

CHAPTER I: RATIONALE



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SUBJECT : GUIDELINES FOR THE NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT ProtecTEEN: PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND OTHER INTERVENTIONS FOR ADOLESCENT MOTHERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

I. RATIONALE

In the Philippines, where the prevalence of teenage pregnancies is the highest and rising among ASEAN nations, teen pregnancy continues to be a serious problem according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The UNFPA and the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) estimate that the Philippines' population will reach 108.8 million in 2020. More than 53 million are below 25 years of age, including 10.3 million adolescent girls (10-19 years old). UNFPA echoes the sense of urgency demonstrated by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and Commission on Population and Development (CPD), which recently described the still alarmingly high teenage pregnancy rate in the country as a "national emergency"¹.

Adolescents in the Philippines are also at risk for multiple and frequent pregnancies. The following factors contribute to shorter birth intervals and multiple pregnancies in adolescence: 1) lower educational attainment and economic status; 2) poor access to contraception exacerbated by legal barriers to access modern contraception; 3) challenges in the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education; and 4) limited service delivery points providing adolescent and youth-friendly sexuality and reproductive health services. Contributory risk behaviors that adolescent mothers are more exposed to domestic violence. Global data shows women who experience intimate partner violence have a 16% greater chance of having a low birth-weight baby, and are more than twice as likely to experience depression – all factors that can negatively impact the child's development.²

The Social Technology Bureau (STB) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) conducted a focus group discussion on teenage pregnancy in the local areas and recognized some consequences: The majority of teenagers' psychosocial wellbeing and emotions are typically impacted by pregnancy. The teen's

¹ Eliminating Teenage Pregnancy in the Philippines, UNFPA Policy Brief, January 2020

² Eliminating Teenage Pregnancy in the Philippines, UNFPA Policy Brief, January 2020

poor academic performance, or worse, their decision to drop out of school to avoid embarrassment, their parents' increased burden of caring for them, the burden of dealing with the stigma from the community, and the economic hardship it will cause the family and the nation all start the chain reaction. Both the mother's and the child's physical and emotional health would be jeopardized. Teenage fathers, on the other hand, are under pressure to support their relationships and risk dropping out of school. Aside from this, young parents, particularly adolescent mothers, face psychosocial, spiritual, and economic challenges that must be addressed.

Key government agencies and civil society organizations, especially children and youth organizations, named adolescent pregnancy as the most pressing issue during the 2019 National Summit, citing its negative impact on individuals, families, communities, and the nation as a whole. In fact, the Philippine government has already declared teenage pregnancy a national social emergency due to the significant increase in teenage birth rates over the last decade. The Commission on Population and Development (CPD) also stated that there are currently 1.2 million minor-led households or families with young parents, which will have an impact on the country's growth, necessitating the declaration of a national emergency.

Recognizing this concern, the FY 2021 General Appropriations Act (GAA) directed the DSWD to create a Social Protection Program for Teenage Mothers and Their Children (SPPTMC) in collaboration with the CPD. In 2022, the same program, now known as the Social Protection Program for Adolescent Mothers and Their Children (SPPAMC), is included in the FY 2022 GAA Provision with a budget of Ten Million Pesos (Php 10,000,000.00) for the implementation of the approved strategies and interventions developed by the DSWD, CPD, and other relevant agencies.

Furthermore, on 25 June 2021, Executive Order (EO) No. 141 was issued, designating as a national priority the adoption of measures to address the root causes of the rising number of teenage pregnancies and mobilizing government entities to that end. As a member of the Human Development and Poverty Reduction (HDPR) Cabinet Cluster, the DSWD should provide all necessary assistance to enable Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) to implement selected programs, activities, and projects within their respective communities.

In accordance with these directives, the SPPAMC Operational Framework and Strategies were created, which take into account social protection plans, adolescent mothers' risks and vulnerabilities, and implementing and coordinating mechanisms. Social insurance, labor market interventions, social assistance and welfare programs, social safety nets, and child protection are a few of the techniques mentioned. These cleared the way for figuring out which government programs were already in place and which ones needed to be tapped to fill in the service gaps for adolescent moms and their children.

In order to better direct the program's development, CPD hired a consultant to quickly assess the needs and circumstances of adolescent mothers in 2021. The appraisal sought to identify risks and vulnerabilities, gaps in the provision of current services, and

recommendations from the primary and secondary target beneficiaries regarding the kinds of services that were required and pertinent. It included individuals from urban and rural areas who were adolescent mothers, their partners, and their parents, as well as Pantawid and non-Pantawid beneficiaries and indigenous peoples from regions III, IV-A, V, VI, X, and NCR. Family, psychosocial variables, and socioeconomic status have all been found to contribute to adolescent pregnancies. Furthermore, it was discovered that early pregnancy poses health and psychosocial hazards, that not everyone is aware of social services, and that some people struggle to obtain social services since they require parental/adult roles.

Thus, the development of a Project ProtecTEEN: Psychosocial Support and other Interventions for Adolescent Mothers and their Families was included in the DSWD Social Technology Agenda. This social technology for adolescent mothers and their families is required to safeguard and enhance psychosocial well-being, as well as to increase adolescent parents' capacity to perform their expected duties as young people and responsibilities as parents of children. Preventing early, unplanned, and recurring births among adolescent parents and teens-at-risk is also essential. The project also adheres to Administrative Order No. 19, s. 2020, as well as the DSWD GAD Agenda for 2020-2025.