

SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL

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ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The Social Welfare and Development (SWD) Journal is the official journal of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Published annually, the SWD Journal aims to popularize studies initiated by the DSWD and other stakeholders along social protection and social welfare development. This Journal features quantitative and qualitative researches from various disciplines of social welfare and rigorous policy analysis along social development. Aside from research papers, the SWD journal also covers the publication of articles with relevant policy implications on social development.

Article contributions are open to DSWD offices, staff and all interested partners – individual researchers, institutions, universities and colleges, and schools including those with research extension offices, non-government organizations, national and local government agencies and other research institutions.

The Journal has also shifted from print media to digital publication starting 2021, following the call for digitalization as a response to the new normal.

Any reader who is interested in submitting a manuscript may refer to the Guidelines for the Publication of the Social Welfare and Development (SWD) Journal (Administrative Order No. 10, Series of 2017). Queries or comments may be sent to pdpb@dswd.gov.ph.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



I am honored to present to you the 2022 Social Welfare and Development (SWD) Journal. On behalf of the editorial team, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to our authors, peer reviewers, copy editor, and the National Research and Evaluation Technical Working Group (NRE-TWG) – all of whom have provided valuable support for this year’s issue of the Social Welfare and Development (SWD) Journal.

This year, as we are still addressing the crisis and vulnerabilities brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, two of the articles will shed light on the pandemic's impact and government’s response.

Further, as we move towards the full devolution of certain functions of the Executive Branch to the Local Government, the other two articles will showcase the impact of the implementation of the devolution to the Department’s programs, operations, policies and the sectors it serves. All these four (4) studies were conducted and produced by the Department, at the Central and Field Office level.

The study, entitled, ***Tracer Study of Graduate Sustainable Livelihood Program Participants: Examining the Sustainability of Microenterprise/ Employment Projects***, examined the sustainability of the microenterprise/ employment projects, of SLP participants who were provided with program modalities in 2016, three (3) years after they graduated from the program.

Meanwhile, the ***DSWD Social Protection Programs: A Focus on Indigenous Peoples***, examined the merged dataset of 759,070 poor IP households and 4,130,908 indigenous peoples from the DSWD National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) Listahanan 2 and assessed if the existing social protection programs of the Department are addressing their risk and

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

vulnerabilities. These two studies were conducted by the Policy Development and Planning Bureau.

Further, the Field Office Caraga, also had two studies featured in this journal. The ***Assessment of the Training Effectiveness of E-learning Technical Assistance (TA) Provision of DSWD FO Caraga to the Local Government Units (LGUs)***, explored the effectiveness and applicability of the e-learning platform in the TA provision of the DSWD FO Caraga to the LGUs.

And lastly, ***The AICS Clients' Perceived Acceptability and Readiness Towards Prospective Transition to Digital Processing and Payment Schemes at DSWD FO Caraga, Butuan City***, explored and assessed the feasibility of shifting from traditional face-to-face interaction to prospective online processing and the viability of utilizing digital payment schemes at the Field Office Caraga, Butuan City.

Thank you once again for your continuous support to the SWD Journal. We look forward to further stimulating discussions and inspire more research and evaluations along SWD sector, and creating relevant, timely and practical evidences for decision-making in the Department.

RHODORA G. ALDAY

Editor-in-Chief of the SWD Journal
Bureau Director, Policy Development
and Planning Bureau

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TRACER STUDY OF GRADUATE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS: Examining the Sustainability of Microenterprise / Employment Projects

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DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of the research paper worked on the study in the exercise of their functions as staff of the Research and Evaluation Division under the Policy Development and Planning Bureau of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. There is no known conflict of interest between the authors and the Department relative to the conduct of the study. While the spouse of the lead author, Mr. John Paul D. Aldeza, works for the Sustainable Livelihood Program-National Program Management Office, their marital relationship had no influence in how the report was written.

ABSTRACT

The Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) is a capacity-building program for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized households and communities created to help improve their socio-economic conditions through accessing and acquiring necessary assets to engage in and maintain thriving livelihoods. It has been implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development since 2011. While the SLP has been subjected to various process evaluations, program assessments, and studies examining the livelihood outcomes of SLP participants, most of which looked into program participants while they were still under the observation and guidance of the program. There needs to be more knowledge on how the participants and their projects fared after graduation from the program. Thus, a tracer study on the SLP participants who were provided with program modalities in 2016 was conducted using a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach to examine the sustainability of their microenterprise/employment projects three (3) years after they graduated from the program. Results showed that nearly half of the Microenterprise Development track respondents could continue the operations of their respective microenterprises. In contrast, only a quarter of those from the Employment Facilitation track remained employed by the same employer until the conduct of the study. On average, the unsustainable microenterprise/employment lasted for 21 months for both tracks. There were program participants whose livelihoods failed but eventually bounced back to become productive. Facilitating and hindering factors contributing to the success of SLP participants in sustaining their microenterprise/employment revolved around three (3) key themes, namely: participant characteristics and vulnerabilities (i.e., attitude, efforts, and willingness to pursue, mindset and acceptance of the program, income shocks); program components (management support, dedication of implementers, insufficiency of workforce, functionality of SLP associations, capacity building, monitoring); and external factors (local government units, private sector, natural disasters, et al.).

Keywords: Sustainable Livelihood Program, Tracer Study, Microenterprise Development, Employment Facilitation

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

To improve the well-being of poor families and complement other approaches to poverty alleviation, the Department had implemented various livelihood schemes for different vulnerable sectors (i.e., families, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, and youth) even before the 1990s. Such schemes have since evolved into what is now known as the Sustainable Livelihood Program, a capacity-building program for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized households and communities. It is aimed at helping improve their socio-economic conditions through accessing and acquiring necessary assets to engage in and maintain thriving livelihoods. In general, the SLP has five (5) implementation stages: pre-implementation, social preparation, resource mobilization, project implementation, and mainstreaming. Within around two (2) years of participation in the program (i.e., incubation period), the SLP participants shall pursue their desired livelihood project under either the microenterprise development (MD) or the employment facilitation (EF) track. After the incubation period, the SLP participants are regarded as graduates and are supposed to be mainstreamed into the entrepreneurial chain/labor market for further monitoring by the local government units (LGUs).

To date, the SLP participants subjected to the final assessment were those provided with program grant modalities in 2015 and 2016. A total of 63,409 participants have undergone final assessment as of March 2021. Results show that 42.3% of the MD projects have stopped operations and have already closed, and 44.8% of the EF participants have already completed their employment contracts, were terminated, or remained unemployed.

B. Rationale and Objectives

Based on the SLP Results Framework, the intended program outcomes are that participants become equipped to engage in a microenterprise or be employed and access external resources through network linkages. In turn, the intended program impact is the improvement of the socio-economic well-being of SLP participants. It is understood that achieving the intended program outcomes would lead to attaining the intended program impact.

With reference to the said framework, the SLP has been subjected to process evaluations, program assessments, and studies examining the livelihood outcomes of SLP participants; however, most of them looked into program participants while they were still under the observation and guidance of the program.

As a result, there needs to be more knowledge on how participants and their projects fared after graduation from the program. Furthermore, an assessment of the livelihood outcomes of the graduated participants would provide valuable insights into gauging the achievement of the intended program outcomes. Thus, the Research and Evaluation Division of the Policy Development and Planning Bureau conducted a tracer study on the SLP participants provided with program modalities in 2016 and examined the sustainability of their microenterprise/employment projects three (3) years after they graduated from the program in 2018. Specifically, this study aimed to:

- 1.To determine the magnitude of SLP participants whose microenterprise/employment projects have been sustained after graduation from the program as of 2021 and identify particular SLP track, modality, industry/occupation group, and other program and project aspects with a high percentage of sustained microenterprise/employment projects;
- 2.To identify and examine the facilitating and hindering factors that contribute to the sustainability of microenterprise/employment projects of SLP participants after graduation from the program;
- 3.To identify policy and program recommendations to ensure the sustainability of microenterprise/employment projects of SLP participants after graduation from the program.

C. Scope and Limitations

The tracer survey intended to cover SLP participants in 16 administrative regions of the country who were provided with livelihood grants in 2016 through various program modalities. These participants have already gone through the 21-month incubation period, wherein they were under observation and guidance and supposedly graduated from the program around 2018. The majority of sampled program participants came from Regions III and IV, while limited participants came from the other regions and none from Regions X and XI due to the limitations in the sampling frame constructed based on the provided database to the research team.

The selected SLP participants were traced three years after the program to solicit updates on their microenterprise/employment projects. This cohort was chosen, considering memory recall, as they were the most recent batch of SLP participants who have undergone final assessment. However, not all target samples were enumerated due to challenges during data collection, such as participants' limited access to the internet, inaccurate contact details, and the intervening tasks of interviewers.

Qualitative interviews with implementers and implementing partners of SLP covered staff of the SLP-National and Regional Program Management Offices (N/RPMOs), representatives of Local Social Welfare and Development Offices (LSWDOs), Local Chief Executives (LCEs), partner National Government Agencies (NGAs), and program beneficiaries. However, interviewees' participation was limited to their availability during the specified interview schedule. While all intended interviewees from the SLP-NPMO and NGAs were successfully interviewed, not all representatives of RPMOs, LSWDOs, and LCEs were able to participate due to conflict in schedule and/or challenges in coordination. Partner civil society organizations (CSOs) were also not covered, despite being initially identified as potential participants, as no partner, CSO was present in the SLP-NPMO list.

The study was limited to remote data collection considering travel restrictions relative to the community quarantine imposed due to the pandemic. These methods include computer-assisted self-interviewing or computer-assisted telephone interviewing for the survey and the virtual conduct of group discussions and interviews. The study participants were therefore limited to those with access to mobile phones, computer devices, and/or the internet.

Data analysis was descriptive and can only apply to the respondents covered by the study and not to the population of 2016 SLP beneficiaries due to sampling and data collection limitations.

D. Conceptual Framework

Anchoring on the existing concepts and frameworks on sustainable livelihood – the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and the SLP Results Framework, and adapting the conceptual framework of tracer studies developed by Schomburg (2010), this study employed the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1.

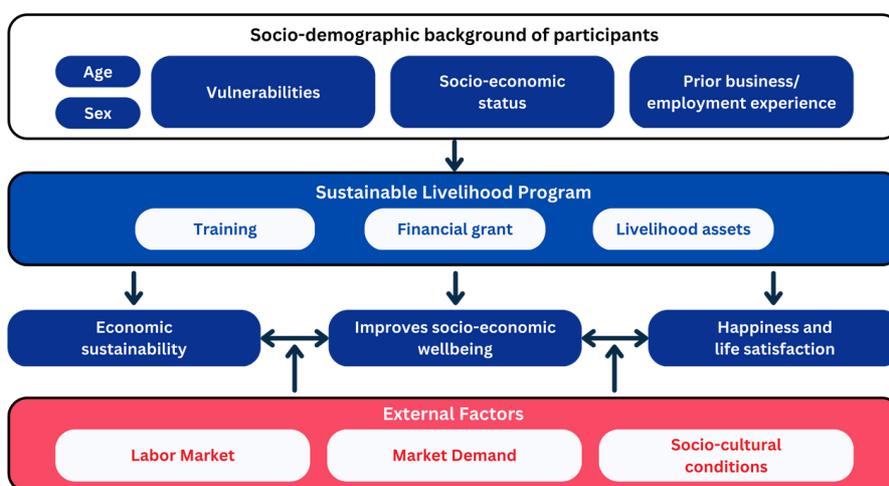


Figure 1. Study Conceptual Framework

Participants' motives in joining the SLP relied on their socio-demographic backgrounds, such as but not limited to age and sex, vulnerabilities, socio-economic status, and prior experience in business or employment. Over the course of participating in the program, the participants were provided with various program modalities in the form of specialized training and financial grants, which promote the acquisition of livelihood assets, be it human, social, natural, physical, and/or financial. All these interventions were intended to lead participants to sustained microenterprise/employment projects, thereby improving socio-economic well-being, happiness, and life satisfaction. External factors influencing this outcome include the availability of employment opportunities, demand for products and services, and socio-cultural conditions. The study also noted other emerging factors and measures that were unearthed as a result of initial data gathering, literature review, and desk review of documents and reports.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

It has been widely recognized that livelihood interventions are essential to improve the well-being of poor families towards poverty alleviation. Singer (2006) argued (as cited by Muklis Lateh, 2017) that the best approach to poverty alleviation in any part of the world lies in encouraging entrepreneurial activity and boosting start-up businesses through enterprise development. Leidholm and Mead seconded such claim (2013; as cited in Alom et al., 2016) and emphasized the value of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in contributing to the development process through generating income, thereby improving welfare, empowerment, as well as social and political stability. The 2015 International Labor Conference also highlighted the MSEs' contribution to employment, job creation, productivity, income, and economic growth, based on empirical data. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) report on decent work published in 2019, "gainful employment remains the most reliable way of escaping poverty ."Unlike conventional methods in poverty reduction, the concept of sustainable livelihood offers a more coherent and integrated approach (Krantz, 2001).

A. Enablers of and Barriers to Success of Microenterprise

International studies exploring the success of MSEs are broad and diverse. Though the identified success factors vary by context, central themes revolve around entrepreneur and firm characteristics and external variables (i.e., environment, interventions, financial services).

Several local studies examined the indicators of livelihood success, particularly that of SLP participants. For example, in a study conducted by Reyes and Arboneda (2018) aimed to develop a characteristic-based sorting tool for SLP participants, results showed that age and previous business experience significantly contribute to the probability of success of SLP participants in the microenterprise development (MD) track. More mature participants, with more experience, tend to be successful in business. In addition, participants from municipalities with lower costs of doing business and those considered risk-takers are more likely to be successful entrepreneurs.

Ballesteros et al. (2017) noted that the capability-building activities provided by the SLP affect the success of livelihood projects. All MD participants were provided with microenterprise development training. The majority considered this training useful, especially seminars on how to grow the business, time management, recording, and how to market products.

The provision of accessible, specialized training that contributes to the success of MD participants was also concurred by the rapid assessment conducted by the DSWD Social Technology Bureau (STB) (Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2019). However, although helpful, the assessment recommended improvements in the conduct of training, especially in the administration of training needs assessment, training design, and uniformity in training facilitation. Meanwhile, the following hindering factors to the success of the SLP participants' microenterprises were identified by the study of STB (2019) and Ballesteros et al. (2016):

1. Participant vulnerabilities (e.g., physical health and old age)
2. Weakness in program design (e.g., funding issues, weak employment partnerships, poor management and leadership, the voluminous caseload of PDOs, and conflicts within organizations)
3. External factors (e.g., political interference, seasonality of demand, weather conditions, cost of warehousing and rent, lack of space to set up machinery, delays in the issuance of business permit)

B. Enablers of and Barriers to Success of Employment

Several meta-analyses of many impact evaluations of skills training and job placement programs across countries paint a mixed picture, but the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the said interventions, have been consistent so far (Dar & Tzannatos, 1999; Betcherman et al., 2004; McKenzie, 2017). As it appears, the emerging body of evidence shows these interventions are generally far less

effective than policymakers, program participants, and economists typically expect – with but a modest impact on employment at a two-percentage-point increase (McKenzie D., 2017). These programs' effectiveness relies heavily on macroeconomic stability, a functioning infrastructure, a working financial system, adequate labor demand, and reliable program targeting.

The study by Reyes and Arboneda (2018) found that participants' age, location, and educational attainment significantly contribute to the probability of success in the employment facilitation (EF) track. For the traits, only achievement and internal focus of control were found to be significant determinants of employment success. Based on the profile of the respondents, younger participants and those with previous work experience tend to be more successful.

Similar to the MD track, specialized training is provided to EF participants. These are helpful because discussions include values formation, essential job skills (e.g., writing resumes and reports, grooming, personality development), and the specific skills for the jobs that they applied for (e.g., security guard, BPO technician).

On the contrary, external factors that may serve as barriers to employment success include the following, as identified by Ballesteros et al. (2017):

1. Availability of jobs
2. Distance
3. Compliance with documentary requirements
4. Competition with other applicants
5. Family issues (e.g., perception of a family member on specific jobs like that of a therapist)
6. Physical conditions
7. Attitude towards work (e.g., lack of motivation, unwillingness to make sacrifices)

C. Tracer Studies of Program Participants

Tracer studies are more commonly applied in exploring the outcomes of educational interventions, particularly that of higher education, by locating graduates of higher education institutions and following up on their lives and participation in the labor force after graduation. Nevertheless, the conduct of tracer studies on former beneficiaries of program interventions is undeniably valuable because its fundamental objective is in parallel with that of impact evaluations – to analyze the program outcome, be it positive or negative, resulting from the given intervention (Roche, 1999; as cited in ILO, 2011).

The tracer study methodology was applied to ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) beneficiaries. While the interventions include livelihood programs for parents of working children, apart from education and non-education interventions for the working children themselves, the tracer study discovered a meager improvement in the economic well-being of the household beneficiaries. Moreover, livelihood activities were not sustained due to budgetary constraints and a lack of time to follow through with the enterprises of the parents (ILO, 2012).

A tracer study was also performed on a similar program of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) called Kabuhayan Program Para sa Magulang ng Batang Manggagawa (KASAMA). Few beneficiaries reported improved economic well-being, given the livelihood intervention, as most failed to sustain the said projects. Despite the projects' positive outcomes for some, in general, no visible signs of improvement were witnessed in terms of the beneficiaries' household/material assets or possessions as they come from poor and vulnerable households with several members. Among the recommendations was to strengthen the resilience of livelihoods against shocks by extending insurance coverage to vulnerable households (Gabito, 2014).

Overall, many researchers have investigated livelihood outcomes and associated factors. However, evidence on the SLP tends to be limited to assessing immediate effects on program participants. Given the value of tracer studies to provide insights on the impact (i.e., long-term effect) of the intervention on its beneficiaries, the conduct of this study is timely and relevant. Furthermore, it would provide helpful documentation of the program noting the need to develop a transition plan relative to the devolution of social welfare services of the DSWD to the LGUs.

III. METHODOLOGY

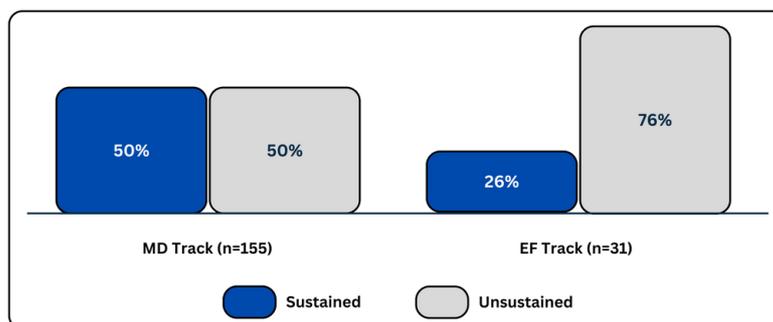
The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach which comprised a quantitative phase (online tracer survey) followed by a qualitative phase (KIIs and FGDs). A total of 205 SLP Participants (155 MD track and 50 EF track) were surveyed using Computer-Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI) and Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) methods. The survey intended to collect information to determine the number of SLP participants with sustained livelihood across various participant characteristics and program components. The analysis of survey data was descriptive in nature. To identify positive points, also gaps and issues in the mainstreaming of program participants, 10 FGDs and 11 KIIs were conducted. These covered implementers and implementing partners of SLP, including staff of the SLP-National and Regional Program Management

Offices (N/RPMOs), representatives of Local Social Welfare and Development Offices (LSWDOs), Local Chief Executives (LCEs), partner National Government Agencies (NGAs), and program beneficiaries (those with sustained and unsustained livelihood projects). The processing of qualitative information was through thematic analysis. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative findings were synthesized to formulate recommendations for program enhancement towards ensuring the sustainability of livelihood projects of SLP participants after graduation from the program.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Number of SLP participants with sustained microenterprise/employment

Most SLP participants were unable to sustain their livelihood projects after graduating from the program. Of the 155 MD track participants traced, nearly half (49.7%) were able to continue the operations of their respective microenterprises. Whereas, among the 50 EF track participants traced, only 31 were found to have acquired employment after joining the program. Of these, only a quarter (25.8%) continued employment with the same employer until the conduct of the study. On average, the unsustained microenterprise/employment lasted for 21 months for both tracks.



