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**THE PHILIPPINE SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY:
AN OVERVIEW**

by

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I. The Philippine Definition of Social Protection

The escalating number of poor families and population in the Philippines puts a compelling challenge to the Philippine government to implement a no-nonsense social protection policy for the poor and vulnerable sectors. The enormity of the issue of poverty and the increasing inadequacy to address the problems of the poor and vulnerable sector requires a re-thinking of the development approaches.

The global economic crisis had posed an enormous challenge especially to developing countries like the Philippines. In order to mitigate the impact of this crisis, the government of the Philippines has endeavored to strengthen its social protection system.

In 2006, while in the process of formulating its sectoral reform agenda, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) defined its contribution and important role in rationalizing social protection in the Philippines. One of its key initiatives was to begin discussions on social protection at the Sub-Group on Social Protection of the Working Group on MDGs and Social Progress in the Philippine Development Forum (PDF)².

After consultations with government agencies, development organizations and other stakeholders, the recommendations were presented to the NEDA-Social Development Committee (SDC) Technical Board and subsequently to the SDC Cabinet Level which issued NEDA-SDC Resolution No. 1, Series of 2007 entitled *Adopting A Philippine Definition of Social Protection*. This defines social protection as:

"Policies and programs that seek to reduce poverty and vulnerability to risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized by promoting and protecting livelihood and employment, protecting against hazards and sudden loss of income, and improving people's capacity to manage risks".

This SP definition considers and harmonizes existing definition of social protection by the National Anti-Poverty Commission, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the International Labour Organization.

It also identified the four (4) components of the Philippine Social Protection as follows:

- a. **Labor Market Programs/Interventions** – Measures aimed at enhancing employment opportunities and protection of the rights and welfare of workers. Employment enhancing measures include trade policies and skills development and training. Labor protection includes compliance with labor standards such as minimum wages or health and safety in the workplace.

¹ Undersecretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development

² NEDA-Social Development Committee Resolution No. 3, series of 2012, "Approving and Adopting the Social Protection Operational Framework"

- b. **Social Insurance** – Programs that seek to mitigate income risks by pooling resources and spreading risks across time and classes. These are designed in such a way that beneficiaries pay a premium over a given period of time to cover or protect them from loss of income and unemployment as a result of illness, injury, disability, retrenchment, harvest failure, maternity, old age, etc. This component includes micro- and area-based schemes to address vulnerability at the community level (such as micro-insurance and social support funds).
- c. **Social Welfare** – Preventive and developmental interventions that seek to support the minimum basic requirements of the poor, particularly the poorest of the poor, and reduce risks associated with unemployment, resettlement, marginalization, illness, disability, old age and loss of family care. Social welfare and assistance programs usually comprise direct assistance in the form of cash or in-kind transfers to the poorest and marginalized groups, as well as social services including family and community support, alternative care and referral services.
- d. **Social Safety Nets** – Stop-gap mechanisms or urgent responses that address effects of economic shocks, disasters and calamities on specific vulnerable groups. These are measures that specifically target affected groups with specific objective of providing relief and transition. Measures include emergency assistance, price subsidies, food programs, employment programs, retraining programs and emergency loans.

Social Protection became more critical at the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008. As a response to the crisis, the government issued Administrative Orders 232 and 232-A which clustered social welfare programs to a National Social Welfare Program Cluster.

Former Social Security System Administrator Romulo L. Neri was designated as the Chair of the Cluster while DSWD coordinates the implementation of the National Social Welfare (NSW) Program and serves as the Secretariat of the NSW Cluster.

The Cluster commissioned the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) in 2009 to conduct an assessment of social welfare and protection programs in the country entitled "*Review and Strengthening of the National Social Protection and Welfare Program*". The study results recommended that social welfare programs need to be harmonized in order to avoid overlaps and improve targeting of areas and beneficiaries. It was also recommended that government needs to harmonize and coordinate poverty reduction with social protection especially in crafting interventions and strategies.³

As a response to the recommendations of the study, a Social Protection Strategy Paper was drafted by the NSWP core group composed of NEDA, DSWD, NAPC and SSS. This was presented to the NEDA-SDC Cabinet level which paved the way for the crafting of SDC Resolution no. 2, series of 2009. The Resolution created the Sub-Committee on Social Protection (SCSP) under the NEDA-SDC. The SCSP is being chaired by the DSWD Undersecretary for Policy and Programs with the NEDA Deputy Director General for Planning and Policy as Vice-Chairperson. This inter-agency mechanism was created to operationalize the identified imperatives for action under the social protection strategy as well as the institutional arrangements including reporting of each of the responsible government agency/entity.

