

IISANG PANGARAP:
*Ang kwento ng
Samahan ng Nagkakaisang
Pamilya ng Pantawid*



The Asia Foundation



A publication of the
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR INNOVATION,
TRANSFORMATION AND EXCELLENCE IN
GOVERNANCE, INC. (INCITEGOV)

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FOREWORD

In the Philippines, the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program of the Government has demonstrated promising results in the fight to alleviate poverty. The formal institutionalization of the CCT program into the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps) law in 2019 (RA11310) is a positive step which will ensure continued annual support for some of the poorest and most vulnerable Filipino families. This law provides comprehensive mechanisms to ensure that vulnerable communities will have long-term support to basic needs such as healthcare, nutrition, education, and their livelihoods.

RA11310 is an act of Congress, but it was heavily shaped and influenced by a number of voices representing the poor. *Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid* (SNPP), a group of passionate parents of families engaged with the 4Ps program, fulfilled an important role in directly shaping and influencing the 4Ps law and its implementing rules. With their united voice, and speaking from experience, the SNPP members contributed to making 4Ps more relevant and responsive. The direct experience of being beneficiaries of the 4Ps support provided the basis for the SNPP to speak with power and authority, even with those who hold legislative power and authority. SNPP was able to bring to the table the voices of the most vulnerable during the numerous committee discussions around the country. The lessons from SNPP's efforts will be of use for other groups who seek to positively influence legislative change — using whatever channels and networks they have access to — to shape landmark poverty alleviation policies.

I am especially touched with the accounts of how the mothers engaged with SNPP brought their passion and grit from caring for their families into the public policy arena. Their drive to give their families' dreams a fighting chance is inspiring. SNPP's experience shows the value of creating space for leaders from communities to help shape and influence inclusive policy reforms.

The Asia Foundation is proud to have been part of SNPP's journey.

Sam Chittick

Country Representative

The Asia Foundation - Philippines

PREFACE

This is a story of grassroots women who engaged government institutions — the Executive and Legislative branches — to pursue their dream of lifting themselves out of poverty. They have experienced the positive changes in their lives, the improving health of their families and the continued schooling of their children under the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* or 4Ps, and they wanted to make sure it would last. They came together and spoke with one voice and moved as one. Every action they took affirmed the power of a united and organized movement. Thank you to the core leaders of *SAMAHAN ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid* (SNPP) led by the officers Jeana Catacio, Analiza Natalio, Anna Luna Bredes, Nida Carillo, Angela Tubello, and Ludivina Buenafe, who agreed to work in partnership with INCITEGov.

This is a story of a bureaucracy that systematically listened to its partner beneficiaries and designed a program guided by data, with faces and systems that are owned by the partner beneficiaries. This was a global program indigenized by the Department of Social Welfare and Development led by then Secretary Esperanza Cabral and the late Undersecretary Lualhati Pablo, and carried over by subsequent leaders of the DSWD. The social development workers — social workers and community development practitioners — developed the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) based on the articulated needs of the poor families; they were guided by the principles of empowerment of the partner beneficiaries that would bring them to self-sufficiency levels of well-being.

This is a story of politics serving the interest of the poor and active citizens. The SNPP asserted their right to be heard on improving the implementation and governance of the *Pantawid* program. They advocated and lobbied for the legislation of the Conditional Cash Transfer or *Pantawid* with the House of Representatives and the Senate. They mobilized their “*ka-benes*” (as they call their colleagues in the program) to talk and negotiate with their representatives in Congress.

This is the story of grassroots women leaders holding the government accountable for their performance as elected officials of the country. Thank you to the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA) — Tess Briones, Roy Calfoforo, Debs Bartolo and Louie Corneby — for journeying with the women leaders of SNPP. The capacity building you provided has developed and strengthened them to be effective negotiators and community facilitators.

I want to thank The Asia Foundation for supporting the efforts of the SNPP mothers and the preparation and publication of this monograph.

This monograph would not have been possible without the patient documentation by Margarita Lopa Perez and Abigail Pangilinan, they who crossed over to government service from CSO work and crossed back to CSO work. They know the intricacies of the implementation challenges of the *Pantawid* program (from the government perspective) and they listened to the stories of the women leaders in each phase of the growth of the SNPP as an organization.

I want to acknowledge and thank my colleagues in INCITEGov for assisting and providing logistical support to the women leaders in their conduct of consultations for the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the *Pantawid* law — to Marj Ibañez, the executive director, Nicole Pangilinan, Pauline Fernandez, Verlie Retulin, Yanee Aguirre, and Jenel Azotes.

This is the story of making democracy work for the people.

Corazon Juliano-Soliman
INCITEGov

MESSAGE

Malaking pasasalamat ko sa DIYOS na Maykapal at sa DSWD na kami'y napabilang sa Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) na nagbigay daan upang mapabilang sa Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid (SNPP). Itong libro na ito ay naglalaman ng kwento ng SNPP at nang bawat benepisyaryo na naging bahagi ng proseso ng pagsasabatas ng programa.

Maraming pagsasanay, pag-aaral at dagdag-kaalaman sa mga lider at miyembro ng SNPP na patuloy na nagpapatatag sa amin bilang mga mamamayan, ina, asawa, at ka-bene. Hinubog ng SNPP ang bawat miyembro upang magkaroon ng malasakit sa kapwa Pilipino at ka-bene. Ang kwento ng SNPP bilang isang samahan ng mga 4Ps beneficiaries ay isang kwento kung paano ang simpleng mga nanay at tatay ay naging BOSES at kinatawan ng kapwa namin benepisyaryo hanggang sa aming adbokasiya na maisabatas ang 4Ps program. Kalakip rin nito ang mga kasalukuyang adbokasiya ng SNPP tulad ng pagbibigay ayuda sa mga kapwa beneficiary na naapektuhan ng iba't ibang sakuna, kabilang na ang COVID-19.

Marami ang naging bahagi sa pagbuo ng kwento ng SNPP. Isa dito ang Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific o ANSA-EAP na kumupkop at kumalinga sa buong proseso ng pagbubuo at pagpapalakas ng samahan. Kinikilala ng samahan ang walang-sawang suporta ng ANSA-EAP sa patuloy na prosesong ito.

Sa panahon ngayon, mahalaga na maiparating ang mga positibong kwento ng SNPP lalo na kung paano naging daluyan din ang samahan upang matulungan ang kapwa mahirap na patuloy na mangarap at lumaban para sa katuparan ng mga pangarap na ito. Sa tulong ng International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance o INCITEGov, ang kwento ng SNPP — isang kwento ng pagkakaisa at pag-asa — ay mailalathala at maibabahagi sa mas nakararaming tao.

Mga ka-bene, ituloy natin ang pangarap upang makatawid sa kahirapan. Itong kwento ng SNPP ay simula pa lang ng marami pang pagkakataon at oportunidad.

Analiza Natalio

Vice President, SNPP

MESSAGE

Magandang buhay mga ka-bene!

Noong maging miyembro ako ng Pantawid o mas kilala sa tawag na 4Ps, hindi sumagi sa isip ko na maraming pagbabago na magaganap sa takbo ng aking buhay. Tatlong taon na halos ang nakalipas nang magkaroon ng katuparan ang lahat ng ito nang mabuo ang Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid (SNPP) at ang pakikibahagi ng mga Parent Leaders sa buong bansa na kumilos upang maging ganap na batas ang 4Ps Act o Republic Act 11310.

Sa mga panahon ng lobbying sa mga mambabatas, napakalaking ambag ng suportang ibinigay ng mga ka-bene mula sa iba't ibang dako ng bansa. Kaakibat ng sakripisyo ay ang hindi maipaliwanag na saya. Hindi naging madali ang proseso para makarating sa kung nasaan ang SNPP ngayon. Itong samahan 'yung naging paraan para makatulong kami sa aming mga kapwa beneficiary at sa iba pa nating mga kababayan. Sa patuloy na pagpapalakas at pagpapalawak ng SNPP, nakikita ko ang impact nito sa mga kapwa ko miyembro, dahil sa pamamagitan ng samahan mas naipaparamdam at naipapakita natin na dapat sumunod, pahalagahan, at yakapin ang programa dahil ito ay hakbang sa pagtawid sa kahirapan. At marahil ang halaga ng bagay at pagpapahalaga sa programa ay nasukat na dahil sa panahon na ginugugol ng mga kapwa ko lider na boluntaryong ibinigay ang lahat para sa pagsasabatas ng 4Ps. Hindi din matutumbasan ng anumang halaga kung paano tayo hinubog ng SNPP at ng Pantawid bilang lider at bilang isang tao.

