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COMMITTEE MEETING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Public Accounts	Inquiry into the implementation of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) particularly on the distribution of the cash aid and on the accountability of the implementers	<p>The Joint Committee, co-presided by Rep. "Kuya" Jose Antonio Jonathan Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), Chair of the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, and Rep. Michael Defensor (Party-List, ANAKALUSUGAN), Chair of the Committee on Public Accounts, will continue its inquiry into the implementation of the SAP in its next meeting.</p> <p>Speaker Alan Peter "Compañero" Cayetano (1st District, Taguig City-Pateros) explained that the main objective of the inquiry is to find solutions on how to implement the SAP in the fastest way possible with the simplest process and least of requirements. He noted that the bureaucratic procedures of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the lack of coordination between regional directors and DSWD officials at the central office with regard to the implementation of SAP policy guidelines have resulted in the slow distribution of the SAP subsidies and caused confusion among local government units (LGUs) and barangays. He informed the body that Congress, in consultation with LGUs, had proposed a three-step process for the SAP distribution prior to its implementation. However, the DSWD adopted a 30-step SAP distribution process instead.</p> <p>The Speaker also asked the DSWD to speed up its food packing processes considering that its National Resource Operations Center was only able to release 10,000 family food packs per day, which were a far cry from the 40,000 food packs being released per day in Taguig City alone.</p> <p>Majority Leader Ferdinand Martin Romualdez (1st District, Leyte) recommended that the DSWD intensify its coordination with the House Members and the LGUs in order to improve the pace of the SAP distribution. He nevertheless extended his gratitude to the DSWD for its continuing efforts to serve the Filipinos especially the poor families during this pandemic.</p> <p>Rep. Sy-Alvarado said that several issues have surfaced related to the distribution of the SAP which include the slow distribution of the subsidies; distribution of alleged expired goods; corruption among local officials; and lack of transparency in the distribution of the cash-aid.</p> <p>Rep. Defensor said that the problem is not only about implementation but also on the policy itself. He explained that the DSWD should have continued implementing the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) Program separately instead of merging it with the SAP.</p> <p>The AICS is one of the DSWD's protective services for the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable/disadvantaged individuals, particularly those who are suffering from unexpected life event or crisis, by providing them psychosocial intervention and/or direct financial assistance to help them recover from such difficult circumstances. (Source: DSWD website)</p> <p>Likewise, Rep. Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino (8th District, Cavite) cited the problems created by the combined implementation of the AICS and SAP in his district. He said that his constituents in Cavite</p>

<p>Continuation...</p> <p>Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Public Accounts</p>		<p>have received financial assistance under the AICS program having been severely affected by the eruption of the Taal Volcano last January. He maintained that this assistance should be outside of what his constituents should receive under the SAP especially since their circumstances were more on the extreme as some have lost their homes and major sources of livelihood.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Luis Raymund "LRay" Villafuerte Jr. (2nd District, Camarines Sur) agreed that this issue on the distribution of SAP subsidy being made contingent upon the other programs of the DSWD should be rectified by the Department. He also suggested that the DSWD review its procurement process for food packs to ensure their availability and speed up their distribution.</p> <p>DSWD Undersecretary for Operations Aimee Neri informed the body that the central office had already issued two memorandum circulars reminding its regional directors that the two programs should be implemented separately.</p> <p>Speaker Cayetano recommended that all DSWD undersecretaries and regional directors should discuss among themselves and come up with a uniform rule or procedure that will address the concerns of all districts and regions relative to SAP distribution.</p> <p>Meanwhile, DSWD Undersecretary Danilo Pamonag presented the overall process flow of the first and second tranche of the SAP and the status of their implementation. He said that the process flow involves seven steps, namely: release of fund by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to the DSWD; determination of target beneficiaries by the LGUs; submission of project proposal by the LGUs and forging of memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the DSWD and LGUs; transfer of funds by the DSWD to LGUs; conduct of pay-outs; submission of liquidation reports by the LGUs; and the conduct of post-validation by the DSWD.</p> <p>Pamonag reported that upon receipt of funding from the DBM amounting to P100 billion on April 2, the DSWD was able to transfer funds to LGUs by April 3. From April 3 to 5, the DSWD through the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) credited the SAP cash subsidy to the cash cards of 3.72 million beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) equivalent to P16.3 billion. However, as of May 11, 440 LGUs have yet to complete their distribution of the SAP cash subsidy to non-cash card holders and other qualified beneficiaries not covered by the 4Ps.