

HIGHLIGHTS OF ASSESSMENT-BASED NATIONAL DIALOGUE (ABND) ISLAND-WIDE CONSULTATIONS VISAYAS CLUSTER

March 18-19, 2015

Amigo Terrace Hotel, Corner Iznart and Delgado Streets, Iloilo City

I. ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) leads the conduct of Assessment Based-National Dialogue (ABND) Island-wide Visayas Consultation held last March 18-19, 2015 at Amigo Terrace Hotel, Iloilo City. It was attended by seventy three (73) participants from Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC), regional counterparts of DOLE and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) in Visayas, Technical Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) RO VI, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Field Office VI, Regional Tri-Partite Councils, and sectoral representatives from National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC).

II. OBJECTIVES

As part of the undertakings of Human Development and Poverty Reduction (HDPR) Cluster to accelerate poverty reduction measures through strengthening the social protection for poor, vulnerable and marginalized sector, the conduct of ABND was approved towards establishing a minimum set of guarantees of Social Protection Floor in the Philippines.

After the inventory of present social protection policies and programs in the Philippines through bilateral and multi-lateral meeting with concerned agencies at the national level, Island-wide Consultations aim to validate and generate comments and recommendations on the social protection policy and program gaps from stakeholders at the regional/local level such as the representative from Regional Development Councils, Regional Tri-partite Industrial Peace Councils, employers' group, workers' group, and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

III. HIGHLIGHTS

- Director Adeline T. De Castro of DOLE-Planning Service led the facilitation of the program as the master of the ceremonies.
- DOLE Regional Office No. VI Director Ponciano M. Ligutom delivered his welcome remarks and opening message to formally start the program. He discussed the importance of measuring inclusive growth. He ended his message by challenging all the participants to speak without fear or in favor regarding the real context of Philippine. He called out to everyone to be critical of their analysis and assessment so that responsive recommendations can be made.
- Ms. Girlie J. Casimiro, Chief Economic Development Specialist from NEDA-Social Development Staff, gave a brief background of the social protection in the Philippine setting. She shared that in the Philippines, the vulnerability rate is higher than poverty and that social protection is/will be an important tool in preventing the poverty incidence in the country to shoot up. She also gave a walk-through on the Social Protection definitions established in the country. The Philippines is guided by the Social Protection Operational Framework, which categorized policies and programs into 4 key components, namely, (1) Social Insurance, Social Welfare, Labor Market Interventions and Social Safety Nets. She reiterated that the Social Protection is for all.

Furthermore, she discussed the importance of ABND to determine the minimum social protection floor for the Philippines since the outputs of the said initiative will be an input to the five (5) year Social protection Plan.

- Ms. Loveleen De, Social Protection Consultant from the International Labor Organization (ILO), presented the ILO perspective of social protection as response to various risks linked throughout the life-cycle such as maternity, disability, old-age, economic crisis, armed conflicts and among others, preventing them to fall further to poverty line. In accordance to this reality, a social protection floor must be established to ensure that minimum social protection level will be given to all people who are exposed to those types of risks. Based on ILO definition, it has four set of guarantees namely, (1) essential health-care, (2) income security for children, (3) working age people, and (4) elderly. She emphasized that the social protection floor may vary from one country to country depending on the specific their needs, resources and values.

She also discussed the ABND concepts and the process by summarizing them into three basic steps: (1) develop an inventory of present social protection programs and projects in a form of an assessment matrix to determine the policy and implementation gaps and its corresponding recommendations, (2) estimate or project the cost for implementing the recommendations as against country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to determine whether those are too idealistic or practical enough to be pursued by the government, and (3) endorse for the launching of the national social protection floor. She explained the different sections of the assessment matrix and how will be the parameters for the cost estimation will be determined.

