

Have loans helped the citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms in Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) to continue amid the COVID-19 pandemic?

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Photos: (Left) Signing by the Department of Finance and the World Bank of the loan agreement for the Second Social Welfare Development And Reform Program, which will provide additional financing for the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). Source: Department of Finance official Facebook page.

(Right) SAP beneficiaries lining up and processing the requirements for cash aid. Source: Jonathan Cellona, ABS-CBN News.

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Background and Overview

It is crucial that citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms in programs of the government continue especially during disaster. There is empirical evidence showing that crisis aggravates corruption and bad governance.

One way to address this is through citizen engagement and accountability (CE-A) mechanisms, which may help ensure that citizen entitlements are delivered by the government, by checking government performance and contributing in the prevention of abuses and deviations from standards. CE-A mechanisms are processes and actions that make government programs and service delivery transparent, participatory, and accountable. Some of these mechanisms include access to information, proactive disclosure, regular monitoring by the government and civil society, effective feedback and grievance redress systems, consultative processes and deliberations, and inclusive processes and standards.

The importance of CE-A mechanisms in loans, in the context of lessening corruption and bad governance in the use of loan proceeds, cannot be understated. In the Philippines, loans are deemed as critical sources of funds for government assistance especially during the pandemic when government revenue generation is struggling. It could serve as a leverage for governments to ensure that CE-A measures are in place especially at times of disaster when the least of government's concerns is ensuring that the assistance given is transparent, participatory, and accountable. Having citizen engagement and accountability pre-requisites in loan documents could serve as policy handles in ensuring citizen engagement and accountability measures are actually practiced on the ground. This is especially crucial since checks and controls are usually relaxed during crisis situations, when the prompt response of the government is a matter of life and death.

However, while documenting commitments in paper is one thing, seeing that the commitments are carried out and implemented effectively in practice is another. This is where independent ground citizen monitoring is most valuable.

This paper presents the findings of G-Watch monitoring on whether and how citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) have remained active despite the pandemic. The research involved reviewing relevant loan documents with the World Bank to establish whether loans entered into by the government for 4Ps included prescribed citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms. The bigger part of the research involved checking the actual operations of the citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms in local G-Watch sites through field survey with 4Ps beneficiaries. The field survey was done by G-Watch accountability frontliners who went directly to 4Ps beneficiaries for response to devise survey tools. The overall research was supported by and done in cooperation with the Accountability Research Center (ARC).

G-Watch is an independent national action research organization that aims to contribute in the deepening of democracy through the scaling of accountability and citizen empowerment. As part of its program, G-Watch local sites have conducted Citizen Entitlement Monitoring surveys that looks into the implementation of assistance provided by the government during the pandemic.¹ One of the programs that the team has looked into is the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, specifically the program's accountability mechanisms.

ARC is an action-research incubator based at American University in Washington, DC that seeks to strengthen and learn from the work of civil society organizations and policy reformers on the frontlines of accountability work and build knowledge for the field of transparency, participation and accountability. One of ARC's core work is the monitoring of the World Bank's commitment to citizen engagement. ARC has devised a tool that tracks the World Bank's citizen engagement commitments on loan documents.² G-Watch has referred to ARC's World Bank-Citizen Engagement tool in framing its documents review and field monitoring.

The paper is divided into two main parts: the first looks at committed citizen engagement and accountability features in the World Bank COVID loans for 4Ps, and the second part presents the result of G-Watch's field survey on whether the citizen engagement and accountability features of 4Ps are working during the pandemic. The paper begins with a brief profile of 4Ps and ends with the highlights of findings and conclusions.

4Ps and International Financing

The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a conditional cash transfer program being implemented by the Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD) since 2007. With over 4 million households as beneficiaries and a total of at least Php780 billion allotted to it from 2009 to the present (see table 1), 4Ps is the biggest social protection program of the government. Sustained across three administrations (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Noynoy Aquino and Rodrigo Duterte) and institutionalized into law in 2019, 4Ps is one of the longest-running nationwide poverty reduction programs of the government.

4Ps aims to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty by investing in poor households' health and education. The program specifically addresses maternal, infant, and child mortality, malnutrition and stunting of children, basic education completion, and child labor. To receive the grant, households enrolled in the program need to fulfill conditions set by the program. If the households' children stay in school and get regular health check-ups, and the parents participate in monthly Family Development Sessions, the household would receive cash grants. The cash grants in 4Ps include Php500 per household every month or a total of Php6,000 every year and

¹ See G-Watch (August 12, 2020), "G-Watch Independent Validation of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) Report on Field Survey Findings," at <https://www.g-watch.org/resources/vertical-integration-research/g-watch-independent-validation-social-amelioration-program>.

² See Accountability Research Center, "Monitoring World Bank Citizen Engagement," at <https://accountabilityresearch.org/monitoring-world-bank-citizen-engagement/>.

Php300 per child every month for ten months, or a total of Php3,000 every year (a household may register a maximum of three children for the program).

Table 1: Annual budget allocation for 4Ps

Year	Annual budget allocation for 4Ps
2021	Php106,800,569,000
2020	Php108,765,970,000
2019	Php89,752,324,000
2018	Php89,408,303,000
2017	Php78,186,551,000
2016	Php62,665,628,000
2015	Php62,322,890,000
2014	Php62,614,247,000
2013	Php44,255,644,000
2012	Php39,444,651,000
2011	Php21,194,117,000
2010	Php10,000,000,000
2009	Php5,000,000,000
TOTAL	Php780,410,894,000

Source: General Appropriations Act; compiled by G-Watch

Based on DSWD’s Program Implementation Status Report for the first quarter of 2019, 4Ps is now implemented in 144 cities and 1,483 municipalities in 80 provinces from all 17 regions. As per the same DSWD report, out of the 4,876,394 total registered households, 4,183,403 are active households in 4Ps or 95.08% of 2019 target of 4,400,000 households. Out of these, 3,955,413 are covered by the regular Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program while 227,990 are covered by the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT).³ The MCCT is a sub-component program to 4Ps that started in 2015. It aims to reach poor and more vulnerable and disadvantaged families, such as indigenous peoples, homeless and families in need of special protection, who have been excluded in the enumeration of the National Household Targeting System (NHTS) or Listahanan because of their physical situation (e.g., lack of house) and living in remotest of places.⁴

4Ps is implemented by DSWD, the agency that oversees and coordinates the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the program. DSWD regional offices translate national policies to region-specific operational guidelines to ensure the smooth implementation of the program. The National and Regional Project Management Offices lead the national and regional implementation of 4Ps. In the municipal or city level, the City/Municipal Link fully implements the Program.

³ Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), “Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program: Program Implementation Status Report, 1st Quarter of 2019,” at <https://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Pantawid-Pamilya-1st-Quarter-of-2019.pdf>.