Note: percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Figure 2. Distribution of survey respondents according to track and status of livelihood

There were program participants whose livelihoods failed but eventually bounced back to become productive. Out of the 78 MD track respondents with unsustained microenterprise, 59.0% have an emerging source of income, which may be salary from a new job or income from a new microenterprise. On the other hand, 56.5% of the 23 EF track respondents with unsustained employment have regained economic productivity. For both MD and EF track respondents, employment was more appealing as a way to recover income. This is more evident for EF track respondents with unsustained employment (56.5%) than MD track respondents with unsustained microenterprise (32.1%). Notably, however, some still remained without economic activity (26.9% of MD track respondents with unsustained microenterprise; 26.1% of EF track respondents with unsustained employment).

A. Participant characteristics and program components with high percentage of sustained microenterprise/employment

Among the MD track respondents, the majority (54.0%) of those who received the Seed Capital Fund successfully sustained their microenterprise. The industry with the greatest percentage of sustained (relative to unsustained) microenterprises was accommodation and food service (53.8%), closely followed by wholesale and retail trade (50.8%). The majority (59.3%) of microenterprises managed by an association were sustained, whereas individual (48.0%) and group enterprises (46.4%) were less commonly sustained. Further, several (77.1%) regular businesses continued their operations compared to short-term or seasonal businesses (27.1%). Also, more microenterprises were sustained with at least one paid employee (57.9%) compared to those without any paid employee (48.5%).

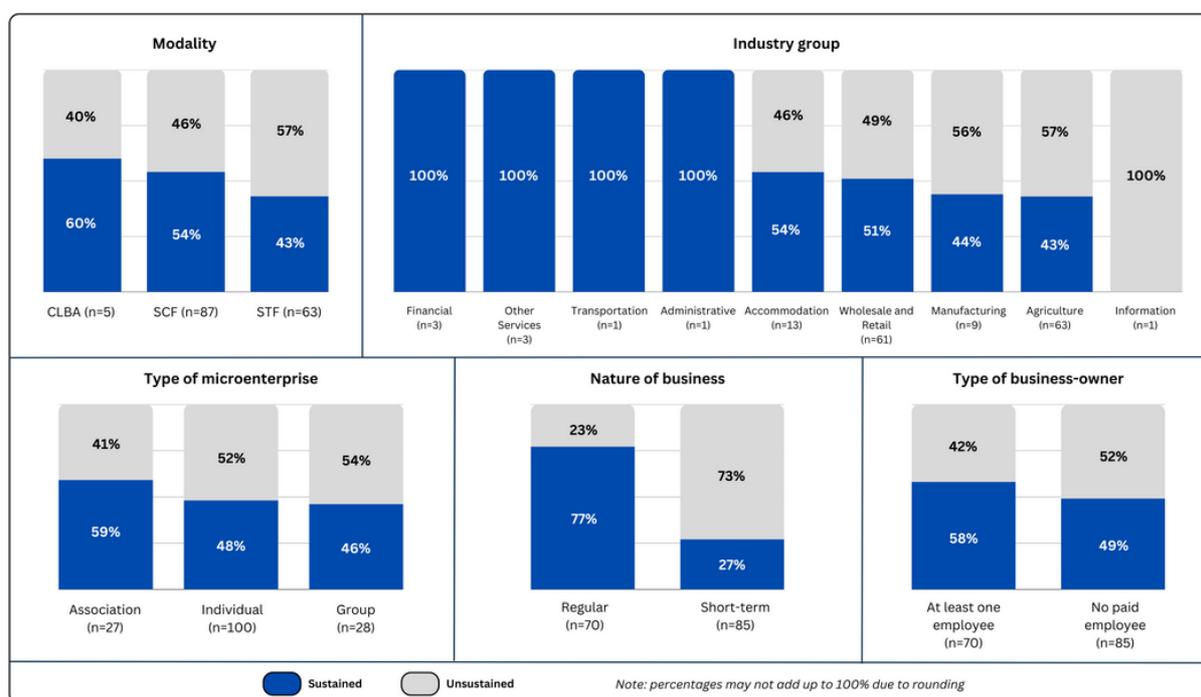


Figure 3. Distribution of MD track survey respondents according to the status of microenterprise by program/project aspect

On the other hand, among EF track respondents who successfully landed a job, half (50.0%) of those provided with the Employment Assistance Fund remained employed at the time of the interview. Across occupational groups, elementary occupations (66.7%; e.g., farm laborers, cleaners, maids, domestic helpers, etc.) had the majority of respondents with sustained (relative to unsustained) employment (though the number of respondents is minimal). In terms of the nature of employment, respondents holding permanent positions could sustain their employment 50.0% of the time. Further, all EF track respondents who have been working in government or government-controlled organizations are reported to have better security of tenure.

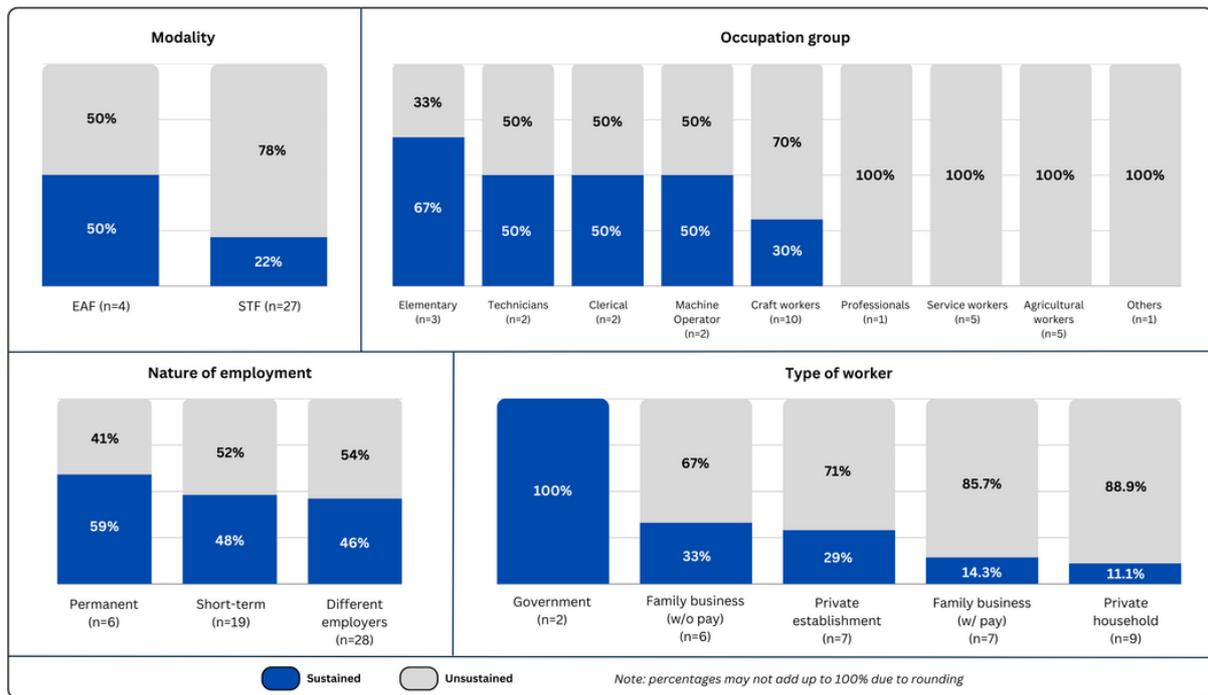


Figure 4. Distribution of EF track survey respondents according to the status of employment by program/project aspect

B. Facilitating factors that contribute to the sustainability of microenterprise/employment projects

Participant Characteristics

Participants' attitude, efforts, and willingness.

For the implementers and partners (i.e., SLP-NPMO, RPMOs, and LCEs), the success and sustainability of SLP projects rely heavily on the participants' attitude, efforts, and willingness to continue their microenterprise and employment. Based on their observations, a common denominator among successful SLP participants – whether from the MD or EF track – is a strong will to carry on with the livelihoods they started. Such observation was confirmed by accounts of the FGD participants who sustained and even grew their livelihoods (MD track) and those who stayed employed (EF track) after graduating in 2018. The said participants exhibited resourcefulness, hard work, and perseverance.

Program Components

Commitment, dedication, and teamwork of implementers. From the perspective of the implementers (i.e., RPMOs), the driving force for the success of the program is the commitment, dedication, and teamwork of its workforce, especially the field Project Development Officers (PDOs). The ability to juggle various duties – from monitoring, providing technical assistance, reporting, and other administrative tasks – and adapt to the needs of the program and its participants keep SLP afloat. Active support from the DSWD management. The RPMOs also identified support from the DSWD management as another facilitating factor in coming up with implementation strategies, addressing concerns, and developing/updating

policies as needed (e.g., the issuance of Memorandum Circular No. 22, s. 2019 or the “Comprehensive Guidelines on the Implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood Program,” periodic meetings and provision of technical assistance).

Adequate and continuous capacity building. Meanwhile, adequate capacity building of the implementers (RPMO Visayas) and the participants (both those with sustained and unsustained projects) alike were highly appreciated and deemed useful. Moreover, the training provided helped prepare the personnel to implement the program more effectively, especially with the issuance of the new guidelines. On the other hand, the participants lauded the training by the SLP as it provided them with vital skills related to business management and employment (e.g., financial management, customer relationship management, etc.).

Strong leadership and cooperation of members among SLP Associations. The sustainability of microenterprise projects was also attributed to effective leadership, unity, and cooperation among members of the cooperative SLP Association (SLPA). Based on the experience of the FGD respondents who had sustained their businesses since graduating from the program in 2018, their associations' strong leadership, coordination, and teamwork immensely helped them continue their livelihood, even amid the pandemic.

Regular and continuous monitoring, mentoring and coaching. Moreover, the regular monitoring also played a role in how MD track participants continued operating their business, as the PDOs guided in crucial stages (e.g., processing documents). LGU monitoring also proved advantageous since it can provide further interventions and fill the gaps for the DSWD, like some Mindanao LGUs.

External Factors

Support from the local government. The most mentioned external factor that was said to be crucial in the sustainability of the SLP was support from the LGUs. The implementers, in particular (i.e., RPMOs, LCEs), agreed that the LGUs' support in providing logistical, administrative, and financial assistance as needed facilitated the conduct of activities (e.g., meetings, assemblies, etc.). The openness of the LGUs to the program also enabled a smooth rollout of program components to SLP participants. Local governments also played a role in sustaining the SLP projects of the beneficiaries, particularly in providing training and follow-through monitoring.

Close coordination between the LGU and the DSWD. The LSWDOs, on the other hand, maintained that the close coordination between the LGU and the DSWD was fundamental in ensuring the continuity of livelihood projects. In some LGUs (e.g.,

Tantangan, South Cotabato), SLP projects were properly turned over to the local government for continuous monitoring.

Support from the private sector. To some extent, support from the private sector was also deemed a significant element in the program, as private institutions link the market to microenterprises. The partnership forged between the SLPAs and the private businesses guarantees a readily available market to patronize the offered products and services of SLPAs.

1. **Hindering factors that contribute to the sustainability of microenterprise/employment projects**

Participant Characteristics

Vulnerabilities of participants. SLP participants who were unable to sustain their businesses and employment noted that the inability to recover from financial shocks/crises brought by sudden health issues of some family members was a primary reason for ending their projects. Therefore, the assistance amounting ₱5,000.00 to ₱15,000.00 was deemed insufficient and could be quickly exhausted once a crisis hits (e.g., sickness in the family).

Mindset on the program. The implementers also observed that participants' general lack of interest in making the most out of the program is another determinant of the sustainability of SLP projects, whether microenterprise or employment. The disinterest in pursuing the livelihood project they started could stem from a limited grasp of the program and its objectives, which could be attributed to the lack of training of PDOs guiding them or to limited time for social preparation. Further reasons identified were the aversion to embracing new livelihood ideas and tending to other life priorities (e.g., seeking other livelihood opportunities and taking care of family members).

Program Components

Insufficient workforce. The implementers (i.e., DSWD and LGU) agreed that the lack of personnel and the staff turnover in some areas inhibited the endurance of MD and EF initiatives. Ballesteros et al. (2015) found that the ratio of the number of beneficiaries to PDOs was as high as 1,000. The resulting heavy work/caseload for PDOs who juggle case management/monitoring, reporting, and duties as Special Disbursing Officers, hampered the smooth operations of the program. Some LSWDOs in the Visayas also complained about the short intervals between PDO replacements, which severely affected the monitoring and supervision of SLP participants. Moreover, the anticipation of the impending devolution of SLP, in line with the Mandanas-Garcia Court Ruling and Executive Order No. 138, series

of 2021, resulted in the resignation or transfer of field staff to other programs or offices to guarantee tenure of employment.

Conflicts within SLP Associations. Internal conflicts within SLPAs were also reported to cause the disintegration of cooperatives/group businesses. Irreconcilable differences among association members and leadership issues were cited as reasons for such conflicts. While there were field staff members who handled grievances, their capacity to resolve conflicts may be limited.

External Factors

Natural disasters and calamities. Most of the respondents, both from the FGD and survey, cited disasters, for instance, the current COVID-19 pandemic, as the primary cause of business closures and unemployment. Since only some are capable of bouncing back (especially those who experienced other income shocks/crises), sustaining MD and EF projects took time. Disaster/calamity occurrences also hampered field operations and made program implementation and monitoring challenging.

Far-flung areas. The location of participants also impeded monitoring and affected the presence/absence of an available market for the microenterprises. For some MD track participants in the FGD, the location of the microenterprise relative to their residence was crucial due to the daily extra out-of-pocket expenses incurred, which were not covered by the seed capital fund provided by the program.

Out-migration and insufficient capital assistance. Other observed hindering factors were migration of beneficiaries to other areas (Mindanao), insufficient capital assistance, and unmet need for assistance in specific matters such as securing documentary requirements (e.g., renewal of certificates).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the study's findings and previous program assessments, the number of participants with sustained livelihood three (3) years after graduation is relatively low. While the program has already been implemented for more than a decade, the minimal improvement in the graduates' livelihood outcomes implies that there is still room for improvement that need to be considered. Hence, the following are recommended for policy and program enhancement as the Department gears toward devolving the program to the LGUs:

1. To minimize the vulnerabilities of program participants, the program planners and implementers shall explore the feasibility of augmenting or restructuring the assistance provided and revisiting the length of the incubation period. Further, principles of social case management shall be applied to mainstream participants in the greater market/employment environment, coupled with continuous capacity building, monitoring, mentoring, and coaching. Eventually, proper turnover to appropriate entities (i.e., LGUs and/or other government agencies) shall be performed for continuity and follow-through. The key principles and methodologies of the mainstreaming stage should also be institutionalized by including them in the comprehensive program implementation guidelines.
2. The mindset of program participants should be influenced by inculcating a sense of ownership and obligation, thereby shaping their attitudes, efforts, and willingness to strive harder and resent complacency.
3. There needs to be more than the commitment and dedication of SLP staff to offset workforce insufficiency; hence strategies towards having additional staff or maximizing existing staff shall be prioritized to realize the intended program outcomes.
4. As a way to promote functional SLPAs and prevent internal conflicts, regular assessment of SLPA functionality is deemed helpful.
5. Given the adverse effect of natural disasters and calamities on livelihoods, incorporating a shock-responsive program component is essential.
6. Project proposals of program participants, particularly those in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, shall be carefully evaluated through a market-driven assessment of livelihood and job placement which might also eliminate the need for out-migration.
7. Close coordination between the LGU and the DSWD shall be sustained to strengthen the preparation for the devolution of SLP. More so, compliance monitoring is crucial to uphold the standards set.
8. Convergence strategies should be strengthened to capitalize on the support of partners from the public and private sectors, following a whole-of-nation approach, with the government, private sectors, and civil society organizations all working together towards achieving a common goal. This can be supported by data and information sharing to boost collaboration.

Further recommendations for policy and program enhancement shall validate and ensure completeness and consistency of the program administrative data, review the existing guidelines on accreditation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) organized by the SLP as beneficiaries using DSWD funds, and restructure the SLP implementation cycle to adapt to existing policies and regulations on budget management.

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DSWD SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS: A FOCUS ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

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ABSTRACT

This research study was conducted to (1) examine the characteristics and circumstances of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) with access to Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Social Protection (SP) programs, (2) examine the risks and vulnerabilities and other factors affecting IPs and assess if these are addressed by the DSWD SP programs provided to them, (3) identify the IPs with risks and vulnerabilities that have not been addressed and which can be prioritized in other existing and new government SP programs and interventions, (4) identify the gaps/issues, good practices and lessons learned by the Department in providing SP programs to IPs, (5) provide specific recommendations to improve the DSWD SP programs and address the risks and vulnerabilities of IPs; and (6) provide policy recommendations to address the risks and vulnerabilities of IPs and in relation to the implementation of the Mandanas ruling. In order to attain these objectives, the study analyzed the merged dataset of 759,070 poor IP households and 4,130,908 indigenous peoples from the DSWD National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR) Listahanan 2 for the quantitative phase. Further, key informant interviews (KIIs) with DSWD program implementers and key officials from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) were conducted to triangulate the data captured in the study. A risk level index scoring was developed for this study by looking at major components that contribute to the risks of poor IP households: (i) Employment, (ii) Health, (iii) Water, Sanitation, and Housing, and (iv) Education. An IP household is experiencing the highest risk at level 3 if the household attains an overall score of greater than or equal to 1.8 by weighing in all 14 indicators identified across the four major components. Based on the findings, the education component contributed the largest to the overall risk level of poor IP households at 78.7% or 597,198 IP households belonging to risk level 3. The health component comes next with a contribution of 49.8%, while the education and water, sanitation, and components both had the least share of 29.8% to the highest overall risk level of poor IP households. Overall, there are existing social protection programs that help address the major risk and vulnerabilities of the IPs; however, implementation challenges, gaps, and issues affect the delivery of

these programs and, in turn, affect the result and impact of the programs to its target beneficiaries. Thus, enhancements and recommendations to further strengthen the existing programs are necessary. One of the recommendations of the study is to address the other risks and vulnerabilities of the IPs through participatory and consultative planning, revisiting policies and guidelines, improving monitoring and profiling of IPs, intensifying partnership building, providing further IP cultural and sensitivity training, increasing the amount of cash grants and expansion to other financial service providers and increasing budget allocation, and strengthening organizational structure of NCIP. Regarding the devolution of social services, the study recommends that the LGUs help sustain the gains of the program, increase the accessibility of basic needs and social services for IP communities, and intensify information sharing.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples are estimated to represent 4.5% of the world's population (World Bank, 2011). The vast majority, approximately two-thirds of the global indigenous population, live in Asia (United Nations [UN], 2014). Across all regions, IPs are over-represented among the poorest segments of national populations - it is estimated that IPs account for 10% of the world's poor (World Bank, 2011). Lack of access to adequate social protection is a reality for millions of men, women and children belonging to IPs, which needs to be understood against the context of their common experience of historic injustices, including colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, as well as persisting marginalization. While detailed data are not available, it is assumed that many IPs are among the 5.2 billion people with no or limited social protection coverage (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2017). In addition, many IPs have no or limited access to basic social services such as essential health care and education because those services are unavailable, physically or financially inaccessible, or culturally inappropriate. For many IPs, the lack of official registration at birth and, consequently, identity documents also remain a considerable obstacle to their access to social protection and social services (ILO, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights [ACHPR], 2009; Errico, 2017).

The DSWD, through poverty alleviation and developmental programs, is committed to ensuring the promotion and protection of the rights of all IPs in the country. Part of this is the development of the DSWD Indigenous Peoples Participation Framework (IPPF) in 2009, which serves as a declaration of policies and standard procedures in developing, funding, and implementing programs, projects, and services for IPs as part of social welfare and development.

Moreover, the Republic Act No. 8371, or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, safeguards and ensures that IPs have the right to participate in decision-making in all matters that may affect their lives. The law also stipulates that IPs have the right to informed and intelligent participation in the formation and implementation of any project related to them. And to also support this, the UN also explicitly declared and defined the rights of the IPs to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, and the responsibility of the state to consult with the IPs concerned to obtain their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

It is, therefore, necessary to look into the existing data of DSWD SP programs relative to IPs and relate how these programs address the current needs of the IPs. This would then help the government, particularly the Department, to

improve or design new SP programs that IPs can efficiently benefit from, considering the many different risks that they face.

The Philippine Social Protection Operational Framework and Strategy

Given the challenge of poverty and risk vulnerability, the government intervenes through SP programs to safeguard households against income shocks. In 2007, the Philippines adopted the Philippine Definition of SP as follows:

"Social Protection constitutes 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."

