



Result and Analysis of G-Watch's Online Survey on the State of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) Implementation



G-Watch Philippines
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Photo: CNN Philippines photo of the cash aid distribution in Bagong Pag-Asa Elementary School in Quezon City taken on May 10, 2020, during the deadline for the first tranche of the SAP. CNN reports that people were queing as early as 5am without observing physical distancing (<https://www.facebook.com/1515763818663512/posts/2819292791643935/?d=n>)

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Introduction

Government Watch (G-Watch) is currently conducting a monitoring of citizen entitlements under the COVID-19 response. This endeavor asserts the need for governments to pay attention to providing what citizens are entitled to during emergency/ crisis situation. Often, this is overlooked and a cause of abuse where delivery of services and assistance becomes an opportunity for corruption and abuse of authority, instead of a way to ensure welfare and protection of the people.

G-Watch's first output is a mapping of citizen entitlements under the government's COVID-19 response, along with the hotlines that citizens can use to inquire or file complaints about their entitlements: <https://www.g-watch.org/news-release/guide-citizen-entitlements-during-covid-19-crisis>.

The second knowledge output of G-Watch in this initiative looks closely into the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), the social assistance of the government that aims to benefit 18 million vulnerable families, particularly focusing on the SAP being implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD): <https://www.g-watch.org/resources/governance-reform-studies/g-watch-report-citizen-entitlements-under-covid-19-social>.

This third output is a presentation of the result of an online survey that G-Watch has opened up publicly from April 27 to May 7, 2020. It aims to know the situation of SAP implementation by generating response online from whomever would be willing to respond to the survey. We distributed the survey questionnaire using G-Watch's Facebook page and have also asked our core G-Watchers to respond to and share the survey questionnaire.

The survey questionnaire consists of 10 questions: 6 multiple choice and 4 open-ended questions, using the SurveyMonkey platform. The survey result is obviously indicative only of the actual SAP performance, but it allows a convenient general sensing of the state of implementation and the sentiment of ordinary citizens who would volunteer their response. We are using the survey result as an additional source of data and information in our monitoring and assessment that also includes actual ground updating from our core G-Watchers, online monitoring of news and reports, desk review of official documents and interviews of key stakeholders.

In general, the result we deduced from the survey is consistent with the actual development in and common perception about the SAP implementation. In the next section, we present nine (9) highlights of the survey finding that has also served as a good take-off point for a discussion on the state of social policies and delivery systems of social programs that G-Watch has been studying and monitoring for the past years now. The paper ends with recap of findings and emerging recommendations.

The first draft of this report is released publicly on May 14, 2020.

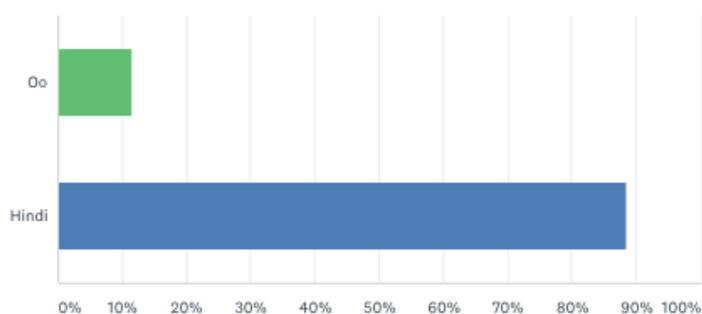
1. The distribution of the Social Amelioration Card (SAC) as the first step in SAP implementation (as per first DSWD information material) was not followed.

DSWD's first information video on SAP informed the public that the first step in the SAP implementation is the house-to-house distribution of a form called the Social Amelioration Card (SAC) that gathers information about the beneficiaries. This is generally not followed, as per result of the survey. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Whether the social amelioration card (SAC) has been received

Nakatanggap na ba kayo/ ang inyong pamilya ng social amelioration card?

Answered: 78 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Oo	11.54% 9
Hindi	88.46% 69
TOTAL	78

This is consistent to developments at the national policy level. DSWD later changed this first step in the SAP process and allowed distribution of SAC during the distribution of assistance. DSWD also allowed local governments to proceed with the distribution prior to the validation to supposedly avoid delays. Nonetheless, DSWD and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) warned the local governments that any beneficiaries provided with assistance who are supposedly not qualified based on the DSWD validation will be charged to the LGU.