⁴ DSWD, Memorandum Circular No. (MC) 02, Series of 2018, at https://www.dswd.gov.ph/issuances/MCs/MC_2018-002.pdf.

4Ps has been supported by loans from multilateral development banks (MDBs) from the beginning. Based on the loan agreements with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) from 2010 to present gathered by G-Watch, at least Php157 billion has been allotted to 4Ps from loans with MBDs (see table 2).

Table 2: Loans financing 4Ps with World Bank and ADB from 2010-present

Funding Source	Loan Title	Approval Year/Coverage	Amount
World Bank	Social Welfare and Development Reform Project ⁵	2010-2015	US\$405 Million
	Social Welfare and Development Reform Project Additional Financing ⁶	2013	US\$100 Million
	Social Welfare and Development Reform Project II ⁷	2016-2022	US\$450 Million
	Social Welfare and Development Reform Project II Additional Funding ⁸	2019	US\$300 Million
	Beneficiary FIRST Social Protection Project ⁹	2021-2025	US\$600 Million
ADB	Social Protection Support Project ¹⁰	2011-2017	US\$400 Million
	Social Protection Support Project (Additional Financing)	2016-2020	US\$400 Million
	Social Protection Support Project (Additional Financing)	2020-2021	US\$200 Million
	Expanded Social Assistance Project ¹¹	2020-2024	US\$500 Million
Total			US\$3.36 Billion/ Php157,920,000

Sources: Various, see footnotes

The growing practice lately is for loans to have citizen engagement pre-requisites. The World Bank, for instance, has an existing ‘Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in WBG Operations’¹² and an ‘Environmental and Social Framework’ (ESF)¹³ that enumerate required citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms that are supposed to be present in projects and programs funded with World Bank loans. The underlying assumption is that loans can be

⁵ World Bank, PH-Social Welfare and Development Reform, at <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P082144?lang=en>.

⁶ World Bank, Social Welfare and Development Reform Project Additional Financing, at <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P122702?lang=en>.

⁷ World Bank, Philippines Social Welfare Development and Reform Project II, at <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P153744?lang=en>.

⁸ World Bank, Social Welfare Development and Reform Project II Additional Financing, at <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P169637?lang=en>.

⁹ World Bank, Beneficiary FIRST Social Protection Project, at <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P174066>.

¹⁰ Asian Development Bank (ADB), Philippines: Social Protection Support Project, at <https://www.adb.org/projects/43407-013/main#project-pds>.

¹¹ ADB, Philippines: Expanded Social Assistance Project, at <https://www.adb.org/projects/52257-001/main#project-pds>.

¹² See World Bank Group Open Knowledge Repository (2014), “Strategic Framework for Mainstreaming Citizen Engagement in World Bank Group Operations,” at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/21113?locale-attribute=en>.

¹³ See World Bank (2016), “World Bank Environmental and Social Framework,” at <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/837721522762050108/Environmental-and-Social-Framework.pdf>.

leveraged to promote better transparency, participation, and accountability in governance of the lender country.



Signing of the loan agreement in 2019 for the Second Social Welfare Development And Reform Program, which will provide additional financing for the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). (Photo source: Department of Finance)

There have been questions of whether and how international development projects can be leveraged to advance transparency, participation and accountability in governance, particularly in empowering the marginalized.

Jonathan Fox in the paper ‘Contested terrain: International development projects and countervailing power for the excluded’¹⁴ investigates whether international development projects can transcend dominant patterns of elite capture and instead enable countervailing power for the excluded. Studying five World Bank projects, Fox concludes that “projects can have not only contested and uneven outcomes (‘mixed results’), but also contradictory interaction effects.” Pro-participation projects, for instance, can both enable power from below and elite capture at the same time.

The question then is when and how projects supported through international financing with citizen engagement requirements truly advance citizen engagement. This paper proposes that a big aspect of it lies in whether these provisions are put into practice and whether the mechanisms are working effectively.

¹⁴ Fox, J. (September 2020). “Contested terrain: International development projects and countervailing power for the excluded,” *World Development*, at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2020.104978>.

World Bank 4Ps Loans During COVID

Since 2010, the World Bank has provided significant support to the Philippines' social protection programs. Its Social Welfare and Development Reform Project in the Philippines strengthened DSWD's capacity to implement the CCT program, or what is more known as the 4Ps, aside from providing financial support (in US\$505 million) and expanding the national household targeting system.

Recently, it has lent the Philippines an amount of approximately US\$750 million (including additional financing as of 2019), to benefit poor households as beneficiaries of 4Ps.

This support has continued even after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are currently three active loans from the World Bank supporting Philippine social protection programs, with the following details:

- Philippines Social Welfare Development and Reform Project II ("SWDRP II") approved on February 19, 2016 amounting to US\$450 million;
- Social Welfare Development and Reform Project II Additional Financing approved on June 27, 2019 amounting to US\$300 million; and
- Philippines Emergency COVID-19 Response Loan ("ECRL") approved on May 28, 2020 amounting to US\$500 million.

The SWDRP II directly benefited only those identified as 4Ps beneficiaries under the Listahanan, which also included indigenous peoples. To support project implementation through 2021, another US\$300 million was approved as additional financing.¹⁵

The World Bank also approved the Emergency COVID-19 Response Loan (ECRL) in 2020. This loan "deepens" 4Ps benefits, and also includes as ultimate beneficiaries those who are not necessarily beneficiaries of the 4Ps—for example, employees temporarily without jobs in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) who were given wage subsidies, or overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who were given assistance.

DSWD tracks spending in this regard through an application in its website.¹⁶ As of January 21, 2021, it reports disbursing Php84.4 billion for its social amelioration program (SAP), with Php7 billion paid to 4Ps beneficiaries and Php77.4 billion paid to non-4Ps beneficiaries for the second tranche of disbursements alone.

Considering the sheer amount of these loans and the extent of assistance provided via the funds lent to the Philippines, accountability in reporting and grievance mechanisms for these loans

¹⁵ World Bank (June 27, 2019), "The Social Welfare and Development Project," at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2017/12/19/philippines-social-welfare-development-and-reform-project>.

¹⁶ <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoieYWM3MTM4OWYtYicyMy00NGFmLWEyZiktZWl3ZDNkMzU1OGUyIiwidCI6ImJkMDNhNm1LTJhYTMtNGNjYS05NzlyLTJhZTQ5MllhYjNlYyIsImMiOiJFwfQ%3D%3D&pageName=ReportSection5de5df1d97a4c68a8cbc>.

have never been more urgent and crucial. In DSWD's tracking alone, it notes that for the second tranche, 1,143,708 individuals were provided with emergency subsidy twice. News reports also consistently report problems with disbursement, including delays or the lack thereof.