She ended by enumerating the strengths and limitations of ABND exercise. Among the strengths cited were: (1) Its coordinative approach which can bring stakeholders from the public and private sectors to define the national SPF, and (2) engaging stakeholders into a national dialogue for the SPF, to identify issues and give recommendations, and estimate its affordability. On the other hand, the limitation is that the proposed recommendations, in particular for starting a new scheme, require more detailed scrutiny or study given the generality of the ABND.

- Executive Director Stella Banawis of Employees Compensation Commission (ECC) shared the initiatives of the ABND core group for the past year towards the establishment of a social protection floor for all in the country. One of those mentioned was the National Convergence Program for the Workers in the Informal Sector, wherein various government agencies inked a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) along with their commitments towards their transition from informal to formal.

She also gave a brief history of the actions taken in order to spearhead the conduct of ABND exercise in the country. Among the particulars highlighted were the creation of inter-agency core group wherein DOLE and NEDA are the co-chairs. She ended by presenting the work plan and timeline for the forth-coming activities pertaining to the ABND exercise.

- After Executive Director Banawis' presentation, the participants were given an opportunity to raise issues and inquiries with regard Social Protection definition and ABND process. Below were the highlights of the open forum:
 - During the open forum, Mr. Ronaldo Payda, sectoral representative from the workers in the informal sector, inquired on how the vulnerable be covered in PHILHEALTH recognizing that they experience hindrances from enjoying health care benefits. In response, Dr. Pargas, Vice President for Corporate Affairs of PHIC, said that the coverage will be less as an issue since there were increase of funding from national government

through Sin Tax. However, the pertinent issue is the targeting mechanisms of the local and the national government for sponsorship and indigent programs which tends to overlap.

- Ms. Celia Matea Flor, representative from women sector, suggested that the local government units (e.g. DILG, League of Municipalities, Cities and Provinces in the Philippines) must have representation in the series of consultations since most of the implementation of social protection policies and programs will be at the local level.
- OWWA Administrator Rebecca Calzado suggested that the OFW representatives or organizations be invited in the next round of consultations in Luzon and Mindanao since they can give a better perspective as to the social protection concerns of migrant workers. She also inquired the exclusion of housing from the SPF. She said that housing is not part of the general SPF however it would still depend on the country if it sees housing could be included in the national SPF.
- Mr. George Zulueta, representative from TIPC Region VI Management sector, expressed some apprehensions on the limited time allotted for the ABND exercise to come up with accurate gaps and responsive recommendations considering that most of the issues have been perennial in the country. Director Banawis said that the ABND aims to validate previously researched and discussed gaps and issues with the different sectors. The activity is to validate the matrix that was a result of a series of activities with stakeholders.
- Ms. Jimmy Lastrilla, representative from the Indigenous People (IPs) sector, asked about the exclusion of National Commission for Indigenous People (NCIP) in the sub-committees/inter-agencies for social protection since the said agency has database for the IPs. On his concern regarding the documentary requirements including birth certificate and marriage contract for PHILHEALTH membership, Mr. Pargas informed that in the new PHILHEALTH law, Republic Act No.10606, only the membership form is to be accomplished, except for few cases. He advised that PHILHEALTH members should update their information to avoid complications.
- Bureau of Workers with Special Concern (BWSC) Director Ahmma Charisma Lobrin-Satumba gave a walkthrough of the content of assessment matrices which is divided into based on ILO SPF guarantees and Social Protection Operational Framework Strategy (SPOFS). She emphasized that only the government programs were included in the ABND exercise given that the configuration of coverage and benefits will be determined in the cost-estimation against the national budget. In general, the discussion moved deliberately by pointing on the following: (1) overview of the programs/schemes, (2) identified policy and implementation gaps and (3) their corresponding recommendations. Director Satumba reminded the participants to look into coverage and benefits of the different programs during the discussion.
- DOLE Planning Service Director Adeline T. De Castro discussed the mechanics of the workshop consultations. Four groups shall be formed in respective to the four (4) SPF guarantees. Each group was assigned a social protection guarantee. Participants were given the freedom to choose which group they want to join in.

