

Philippine Social Welfare Policies

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THE FILIPINO FAMILY

Filipinos comprise 111 cultural and linguistic groups of Malay-Polynesian origin, with varying degrees of Chinese, Spanish and American influences. Majority are Roman Catholics, though a significant number are Protestants and Muslims. The Philippines is the world's third largest English-speaking country after the United States and the United Kingdom. Filipino is the national language; English is used for commercial and legal translations. Literacy rate is a high 94%.

The communities before the colonial years were small, consisting of about thirty-to-one-hundred households with a population of 100 to 500 individuals. Most of the villages could be found in the upland and coastal areas, thus, earning the name "*balangay*", a Malay term referring to a small boat commonly used by the residents as their means of transport. Although these communities were small, they were, nevertheless, self-reliant and were governed by the natives themselves.

The family plays a very significant role in the life of the Filipinos and in the development of the community. Traditionally, the family is so protective that going outside the family to ask for help, for example, from a social welfare agency, is only taken as a last course of action. As much as possible it is the family that takes care of its own kind as a show of independence and self-reliance. Pride (*danga*) and shame (*hiya*) dominate the psyche of the people. In some instances the practice of these values becomes counter productive.

Because of the magnitude of poverty especially in the rural areas, the Filipino family cannot afford to be passive and isolated. It is now proactive as strategic partners in solving their problems, meeting their needs and fighting poverty. Values like *bayanihan* (cooperation), *damayan* (sharing) and

utang na loob (gratitude) are now more demonstrated in social development programs. There is a revival of values that were propagated by ancient edicts like the Codes of *Kalantiao* and *Maragtas*.

Status of Human Development

There are about 78.6 million Filipinos in 16 million households. (UNDP 2004) The average household size is 5. More than half of the population occupies the largest island of Luzon. The national poverty line is 36.8 which means that about one-third of the population is poor. The average annual income is \$2890 which is less than the minimum monthly requirement for a family of five to meet all their basic minimum needs. The average annual poverty threshold is \$278. The annual per capita food threshold is \$184. The GDP is US\$74.7 B. The GDP per capita is \$4,170 from \$3,971. The country has a medium human development index (HDI). It ranks number 77 in 2000 to number 83 in 2002 out of 177 countries.

The Philippines is classified in the medium category as far as the HDI or the measure of achievements is concerned but in terms of the HPI, or deprivation, the Philippines is in the top 30. In the ASEAN region the country trails behind Malaysia (59) and Thailand (76) in terms of the country's average achievement as measured by life expectancy, education and GDP per capita.

For the human poverty index (HPI) that measures deprivations in terms of the three basic dimensions of development the country ranks number 28 (from 23 in 2000) out of 95 developing countries. In other words, the index represents vulnerability to death at a relatively early age, exclusion from the world of reading and communications and lack of access to overall economic provisioning, as measured by the percentage of the population not using improved water sources and the percentage of children under five who are underweight.

The country ranks number 66 in the gender development index (GDI). GDI adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequalities between men and women in terms of a long and healthy life, knowledge and decent standard of living. For the gender empowerment measure (GEM) it is number 37, better than Malaysia (44) & Thailand (57). The GEM captures gender inequality in three key areas: political participation and decision-making power, economic participation and decision-making and power over economic resources.

Filipino women are better than their counterparts in some of our neighboring countries in Southeast Asia. As a matter of fact in most community development projects, women are very much actively involved. Women are good entrepreneurs and they are very good in managing livelihood projects.

However, there is still much to do as far as capacitating or giving women education, health and medical care and other basic services. There is also a lot of development work that is needed to address the problem of poverty particularly in the rural areas of the country. Income is low and this explains why food and nutrition as well as health are important concerns that should be addressed in development work.

Evolution of Social Welfare

Concern for others is inherent in the Filipino character. Two (2) ancient decrees of the barangay, the Maragtas Code and the Kalantiao Code, formed the basis of policy for human interaction in promoting the wellbeing of people and communities. These codes primarily give importance to a rule that each member should be responsible for one another and that the community must see to it that the needs of its members are well provided.

Caring for people is indeed an inherent trait of the Filipino. In fact, two modes of intervention, shaped by human values, became visible and have been practiced since time immemorial. These are the *bayanihan* and the *damayan* helping approaches. *Bayanihan* is the collaborative way to approach a community problem. People collaborate and work together to provide labor and materials to build farm to market roads. *Damayan* is more of an individualized approach to a person or family who needs assistance.

The spirit behind these ancient laws, values and approaches is the sense of the *Kapwa Tao* that gives value to the importance of the *Other Person*. It is this force that propels people to show concern for their neighbor's welfare inside their respective barangays. A barangay is the basic local government unit. It is at this level that domestic as well as community problems are mediated and settled.

The colonizers reinforced these good practices.