The primary goal of SP is to contribute to a better and improved quality of life for the citizenry, as exemplified by Ambisyon Natin 2040. This is achieved through a substantial reduction in poverty, inequality, and vulnerability and the inclusion of the marginalized in the development process. SP also hopes to realize the rights of citizens for full participation in decision-making affecting their access to and control over resources necessary to maintain and sustain a decent and secure life. It also aims to contribute to social transformation and cohesion to promote human rights, public welfare, and equity among all citizens of a country.

The SP Plan 2020-2022 considers the general directions stated in the SP Operational Framework and Strategy's key elements and the thrusts of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022. Unlike sector-specific plans, the SP Plan is unique because it is multi-sectoral and is a strategy for broader social development. Therefore, its scope is not agency-specific and requires a deliberate effort among national, sub-regional, and local governments toward a common goal and set of objectives and guidelines. On the other hand, the SP Vulnerability and Adaptation Manual (VAM) identifies major risks and vulnerabilities, which are categorized into the following:

1. Individual and Life Cycle Risks such as hunger, illness or injury, disability, pregnancy, childbirth, old age, or death
2. Economic Risks such as unemployment, underemployment, the sudden end of the source of livelihood, price instability of essential commodities, economic crisis, lack of local opportunities, or weak agricultural production
3. Environment and Natural Risks such as drought, rains and floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruption, landslides, or storm surge
4. Social and Governance Risks such as shelter insecurity, corruption, crime, domestic violence, political instability, armed conflict, or social exclusion

DSWD Social Protection Programs for IPs

A. Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) and Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT) for IPs in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDAs)

The 4Ps is the pioneer conditional cash transfer program implemented in 2008 by the national government, with the DSWD as the lead implementing agency. On April 17, 2020, 4Ps became a regular national government program through the passage of Republic Act 11310, or “An Act Institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program,” or the short title “4Ps Act”. The law positions the 4Ps as both a human capital development program and as the national poverty reduction strategy of the national government through convergence with other pro-poor programs and services. The program provides conditional cash transfers to poor households for a maximum period of seven (7) years to improve their health, nutrition, and education.

The transfer of cash grants to the beneficiaries under the program is conditional, meaning beneficiaries must comply with program conditions related to increasing human capital to continue receiving 4Ps grants. Furthermore, the MCCT Program for IPs in GIDAs is a modified version of the 4Ps. The said modifications are in terms of targeting, conditionalities, process of implementation, package of services, interventions, and some policy and planning strategies. The MCCT-IP in GIDA works within the context of the IPRA and the DSWD IPPF.

B. Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP)

The SLP is one of the core programs of the DSWD related to SP and poverty reduction that continues to develop and implement programs and projects for the poor, vulnerable, and disadvantaged individuals/groups. Through the SLP, program participants are provided with access to economic opportunities/resources such as micro-enterprise development and/or employment. The program is implemented through a two-track program. The first track, the Microenterprise Development Track, supports micro-enterprises in becoming organizationally and economically viable. Meanwhile, the second track, the Employment Facilitation Track, assists participants in accessing appropriate employment opportunities.

The DSWD, through SLP, has provided eligible individuals with Livelihood Assistance Grants (LAG), a form of financial assistance granted to families whose livelihoods were affected by the implementation of the community quarantine brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. This LAG is pursuant to the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act (Republic Act No. 11469) and provides qualified beneficiaries with financial assistance not exceeding PHP15,000.00. The grants can be used as seed capital for new alternative income-generating activities, certain micro-enterprise ventures, or as support for pre-employment requirements or allowance during the first month of employment. As of January 2021, a total of 3,435 IP beneficiaries were initially provided with LAG nationwide.

C. Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) and Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) program

PHP1,487,146,923.94. Of the 1,447 total funded projects, 620 projects have been completed.

The DSWD implements its KALAHI-CIDSS subprojects and ensures that IPs are informed, consulted, and mobilized during the subproject identification, prioritization, and implementation. The Department will ensure the informed participation of IPs in the Community Empowerment Activity Cycle (CEAC) such that they will receive social and economic benefits that are culturally compatible and that they will not be adversely affected by the subproject implementation. The Department would further ensure that IPs in target municipalities can provide input to local planning activities. Also, the Department facilitates the participation of IPs in selecting community subprojects through informed decision-making. It ensures that they actively participate and lead in the design, development, and implementation of community projects. Lastly, the Department also ensures that feedback on project implementation, benefits, and risks to IP groups are continuously provided throughout the Project.

D. Comprehensive Program for Street Children, Families, and IPs

The Comprehensive Program for Sama-Bajau is a community-based approach geared towards the Social Development of Sama-Bajau. It shall integrate community-driven development strategies to ensure the inclusion of the Sama-Bajau in the Planning, Programming, and Policy Making at the local level. This social technology project aims to help the Sama-Bajau families access basic services not limited to livelihood, financial, and other social services. Furthermore, it shall strengthen networking alliance-building through forming a

task force at the National and Regional levels that shall serve as a coordinating body for the Sama-Bajau.

The program is implemented in the pilot sites of Region III, IV-A, VII, NCR, and Region IX, where large numbers of Sama-Bajau are found. It targets poor Sama-Bajau who are not members of the 4Ps and those not included in the DSWD Listahanan, as well as families and children who stay and remain on the streets and those with no permanent residence, vulnerable to disasters. The program develops income-generating opportunities and skills training for children and their families to prevent them from working on the streets. It also creates activity centers where they could have life skills training and literacy activities. In addition, it provides shelter assistance for them to leave the streets permanently and gain access to basic social services eventually.

Associated Risks and Vulnerability of IPs

The table below summarizes the major risks and vulnerabilities experienced by IPs indicated in the SP VAM 2020-2022:

| Type of Risks | Major Risks and Vulnerabilities |
|--|--|
| Individual and Life Cycle Risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and accessibility of basic social services in far-flung areas • Cultural sensitivity of services |
| Economic Risks | Lack of economic opportunities |
| Social and Governance Risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination • Lack of identity documents |
| Environment, Natural and Human Induced Risks | Injury, loss of life |

The SP Framework also highlighted the importance of considering social risks related to the GIDAs, where most IPs are residing. These zones should need special attention as government entities, or even the civil society sectors, are seldom able to reach these areas. Likewise, GIDAs tend to have very high poverty and vulnerability incidence rates.

Opportunities for Inclusion of IPs in SP

The PDP 2017-2022, across the different chapters, emphasized various strategies that respond to SP ranging from poverty to extreme climate situations. The Philippine strategy is to reduce poverty and address vulnerability to improve the situation of poor, marginalized, and disadvantaged groups, including IP communities. This means that SP, apart from addressing poverty and vulnerability, must build the resilience of people, structures, cultures, and institutions. They are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, allowing the promotion of economic development, the provision of essential social services, and the protection and management of disaster risks.

Another key strategy of the Philippine government for a more responsive SP system is establishing a well-defined SP Floor. This will allow the poor and the vulnerable to be increasingly protected against chronic social problems such as hunger, failing health, lack of education and opportunities, and social exclusion. In particular, vulnerable groups such as women, children, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), the elderly, and IPs are provided income protection. Even as the SP Floor has yet to be fully defined and implemented as a program in the Philippine context, most of its elements are already present in the PDP and existing government programs.

Further, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has placed particular emphasis on addressing inequalities and poverty, as they are significant obstacles to sustainable development, and included a specific target on achieving social protection coverage for all, including the IPs. Therefore, guaranteeing at least a basic level of social protection through the social protection floor is an essential component of national strategies for sustainable development.

The Philippines, in fact, had an IP Master Plan developed by NCIP, which aimed to strengthen the provision of basic services such as health and education, creating economic opportunities and sustainable management of natural resources. It aimed to facilitate cooperation of all agencies and institutions to converge their programs, projects and services for the development of the IPs or Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs). The programs and projects in this IP Master Plan focused on ancestral lands, domain and natural resources, self-determination of IPs, social justice and human rights, as well as indigenous peoples' culture and traditions.

Thus, to address the need for reliable, accurate and timely data on the status of vulnerable and marginalized sectors, such as PWDs, informal sector workers, IPs,

and Internally displaced people (IDPs), the government shall formulate a SP Statistical Framework and its subsequent indicators consistent with the Philippine Statistical Development Program and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These indicators require disaggregation by sex, age, ethnicity, sector, and vulnerability. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) shall then consider the framework and harmonize needed data in the design of the Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) and Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS).

OBJECTIVES

The DSWD implements poverty alleviation and developmental programs and is committed to ensuring the promotion and protection of the rights of all IPs in the country. This research generally aims to examine the DSWD data on IPs and assess if the existing SP programs of the Department are addressing their risk and vulnerabilities. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Examine the characteristics and circumstances of IPs with access to DSWD SP programs;
2. Examine the risks and vulnerabilities, and other factors affecting IPs and assess if these are addressed by the DSWD SP programs provided to them;
3. Identify the IPs with risks and vulnerabilities that have not been addressed and which can be prioritized in other existing and new government SP programs and interventions;
4. Identify the gaps/issues, good practices, and lessons learned by the Department in providing SP programs to IPs;
5. Provide specific recommendations to improve the DSWD SP programs and address the risks and vulnerabilities of IPs; and
6. Provide policy recommendations to address the risks and vulnerabilities of IPs in relation to the implementation of the Mandanas ruling.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The country has much to accomplish in terms of improving its population's access to SP. SP constitutes policies and programs that seek to reduce poverty, inequality, 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. A study on the DSWD SP programs for IPs is crucial as the Philippines is working towards universal coverage and transformative SP. The IPs are among the poorest and most marginalized sectors of Philippine society. Part of the government's response to social risks and vulnerabilities is the delivery of SP programs that provide basic protection to the poor, excluded, discriminated

against, and marginalized through cash transfers, subsidies, scholarships, and others. This would include the Department's three (3) specialized programs, namely, 4Ps, Kalahi-CIDSS, and SLP.

This study will look into the data of the DSWD on IPs, focusing on their risks and vulnerabilities. Understanding these are imperative in planning SP and adaptive strategies. Although the risks are categorized into four (4) major types: Lifecycle and Individual Risks; Economic Risks; Environment, Natural, and Human-Induced Risks; and Social and Governance Risks, the risks are not mutually exclusive but are related to each other. Individuals, families, and communities have different types of risks and varied consequences, impacts, and responses. This is due to varying levels of vulnerabilities, exposures, and capacities.

Upon examining these, the study would help determine if the existing DSWD SP programs address these risks and vulnerabilities. Further, the characteristics or profiles of IPs would be categorized such that the Department would know the priority areas to look into.

Likewise, the study will capture the program operations' gaps and issues, good practices, and lessons learned by the Department in providing SP programs to IPs. These would then help the research team provide specific recommendations to improve the DSWD SP programs and provide policy recommendations that will further address the risks and vulnerabilities of IPs, considering the implementation of the Mandanas ruling.

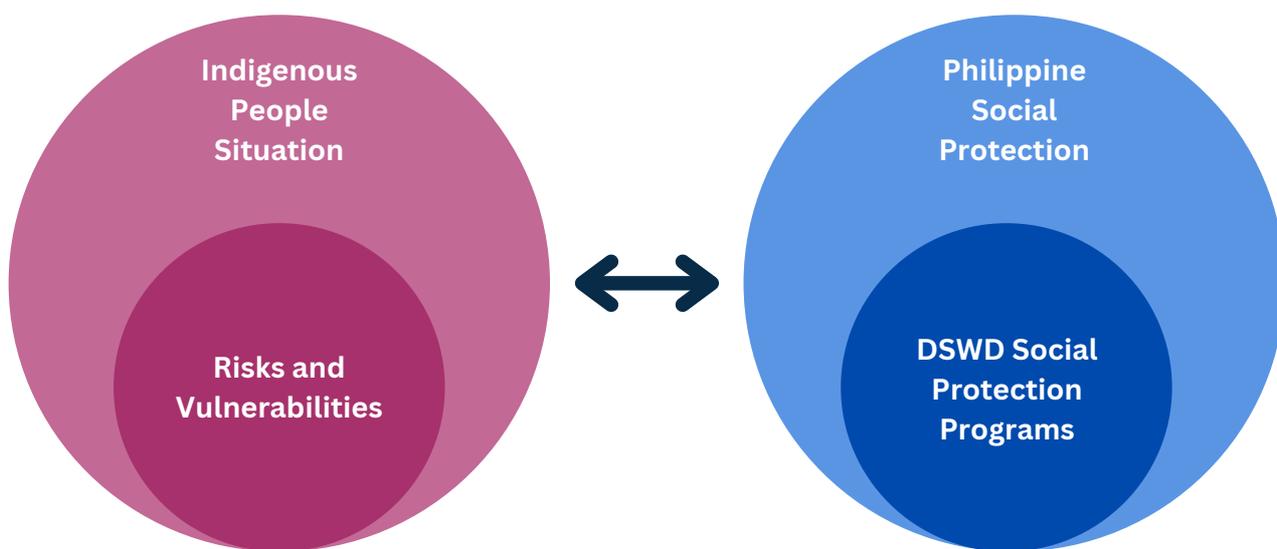


Figure 1: Framework of Variables included in the study

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study focused on the existing DSWD SP programs and services provided to the IPs, particularly 4Ps, SLP, KALAHI-CIDSS, and Comprehensive Program for IPs. This study primarily used the Listahanan data and/or database of the Specialized Programs of DSWD. The study used quantitative analysis and was limited to descriptive statistics only.

After examining the data of IPs in the available databases of the DSWD, the second stage applied a qualitative approach through KIIs with selected program implementers. The KIIs were limited to selected national and regional focal persons of the different DSWD SP programs.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment and Leadership (WEEL) for Indigenous Women and Girl-Children of the 4Ps (2019)

In 2019, comprehensive mix-method research was conducted as part of the WEEL project implemented with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which aimed to surface the dynamics of gender and IPs' issues. The research entitled Promoting WEEL for Indigenous Women and Girl-Children of the 4Ps covered nine (9) municipalities from eight (8) provinces under the MCCT-IP and Regular 4Ps in GIDAs, which are tagged as gender red-sites. Key gender issues, particularly the increasing burden of women's multiple roles, gender stereotyping and discrimination, and violence against women and children (VAWC), were identified among IP women in the study. Most IP respondents of the study generally perceived that the 4Ps has resulted in positive changes in gender dynamics. Specifically, they think that the 4Ps has increased women's community participation and role in economic affairs. Some respondents also say that the 4Ps helped their marital relationship through increased participation in family decisions and decreased incidences of VAWC. The same study also captured evidence that development interventions have led to positive and negative changes and outcomes in IP communities' economic, environmental, and sociocultural dimensions. With their livelihoods tightly linked to nature, environmental changes greatly influenced IPs' livelihoods and access to basic needs, such as water and food. Increased income resulted in more food choices and improved the IPs' ability to send children to school. On the other hand, one of the unintended impacts of the initiatives includes worsening the multiple burdens for women as they perform domestic chores, child-rearing, and farm responsibilities in conjunction with their new roles in livelihood and community

The study also reinforced that self-determination and continued recognition of IP culture, values, and community leaders are important driving forces for sustainable and culture-responsive development programs.

Assessment of MCCT Program for IPs in GIDAs (2017)

In 2017, in collaboration with the DSWD, UNICEF commissioned the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) to assess the MCCT Program for IPs in GIDAs. This study assessed the factors on the ground that could affect the capability of the MCCT-IP beneficiaries to comply with the conditionalities of the program, specifically in the health and education services. Data collection was conducted in nine (9) areas in Luzon, two (2) areas in the Visayas, and 19 in Mindanao. In this study, the demand side of the MCCT for IPs in the GIDA program employed two qualitative research methods - Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and KIIs. While for the supply-side assessment, a census of regular and alternative service providers, and a mapping of the education and health facilities located in the study areas, were conducted. The study found that distance and other physical barriers were the most prominent barriers to accessing facilities that deliver the services used to comply with the MCCT conditionalities. Operational issues pertaining to absentee teachers, irregular schedules of deployed health services, missing names in beneficiary lists, and the actual amount of cash grant received were also noted in the study as factors affecting the program delivery. Further, the study found that the health conditionality most consistently cited as directly clashing with local beliefs and practices is the requirement that pregnant women beneficiaries deliver in a health facility since most still prefer their traditional birth attendant and home delivery. Early marriage as a hamper in meeting the education conditionality was also notable as several tribes still practice their tradition to arrange for children as young as nine (9) to be married. The same study also showed results on the major needs of the IP beneficiaries; one is access to adequate food. The data showed a lack of food in the household as a recurring theme in both the demand and supply side data. Evidently, physical access to and from their communities, and literacy programs for tribe members, were also seen as common needs. The study, therefore, recommends the review of the conditionalities of the MCCT-IP in the GIDA program and ensuring that the requirements take into consideration the communities' geographic location and other factors that put them in a more disadvantaged position.

IPs in the Philippines: A Country Case Study (2007)

In a country case study, De Vera, D. (2007) cited that most ICCs do not have legal recognition over their traditional lands. This limits their ability to conduct their livelihood activities freely, and they are denied access to other natural resources in their communities. The author added that in most cases, local and ICCs had been

been completely disempowered where the dominant societies have successfully imposed other resource-use and tenurial arrangements through legal decrees or physical force and occupation of traditional territories. In this study, the author provides an example of economic risk wherein IPs are deprived of economic opportunities. According to the UN (2014), IPs are engaged in many sectors and occupations, varying from country to country. Nevertheless, indigenous workers worldwide face similar challenges as their livelihoods are undergoing rapid changes with far-reaching consequences for their rights and well-being. IPs' traditional livelihood strategies are increasingly under pressure. At the same time, indigenous women and men face serious and persistent obstacles in gaining access to decent work, including productive and freely chosen employment and SP. In the Philippines, according to the ILO (2012), IPs continue to be over-represented among the poor, the illiterate, and the unemployed. In many instances, IPs are combining traditional occupations such as cultivation and handicrafts with wage labor, often as a necessity. Their shrinking land base often no longer allows traditional activities to serve as the sole source for securing a livelihood.

Most of the IPs depend on traditional swidden agriculture utilizing available upland areas. However, most of these traditional cultivation sites and fallow areas have now been degraded. They are further threatened by the influx of migrant farmers who have introduced unsustainable lowland commercial farming practices. Supporting the economic inclusion of the IPs at local and regional levels is essential to achieving the promise of the SDGs to “leave no one behind” and overcoming the significant gaps in well-being that continue to exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, notably in rural areas. Ensuring IPs' access to decent work, including productive and freely chosen employment and social protection, contributes to reducing poverty and is essential for promoting social cohesion and inclusive development. Further, the UN claimed that overcoming the exclusion of IPs and ethnic minorities from decent work and employment opportunities has been identified as a key challenge that should be considered.

METHODOLOGY

I. Research Design

This research employed the mixed-methods sequential explanatory design since the study's main goal is to draw insights for improving DSWD SP programs and not to test the impact of a specific SP program. This design incorporated quantitative and qualitative approaches in two (2) consecutive study phases. The quantitative method was conducted in the first phase using the 2015 Listahanan data, and the quantitative analysis was limited to descriptive statistics only.

After examining the data of IPs in the 2015 Listahanan, the second phase applied the qualitative approach through KIIs with program implementers. The participation of the NCIP through KIIs was also valuable in triangulating the data captured in this study. Existing efforts and initiatives of the NCIP along the SP of IPs were also cited in the study.

II. Data Source

Quantitative data analysis uses the merged dataset of the 2015 Listahanan conducted by the DSWD National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction (NHTS-PR). The Listahanan provided the research team filtered dataset of Poor IP households and individuals. The household level data have 759,070 households and 4,130,908 IP populations.

III. Methods in Developing Vulnerability Index

Both household and population data were used in developing the initial vulnerability index. Then, weights were adjusted correspondingly using the methodology initiated by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) Director Sabina Alkire and Dr. James Foster of Washington University. This was commonly referred to as the Alkire Foster or AF method.

The Vulnerability Index is a measure that intends to capture deprivations on various dimensions (i.e., health, education, Water, Health and Sanitation [WASH], and employment). Using the four (4) major components mentioned, a risk level index scoring was developed, which categorizes the overall risk level of the identified poor IP households into three (3) levels: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. For example, an IP household is experiencing the highest risk at level 3 if the household attained an overall score of greater than or equal to 1.8 by weighing in all 14 indicators identified across the four (4) major components. Meanwhile, poor IP households which attained greater than or equal to 1.3 but less than 1.8 were classified as belonging to Risk Level 2. Those with overall scores less than 1.3 were considered to experience the lowest level of risk at level 1.