Salamat sa Diyos dahil siya ang unang humubog sa akin at nagbigay ng katatagan upang magampanan ang layunin ko sa buhay, kasama ang aking pamilya, kaibigan, kakilala, kapwa lider, mga ka-bene at ang programa. Sa mga makakabasa ng aming kwento, magsilbi nawa itong inspirasyon upang isipin natin na hindi hadlang ang kahirapan para sa pag-abot ng ating mga pangarap.

Maraming Salamat!

Jeana Catacio

President, SNPP

LIST OF ACRONYMS

4PS	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
ANSA-EAP	Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
BUB	Bottom-Up Budgeting
CALABARZON	Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
DA	Department of Agriculture
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DepEd	Department of Education
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
ECQ	Enhanced Community Quarantine
EJK	Extrajudicial Killings
ESGPPA	Expanded Students Grants-in-Aid Program for Poverty Alleviation
FDS	Family Development Sessions
IDEALS	Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services
INCITEGov	International Center for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance, Inc.
IRR	Implementing Rules and Regulations
LBP	Land Bank of the Philippines
LGU	Local Government Unit
MAPEH	Math, Arts, Physical Education, Health
MCCT	Modified Conditional Cash Transfer
MVC	Mountain View College
NAC	National Advisory Council
NCR	National Capital Region
NFA	National Food Authority
NHTS	National Household Targeting System or Listahanan
OVP	Office of the Vice President
PBSP	Philippine Business for Social Progress
PMT	Proxy Means Test
PPVR	People Power Volunteers for Reform or Pwersa ng Pamayanan Para sa Voluntarismo at Reporma
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SAE	Small Area Estimates
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
SLP	Sustainable Livelihood Program
SNPP	Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid
UniFAST	Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education
VAWC	Violence Against Women and Children

I. INTRODUCTION

Pantawid Pamilya: its origins and challenges

The *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program*, the Philippines' conditional cash transfer program, was first introduced as a pilot program under the Arroyo administration in 2007 with then Secretary Esperanza Cabral at the helm of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). As it was first configured, the pilot started with 6,000 household beneficiaries. By the end of the Arroyo administration, *Pantawid Pamilya* covered approximately 630,000 households nationwide. Patterned after the design of conditional cash transfers (CCT) in Latin America, notably Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* and Mexico's *Oportunidades/Progresas*, *Pantawid Pamilya* aims to provide short-term support to poor households through cash grants that enable them to address immediate needs. Meanwhile, for the long-term, the program is centered on human capital investment for the children by securing their health and education.

Under the Aquino administration, *Pantawid Pamilya* became the government's flagship program for poverty reduction and social protection. From approximately 630,000 households in 2009, *Pantawid Pamilya's* coverage expanded to cover 4.4 million households by the end of 2019. It was during this period that the Philippine CCT became the third largest CCT program in the world, second to Brazil (8.8 million households) and Mexico (6.5 million households). President Aquino recognized that in the long term, programs like CCT would not only break the cycle of poverty in the country but also serve as a catalyst towards having a more empowered citizenry.

The rapid expansion of *Pantawid Pamilya* from 6,000 households in 2007 to 4.4 million households did not come easy. The DSWD, under the leadership of former Secretary Corazon Juliano-Soliman, worked on improving various aspects of program implementation including targeting, compliance monitoring, and even the payment cycle. The notable system improvements were done from 2010 to 2011, particularly the automation of the beneficiary updating and data management, compliance verification and grievance redress systems. In 2011, the *Pantawid Pamilya* payment cycle was revised from being quarterly to every two months. Payouts and monitoring periods would now be done in closer intervals so that households are better able to manage the money to support their and their children's needs. By improving the delivery systems, it became easier for beneficiaries to be monitored and to access the grants. Further, policy enhancements were also done to guarantee that the program remains responsive to the dynamic situation of poverty in the country.

Aside from the expansion of the program to cover older children (15 to 18 years old), another notable policy enhancement was the creation of the modified conditional cash transfer (MCCT) in 2012. The MCCT was a modality designed to cover vulnerable and marginalized families such as homeless street families, indigenous peoples, and those who were affected by natural calamities. MCCT beneficiaries are families who were not covered by the National Household Targeting System (NHTS).

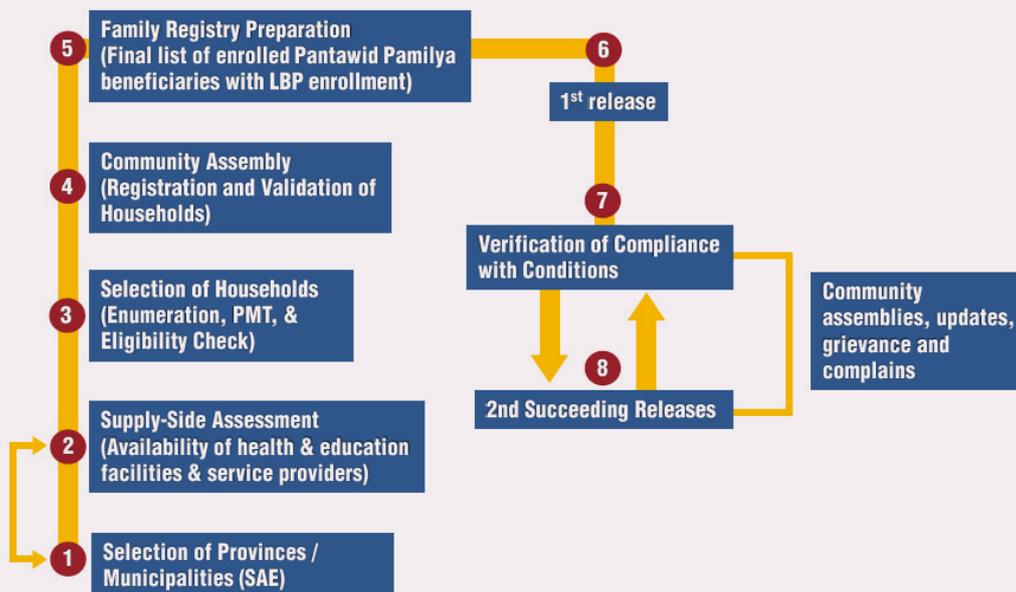
PROGRAM CYCLE AND PROGRAM DESIGN

The Philippine CCT follows a program cycle that is anchored on people's participation. The beneficiaries (potential and registered) all play an active role in the major processes. Figure 1 shows the entire program cycle, which starts from geographic targeting, specifically the selection of the poorest municipalities using Small Area Estimates (SAE). This is followed by a supply side assessment, a rigorous process to check if health and education facilities are available in the municipality. The presence of health and education facilities is integral because this enables beneficiaries to comply with the conditionalities of the program. This stage is also a point of convergence between the DSWD and the local government unit (LGU), and the Departments of Health and Education. *Pantawid Pamilya* is a demand-driven program, which makes it pivotal to get the commitment of LGUs and other stakeholders in terms of supply side provisions, so that they are able to comply with the co-responsibilities and avail of the cash grants due them.

Household beneficiaries are selected based on the household assessment done by the National Household Targeting System (NHTS, now known as *Listahanan*). Eligible beneficiaries are gathered in a community assembly, which is a process for validation prior to registration into the program. These assemblies are centered on the beneficiaries; it serves as the avenue by which they can ask questions about the program and during which they are given an orientation on their co-responsibilities as partner beneficiaries. Community assemblies are often concluded with the signing of the "oath of commitment" which formalizes the partnership between the beneficiary and the government.

After registration into the program, the beneficiaries are organized into parent groups with 25 to 30 members in each group. These parent groups are formed to aid the conduct of monthly Family Development Sessions (FDS). In a consensus, the group of parents selects one parent leader who will serve as the link between the DSWD field personnel (municipal/city link) and the members. Parent leaders assist the municipal/city link in terms of information dissemination both on the part of DSWD and the beneficiaries. After the release of the first payment, the process revolves around the three integral processes in *Pantawid Pamilya*: beneficiary update, compliance verification, and payment.

FIGURE 1: PROGRAM CYCLE OF THE PANTAWID PAMILYANG PILIPINO PROGRAM



Source: Department of Social Welfare and Development

Early gains: Initial impact of the program in the lives of beneficiaries

“Nakita ko na pinapahalagahan ako ng aking gobyerno. Ganito niya binago ang buhay ko, ‘di lang ako, [pati] buhay ng asawa ko. Buhay ng apat na anak ko. Anim na buhay ang nabago [I saw that the government gave me importance. It changed my life. Not just my life, but also my husband’s life. The lives of my four children. Six lives have been transformed (because of this program)].”