The next part of this paper discusses existing transparency, citizen participation, and accountability (TPA) mechanisms available in the SWDRP II and ECRL projects stated above, based on available documents and consultations with a World Bank representative. To flesh out how these mechanisms may be utilized or realized on the ground, this paper also discusses initial findings from a G-Watch field survey on the actual operations of citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms in the 4Ps. Four G-Watch sites conducted the survey from August to October 2020, namely: Agusan del Sur, Lanao del Sur, Southern Leyte, and Bohol, Philippines, which also includes an interview with a DSWD representative.

Citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms in World Bank operations

The accountability mechanisms for World Bank-related operations¹⁷ (including loans) are classified into three:

- a. World Bank Grievance Redress Service:¹⁸ a corporate-level mechanism for direct or referred complaints submitted to World Bank management, which reports to World Bank Senior Management.
- b. Project Level Grievance Mechanisms: a responsible and accessible project-level mechanism put up by a borrowing government (such as the Philippines).
- c. World Bank Inspection Panel: independent from the World Bank and staff, this panel assesses allegation of harm to people and the environment, and also reviews compliance of the Bank with its own policies and procedures.

To be clear, the World Bank's institutional complaints submission system is the Grievance Redress Service (GRS). It is a single, unified system, functioning either as direct route to the World Bank's management or as an alternative grievance mechanism when a project-level complaint mechanism is not satisfactory.

The GRS was launched in 2016. To distinguish it from project level grievance mechanisms from that year onward, the latter are now called grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs). It should be emphasized that when this paper mentions the GRS, it refers to the institutional World Bank Grievance Redress Service (except when mentioned in data tables by G-Watch, where GRS refers to the local /project level mechanism); and that when this paper mentions a GRM, it refers to the project level grievance mechanism.

¹⁷ World Bank, "Grievance Redress Service: Finding Solutions Together," available at <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/135711605818475692/GRS-brochure-2020.pdf>.

¹⁸ World Bank, "Grievance Redress Service," at <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/products-and-services/grievance-redress-service>.

Details on accountability mechanisms, including those mentioned above, may be found in each project’s dedicated portal in the World Bank website, which contains, among others, project information and appraisal documents, loan agreements, amendments, implementation and status reports, and audit reports.

A. The Social Welfare Development and Reform Project II (“SWDRP II”)

In the SWDRP II, the World Bank provides support to the DSWD to improve the use of health and education services for poor children. Its first component supports the continuous delivery of the program via World Bank financing; its second component strengthens CCT implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Project documents for the SWDRP II are available via this [link](#). For the SWDRP II additional financing, project documents are available in this [link](#).

During project preparation, SWDRP II utilized multi-stakeholder feedback and formal assessments, building on seven (7) years of lessons learned from CCT implementation. The SWDRP II’s project appraisal document (PAD) stresses how the project also involved “multi-stakeholder consultations that DSWD conducted at the national and local levels with participation from representatives of key national implementing agencies; the academe; private sector, non-governmental networks; leagues of local government units and basic sector organizations.”¹⁹

Feedback gained using the FDS and the GRM of the CCT were also used to improve the SWDRP II’s program design. The program was also enhanced using input from regular reviews and studies, which included impact evaluation surveys, assessments, and third party monitoring/spot checks.

During the SWDRP II’s implementation, citizen feedback mechanisms are generally provided via the FDS and the project GRM (for which DSWD is responsible via its national program management office). Specifically for IP beneficiaries, the policy framework here also included annual focus group discussions and regular meetings with program advisory committees at all levels, and also ensured representation of the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples.

Any one dissatisfied with the project GRM may forward complaints to the World Bank GRS, or even to its inspection panel. However, there is no clear system to address the effectivity of the GRM itself.

The SWDRP II committed to assign a third-party monitoring group to conduct impact evaluation and submit a report. It is not clear, however, whether citizens may lead (as opposed to participate in) monitoring, evaluation, and oversight efforts for the SWDRP II, even as DSWD organized an

¹⁹ World Bank (January 2016), “Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Loan in the Amount of USD 540 Million to the Republic of the Philippines for a Social Welfare Development and Reform Project II,” at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/508261467988930630/pdf/PAD1321-PAD-P153744-R2016-0007-1-Box394849B-OUO-9.pdf>

independent monitoring and advisory committee to ensure transparency and social accountability.

The implementation status report as of June 27, 2021, has been made available in the SWDRP’s project portal, available via this [link](#).

B. Philippines Emergency COVID-19 Response Loan (“ECRL”)

The ECRL provided additional subsidies (on top of monthly cash transfers) to 4Ps beneficiaries to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Notably, ECRL’s scope included non-4Ps beneficiaries as it also provided financial relief to SMEs and OFWs. Project documents for the ECRL are available via this [link](#).

As a side note, the World Bank, in October 1, 2018, introduced an ESF, which affected how projects are prepared, and which required, among others, a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and an Environmental and Social Commitment Report (ESCR) relating to the projects it covers. In the SEP, the World Bank “outlines the ways in which the project team will communicate with stakeholders and includes a mechanism by which people can raise concerns, provide feedback, or make complaints about project and any activities related to the project.”²⁰

While other projects of the World Bank—such as the COVID-19 Emergency Response Development Project (ERPD)—have released a draft SEP and ESCR in line with the ESF, it is unclear if the ECRL (approved after the introduction of the ESF) also utilizes these mechanisms, as these are not mentioned in any of the available project documents.

Nevertheless, the ECRL’s program document states that in preparing the loan, the World Bank closely engaged DSWD, and considered existing challenges in targeting and delivery mechanisms. Rapid surveys of SMEs were also conducted.²¹ It is unclear, however, if the DSWD engagement included public consultations or public hearings, or were limited to such surveys, formal assessments, or multi-stakeholder consultations where public participation may have been limited. There may have been no formal mechanism to solicit citizen feedback about the needs of beneficiaries for the pandemic. Apparently, for both the SWDRP and ECRL, there are no mechanisms for collaborative decision-making that involved the public.

The World Bank and the Department of Health (DOH) also collaborated with the World Health Organization (WHO) in preparing the loan, but it is uncertain if other international agencies have also been consulted or if they only provided grants or technical support and assistance.

²⁰ World Bank (2016), “World Bank Environmental and Social Framework,” at <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/837721522762050108/Environmental-and-Social-Framework.pdf>.

²¹ World Bank (May 21, 2020), “Program Document for a Proposed Loan in the Amount of USD 500 Million to the Republic of the Philippines for the Emergency COVID-19 Response Development Policy Loan,” at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/872561590976897612/pdf/Philippines-Emergency-COVID-19-Response-Development-Policy-Loan.pdf>.

The ECRL is also supposed to have a monitoring system in place during project implementation. The program document states, as of May 21, 2020, that “the World Bank team is currently working with the Government in designing a monitoring system to track the progress and effectiveness of the stimulus packages, social protection measures in particular.” While the Department of Finance (DOF) is designated (through its International Finance Group) as the Bank’s main counterpart for policy dialogue and monitoring, the World Bank takes care to state that these tasks (including evaluation) are shared with DSWD, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), Social Security System (SSS), and PhilGuarantee. As of date, however, no other information is available in the World Bank website that may show if such monitoring system has been designed, and it remains to be seen whether such has already been drafted and utilized to monitor the progress of the project.