IV. Dimensions and Indicators

In selecting the domains and indicators, the initially identified PSA Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) domains and DSWD Social Welfare and Development Indicators (SWDI) were considered to come up with the risk index for the study. Indicators were employment, the occurrence of child labor, access to health services, disability, access to WASH, and access to education.

Refer to Annex A for the indicators and their corresponding weights.

V. Data Processing and Analysis Plan

For the quantitative part, the research team ran the data using Microsoft Excel and STATA software, while for the qualitative part, thematic coding was used.

Through the KIIs with NCIP, qualitative data on the situation of the IPs and their communities were captured. Also, the policy support and direct interventions provided to IPs were gathered. Lastly, initiatives, coordination, and partnership with stakeholders for the benefit of IPs were also asked.

Meanwhile, KIIs with DSWD program implementers captured the situation of IPs and communities already being served by the programs. Then the discussions were focused on program implementation, outcomes, and sustainability among IPs and their communities.

For the quantitative part, all variables captured in the Listahanan were used to determine the socio-economic profile of the poor IP households and individuals. Descriptive statistics were used to illustrate this. Likewise, the variables were also used to determine their level of risks and vulnerabilities, using the assigned weights and value descriptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Basic Profile of Identified Poor IP Households

Based on the 2015 Listahanan results, 759,070 IP households were identified as poor. The majority of IP households were concentrated in Region XI (17%), IX (15%), and BARMM (12%). At the same time, a few hundred poor IP households can be found in NCR and Region VIII.

The average national IP household size is five (5) persons. This is slightly higher than the national average household size of four (4) persons based on the 2015 census population. Regions V, CAR, and NCR registered the highest average household size (AHS) of poor IPs with six (6) persons, and the lowest is Region XII with five (5) persons.

Among the total number of identified poor IP populations, less than 1% (40,463) of them were found to have disabilities. Most of them are in Region IX, with 6,710 IPs with disabilities, followed by Region XI with 4,793 IPs, and Region X with 4,608 IPs.

There are 77,101 IP households with solo parents, composed of 24,720 male solo parents and 52,381 female solo parents.

Most identified poor IP households benefited from the 4Ps program, with 332,568 of the identified poor IP household beneficiaries in 2015. This has reached around

600,000 for both MCCT and Regular Conditional Cash Transfer (RCCT). Philhealth follows this with 270,859 (or 35.68%) of the identified poor IP households. Those benefitting from Day Care Services, Subsidized Rice, and Supplementary Feeding Programs (SFP) are also evident, at 6-7% of the identified poor IP households. Very few poor IP households benefit from microcredit, SLP/ Self-Employment Assistance Kaunlaran (SEA-K), Skills / Livelihood Training, and Scholarships, with less than 1% of the poor IP households each. Beneficiaries of housing programs reached 1.5%, 3.1% for other cash transfer programs, and 4.4% for those benefitting from Emergency Financial Assistance.

II. Socio-economic Characteristics of Identified Poor IP Households

For housing indicators, it was found that all regions posted higher than 90% of their households residing in single-type housing units, except in NCR, with 79.9%. The majority, or 366,580 (48.3%), have housing units made of light materials, mostly residing in Regions IX, XI, BARMM, and Region XII. Almost half, or 44.8%, of the poor IPs households owned their house and the lot they occupied, and about 39% of poor IPs households owned their house in a rent-free lot with the consent of the owner. Less than half or 43% of poor IP households across the country had access to electricity. NCR and Region III had the highest proportion of households among regions using electricity at 90.6% and 76.4%, respectively. This was followed by BARMM (71.4%) and Region IV-B (65.7%). Meanwhile, Region X had the lowest proportion of households among regions using electricity, with 24.7%.

For health and sanitation indicators, it was found that the most common drinking water source among urban and rural households are springs, rivers, and streams, followed by shared faucet community water systems. Among urban households, 26% used water from springs, rivers, and streams, 22% shared faucet community water system, and 18% used shared tube/ pipe well. For rural households, 31% used water from springs, rivers, and streams, 23% shared faucet community water system, and 18% used dug well as a source of drinking water. 399,137, or 52.5% of IP households have access to water-sealed or closed pit toilet facilities, 146,096, or 19.2%, use open pit toilet facilities, and 55,518, or 7.3%, use other types such as pail systems. However, 158,319, or 20.8% of IP households, did not have access to any toilet facilities. Across all regions, the absence of toilet facilities is high in Regions VIII, III, NCR, IV-A, IV-B, V, VII, and CARAGA. The majority, or 57% of IP household members, are not attending a health center, while 43% attend a health center. Regarding urban-rural disparity, IP Household members living in urban areas have a higher incidence of not attending a health center (61%) compared to rural areas with 56 percent.

On education indicators, it was found that 60.4% of heads of poor IP households only completed elementary education, followed by those who finished high school (19.5%) and no grade completed (17.7%). Of the 1,966,322 identified poor IP household members of the Listahanan 2 aged 18 and above, 53.1% of IPs finished elementary level, including those who have attained Kinder to Grade 6. Around 26% have attained at least High School level, including those who have attained grades 7 to 12 and/or graduated high school. In comparison, 5.7% have attained up to college and post graduate studies including those who have completed 1st to 4th year college and/or those who have bachelor's and Masteral or Doctorate Degrees. Meanwhile, 15% have No Grade Completed. Of the 1,792,442 identified poor IP household members of the Listahanan 2 aged 3 to 17 years old, 73.7% or 1,321,235 children and youth IPs were attending school during the time of the assessment. On the other hand, 26.3% or 471,207 children and youth IPs are not attending school during the survey.

Listahanan adopted the 2012 Philippine Standard Occupational Classification for its employment and income indicators. It was found that workers in skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery occupations comprised the largest share of 44.7% across occupation groups. Elementary occupations were the second largest group of workers (43.5%), followed by services and sales workers (4%) and craft and related trade workers (3.2%). Among those employed and have wages/salaries, those who worked in private establishments were the largest proportion (18.6%), followed by workers in private households (14.2%). The self-employed workers without paid employees were estimated at 32.2% of the total IP household head employed, while the unpaid family workers were 17.9%. Most of the household heads of the identified poor IP households worked in short-term, seasonal, or casual job/business / unpaid family work, comprising 50.4% or 382,343 households. Most of these are from Region IX and BARMM. Further, this is followed by those household heads of poor IP households who are engaged in permanent job/ business/ unpaid family work, with 35.2% or 267,262 households. Most of these are from Regions XI and XII. An estimated 157,942 youth IP population belongs to the youth labor force, which translates to a youth labor force participation rate of 20.2%. Of the 1.53 million IP population aged 5 to 17 in 2015, 2%, or 31,121, were working children. This includes those who worked for at least one (1) hour during the past week of the time of assessment. Aged 15-17 years comprised the highest group of working children at 82.7%, followed by those aged 10-14 at 16% of total working groups. 1.4% of working children belong to the age group of 5-9 years old.

III. Major Risks and Vulnerabilities of Identified Poor IP Households

As defined in the DSWD SP Vulnerability and Adaptation Manual, risks are uncertain events that may damage someone's well-being, leading to poverty.

Economic risks are operationally defined in this study by looking at 11 Listahanan 2 indicators related to education, income and employment, location, et. al.. The top four (4) indicators with the highest incidence rate under this type of risk are educational attainment (97.3% or 738,780 households), urban-rural classification (83.1% or 630,665), unemployment (32.3% or 244,916), and a class of worker (17.9% or 135,663). Low educational attainment of household heads is evident across all regions. Meanwhile, except for NCR, IP households are also concentrated in rural areas in all other regions.

Governance risk is the potential harm caused by decisions, policies, and processes made by state and non-state actors that may result in conditions such as exclusion, displacement, loss of property, or migration. Only 5.8% of the total identified poor IP households, or 43,857, experienced displacements. It is notable, however, that almost two-thirds, or 63.5%, of identified poor IP households in Region V, have experienced displacement. On the other hand, only 0.4 % of the total identified poor IP households experienced high risk in terms of tenure status.

As operationally defined in this study, individual and life cycle risks are those IP households experiencing deprivation of access to health, water, and sanitation and the presence of disability and pregnant members in the household. Among six (6) indicators, access to health centers had the highest incidence of deprivation among IP households. This means four (4) out of ten (10) IP households were deprived of basic health services. While three (3) out of ten (10) IP households are also experiencing deprivation of clean water supply, and two (2) out of ten (10) are experiencing deprivation of access to toilet facilities.

Environmental risks refer to the susceptibility to harm from exposure to stresses associated with environmental change, such as but not limited to drought, rains and floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and landslides. Among the five (5) indicators of the Listahanan that are categorized under environmental risks, most of the identified poor IP households, amounting to 56.7% or 430,409 households, are experiencing high environmental risk due to the absence of access to electricity. Further, this is followed by the absence or lack of access to a safe water supply, with 31% or 235,090 households.

The education component contributed the largest to the overall risk level of poor IP households at 78.7% or 597,198 IP households at risk level 3. The health component comes next with a contribution of 49.8% or 377,715 IP households belonging to risk level 3.

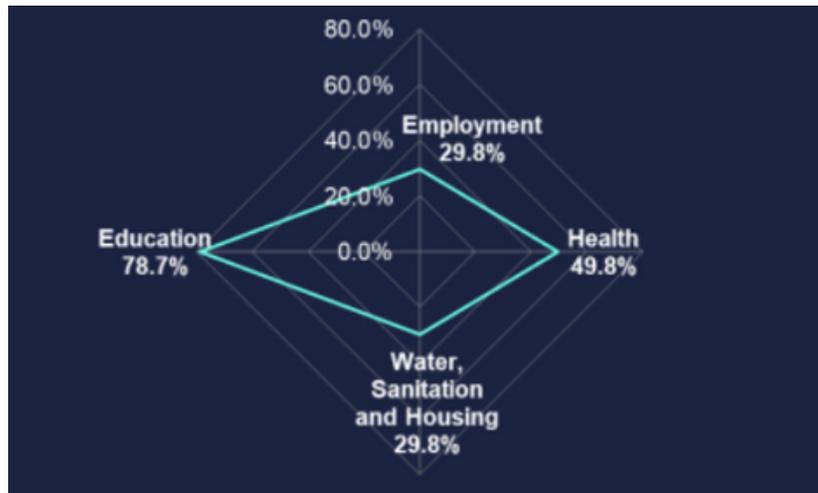


Figure 2: Share of Each Component to the Overall Risk Level 3

Employment and WASH components both had the least share of 29.8% to the highest overall risk level of poor IP households. This amounts to 226,143 IP households belonging to the risk level 3 for WASH and 226,028 IP households belonging to the risk level 3 for employment.

Under the employment component, 65% (493,451) of poor IP households belong to the level 2 risk classification, while 29.8% (226,028) belong to the level 3 risk classification, and only 5.2% (39,591) are classified as Level 1. Further, this data reflects the situation of IP communities as described by the ILO as having high unemployment rates, underemployment, and illiteracy.

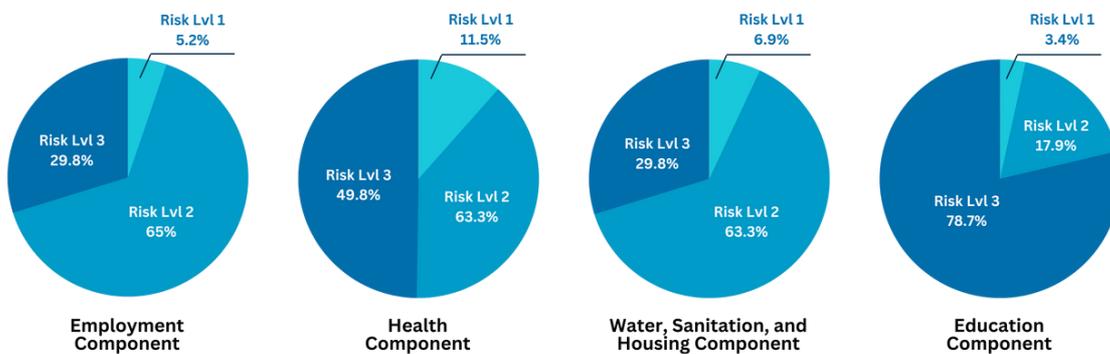


Figure 3: Magnitude of Risks among Poor IP Households per Component

Half of the poor IP households are experiencing the highest risk level under the health component. Further, the magnitude of risk on the health component among identified poor IP households is at least 50% in 9 of the 17 regions. In the State of the World's IPs of UN, Lama (2016) states that one of the primary experiences of the IPs in Asia and a key reason for the indigenous health deficit is the lack of access to adequate and culturally appropriate healthcare services for IPs.

Under the WASH component, 63.3% (480,387) of IP households are under level 2 risk classification, while 29.8% are under level 3 risk classification, and only 6.9% are considered level 1. Similarly, in a UN report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Farha (2019) expressed that the housing conditions for IPs worldwide are overwhelmingly abhorrent and too often violate the right to adequate housing, depriving them of their right to live in security and dignity.

The majority of the identified poor IP households are experiencing the highest risk level on education, or Level 3, with 78.7% or 597,198 households. This can be attributed to the low educational attainment of the household heads and somehow also related to the school attendance of school-aged members of the households. Eduardo and Gabriel (2021) explain that the current curriculum of education programs is incapable of addressing the unique needs of the IPs/ICCs because the education system still assumes its universality of application, disregarding the distinctive nature of IP students' cultural orientation and social experiences.

Most poor IP households are in Risk Levels 3 and 2. The Listahanan 2 data showed that 55.2% or 418,762 households are in Risk Level 3, 44.8% or 340,228 households are in Level 2, and only 0.01% or 80 households are in Level 1. The high magnitude of poor IP households belonging to Risk Levels 2 and 3 is reflected across all regions. Most of the Level 3 households are in BARMM (third among the regions with the highest number of poor IP households), with 89.4% of its poor IP households belonging to the said level. On the other hand, the least percentage of poor IP households in Risk Level 3 can be found in Region I, with only 19.1% of its poor IP households belonging to the said level.

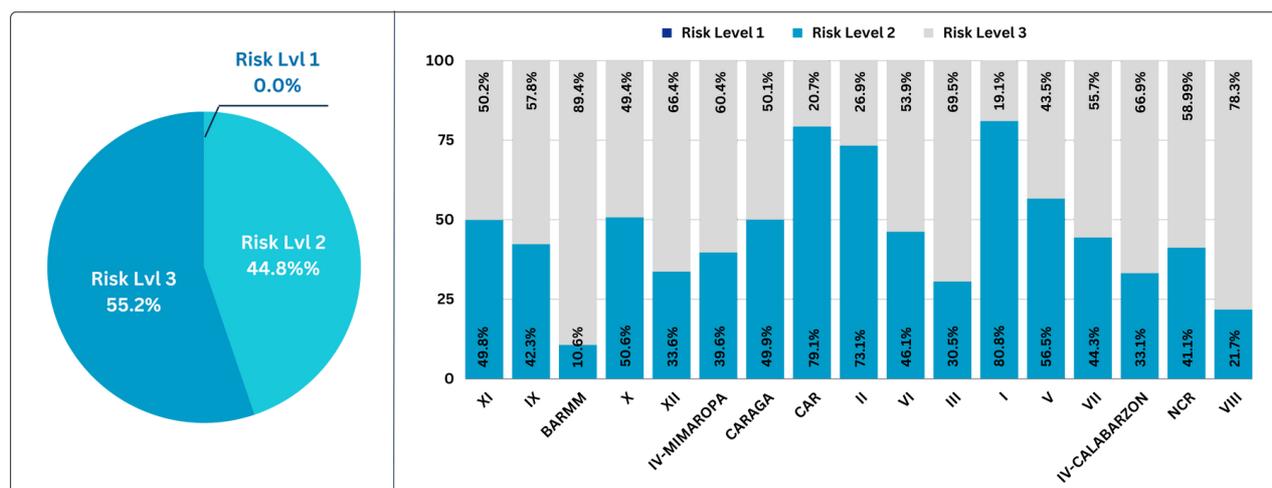


Figure 4: Percentage Distribution of Risk Level per Region

IV. Summary of Major Findings

Examining the Individual Life Cycle Risks of the identified poor IP households, social protection programs and policies such as the Pantawid Familyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) Act, Universal Health Care Act, Solo Parent's Welfare Act, and Magna Carta for PWDs, are present to help address risks and vulnerabilities of sectors such as solo parents and PWDs, as well as address concerns such as limited access to health facilities and teenage pregnancy. However, there are still bottlenecks, such as the concept of early marriage, low health-seeking behavior among pregnant IPs, especially in rural areas, the absence of health facilities in GIDA, and limited access and knowledge of sectors/individuals on social protection services. In addition to these is the issue of shelter insecurity for IPs, especially those living in urban areas and those at risk of relocation and displacement due to land-related projects.

In terms of economic risk, the most pressing concern is the low educational attainment of IPs, which is brought about by the lack of access to schools, especially in GIDA. This, in turn, affects IP households' employment and source of income. The household head's lack of education limits household earning potentials (Albert et al.,2015), considering their limited access to decent work and other economic opportunities. Unpaid family work is also a concern, including the occurrence of working children, which affects the school attendance of school-aged children. Although the 4Ps program, Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, SLP, and other livelihood programs could help address such risks and vulnerabilities, the available opportunities still need to be improved. In addition, inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) conditions exist among IP communities. Although the government and the private sectors help improve the efficacy, sustainability, and integration of hygiene and sanitation interventions into communities and institutions, these concerns are still evident.

Likewise, governance and environmental risks also manifest, such as the violation of human rights of IPs and the occurrence of disaster-related death and injuries. However, these are somehow manageable with the existing programs and policies implemented. As such, the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) program and other programs under the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ECLAC) help address human rights concerns. At the same time, disaster response and resilience initiatives are also provided to communities to mitigate and respond to natural disasters.

Overall, there are existing social protection programs that help address the major risk and vulnerabilities of the IPs; however, implementation challenges, gaps, and

issues affect the delivery of these programs and, in turn, affects the result and impact of the programs to its target beneficiaries. Thus, enhancements and recommendations to further strengthen the existing programs are necessary.

V. Factors that Influence Implementation of SP Programs to IPs

A. Strengths and Opportunities

1. *Achievement of targets based on organizational objectives.*

Looking at the short- and medium-term outcomes, compliance data, and strategic plan targets of the 4Ps, the program's intended goals are being realized. Results of the third impact evaluation (IE Wave 3) by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) published in February 2021 showed that 4Ps positively impacts the income and food security of its household beneficiaries. The education and health outcomes of children and pregnant women also improved with the program's help. Of the 3,213,370 4Ps households who have undergone the SWDI assessment, majority (73.5% or 2,361,249) were classified to be at the subsistence level (Level 2) of well-being, while more than a quarter (26.1% or 838,483) were already at the self-sufficiency level (Level 3). However, it must be taken into account that the pandemic might have brought changes in household welfare across all sectors, thus the need for a re-assessment of the SWDI.

2. *Systems, structures and mechanisms are well-founded*

The existence of an operations manual, beneficiary database, monitoring and evaluation system, grievance mechanisms, and partnership and coordination mechanisms contributed much to the success of the day-to-day operations of the programs. The different levels of structures for program management and implementation, having municipal to provincial, regional and central offices, also paved the way for ensuring proper monitoring and implementation of the programs and services up to grassroots level.

Moreover, there are other systems and mechanisms which promote the welfare of IPs; for instance, the Seal of Good Local Governance includes, in its core assessment areas, compliance to the IP Mandatory Representation (IPMR) in the Sanggunian. Moreover, the inclusion of IPs in the Local Development Plan materializes through the ADSDPP.

3. *Policies are responsive to the emerging issues and open to amendments*

DSWD guidelines on implementing programs are well-founded and properly coordinated with NCIP. There are also local resolutions at the Local Government

Units (LGUs) level to support the program implementation. Policy issuances of different agencies also prove the recognition of NCIP as the primary government agency for IP concerns.

4. Different programs are complementing each other

Existing SP programs are somehow complementing each other. Nevertheless, looking at these programs, there are also prominent focus areas like education and livelihood services that limit the provision of services for other needs and vulnerabilities of the sectors.

5. Awareness and Recognition of the IPs Rights Act of 1997

The willingness of partners to recognize and follow processes as mandated by the IPRA law, such as the FPIC, was deemed necessary. In the same way, the immediate and real-time response of the partners to IP concerns, and even referral systems for different services, helped protect and promote the interest and well-being of the ICCs/IPs.

B. Gaps and Issues

1. Monitoring of outcomes are not well-established

There has yet to be any available data on the outcome indicators despite the significant years of implementation and expansion of programs.