2. The distribution of the SAP is delayed and/or did not reach all intended beneficiaries.

The survey started third week after SAP has been launched by the national government. Since then until it ended last week, 67% of those who said they are qualified to receive SAP has not received SAP. The survey leaves it up to the respondents to determine who are qualified or not, which is another limitation.

The survey response is generally consistent with the report of DSWD. As of end of April, in the 5th Report to Congress by the Executive under Bayanihan We Heal as One Act, DSWD reports that only 32% of the total disbursed SAP funds have been received by the target beneficiaries, only 18% of non-4Ps beneficiaries have been served.

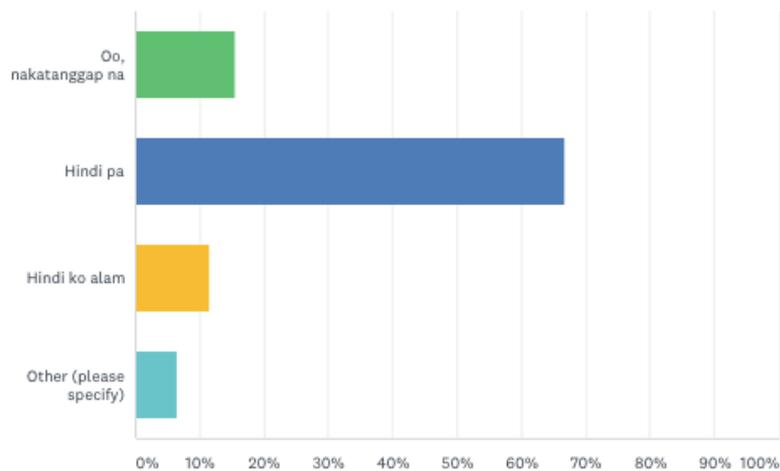
As of May 5 report to Congress by the Executive, DSWD claims that SAP has already served 13.5 million families out of the 18 million target which translates to 75%. This is for the first round of payouts, which was supposed to have ended last April 30 as per DILG order. The deadline has been extended to May 10. The total funds that had reached the beneficiaries is 75 billion out of the 205 billion SAP budget or 37%.

It is important to note that the backlog indeed is on the end of the local governments since DSWD has reported high disbursement to local governments as early as the third week of April. As earlier reported by G-Watch, local governments complain about confusing guidelines causing the delay on their end. There has also been a dramatic increase in the rate of distribution to the beneficiaries by the local government on the week of the deadline and during the extension, which is not covered by the survey. However, for lack of standard timeframe, the expectation is for beneficiaries to receive it as soon as it has been announced, hence the general sentiment that it has been delayed.

Figure 2: Whether intended beneficiaries have received social amelioration assistance

Ang kapamilya/ kamag-anak o ka-komunidad na kwalipikadong makatanggap ng social amelioration ay naka-tanggap na ba ng social amelioration assistance?

Answered: 78 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Oo, nakatanggap na	15.38% 12
Hindi pa	66.67% 52
Hindi ko alam	11.54% 9
Other (please specify)	Responses 6.41% 5
TOTAL	78

We also would like to underscore that G-Watch received a lot of complaints about senior citizens not receiving social assistance. This is either because they were not qualified (eg. they are receiving social pension or they have children who have work) or they simply did not know the status of the assistance to them. It is crucial that the extent of neglect of the entitlements of senior citizens during this pandemic is looked into closely.

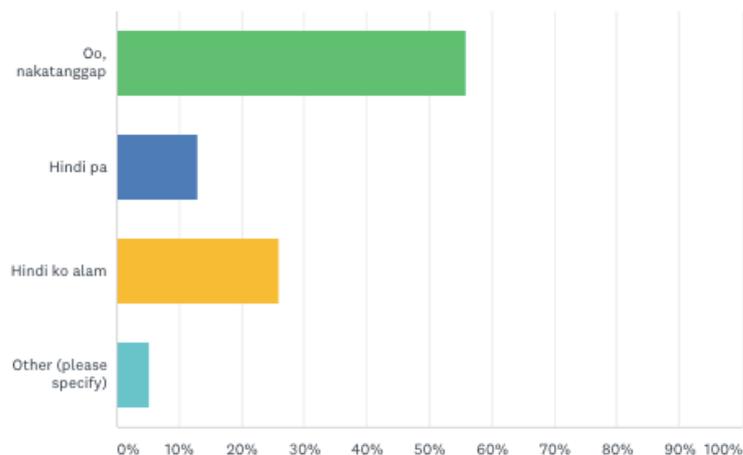
3. The 4Ps beneficiaries indeed received their payout fastest among the SAP beneficiaries, but it is hard to check whether they got the additional assistance on top of their regular payout since this is not separately accounted for.