The Spaniards came and brought Christianity to the Filipinos. They taught the concept of salvation as an incentive to being good and responsible as our brother's keeper. They established institutions like San Lazaro Hospital, San Juan de Dios Hospital and Hospicio de San Jose.

The Americans introduced two (2) important concepts that of public welfare as a government responsibility and the principle of "parens patriae". This principle allows the government to take into custody and provide protections to all victims particularly children who are physically and sexually abused.

In the 1940s or during the Japanese occupation, social welfare activities focused more on relief for prisoners of war and displaced persons. This was the need at that time of conflict. After the war, social welfare concentrated more on relief and rehabilitation for orphans, displaced persons, physically disabled, and released prisoners.

In the 1950s, the thrust of social welfare was the delivery of social amelioration programs into the countryside because of the agrarian unrest in Central Luzon. This unrest was caused by the abuse and unjust relationship between landlords and tenants. It was during this period that the government established the Social Welfare Administration (SWA). This was the forerunner of the present DSWD.

In the 1960s, there was a strengthening of government social welfare. It was at this time that the SWA was transformed into the Department of Social Welfare by virtue of Republic Act 5416 in 1968. As a cabinet department, it assumed the bigger role of promoting the social welfare activities of government. It was also in June 1965 when Republic Act 4373 was passed regulating the practice of the social work profession.

In the 1970s, emphasis was given to the development and integration of more specific social welfare programs, namely: self-employment assistance for livelihood opportunities; practical skills development for capacity building, day care services for children; family planning for couples, and special social services for emergency situations.

In the 1980s, an important development was the introduction of a tool to measure and track the changes in the wellbeing of clients. This first tool was the social welfare indicators (SWI) that measured the movement of a client from survival to subsistence and to self-reliance. This tool was further

enhanced and was revised to become the family welfare indicators (FWI) to monitor changes in the family's wellbeing. After about two decades later, this system of measurement became the SWDIS or the social welfare development indicator system that measure the indicators of survival, security and empowerment of clients and communities being assisted.

In the 1990s, the Social Reform Agenda was launched by the national government and the Department of Social Welfare and Development was a major player. As a matter of fact it started the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Services (CIDS). Using the principle of convergence, this flagship project has enabled the growth of people and communities by the mobilization and delivery of vital government services that converge at the level of the family and the community.

It was also in the early part of the 1990s that Republic Act 7160 or the Local Government Code was approved and transferred the delivery of social welfare services from the national government to the local government units. The basic premise for the transfer is that it is the local government that knows the needs and problems of people better. As a result, the mandate of the DSWD, as a premier welfare agency, changed from direct service provider to policy and program developer.

In the 2000s CIDS was further reinforced and became KALAHI-CIDS or the movement against poverty. It is the government's key strategy for poverty alleviation whose ultimate goal is social change and empowerment through the delivery of basic social services, vital infrastructures, livelihood and financing interventions.

KALAHI-CIDS is being implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. It is a community driven development project where decision-making resides in the community. The people analyze their situation and needs, prioritize problems, propose solutions and develop projects which they will implement.

Social Welfare Legislations

Philippine Social Welfare Policy is selective and not universal where everybody is protected with welfare provisions that starts from the "womb to the tomb". In selective social welfare, not every citizen is entitled to social

welfare benefits. Social welfare services are limited to those who are really in need like the poor and the disadvantaged groups. More specifically, they are the orphans, abused children, needy adults, battered and disadvantaged women, elderly, persons with disabilities.

Policy making starts with the stakeholders discussing the problems and issues and submitting the proposal, that is technically called a bill after being sponsored by a Congressman or a Senator, to the floor of the legislative bodies like the lower house or the House of Representatives (HOR) and the upper chamber or the Senate. After careful deliberations and subsequent approval by both chambers, the bill comes to the conference committee that is composed of selected Congressmen and Senators to craft the final version after threshing out the version that was passed by both houses. It is only after the approval of the President of the Philippines that the bill becomes a law or policy, labeled as a Republic Act that will serve as the basis for the line departments like the DSWD to develop the corresponding program and issue the implementing rules and guidelines.

There are a number of important legislations in the country. These national policies are designed to serve, protect, promote and sustain the welfare and development of poor and disadvantaged families, children, youth, women, persons with disabilities, elderly, solo parents, indigenous peoples and migrant workers.

On the Family

1. Republic Act No. 8369 – An Act Establishing Family Courts, Granting them Exclusive Original Jurisdiction over Child and Family Cases;
2. Republic Act No. 8533 – The Family Code of the Philippines. An act amending Title 1, Chapter 3, Article 39 of EO 209, nullifying the prescriptive period for action or defenses grounded on psychological incapacity.