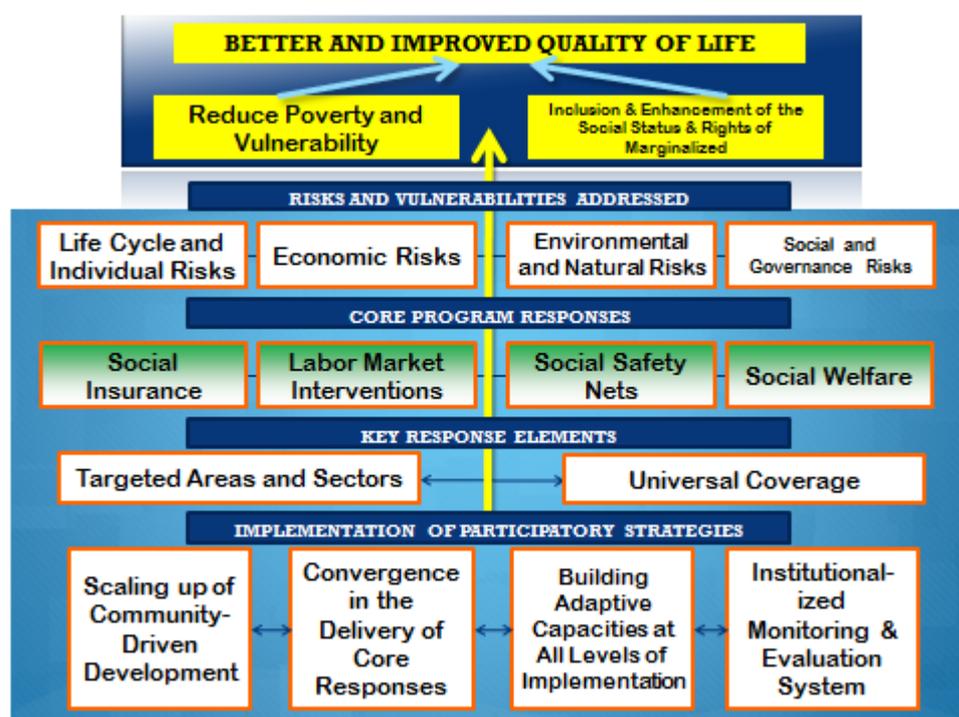
³ Ibid

II. The Social Protection Operational Framework and Strategy

On the last quarter of 2010, the Basic Orientation on SP Concepts and Strategies for SDC SCSP members was conducted wherein issues/concerns and recommendations were raised including the need to review and refine the SP definition and draft SP framework.

Significant contributions to the finalization of this SP framework are the results of the three (3) workshops conducted in November - December 2011 participated in by CSOs, LGUs and Sub-Committee on SP, DSWD OBS and Field Offices and feedback from presentations done with the SDC National - Regional workshop and separately with the faculty of the UP College of Social Work and Community Development (UP-CSWCD).

The draft SP Operational Framework was then endorsed by the SDC Technical Board (April 2012) and approved by the SDC Cabinet Level in May 2012. (SDC Resolution No. 3, series of 2012: Approving and Adopting the Social Protection Operational Framework).



Social Protection Operational Framework and Strategy

The adopted framework is envisaged to serve as the overall guide for implementing social protection programs / interventions and other policies related to SP. The core of the framework is the underlying purpose and objective of social protection which is better and improved quality of life for its beneficiaries. It is contextualized within the over-all inclusive development goals and poverty strategy of the country – *“to empower and protect the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, families and communities from individual life cycle, economic, environmental and social risks”* (Chapter 8, Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016).

Specific objectives of social protection programs include to:

- a. protect and prevent people from falling from their current income/consumption levels due to various risk factors,

- b. build capacity and adaptability to ensure that better quality of life is maintained and sustained,
- c. expand opportunities for income expansion and improve human capital investments in the long term,
- d. sustain standard of living in spite of exposure to risks of different types

Elements of the SP Operational Framework

- a. Identifying and Responding to Major Risks and Vulnerabilities - The responses can emanate from the households themselves, from government or from the private and civil society sectors. The Social Protection program responses to the different type of risks and vulnerabilities are clustered in accordance to the SP components.
- b. Identifying and Responding to Priority Targets and Sectors - In terms of targeting, the government has mandated all agencies to utilize the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction.
- c. Working Towards Universal Coverage - Universal coverage of social services entails the country-wide provision of the full requirements of the basic rights of citizens in terms of education, health and nutrition, shelter, water and sanitation. But given resource constraints, social protection programs target individuals and households that are poor and highly vulnerable.