2. Pre-implementation concerns

Lack of documents to support the identity of the members of the households, such as birth certificates and identification cards (IDs), was experienced at the onset of the program implementation. However, this was later resolved with the help of LGUs services of late birth registration and issuance of IDs. The long approval process of the FPIC of the IP communities was also initially challenging for PAMANA IP-CDD projects.

3. Lack of partnership framework

There are partnerships in education, health, livelihood, peace, and security. However, a strong standard partnership framework on the interventions for the IPs, considering their sectoral concerns, and equipped with solid policies, is lacking.

4. Total population of IPs is not known

Since there is no reported overall population and no database of IPs in the Philippines, it is difficult to determine the extent of the provision of SP programs in terms of IP population. Meanwhile, other SP programs for IPs, and even those

implemented by NCIP, prioritize and target those residing with Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADT). Moreover, the NCIP has been teaming up with PSA for the successful conduct of the 2020 Census of Population and Housing (CPH) among IP communities.

5. Mode of payment and transfer to beneficiaries is still challenging

In the earlier years of implementation, an over-the-counter or pay-out mode was used, but there was a lack of service providers to deliver the grants to IPs in GIDA. Thus it was changed to ATM/EMV cards as the primary mode of payment for the CCT beneficiaries. These, however, are usually located in barangays or municipalities; accordingly, they cannot reach far-flung sitios or GIDAs where IPs are mostly located. There are even instances when transportation costs are high and go beyond the acceptable limit.

6. Difficulty in reaching out to the communities due to physical factors

IP communities are challenging to reach due to distance and transportation difficulties; some are on islands, upland, lowlands, and other hard-to-reach areas. This is coupled with the limited budget for transportation allowance of field implementers, making it challenging to reach the communities to implement activities. Difficulties in communication due to poor signal and connectivity also hinder information cascading of the programs and services. Moreover, climate disturbances also affected the project implementation timeline due to logistics delays.

C. Good practices and Lessons Learned

A significant component of the RCCT, MCCT, and the Comprehensive Program for Sama Bajaus is the conduct of case management, wherein the intervention provided to the households/individuals depend on their needs. The KC-PAMANA, which eventually expanded to IP-CDD, was designed for the unique complexities of ancestral domains. The CDD technology was utilized to identify the problem and vulnerabilities as well as appropriate interventions to fit the IPs' needs and consider their cultural and political structures.

The NCIP also promotes and follows a community-driven approach to project development. Project proposals are prepared by IPs and their communities, through their community service centers.

The IPPF promotes strategies to be adopted by the Department in all aspects of social welfare and development and reform agenda for meaningful IP participation and empowerment. Furthermore, the NCIP through Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC), such as the JMC 01 series of 2013 between NCIP,

the Department of Health (DOH), and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), provided guidelines on the delivery of basic health services for IPs/ICCs. Considering the IPs' political and cultural structures, the NCIP also initiated a Memorandum of Agreement with the Philippine National Police (PNP) to establish IP desks on police stations/offices.

Previous strategic plans were only partially implemented due to the devolution of health services and were later geared towards regional inter-agency committees. Despite this, the enhancement of plans created opportunities to review and assess the plans and their implementation, then further include other areas that could be improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Addressing Other Risks and Vulnerabilities

Participatory and consultative planning

The IPRA law, which imposes the adherence to FPIC to the ICCs/IPs, should continuously be imposed and strengthened among all agencies and organizations. Furthermore, the opinion and voices of ICCs/Ps on local planning should be ensured along with their involvement in implementing and monitoring the projects and activities. Through these mechanisms, inclusivity and equity of the programs, projects, and services are ensured. Other mechanisms include the conduct of social preparation and the use of a community development approach. Also, under this recommendation is the availability of an IP Master Plan as a significant tool for strategic planning of the different stakeholders to deliver appropriate support services to the ICCs/IPs.

Revisit policies and guidelines

The different guidelines of the programs, projects, and services provided to the IPs should be specific to their culture, traditions, and institutions. As such, the conditionalities and components of the programs should promote the protection and preservation of the IP culture, traditions, and institutions. This would also include provisions of policies and guidelines on resolving disputes using customary laws and practices. In addition, amendments to existing policies should also be done to expand the coverage and improve the accessibility of SP services to sectors such as solo parents, senior citizens, and PWDs. This shall limit the challenges faced by those experiencing multiple burdens of being in the different marginalized groups of society. Moreover, the NCIP, as the primary government agency that formulates and implements policies, plans, and programs for the IPs, should revisit its process for securing FPIC and other permits/certifications in

terms of timeline and flexibility to help in the smooth implementation of projects, particularly for those who are already existing partners. Furthermore, the NCIP and its partners should also push for the full implementation of JMCs to address jurisdictional and operational issues between and among partner agencies. Lastly, the NCIP shall also continuously conduct initiatives to strengthen further the implementation of the provisions of the IPRA Law.

Improve monitoring and profiling of IPs

The NCIP shall continuously partner with agencies such as PSA to conduct a census to address the lack of data on IPs and facilitate civil registration of IPs and inclusion in the priority for the PhilSys. Likewise, agencies such as DSWD could also provide additional data on IPs focusing on those identified as poor households/individuals. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation data on the experiences and impact of the different programs and services to the ICCs/IPs should also be shared with NCIP and other stakeholders for evidence-based decision-making on future endeavors.

Intensify partnership building

There is a need for continuous efforts to strengthen the existing partnership of NCIP with other agencies and organizations, to provide a whole-of-nation/whole-of-government approach to address the risks and vulnerabilities experienced by the ICCs/IPs. Related to this is the need for continuous leveling off with key stakeholders, including the ICCs/IPs, to respond to the emerging issues. Proper disclosure of necessary information about the project and transparency on stakeholders also play a vital role in partnership development, which is one of the emerging challenges with private organizations offering programs and services to the ICCs/IPs. This would also bring back the idea of strengthening the provisions of the IPRA Law.

Provide further IP cultural and sensitivity training

In order to fully recognize the protection of indigenous culture, traditions, and institutions, the conduct and provision of capacity-building activities through training and orientations must be rolled out. This would help the program implementers respect the communities' beliefs, such as health practices, customary laws, and other indigenous knowledge, beliefs, systems, and practices.

Increase the amount of cash grants and Expansion to other Financial Service Providers

Recognizing the need for the timely adjustment of cash grants provided by the program based on the present value using the consumer price index, as well as the impact on the level of well-being of the households due to the COVID-19

pandemic, the 4Ps needs to assess the current amount of grants provided in the different SP programs of the government and rationalize the need to increase their amount. In addition, the program managers should also look at the possibility of differentiating grant amounts for specific target beneficiaries to consider factors such as accessibility to social services, multiple deprivations of the household/individuals, and location. Likewise, the timely receipt of grants by the beneficiaries is another consideration. The expansion to other local banks and other financial service providers that could cater to even those in far-flung areas should be explored while also continuously coordinating with LandBank of the Philippines, as a government financial institution, in streamlining processes involving the resolution of grievances related to cash and cash cards of beneficiaries.

Increase budget allocation and Strengthen organizational structure of NCIP

For the NCIP to properly and efficiently work on its mandate, it is necessary to increase the budget provided. There is also a need to expand staff complement for more absorptive capacity given the growing demands on the promotion of rights and welfare of the ICCs/IPs. The regional offices of NCIP are also deprived of human resources; considering that majority of the project implementations are at their level, thus a need to mirror the organizational structure of the Central Office to Regional Offices. Strengthening policies and providing more services would also require further involvement of the NCIP community service centers to the communities and the NCIP Regional Offices to the Regional Development Committee, thus requiring additional workforce and budgetary requirements. The allotment of additional funds for NCIP would, overall, contribute to achieving its mandates.

B. Devolution of Social Services

LGUs to help in sustaining the gains of the program

The LGUs have always been the partner of National Government Agencies (NGAs) in providing social services to the people. However, with the full devolution, there is a need to ensure the buy-in of LGU stakeholders, especially the Local Chief Executives, to prioritize and continue delivering services for the ICCs/IPs. Likewise, as the IPRA law mandates, the engagement of the IPMRs should also be pushed to ensure that the needs and interests of ICCs/IPs are included in the plans and budget of the local government. LGUs should then be reminded of the need for IP participation in the legislative body of LGUs. Support from legislators at the local and national levels needs to be strengthened to have local legislation to promote the rights and welfare of the ICCs/IPs. This would also help gain bigger budget allocation for NCIP and the ICCs/IPs as partner beneficiaries. Furthermore,

in order to fully localize the programs and services and ensure that they would cater to the needs of the IP sector, it would also help to hire local IPs as workers/staff of these programs and services; staff who can communicate in their language and are culturally sensitive. This would help in the employment of IPs and contribute to the efficient implementation of the program as compared to the adjustments needed on the language and cultural sensitivity if the assigned worker/staff are non-IPs.

Increase accessibility of basic needs and social services for IP communities

Climate change and location are a few factors that affect the accessibility of services provided to IPs, such as livelihood and education opportunities. Thus, there is a need to innovate ways to improve accessibility, such as setting up halfway houses or temporary shelters/housing for IPs or bringing services to their communities through outreach programs and other community-based approaches. Likewise, other needs and vulnerabilities of the ICCs/IPs should also be addressed by providing job opportunities that would fit their qualifications. In terms of health-related risks, continuous advocacy for the promotion of indigenous health and conduct of culture-sensitive dental missions and emergency medical assistance to IPs should be done. Providing better access to safe drinking water, proper sanitation, and hygiene is crucial as it contributes to livelihood and school attendance and helps create resilient communities living in a healthy environment. Services are also needed to build capacities to mitigate and respond to disasters. Extensive use of recently developed information technologies to manage disaster risks could also be explored. However, considering the challenges of connectivity and communication in far-flung areas, it might take some time. Likewise, IP farmers and fisherfolks need to boost their capacity to adopt new and better technologies to adjust to climate change impacts on their livelihoods.

Intensify information sharing

Considering the culture and tradition of the ICCs/IPs, the cascading of information at their level must also be culturally sensitive for them to understand the benefits of the program to their well-being. Educating household members on the importance of education, health, and sanitation is also critical in sustaining the impacts of the different programs on the household. Regarding responsibility to their communities, it would also be beneficial to conduct activities that showcase to the IPs the benefits of wealth management in their communities. This would empower them to have control over their wealth from their ancestral domains through planning and budgeting. It would also promote harmony in managing resources properly and ensuring benefits for the next generations.

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Annex A – List of Listahanan 2 Indicators per Risk Classification

| Economic Risk Indicator | Indicator criteria: household is considered experiencing high economic risk if |
|---|---|
| 1. Household member who are currently pregnant | HH is currently pregnant |
| 2. Solo Parent | HH is a solo parent |
| 3. Household member who have disability | HH has disability |
| 4. Highest education attained by the household member | HH attained only Grade 10 or below |
| 5. Employment: Household member who did any work/business for at least an hour during the past week | HH didn't do any work/business for at least an hour during the past week |
| 6. Class of Worker: Where does the household member work | HH worked without pay in own family operated farm or business |
| 7. Basis of payment that the household member receives | HH was paid in kind, imputed (received as wage/salary), or per piece, or received other/no salaries/wages |
| 8. Nature of employment of the household member | HH worked for different employers or costumer onday-to day or week to week basis |
| 9. Urban - Rural classification of the barangay | Household is in rural area |
| 10. Tenure status of the housing unit and the lot occupied by the household | Rent free house and lot without consent of owner |
| 11. Type of household | Two or more non-relative families / persons |

| Governance Risk Indicator | Indicator criteria: household is considered experiencing high governance risk if |
|--|---|
| 1. Tenure status of the housing unit and the lot occupied by the household | Household is living in rent free house and lot without consent of owner |
| 2. Any household member who experienced displacement in the last 12 months | HH experienced displacement in the last 12 months |

| Life Cycle Risk Indicator | Indicator criteria: household is considered experiencing high life cycle risk if |
|---|---|
| 1. Household member who are attending health facility | Household is living in rent free house and lot without consent of owner |
| 2. Household member who are currently pregnant | HH experienced displacement in the last 12 months |
| 3. Household member who have disability | HH has disability |
| 4. Type of toilet facilities the household have in the house | Household doesn't have toilet facility |
| 5. The household's main source of water refers to where the household derives the water for (majority of) household use | Household's main source of water is rain or spring,river, stream, etc. |

| Environmental Risk Indicator | Indicator criteria: household is considered experiencing high environmental risk if |
|---|--|
| 1. Type of household | Two or more non-relative families/persons |
| 2. Roofing material used in the residence/house | Salvaged / makeshift materials or mixed but predominantly salvaged materials are used for roofing of the residence/house |
| 3. Materials used for the outer walls of the residence/house | Salvaged / makeshift materials or mixed but predominantly salvaged materials are used for outer walls of the residence/house |
| 4. Access to electricity in the building / house | Household has no access to electricity |
| 5. The household's main source of water refers to where the household derives the water for (majority of) household use | Household's main source of water is rain or spring, river, stream, etc. |

The AICS Clients' Perceived Acceptability and Readiness Towards Prospective Transition to Digital Processing and Payment Schemes at DSWD FO Caraga, Butuan City

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DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of the study have no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

ABSTRACT

The Department of Social Welfare and Development's capacity to continuously deliver its programs and services has been challenged by the enduring health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, digitalizing government processes has been one of the considerations in coping with the spatial challenges imposed by the situation. In the DSWD Field Office Caraga's context, this study has considered and explored discussions toward transitioning to virtual processing and utilizing digital payment schemes. The study, employing a mixed-methods approach, found out that the respondents for the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) program, prospectively agree with the idea of digitalization, where the majority have access to appropriate gadgets and internet connections. However, socio-economic disparities, lack of digital literacy, and varying perceptions of utility are challenges to the prospect of AICS digitalization. Despite challenges, strategic planning, information dissemination, and appropriate stakeholder collaboration were explored as points for consideration. The study concludes with practical recommendations for future implementation and research endeavors.

Keywords: Acceptability, Readiness, AICS, Digital Processing, Payment Schemes

I. Introduction

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), through the Crisis Intervention Unit/Section (CIU/S), continuously implements Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) as one of its social welfare and protective services. Being part of technical assistance and augmentation support to the LGUs and other partner stakeholders, AICS provides timely and appropriate aid to individuals or families in distress brought about by a sudden severe event or series of stressful situations... [when] their social functioning is impaired, and their resources are inadequate to cope (DSWD, 2020). Monetary assistance is provided in the form of outright cash, guarantee letter (GL), or voucher (CV) to augment the resources of the client who needs support with any of the following: medical, transportation, cash, burial, food, and education (DSWD, 2020). In 2018, the total number of clients/beneficiaries served by AICS in the Field Office (FO) Caraga was 32,649, utilizing a total of PHP 164,823,682.00 in assistance funds. While in the succeeding year, 54,555 individuals were assisted with a total amount of PHP 251,881,594.30.

Since the inception of the AICS Program, the beneficiaries have all been walk-ins regardless of the type of assistance. Thus, in-person presence was required to submit the documentary requirements, participate in an interview, and receive the provision of cash assistance/ guarantee letters (GL). However, the spatial challenges imposed by the health crisis brought by the COVID-19 virus (pandemic) in 2020 forced the Department to limit the number of clients/ beneficiaries it caters to daily. Since the declaration of a state public health emergency in the Philippines, the AICS has only limited its services to a maximum of fifty (50) clients per day. Albeit this improvisation intended to help prevent the spread of the virus, it also resulted in a significant decrease in catered clients/ beneficiaries, as shown in Figure 1, thus impeding the fast and convenient service delivery to the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized.

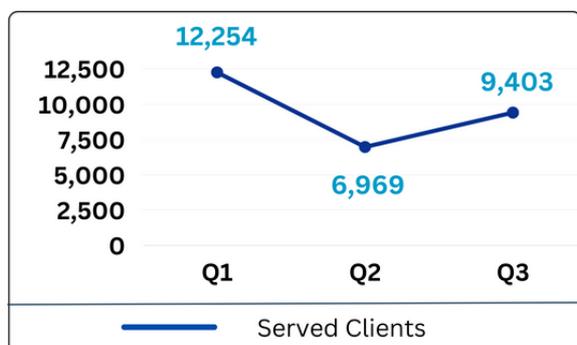


Figure 3: AICS Served Clients in FO CARAGA CY 2020

Given the impact of the pandemic, requests for assistance were expected to balloon in the Department in 2020. However, with the 50-clients-per-day limitation, the Department was challenged to innovate in delivering its services to the widest extent amidst the pandemic. In this light, the Field Office in Caraga is considering the possibility of bridging the people's need for assistance by utilizing digital platforms through the

digitalization of processes and using digital payment outlets to provide AICS assistance. Digital payment, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) (2019) is the “monetary transaction between two parties (individuals, business, or government) through a digital payment instrument (such as cards, bank transfer, mobile wallet, etc.) in which both the payer and the payee use an electronic medium”. The country's most common digital payment platforms include Gcash, PayMaya, cash cards, and remittance centers such as Palawan Pawnshop, Cebuana, among others explored in this study.

Considering the nature of clients/beneficiaries the CIU caters to, which are indigent individuals belonging to the informal sector, marginalized, and/or disadvantaged, it is crucial to identify how applicable the intention is to their readiness and capacity to adapt to the utilization of digital platforms. Thus, this study aims to assess the feasibility of shifting from traditional face-to-face interaction to prospective online processing and the viability of utilizing digital payment schemes at the Field Office Caraga, Butuan City. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Assess the extent of the AICS clients’ acceptability and readiness to access online services;
2. Identify the factors (hindering and facilitating) associated with the feasibility of shifting the AICS processes online and adopting a digital payments scheme as perceived by the clients; and
3. Identify the implications of shifting the AICS processes online and adopting digital payment schemes to social welfare service delivery.

The study, employing a mixed-methods approach, explores the readiness of AICS clients/ beneficiaries and the perceived acceptability of the prospective intervention. The study may provide evidence-based information that can aid the management’s decision-making process in such cases and, in a broader context, regarding similar concerns. Practical recommendations and important directions for future research were also outlined.

II. Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method qualitative and quantitative research approach, utilizing Archival Research (AICS Quarterly Reports from January to October 2020), Survey Research, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as data collection tools. The survey respondents were the AICS clients/ beneficiaries of the DSWD FO Caraga located at Butuan City, Agusan del Norte.

The respondents' perceived acceptability of online processing was operationalized by statements inquiring about their agreement whether a particular stage (online interview, online submission of documentary requirements, and digital money transfers) is prospectively suitable or feasible for them. At the same time, the respondents' readiness was operationalized by identifying their access to appropriate gadgets, the internet, and technical know-how.

Pre-testing of the survey questionnaire was conducted among AICS social workers to gain feedback on the questions' readability. The questionnaire was written in Cebuano (Annex A), which the clients/ beneficiaries self-administered, although the concerned social worker/s who catered to their request was on standby if assistance was needed. Informed consent was solicited, and the option to not participate was also provided.

Moreover, one FGD session was facilitated among eight AICS social workers to gain an in-depth internal perspective on the intended intervention. The quantitative processing was facilitated via the statistical software SPSS (Statistics 25), while the qualitative data were processed using a thematic generation technique.

Limitations

Due to spatio-temporal constraints imposed by the health crisis, randomization was difficult since generating a list of AICS clients in the region was challenging because AICS services are requested as the need arises. Nevertheless, it led the researchers to identify target respondents through the served AICS clients within five days from November 9-13, 2020, resulting in 270 respondents mimicking the regular pool of clients served for a week. Thus, it is essential to note that no significant events, such as fire, flood, earthquake, and other natural disasters, have happened besides the pandemic, considering the health and safety protocols adopted against the virus that could influence the influx of clients during the questionnaires' administration. The study also does not cover the clients' perception towards the other services of the Crisis Intervention Unit (CIU), such as immediate rescue and provision of psychosocial support.