Most survey respondents affirmed that Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries have already received their assistance. This is consistent with the DSWD reports.

Figure 3: 4Ps additional assistance

Ang mga 4Ps ba sa inyong komunidad ay nakatanggap na nang emergency assistance na liban pa o on top of ng regular payouts?

Answered: 77 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Oo, nakatanggap	55.84% 43
Hindi pa	12.99% 10
Hindi ko alam	25.97% 20
Other (please specify)	Responses 5.19% 4
TOTAL	77

However, a big number of respondents, 26%, says they are not certain or they do not know if the amount of assistance 4Ps beneficiaries received included the additional assistance from SAP. This is also not traceable since DSWD reporting simply accounts for the number of 4Ps beneficiaries served. We have yet to see the exact amount of additional assistance given to 4Ps per region/ province and in total in their official reports.

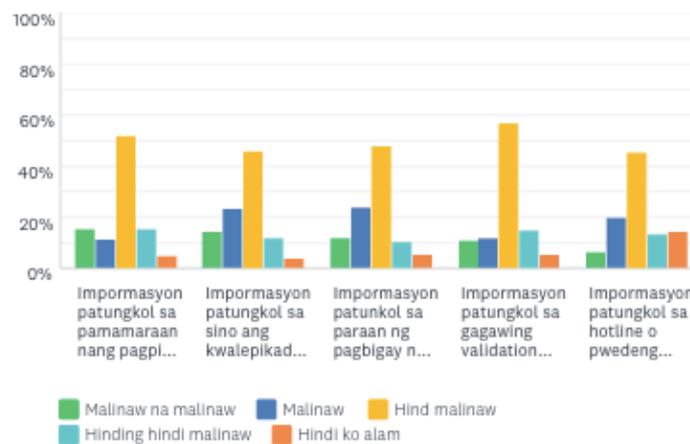
4. Information and guidelines about SAP have been generally unclear.

The survey validates the common perception and reports on the ground that the information and guidelines on SAP have been confusing. DSWD Memorandum Circulars on SAP have had several reiterations which include several amendments and additions to the SAP processes.

Figure 4: How clear is the vital information

Sabihin kung gaano kalinaw ang information mula sa DSWD patungkol sa mga sumusunod na aspeto nang social amelioration

Answered: 77 Skipped: 3



	MALINAW NA MALINAW	MALINAW	HIND MALINAW	HINDING HINDI MALINAW	HINDI KO ALAM	TOTAL
Impormasyon patungkol sa pamamaraan nang pagpili ng mga benepisyaryo ng SAP	15.58% 12	11.69% 9	51.95% 40	15.58% 12	5.19% 4	77
Impormasyon patungkol sa sino ang kwalepikadong maging benepisyaryo	14.47% 11	23.68% 18	46.05% 35	11.84% 9	3.95% 3	76
Impormasyon patungkol sa paraan ng pagbigay ng assistance	12.00% 9	24.00% 18	48.00% 36	10.67% 8	5.33% 4	75
Impormasyon patungkol sa gagawing validation ng mga benepisyaryo na nabigyan	10.81% 8	12.16% 9	56.76% 42	14.86% 11	5.41% 4	74
Impormasyon patungkol sa hotline o pwedeng tawagan para sa mga tanong o concerns	6.67% 5	20.00% 15	45.33% 34	13.33% 10	14.67% 11	75

The information on how the beneficiaries are selected and the validation process have been the most unclear, as per survey result. Until now, it is not clear if DSWD or the local governments have the final say on who would receive the assistance and what they use as basis for their decision. Earlier, DSWD was saying they will use the *Listahanan* which is also the basis of 4Ps. Now, it is unclear whether the validation would involve new data-gathering or simply checking of whether those who received the SAP assistance are in a standing list.

5. Government poverty data is problematic across levels.

The way the LGUs made their listing is generally problematic. LGUs determine for themselves how they will come up with the list. There is no common data management system used by the LGUs. This is despite of various and long initiatives on local data management, particularly on poverty and development. Some mentioned using the community-based monitoring system, but still complained that it is not accurate and updated.