– Nanay Angelita from Calumpit Bulacan

Cash transfer programs like *Pantawid Pamilya* are designed to invest in the education and health of school-aged children but its benefits extend to the whole family, as shown in the experience of mothers like Nanay Angelita.

In 2015, the World Bank conducted a benefit incidence analysis which showed that the *Pantawid Pamilya* reduced short-term poverty because it increased household income by 7.4 percentage points. Among the findings presented in the second impact evaluation by Orbeta et.al was that education expenditure among *Pantawid* households is 82% higher than non-*Pantawid* households (annually per school-age child). The program also kept older children, aged 12 to 15 years old, in school. For health, the impact evaluation showed that 70% of mothers benefiting from *Pantawid Pamilya* delivered their babies in health facilities, compared to only 56% of mothers of non-*Pantawid* households. The program gives rise to a culture of hope, where parents of children beneficiaries believe that their children will have a better life compared to theirs, such as being able to complete a college education.

The program’s impact on strengthening the social fabric is also undeniable, particularly with a component such as the Family Development Sessions (FDS). The FDS is unique to the Philippines and usually involves a monthly, hour-long gathering where parent groups of 25 to 30 members meet to discuss topics varying from effective parenting, gender and development, and disaster risk reduction, among others. Throughout the implementation of *Pantawid Pamilya*, the monthly attendance in FDS is part of the co-responsibilities of partner beneficiaries. With primacy given to nurturing relationships and dynamics within the family, the FDS is an empowering tool because it capacitates parents and provides them with knowledge and skills to respond to the needs of their children. The FDS also promotes social awareness, participation, and community volunteerism because it serves as a venue for parents to interact with each other, form support groups, and share experiences on various topics such as health care, responsible parenthood, and active citizenship. There are also numerous instances where beneficiaries engage in volunteer activities together, such as the Department of Education’s *Brigada Eskwela* or the National Schools Maintenance Week during which the parents support the effort to restore and prepare the schools for the onset of a new school year.

Pantawid Pamilya beneficiaries value the FDS because its effect on family life is irreversible. The knowledge gained from these monthly sessions is applied in their day-to-day lives and remain with them in the long run.

One parent volunteer, Dina Macayan from Eastern Visayas, said that participation in FDS and volunteer efforts have helped build her self-esteem because these have served as avenues for talking to people and helping her fellow beneficiaries. According to her, “*Sa pagiging volunteer, marami talaga ako natutunan. Dati mahiyain ako. Ngayon marunong na akong humarap at kumausap sa tao. Natuto din akong gumamit ng ATM. At ako na ang nagtuturo sa ibang miyembro paano gumamit nito. Buhay ko na ang pagiging volunteer. Tumaas ang tingin ko sa sarili dahil dito.*” [As a volunteer, I have learned a lot. Before, I was too shy to speak in front of other people, but not anymore. I even learned how to use the ATM. Now, I teach my fellow beneficiaries how to use it. Being a volunteer is part of my life now. My self-esteem improved because of it.]

The experience of *Nanay* Dina is just one example of the long-term effects of FDS on the lives of program beneficiaries. It also serves as the building block in empowering beneficiaries, particularly the mothers, to play a more active role in their households and communities.

As an investment in human capital, approximately 8 million children from the 4.4 million household beneficiaries, have benefitted from the *Pantawid Pamilya* program. In 2015, the program had its first batch of high school graduates, with 330,000 children beneficiaries completing secondary education nationwide. With the convergence of programs and services, *Pantawid* beneficiaries who finished high school are eligible to apply for the Expanded Student Grants-in-Aid Program for Poverty Alleviation (ESGPPA) of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

The ESGPPA provides *Pantawid Pamilya* children with a college scholarship to any state university or college. Beneficiaries like Oshin Balasabas from Malaybalay, Bukdinon is an example of how the convergence of other government programs with *Pantawid Pamilya* magnifies the impact of the program in helping poor families improve their overall well-being.

In 2018, the DSWD reported that approximately 34,000 ESGPPA scholars from *Pantawid Pamilya* households were scheduled to graduate that school year. With the passage of RA 10931 (Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act), there are no longer additional beneficiaries from ESGPPA but *Pantawid Pamilya* beneficiaries who finish high school may avail of free college education through the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UNIFAST).

KWENTONG PANTAWID: AKO SI OSHIN LARITA BALASBAS, ESTUDYANTE, ANAK, ESGPPA SCHOLAR, 4PS BENEFICIARY¹



Oshin Larita Balasbas
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION
BATCH 2018

“Poverty is not the hindrance to success”

Elementary pa lang ako ay palagi na akong humihinto sa pag-aaral dahil wala kaming pera. Yes, we are too poor! Tumutulong ako sa aking mga magulang na manggapas sa tubuhan at maisan ng amo ng papa ko. Yan lang ang buhay namin. Kung baga, isang kahig, isang tuka.

After I graduated from my primary years, I stopped going to high school again for the same reason, “We don’t have money!” In 2009, I started first year high school. Life was so difficult so in order to earn money for my school fees, paminsan minsan ay umaabsent ako sa klase upang maka panggapas sa tubuhan. Bilang kapalit, may sahod akong 150 per day. Walang week na wala akong absent sa klase, but then, alam naman ng aking guro kung bakit wala ako at kung ano ang ginagawa ko, so hindi nalang siya nagagalit sa akin. Pinabayaang nyan lang akong umabsent. Kase alam naman niya ang pinagdadaanan ko.

Second year high school, naranasan ko ring maging isang “tapasero”. Yes, and I’m proud of it because in every hardship I’ve been through, I know I fought a good fight and I did it without any regrets.

Third year high school ay naging working student ako sa aking guro sa math subject ko. But something happened, a family problem came up and I stopped being a working student. Ang aking buhay, mula first year up to fourth year high school, ay hindi madali. Minsan isang beses lang akong kumain sa isang araw upang may makakain pa ako sa susunod na araw. If you were in my position how would you budget PHP150 allowance per week, kasama na diyang kain at project mo? Hindi naman ako nanghihingi sa parents ko kasi, at that time, nasa bukirin sila. Naaawa din ako sa papa ko kaya kailangan ako talaga ang gagawa ng paraan sa aking lahat na pangangailangan.

Dumating yong araw na pinakahihintay ko! My graduation day in high school. Napakasaya ko at that time kasi hindi man nakapunta yong mama ko, dumating naman yong papa ko. Yun nga lang, tapos na ang tribute to the parents program. I’m so blessed even though I didn’t have my parents during my tribute.

(Photo source: Oshin Balasbas FB Page)

1 Oshin’s story was published from her Facebook post in 2018.



After graduation, I went to Mountain View College (MVC) to pursue a degree in education, major in math, arts, physical education, and health (MAPEH). But hindi ako pinalad na makapag-enrol kasi, after one year of work ko as a villager, nagkasakit ako. So nakapag desisyon akong umuwi sa amin at kunin nang ang sahod ko, good for one year. I received PHP22,000, if I'm not mistaken. I lost all my hope at that time, but there is one text in the Bible that strengthened me in Romans 8:28 *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."*

I used my money for my first semester in Bukidnon State University. Second semester ko ay yong parents ko ang bumubuhay sa akin. Sa hirap ng buhay ay nakapag-decision na naman akong huminto sa pag aaral at mag-ipon na muna. Pumunta ako sa San Fernando at namasukan bilang isang cashier sa isang commercial store. But God sent an angel to my life and kinuha nila ako na maging working student nila. Salamat, Tagra family! Second year, second semester, ay natanggap ako bilang isang Commission on Higher Education (CHED) grantee. Kaya ang laking pasasalamat ko sa Poong May Kapal kasi hindi Niya ako pinabayaan sa laban ng buhay.

(Photo source: Oshin Balasbas FB Page)



(Photo source: Oshin Balasbas FB Page)

Third year, second semester, ay natanggap din ako na maging isang 4Ps grantee kaya ang laking pasasalamat ko sa DSWD ESGPPA scholarship.

Mahirap man ang buhay ay kaya natin hangga't may pananalig tayo sa Poong Maykapal. To the people behind my success: my family Balasabas, Tagra — my “second family, Canio family, Bedro family, Tapia family, Hernan family, Ronquillo family, my Church friends, classmates, etc. , there are no words that can express how thankful I am for being part of your family. To God be all the glory!