IV. SUMMARY OF GROUP WORKSHOP

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR (SPF) 1 – HEALTH CARE

Chairperson	: Dr. Israel Francis Pargas, PHIC
Attendees	: Ms. Lourdes Miñoza, PHIC Mr. Ronaldo Payda, NAPC Ms. Celia Matea Flor, NAPC
Secretariat	: Ms. Marinelle Marcos, DOLE-PS

The group was chaired by Dr. Israel Francis Pargas, Vice President for Corporate Affairs of PHILHEALTH. The group conferred on PHILHEALTH, Veterans Hospitalization Program of Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO), and Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). Among the issues discussed expanding health care benefits and membership coverage for PHILHEALTH, particularly the enrollment to indigent and sponsorship programs, limited availment of hospitalization benefits for veterans, and accessibility of 4Ps beneficiaries to health facilities. The following were the highlights of discussion with its corresponding responses and agreements:

- On National Household Targeting System (NHTS) database, it was clarified that DSWD conducts validation through household survey every 3 years only then that they can issue the updated NHTS database. The group put in recommendation for the inclusion of indigents, IPs and PWDs in the said database.
- The group agreed to recommend the improvement of information dissemination by strengthening coordination with concerned agencies at the national and local levels, aggressive conduct of ALAGA KA at LHIO level, organize session with tribal councils/IP groups in local dialects, localizing IEC, and among others.
- The benefits for the PWDs include Z morph package in 2013. However, it was clarified that the said benefits may only be availed through contracted hospitals UERM, PGH and others. Ortho implants and devices are also included while assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids are under study.
- On the issue of reimbursement of expenses incurred by indigent members, it was mentioned that they are afforded a “No Balance Billing”. All medical services and medicines will be free for all indigents and sponsored members.
- With the national government now paying the premium contribution and the DSWD identifying the poor as listed in the Listahanan, political considerations are greatly lessened if not totally eliminated.
- To enable the members from the informal sector on sustaining their premium contributions, it was recommended for the (1) segmentation of the informal sector and, (2) implementation of partial subsidy scheme.

- Regarding the issue of poor services and facilities of public hospitals, the group agreed to retain the recommendation “Retention of PHIC payment to be used for operation and improvement of services and facilities”.
- As hospitalization benefits of veterans may only be availed at Veterans Memorial Medical Center, the group agreed to retain recommendation “Fast track the passage of pending bills on the establishment of veteran hospitals in the other regions of the country”. Moreover, the group also recommended to set up a section in public hospitals dedicated for PVAO concerns.
- The group recommended for the provision of support services and mobile health facilities at the community level in response to the lack of accessibility and availability among the 4Ps beneficiaries to essential health facilities for compliance to conditions.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR (SPF) 2 – INCOME SECURITY FOR CHILDREN

Chairperson	: Ms. Girlie J. Casimiro, NEDA-SDS
Attendees	: Mr. Mark John Fabale, NAPC-Youth Mr. Jonathan C. Anteza, DSWD FO VI Mr. Jonathan E. Togonan, TESDA RO VI Mr. Jason V. Geronia, TESDA RO VI Ms. DV Agrea, DOLE RO VI
Secretariat	: Ms. Marie Elaine Ceralde, NEDA-SDS

The group was chaired by Ms. Girlie J. Casimiro from NEDA-Social Development Staff. The group conferred on Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP), and Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES). The following points were discussed during the workshop:

- No nutrition education modules in family development sessions, Include standard modules to be facilitated on nutrition for FDS to be delivered by BNS/BHW under supervision of Midwife. Overworked/ shortage of municipality links, Adjust ratio to 1:300 households to achieve quality outcome
- The group agreed on several recommendations to address issues on the implementation of Supplementary Feeding Program which includes the hiring of nutritionist for SBFP to ease the heavy workload of teachers, and to download SBFP funds directly to DEPED.
- The significance of social workers in guaranteeing the welfare of children’s sector in the local government unit level was raised. The group emphasized the recommendation to hire and train social workers in residential care.
- The group agreed on the importance of educating people on the concept of social insurance (e.g. PHILHEALTH, SSS, GSIS) schemes and its benefits.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR (SPF) 3 – INCOME SECURITY FOR WORKING AGE PEOPLE

Chairperson	: Mr. Antonio Asper, FFW
Attendees	: Director Chona M. Mantilla, NRCO Director Exequiel Sarcagua, DOLE RO VII Diretor Elias Cayanong, DOLE RO VIII Mr. Bernard Sibay, NRCO RO VI Mr. Teddy Matubac, NAPC Mr. Allen Aquino, APL-SENTRO Mr. Roquel Espinosa, FFW Mr. Joel Gepaya, NAPC Ms. Nympha Ragel, SSS Ms. Roxanne C. Yap, NEDA Mr. George Zulueta, TIPC-RO VI Mr. Alan Gozon, DALO-TIPC Ms. Loveleen De, ILO Mr. Beufred Tacuyan, NAPC Mr. Micheal Gison, DOLE RO VI Mr. Danny Espinosa, DOLE RO VI Ms. Liwayway Ester Magaway, NAPC
Secretariat	: Mr. Cyrus C. Policarpio, DOLE-BWSC

- The discussion on Social Security System (SSS) centered on unemployment insurance and low coverage among workers in the informal sector, and social security benefits for OFWs and migrant workers. Among the agreements that the group had reached were the following: (1) Government to partly subsidize the monthly contributions of vulnerable self-employed workers, (2) Study the feasibility of unemployment loan program, (3) Develop a new scheme where those who can afford to pay higher premiums to get higher pension benefits, and (4) Develop mandatory scheme by SSS for the benefit of the OFW and their dependents.
- The group considered the idea of creating a separate EC unit to standardize the implementation of EC programs. For the time being, the recommendation to “harmonize the implementation guidelines of social security agencies” was agreed by the group.
- It was emphasized that there is a need to boost the information campaign of social security agencies on the coverage and benefits.
- When the livelihood program and emergency employment programs were discussed, convergence among government agencies was emphasized to ensure the effectivity of the intervention, especially during the aftermath of emergencies or calamities.
- The need to amend the law which supports the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) was recognized by the group to make it more focused on the developmental side by providing the migratory workers (sakadas) and plantation workers the same benefits entitled to mill workers.

- Farmers and fisher-folks have to be empowered by promoting their involvement and participation in local governance and sector councils (e.g. National Agri-Fishery Council).

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR (SPF) 4 – INCOME SECURITY FOR THE ELDERLY

Chairperson	: Atty. Alan Ortiz SSC – Office of Commissioner Ibarra Malonzo
Attendees	: Ms. Marian Therese Pamonag, NEDA RO No. VI Ms. Annielyn Costiniano, NEDA RO No. VIII Ms. Amy Judicpa, DOLE RO No. VI
Secretariat	: Ms. Riza Mae B. Daguplo, ECC Ms. Lynmar Laruscain, ECC REU VI

As the chairman of the group, Atty. Ortiz from SSS preside the discussions in social protection floor four (4), income security for the elderly. With the attendance of two NEDA regional officers and Ms. Judicpa as the lead facilitator of DOLE RO 6 for SPF 4, the group discussed each of the schemes provided by the government for the elderly under Social Insurance and Social Welfare SPOFS then tried to identify more gaps and come up with additional recommendations to address the gaps.

Generally, the group verified the policy and implementation gaps identified on the discussions prior to this consultation existent in the Visayas regions. They also have concurred with the recommendations to address the identified gaps on the social insurance and social welfare schemes provided by the government. However, the group also specified additional recommendations (texts with font color blue) to further strengthen the means to address the gaps. The highlights of the discussions are summarized in a matrix below.