Implementation Strategies

- a. Convergence in the Delivery of Social Protection – DSWD internally started to orchestrate its social protection programs by initially harmonizing the implementation of KALAHI-CIDSS, Pantawid Pamilya and Sustainable Livelihood Program. Also, the localization of convergence of poverty and SP programs by the Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cluster (HDPRC) thru the bottom-up budgeting in focus municipalities.
- b. Scaling Up Community Driven Development (CDD) - The leading CDD program is the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) and the Makamasang Tugon.
- c. Building Adaptive Capacity - Social protection can build adaptive capacity through protective and preventive strategies for coping, as well as through promotive and transformative measures.
- d. Institutionalized Monitoring and Evaluation System - This will facilitate the rationalization of various social protection programs according to the various key components. . A regular monitoring and evaluation system is also important to be able to adjust, refine or even terminate programs so that appropriate responses to the various risks are implemented and sustained.

III. Other SP Initiatives and Way Forward

a. Targeting of Social Protection Program Beneficiaries

The National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) or “*Listahanan*” is an information management system that identifies who and where the

poor are in the country. The system makes available to national government agencies and other social protection stakeholders a database of poor families as reference in identifying potential beneficiaries of social protection programs.⁴

Issuances related to this initiative include the following:

1. National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) Resolution No. 18, Series of 2009 - "Recognizing and Enjoining Support to the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction being Implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development as a Tool to Identify Beneficiaries of Social Protection Programs"
2. Executive Order 867 (March 2010) - Provides for the Adoption of the NHTS-PR as the Mechanism for Identifying Poor Households Who Shall be Recipients of Social Protection Programs Nationwide

The NHTS-PR involves the following phases⁵:



NHTS-PR Project Cycle

Phase 1: Preparatory Phase

Step 1: Identification of areas for assessment – NHTS-PR is implemented nationwide: 17 regions, 80 provinces, 1,491 municipalities, 143 cities and 42,028 barangays.

Step 2: Identification of data collection strategy – This includes: a) saturation or complete enumeration of rural barangays and b) saturation in pockets of poverty for urban barangays.

⁴ Department of Social Welfare and Development – National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) webpage (<http://listahanan.dswd.gov.ph/about-us/>) accessed on 25 September 2013

⁵ Department of Social Welfare and Development – National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) Advocacy and Information Material (<http://listahanan.dswd.gov.ph/downloads/>) accessed on 25 September 2013

Phase 2: Data Collection and Analysis Phase

Step 3: The enumerator conducts family assessment using the Family Assessment Form (FAF), a 4-page questionnaire with 46 variables.

Step 4: Information in the FAFs are encoded and subjected to Proxy Means Test (PMT)⁶ to estimate the annual per capita income. The estimated income of a family is compared to the provincial poverty thresholds to determine if it is poor or non-poor. Families with income equal or lower than the poverty threshold are classified as poor.

Phase 3: Validation and Finalization Phase

Step 5: Initial list of poor families is posted in municipalities/barangays for validation of the community people. Queries and complaints are received for a period of one month or longer in areas where travel is difficult.

Step 6: During the validation, a Local Validation Committee (LVC) is organized to resolve all the complaints/appeals received during the validation period. There is also a strategy called the On Demand Application (ODA) which gives families that were not visited during the first enumeration the chance to apply for assessment.

Step 7: The final list of poor families is established as soon as PMT has been applied on families covered by the validation activities.

Phase 4: Reports Generation Phase

Step 8: The national and regional profiles of the poor are generated using data extracted from the *Listahanan* Database. These are shared with National Government Agencies (NGAs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Local Government Units (LGUs) and other social protection stakeholders.

Step 9: Upon signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department, the official list is shared with data users to serve as their guide in selecting beneficiaries for their social protection programs.

Step 10: As stipulated in the Data Sharing Agreement, data users are to provide feedback on how they used the information generated from the *Listahanan* Database and resolve appeals or complaints on beneficiary selection.

b. The Social Protection Statistics Component under the PSDP⁷

The SDC SCSP recommended the formulation of the SP Statistics Component under the Philippine Statistical Development Program 2011-2017. After several consultations spearheaded by NSCB, the PSDP 2011-2017 which includes the SP component was approved by NSCB Executive Board (NSCB Resolution No. 8) in June 2012 and was endorsed to the President for the issuance of a Proclamation enjoining its adoption and implementation by concerned government departments/agencies.