The World Bank makes a general reference to grievance mechanisms available for the ECRL. Complaints may be submitted to: (a) responsible country authorities; (b) the World Bank’s GRS; and (c) the World Bank Inspection Panel. The “responsible country authority” here is the DOF. However, there are no other details on the structure or procedure for the project/country level grievance mechanism, which is the DOF’s responsibility.

As of date, implementation status reports are not available in the ECRL’s project portal.

Accountability mechanisms in actual 4Ps operations during COVID-19

G-Watch field surveys on the actual operation of citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms of 4Ps were conducted from August to October 2020. The results of the survey provide interesting insights on how the mechanisms above operate on the ground and in the context of a pandemic.

Five G-Watch sites conducted the survey, namely: Agusan del Sur, Lanao del Sur, Southern Leyte, Cebu City, and Bohol. The number of 4Ps beneficiaries that responded to the survey varied across localities, depending on what was doable as set by the G-Watch sites in light of the pandemic. While there were similar questions for 4Ps beneficiaries in all of the tools, the survey tools used per site varied depending on the focus of the site. Monitors in Bohol focused on assistance to farmers; Southern Leyte monitors looked into assistance to the poorest households; Agusan del Sur and Cebu monitors looked into 4Ps’ GRM specifically; and Lanao del Sur monitors looked into the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) that also benefited 4Ps beneficiaries.



The survey looked into the following citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms: the project-level GRM, FDS, monitoring of health and education compliance, and updating of beneficiary information. Monitors also checked the status of visitations (“pangungumusta”) of DSWD and Parent Leaders, and if there were additional activities conducted by DSWD and beneficiaries during the pandemic.

The GRM aims to capture and resolve all grievances and inquiries from both the beneficiaries and the public effectively and expeditiously, should there be any concerns, issues, or questions from the beneficiaries.

The FDS is a monthly activity for grantees (usually mothers) to participate in learning activities relating to 4Ps, and where they may learn more about their parental roles and responsibilities on health, nutrition, children’s needs and education, and family and community development, among others.

The release of payouts are based on the compliance of beneficiaries to the conditionalities of the program. As such, monitoring and verification of health and education compliance is implemented by DSWD, DOH, the Department of Education (DepEd), and the local government unit (LGU).

Meanwhile, the updating of information is done to monitor and keep track of the beneficiaries’ eligibility in the program. It looks at any changes in the status or condition of the household beneficiary (i.e., new birth, new enrollees, transfer of residence, transfer of school and health centers, etc.)

G-Watch accountability frontliners went straight to 4Ps beneficiaries in conducting the survey. In some instances, they informed the local DSWD, but no longer waited for any approval before going to the 4Ps beneficiaries. The G-Watch Center also sent a letter to DSWD informing the department of G-Watch’s ongoing survey. G-Watch has not received any response from DSWD, though at the local level, there was one DSWD office (Cebu) that entertained an interview.

Presented below are result of the G-Watch survey that interviewed 4Ps beneficiaries on 4Ps processes and activities. It includes additional data from news monitoring done by the G-Watch Center and an interview with local DSWD officials.

1. Anu-anong proseso at aktibidades ng 4Ps ang gumagana/ operational/ active ngayong pandemya? [What processes and activities of 4Ps are operational/active this pandemic?]

The COVID-19 pandemic hampered the implementation of some accountability measures in 4Ps. At the start of the quarantine, DSWD announced that the monitoring of beneficiary compliance was suspended from February to May 2020. 4Ps conditionalities were waived on account of DSWD’s declaration of “force majeure” on the program.²² All face-to-face activities such as FDS were suspended.

In a separate interview, DSWD said that the GRM and monitoring remains operational with active staff manning it.²³ Payouts continue along with additional assistance from SAP.

On October 2020, DSWD resumed the FDS and the monitoring of health and education compliance.²⁴

Two hundred ninety-seven (297) respondents answered the question on whether or not these 4Ps activities and processes are still active during the pandemic. Fifteen (15) respondents were from Southern Leyte, 100 from Agusan del Sur, 82 from Lanao del Sur, and 100 from Cebu City.

Out of the 297 respondents, 160 (54%) said the GRS is active while 131 (44%) said it’s not and 6 (2%) did not answer. For family development sessions, 73 (25%) said it is active while 221 (74%) said otherwise, and there were 3 (1%) who did not answer.

Table 3: Whether 4Ps CE-A mechanisms are active

	Total
Grievance redress system:	
Active:	160 (54%)
Hindi [Not active]:	131 (44%)
No Answer:	6 (2%)
Family development sessions:	
Active:	73 (25%)
Hindi [Not active]:	221 (74%)
No Answer:	3 (1%)
Monitoring ng health compliance:	
Active:	177 (60%)
Hindi [Not active]:	107 (36%)
No Answer:	13 (4%)
Monitoring ng education compliance:	
Active:	205 (69%)
Hindi [Not active]:	92 (31%)

²² Department of Social Welfare and Development (April 3, 2020), “DSWD releases emergency subsidy of 4Ps beneficiaries,” *DSWD*, at <https://www.dswd.gov.ph/dswd-releases-emergency-subsidy-of-4ps-beneficiaries/>.

²³ Virtual interview with DSWD Region 7 Head Aileen Cuevas and DSWD Cebu City Social Worker Irene A. Salazar, 8 June 2020.

²⁴ Department of Social Welfare and Development (October 21, 2020), “DSWD resumes monitoring of compliance of 4Ps beneficiaries,” *DSWD*, at <https://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/2020/10/dswd-resumes-monitoring-of-compliance-for-4ps-beneficiaries/>.

Updating ng information:	
Active:	225 (75.7%)
Hindi [Not active]:	71 (24%)
No Answer:	1 (0.3%)
Pagbisita/ pangumusta/ visit ng DSWD staff:	
Active:	159 (53.5%)
Hindi [Not active]:	137 (46.1%)
No Answer:	1 (0.3%)
Pagbisita/ pangumusta ng Parent-Leader:	
Active:	205 (69%)
Hindi [Not active]:	91 (30.6%)
No Answer:	1 (0.3%)

One hundred seventy-seven (177) (60%) said that the monitoring of health compliance is still active but 107 (36%) said that it's not. There were 13 (4%) who did not answer. Meanwhile, for monitoring of the education compliance, 205 (69%) responded that it is still active while 92 (31%) said that it's not.

As for the updating of information, 225 (75.7%) respondents said that it is still being done, while 71 (24%) said that it's not.

For visitation or *pangungumusta* of DSWD staff to 4Ps beneficiaries, 159 (53.5%) of the respondents said that it is still active and 137 (46.1%) said otherwise. Visitation of the Parent-Leader is also active according to 205 (69%) respondents but 91 (30.6%) said it's not active.