III. Results

Survey Research

Demographics

| Table 1. Participants' Demographics (N= 270) | | |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Sex | Frequency | Percentage |
| Female | 193 | 71 |
| Male | 68 | 25 |
| PNTS | 9 | 3 |
| AICS Category | | |
| FHONA | 175 | 65 |
| Senior Citizens | 29 | 11 |
| No Response | 42 | 16 |
| PWD | 12 | 4 |
| None | 11 | 4 |
| WEDC | 1 | 0 |
| Location | | |
| Butuan City | 162 | 60 |
| Agusan del Norte | 82 | 30 |
| No Response | 19 | 7 |
| Agusan del Sur | 5 | 2 |
| Surigao del Norte | 1 | 0 |
| Surigao del Sur | 1 | 0 |
| Income (Top 5) | | |
| Php 0- 5,000 | 105 | 39 |
| No Response | 66 | 24 |
| Php5,001- 6,000 | 31 | 11 |
| Php 13,001 above | 18 | 7 |
| Php 8,001- 9,000 | 14 | 5 |

The respondents ranged from 19-84 years old ($M = 41.73$, $SD = 14$); most (5.2 percent) are 34 years old; 71 percent identified as female, while 25 percent were male. The majority of the respondents (65 percent) are categorized as Family Head and Other Needy Adult (FHONA), followed by Senior Citizens (SC) and Persons with Disability (PWD); 16 percent were not specified into a category of which majority are believed to be under FHONA.

Most of the clients are from Butuan City (60 percent), followed by clients from other municipalities of Agusan del Norte (30 percent). Only 3 percent of the clients came outside Agusan Del Norte, while 7 percent did not specify their location. As to family income, twenty-four (24) percent of the total respondents did not disclose their family income. Nonetheless, the majority (39 percent) of those who did, identify having an income falling under Php 0 - Php 5,000.00, followed by those in bracket Php 5,001- Php 6,000.00, which was 11 percent. Moreover, most clients during the survey's administration requested medical assistance, followed by cash and burial assistance. It reflected the most requested aid based on the quarterly reports of the CIS for 2020.

| | Frequency | Percent |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Medical | 175 | 32 |
| Cash | 131 | 24 |
| Burial | 76 | 14 |
| Education | 73 | 13 |
| Food Packs | 36 | 7 |
| Transportation | 34 | 6 |
| No Response | 23 | 4 |
| None | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 550 | 100 |

On Acceptability

When asked what type of assistance they perceived to be appropriate to be facilitated and processed online, of the 550 submitted responses (multiple responses per respondent were allowed), 32 percent chose Medical assistance, followed by Cash (24 percent) and Burial (15 percent). As shown in Figure 2, most respondents agree that all three stages of assistance processing (submission of documentary requirements, interview, and provision of assistance) are digitally suitable. However, it was found that the respondents' money transfers lean towards Over-The-Counter (OTC) transactions. The majority (48 percent) identified Remittance Centers such as Palawan or Cebuana as the most suitable transfer mode for them, followed by e-banking via Landbank ATM transfers (7 percent), and e-money applications such as Gcash and Paymaya (5 percent); 35 percent did not respond. However, when asked if they would be deducted with a processing fee, 57 percent of the 241 respondents were okay with it; 53 percent of those responses are indicated vis-à-vis OTC. Further, the majority (64 percent) identified that they would wait at least 2-3 days to process their requests; 34 did not agree, while 2 percent did not respond.

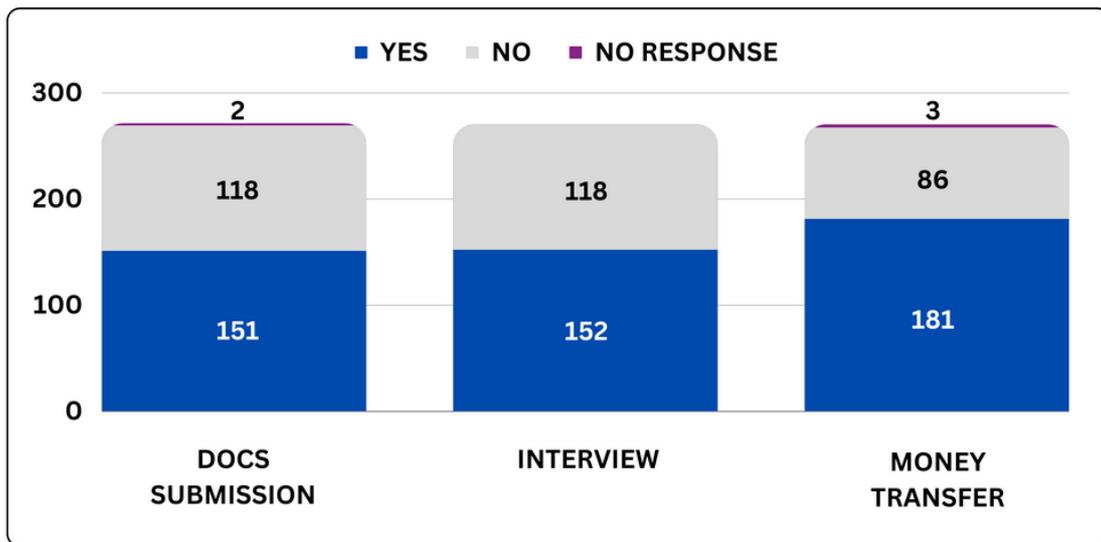


Figure 2: Participants agreement towards AICS processes transferred online

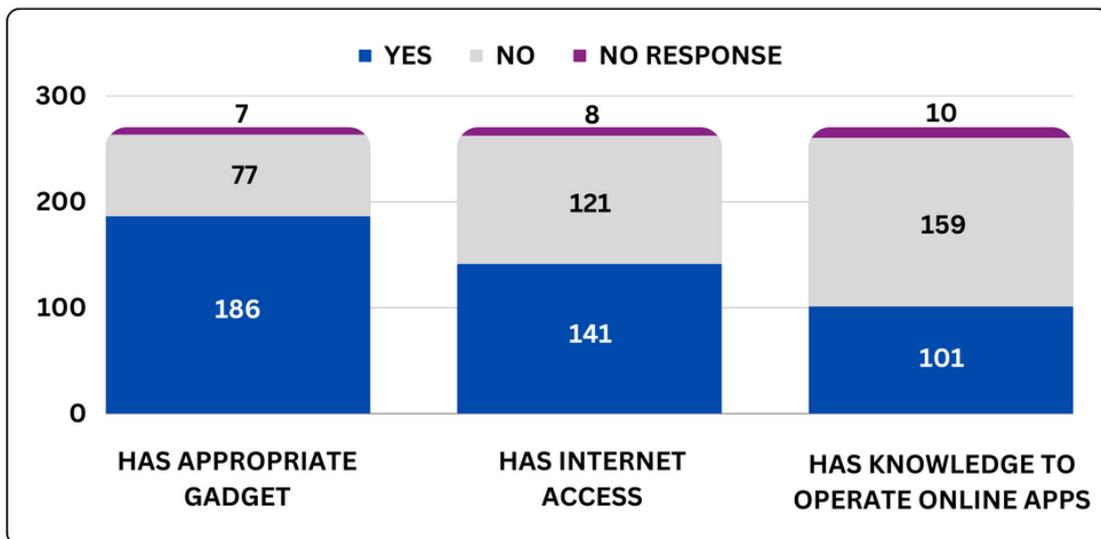


Figure 3: Participants readiness towards processes transferred online

On Readiness

As shown in Figure 3, Respondents' readiness towards the AICS processing being transferred online was operationalized by identifying their existing resources and technical knowledge in accessing such service. Key findings show that although the majority have the appropriate gadgets (69 percent) and have internet access (52 percent), 59 percent identified to have no personal knowledge or no family member at home knows about accessing e-money applications such as Gcash and Paymaya. Only 12 percent have disclosed having personal or someone at home who has access to these applications. Also, only 17 percent (46) identified having Landbank ATM accounts. In addition, most participants were not 4Ps and SocPen beneficiaries, 84 and 93 percent, respectively.

On Acceptability vis-à-vis Readiness

When tested for correlation, the variable 'age group' was found to directly correlate with acceptability and readiness with the older the age group (60-84 years old), the lower the agreement is, as manifested by lower mean scores of the indicator items. It was supported by the data classified per category, where Senior Citizens had the lowest mean score for both acceptability and readiness. In contrast, the PWDs had the highest mean score for acceptability and FHONA for readiness. Male respondents also showed a higher mean score than their women counterparts. The findings show that beneficiaries outside Butuan City and Agusan del Norte generally have a higher mean score for acceptability and readiness. Furthermore, the higher the self-rated income, the higher the acceptability and readiness.

The data showed that most respondents agree or are open to transferring the AICS processes online. However, considering those not in favor, the majority cited the reason for not being digitally literate, preference for a face-to-face transaction, and none to intermittent internet access as the top three reasons for their disagreement (as shown in Table 4). Lastly, urgency or the immediate need for assistance has been a significant consideration for those who do not want to wait for a possible 2-3 days processing time.

| Table 4. Most cited hindering factors of those not in favor of prospective online processing and online cash assistance transfer | | | | | |
|---|---------------|---|---------------|--|--------------|
| Interview | N= 118 | Submission of documentary Requirements | N= 118 | Waiting period (2-3 days) | N= 93 |
| No digital literacy | 28 (24%) | No digital literacy | 32 (27%) | No digital literacy | 51 (55%) |
| Face-to-face preference | 28 (24%) | Face-to-face preference | 23 (19%) | Face-to-face preference | 27 (29%) |
| No/intermittent internet access | 21 (18%) | No/intermittent internet access | 20 (17%) | No/intermittent internet access | 9 (10%) |

FGD Results

| Table 5. FGD participants' identification whether a type of assistance is viable for online processing or face-to-face | | |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Type of Assistance | For online processing? | Comments |
| Laboratory | Yes | FGD participants expressed their concern over the verification of the authenticity of documents. |
| Burial | Yes | |
| Educational | Yes | |
| Transportation | No | Reported to be prone to deception (even face-to-face). Numerous cases have been identified where the beneficiary did not travel to their divulged destination. |
| Medicine | No | Participants have concerns over document authenticity, especially since reported cases of tampered receipt dates were identified in prior cases. |
| Hospital Bill | No | Participants expressed that personal probing is necessary, especially if the requested assistance is large. |
| Cash | Both | Participants unanimously agreed that cash and food assistance could be processed online and in person since they could be provided on top of the immediate assistance requested. |
| Food | Both | |

The FGD participants were asked to identify whether a particular type of assistance is viable to be processed online given the nature of the required documents for assessment, details necessary for probing, and the amount of assistance for transfer. On the one hand, as shown in Table 5, the respondents unanimously identified Laboratory, Burial, and Educational Assistance as feasible to be processed online. However, respondents are concerned about verifying the documents' authenticity since digitized documents can be easily forged. On the other hand, Transportation, Medicine, and Hospital Bill Assistance were assessed to be processed face-to-face.

On top of the reasons cited in Table 5, the participants maintain the advantage of in-person interaction for purposes of probing and perusing the non-verbal actions of the clients/ beneficiaries as their way of knowing if someone is telling the truth. Probing is also accordingly much more manageable in this manner as follow-up questions could be immediately asked. Therefore, this approach allows them to paint "comprehensive information" of the clients/beneficiaries' situation necessary for case study reports.

Although Cash and Food assistance was identified as applicable in both online and in-person modes, concerns over how to effectively determine if one needs another form on top of the main requests were raised since the information submitted online is assumed to be structured. Therefore, the social worker can only initiate these types of assistance upon identifying and verifying their other needs for additional assistance.

Further, the FGD participants were asked to identify the disadvantages and advantages of the prospective online and face-to-face processing, summarized in Table 6. These disadvantages included concerns over the efficiency of online processing given the possibility of the social worker's workload being doubled due to the information system's possible failure, poor internet connection, or out-of-coverage areas of clients/beneficiaries. Respondents also raised the potential implication of online processing to what they call the "essence of being a social worker." This pertains to the advantage of building a connection with the clients/ beneficiaries through personal interaction, facilitating rapport-building, and providing an avenue for advice-giving or any psychosocial service.

Table 6. FGD Results on the advantages and disadvantages of online and face-to-face medium

| Medium | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Online | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible • Efficient • Convenient • Lessen the risk of virus infection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible unavailability of the information system which could affect the efficiency and convenience of transactions. • Poor internet connection. • Out-of-coverage beneficiaries/clients. • Possible delay in the provision of assistance. |
| Face-to-face | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates convenient interaction which allows direct perusal of non-verbal cues. • Allows easy probing • Immediate provision of assistance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Risk due to the COVID-19 virus. |

IV. Discussion

The key findings showed that age group, category, location, and income are directly correlated to the respondent's level of acceptability and readiness toward prospective online processing and utilization of digital payment schemes. Furthermore, although the majority prospectively agreed for the assistance to be processed digitally, the data also showed that the respondents favor over-the-counter (OTC) transactions through Remittance Centers instead of digital payment via e-money and e-banking mediums. The data further suggests that the scope of e-money transfers via online applications and Landbank fund transfers can be very limited in the context of the present demographic. This finding supports the claim of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP, 2019) that the OTC method is still preferred over other modes since "Cash and OTC are deeply entrenched in the current economic structure and are thus perceived to be inexpensive and convenient."

Key findings also show that the majority agreed to be deducted a processing fee (if applicable) and are willing to wait at least two to three days to process their requests. Those who are not in favor cited being digitally illiterate, preference over a face-to-face transaction, irregular internet access, and a sense of urgency for assistance as the top reasons for their disagreement.

In addition, although most have access to appropriate gadgets and an internet connection, most signified having no technical knowledge nor someone at home knowledgeable enough to access the digital platform and e-money applications. This explains the finding that only one in every ten respondents has access to e-money applications and has Landbank ATM accounts, thus, implying limited scope through this medium. This finding is consistent with the study of Klapper and Singer in 2014 (as cited in Evardome et al., nd), which enumerates the impediments to the digitization of payments, including a lack of knowledge about digital payments and proper financial literacy.

Interestingly, male respondents showed a higher mean score for agreement and readiness than their female counterparts. This contrasts with the study of Massally et al. (2019), which recognizes the Philippines as one of the few countries where more women than men use digital payments and financial services. A higher proportion of Filipino women (39%) hold formal accounts than men (30%), causing a gender gap of nearly nine (9) percentage points (Massally et al., 2019). BSP (2019) also claims that women are ahead of men in the uptake of digital transactions. Given the study's limited sample size, a further inquiry would be beneficial as gender-based intervention targeting might be a significant factor if the AICS digitization pushes through.

Furthermore, most survey respondents identified medical, cash, and burial assistance as viable for online processing. However, the FGD social worker participants only identified burial and medical assistance in the form of medical laboratory orders. Educational provision was also cited to be feasible online. The FGD participants acknowledged that face-to-face and prospective online processing have advantages and disadvantages, considering the current health crisis. However, the participants still emphasized the benefit of face-to-face interaction in facilitating assistance requests, especially when probing and perusing the documents' authenticity.

As shown in the results, socio-economic disparities, lack of digital literacy, and varying perceptions of utility are challenges to the prospective digitization of the AICS and utilization of a digital payment scheme. Nonetheless, with the 21st century's traction towards digital literacy and the sudden onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the digitization of government transactions becomes imperative to curb the inconvenience and health risks associated with face-to-face and over-the-counter (OTC) transactions. The BSP (2019) also claims that "digital transfer of social benefits can be the first step in the digital payments journey for many financially excluded Filipinos."

Since the country is considered the world's social media and texting capital (Mateo, 2018), digitizing the AICS becomes intuitive and practical. However, identifying and addressing the re-engineering process and its structural support are vital to ensure security, reliability, convenience, and efficiency.

V. Recommendations

If pursued, the road toward AICS digitization will have its challenges. However, the possibility of digitizing the processing and utilization of a digital payment scheme is an inevitable pathway the Department, in general, will eventually take in the immediate future. In doing so, the following recommendations considering the study's SWOT analysis are outlined for consideration:

Strengths:

Enable, Capacitate, and Strengthen the FO's Support Systems.

The study initially identified three central internal support systems in the prospective implementation of AICS digitization and utilization of digital payment schemes: Regional Information and Communication Technology Section (RICTMS), CIS, and Policy Development and Planning Section (PDPS). The RICTMS will lead in the Information System's (IS) development; the CIS will lead in the operations,

monitoring and coordination with potential external partnerships/ collaborations; and the PDPS will oversee the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation. If pursued, they must be convened. Their roles and responsibilities must be clearly and further defined along with the other ODSUs (Office, Division, Section, Unit) identified to be necessarily involved.

The uptake towards digitization can be implemented phase by phase. Nonetheless, it is definite that in digitizing the AICS and utilizing a digital payment scheme, resources (funds, human resources, time, and equipment) will be needed. For instance, monetary costs will be incurred in hiring the required personnel to design the possible IS. Upon its launch, social workers will need a designated hub manned to process the online requests. Training to boost their competency to facilitate online requests is also a prerequisite. The re-engineering also requires additional equipment (computers and phones) to connect with the beneficiaries and clients. Consequently, a strong internet connection must be ensured.

Ensure Strategic Communication Among Prospective Users and Existing Partner-Stakeholders.

Strategic communication with prospective users is the key to addressing the concerns over digital illiteracy. It can be done by building the user's awareness by maximizing the Department's social media platform and initiating information dissemination drives during community visits (e.g., payouts, monitoring visits, et al.). Communication with Service Providers (SPs) is also crucial in adopting digital payment schemes. It is especially vital to show the advantages of shifting the transactions towards a digitally-driven pathway.

The BSP (2019) reported that "few businesses are willing to digitize payments when the rest of the process still requires the use of paper...The willingness to shift is further lowered by a risk of transactions taking too long or failing too often and an absence of fair and convenient recourse mechanism." Given the government's bureaucratic processes, a convenient mechanism for all the involved parties must be devised. Moreover, engaging the Landbank to support the Department's objective is necessary to attain a responsive digitized AICS service.

Weakness:

Ensure the Digital Reengineering of AICS Processes are Compliant with the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Law Without Additional Regulatory Burden and Cost to the End-Users and SPs.

The ultimate challenge for the prospective AICS digitization is to compete with the convenience offered by face-to-face interaction. For example, clients with complete requirements/ attachments can process their request within one day and receive the corresponding financial assistance on the same day.

In line with the DSWD AO No. 20, s. 2019, also known as the "Guidelines on the DSWD Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Service Delivery," services can be labeled as simple (maximum of 3 days processing time), complex (maximum of 7 days), and highly technical (maximum of 20 days). Although key findings show that most respondents were willing to wait for 2-3 days for processing time and the AICS services can be categorized as "simple transactions," the implementation should be at par or better than the convenience of face-to-face transactions. Thus, it is recommended that digital transactions should be one-day transactions.

For the initial stage, consider fully digitizing the type of assistance perceived to be viable by the social workers: the laboratory, educational, and burial assistance. Given the required documents, level of probing, and amount of assistance for transfer, the laboratory, educational, and burial assistance were assessed to be fully viable online with possible additional assistance in the form of cash and food, subject to further assessment and verification by the social worker. The IS design could also incorporate the Transportation, Medicine, and Hospital Bill assistance in its initial stage to observe the extent of IS's limitations and assess its effectivity and efficiency in the users' and social workers' utilization.

Opportunities:

Lobby, Encourage, and Establish a (Digital) Partnership with Financial Technology companies, the BSP, and Major Telecommunication Providers in the Country to Expand Better Services, Especially to Far-Flung Communities.

As discussed, some factors are not within the Department's direct control. The success of the implementation also rests with its partner stakeholders. Fintech platforms might have their procedures (e.g., Know-Your-Customer); hence it would be beneficial to engage with them and have a dialogue as early as possible to gauge the processes to be considered if partnerships are to be forged. In this

regard, a partnership with the BSP is also necessary since the Agency is at the forefront of popularizing digital payment schemes. Their technical assistance in effectively utilizing the digital platform will help with the possible partnership with Financial Technology (FinTech) platforms (such as GCash and Paymaya) in providing social benefits to the people, especially to the unbanked and unserved. The Department should also consider expanding partnerships with other banks besides the Landbank to reach a broader scale of clients/ beneficiaries.

Further, internet access is indispensable in implementing prospective AICS digitization. However, one factor outside the Department's control is users' access to a viable internet connection and mobile signal. It is then crucial to encourage major telecommunication providers to expand and strengthen their services to distant rural communities, at least in the Caraga region, as the focus of this study.

Threats:

Development of a User-Friendly AICS Information System (AICS-IS).

The main concern towards lack of digital literacy (or the fear of being unable to cope) has been identified despite having access to the appropriate gadgets and internet access. It can be addressed by designing a user-friendly information system accessible on the web and mobile phones. A mobile application version of the system would be beneficial to allow easier accessibility for most clients. The design should also consider the Operational and Security Risks embedded in the digitization process. Pilot testing and regular monitoring should be rigorously conducted to properly contextualize the design for the users' benefit.

Adopt a Blended Assistance Provision.

