

Assessment-based National Dialogue: A process to define a national SPF



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Philippines

During 2014-2016, the Government of the Philippines engaged ministries, social security institutions, employers, workers, civil society and international organisations in a multipartite national dialogue. The ultimate objective was to arrive at a consensus on what needs to be done to complete the social protection floor (SPF) in the Philippines. The resulting recommendations to policymakers are meant to serve as inputs into the Five-Year Implementation Plan for the national Social Protection Operational Framework and Strategy (SPOFS).

The national dialogue process was conducted using the Assessment-based National Dialogue (ABND) methodology. The ABND assessed the social protection programmes in the Philippines, developed a consensus on recommendations for a national SPF, estimated its cost and presented the findings to policymakers for endorsement. The process was led by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). The ILO provided technical and financial support under the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme.

The Recommendation on Social Protection Floors, 2012 (No. 202) stipulates establishing basic social security guarantees to ensure access to essential healthcare and income security for all, including children, people of working age and older persons.

The Sustainable Development Goal 1.3, part of the UN 2030 agenda, aims to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, supported by the Universal Social Protection partnership (USP2030).

This brief presents a successful experience of a country in extending social protection.



Main lessons learned

- The ABND process should be institutionalised through a government decree to ensure that it engages all relevant stakeholders working in the field of social protection in the country, is completed within a specified period of time and has an impact on policymaking. A working group mandated by the decree and led by a ministry should conduct the process.
- The ABND process was adapted to the Philippine context by following national decision-making processes and utilising existing coordination mechanisms. This facilitated the process of endorsement by policymakers.
- The scope and final outputs should be decided at the beginning of the process to manage expectations of different stakeholders.
- Conducting dialogue workshops at the local level was instrumental in understanding ground-level realities and area-specific challenges and thus, in having a better understanding of existing policy gaps and implementation issues.
- The ABND contributed to capacity development on social protection concepts and quantitative methodologies.

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1. Background of the ABND process

The Philippines aims to empower and protect its poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged people within the inclusive development goals and poverty reduction strategy of the country. The ABND exercise is an effort of the Government of the Philippines towards establishing a nationally defined social protection floor for all people in the country, with a focus on the poor and vulnerable.

The ABND assesses the social protection, employment promotion and disaster management programmes in the country, identifies gaps in design and coverage according to the vulnerabilities of the people, explores recommendations to establish an SPF in the Philippines and estimates the cost of these recommendations. The SPF recommendations are validated at the technical level by the national and local governments, employers, workers, civil society and development partners, while it is endorsed at the cabinet level by policymakers.



2. A participatory approach uniting many actors

A Core Group (CG) co-chaired by DOLE and NEDA was mandated to conduct the ABND process. Its responsibilities included technical validation of the assessment data and planning of the ABND process. Members of the CG included representatives of the following agencies:

- ministries and government agencies, such as DOLE, NEDA, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Social Security System (SSS), Government Social Insurance System (GSIS),

Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) and others;

- Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) and Federation of Free Workers (FFW); and
- UN agencies, such as ILO, UNICEF and WHO.

Other ministries, including the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and civil society organizations, such as Social Watch, also participated in the CG workshops.

The Government's commitment to conducting a transparent and inclusive national dialogue process greatly helped to engage different national stakeholders working in the field of social protection. The ABND process was institutionalised and supported through DOLE Administrative Orders. It is also part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-18: Strategic Focus 4 on "Pursuit of a nationally-defined, context-specific Social Protection Floor".

3. Three stages of the ABND

The ABND was started in May 2014 and completed in 2016.¹ It comprises three main stages.

Stage 1: Assessment matrix

The assessment matrix is an inventory of the existing social protection, employment promotion and disaster management programmes in the country. It identifies policy gaps and implementation issues, as well as recommendations to address them and establish a nationally appropriate SPF. The matrix was developed through joint national and regional consultations and presented at the cabinet level.

	Existing schemes	Policy gaps	Recos	Implementation issues	Recos
Health					
Children					
Working age					
Elderly					

} Social insurance
} Social welfare
} Social safety nets
} Labor market interventions

¹ The ABND process encountered delays, which risked rendering parts of the assessment obsolete. This could be better managed by stipulating a time frame in the decree.

The assessment matrix is segregated into the four SPF guarantees, namely access to health care and social protection for children, working-age people and the elderly. It is further segregated into the SPOFS components of contributory social insurance, social welfare for the poor, social safety nets for disaster victims and labour market interventions. In this way, the matrix is tailored to the national context.

Stage 2: Cost of the SPF recommendations



The cost of the recommendations, i.e. the additional cost of establishing a national SPF, was estimated using a tool known as the Rapid Assessment Protocol (RAP). Parameters such as benefit levels and beneficiary groups were determined through dialogue workshops. During this stage, members of the CG were trained on the RAP methodology.

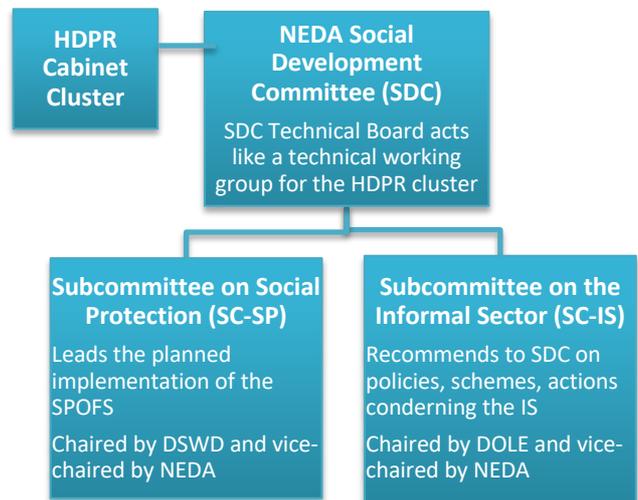
The results of the RAP were used as a basis to prioritize recommendations and phase their implementation from now until 2028. This was done as a way to monitor the establishment of the SPF in line with the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

Stage 3: Endorsement of the SPF recommendations



The recommendations for establishing a national SPF were technically validated at the national level by the Core Group and at the local level through multipartite consultations held in the three island groups of the Philippines, namely Visayas, Luzon and Mindanao. This helped to ensure that the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders and ground-level realities were taken into account. This also contributed to making the process transparent and inclusive.

Progress on the ABND process and its findings were regularly presented to high-level coordination committees, including the Human Development and Poverty Reduction (HDPR) cabinet cluster, NEDA Social Development Committee (SDC) and the Subcommittees on Social Protection and the Informal Sector. Thus, adapting the process to existing decision-making processes and coordination structures facilitated endorsement by policy-makers.



4. What's next?

The recommendations of the ABND process are expected to serve as inputs into a Five-Year Implementation Plan for the national Social Protection Operational Framework and Strategy. The recommendations constitute a consensus on what needs to be done to achieve a national SPF and could therefore contribute to policymaking in the country. Furthermore, the Core Group represents an inclusive mechanism to conduct national dialogue on social protection issues and could be utilised for future exercises.

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