Overall, the survey response indicates that the mechanisms are active and operational in some areas and not in some areas. DSWD has made announcements on what mechanisms were suspended due to the pandemic and it is possible that not all beneficiaries were aware of these pronouncements.

2. May konsultasyon bang naganap patungkol sa mga pangangailangan ng mga 4Ps ngayong pandemya? [Was there a consultation about the needs of 4Ps beneficiaries this pandemic?]

As stated above, the World Bank engaged DSWD in preparing the ECRL (the COVID-19 emergency loan), and considered challenges in targeting and delivery mechanisms. While it is unclear if such consultations included public consultations with beneficiaries, it appears that the respondents for this question were consulted about their needs.

There were a total of 404 respondents for this question: 15 from Southern Leyte, 189 from Bohol, 100 from Agusan del Sur, and 100 from Cebu City. Out of the 404 total respondents, 220 (54%) said that there had been consultations on matters regarding 4Ps, 138 (34%) said otherwise, 3 (1%) did not know, and 43 (11%) did not answer.

Table 4: Conduct of consultation

	Total
Merong [There was]	220 (54%)
Wala [No consultation]	138 (34%)
Hindi ko alam [I don't know]	3 (1%)
No Answer	43 (11%)

This shows that at least that 4Ps beneficiaries were consulted about their needs. It is possible that the existing mechanisms were used for this. It is also possible that the beneficiaries were referring to past consultations.

On the other hand, G-Watch earlier noted the apparent lack of information provided to 4Ps beneficiaries on how much is the additional assistance that they should expect from the Social Amelioration Program—the social assistance program by the national government to vulnerable segments of the population in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁵ In terms of access to information, there was also the problem of different and confusing guidelines from DSWD and local governments in giving assistance for COVID-19.

3. On the use of the GRM

Gumamit ba kayo ng hotline o grievance redress system (GRS) ngayong pandemic? / Nakapag-file ka na ba ng reklamo sa 4Ps gamit ang grievance redress system ng 4Ps? [Did you use the GRS to file a complaint this pandemic?]

Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries to 4Ps may lodge concerns about the program via different means: coordination with the Municipal / City Link for the submission of a filed form, sending a message via the 4Ps website, email, and other social media channels, or through dedicated hotlines.

For this question, there were a total of 215 respondents: 15 came from Southern Leyte, 100 are from Agusan del Sur, and 100 from Cebu City.

Majority of the respondents or 134 out of 215 did not use the hotline/Grievance Redress System of 4Ps. Only 60 used the GRS.

This validates earlier findings of G-Watch²⁶ that shows the low utilization of hotlines and GRS.

Table 5: Use of GRS

	Total
Oo [Yes]	60 (28%)
Hindi [No]	134 (62%)
No Answer	21 (10%)

²⁵ See G-Watch (August 12, 2020), "G-Watch Independent Validation of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) Report on Field Survey Findings," at <https://www.g-watch.org/resources/vertical-integration-research/g-watch-independent-validation-social-amelioration-program>.

²⁶ Ibid.

When asked about why they did not use the GRS, all respondents in Southern Leyte said that they did not have any issues/complaints.

Table 5-1: Bakit kayo hindi gumamit (ng hotline or GRS)? [Why did not use the GRS]

	Total
Walang reklamo/issue	15 (100%)

In Agusan del Sur and Cebu, 52% of the respondents said that there were instances where they want to use the GRS of 4Ps to file a complaint, but did not or cannot. The rest of the respondents said no (17%) or did not answer (31%).

Table 5-2: May pagkakataon ba na gusto mong gamitin ang 4Ps GRS para mag-file ng complaint, pero hindi mo ito nagamit/ magamit? [Were there instances that you wanted to use the GRS but did not?]

	Total
Meron [There was]	104 (52%)
Wala [None]	33 (17%)
Walang sagot [No Answer]	63 (31%)

When asked why they did not use the GRS when they had an issue/complaint, 53 (26.5%) said that they have already filed or shared their complaints through other channels; 1 (0.5%) did not know how to use the GRM of 4Ps; 41 (20.5%) were afraid of the repercussions of making complaints; 2 (1%) respondents do not expect any result/response; 11 (5.5%) did not know; and 92 (46%) did not answer.

This response shows that one hindrance to the use of GRS and hotline is the fear of reprisal. This is consistent with feedback given by 4Ps beneficiaries to G-Watch in several activities with them.

Table 5-3: Kung meron, ano/ anu-ano ang mga dahilan bakit hindi mo magamit/ nagamit ang GRS kahit ito ay kailangan mong gamitin? Pumili ng mga naaangkop na sagot. [Why did you not use the GRS even if you had a complaint?]

	Total
a. Nagfile/ impormal nang nakapagbahagi ng reklamo sa ibang channel [Filed/ informally shared complaint through other channels]	53 (26.5%)
b. Hindi ko alam paano gamitin ang GRS ng 4Ps [Not sure how to use GRS of 4Ps]	1 (0.5%)
c. Takot sa anumang maging pinsala [Afraid of repercussions]	41 (20.5%)
d. Hindi umaasa sa anumang resulta [Not optimistic that there will be result]	2 (1%)
e. Hindi ko alam [Don't know]	11 (5.5%)
f. Walang sagot [No answer]	92 (46%)

When asked if they want to use the GRS of 4Ps to file a complaint, suggestion, or feedback, 106 of the 200 respondents said yes, while 84 said no. This shows that there is a clear demand for the use of GRS.

Table 5-4: Sa ngayon, gusto mo bang gamitin ang GRS ng 4Ps para mag-file ng complaint, suhesyon o feedback? [Now, do you want to use the GRS to file a complaint, suggestion or feedback?]

	Total
a. Oo [Yes]	106 (53%)
b. Hindi [No]	88 (44%)
c. No answer	6 (3%)

From those who answered in the affirmative, we asked why they still want to use the GRS. 43 respondents said that they still want to use the GRS so that their complaints can be answered properly or be satisfied with the answers they receive; 12 will still use the GRS to get fast response to their issues/complaints/questions; 7 want to have their issues/complaints formally recorded and addressed; 4 want to know where their payouts went; and 40 did not tell why.

Table 5-5: Bakit mo parin gustong gamitin ang GRS ngayon? [Why do you still want to use the GRS?]

