



POLICY BRIEF ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION, HEALTH AND LIVELIHOOD

SUMMARY

The Magna Carta of Women (MCW) shields the sector from discrimination and violence. It also guarantees the social protection of the marginalized by instructing key government agencies to provide labor market programs, social insurance, social welfare and social safety nets for the sector. Although several programs have already been created to fulfill these functions, many women, particularly those living in the countryside, still lack awareness on the existence and significance of these or are yet to organize themselves to push for their rights.

The monitoring activity examined the implementation of key government programs that cover women, including: the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC), and the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP). It also looked into the availability and accessibility of maternal health care for women in the project's areas of implementation.

This Policy Brief details the results of the monitoring activity, and tackles the issues and recommendations made by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the members of the sectors themselves. In doing so, it seeks to improve the implementation of these programs at the local and national level.

difficulty in forming their own groups. It should help them organize and register the women's associations in the barangays, and reactivate non-functional groups. Trainings should also be conducted to ensure the sustainability of the associations.

Additionally, an information dissemination campaign should be conducted to inform solo parents in the barangays of the registration process as well as the requirements in getting their IDs. The MSWDO should also maintain a database containing the information of the solo parents in every barangay. With the help of MSWDO and barangay officials, solo parent groups should be formed and registered. A focal person should also be designated to attend to the concerns of the solo parents.

Lastly, there is a need to inform all women in the barangay about the LGUs plans, programs and services for the sector. This can be done by organizing forums during the Women's Month Celebration as well as during the Barangay Assemblies and 4Ps Family Development Sessions. Representatives from the sector should also be included and consulted during the planning and budgeting of the 5% GAD fund.

ORGANIZING AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

14 of 20 municipalities reported concerns related to the absence of women's organizations in their area

The absence of women's groups at the local level limits the sector's participation in the governance process. Because of this, proper attention is not given to address their issues and complaints. This gap is due to several factors, including: 1) the lack of support coming from the barangay; and 2) the unsustainability of formed groups (*ningas-cogon*).

8 of those 14 municipalities added that solo parent groups are also absent at the barangay level

Many solo parents remain unregistered in the municipalities. Apart from this, the allocation and utilization of the 5% Gender and Development (GAD) fund is also unclear and solo parents do not know how they can actually benefit from it.

The BLGU, with the help of the MSWDO, should determine the reason why the women in the barangays are having

PROVISION OF LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT

12 municipalities reiterated the need to provide adequate and sustainable livelihood support for the women's sector

The MSWDO should conduct a survey to identify the qualified beneficiaries of the government's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), then coordinate with DOLE and DTI. In order to come up and push for long-term labor market programs and other alternative income sources, SLP's budget allocation should also be increased.

There is also a need to monitor SLP projects, in cooperation with its beneficiaries. Beneficiaries should be consulted during the drafting of proposals and assessments should be conducted to ensure that the programs match the skills and interests of its recipients. Attention should also be given to solo parents, particularly in terms of designing suitable livelihood programs for them.

Lastly, the 5% GAD budget should be properly appropriated and utilized to fund livelihood programs for women. There should be proper targeting among the beneficiaries as well as conducting Training Needs Assessments and Intensified Social Preparations.

PANTAWID FAMILYANG PILIPINO PROGRAM (4Ps or "Pantawid")

In 2012, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported that 9 out of 10 Pantawid beneficiaries in Eastern Visayas region are women. According to DSWD, "women are chosen as household beneficiaries over men because the cash grant is usually given to the most responsible member of the household." Households that have children (aged 0 to 14) and /or have a pregnant woman at the time of the assessment are some of the considerations in selecting beneficiaries.

7 municipalities identified gaps in the implementation of 4Ps

These are: 1) not all women from indigent families are included as beneficiaries of the program; 2) there have been delays during payout; and 3) the venue is far from the beneficiaries' residences. This is a concern especially to senior citizens who receive the cash grants in behalf of their grandchildren. In addition, there is weak monitoring on the beneficiaries' compliance to conditions, and limited CSO participation in program monitoring.

The LGU and MSWDO should conduct a survey in the barangays to identify those who are yet to be beneficiaries of the program and assess their qualifications. The budget allotted for the program should also be increased. Meanwhile, in barangays where surveys had already been administered, the LGU should revalidate its results to ensure that all indigent families were listed as beneficiaries. A grievance mechanism should also be installed to receive complaints and address them.

Moreover, the monitoring system used for the program should be strengthened. Barangay officials and CSOs should also be enlisted to help in the monitoring. A feedback mechanism among the parent leaders, BLGU and 4Ps Municipal Link should be present, too. Regular orientations should be conducted and there should be close coordination between the health and education personnel assigned.

HEALTH

The MCW implementing rules and regulations task the Social Security System and the PhilHealth to support indigenous and community-based social protection schemes and ensure that marginalized women not covered by SSS and PhilHealth will be able to access special packages developed for their benefit.

Participants of the monitoring activity raised the following gaps on the provision of medical and health care to women:

- The location of hospitals is too far for pregnant women, for instance, in Mandaon, Masbate. Although other barangays have an Inter-Village Health Cooperative (IHVC), these are not well-maintained and many of its features are already damaged and unusable;
- Patients have to pay for medicines, laboratory tests and the use of medical equipment in private hospitals because these are not available in the district hospital;
- Some members of the sectors are not yet registered with Philhealth;
- Some patients do not get discharged from the hospital immediately because their bill is higher than the

amount that can be covered by Philhealth;

- Some hospital staff seem to lack a sense of urgency when responding to the needs of their patients; and
- Facilities at the Barangay Health Stations should be upgraded to accommodate child delivery. The monitoring recommends that the Sangguniang Bayan submits a resolution to increase the budget in district hospitals and procure additional medical equipment.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN (VAWC)

The MCW provides for the establishment of a Violence Against Women (VAW) desk in every barangay to ensure that related cases are fully addressed in a gender-responsive manner.

Several municipalities, however, reported that Barangay VAWC desks are usually or frequently unmanned. Moreover, the sector is not aware of the ways to participate and ensure proper implementation of the law.

The LGU should orient the BLGU about the VAWC campaign and its importance, particularly for the women in the community. Then, the BLGU and local CSOs, along with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the MSWDO, should strengthen the information dissemination campaign for the program. Moreover, a VAWC officer should also be appointed to 1) man the VAWC desk, 2) encourage women's groups to participate and tackle the issues of the sector, and 3) explain the referral pathway when reporting abuses.

During the national consultation, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) made the following responses and/or clarifications to the gaps and recommendations raised by the sectors:

- The VAWC campaign already began targeting women who are experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization such as those in IP communities and armed-conflict areas.
- The Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and their Children (IACVAWC) has developed and recently revised its Strategic Plan to help government agencies reach more women at the community level. The PCW became an attached agency to the DILG as they saw the gap in localizing the implementation of the MCW.

Additionally, the following policy changes can be implemented at the national level:

- Expand coverage of 4Ps to provide livelihood support/employment opportunities, especially to solo parents;
- Universal coverage of maternal health care through PhilHealth;
- Expand opportunities for self and social development of women;
- Build durable and long-lasting daycare centers at the barangays;
- Support capacity-building of women associations;
- Enhance anti-VAWC programs and policies, and establish VAWC desks for LGUs that do not have them yet;
- Strengthen social welfare services for women at the local level and the capacity of MLGUs to implement SP and risk reduction programs; and
- Ensure budget allocations for women and meaningful use of the GAD fund.



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