On Solo Parents

3. Republic Act No. 8972 – An Act Providing for Benefits and Privileges to Solo Parents and their Children.

On Women

4. Republic Act No. 6725 – An Act Strengthening the Prohibition on Discrimination Against Women with Respect to Terms and Conditions of Employment;
5. Republic Act No. 7192 – Women in Development and Nation Building Act;
6. Republic Act No. 7877 - An Act Declaring Sexual Harassment Unlawful in the Employment, Education and Training Environment and for other purposes;
7. Republic Act No. 7882 – An Act Providing Assistance to Women Engaging in Micro and Cottage Business Enterprises and for other purposes;
8. Republic Act No. 8353 – Anti-Rape Law of 1997;
9. Republic Act No. 9208 – An Act to Institute Policies to Eliminate Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children; and
10. Republic Act No. 9262 – An Act Defining Violence Against Women and Children

On Children

11. Presidential Decree 603 - Child and Youth Welfare Code;
12. Republic Act No. 6972 – An Act Establishing a Day Care in Every Barangay, Instituting therein a Total Development and Protection of Children Act;
13. Republic Act No. 7610 – Special Protection of Children against Child Abuse Exploitation and Discrimination;
14. Republic Act No. 7658 – An Act Prohibiting Employment of Children below 15 years of age in public and private undertakings;
15. Republic Act No. 8043 – Inter Country Adoption Act of 1995;

16. Republic Act No. 8552 - The Domestic Adoption Act of 1998;
17. Republic Act No. 8980 – An Act Providing a Comprehensive Policy and a National System for Early Childhood Care and Development;
18. Republic Act No. 9231- An Act Providing for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Stronger Protection for the Working Child

On Youth

19. Republic Act No. 8044 – An Act Creating the National Youth Commission, Establishing a National Comprehensive Program on Youth Development

On the Elderly

20. Republic Act No. 7432 – An Act to Maximize the Contribution of Senior Citizens to Nation Building;
21. Republic Act No. 9257 – An Act Granting Additional Benefits and Privileges to Senior Citizens

On Persons with Disabilities

22. Republic Act No. 7277 – An Act Providing for the Rehabilitation, Self-Development and Self Reliance of Disabled Persons and their Integration into the Mainstream of Society

On Migrant Workers

23. Republic Act No. 8042 – An Act to Institute the Policies of Overseas Employment and Establish a Higher Standard of Protection and Promotion of the Welfare of Migrant Workers, their Families and Overseas Filipino in Distress

On Indigenous Peoples

24. Republic Act No. 8371 – An Act to Recognize and Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous People, Creating a National Commission of Indigenous People

On the Devolution of Social Welfare Service

25. Republic Act No. 7160 – Local Government Code which Localize the Implementation of Social Welfare Services

Social Welfare Programs & Services

With the devolution of social welfare services, the Department of Social Welfare and Development has to keep its mandate of program development and delivery of technical assistance to the local government units, namely: the provincial, municipal and city governments that are now tasked to directly implement social welfare programs and services to their constituencies.

There are, however, highly specialized projects that need the direct supervision by the Department of Social Welfare & Development. These retained programs and services are as follows:

1. Community Based Integrated Programs that have a national coverage like the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services; Self-Employment Assistance *Kaunlaran* Integrated Program; and *Lingap sa Mahirap*;
2. Protective Services for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Groups like:
 - children (adoption, foster care, legal guardianship, services for children in need of special protection: abused and exploited, street children, working children, child labor, children in situations of armed conflict/ transnationals and repatriated children);
 - youth (special social services for youth offenders);
 - women (productivity skills capability building for disadvantaged women, services for women in especially difficult circumstances);
 - persons with disabilities (social and vocational rehabilitation services);

- older persons (day center services for older persons);
 - dysfunctional couples and families (parent effectiveness services and services for street families);
 - individuals with special needs (after care service for recovered drug dependents and crisis intervention services); and
 - residential care (children, youth, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, couples and families).
3. Disaster Management (augmentation assistance for disaster preparedness, response and rehabilitation);
 4. Pilot Projects (national family violence prevention program; empowerment and affirmation of paternal abilities; community based strategies for drug abuse and HIV/AIDS; therapy services for sexually abused and exploited children; *tuloy aral walang sagabal* or continue schooling without hindrance; home aide service; foster care program for children with special needs)

The Programs and Services devolved to the local government units include:

1. Children (community based services for street/working children; supplemental feeding; day care service)
2. Youth (*unlad kabataan* program or youth development program; community based services for delinquent youth; self-employment assistance for youth)
3. Women (self employment and community participation skills development; women and child care skills development; livelihood skills development; social communications skills development)
4. Persons with Disabilities (self and social enhancement services; early detection and prevention of disability, assistance for physical restoration for disabled persons; community-based vocational rehabilitation and employment; self employment assis-

tance; after care and follow up services for released prisoners, recovered mental patient and rehabilitated drug dependents; information dissemination on disability prevention)