Oo ang sagot [Answered yes]:	TOTAL
1. Want to have their issues/complaints/questions addressed and answered	43 (40%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para masagot ng buo ang reklamo [So my complaint will be answered] (17 responses) • Para masolusyunan [So my complaint will be resolved] (10 responses) • Sana po tulungan kami [To get help] (2 responses) • Para malaman ko ang tamang sagot kung bakit kulang ang pay out [To find out the right answer why the payout is not the right amount (5 responses) • Para ma satisfy sa sagot [To get a satisfying answer] (1 response) • Para maisali ang isa kong anak sa system [So my child gets included in the system] (1 response) • Still have questions (2 respondents) • Because I am the recipient of the complaint (1 respondent) • I already know now about GRS (1 respondent) • I want to know the steps if there are complaints (1 respondent) • Want to know how to claim my payout (1 respondent) • To understand the activity that was provided on the radio (1 respondent) 	
2. Want to know where their payouts went	5 (5%)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para malaman kung saan napunta ang kulang na pay out namin [To know where our lacking payout went] (1 response) • Para malaman kung saan napunta ang pera ko [To know where my money went] (3 responses) • Module submitted but I still did not receive my payout (1 respondent) 	
3. Want to have their issues/complaints formally recorded and addressed	7 (7%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para formal at on the record at para matugunan ng maayos [To formally put my complaint on record and it get responded to and addressed] (3 responses) • Para alam nila ang reklamo [So that the authorities would know my complaint] (3 responses) • Because I was the one who take[s] all concerns of the members (1 respondent) 	
4. Upang mapabilis ang resulta [To fast-track the result]	12 (11%)
5. Walang isinagot [No answer]	40 (38%)

From those who answered no, 16 respondents said that they will not use the GRS because nothing will happen; 15 will just relay their issues/concerns/questions to the Parent-Leader, Municipal Link, or during the FDS; 4 respondents fear that they will be removed from the list or reprimanded by their ML; 6 do not have a problem regarding 4Ps, and 47 did not tell why.

This shows that those who will no longer use the GRS would look for other channels and a big number would opt not to use it because they expect not to get any response. Alarmingly, there are beneficiaries who do not use the GRS because they are afraid of repercussions or punishment.

Table 5-6: Bakit ayaw mo nang gamitin ang GRS ngayon? [Why do you not want to use the GRS?]

Hindi ang sagot:	TOTAL
1. Used a different channel	15 (17%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sa FDS nalang [Will use FDS] (3 respondents) • Pwedi naman sa Parent Leader [coursed it through the Parent Leader] (10 respondents) • Sa ML na lang [coursed it through the Municipal Link] (2 respondents) 	
2. Fear of punishment	4 (5%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baka matanggal ako [I might get removed] (1 respondent) • Papagalitan lang kami ng ML namin [My Municipal Link might scold me] (1 respondent) • Afraid I might not receive my payout (1 respondent) 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afraid to file (1 respondent) 	
3. Nothing will happen	16 (18%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wala ding mangyayari [Nothing will happen] (14 respondents) • Wag nalang [Nevermind] (2 respondents) 	
4. No problem re: 4Ps	6 (7%)
5. Walang sinagot [No answer]	47 (53%)

4. Anu-ano po ang pinagbago sa 4Ps ngayong may pandemya? / Batay sa inyong karanasan bilang 4Ps beneficiaries, anu-ano ang pagbabago sa programang 4Ps na dulot ng pandemya? [Based on experience as 4Ps beneficiaries, what have been the changes in 4Ps this pandemic?]

In order to adapt to the changes brought on by the pandemic, there were some changes in 4Ps activities and mechanisms. This included DSWD’s suspension of some compliance activities, which were eventually resumed after a few months with safety protocols. DSWD also engaged financial service providers (FSPs) in June 2020 to distribute emergency subsidies to beneficiaries and minimize face-to-face contact.²⁷

The DSWD also announced at one point that it will suspend cash grant distributions as a precaution against the virus, which was subsequently retracted after a group of beneficiaries protested online.²⁸

In the survey, beneficiaries noted that FDS are not being conducted and that their payouts are either delayed or the amount they received is reduced. Furthermore, the way they received and withdrew their payouts have also changed--some said that they now use Landbank, and that withdrawal of payouts is now grouped. Some also said that their City Link is not active.

Some beneficiaries expressed that they do not get regular and timely updates. They also suggested that payouts should be disbursed monthly, or at a fixed schedule.

In terms of additional assistance during the pandemic, beneficiaries shared they have been receiving additional assistance either in the form of additional cash and health assistance and/or relief goods such as rice. In general, these assistance are appreciated by the beneficiaries, who also want everyone to receive the same. But some also noted that it will not last long, especially for big families.

²⁷ See Gabuya, G. (December 1, 2020), “Implications of the Pandemic to Social Welfare Delivery System: The DSWD Experience,” [Speech]. Philippine Association of Social Workers Incorporated (PASWI) National Convention on November 28, 2020 via Zoom. available at <https://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/2020/12/implications-of-the-pandemic-to-social-welfare-delivery-system-the-dswd-experience/>.

²⁸ Lopez, A., Natividad, S., & Sales, S. (June 3, 2020), “[ANALYSIS] 2 4Ps mothers speak up on the coronavirus and their communities,” *Rappler*, at <https://r3.rappler.com/move-ph/ispeak/262644-analysis-rural-urban-mothers-speak-coronavirus-communities>.

As for 4Ps human resource, DSWD shared that the 4Ps staff are receiving additional hazard pay with the COVID-19-related work they do, which mostly revolve around SAP.²⁹

5. May mga aktibidades ba kayong mga 4Ps beneficiaries na tugon sa pandemya? [Do you have added activities as 4Ps beneficiaries this pandemic?]

When asked if 4Ps beneficiaries in Lanao del Sur have activities that respond to the pandemic, the answers were mixed. Some shared that there are no 4Ps activities or that they haven't seen DSWD during the pandemic. There were also those who said that they had a seminar about COVID-19 or have seen DSWD during the SAP validation.

Table 6: Whether there were Additional Activities for 4Ps Beneficiaries during the pandemic

- Never dumating ang DSWD Team sa mga 4Ps beneficiaries since pandemic [DSWD Team never visited 4Ps beneficiaries since the pandemic]
- Wala pa daw kasi sa panahon ngayon, isa sa pinaka busy'ng department ay ang DSWD [None because DSWD is the busiest department during the pandemic]
- Sa ngayong pandemya wala pa [This pandemic, none]
- Nagkita-kita lang sila during the SAP validation [We see each other during SAP validation]
- Gardening only
- Seminar tungkol sa Covid19 [Seminar about COVID19]

The same question was also asked to 200 respondents from Agusan del Sur and Cebu City, where majority said there were no additional/ new activities for 4Ps beneficiaries during this pandemic.

Table 6-1: Do you have added activities as 4Ps beneficiaries this pandemic?

	Total
Wala [None]	152 (76%)
Clean up drive	10 (5%)
Radio listening	7 (3.5%)
Backyard gardening	5 (2.5%)
Feeding program	1 (0.5%)
Give assistance	1 (0.5%)
I don't know / No answer	24 (12%)

In a separate interview with DSWD, DSWD said awareness-raising, information dissemination and updating activities happened in some areas through the Parent Leaders.³⁰ Also, 4Ps staff received

²⁹ Virtual interview with DSWD Region 7 Head Aileen Cuevas and DSWD Cebu City Social Worker Irene A. Salazar, 8 June 2020.