Although complete digitization is the inevitable pathway in the near future, the FO should consider maintaining at least 2-3 counters (or what is identified to be necessary) for face-to-face transactions to cater to those who do not have the necessary resources/ technical knowledge to access the services online (e.g., senior citizen and PWD clients/ beneficiaries) even if the IS will be fully functional. Thus, providing options for those who cannot access the digital process while ensuring health and safety protocol standards. Moreover, to fully maximize the potential investments in digitizing the AICS, a structure must be outlined by designating the type of online or face-to-face assistance and mechanisms for those with special needs.

VI. Conclusion

The study sought to assess the AICS clients' capacity to access online services, identify facilitating and hindering factors associated with its feasibility, as well as the implication of the shift to online and the adoption of digital payment schemes on social welfare service delivery in the Department. Results revealed that age, sex, and income correlate with the AICS clients' acceptability and readiness. Meanwhile, document processing, interviews, and money transfers were the top choices to be transferred online. While most have appropriate gadgets and internet connections, most still lack the technical know-how on digital payment platforms. The lack of digital literacy, intermittent to no internet connection preference for in-person over online transactions, and urgency of request facilitation were the identified hindering factors by the AICS clients. The AICS social workers are also uncertain about digitalization to some extent, as vulnerability to fraud in document verification and the expected technical errors and out-of-network coverage are possible scenarios to be experienced.

Indeed, digitalizing the AICS will not be easy and will be challenged by various structural limitations within and outside the Department. Nevertheless, the FO's consideration could indicate its intention to adapt and improvise in today's changing socio-economic structure and spatial landscape. Despite the identified possible challenges to digitization, the study has offered practical recommendations for consideration. The undertakings for re-engineering AICS processes must be responsive to the needs of the clients/beneficiaries, with reduced if not avoided risks, and ensuring that the overall outcome will result in a convenient and efficient transaction for both the end-users and the implementers.

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ANNEX A- SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Maayong adlaw!

Form No.: _____

Ang DSWD FO Caraga nagapahigayon ug survey nga ang tumong ug tuyo ang mahibalo-an ang panglantaw sa mga kliyente/ benipisyaryo mahitungod sa posibilidad nga pag balhin sa pipila ka mga transaction sa **Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS)** ngadto sa online nga pamaagi. Ug, sa posibilidad nga ihatag ang assistance pinaagi sa digital nga pagbayad sama sa cash carding (Landbank ATM) ug money remittances (sama sa GCash, Paymaya, Palawan).

Buot namo isiguro nga walay personal na impormasyon ang ipagawas maskin ni kinsa nga nagtubag sa survey isip pagtuman sa RA 10173 o ang Data Privacy Act of 2012. Walay sakto o sayop nga tubag usab, maong walay angay kabalak-an. Ang datos nga makuha mahimong makatabang sa mga lakang nga pagabuhaton sa ahensya aron mamahimong haom ang paghatag sa saktong serbisyo sa mga kliyente ug benipisyaryo sa maong ahensya.

Kung naa kay mga pangutana o dili masabtan sa survey, ayaw kaulaw ug pangutana sa social worker nga naghatag sa imo ni ining survey. Daghang Salamat!

Pangalan (Optional): _____

Edad: _____ Sex: Babae Lalake

Category: FHONA YNSP PLHIV PWD SC WEDC CNSP Wala
 Uban pa _____

Address: _____ Contact Number: _____

Trabaho: _____

Binulan nga income sa pamilya:

| | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Php 0-5000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Php 5,001-Php 6,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Php 6,001-Php 7,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Php 7,001-Php 8,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Php 8,001-Php 9,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Php 9,001-Php 10,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Php 10,001-Php 11,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Php 11,001-Php 12,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Php 12,001-Php 13,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Php 13,001 ug pataas |

Palihug sa pagbutang ug tsek (✓) sa napili nga tubag.

1) Unsa nga assistance imong gi request karung adlaw sa AICS?

Burial Medical Transportation Educational
 Food Packs Cash Assistance Iba pa _____

2) Unsa kaha nga mga serbsiyong sa AICS ang haom sa imo i-proseso sa online? (Pwede daghan ug i-check nga tubag)

- Burial Medical Transportation Educational
 Food Packs Cash Assistance Uban pa. _____

3) Haom sa akong nga ako mamahimong i-interview sa social worker online.

- Oo Dili

Kung dili, nganu

4) Haom sa akong nga ang pagpasa sa mga dokumento sa pagpangayo ug hinabang sa AICS kay ipaagi na ug online nga proseso.

- Oo Dili

Kung dili, nganu

5) Uyon ko nga ang assistance ipadala pinaagi sa online (GCash, Insta Pay, Pay Maya), remittance center (Palawan, Cebuana), o sa akong ATM (Landbank).

- Oo Dili

5.1) **Kung oo,** unsa ang pinaka maayong pamaagi sa pagpadala sa assistance ang haom sa imoha?

GCash, Insta Pay, Pay Maya Remittance center (sama sa Palawan, Cebuana)

ATM (Landbank)

5.2) Uyon ba usab ka nga kuhaan ang madawat na assistance ug 'processing fee' kung kinahanglan? Oo Dili

6) Sa kinatibuk-an, mu uyon ako nga ang tanang proseso (pagpasa sa dokumento, interview sa social worker, ug pagpadala sa assistance) nga akong giagian karung adlaw sa online na pagabuhaton.

- Oo Dili

Kung dili, nganu

7) Nanag-iya ako o naa koy kauban sa balay nga naay cell phones, smart phones, tablets, laptops nga pwede magamit sa pag access sa mga applications online.

- Oo Wala

8) Ako o akong kauban sa balay naay access sa internet pinaagi sa mobile data, PLDT postpaid, prepaid, o wifi. Oo Wala

9) Ako o akoang kauban sa balay kabalo mugamit ug online applications sama sa Gcash, Insta Pay o Paymaya.

Oo Dili

9.1) Naa koy Gcash/Paymaya/Insta Pay account.

Oo (Paki sulat kung unsa) _____ Wala

10) Ako o akong kauban sa balay kabalo mugamit ug ATM card.

Oo Dili

10.1) Naa koy ATM account sa Landbank. Oo Wala

10.2) Usa ko ka 4Ps Member: Oo Dili

10.3) Usa ko ka Social Pension Member: Oo Dili

11) Andam ako mag maghulat ug pipila ka adlaw (2-3 ka adlaw) aron ma proseso sa online akong assistance nga gipangayo.

Oo Dili

Kung dili, nganu

12) Sa kinatibuk-an ug sa kasamtangang sitwasyon tungod sa pandemya, haom sa akoa ang _____.

online transaction sa paghatag ug hinabang.

personal (face to face) transaction sa paghatag ug hinabang.

13) Naa ba kay laing komento/suhestyon bahin sa mga pangutana? Palihug sa paghatag ug tubag.

13.1) *Naga-uyon ako nga i-proseso ang datos nga akong gihatag sulod sa tumong sa pagtuon.*

Oo Dili

Pirma sa Respondent: _____

Date: _____

Assessment of the Training Effectiveness of E-learning Technical Assistance (TA) Provision of DSWD FO Caraga to the Local Government Units (LGUs)

Authors: Felyjane Leray, Eliezer Diamante, Eric Descartin

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The study received a research grant from the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Policy Development and Planning Bureau last 2021, amounting to Php 300,000. The said amount was utilized to hire Mr. Eliezer Diamante and Mr. Eric Descartin as research consultants. Ms. Felyjane Leray is an in-house researcher under the Policy Development and Planning Section in the Field Office Caraga of the same Department.

ABSTRACT

One of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) strategic supporting blocks in its refreshed strategy map for 2028 is to improve and strengthen 'Human and Organizational Capital' to develop highly competent personnel. In order to meet the learning and skill requirements of the workforce, capacity-building programs like seminars, forums, and training have been commonly developed through in-person instruction. However, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the enactment of the Mandanas-Garcia Ruling challenge this normativity. In this regard, the effectiveness and applicability of the e-learning platform in the Technical Assistance (TA) provision of the DSWD Field Office (FO) Caraga to the Local Government Units (LGUs) were explored. The learners (N=102) participated in a three-week course of synchronous and asynchronous technical assistance provided through Zoom and Canvas. The study, employing a mixed-methods research design and system theory perspective, found that participants' *Openness to Experience* under *Trainee Characteristics* sub-systems is consistently significant to their learning and engagement. *Elaboration Strategies* and *Strategic Planning* constructs as self-regulatory mechanisms are also found to be significantly correlated toward participants' learning, engagement, and transfer. At the same time, the degree of their *Motivation to Transfer* under *the Training Environment* sub-systems is highly significant towards their learning and transfer. The study's results and recommendations aim to elicit the opportunities and challenges of e-learning as an alternative platform for capacity-building initiatives for the LGUs. Implications of such an approach to the DSWD's capacity-building initiatives and recommendations for its possible institutionalization are discussed.

Keywords: E-learning, LGU, Technical Assistance, System Theory, Training Effectiveness

I. Rationale

The enactment of Republic Act No. 7160, or the Local Government Code of 1991, resulted in the decentralization of political and fiscal powers, necessitating the devolution of specific government programs and services. In this light, the DSWD "assumed a steering role on policy formulation, standard-setting, monitoring and technical assistance relevant to social welfare and development" (DSWD, 2018, p. 1). As spearheaded by the Department's Technical Assistance and Resource Augmentation (TARA) program, the Department's function was redirected from direct service provider to technical service provider. However, this particular role is expected to be magnified with the recent enactment of the Mandanas-Garcia Ruling (Executive Order 138). In hindsight, the Department's capacity to provide the necessary technical assistance through various capacity buildings and the LGUs' capability to adapt will be challenged. In addition, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has created health and security risks limiting the traditional approach of providing face-to-face technical assistance.

With the anticipated build-up of DSWD's TA provision, enduring challenges imposed by the pandemic, and inevitable utilization of technology-based platforms, it is imperative to assess the feasibility and efficacy of adopting technology-based strategies, specifically e-learning, for the continuous TA delivery as contextualized in the FO Caraga. In doing so, the study will undertake to answer the following questions: 1) What trainee characteristics (individual), features and conditions (training design), and contexts (work environment) influence engagement and learning in an e-learning TA provision as experienced by the participants? 2) What factors compel the participants to transfer their learning in the working environment? and 3) What are the implications of a fully online technology-based TA provision in the DSWD FO Caraga vis-à-vis LGUs capacity building?

Despite the massive extant literature, understanding training effectiveness in the context of e-learning still needs to be improved. Recent studies have recommended the need to assess technology-based mediated learning (e.g., Arthur et al., 2003) and a better understanding of their nomological network connecting the different training criteria of learning, transfer, and performance, which can help build the benchmarks for training effectiveness (e.g., Bell et al., 2017). It is in this light that the study grounds its undertaking.

I. Review of Related Literature

On Technical Assistance and E-learning

Most organizations spend millions annually on training as a learning and development intervention to increase employee productivity and explain organizational objectives. The goal is to create sustainable changes in behavior and cognition so that individuals possess the competencies they need to perform a job (Salas et al., 2012). To date, delivery modes can generally be face-to-face, blended, or technology-based. The latter has been interwoven into nearly every facet of modern life, including training.

E-learning can be defined as using computer network technology, primarily over an intranet or the Internet, to deliver information and instruction to individuals (Welsh et al., 2003). [Admittedly,] although e-learning has high development costs, organizations can potentially reduce their overall learning costs compared with face-to-face instruction through reduced travel, lodging, and recurring instructional costs (Noe et al., 2014). Nevertheless, Noe et al. (2014) also noted that e-learning is not inherently more effective than other instructional methods. Scholars in meta-analyzed studies in learning delivery (e.g., Bell et al., 2017) argue that the learning medium does not matter. Well-designed instruction works irrespective of the delivery mode (Salas et al., 2012). Thus, it has been recommended (e.g., Bell & Federman, 2013; Bell et al., 2017) for future research on technology-based training to move beyond comparing different media and focus on the features and conditions that influence its effectiveness. In particular, one critical issue recommended by Bell and his colleagues (2017) is to understand better how:

[J]ob demands, work-life conflict, and other stressors influence participation in technology-based training during non-work hours and important outcomes, such as learning and attrition, and investigate the factors (e.g., manager and peer support) that may mitigate their impact.

The study heeds this recommendation.

The Need for Transfer and System Perspective

Although employees may learn new skills and knowledge through training programs, Velada et al. (2007) noted that organizations must ensure that the training produces the expected results, including improved job performance. Thus, the need for transfer. Baldwin and Ford (1988) define the transfer of training as "the degree to which trainees effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in the training context to the job". After learning and retaining the training content, trainees should transfer the knowledge and/or skills accrued to the work context with the intention of improving job performance over time (Noe et al., 2006).

Bell and his colleagues (2017) have illustrated that since the 1960s, published studies have started to acknowledge that a training program's success is influenced by the more extensive system in which it is embedded. Numerous studies have pointed out the importance of viewing training "as a system" and not a one-time event (e.g., Salas et al., 2012; Velada et al., 2007; Grossman & Salas, 2011), taking into account what happened before, during, and after training (Salas et al., 2012). First popularized by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in his General System Theory (1950), the system perspective prompts individuals to look beyond their sub-systems to the interactions between sub-systems and suprasystems (Hays, 1992). At the core is the concept of 'system' defined as "a group of interrelated and interacting elements that form a complex whole and exists in an environment (Montouri, 2011)". As applied in the training and development discourse, it considers "the planned interaction of people, materials, and techniques, with the goal of improved human performance as measured by established criteria on the job (Hays, 1992)".

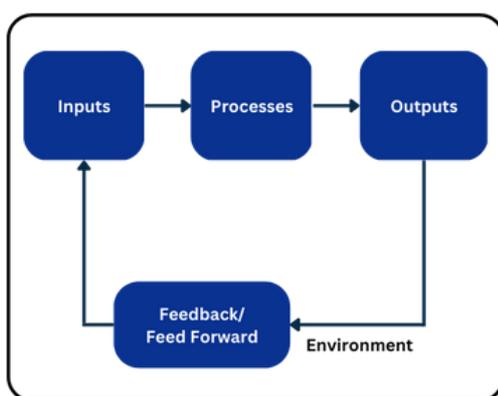


Figure 1: The basic components of Systems as adopted from Jacobs (2014)

As Jacobs (2014) discussed, a system at once, has parts or elements. These components (see Figure 1) are the: inputs (the elements/materials required to implement the desired goal), processes (activities that utilize inputs to achieve the desired goal), and outputs (results both intended and unintended). Another crucial component of a system is the importance it gives to feedback and feed-forward mechanisms², which provides evaluative information for improvement. The latter promotes a reflective process providing points for enhancement to inputs and

² When information from the outputs returns to the inputs unchanged, it essentially becomes feedback. However, when the information from the outputs causes changes to the inputs in some way, it becomes feed-forward (Jacobs, 2014).

processes, and can only be found in open systems. Open systems allow a training system to be dynamic and multidimensional in understanding the training processes. Following this logic, the study integrates the system theory perspective into the study's theoretical framework.

The Observed Sub-Systems

On Trainee Characteristics. Trainee characteristics can be broadly defined to include capabilities, personality traits, motivational constructs, values and interests, attitudes and emotions, and perceptions (Bell et al., 2017). Furthermore, it has been argued that these characteristics account for most of the variability in training transfer (Nijman et al., 2006). Nevertheless, despite numerous research on how sub-systems of trainee characteristics influence learning and transfer, especially in the traditional mode of instruction/learning, Bell et al. (2017) still recommend identifying specific trainee characteristics relevant to new and emerging learning modes such as e-learning.

One of the most attended trainee distinguishing factors is *Motivation*. Two critical factors of Motivation include *Extrinsic* and *Intrinsic Motivation*, which affect individual performance (Saeed & Asghar, 2012). Extrinsic Motivation is characterized by external reward-driven behavior, while Intrinsic Motivation applies when an individual is motivated by internal rewards such as personal gain and satisfaction. Ryan and Deci (2000) revealed that intrinsic Motivation, relative to extrinsic, provides more interest, excitement, and confidence to the individual, which in turn, is manifested through enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity.

In trainee characteristics literature, psychology's 'The Big Five Personality Traits,' particularly, *Conscientiousness* and *Openness to Experience*, were also relevant to learning and transfer. For example, conscientiousness represents a tendency to show self-discipline, acting dutifully and ambitiously for achievement (Rowold, 2007); openness to experience is the extent to which an individual allows or seeks new experiences and initiates new ideas (McCrae & John, 1992). Accordingly, these personality traits predict several positive training variables, such as training performance, self-efficacy, transfer outcomes, transfer intentions, and declarative knowledge (Roberts et al., 2018; Gully et al., 2002).

Compare various mediums and assess their efficacy toward learning outcomes. The value of such studies, however, was limited since there were few attempts to explain why a particular method yielded superior outcomes (Bell et al., 2017). Instead, what is more important is understanding the pedagogical features that influence the effectiveness of technology-based training and the conditions under

which it is likely to be most effective (Bell & Federman, 2013). In this regard, concerns in identifying training design variables as predictors of training success were emphasized.

For example, Sitzmann et al. (2010) showed how technical difficulties influence learning and attrition in online training. Specifically, time constraints and workplace interruptions were found to be the most common reasons for failing to complete a course in one attempt. The trend of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) was also explored by Gegenfurtner et al. (2017), who found that participants prefer less time spent on group discussions of task solutions, more learner-teacher interaction, and the option of watching recorded webinars at home or work.

[Eventually,] the increased reliance on technology-based training and informal learning within organizations has led to more learner-centered training and has given trainees unprecedented control over their learning (Noe et al., 2014). Learners are acknowledged as active agents and are seen to have the capacity to take responsibility for how to manage technology-based activities and outcomes best. Thus, measuring self-regulated learning has become one of the interests in assessing e-learning platforms. Zimmerman (2000) defines self-regulatory definition as "self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals." Zimmerman's (2000) Self-Regulated Learning Model proposes a three-stage process composed of forethought, performance, and self-reflection.

the physical surroundings, psychological or emotional conditions, and social or cultural influences affecting the growth and development of an adult engaged in an educational enterprise (Hackbarth et al., 2010). Among the variables reviewed, *Motivation to Transfer* is a widely studied factor that facilitates a better understanding of learning transfer. It refers to the trainee's desire to apply to their work the knowledge and skills mastered in the training program (Noe & Schmitt, 1986). For example, studies found that motivation to transfer was a crucial variable in determining the extent of transfer of interpersonal skills and that it also mediates the effect of training reactions on transfer (e.g., Axtell et al., 1997). Recent studies have also shown that motivation to transfer is strongly influenced by the activity's perceived practical importance of *Training Utility/ Opportunity to Use* (e.g., Liebermann & Hoffmann, 2008). Opportunity to use is defined as the "extent to which a trainee is provided with or actively obtains work experiences relevant to the tasks for which he or she was trained" (Ford et al., 1992, p. 512). When training instructions are congruent with job requirements (Velada et al., 2007) and resemble the conditions the participants face at work (Grohmann et al.,

2014), an increased likelihood of transfer should exist. Its perceived absence is considered one of the biggest obstacles to transfer.

Overall, the sub-systems' constructs include Supervisor Support, Peer Support, Supervisor Sanctions, Personal Positive Outcomes, Personal Capacity to Transfer, Transfer Design, Content Validity of Training, and Resistance to Change. Contextual observation of these factors is necessary to understand better the individual's extent of training engagement, learning, and transfer.

III. Methodology

The study employed mixed-methods research and a quasi-experimental design. Following a system theory framework, the study has identified and utilized the most common constructs that were found to be correlated with training effectiveness, as shown in Figure 2. The learner characteristics and training design via e-learning were the primary inputs of the intervention. At the same time, the synchronous and asynchronous approaches via Zoom and Canvas became the medium of learning processes. From a system perspective, the interaction of the inputs, processes, and environment is hypothesized to affect the extent of participants' learning and engagement, as well as the eventual attainment of the activity outcome—for the learners to transfer (utilize) their learning to their respective working environment. The dashed line indicates the permeability of each system to be influenced by one another. With the dynamic and complex interaction between sub-systems, the study intends to identify constructs that predict or influence e-learning training effectiveness.