Pantawid Pamilya, as it has thus far been implemented, is not perfect. Nor has it offered itself to single-handedly address poverty in the country. However, the previous section has shown that *Pantawid* has been effective in giving poor families a fighting chance at getting out of poverty by ensuring that their children remain healthy and in school. Further, the gains of the program are maximized when it is implemented in complementation with other government programs such as sustainable livelihood, universal health care, and the ESGPPA.

II. A Force Emerges: *Ang Pagtataguyod ng SNPP*

In 2016, the newly installed administration of President Rodrigo Duterte adopted a policy that pivoted from poverty reduction to addressing security and criminality. The Duterte administration's "War on Drugs" appeared to take precedence over all other programs, including those designed to alleviate the plight of the poor, among them, the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* or 4Ps.

While President Duterte vowed to continue to implement the Conditional Cash Transfer program of the 4Ps during his term, by July 2016, there were indications of a slowdown in its implementation. The DSWD, under then Secretary Judy Taguiwalo, in fact, issued a statement explaining that while beneficiary families would continue to receive benefits under the program, no new families would be added to the roster of *Pantawid* families because there were no more funds to keep the program going.² In the meantime, the DSWD would review the 4Ps to assess how it had fared as a poverty alleviation program.

The parent leaders of the *Pantawid* program, many of whom had gotten to know each other through the various community organizations they are part of and the training sessions and seminars they had attended under the DSWD, saw that these statements did not augur well for the future of a program that had impacted significantly on the lives of millions of poor Filipino families. The parent leaders feared that *Pantawid* would be shelved or transformed into what would essentially be a dole-out program. This would be a loss, they felt, given the benefits it had made possible for their own families.

The government's policy pivot away from poverty alleviation would leave the majority of the 4.4 million 4Ps household beneficiaries asking, *Where do we go from here?*

The first response of some *Pantawid* parent leaders from Metro Manila was to organize themselves as *Pantawid* beneficiaries. The organizers belonged to the People Power Volunteers for Reform (PPVR), a national network of women committed to help the "*Kung Walang Corrupt, Walang Mahirap*" platform of the Aquino administration. The parent leaders from five cities in Metro Manila had no funding but they knew that their numbers were their source of strength. They also knew that it was important to organize themselves into a unified force to protect the 4Ps.

The *Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid* (SNPP) was founded to fight for the continued implementation and expansion of the *Pantawid Pamilya Program*. It was formally launched on November 30, 2016 and was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as a legal entity on May 10, 2017. To support their initial activities, the mothers sold Tupperware, a line of kitchenware, to raise funds for meetings and process official registration documents.

2 "No New Beneficiaries under the 4Ps, says Taguiwalo accessed at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/140902-dutert-sona-2016-4ps-beneficiaries> on February 6, 2020.



Photo from the SNPP Launch (Source: SNPP Facebook)

“Ang SNPP ay malayang samahan ng mga Parent Leaders ng Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). Kami ay tumataya upang maisakatuparan ang pagpapatuloy at pagpapalawak ng Pantawid Pamilya. Kami ay kumakatawan sa boses ng aming mga kapwa benepisyaryo upang tuloy-tuloy ang pag-unlad ng usaping pangkabuhayan at pangangalaga sa kapakanan ng pamilya.”

Primary among its avowed goals are the following:

- The protection and promotion of the *Pantawid* program and its gains
- To serve as a voice for poor, marginalized families
- To push for the institutionalization of the *Pantawid* program through its legislation.

Mga Layunin ng SNPP:

- **Babantayan at ipagtatanggol** ang programa at mga tagumpay ng Pantawid
- **Magsisilbing boses** ng mga mahihirap tulad namin.
- **Aalagaan at kakalingain** ang kapwa naming mga benepisyaryo, at lahat ng mga mahihirap.
- **Isulong at maipasa** ang BATAS PANTAWID

The SNPP has organized, trained, and mobilized *Pantawid* program beneficiaries to: (i) Monitor the implementation of social protection programs such as the *Pantawid* program; (ii) Engage government to efficiently and effectively deliver social protection program benefits; (iii) Network and partner with stakeholders to generate support for SNPP programs, projects, and activities, and for the development and implementation of social protection programs such as *Pantawid* programs and services; and (iv) Lobby for the passage of a *Pantawid* law and other social protection policies and laws to ensure that the gains generated by the SNPP are protected and sustained.³

III. May Bunga Kung May Pagkakaisa: *The Fruits of the SNPP's Advocacy Efforts*

“Sumali ako sa SNPP kasi gusto ko maranasan yung pagsasabatas. [Taong] 2013 nagsimula pero hindi naman nangyari, kaya ito na siguro yung pagkakataon, baka tayo [SNPP] na nga iyon. Ang mahalagang natutunan ko ay makipag-dayalogo sa congressman, hindi ko inakala na kasama ako sa makakaharap at makakausap nila. Dati nakikita ko lang sila sa TV [I joined SNPP because I want to experience how to lobby for a law. We initially tried this in 2013 but it did not push through. I learned how to conduct dialogues with a congressman. Never did I expect to be among those who would face people of such high stature, people I had only seen on TV].”

- Nanay Sara (Lajera), Mandaluyong

Since its establishment, the SNPP has been at the forefront of the conversation relating to the *Pantawid* program, through a number of campaigns. Foremost among these was the campaign for the institutionalization of the *Pantawid* program through legislation, to ensure that the program will continue to benefit future generations of poor Filipino families and preserve the gains made through its implementation.

By applying the knowledge they gained from various training sessions hosted by DSWD for *Pantawid* parent leaders in 2013, which taught them the basic principles of lobbying and active citizenship, SNPP members began to engage their respective legislators and the key officials of the DSWD. The core leaders worked closely with DSWD in ensuring that they made the voices of the beneficiaries

³ From the History of Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid or SNPP, unpublished.



SNPP courtesy call and meeting with Sen. Franklin Drilon, 2016 (source: SNPP archives)

heard with regard to the institutionalization of the program, and also its enhancement, such as the provision of a rice subsidy for 4.4 million households.

Embarking on the lobbying process required working with different stakeholders. The majority of the SNPP members did not have any experience engaging with legislators but they took on the challenge and requested meetings with members of Congress and the Senate. They also held multiple dialogues with the leadership of the DSWD, in particular, former Secretary Judy Taguiwalo whom they lobbied not only for the passage of the law but also for improvements to the program such as the provision of cash instead of National Food Authority (NFA) rice for the rice subsidy⁴ promised by President Duterte, and the continued health grant for 1.3 million households.

4 “DSWD agrees with Drilon: Cash instead of rice for 4Ps beneficiaries” at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/817579/dswd-agrees-with-drilon-cash-instead-of-rice-for-4ps-beneficiaries> accessed on February 6, 2020



One of the mass activities carried out by SNPP was a dialogue with former DSWD Secretary Taguiwalo, February 9, 2017 (source: SNPP archives)

In the lobbying process, the SNPP reached out to the Committee on Poverty Alleviation of the House of Representatives, through its former Committee Chairman, Congressman Raymond Democrito Mendoza, and the Committee Secretary, Ms. Odette Mendoza. In the Senate, they reached out to Senators Francis “Kiko” Pangilinan and Franklin Drilon. The SNPP core group also worked closely with the office of the incarcerated Senator Leila de Lima, who chaired the Senate Committee on Social Justice, Welfare, and Rural Development, and Senator Antonio Trillanes, who would speak on behalf of Senator de Lima and take up the cudgels for the proposed bill on the Senate floor.

In a way, it was an example of “learning by doing”, with the core leaders learning about the legislative process while playing an active part in it. The Manila-based SNPP members did their best to attend the committee hearings on the bill.

In the first year, as they lobbied for the passage of the bill, the SNPP expanded their membership nationwide using social media. Starting from five cities in Metro Manila, they reached out to fellow parent leaders and beneficiaries in nearby Regions III and IV-A. Through their relatives in their home provinces, they were also able to expand to various provinces in Northern Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The core leaders of SNPP also reached out to organizations like the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP), whom they had interacted with in different activities hosted by DSWD through the years. ANSA-EAP became a close ally of SNPP, helping them with capacity building activities on topics like constructive engagement and leadership.

Meanwhile, those based in the provinces continued lobbying with their respective district congresspersons to support the 4Ps bill. Many of the parent leaders also received help from their college-age children who simplified complex legislative documents and converted these into forms that were easier to understand and share with each other during meetings.