The conundrum on SAP listing points to two major problems when it comes to poverty data management in the country:

- There is no uniformity of poverty data across LGUs.
- The data of LGUs and the national government particularly DSWD are not synergized/ harmonized.

These are big problems not only during disaster situation, but in poverty reduction efforts in general. Given that the country's social policy is founded on targeting, the huge gaps and misses on data management at different levels could be indicative of a flawed poverty reduction targeting.

This begs a question raised by those who have been critical about the targeted approach to social programs: since targeting has been proven to be flawed, even resulting in unintended consequences (e.g., one study shows an increase in stunting among children of non-4Ps beneficiaries, emerging issues of social fragmentation/ division), should we start the conversation of how to achieve universal social programs?

Other information are also unclear to most but relatively understood by more people compared to how the beneficiaries are listed and validation will be conducted. These other vital information that are also unclear are:

- Who are qualified to receive the assistance
- How the assistance will be provided/ distributed
- Information on the hotlines/ grievance redress system

The confusion on who are the qualified beneficiaries are also apparent in the result of the open-ended question asking respondents what they know as the ways the local government selected the beneficiaries. Only 18% had more or less answered correctly (poorest/ most affected), 17% provided the general answer of referring to the DSWD guidelines. 15% of the

respondent think its *palakasan* and nepotism that determine who will get in the list, while 13% think it is the discretion of the barangay officials.

This shows that if the information is unclear, people will speculate and the perception of corruption and anomalies in the government could be one that would influence what people expect. Of course, it is possible that the selection of the beneficiaries really became discretionary and abusive but just as pointed in many corruption studies, it is hard to tell for sure.

Figure 5: Selection process

Ano ang nadinig/ napag-alaman ninyong paraan ng lokal na pamahalaan na pagpili ng benepisyaryo ng social amelioration assistance?		
Mahihirap (poorest of the poor), nawalan ng trabaho/no work no pay, senior citizens, solo parents, buntis	13	18%
[DSWD-led] Follow guidelines/qualifications and list of DSWD with support of LGU	12	17%
Palakasan, ka-alyado, kakilala, kamag-anak ng leaders (kagawad, purok-leader)	11	15%
[Brgy./LGU-led] Brgy. Officials/purok leaders/block leaders to determine list of beneficiaries;	9	13%
No action / Wala pang lumilibot / hasn't released SAP yet	7	10%
Mentioned Requirements / other qualifications	7	10%
Don't know	6	8.4%
Magulo / Many requirements / Long process	4	5.6%
Binabawasan ang amount na binibigay	2	2.8%
TOTAL	71	

It is important to underscore that the nuances and details on who are the qualified beneficiaries was released late after a list of sectors have already been published. The government needs to pay attention to communication more, especially its use of social media. The transmission of information today is faster than before. A post by a Facebook page of a government office can be transmitted nationwide in an instant.

The standard manner of distribution as per the first guidelines of DSWD has also not been followed in general. As per DSWD's first information material on SAP, the SAC and the assistance shall be distributed house-to-house. Most gathered people for the distribution. There are reports of gatherings for SAP distribution that totally disregarded social distancing. This is a clear violation of both SAP and health guidelines. This specific development highlights the need for how it is important that one entitlement of citizens is served without compromising the others. In this case, since we are under a health emergency, safety should have been central to all government actions.

Finally, with regards the hotlines/ grievance redress system (GRS), the information about it has been widely disseminated, but we have received countless reports of non-functioning hotlines. We urge the government to also report on the performance of the hotlines and the

GRS they have set up in terms of the calls/ text they have received and the actions they have taken on each of the calls/ texts. The hotlines and GRS as a transparency, participation and accountability mechanism was supposed to help in addressing widely perceived corruption and anomalies. However, for such TPA mechanism to work, it needs to build its credential first to win the trust and confidence of the people. Reports of non-functioning/ non-performing hotline did not help build such needed credibility.

6. There is a general perceived distrust and lack of confidence towards those who manage and implement SAP.

Generally, the respondents disagree that people in their locality trust and are confident with the government. 61% of the respondents say they disagree that people in their locality trust and are confident with DSWD. Interestingly, the perceived distrust and lack of confidence is lowest towards municipal/ city governments (47% of respondents). 58% say they disagree that people in their locality trust and are confident with the barangays.