</p> <p>According to Pamonag, several factors affected the distribution of the SAP which include the following: stringent validation process of LGUs in determining eligible beneficiaries; emergence of waitlisted or "left-out" beneficiaries caused by prioritization; mobility constraints due to the lockdown and in geographically isolated areas; exposure of SAP implementers to health risks; and security threats in the areas of distribution.</p> <p>For the second tranche, the beneficiaries are the 8.5 million families who were included in the first tranche and 5 million families nationwide who were left out of the first tranche. Out of the 5 million waitlisted or left-out families, 3.5 million would come from areas under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) – National Capital Region, Region III except Aurora, Region IV-A, Benguet, Pangasinan, Iloilo, Cebu, Albay, Bacolod City, Davao City and Zamboanga City – while the 1.5 million would come from general community quarantine (GCQ) areas.</p> <p>To speed up the distribution of the SAP, the DSWD has partnered with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), United States Agency for International Development (USAID)</p>
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<p><i>Continuation...</i> Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Public Accounts</p>		<p>Philippines, and Developers Connect Philippines in launching a web and mobile application that will allow SAP beneficiaries to register with the DSWD or their respective LGUs without leaving their homes. In addition, digital payments will also be utilized to further speed up the distribution of the SAP subsidy, Pamonag said.</p> <p>Rep. Francisco Datol Jr. (Party-List, SENIOR CITIZENS) maintained that senior citizens should not be excluded from the SAP cash assistance just because they were already getting social pensions and stipends pursuant to other laws.</p> <p>DSWD Assistant Secretary Glenda Relova replied that all indigent senior citizens are included in the second tranche of the SAP.</p> <p>Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) noted that the areas covered by the second tranche of the SAP are limited to areas that are placed under the ECQ and GCQ. He said that this is unfair to the poor families in his congressional district and other areas in Mindanao. It is also a violation of the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act” which he said provides for the distribution of cash subsidy to all 18 million low-income households in the country, without any condition that they must be residents of areas declared under ECQ or GCQ.</p> <p>Pamonag and DSWD Chief Legal Officer Paul Anthony Tacorda said that the composition of beneficiaries for the second tranche of the SAP was approved by President Rodrigo Duterte and the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF).</p> <p>Rep. Sy-Alvarado informed the body that several House Resolutions were filed calling for an investigation into the implementation of the SAP. He said that the two Committees are just waiting for these HRs to be formally referred to them.</p> <p>The DSWD Secretary will be invited in the next meeting of the joint Committee to answer the queries of the Members.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>North Luzon Growth Quadrangle (Special Committee)</p>	<p>Briefing by the Regional Task Force (RTF) for COVID-19 in Regions I and II and the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) on the status of COVID-19 pandemic in North Luzon and their respective recovery programs</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ramon Guico III (5th District, Pangasinan), listened to the briefing by the RTF offices in Regions I, II and CAR on the status of COVID-19 pandemic in North Luzon and their respective recovery programs.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Guico underscored the importance of knowing the actual situation on the ground in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic to know the severity of the spread of the disease, particularly in North Luzon, as well as the response of the government agencies concerned to the pandemic and the challenges that they encounter. He also mentioned that funding for COVID-19 response should be given priority.</p> <p>Office of Civil Defense (OCD) Policy and Planning Service Director Tecson John Lim presented the organizational structure and functions of agencies involved in the government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On top of the organizational structure is the President who acts as the National Command Authority. Directly under him is the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) which sets the policies for the entire government's response to pandemic. Under the IATF is the National Task Force (NTF) for COVID-19 which serves as the operational command.</p>

<p>Continuation... North Luzon Growth Quadrangle (Special Committee)</p>		<p>The NTF is mainly composed of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) chaired by Department of National Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana. Under the NTF are the RTF units headed by the OCD regional directors, with the regional directors of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) as RTF vice chairpersons. The RTFs oversee all tactical matters at the regional level, while the Regional IATFs review appeals relative to risk classification and concur with community quarantine classification imposed by local government units (LGUs).</p> <p>OCD Region I Director Eugene Cabrera reported that as of June 21, there are 107 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Region I affecting the following provinces: Ilocos Norte, 4; Ilocos Sur, 4; La Union, 22; and Pangasinan, 77. He added that the Region has established some level of flattening the curve except for the Province of Pangasinan where a spike in COVID-19 cases has been recorded in the last 10 days.