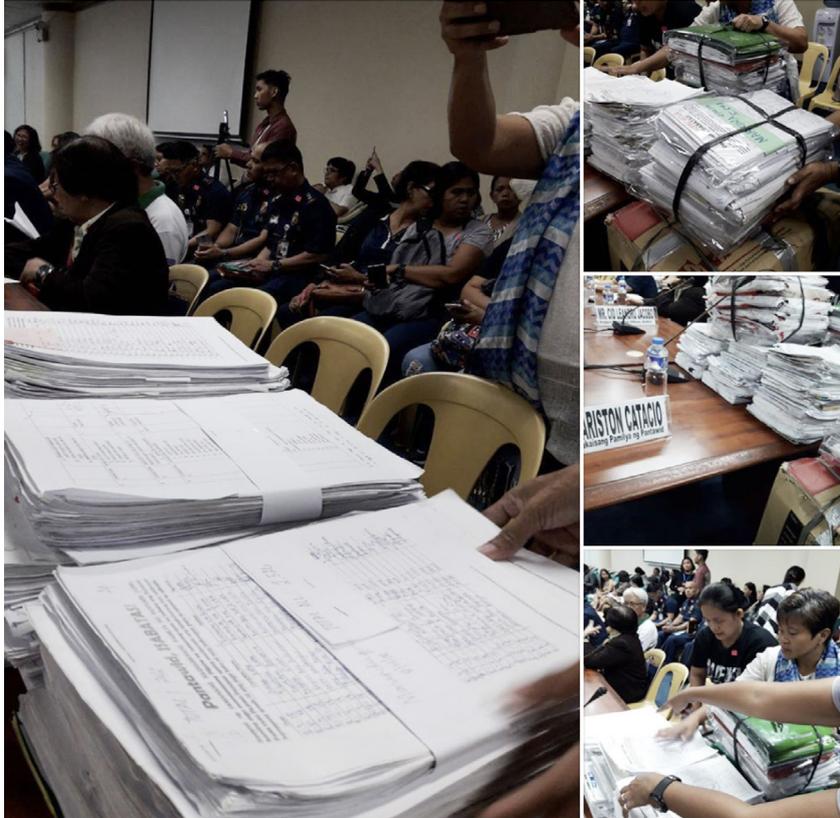
SNPP members, former DSWD Usec. Malou Turalde, and Committee Secretary Mendoza after a Committee Meeting at the House of Representatives, 2016

In 2018, SNPP launched their first massive national activity to push for the legislation of 4Ps, a signature campaign with the goal of having 500,000 signatures in support of the 4Ps bill. The task was not without its challenges, especially given their limited operational funds. However, through what the leaders call a “*ka-bene*”⁵ network united behind the goal of protecting the program that has benefited 4.4 million poor families, SNPP succeeded in collecting more than 500,000 signatures nationwide. In June 2018, SNPP officially endorsed half a million signatures to the chair of the Senate Committee on Social Justice, Welfare, and Rural Development, Senator Leila De Lima. This initiative cemented the power of the beneficiaries, through SNPP, in pushing for the institutionalization of the 4Ps.

5 “*ka-bene*” is a slang term that Pantawid families have come to use to refer to a fellow beneficiary by combining the Filipino term “*ka*” to mean “*co*” and “*bene*” short for beneficiary.

HETO NA PO, mga KABENE! Pasimula na po at narito po ang SNPP sa Senado para isumite ang ating SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN. KALAHATING MILYONG LAGDA! Ito po ang ating dugo at pawis. Nawa'y hawakan ng Panginoon ang puso ng ating mga Senador upang pakinggan ang ating dalangin.

[See Translation](#)



SNPP leaders submit half a million signatures to the Senate. Source: SNPP Facebook page

The campaign for the institutionalization of the *Pantawid* program bore fruit after a long and eventful journey. On April 17, 2019, President Duterte signed Republic Act 11310, which institutionalized the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* into law. With this, the program's implementation by all future administrations of the Philippine government is ensured, until or unless it is repealed.

RA 11310 legislates the following:

- Provision of up to P300 every month for every condition compliant child enrolled in a day care program or elementary school for up to 10 months in a year;
- Provision of up to P500 every month for every condition compliant child enrolled in junior high school for up to 10 months in a year;
- Provision of up to P700 every month for every condition compliant child enrolled in senior high school for up to 10 months in a year; and
- Provision of a P750 health and nutrition grant for every condition compliant family.⁶

⁶ Republic Act 11310, An Act Institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program at <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2019/04apr/2019o0417-RA-11310-RRD.pdf>. Accessed on February 6, 2020.

TECHNOLOGY AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING: THE SNPP EXPERIENCE

Much has been said about the weaponization of social media and technology in society, where truth is systematically eroded by the onslaught of fake news, and internet trolls are known to shape the outcome of elections. The experience of SNPP, however, presents an opposite view, with social media and technology playing a big part in the success of the advocacy initiatives by grassroots organizations.

Over the past few years, SNPP has successfully employed technology to support its advocacy efforts. With the use of technology, it was able to establish a nationwide communication network among its members. With little or no budget for communications, SNPP's leadership relies on free messaging apps to coordinate and communicate with their members, quickly disseminate information, mobilize warm bodies for campaigns (for disaster relief efforts, for example), and quickly engage in virtual discussions of key issues with and among their members nationwide, all in real time.

During the campaign to institutionalize the *Pantawid* program, SNPP's core members employed technology to engage legislators at key points in the lobbying process. At one point, the process seemed to stall because of concerns raised by some senators. Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto, in particular, had certain questions about the program at a crucial point during the third reading of the *Pantawid* bill. The mothers took this to mean that there would be unwanted delays in passing the law. SNPP members immediately took action, flooding Senator Recto's Facebook page with comments. They also asked their members, via their nationwide chat group, to engage with Congresswoman Vilma Santos-Recto, the Deputy Speaker and Representative of the 6th district of Batangas to the lower house of Congress, who is also Sen. Recto's wife. Within minutes, SNPP leaders in Batangas massed in Rep. Recto's district office, demanding to meet and succeeding in getting an audience with the congresswoman. In the end, Sen. Recto opted to meet with the *nanays*, resolving his questions prior to the formal session, which paved the way for the passage of the *Pantawid program* legislation.

The SNPP leaders have used these same communication channels to respond to unfavorable comments made by certain legislators. For example, Senator Cynthia Villar earned the ire of the *nanays* when she was quoted blaming local milk producers for the mental "slowness" of poor children, who could not afford to drink locally-produced, high quality milk.⁷ In another instance, then Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said that the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program should be converted into a livelihood program.⁸ His premise was that the *Pantawid* program funds were being used as a dole-out and would better serve the country if used as a livelihood fund that would contribute to agricultural production. The SNPP leaders responded immediately to such statements, taking to social media to call out the inaccuracies and falsehoods, going as far as posting messages on the concerned legislators' social media pages.

The experience of the SNPP has shown that technology, social media in particular, can be an important and inexpensive mode of communication for an organization, serving as a platform for exchanging ideas between and among themselves, as well as an avenue for getting their messages across to key political figures. Technology can, indeed, be effectively utilized in grassroots advocacy and organizing.

7 "Dumb kids? Villar sees lack of affordable milk" at <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1220342/dumb-kids-villar-sees-lack-of-affordable-milk> accessed on February 6, 2020

8 "DA wants 4Ps changed into livelihood program" at <https://www.philstar.com/business/2018/05/25/1818297/da-wants-4ps-changed-livelihood-program> accessed on February 8, 2020

IV. Mapapagod, Magpapahinga, Pero di Susuko:

Ang Patuloy na Pakikibaka ng SNPP

SNPP celebrated its third anniversary on November 30, 2019. In the years since its formal establishment, the people's organization asserted the role of its members as change agents in the broader community. They continue to express their views and remain actively involved in monitoring and ensuring continuous program improvements for the 4Ps as well as a number of key national issues.

SHAPING THE 4PS IRR

After the passage of the 4Ps into law, the SNPP had to ensure that the corresponding Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) factored-in the perspective and voice of the beneficiaries themselves. With partial support from The Asia Foundation, core leaders of SNPP conducted a series of consultations with 3,672 of its 77,000-strong membership in over 26 provinces and cities nationwide from November 19 to 26, 2019. The goal was to draw in their *ka-benes'* inputs on what they felt should be the key components of the *Pantawid* law's IRR. The SNPP core leaders then presented these findings in various regional consultations hosted by the DSWD. Foremost among the ideas contributed by its members were the following:

- There needs to be clarity in the program's case management. This refers to the case load being handled by the city and municipal links, to ensure that the needs of the program beneficiaries are adequately met. This includes clear protocols for the management of the needs of families with members who are persons with disabilities (PWDs) as well as families of Indigenous Peoples.
- The *Pantawid* law stipulates that there is no limit to the number of children beneficiaries per household for as long as they are between the ages of 0 and 18. This should be clearly reflected in the IRR to allow all the children within a household equal opportunities to complete their education.
- Given the different life circumstances of beneficiary families, the families that are undergoing difficulties should be given due consideration with regard to the seven-year limit of participation in the program. SNPP recommended that the National Advisory Council (NAC) be empowered to rule for longer program coverage by issuing resolutions and guidelines consistent with the targeting system covering these unique circumstances.