³⁰ Ibid.

additional hazard pay with the COVID-19-related work they do, which mostly revolve around SAP.³¹

Meanwhile, an organization of 4Ps beneficiaries called Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid (SNPP, Association of United 4Ps Families) has initiated partnerships with private organizations (ABS-CBN, Jollibee, etc.) to provide relief packs to 4Ps communities. The first two weeks of the enhanced community quarantine have seen the private sector stepping up to provide assistance to frontliners and vulnerable communities. Big brands were donating their advertising budgets and securing support for their staff and suppliers. Private companies and citizens have begun to pledge support to fundraising initiatives. These initiatives also saw partnerships with community-based organizations such as Caritas Manila and SNPP to reach families sorely affected by the lockdown.³² Specifically, SNPP was a partner of ABS-CBN's Pantawid ng Pag-ibig and Bayanihan Musikahan.³³

All these efforts of 4Ps beneficiaries in response to COVID-19 somehow belies the stereotyping of 4Ps beneficiaries as passive recipients of government dole-outs and directly confronts the demonization of 4Ps families accusing them of using grants for their vices, which are some of the persistent issues that are being raised against 4Ps.³⁴ It is clear, though, that there is no consistency on additional activities during COVID-19 across localities and communities in the country.

6. Mula 1-5, 5 ang pinaka-mataas, gaano kayo ka-satisfied sa SAP/ 4Ps assistance na inyong natanggap? [Using the rate 1-5, 5 being the highest, how satisfied are you with the assistance extended to you as 4Ps beneficiaries during this pandemic?]

For this question, there was a total of 204 respondents: 15 came from Southern Leyte while 189 are from Bohol.

Forty-three percent (43%) gave a grade of 5 and 4, which signals high satisfaction. Respondents from Southern Leyte who answered 5 shared that the assistance they received was a big help to cover their expenses. Respondents who gave a score of 4 acknowledged that it did help them but it was not enough.

Twelve percent (12%) gave a grade of 3, while about 16% gave a low satisfaction rate of 1 and 2. Those who answered 3 said that what they received is not enough especially for those whose family members have lost their jobs/livelihood.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Fernandez, I. Pangilinan, A., et.al. (March 25, 2020), "In Metro Manila, Fighting COVID-19 Requires Helping the Poor—Now," *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*, at <https://pcij.org/article/3903/saving-metro-manila>.

³³ ABS-CBN Corporate (June 3, 2020), "Pantawid ng Pag-ibig aids more than 750k families, gears up for 2nd phase to cross 1 million mark," available at <https://www.abs-cbn.com/newsroom/news-releases/2020/6/3/pantawid-ng-pag-ibig-phase-2-750000-families?lang=en>.

³⁴ Lopez, A., Natividad, S., & Sales, S. (June 3, 2020), "[ANALYSIS] 2 4Ps mothers speak up on the coronavirus and their communities," *Rappler*, at <https://r3.rappler.com/move-ph/ispeak/262644-analysis-rural-urban-mothers-speak-coronavirus-communities>.

There was a considerable number of respondents, 58 (28.4%), who did not want to answer—which could be because of fear, mistrust or because they simply did not have any opinion on the matter.

Table 7: Satisfaction Level of 4Ps Beneficiaries to Assistance Received

5	54 (26.5%)
4	35 (17.2%)
3	25 (12.3%)
2	18 (8.8%)
1	14 (6.9%)
N/A	58 (28.4%)

Below are some of the other pressing 4Ps-related issues and challenges today from news reports and local G-Watchers' observation.

- “Iba-iba ang guidelines/instruction from the DSWD and CSWD [City Social Welfare and Development Office] sa pagbigay ng ayuda, may bias, pasa-pasa ang mga tao.” [Different guidelines from DSWD and local CSWD in giving assistance, they are passing people around.]³⁵
- Many do not know how much was the additional assistance or do not know that what they received on top of the regular payout was from the social amelioration program.³⁶
- Very few use the GRM and other hotlines for SAP-related complaints (11 out of 226 respondents/ 4.8%).³⁷ Only seven (7) got a response.³⁸
- Beneficiaries, and the urban and rural poor in general, are discriminated in efforts to enforce quarantine measures, or are otherwise stereotyped as the “lazy poor.”³⁹
- Beneficiaries who allegedly use their grants for illegal activities will now face stricter penalties from the DSWD.⁴⁰
- Local authorities in Cavite threaten to strike out 4Ps beneficiaries from the DSWD list if they did not return sacks of rice that were given to them earlier.⁴¹

³⁵ G-Watch independent validation preliminary results, as of 18 July 2020.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Lopez, A., Natividad, S., & Sales, S. (June 3, 2020), “[ANALYSIS] 2 4Ps mothers speak up on the coronavirus and their communities,” *Rappler*, at <https://r3.rappler.com/move-ph/ispeak/262644-analysis-rural-urban-mothers-speak-coronavirus-communities>.

⁴⁰ Department of Social Welfare and Development (February 1, 2021), “DSWD passes stiffer penalties against erring 4Ps beneficiaries,” *DSWD*, at <https://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/2021/02/dswd-passes-stiffer-policies-against-erring-4ps-beneficiaries/>.

⁴¹ Gotinga, J. (May 3, 2020), “Cavite town takes back rice aid from 4Ps families hours after distribution,” *Rappler*, at <https://r3.rappler.com/nation/259747-naic-rice-distribution-incident-april-30-2020>.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

In sum, the World Bank loan documents on 4Ps during the pandemic contain provisions that set transparency, participation and accountability standards in 4Ps that take into account the pandemic situation. These commitments on paper are handles that help ensure that TPA mechanisms continue during the pandemic.

The following are the citizen engagement and accountability features present in the World Bank COVID loan agreements:

- Beneficiaries who are among the most vulnerable sectors are clearly identified.
- Multi-stakeholder and citizen feedback and consultations in project preparations and project progress.
- Formal assessments and feedback from Family Development Sessions (FDS) informing project design.
- Grievance Redress System of the World Bank with specific timelines for redress.
- Grievance Redress Mechanism at the project-level.
- Redress to the World Bank Inspection Panel if grievances are not satisfactorily resolved.
- Online publication of an annual monitoring report for GRS complaints for the ECRL that utilizes the World Bank's GRS.
- Government monitoring and evaluation with regular status reporting.
- Third-party monitoring group to conduct impact evaluation and submit a report.

Through the survey conducted by G-Watch in five localities, the effectivity of the citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms contemplated by the World Bank for the SWDRP and the ECRL, both of which support the 4Ps project (the latter, an emergency response in light of COVID-19), is tested by the beneficiaries themselves. At this point, it is useful to compare how the World Bank documents proposed and articulated the implementation of these mechanisms vis-à-vis the observed actual operation of the mechanisms.