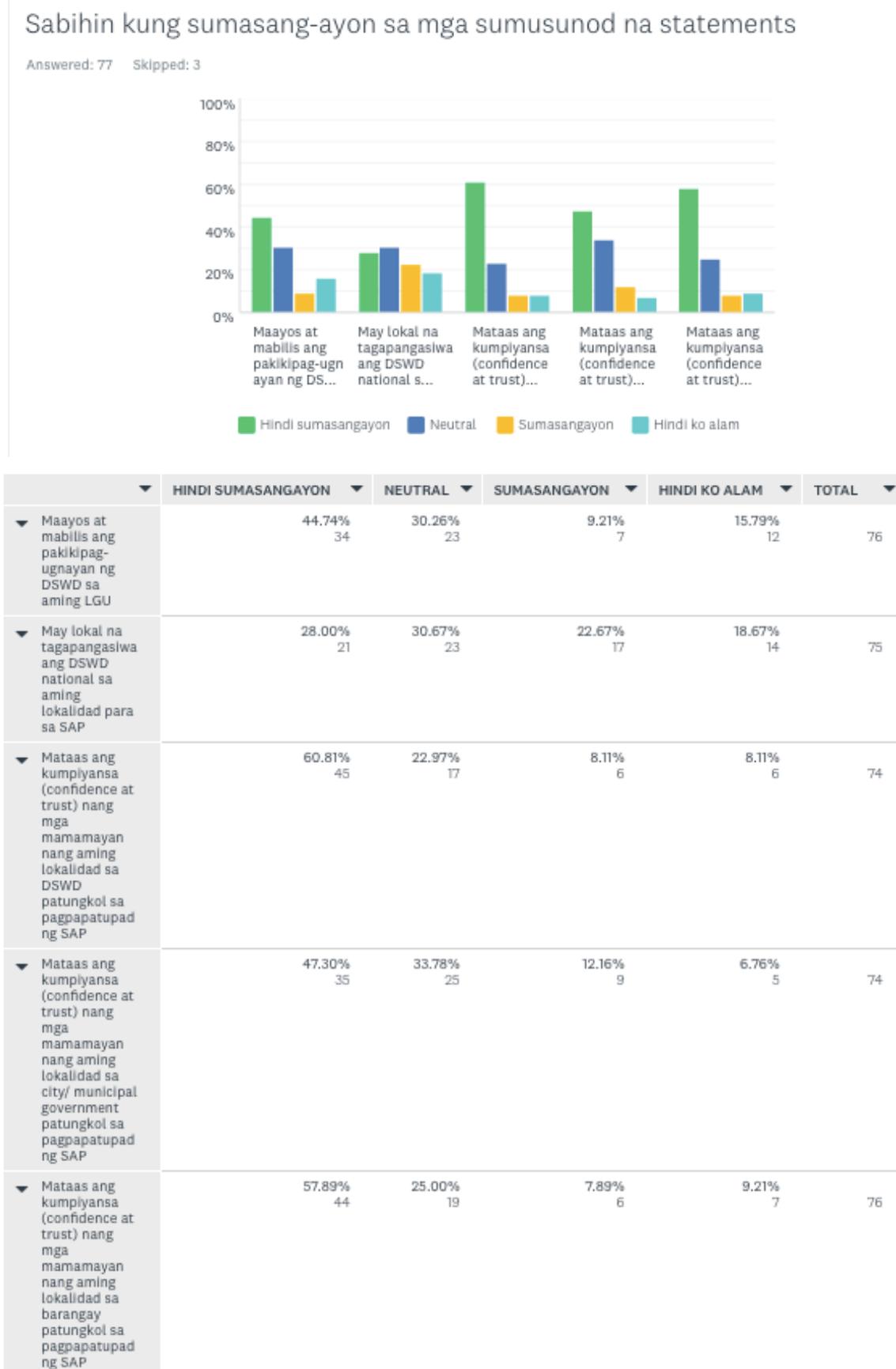
The confusing guidelines and processes, standing bias or negative perception towards government, allegations/ reports of corruption, seeming effort of the national government to pass the blame to local government could be some of the explanation for this generally perceived mistrust. This points to the need for confidence-building measures, especially in disaster relief and response that have been plagued by corruption allegations in the past.