The signed IRR of the 4Ps Act captured the majority of SNPP's recommendations, particularly on strengthening case management especially for families with members who are PWDs.



SNPP led IRR consultation with *ka-benes* from Region 12 (Source: SNPP Facebook)

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 4PS RICE SUBSIDY

During President Duterte’s first State of the Nation Address, he promised a rice allowance on top of the benefits that beneficiary families were entitled to receive under the *Pantawid* program.⁹ Following this, funding for an additional cash grant for rice was incorporated into the 2017 national budget.

The SNPP initiated consultations with its members regarding the provision of the rice subsidy. In the end, the group agreed that the subsidy should be given in cash to give the beneficiaries the freedom and flexibility to choose the quality of rice that they will consume as a family. Subsidy in the form of rice or *palay* would not give them this freedom.

The SNPP conducted a “Unity Walk” to request DSWD to distribute the rice subsidy in cash instead of rice, as a practical and more empowering way of providing the subsidy.¹⁰ The DSWD agreed and in March 2017, it announced that *Pantawid* beneficiaries were eligible to receive P600 a month, to be given in two tranches of P300 each, for the purchase of rice. This was one of SNPP’s early victories as an organization.

On November 4, 2019, the Senate approved Joint Resolution No. 8 authorizing the DSWD, in coordination with the National Food Authority (NFA), to use its undisbursed rice subsidy fund of

9 “Duterte orders rice subsidies to poorest families” at <https://news.abs-cbn.com/business/07/25/16/duterte-orders-rice-subsidies-to-poorest-families> accessed on February 8, 2020

10 “4Ps beneficiaries to receive rice subsidy in March” at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/4ps-beneficiaries-rice-subsidy-march> accessed on February 8, 2020

P6.97 billion to purchase *palay* or unhusked rice from farmers in the light of dipping farmgate prices of rice.¹¹ The resolution provided for the purchase of rice from the provinces of Pangasinan, Ilocos Norte, Cagayan, Nueva Vizcaya, Isabela, Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Nueva Ecija, Zamboanga del Sur, and Iloilo.

POSISYON NG SNPP SA USAPIN NG RICE SUBSIDY

- Maayos na kalidad ng bigas upang hindi masakripisyo ang kalusugan ng pamilya.
- Accessibility sa distribution- baka sa panahon ng pagbibigay ay mamamasahe pa at may maisasakripisyong hanap buhay para kunin ang bigas.
- Katumbas na kilo ng bigas sa halaga ng rice subsidy na P600/month = P20,000
- Sa panahon ng krisis o pagsalanta dahil sa kalamidad ng bagyo at iba pa, maaring bumaba ang presyo ng bigas. Ano po ang hakbang o plano para maibigay ito?
- Lahat po ba ng kakailanganing halaga para sa gastusin (logistics, administrative cost, at iba pa) ay hindi na kukunin sa halaga ng aming matatanggap?
- Sa huli, nirerekomenda pa rin namin na manatiling cash ang aming matatanggap at bigyan kami ng kalayaan na pumili ng bigas para sa aming pamilya.
- At kung maiimplementa ang Joint Resolution. May mga mungkahi ang mga beneficiary mula rice-producing area na may mga kooperatiba, at may kakayanang mag supply ng bigas sa mga benepisyaryo upang sa ganon ay talagang matulungan ang mga kapwa nating Pilipinong magsasaka.

HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

When the Duterte administration mounted its so-called “War on Drugs” which has led to approximately 30,000 deaths, mostly of alleged drug users and pushers in urban poor communities, SNPP began playing a more active role in human rights advocacy.

In partnership with organizations such as Initiatives for Dialogue and Empowerment through Alternative Legal Services (IDEALS), the SNPP provided basic orientation for its members on human rights, especially within the context of extrajudicial killings (EJKs) and other punitive approaches carried out by both state and non-state actors. SNPP also worked with the Office of the Vice President (OVP) which organized a series of workshops on the subject of human rights for their members.

SNPP has also conducted town hall meetings to develop barangay advocates for human rights. Between October and November of 2019, the SNPP core leaders have led 68 human rights sessions for around 4,613 participants in such town hall meetings conducted through the *Pantawid* program’s Family Development Sessions and small group neighborhood gatherings.¹²

11 “Senate final reading measure using 4Ps but palay from farmers Philippines” at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/244124-senate-final-reading-measure-using-4ps-buy-palay-from-farmers-philippines> accessed February 12, 2020

12 “SNPP holds human rights townhall sessions at <https://snpp.ph/advocacies/human-rights-townhall-session-oct-nov-2019> accessed February 19, 2020.

SUPPORT FOR FELLOW BENEFICIARIES AFFECTED BY FIRE AND OTHER HAZARDS

Aside from their usual activities as a people's organization, SNPP has engaged in relief missions to provide assistance to their fellow beneficiaries affected by different disasters such as floods, demolitions, and fires.

On February 22, 2019, a community in Barangay Addition Hills in Mandaluyong fell victim to a large fire that razed many homes affecting 764 families, among them *Pantawid* beneficiaries. SNPP responded quickly to the situation, asking its members for donations in cash and in kind to help the displaced families.

A few months after the fire in Addition Hills, another fire razed Market 3 in Navotas City on October 18, 2019, affecting the homes of more than 2,000 individuals, the majority of whom were 4Ps beneficiaries. In coordination with Art Relief Mobile Kitchen, SNPP members from Malabon, Navotas, and Mandaluyong volunteered to cook hot meals for the fire victims in the evacuation areas. They also brought donations for their fellow beneficiaries.

Following the eruption of Taal Volcano¹³ on January 12, 2020, thousands of communities in the province of Batangas were displaced from their homes and forced to relocate when the authorities warned of an imminent larger eruption. SNPP mobilized efforts, together with organizations such as *Tindig Pilipinas*, Sogo Hotel, Cavite Riders, and other private donors, to respond to the needs of the *Pantawid* beneficiary families who were dislocated by the natural calamity.



13 On January 12, 2020, Taal Volcano issued a large volume of smoke and ash following a steam-driven or phreatic eruption. This was caused by ground water coming into contact with hot magma and resulting in a release of steam and ash into the surrounding areas. Thousands of residents in the CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon) region were displaced and the resulting ashfall would reach other parts of Luzon, including Metro Manila. While there were few casualties, damage to property and loss of livelihood is estimated to have reached the hundreds of millions of pesos. The Department of Agriculture estimates that damage to agricultural products alone has reached P577.59 million. (<https://www.rappler.com/business/249315-agricultural-damage-taal-volcano-eruption-january-14-2020> accessed on February 13, 2020).

On January 15, 2020, the group raised P23,000 to purchase hygiene kits, food packs, baby and adult diapers, and underwear which were distributed to more than 600 families in Tanauan, Batangas, and surrounding areas. A second round of fund-raising done on January 18, 2020, mostly through “pass the hat” collections during their Family Development Sessions, and yielded P19,000 for the purchase of relief goods for communities in Tambo, Lipa, Tanauan, and San Jose in Batangas. While the volcano has since quieted down, SNPP, through its *Bangon Batangas* relief initiative, continues to provide support to its member beneficiaries displaced from Taal Island, Laurel, and Agoncillo. As of February 9, 2020, the group had undertaken five outreach trips (January 15, 19, 20, 22 and February 9) to provide relief to families in Batangas.



Relief operations for SNPP members affected by Taal eruption
(Source: SNPP archives)

SNPP also mobilized its members to provide support for victims of an earthquake in Mindanao during the last quarter of 2019.

COVID-19 RELIEF RESPONSE

“*Mahirap para sa mahirap*” was the battle cry that spurred SNPP members to go into relief operations in response to the on-going pandemic. This held true for SNPP when they took part, along with other organizations, in their biggest relief effort to date to distribute relief assistance to the poorest communities affected directly and indirectly by the COVID-19 response, particularly the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) from March to June 2020. Taking the frontlines as the entire country faced the COVID-19 pandemic, the SNPP was among the first groups to facilitate relief efforts during the first few weeks of the lockdown in Luzon. In close partnership with *Bayanihan Musikahan*, the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), ABS-CBN Foundation, and the Jollibee Group Foundation, among others, SNPP helped distribute relief assistance to more than 100,000 households all over Metro Manila, and Regions 3, 4A, and 7.