On clearly identifying beneficiaries who are among the most vulnerable sectors. For SWDRP, the beneficiaries are 4Ps beneficiaries under the Listahanan, including indigenous peoples; for ECRL, the beneficiaries are not limited to 4Ps beneficiaries, but also SMEs and OFWs. Forty-three percent (43%) of 4Ps beneficiaries interviewed by G-Watch confirmed they received the assistance and gave a grade of 5 and 4, which signals high satisfaction. Twenty-eight percent (28%) had medium to low satisfaction rating because they said the assistance was not enough.

On consultations before project implementation. For the SWDRP II, it may be recalled that feedback from the FDS and the existing GRM informed the program design, aside from seven (7) years of lessons learned from CCT implementation. For ECRL, the DSWD was engaged in the preparation of the loan. Data on the ground show that citizens appear to have been consulted about their needs for the pandemic, but whether these were for the purposes of providing input to the ECRL is unclear.



On use of GRMs during project implementation. As reported in the news and based on the G-Watch monitoring of the SAP,⁴² there were various complaints and concerns about the disbursement of SAP and the proper distribution of aid to rural and urban poor, including 4Ps beneficiaries. The survey by G-Watch also enumerated numerous issues that beneficiaries had with the payouts. For beneficiaries, all these complaints, concerns, and issues may find redress through the GRM.

The G-Watch survey shows a significant number of respondents who said they did not use the GRM because they resorted to an alternative method to express concerns, such as the FDS. It also showed that fear of reprisal is a strong deterrent in using the GRM.

Notably, while the GRM remained active throughout the pandemic, the FDS (and other face-to-face interactions with the Municipal/City Link, and Parent Leaders) were suspended or held in abeyance for a few months. For those who feared reprisal, or those who would rather resort to alternative channels for grievances, the suspension of the FDS and other face-to-face interactions would have hindered their chosen venue to provide

crucial and timely feedback about the program.

Furthermore, while the SWRDP II has an existing GRM and other feedback mechanisms lodged in DSWD, it appears there is no separate mechanism for the ECRL. As discussed above, beneficiaries who received the emergency subsidies may use existing mechanisms available to them in the 4Ps to lodge concerns—but for non-4Ps beneficiaries (OFWs, SMEs) who were also entitled to emergency subsidies, the lack of a separate feedback mechanism is problematic. Even if redress is supposedly available through “responsible country authorities,” as provided by the ECRL program document as of date, it appears that a centralized, functioning GRM for the ECRL has not been implemented by such authorities.

It is unclear if the DOF has designed a monitoring system to track the progress of the ECRL. What does exist in terms of tracking the disbursement of emergency subsidies to beneficiaries—one of the objectives of the loan—is a DSWD application in its website indicating how much has been disbursed for the first and second tranches of the SAP. As mentioned above, the implementation

⁴² See G-Watch (August 12, 2020), “G-Watch Independent Validation of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) Report on Field Survey Findings,” at <https://www.g-watch.org/resources/vertical-integration-research/g-watch-independent-validation-social-amelioration-program>.

status reports on the ECRL are unavailable on the World Bank website and Philippine government websites.

On monitoring and evaluation of project implementation. The SWDRP II's latest implementation status report is as of June 2021, and may be viewed in the World Bank's project portal. The project's revised closing date is now June 30, 2022 (originally December 31, 2019). As of the report date, the World Bank noted that compliance rates of monitored children for health are below target, while compliance of children monitored for education cannot be checked because of DSWD's declaration of "force majeure" and waiver of requirements during such period. For the ECRL, no such implementation status report is available. The project closed on June 30, 2021. Meanwhile, the G-Watch survey shows that the monitoring of health and education conditionalities continue during the pandemic, as per the beneficiaries interviewed. There were beneficiaries who said these were discontinued likely because of the DSWD "force majeure" announcement at the onset of the pandemic.

On other citizen engagement activities. It is clear that the pandemic has affected how 4Ps engage its beneficiaries. The FDS sessions were temporarily canceled and eventually adjusted to online. Yet, the G-Watch survey shows 4Ps beneficiaries remained active undertaking various activities. For visitation, or *pangungumusta* of DSWD staff to 4Ps beneficiaries, 138 (70%) of the respondents say that it is still active and 59 (30%) say otherwise. Visitation of the Parent-Leader is also active according to 142 (72%) respondents but 55 (28%) say it's not active. When asked if 4Ps beneficiaries in Lanao del Sur have activities that respond to the pandemic, the answers were mixed. Some shared that there are no 4Ps activities or that they haven't seen DSWD during the pandemic. There are also those who said that they had a seminar about COVID-19 or have seen DSWD during SAP Validation. In a separate interview with DSWD, DSWD said awareness-raising, information dissemination and updating are happening in some areas through the parent-leaders.

However, while there is relatively high satisfaction towards the assistance received, there is little to no evidence, that proves 4Ps beneficiaries have substantively been involved in determining what assistance were to be provided and how it was best delivered. There is also little-to-no evidence pointing to any meaningful citizen voice and claim-making in the government's social assistance for COVID-19 even when 4Ps supposedly has existing mechanisms for this to happen. The weaknesses of the GRS and the lack of citizen oversight on the government's social assistance are huge gaps in accountability.

To recap, the following are the main gaps on citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms in the loan documents:

- No collaborative decision-making that involved the public.
- No definite provision or mechanism in the ECRL to accommodate citizen feedback during the implementation of the loan, though citizens may always lodge complaints in the World Bank's Grievance Redress Service (GRS).
- No clear system to assess the effectiveness of the GRM systems for both SWDRP and ECRL.
- No support to monitoring, evaluation, and oversight efforts of civil society.

Though not provided in the loan documents, there have been citizen engagement and accountability activities noted on the ground based on G-Watch field survey: visitation, or *pangungumusta* of DSWD staff to 4Ps beneficiaries, visitation of the Parent-Leader, seminar about COVID-19 or have seen DSWD during SAP Validation, awareness-raising, information dissemination and updating.

The major gaps on citizen engagement and accountability features observed on the ground are as follows:

- Low use of GRS even if there is a clear demand/ need for it.
- Participation of 4Ps beneficiaries in the kind and amount of assistance to be provided.
- Weak-to-no information campaign on what beneficiaries should expect and the status of the program.

Overall, while the commitments in the loan agreements provided the policy handles useful in ensuring that the government maintain the citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms in 4Ps even amid the pandemic, the impact of the pandemic on these mechanisms is undeniable.

While DSWD had made efforts to adjust, it was not sufficient to ensure meaningful citizen engagement and effective accountability in 4Ps and other social assistance during the pandemic. This clearly indicates the need for more proactive and affirmative support in ensuring that the citizen engagement and accountability commitments in loan agreements are operationalized and realized on the ground, especially at the time of crisis.

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