7. The level of efficiency and smoothness in the coordination between the DSWD and the local governments varies, with many perceiving it to be problematic. It is not immediately apparent to people if there is a point-person of DSWD in their locality.

When asked if they agree that the coordination of DSWD with local government had been smooth and efficient, 45% of the respondent said that they do not agree, with only 9% saying they agree. The response to whether there is a local DSWD point-person in their locality is widely dispersed, which could mean this not clear to people or it is not something immediately apparent or verifiable.

In the DSWD field reports reviewed by G-Watch in its report on SAP released last May 4, coordination with local governments have been repeatedly mentioned as a factor affecting the implementation of SAP. Those with smooth coordination and local government champions had more efficient SAP implementation, while problematic coordination and interfacing with local governments had been one of the major factors SAP has been delayed in many localities. This is understandable since the SAP delivery mechanism consists of processes and tasks divided between DSWD and the local governments.

Figure 6: DSWD-LGU Coordination, Trust and Confidence Towards Government



The trend in the delivery of social programs in the recent past has been to limit the authority of the local governments on social programs, particularly in the identification of the beneficiaries. This is in the case of three major poverty reduction programs that G-Watch is also studying: Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI), 4Ps and Bottom-up-Budgeting (BuB). While there are/ were still coordination and interface between DSWD and local governments in these flagship programs, SAP delivery mechanism is different because the local government are tasked to be the frontliner with a relatively bigger role in the identification of beneficiaries. This sudden change in the role and responsibility between DSWD and LGUs required adjustments that perhaps some were not able to handle well, affecting implementation.

8. It is widely perceived that *palakasan* system, nepotism and patronage determines who got assisted by SAP.

As shown in Figure 5, a number of respondents said that *palakasan*, nepotism and patronage was the way SAP beneficiaries were selected. This is consistent with the result of the other open-ended questions in the survey. Allegation of inclusion or exclusion errors is the top complaint which is often understood as due to *palakasan*, nepotism and patronage. Wrong information/ data using old census were also mentioned, as well as questions on how location/ type of house affects who get assisted which signals the lack of public understanding on how the government measures poverty or who is poor.

Figure 7: Common complaints about SAP

Ano ang naririnig ninyong reklamo o hinaing ng mga kamag-anak/ ka-komunidad ninyo patungkol sa social amelioration assistance?		
Inclusion/Exclusion - Pinipili lang ang mabibigyan/makakasama sa listahan; - Sinasama sa listahan ang mga kamag-anak, kaibigan, kakilala, ka-alyado - Some 4Ps beneficiaries/pensioners/OFWs or may kamag-anak abroad are included in the list; seniors with no pension not included in the list - Some PWDs/Solo parent ay hindi nabigyan - Cash assistance from DOLE wasn't approved and family wasn't included in DSWD list - Inconsistency in implementation. (i.e. a solo parent included in the list was living with daughter and daughter has an OFW husband; they thought all seniors will be given SAP)	40	51%
Slow disbursement / Haven't received SAP (or SAP form)	20	25%

No information/updates given	8	10%
Lumang census ang ginagamit and hindi updated; no data; guidelines not clear	4	5%
Kaltas ng makukuhang ayuda	3	4%
Discrimination based on location/type of house	2	2.5%
No comment; "tahimik na namimigay"	2	2.5%
Total	79	

The widely perceived cases of palakasan/ nepotism/ patronage could either be well-grounded based on actual experience in the SAP or could be due to long-standing perception or bias towards government. Unless the allegations are investigated and there is credible assessment or audit that would attest to the level of the compliance/ non-compliance to the SAP standards or presence/ absence of anomalies, it is hard to know the exact level of irregularities to determine whether the perception is valid. Nonetheless, on top of the perception, there are numerous reports and allegations (and lack of evidence to prove otherwise) meriting further investigation.

Other complaints which validate findings discussed in other sections above include slow disbursement, no SAP form received and lack of information. Another complaint which also came out in the earlier report of G-Watch on SAP based on its monitoring online and on the ground is the incidence of “pagkaltas” or cutting of SAP assistance. Several reports G-Watch got online said beneficiaries were asked to return a portion of the SAP assistance they received, which they understood as the pre-requisite for them to receive their SAP. Another report said that the cut from their assistance was mandatory contribution to the local government COVID-19 efforts.

9. SAP implementation is generally deemed problematic.

The final general open-ended question of the survey validates the general perception that the SAP implementation has been generally problematic causing backlogs and delays in the distribution of benefits.