Relief distribution for families affected by lockdown in the National Capital Region (NCR) (Source: SNPP archives)

VOTER'S EDUCATION PROGRAM

With their new-found awareness of the importance of having allies in government, following the success of their campaign to institutionalize the *Pantawid* program, the SNPP went into voter's education for its members, in partnership with ANSA-EAP. Its voter's education program centers on the need to support candidates with the R.I.G.H.T. credentials: *May tamang pamamahala, katapatang loob, may kakayahan at karanasan, may puso para sa tao at Panginoon, at track record sa maayos na pamumuno* [management skills, sincerity, heart for the people and God, and a track record for good governance.] This would include how the candidates expressed (or withheld) support for the passing of the *Pantawid* law. They also encourage the membership to take an active part in promoting the appropriate standards during elections.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS

The SNPP has also strengthened the leadership skills of its core group members through the voter's education program and training programs on community organizing.

V. Mga Aral at Panaginip: *Conversations with SNPP on the Future*

LEARNING FROM SNPP'S EXPERIENCE

The experience of the SNPP, particularly that of its core parent leaders, has proven to be abundant in lessons for students of social movements, especially those who are interested in the strategic role that people's organizations play in society. This monograph ends with a conversation with SNPP core leaders on their vision for the future. As the leaders would say, the institutionalization of the 4Ps was just the beginning of their journey and these conversations with them have allowed them to look back on how much the program has helped them, and how these fuel their dreams for the future.

The SNPP core leaders we spoke with were one in saying that they and their families benefited much from the *Pantawid* program. The material benefits were significant for families that were often living on the brink of poverty.

Nanay Jai Catacio, who currently serves as president of the SNPP recalled,

“Malaking tulong talaga yung grant. Dati, wala kaming kuryente, walang tubig, hindi nakakakain ng tatlong beses sa isang araw. Hindi naman dapat mangyari iyon sa buhay. Nawalan ng trabaho yung mister ko, hindi namin alam kung saan kukunin ang panggastos. Malaking tulong yung grant, pasimula ulit sa buhay [The grants were a big help. At that time, we had no electricity, no water, we did not eat three meals in a day. This should not happen to anyone. My husband lost his job and we did not know where to get funds to meet our needs. The grants helped us to start over].”

The impact on the health and education of their children was also significant. *Nanay* Vina of Marikina said,

“Isa po sa kabataan na mapalad ang anak ko at ang pamilya sa ganitong prebilibhiyo na binigyan ng pagkakataon sa simula nang sya ay nasa high school... Nakatanggap siya ng tulong galing sa gobyerno upang makapagtapos pa sa mataas na antas ng edukasyon. Buong puso ang aming pasasalamat dahil ang edukasyon at kaalaman nito ay tunay na hahango sa kahirapan at magandang kinabukasan nito [My child was lucky to have been given this privilege while in high school. He received help from the government so he was able to reach a higher level of education. We are so thankful for this because education and the knowledge he gains will bring us out of poverty and give him a chance at a better future].”

Beyond the cash grants and their impact on the health and education of the children, one of the threads that permeated practically all the stories of the SNPP leaders was the **impact of training and continuing education on them as individuals and as leaders within their communities**. Again and again, the *nanays* shared that participating in the Family Development Sessions allowed them to learn important new skills on parenting, household management, and values formation, among many others. *Nanay* Beth has developed a greater sense for budgeting and allocating the precious financial resources

to which her family now has access. She also appreciates the importance of proper nutrition for her family. For *Nanay Xienzy*, time management is a new found skill, and she says,

“Dito ko natutunan na ang oras pala pwedeng hatiin [I learned that time can be managed].”

She also revealed that it has enabled her members to discover more productive endeavors, saying,

“Dati yung mga member ko nagsusugal. Ngayon, may sarili na silang negosyo [In the past, my members would just gamble. Now, they have their own businesses].”

Nanay Sarah, as a mother of six, explains that before the FDS sessions, her concerns were limited to her everyday tasks in the household. She knew nothing about the rights of children, the concepts surrounding violence against women and children (VAWC), even the idea of self-development. But the sessions helped her gain an awareness of these things, and whatever she learned, she applied at home. She added,

“Iyon ang pamana sa atin, na mabago natin ang ating mga sarili [This is its real legacy to us, that we transform ourselves].”

Some of the core leaders of the SNPP were likewise active members of the People Power Volunteers for Reform¹⁴ or the *Pwersa ng Pamayanan para sa Voluntarismo at Reporma* (PPVR), a citizens' movement for good governance and reforms. Under the PPVR, the SNPP core members were able to undergo additional training sessions on leadership which further helped them in their growth as core leaders in their respective spheres of influence, including SNPP. *Nanay Nida* mentions that through the PPVR, her perspectives broadened further:

“PPVR ang nagbigay ng FDS. Maraming topics na tinalakay, tulad nang sa pamilya, disaster, pagiging bahagi sa komunidad at sa barangay, at iba pa. Marami kaming natutunan at nakabuo rin kami ng sariling grupo sa barangay. Natutunan naming kamustahin ang mga miyembro [PPVR gave the FDS trainings. Many topics were tackled: the family, disaster, being part of our communities and the barangay, among others. We learned many things and we were able to organize our barangay. We learned to watch out for our membership].”

Their newly honed skills were almost always accompanied by a greater appreciation of their self-worth and empowerment as individuals and emergent leaders among their peers and fellow *Pantawid* beneficiaries and, by extension, the broader communities to which they belong.

Nanay Juliet, a SNPP core leader from Mandaluyong, relates:

“Dati, ni hindi ako makatayo sa harap ng maraming tao, ngayon nauuna pa ako magsalita [Before, I could not even stand in front of many people, now I am the first to speak].”

14 The People Power Volunteers for Reform is one of the many civil society organizations that has partnered with the Department of Social Welfare and Development on the conduct of Family Development Sessions.

Nanay Perla, a parent leader who originally hails from Bicol, boasts of a similar change in herself, saying:

“Dati, mahiyain ako. Ngayon, makapal na ang mukha ko [I used to be shy. Now, I am thick-faced].

Nanay Sara reiterates that she cannot believe that her involvement has led to her doing things she never would have thought she could do. She says:

“Sa mga pinakamahalagang natutunan ko — isa ang makipag-dayalogo sa congressman. Hindi ko inakala na kasama ako sa makikipagharap sa matataas na tao na dati ay nakikita ko lang sa TV [Among the most important things I learned — one is that I am now capable of conducting dialogues with a congressman. Never did I expect to be among those who would face people of such high stature, people I had only seen on TV].”

They were able to use this skill in the lobbying process. The confidence they gained through the FDS sessions enabled them to talk to senators and congressmen as co-equals. There were also instances that SNPP core leaders were asked to sit in the panel during Congressional and Senate committee hearings on the 4Ps and other related policies on poverty reduction.

For Nanay Beth, her involvement in the group has encouraged her to become a better person and leader. She relates:

“Ikaw ang kaharap ng mga member, kailangan humaba ang pasensiya. Nahubog ang pasensiya ko. Pampalago ng iyong kaalaman. Nakilala ko rin yung sarili ko na maging facilitator. Nakakapag-train na rin ako ng kapwa [When you face the members, you have to have a lot of patience. I developed patience aside from gaining knowledge. I also realized that I can be a facilitator. I can now train my peers].”

Nanay Analiza is amazed at her own transformation due to her participation in FDS sessions and her involvement in the SNPP. She likes to joke that from being a simple “misis” she is now a “bise”. As vice-president of the SNPP, she has grown by leaps and bounds. She expounds:

“Yung FDS malaking tulong sa pagiging leader, dati homebody ako, trabahong bahay lang ang inaatupag. Ngayon naging Bottom-Up Budgeting (BUB) signatory, co-chair ng samahan, malaking pagbabago sa buhay ko. ‘Yung mga training, in-apply ko lahat. Wala akong tinatanggihan. Tuloy, ang dami kong natutunan [The FDS helped me a lot in becoming a leader. I used to be a homebody, I only knew housework. Now, I am a signatory to the BUB, I am co-chair of the organization. There have been many changes in my life. The trainings, anything I learned, I applied. I never declined anything. The result is I have learned so much].”

