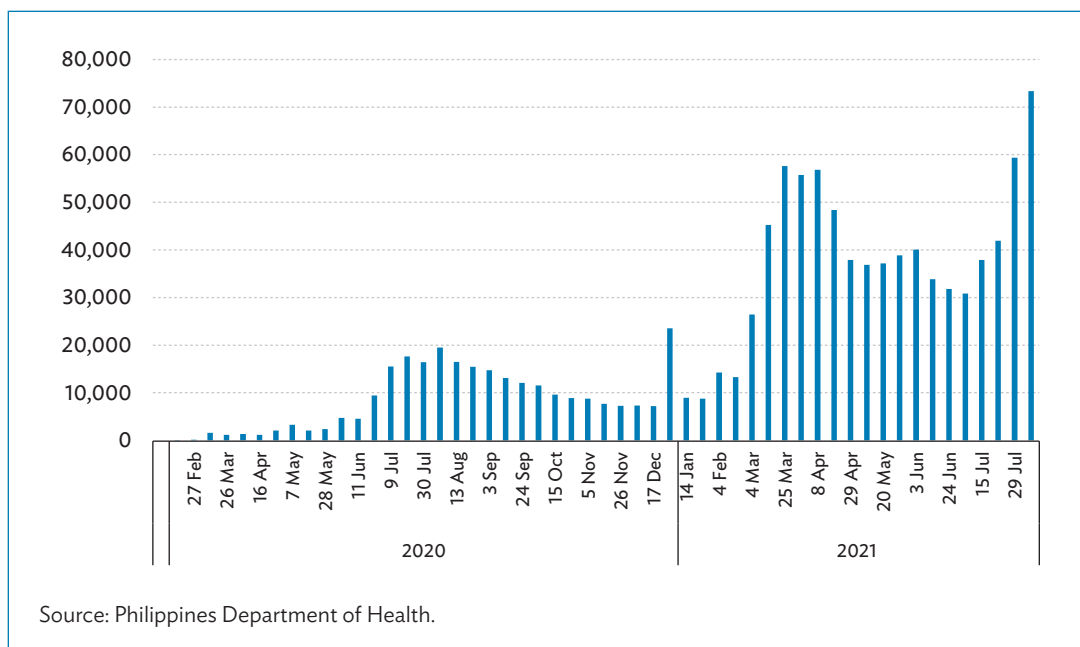
PH-COVID-133901000-000001

Annex 3: SAP Grievance Redress System Form Sample

	Republic of the Philippines Province of Batangas CITY OF TANAUAN CITY SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE GRIEVANCE REDRESS SYSTEM	 	TRACKING/REFERENCE NUMBER <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
GRIEVANCE FORM			
I. IMPORMASYON NG MAY REKLAMO <i>Gamitin ang form na ito para sa inyong reklamo. Ibigay ang hinihinging *Impormasyon at punan ang angkop na mga box</i>			
*UNANG PANGALAN	*GITNANG PANGALAN	*HULING PANGALAN	*PETA (MM-DD-YYYY)
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div>
*NUMERO/KALYE/SITIO NG		*BARANGAY	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>	
*CITY/MUNICIPALITY		*PROVINCE	*REGION
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>
*SEX <input type="checkbox"/> Lalaki <input type="checkbox"/> Babae	*CONTACT NUMBER	*E-MAIL ADDRESS	*KABILANG SA ISANG IP Group? <input type="checkbox"/> Oo <input type="checkbox"/> Hindi
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>	Kung Oo, pangalan ng grupo <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 20px;"></div>
II. KATEGORIA NG REKLAMO <i>Lagyan ng tsek ang box na angkop sa inyong reklamo</i>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dapat ako ay mapasali sa Social Amelioration Program (SAP) Paliwanag/Batayan <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dapat maalis ang pamilya sa Social Amelioration Program (SAP) SINO? <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 200px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> Paliwanag/Batayan <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dapat isama ang pamilya sa Social Amelioration Program (SAP) SINO? <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 200px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> Paliwanag/Batayan <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dapat kong ma-claim ang on-hold na Social Amelioration Program (SAP) grant ko Paliwanag/Batayan <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 40px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>			
Lagda ng may reklamo:		Petsa:	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>	
Inasikaso ni:		Petsa:	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>	
FOLLOW-UP SLIP			
Pangalan ng may inihaing reklamo: <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>		Tracking/Reference Number <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>	
Address: <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>		Follow-up date: <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>	

Source: Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Annex 4: Weekly COVID-19 Cases by Date of Onset of Illness (4-week moving average)



Study Questions

1. The Social Amelioration Program (SAP) amounted to ₱205 billion (\$4 billion), which was used to provide ₱5,000 (\$98) to ₱8,000 (\$157) per month to 18 million households for 2 months. Do you think this is the best use of public money? From a macroeconomic perspective, what are the rationale and justification for this expenditure? What are the benefits of cash subsidies from a social protection perspective and poverty reduction strategy? What are the arguments against, if any, for the SAP and cash grants from macroeconomic and social perspectives? [In answering these questions, students may be asked to form two groups for a role play (e.g., legislators debating on the issues.)]
2. There are four general approaches used by governments to identify beneficiaries of social assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic: (i) existing data from social protection sector (e.g., existing social registries and pension databases); (ii) existing government data beyond social protection sector (e.g., tax, vehicle and land data for affluence testing); (iii) existing nongovernment data (e.g., telecom providers, financial inclusion programs, humanitarian data, and local NGOs, informal worker organizations, farmer registries); and (iv) on-demand registration to complement traditional approaches using digital content, SMS, and helplines). Discuss and explain the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Which approach(es) was(were) used in SAP implementation? How could the identification of beneficiaries have been done better?
3. Suppose you have been asked to prepare a brief concept note to conduct a rapid assessment of SAP implementation and outcome. Prepare an annotated outline of the concept note and discuss the following, but not limited to (i) objectives of the assessment; (ii) performance indicators; (iii) operational definition of each indicator; (iv) sources of data and information for each indicator; and (v) methods of data collection and verification.
4. Enumerate and discuss the fiduciary and implementation risks in SAP. Summarize the measures undertaken by implementors to mitigate each risk and explain what could have been done better.
5. Discuss the relevance and role of development financing (e.g., mobilizing support from international financing institutions and/or private sector) in addressing the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on the poor and vulnerable households.

Cover photo: Manila, Philippines, August 2020. People line up at a remittance center to receive SAP aid from government (photo by MDV Edwards / Shutterstock.com).

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