Issues and Challenges in Social Protection as Identified in the PSDP 2011-2017

⁶ PMT is a statistical model that estimates annual per capita income based on observable and verifiable indicators such as family properties, type of housing, and access to water and sanitation facilities, among others.

⁷ From the Philippine Statistical Development Program 2011-2017 (NSCB)

Aside from the absence of a social protection statistical framework, the following are the key issues and challenges along social protection statistics:

1. There is a need to establish statistical coordination mechanism to initiate the development of comprehensive social *protection* statistics;
2. There is inadequate data to provide baseline information against which social protection outcomes can be defined and measured; and
3. There is a need to strengthen institutional capacities for the generation and use of social protection statistics.

Statistical development programs have also been planned to establish the social protection data system:

To deliver more timely, accessible, coherent, comparable, comprehensive and relevant statistics:

1. Improvement of the generation and updating of critical indicators on social protection;

To increase user understanding, capacity and trust in statistics for wider and rational use of statistics:

2. Improvement of dissemination and accessibility of social insurance data generated by major source agencies;
3. Development of the Philippine Social Protection Statistics web portal;
4. Strengthening of advocacy and communication strategies for rational use of social protection statistics;
5. Development and use of effective tools for monitoring and evaluation of impacts of social protection programs;
6. Capacity building of social protection institutions at the national and local levels on rational use of statistics

To enhance statistical capacities of data producers and providers:

7. Conduct of methodological studies to develop and improve social protection statistics;
8. Statistical capacity building of social protection statistics producers;
9. Participation and hosting of international conferences, trainings, workshops, and expert group meetings on social protection and other related statistics

To improve coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the statistical system:

10. Strengthening of coordination of intra/interagency statistical activities on social protection;
11. Development and adoption of statistical framework and standards on social protection consistent with international recommendations;
12. Implementation of appropriate statistical policies and standards in the production and dissemination of SP statistics;
13. Assessment and improvement of statistical activities including censuses and surveys for the generation of relevant SP statistics;
14. Development and implementation of a data quality assurance framework for SP statistics;
15. Participation in international cooperation and capacity building programs/projects and standards and methodological development activities on SP and other related statistics

To increase and sustain resources for statistics:

16. Strengthening of institutional coordination; and
17. Institutionalization of sustainable financing for SP statistics.

c. Other Initiatives

Continuous efforts are being undertaken by the SDC SCSP to operationalize the social protection framework and strategy. These include:

1. Formulation of the SP Plan - The Plan, which is anchored on the PDP 2011-2016 particularly the chapter on Social Development, shall serve as the blueprint for policymakers, planners and program implementers on what specific approaches and strategic interventions are best suited to be carried out by responsible agencies on SP to cover specific target groups and vulnerabilities. The DSWD, through the SDC Sub-Committee on Social Protection leads the formulation of this plan. There will be a High Level Consultation in October 2013 before the endorsement of the draft SP Plan to the NEDA Social Development Committee in December 2013.
2. Development of SP Handbook - Consultation Workshops for the Formulation of a Social Protection Handbook were conducted from September to October 2012 with the participants from the LGUs, CSOs, academe and regional SDC, and SCSP members. The SP Handbook will serve as primary reference manual in implementing social protection interventions from national to LGU level. It is envisioned to empower and capacitate local government units, civil society organizations, and government agencies implementing SP programs and projects by providing guidelines in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating SP interventions. Pilot-testing was conducted in August (with Cabanatuan City and Pakil, Laguna). The Handbook is still being finalized by the Consultant in coordination with DSWD.
3. Development of SP VAM - On 13 November 2012, the SCSP members were involved in the Consultation for the Crafting of SP Vulnerability and Adaptation Manual (VAM). This Manual, which is part of the SP Handbook, will provide a guide for better understanding of vulnerability and its adaptation containing: 1) risk mapping; 2) risk and vulnerability analysis of the conditions and circumstances of the vulnerable sectors through improved risk and vulnerability profile 3) appropriate risk management strategies through effective risk prevention, mitigation and coping; resiliency and adaptation 4) evaluation framework and tools for risks management strategies and 5) report preparation for management information and decision making.

The Manual was pre-tested in 2 LGUs: 1 rural (Laguna) and 1 urban (Nueva Ecija) in March to April 2013; and consultation workshops for the enhancement of the Manual were conducted from May – July 2013. The National Consultation Workshop for the enhancement of the Manual was held on 17 September 2013.

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NEDA-Social Development Committee Resolution No. 3, series of 2012, “Approving and Adopting the Social Protection Operational Framework”

Philippine Statistical Development Program 2011-2017 (National Statistical Coordination Board)