The mothers radiate a sense of pride in the awareness that the small steps — the tiny increments in their progress as individuals — have led to bigger steps toward their self-transformation. With that knowledge comes a profound realization of their power to improve themselves as parents and community leaders, and the immensity of their potential as individuals.

For *Nanay Anna Luna*, overcoming her self-doubt when called to a position of leadership, and realizing she could become a good leader, was monumental. She recalls:

“Na-overcome ko yun at nagkaroon ng self-esteem. At natuto ako sa bawat module na binababa [I overcame it and developed self-esteem. And I learned with each module that was handed down].”

The training sessions had a profound impact on the lives of the core group of leaders who took part in them, which filtered down to other members of their community. According to *Nanay Vina*, their members benefited from their leadership training experience. She explained:

“Pagkatapos ng training, dapat ibahagi mo yun sa kapwa benes. Kapag nag-aaral, dapat nangangarap ka. Nakakapagod maging mahirap. Hinihimok namin ang mga nanay na dapat hindi sila maging tamad [After the training, you need to share what you learned with your fellow beneficiaries. When you learn, you have to dream. It’s exhausting to be poor. We encourage our fellow mothers not to be lazy].”

Nanay Vina, a mother of seven, has seen the ripple effects of the 4Ps on her own family. Her daughter graduated from college as a scholar under the Expanded Students’ Grants-in-Aid Program for Poverty Alleviation (ESGPPA) and is now a scholar in graduate studies at the Ateneo School of Government. Because of their involvement in the *Pantawid* program, the family learned to dream big and aspire to have a college graduate in their family for the first time ever.

From the stories shared by the *nanays* and the parent leaders interviewed for this monograph, it is evident that, beyond merely a means for transferring skills, the Family Development Sessions are, in fact, very powerful tools for transforming the beneficiaries in very tangible ways, and laid the foundation for building a core of leaders in the communities they belong to.

A second important lesson from the SNPP experience relates to the **strategic importance of technology in the organizing process.**

Technology has enabled the SNPP leadership to develop an effective means of reaching out to and communicating with its nationwide network of members with little or no expense. Currently, their Facebook page has 17,000 members. Information dissemination and coordination — previously done by community organizers with a great deal of expense involved in physically traveling to or gathering groups in meetings that would have entailed provisions for travel and sometimes even food and accommodation — are now done instantaneously at the touch of a button through SMS and messenger apps.

Facebook messenger calls have replaced traditional meetings, and now quickly and effectively facilitate discussions and shape consensus on urgent issues. SNPP leaders make use of messaging apps to mobilize their members for critical activities such as mass actions and disaster response efforts. The SNPP leaders have also learned to use social media to express their opinions on issues of national import. They have used social media to engage national leaders in discussions of critical issues that concern them. They have not hesitated to publicly call out legislators and cabinet ministers on social media, when these national figures expressed views or positions that the SNPP leaders felt were offensive or inaccurate.

The experience of the SNPP has shown that technology, social media in particular, can be an important conduit for communication within an organization, especially when resources are limited. Social media

offers the platform for exchanging ideas and engaging with the powers that be. In short, when put to good use, technology can be an important tool for grassroots advocacy and organizing.

A third lesson that can be derived from the experience of SNPP relates to the **important role that people's organizations can play in the implementation of a national program** such as the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program*.

From the very start of the *Pantawid* program's roll out, the parent leaders have played a key role in facilitating its implementation. It is the inherent role of the parent leaders, guided by the municipal and city links, to facilitate the process so that the families are able to fulfill the program requirements. They help the families fill out forms, prepare the paperwork, and ensure their compliance with the required school attendance and health center visits. The establishment of the SNPP has created a more formal network of accountability among the beneficiaries with the parent leaders playing this guiding role with authority and efficacy.

With the organization of the parent leaders into the SNPP, it has also become easier to bring groups of beneficiaries together to come to a consensus on how they think the government's other interventions for the poor can be improved. For instance, when the idea of providing rice subsidies for the poor emerged, the SNPP immediately engaged in a consultation process with its membership to discuss: a) whether they were in agreement with this; and b) how they felt the intervention could be made most effective. Eventually, the emergent position was that the assistance would best be appreciated in the form of cash as this would allow the families to decide how they could make use of it, and finding their own, probably cheaper and higher quality sources of rice.

The SNPP has, thus far, proven to be an important conduit for information in the implementation of the program. By establishing a network of beneficiaries all over the country, the parent leaders are easily able to explain processes and essential components of the government program to beneficiaries, and easily respond to questions from beneficiaries as they arise. As the parent leaders have shared in their personal testimonies, even the new knowledge that they gather from the training sessions — whether they directly involve the *Pantawid* program's implementation or other more general skills tackled in the FDS — is easily cascaded to and shared with their members.

Finally, the SNPP has played an important role in the institutionalization of the *Pantawid* law. By coming together as a people's organization, the SNPP parent leaders were able to consolidate the beneficiaries so that their voices could be heard and they could clearly articulate how the *Pantawid* program had made a difference in their lives and why it should continue to benefit other poor families. They also engaged in mobilizations and other activities to make their points heard by the powers that be.

The SNPP's efforts would come to fruition: they succeeded in having the *Pantawid* program pass into law, thereby ensuring its implementation regardless of shifts in political leadership. They have also managed to work successfully with both the legislative and executive branches of government, as well as their members, on the implementing rules and regulations of the *Pantawid* law. The SNPP has shown time and again what can be accomplished when people's organizations become active and engaged partners of the government in the development and implementation of its programs.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The discussions initiated in the process of preparing this monograph was also an opportunity for the SNPP leaders to reflect on their hopes for the future. After their unequivocal win in the passage of the *Pantawid* program into law, the parent leaders expressed the hope that the program would continue

to transform the lives of other ordinary Filipino families like theirs. They also saw the potential for the program to grow exponentially if certain changes could be instituted to make its delivery more efficient. For instance, given the steep learning curve for newly selected parent leaders, the mothers proposed the extension of their term limits to four years from the current two. They also expressed the need for additional staff (perhaps referring to municipal and city links) to provide assistance to the families. They also insisted that the *Pantawid* processes be streamlined further to make the program more efficient. One example given was the inconvenience and cost entailed in having to make repeated submissions of requirements to city links especially with regard to the processing of retroactive payments. For families already struggling to meet their day-to-day needs and juggling keeping a home, raising children, and making a living, this is no small additional task. They also stressed the importance of bolstering the financial skills of the beneficiary families through the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) which, while well-intentioned, was not quite there yet in terms of its potential. The additional training would better prepare those who choose to participate in the SLP.

It was evident from the spirited exchange among the mothers that the suggestions raised were by no means exhaustive; the topic of how the *Pantawid* program can be still be improved is one that the SNPP will surely continue to pursue.

When asked about their goals and aspirations for the SNPP as an organization, the leaders were no less enthusiastic in sharing their ideas. They expressed the need for SNPP to gather more resources for their work. At present, the organization has no physical office. It has no steady source of funds to support their administrative and other costs. Neither does the organization have resources to engage in projects that would contribute to self-sufficiency and financial stability, such as cooperatives development or microfinance.

Other mothers said that they hoped the organization would continue to remain strong (*manatiling matatag*) and its leaders continue to love and support one another. They also expressed the hope that the core group members could be more successful working together (*sama-samang umangat*). Other dreams were more personal in nature: one or two mothers hoped that their work could someday take them to places abroad. Others took their dreams for SNPP in a whole new direction, expressing the hope that one day SNPP could evolve into a partylist organization and succeed in winning a seat in Congress as a sectoral representative.

Questions remain on how they will manage in the immediate future given the coronavirus pandemic. The SNPP and its mass base are among the most vulnerable sectors of Philippine society in this time of crisis. The urban poor often live among the most highly dense areas of the country where they are susceptible to the spread of the virus. Their sources of livelihood, already involving hand-to-mouth existence as it is, have become even more precarious under strict community quarantine arrangements. Discussions on how the group can protect themselves and their expanded community, are among the most urgent concerns at this point.

Despite all these questions, conversations with the SNPP core group members on what they might be able to achieve moving forward as a people's organization, were spirited. And for every one of these parent leaders, the possibilities for the future of SNPP are endless.

Not too long ago, these seemingly ordinary women were content to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers overwhelmed by the enormity of their tasks as home-makers and child-bearers. These days, they revel in the awareness that they ARE leaders and the empowered driving force behind an organization that has accomplished much and can now aspire to do so much more. To them, no dream is too far off the mark. They know that, as long as they work together, the sky's the limit. ■

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