The key factors negatively affecting (perceived) performance of SAP based on the survey responses are:

- Allegation of anomalies and corruption
- Complicated and unclear processes
- Confusing information due to changing guidelines and weak communication
- Logistical capacity of the implementers

Figure 8: Assessment on Factors Affecting

Ano ang inyong assessment sa social amelioration program sa ngayon? Ano ang mga factors na nakaka-apekto dito?		
Problems/Issues in listing; inclusion/exclusion - Unfair, hindi nakakatanggap lahat (assistance should be given not just to the poorest of the poor but to everyone) - Kailangan kadikit/kamag-anak ng leader, "palakasan", low trust in LGU/government - List not updated/correct (or no existing list at all) - Lack of validation	38	48%
Implementation Problem - Complicated/unclear process and assessment; - Implementing agencies not ready/encountering challenges to implement; - Some processes weren't followed, slow implementation - Lack of communication / information from LGU, and between agencies	24	30%
Walang nag-iikot, wala paring natatanggap	9	11.4%
Lack of empathy from implementors, cause of fights and misunderstanding	3	4%
Can't say	3	4%
Okay implementation	2	2.5%
Total	79	

Recap and Some Recommendations

To sense the general sentiment of people with regards SAP implementation, G-Watch has undertaken an open online survey from April 29 to May 7 that yielded 80 responses from all over the country. G-Watch finds the survey results consistent with reports at the national/policy level and with G-Watch's online and ground monitoring.

While only indicative and limited to assessing SAP implementation up to the start of May only, the use of the open survey is proven to be an efficient and convenient way to generate public feedback as another source of information in assessing/ analyzing the state of policy/ program implementation and as a take-off point for recommendations on ways forward.

The following are the highlights of the survey findings:

1. The distribution of the Social Amelioration Card (SAC) as the first step in SAP implementation (as per the first DSWD information material) was not followed.
2. The distribution of the SAP is delayed and/or did not reach all intended beneficiaries. G-Watch got a lot of complaints from senior citizens who did get assisted.
3. The 4Ps beneficiaries indeed received their payout fastest among the SAP beneficiaries, but it is hard to check whether they got the additional assistance on top of their regular payout since this is not separately accounted for.
4. Information and guidelines about SAP have been generally unclear.
5. Government poverty data is problematic across levels. There is no uniformity of poverty data across LGUs. The data of LGUs and the national government particularly DSWD are not synergized/ harmonized.
6. There is general perceived distrust and lack of confidence towards those who manage and implement SAP.
7. The level of efficiency and smoothness in the coordination between the DSWD and the local governments varies, with many perceiving it to be problematic. It is not immediately apparent to people if there is a point person of DSWD in their locality.
8. It is widely perceived that *palakasan* system, nepotism and patronage determines who got assisted by SAP.
9. SAP implementation is generally deemed problematic.

Given these survey findings highlights, we recommend the following:

- That DSWD sets a standard timeframe for the delivery of relief and assistance during crisis that is observant of citizen entitlements and needs.
- Need for a closer look into the extent of neglect of the entitlements of senior citizens during this pandemic, what caused it and what can be done about it.
- That DSWD separately accounts for the additional SAP benefits given to 4Ps beneficiaries and the exact amount given per locality and in total for all 4Ps.
- That DSWD clarifies how the validation is/ shall be undertaken and ensure public release of the list of SAP beneficiaries with clarifications on how the beneficiaries were targeted/ listed.

- That government rechecks its poverty data management at national and local levels, taking into account why the past similar efforts have not ensured updated, accurate and reliable poverty data across all levels that we should have felt in this crisis response.
- That DSWD and DILG investigate those who distributed SAP assistance without complying with physical distancing requirements and health safety protocols.
- That policy conversations on whether universal social programs would be better and feasible be initiated given persisting flaws or errors of targeted social programs.
- That DSWD and DILG ensures that the hotlines and grievance redress system are functional, making public the data on its operation and performance.
- That government undertakes efforts to build trust and confidence in its disaster relief and response, starting with good design and performance that are communicated well.
- That working and effective transparency, participation and accountability mechanisms would be instituted and provided with needed support.
- That future social amelioration assistance in disaster relief and response take note of the lessons from this SAP to improve design and implementation, particularly when it comes to information and communication.