- In support to providing higher pension benefits for PWD pensioners, the group agreed to include the improvement on the collection scheme, increase in the contribution, and revisit the monthly salary bracket are among the recommendations
- Provision of disability benefits for government employees for non-work related disability was recommended under GSIS.
- While waiting for the passage of the legislative bills which will augment the pension of retired veterans, it could be considered to affiliate with existing government hospitals in the district or region and adopt the method similar to PHILHEALTH. Furthermore, veterans may also avail of services in private hospitals provided that they can certify that the particular service is not available in public hospitals.
- The group proposed to conduct a third party review, through an independent body or government agency, to verify qualified beneficiaries for the Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens and clean up the list to ensure that the beneficiaries are deserving of the help that they are receiving.
- The policy gap “Need to review the guidelines on how to identify and categorize a person with disability and the eligibility criteria to be used in the issuance of the PWD ID” was reiterated. Among the agreed recommendations were:

- (1) Organize forum or implementation review to clarify issues or revise the guidelines accordingly.
- (2) Strengthen monitoring on the implementation of the discounts for Senior citizens and PWDs (OSCA may coordinate with senior citizens and/or PWD associations)
- (3) Increase discount for basic necessities from 5% to 20%
- (4) Expand the coverage of discounted items based on the actual needs of the senior citizens and PWDs

V. PRESENTATION OF OUTPUTS

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR (SPF) 1 – HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ronaldo Payda of NAPC-WIS presented the discussion for SPF1 working group. He shared that he, along with other participants who joined the SPF1 group, workers in the IS, IPs, PWDs and Women believe that Health is the most necessary social protection for their respective sectors. The group was completed by representatives of PhilHealth and NEDA. Dr. Israel Pargas, chaired the discussion. After the presentation, the floor was opened for questions. The highlights of the open forum are found below:

- NHTS was one of the major concerns raised the open forum. DSWD clarified not all in the list are automatically enrolled to PHILHEALTH; the list still undergoes enumeration process or surveying. The existing list was a product of the enumeration conducted in 2009. Supposedly, NHTS will conduct enumeration every three years but has been delayed because of circumstances. There is an on-going orientation of enumerators this year and will be conducting a saturated enumeration to address concerns of non-inclusion of IS, IPs and PWDs and based on enumeration process. It was also added that nuclear family will be used as unit instead of household so that each family will be identified as either poor or non-poor.
- When noncompliance of some hospital in providing medicines to PHILHEALTH members was raised, PHILHEALTH said that they receive such complaints but under the existing law, hospitals should really be the ones to buy the medicines for the patients because PHILHEALTH pays the hospital for the medicines. It was reiterated that members should know their rights and benefits, assert to hospitals and be vigilant in reporting non-compliant hospitals to PHILHEALTH.
- It was said that it would be more ideal for the public to patronize government hospitals to retain public ownership of health facilities, however the poor services discourage it. On this matter, PHILHEALTH clarified that DOH has premise over health facilities. PHILHEALTH will raise the concern to DOH and hopefully the DOH will be included as one of the members of the core group. The organizers will make sure that DOH will be present for the succeeding consultations to address issues on improving health facilities and delivery of services.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR (SPF) 2 – INCOME SECURITY FOR CHILDREN

Mr. Mark Fabale, NAPC representative from the youth sector, gave the presentation of their working group outputs. During the open forum, the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program was among the seriously discussed programs. Below are the summary of the open forum:

- Mr. Jonathan Anteza of DSWD FO VI clarified that the need for social workers are mostly evident in the LGU level. At their own ranks, given the amount of present programs, the capacity to absorb social workers to help them is one of their operational concerns.
- Mr. George Zulueta asked if the Philippine government is committed to institutionalize the Conditional Cash Transfer program. DSWD responded that the said program serves as a long term development program aimed to deliver many poor households out of poverty cycle. The focus of the program is on re-education among the beneficiaries which invest in the education and health of the children.
- Mr. Leo inquired about the timeframe of CCT implementation. DSWD replied that the impact of the program will be assessed by 2020. The institutionalization of CCT is sought since the continuation of the program might be halted in the next administration. Ms. Casimiro added that, according to a study, the inter-generation impact will only be visible in 10 years. Furthermore, the CCT is to be extended beyond elementary, until high-school or 18 years old.
- Dr. Pargas and Regional Director Sarcauga expressed their appreciation on the objectives of the program. Dr. Pargas noted that it should not be considered as a dole-out program but rather an incentive program designed to make the recipients to comply first before receiving the benefits. Moreover, Director Sarcauga emphasized the need for convergence of government programs to ensure the program can make an impact to the beneficiaries.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR (SPF) 3 - INCOME SECURITY FOR WORKING AGE PEOPLE

Ms. Ma. Nympha Ragel of SSS presented the discussion and outputs for the SPF3 working group. Social security benefits and coverage were among the major concerns conferred by the group. Below are the highlights of discussion during the open forum:

- Regional Director Sarcagua said that among the implementation issues is the OSHC funding for informal sector. Since the said sector is virtually compose of different types of occupations, each IS sub-group should be consulted by concerned agencies for technical expertise. Convergence of agencies on OSHC concerns for the informal sector should also be considered.

- Admin. Calzado said that most of government agencies NGOs must complement with the implementation of emergency employment.
- In considering the worker's right and welfare as part of social protection, Mr. Allen, RTIPC representative, said that there is a case wherein the right exercise of Labor unions to organize are being limited due to the privatization of electric cooperatives. Furthermore, for the past years, increase in wages among the employees in the electric cooperatives had been dormant. In response, the organizers assured that this particular concerns will be send to the concerned agency.
- DSWD clarified that under the new SLP guidelines beneficiaries can access Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) regardless of what group he or she belongs to.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR (SPF) 4 - INCOME SECURITY FOR THE ELDERLY

Ms. Marian Therese Pamonag of NEDA Region VI presented the summary of discussion and agreements of SPF3 working group. The following were the highlights of the open forum:

- Atty. Ortiz reiterated that one of the issues wherein the SSS cannot intervene is the non-remittance of employer of employees' contributions. He suggested that SSS members to be vigilant of where their contributions are placed.
- One of the concerns raised was the prevalence of using cash cards as payment for loan. Mr. Joel Gepaya, NAPC representative from farmer sector, suggested that a strict guidelines on the use of privilege/cash card should be implement to avoid it being used as loan payment. It was also suggested the creation of lending windows which can give affordable rates suitable to the financial capabilities of beneficiaries preventing to rely on loan sharks. Furthermore, a suggestion to criminalize lending activities to elderly beneficiaries was raised in order to avoid resorting to such circumstance.
- Director Ondo said that one of gaps could be found on Family Development Session (FDS) among CCT beneficiaries. Implementers must ensure that the beneficiaries are capacitated. Mr. Anteza assured that certain measures are being done to make sure that beneficiaries do understand the dynamics of the program, particularly on their roles and responsibilities on CCT. With regard to the level of implementation, he said that the beneficiaries are responding positively. At their end, they are lobbying with LGUs to issue ordinance which will sanction lenders who accepts payments of cash cards of beneficiaries.

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PHOTO DOCUMENTATION



Figure 1. DOLE VI Regional Director Ponciano Ligutom delivers his opening message



Figure 2. Mr. Antonio Asper of FFW leads the discussion of SPF-3 (Working Age People) Group



Figure 3. ECC Executive Director Banawis shares her views during the discussion on social security coverage



Figure 4. Ms. Girlie Casimiro of NEDA-Social Development Staff gives an overview of the Philippine Social Protection Operation Framework