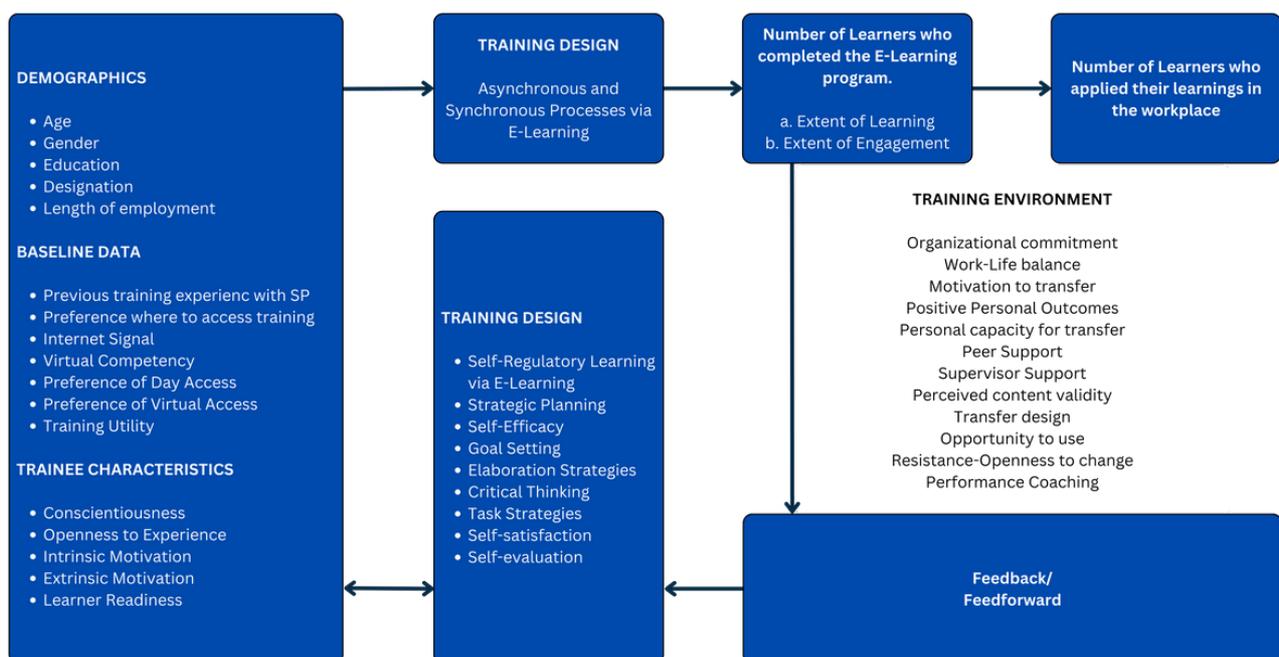


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the study

The study utilized Likert, Likert-type scales, and open-ended questions to operationalize this inquiry. Overall, 26 constructs were assessed comprised under the three sub-systems measured at different periods (pre, during, and post) during the conduct of the training: Trainee Characteristics (5 constructs), Training Design via Self-Regulatory Learning (8 constructs), and Training Environment (13 constructs). In addition, participants' virtual competency and all six constructs under self-regulatory learning (training design) were consistently measured weekly (1 module per week for three weeks). The e-learning TA provision was conducted from July 12, 2021, to July 30, 2021, with a one-week extension to allow participants to submit their final output. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured while informed consent was explicitly requested.

The Participants. The 78 Local Government Units in the Caraga region were the target participants of the study. They were invited to participate in an e-learning TA provision entitled "Introduction to Social Protection in view of the Full-Devolution via E-learning." At least two representatives with a significant role in decision-making were mainly invited from each LGU, from their Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO) and Planning Development Office (PDO). Representatives were allowed to participate, regardless of position, if the Office head could not commit. The invitation was responded to by 102 participants who registered in Canvas. Through volunteer sampling, the response rate was 65% out of the expected participants covering 46 LGUs across the five provinces in the region. This gave the study a 95% confidence level with a 5.8% margin of error.

Instruments Utilized. The study adapted various published instruments to measure specific constructs. Specifically, the items of Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience were adapted from Costa and McCrae's (1992) NEO Personality Inventor (NEO-PI) scale, as indicated in Cheramie and Simmering's (2010) article. Motivation (Intrinsic and Extrinsic) related items are adapted from Hartnett et al.'s (2011) article. The Training Design instrument was adapted from Fontana et al.'s (2015) integrated Self-Regulatory Learning instrument, while the training environment instrument was also adapted from the Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI), as indicated by Holton III et al. (2000) and Chatterjee et al.'s (2018) articles.

Techniques for Data Processing and Analysis. The study utilized SPSS Statistical Software ver. 28.0.0 in conjunction with Microsoft Excel to process and analyze the data. For Likert Scale constructs, a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the participants' perceptions with corresponding numerical values based on their level of agreement (e.g., 1=Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 5=Strongly Agree);

negatively constructed items were reverse-scored (represented by the R symbol). The researchers treated scores as interval measurements due to the statistically significant sample size. However, due to the limitations of a 5-point scale, the statistical test used for correlation analysis was nonparametric, which accepts at least an ordinal level of measurement. Interval means of a particular item were assigned with ordinal labels defined by the following: 1.00-1.99 (Strongly Disagree); 2.00-2.99 (Disagree); 3.00 (Neutral); 3.01-4.00 (Agree); and 4.1-5.00 (Strongly Agree). The constructs were also subjected to an internal reliability test by identifying Cronbach's Alpha using SPSS 28. In addition, correlation analysis and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were conducted to further verify each construct's internal consistency. Furthermore, the data were subjected to regression analysis to identify which factors/constructs directly influence the participants' learning, engagement, and transfer. Finally, qualitative data were thematized to supplement the results of the quantitative data.

Limitations. Aside from utilizing volunteer sampling, using a self-reported questionnaire as the primary data source is one of the study's limitations. Nevertheless, although with recognized potential risks, the self-reported questionnaire is a standard method in training and development literature. Another limitation of the data collection is the voluntary choice of the participants to opt-out of answering a survey. Since the questionnaires were spread out throughout the training, survey participation was subjected to inconsistency (e.g., poor internet connection access, multiple commitments), limiting the analysis of the study. Furthermore, due to time constraints, measuring the transfer data (learning application) was only facilitated after two months instead of three, the prescribed timeline for transfer data assessment.

IV. Results

A. Demographics

The study's sample size grounds from the 102 learners who submitted a registration form and enrolled in Canvas. The mean age of the participants is 41 years old, ranging from 22-64 years old (SD:11.25). Data show that most participants (67%) identified themselves as female. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the participants graduated with a baccalaureate degree, and fifty-nine percent (59%) were assigned primarily to managerial positions. Data also show that their average length of employment is 6.3 years (R: 1 month – 36 years), and most (64%) are employed for more than four years. Sixty-three percent (63%) are from the LSWDOs, while 27% come from the PDOs.

B. Operationalized Sub-systems and Constructs

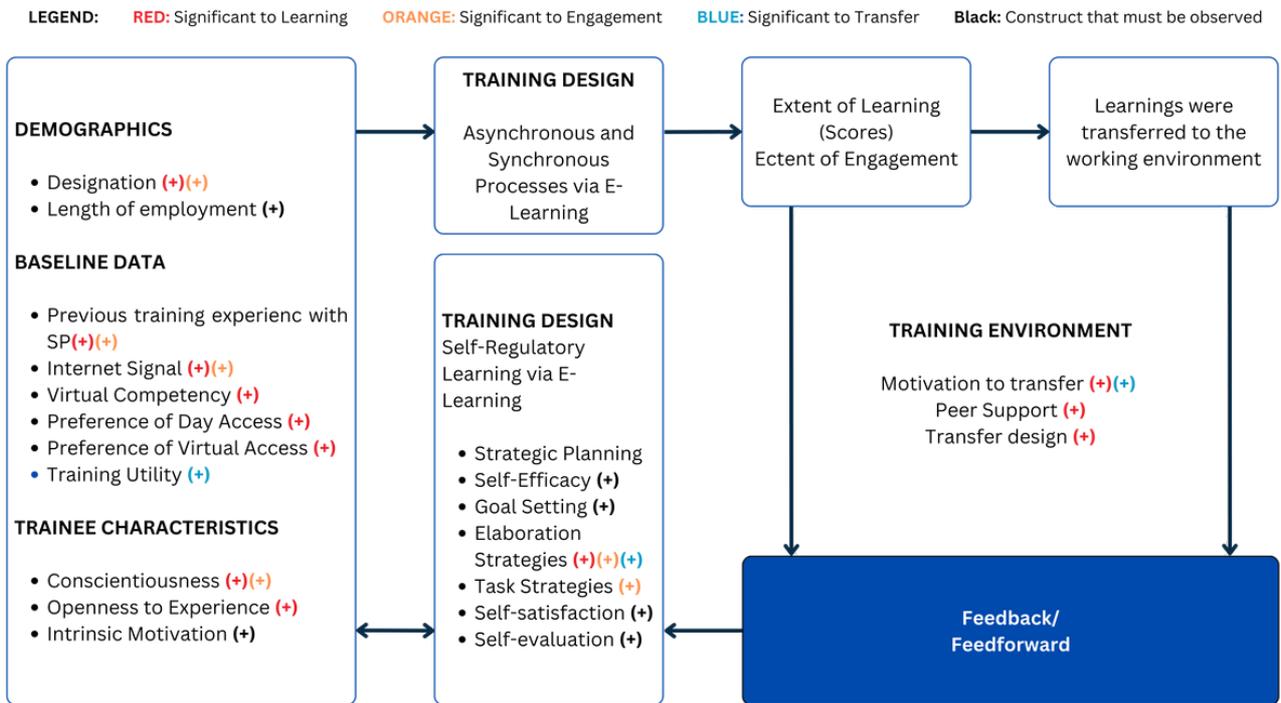


Figure 3: Summary of key findings

The data processing revealed that the three operationalized sub-systems have a Cronbach Alpha of 0.748 for the Trainee Characteristics, 0.822 for the Training Design, and 0.787 for the Training Environment. The said alphas are considered to be acceptable levels of reliability. The summary of key findings is illustrated in Figure 3.

B.1 Trainee Characteristics

Regression analysis results show that Openness to Experience (e.g., ability to adapt new learning styles to meet the expectations of the e-learning program.) and Conscientiousness (e.g., ability to get the tasks done right away.) contribute positively to the participants' learning. However, only the former was significant in their engagement. Even so, the participants' Intrinsic Motivation (high internal-based motivation, e.g., willingness to engage in this e-learning program to learn more.) must be measured because it was consistently identified as a good predictor of learning and engagement. Finally, towards learning transfer, no construct was identified to be significant. However, all five measured constructs should be observed since any logistic regression equation derived from the trainee characteristics sub-systems can accurately predict the transfer results with an 80.4% accuracy.

B.2 The Training Design and Delivery: Towards Self-Regulatory Learning

Regression analysis shows that the construct of Strategic Planning (e.g., the ability to set realistic deadlines for learning when having a learning need.) under the Forethought process is significant to participants' learning, engagement, and tendency to transfer. Self-efficacy (e.g., the extent of confidence in completing the online course at the given time.) and Goal-setting (e.g., the extent of goal in not compromising the quality of learning even online) constructs under the same process can also help increase the accuracy of the predictions vis-à-vis learning. Between high and low scorers, Self-efficacy and Goal-setting constructs can differentiate the two levels of participants with an accuracy of at least 75%. Moreover, Elaboration Strategies (e.g., the ability to look up something when unsure.) under the Performance process were consistently significant towards participants' learning, engagement, and tendency to transfer. Because of higher correlations, other constructs like Task Strategies (e.g., ability to change strategies when not making progress while learning) under the Performance process, Self-Satisfaction (e.g., the extent of understanding of how the newly learned information impacts work) and Self-evaluation (e.g., extent of evaluated learning after finishing a learning task) under Self-Reflection process must be observed to accurately predict the participants' level of learning and engagement.

B.3 Training Environment

When factor analysis was applied, the constructs of Motivation to Transfer (e.g., extent of motivation in applying the acquired learnings to work) and Organizational Commitment (e.g., extent of attachment to the organization) were responsible for about 96% of the participants' score variability. Consequently, when the regression analysis was conducted, a higher R-square value was computed from the predictions for learning (R-square = 0.80) and engagement (R-square = 0.82). This higher level of accuracy is attributed to significant constructs that influence learning, like Motivation to Transfer (e.g., the extent of the appropriateness of the utilized methodologies in attaining the learning objectives), Transfer Design (e.g., the extent of the appropriateness of the utilized methodologies in attaining the learning objectives), and Peer Support (e.g., the extent of perceived peer support in using the learned skills at work). These factors, along with those significant correlations, can also be used to create a regression equation that can predict the participants' expected level of engagement during the training and is found to be about 93.1% accurate most of the time. In addition, it is essential to note that all significantly correlated constructs, especially Motivation to Transfer, must be observed to predict training transfer.

B.4 Additional Observations

Key findings show that Designation and Internet Signal significantly influenced learning and engagement. Significant improvements (at a 99% level of confidence) in pre-test scores and post-test scores were observed for Modules 1 and 2. However, some participants (38%) who got a perfect score during the pre-test tended to submit their answers beyond the due date. These participants are mostly designated to managerial positions in their offices with intermittent/irregular internet connections. Key findings also show that 85% of the respondents who participated in the transfer survey (N=40) responded that they had utilized some information from the training within two months. Most (60%) were in managerial and supervisory positions. The respondents with a higher tendency to transfer were also likely to have completed all three module requirements. In addition, factors like Virtual Competency (e.g., the extent of confidence in navigating the virtual platform when presented with technical difficulties), previous training experience related to Social Protection, and preference for virtual access (synchronous/ asynchronous) have been shown to have significance towards learning when subjected to regression analysis. Moreover, it was observed that most of the participants who failed to submit at least two requirements (mostly peer-graded activities) in training tended to skip the rest of the training, eventually leading to a decline in e-classroom participation.

Toward the end of the training, Modules 1 and 2 received the highest feedback rating for the topics and resource persons. Subsequently, the transfer data show that topics related to Module 1 (Key Concepts in SP) and Module 2 (Planning on SP) were the most transferred/ applied lessons in the learners' working environment (N= 40). Participants who know the training's applicability (Training Utility) to their primary function were identified to have higher transfer during the training. When asked how they have specifically used what they learned in the workplace, qualitative data show that most (43%) have applied them to their official reports, planning, and Devolution Transition Plan (DTP)-related tasks. This is followed by sharing information with colleagues or office heads (23%). Specifically, the most cited factors that facilitated transfer are: 1) Applicability of the information to primary role/ responsibility/ tasks (38%) or Training Utility; 2) Availability of Resource Materials/ Access to Modules (24%); and, 3) Avenue and Time with Office Heads to Share Information (18%).

V. Discussion

The study has shown that various factors affect the extent of the participants' learning, engagement, and transfer in an e-learning context. The data gathered is straightforward, but additional explanation and contextualization are needed on

some points. Firstly, it showed that most participants who transferred their learning in the workplace were in managerial and supervisory positions. The researchers attribute this to their decision-making privilege in the office and access to people or events where the learning can be applied. Interestingly, it has also been observed that learners with at least two skipped requirements (mostly peer-graded activities) tend to skip the rest of the training. The reason was not identified in this study. However, it is possible that the required additional assessment and analytical skills on this specific activity, as well as, the immediate work responsibilities in their respective offices could have discouraged some participants as opposed to plain quiz-type multiple choice activities.

Additionally, it is essential to note that the participants' average perceived Virtual Competency increased from Module 1 to 3, although minimal. Data shows that at a 90 percent confidence level, participants with a higher level of perceived virtual competency (e.g., higher confidence in navigating Canvas) were found to have a higher virtual engagement. In this respect, the findings support Sitzmann et al.'s (2010) argument that technical difficulties influence learning and attrition, as shown by Virtual Competency's significance towards learning and engagement. Secondly, data supports the significance of specific trainee characteristics constructs, such as Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness towards learning, and are consistent with the literature. At the same time, Openness to Experience was found to be very significant in their engagement. For learning transfer, it was noted that the five operationalized constructs under trainee characteristics must be considered, especially the participant's Intrinsic Motivation, as it strongly correlates with the other significant constructs. The data is consistent with Ryan and Deci's (2000) findings, where Intrinsic Motivation is consistently identified as an essential construct alongside highly significant constructs influencing learning and transfer.

Thirdly, consistent with the reviewed literature, self-regulatory mechanisms as a training design variable significantly influence training success. All sub-processes identified by Zimmerman (2000)—forethought, performance, and performance---were significant in the participants' self-regulatory process. It is also assumed that self-regulatory cues and reminders by the facilitators (only done in Modules 1 and 2) through follow-ups via email and texts aided the participants' engagement. The lack of induced self-regulatory mechanisms was assumed to help explain the decline of participants' learning, engagement, and transferred learning information in Module 3.

Fourthly, data shows that all constructs under the Training Environment sub-systems were recommended to be measured, supporting the LTSI's validity as an

instrument. The study also supports the importance of Motivation to Transfer as a critical variable on the extent of learning and transfer, as well as Peer Support and Transfer Design's high significance towards learning. Due to the Training Environment constructs' regression equation's high prediction percentage (over 90 percent correct), the participants' answer to this survey could also predict their participation rate in the modules. This implies that it is ideal for measuring the training environment along with training design and delivery instruments. Doing so can facilitate a high predictive ability toward high-level and low-level engagement.

Furthermore, the study supports the significance of perceived Training Utility/ Opportunity to Use vis-à-vis transfer. As noted by Velada et al. (2007) and Grohmann et al. (2014), the more training is helpful to a participant's primary role, the higher the tendency for their learning to be applied. Nevertheless, the data also suggest that even though the participants' training need or utility is high as assessed during the baselining, higher learning and engagement are not guaranteed since other factors within the e-learning training system shape participants' decisions and actions. This implicates the assumption that if training is already identified in the Training Needs Assessment (TNA), attaining positive training results will directly follow.

Lastly, this study has shown that two thematic forms of transfer were mostly utilized by the participants--- 1) the direct application of learning to role/function and 2) sharing of information with colleagues and office heads. The researchers of this study advance the notion of considering various forms of transfer to help identify the direct and indirect forms of how capacity-building investments return to the Department.

VI. Conclusion

The study results show that participants' engagement in e-learning becomes interwoven with their work commitments and demands, resulting in time constraints and workplace interruptions. Additional stressors were also identified, such as their weak to an intermittent internet connection, which affects their learning and participation. As shown by other studies, these stressors are not different from those they can experience in in-person learning. Hence, not taking advantage of the e-learning platform is like throwing a baby out with the bathwater. Future studies must further look into these stressors and know how the DSWD can help mitigate these, especially since the LGUs are not under the jurisdiction of the Department. Would the sustainable approach be to go back to the in-person instruction (which most might prefer), or can a blended approach be a better alternative if not a full e-learning approach?

Nonetheless, albeit with challenges and limitations, the key findings of this study showed that e-learning technical assistance provision does facilitate learning, engagement, and transfer, making e-learning a promising alternative platform for capacity building in the DSWD. Future capacity-building initiatives in e-learning (and even regardless of the chosen approach) must adopt a system perspective in devising instruments and a process that treats a training system in a dynamic approach. Careful planning of e-learning TA provision and adopting valid and reliable instruments are crucial pre, during, and post-assessment.

VII. Recommendations

The study recommends adopting a holistic, multidimensional, interacting sub-systems perspective when implementing and assessing capacity buildings via e-learning in short-term or long-term engagements. The following are recommended for consideration to the DSWD management and various TA Office/Division/Section/Unit (ODSU) providers in devising mechanisms and instruments that measure e-learning training effectiveness:

To increase learning results. 1) Consider the designation, internet signal, virtual competency, prior experience with a related activity, preference of virtual engagement (asynchronous/synchronous) when selecting and monitoring e-learning participants; 2) Monitor the extent of Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, and Intrinsic Motivation when identifying participants and as a basis for possible intervention (e.g., if participants are low with Conscientiousness, specific activities that increases it can be adopted.).

To increase engagement results: 1) Consider participants' virtual competency and internet signal. 2) Monitor and improve participants' Strategic Planning, Elaboration Strategies, Task Strategies, Self- evaluation, and Self- satisfaction; 3) The ability to self-regulate must not solely rely on the learners. The facilitators can help boost learners' self-regulation by sending virtual reminders through email or texts; 4) At least two consecutive non-submission of outputs should serve as a monitoring guide for future similar activities to prompt necessary intervention to prevent attrition.

To increase transfer results: Monitor and improve participants' Motivation to Transfer, Elaboration Strategies, and Strategic Planning alongside trainee characteristics and training design constructs. It is also ideal to monitor transfer data for at least three or six months from the conclusion of the activity. In addition, specific operationalization on what, to whom, and how the learning was transferred must be measured.

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