</p> <p>In managing COVID-19, the Region has three COVID-19 testing laboratories located in the Ilocos Training and Regional Medical Center, Mariano Marcos Memorial Hospital and Medical Center, and Region I Medical Center. Likewise, Cabrera said that the bed capacity of treatment facilities in the Region is more than enough compared to the number of confined patients with COVID-19.</p> <p>Among the initiatives implemented by RTF I to address the challenges of COVID-19 were the following: provided personal protective equipment (PPEs), hygiene kits, and family kits to frontliners from the LGUs, hospitals, and concerned agencies; distributed 2,000 rapid test kits; provided logistics support to RTF member agencies; and identified 34 quarantine and isolation facilities.</p> <p>Cabrera also presented the draft COVID-19 Recovery Program for Region I which identified 545 projects to be implemented in the remainder of 2020 until 2022. The investment requirement for these projects is P61.22 billion. Cabrera promised to submit to the Committee the details of the Recovery Program once it has been approved.</p> <p>OCD Region II Director Dante Balao said that as of June 19, there are 48 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Region, with 9 active cases, 38 recoveries and 1 death. There is only one testing center in Region 2 but two hospitals are awaiting accreditation from the Department of Health.</p> <p>Balao said that the provinces of Quirino and Batanes remain COVID-19-free. He added that while the provinces of Cagayan, Isabela, and Nueva Vizcaya already flattened the curve in May, additional COVID-19 cases were recorded with the coming home of returning overseas Filipinos (ROFs) and locally-stranded individuals (LSIs) this June.</p> <p>Balao enumerated the accomplishments of the RTF II in response to COVID 19 pandemic, which include the following: established LGU checkpoints; strictly monitored the prices of basic commodities; issued memorandum on observing social distancing and other health protocols to combat COVID 19 pandemic; assisted 398 LSIs and ROFs; assisted other member-agencies in the distribution of subsidy under the Social Amelioration Program (SAP); and distributed PPEs to hospitals.</p> <p>Moving forward, Balao proposed for the construction of additional level-three hospitals and intensive care unit facilities, construction of separate quarantine facilities for ROFs and LSIs, and release of the 2nd tranche of the SAP.</p>
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<p>Continuation... North Luzon Growth Quadrangle (Special Committee)</p>		<p>OCD CAR Director Albert Mogol informed the Committee that as of June 20, there are 109 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in CAR, with 54 active cases, 53 recoveries, and 2 deaths.</p> <p>Mogol said that prior to the declaration of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) in Luzon, CAR has prepositioned food and non-food items to ensure sufficient supplies for the Region during the quarantine period. In addition, COVID-19 prevention, control and biosafety protocols as well as a logistics management system were put in place. Other accomplishments of the RTF in CAR were the following: completed the distribution of SAP (1st tranche) to the beneficiaries; assisted 2,544 LSIs; facilitated the transport to their provinces of 853 stranded OFWs in Manila; and provided financial assistance to displaced OFWs.</p> <p>Mogol also presented the Cordillera Resiliency and Recovery Plan (RRP) for COVID-19 pandemic which aims to restore the socio-economic condition of the Region with a higher level of resilience as a response to the "new normal." The total investment requirements for the Region is P33.41 billion spread over three years from 2020.</p> <p>Reps. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma (Nueva Vizcaya) and Joseph "Jojo" Lara (3rd District, Cagayan) asked why the general community quarantine (GCQ) classification remains in Region II despite having very few cases of COVID-19. They lamented that because of the GCQ restrictions, many of the businesses in the Region are already in the brink of bankruptcy.</p> <p>RIATF II Director Jonathan Paul Leusen Jr. explained that the RIATF recommended that Region II be reclassified to modified GCQ. However only Batanes was declared as such. He also informed the Committee that Quirino Province preferred to remain under GCQ despite having no COVID-19 cases. Leusen said that RIATF II will seek clarification from the IATF on its risk classification of Region II.</p> <p>Also during the meeting, Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) Executive Director John de Leon reported that the Department of Budget and Management-approved budget for PhilRice for FY 2021 is P621.80 million which is lower than its current budget of P650.64 million. For 2021, the branch stations of PhilRice in North Luzon, specifically in Batac, Ilocos Norte and San Mateo, Isabela, have a proposed budget of P8.87 million and P10.01 million, respectively.</p> <p>De Leon also reported that PhilRice has reached 94% seed distribution in Region I benefitting 65,707 farmer beneficiaries. For Region II and CAR, PhilRice has accomplished 80% seed distribution to 106,351 farmer beneficiaries.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano (1st District, Ilocos Sur), along with several House Members, advised PhilRice to coordinate with the legislators the implementation of its programs considering that it is Congress which review and approve the budget for the agency.</p> <p>The resource persons were asked to submit the data requested by the Members during the meeting.</p>
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