5. Older persons (special social services for older persons; self and social enhancement services; self employment assistance)
6. Survivors of Disasters (family and community preparedness/disaster mitigation and preparedness; disaster relief services/emergency disaster relief/relief assistance; supplemental feeding; critical incident stress debriefing; food for work/cash for work; emergency shelter assistance; core shelter assistance services; *balik probinsya* or back to the province assistance; assistance to individuals in crisis situation)
7. Couples/Families (marriage counseling service; crisis intervention services; parent effectiveness services; responsible parenthood; family casework; social services for solo parents; self-employment assistance)
8. Disadvantaged Communities (social preparation for peoples' participation, community volunteer resource development; social welfare structure development; and community mobilization services)

Current Status of Social Welfare Programs

Given the current economic difficulties and political turbulence there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to address the needs and problems of the poor and disadvantaged sectors of society. This is particularly true to the vulnerable population that requires social welfare programs and services like the families in distress, abandoned children, battered women, needy adult, out of school youth, persons with disabilities, and elderly among others.

The primary welfare agency in the country is the Department of Social Welfare and Development. As a government entity, it is mandated to develop social welfare programs and to provide technical assistance to local government units in the delivery of vital social welfare services to people. As a government facility, it is responsible in the licensing and accreditation of

non-government organizations that are involved in human development work. It seems to me that these private organizations follow the rules and standards in the delivery of social welfare services and in the practice of social work.

But there is also one Government Corporation, the Philippine Charities Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), which is in-charge of conducting public lottery that has been giving a lot of support for the needy individuals who have difficulty financing their medical requirements. This public company has poured millions of pesos to fund hospitals that service the needs of poor patients with heart, kidney, lung, and all other kinds of benign and catastrophic illnesses.

There are also a number of non-government organizations in the country. Most of them are primarily engaged in the development of children and their families.

Aside from UNICEF, these organizations are as follows: SAVE THE CHILDREN, CHRISTIAN CHILDRENS FUND, PLAN INTERNATIONAL, WORLD VISION, CARITAS, CHILD HOPE, NORWEGIAN FOUNDATION, CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL, CHILD HOPE ASIA, etc.

Local organizations that have also dramatically contributed to the development of people include: the EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (ERDA), KAISAHANG BUHAY FOUNDATION (KBF), BANTAY BATA, GAWAD KALINGA, etc.

Business corporations have also effectively exercised their corporate social responsibility. Big corporations in the Philippines have their own foundations that are into human development work, the ANDRES SORIANO, SAN MIGUEL CORPORATION, METRO BANK, AYALA, ABOITIZ, to name a few. In fact, they have bonded themselves and formed the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) which is active in implementing a whole range of programs that benefit individuals, families and communities.

Generally, using children as a point of entry, these human development organizations have adopted a holistic approach in development work. They have introduced programs that build the capacities of families and their communities. A number of them have started to incorporate cooperatives, housing, micro finance, entrepreneurship, environment and the importance of spirituality into their tested approaches in education, health, nutrition, livelihood and skills training activities.

Good results have been produced from the calculated interventions delivered by government and private organizations involved in human development initiatives. A number of these are well documented. For example: *years back, a family got a capital to engage in a chicken barbecue business in a corner of a busy street. With determination and luck, the family is now into a restaurant business that attract local and foreign visitors.* Another example: *a community organization that started with individual livelihood projects was transformed into a multi-purpose cooperative that provides lending, housing and mutual benefit assistance to its members. But what is heartening to note was its social consciousness and concern for another group in a neighboring community that became a beneficiary of its grant of Php200,000 (\$3571) to finance a micro-enterprise.*

Future Direction: Building the Family

The oriental culture puts a premium on the important role for the family. This culture highly regards the family as a source of strength as well as a refuge in times of difficulties. It is natural for its individual members to tap and mobilize the resources of the family and the relatives before they go to an agency to seek help from a social worker.

Traditionally, because of culture, people in need have reservations going to a social welfare office to ask for assistance and to receive welfare benefits. For them it is a discomfort to be asking help and in most cases it is considered a shame to queue up in a line waiting to be served.

Today, however, because of grinding poverty and victimization of people and the solutions beyond them, people are left with no choice but to be actively involved and tap a social welfare agency that is either operated by a government or by a non-government organization. They pin their hopes in these organized social welfare agencies as their providers and safety nets when they are in crises.

It is in this context that government and non-government organizations should once again go back to the basic and that is to build on the core foundation of society which is the family system. Building families and preventing them from becoming victims is one best alternative option that should not be missed in development work at all types and levels whether in social services or in physical infrastructures.

Empowering the family by building the capacities of each member through human development workers like social workers who will serve as catalysts that are indigenous and community based might be one of the most responsive, efficient and cost effective alternative to a big welfare bureaucracy.

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