

11 Ensuring Food Resiliency and Reducing Vulnerabilities of Filipinos



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The COVID-19 crisis further reinforced the country's determination to strengthen its social protection (SP) system towards ensuring the resilience, health, and well-being of Filipinos. In the first half of the Plan period, SP programs have contributed considerably to the reduction of vulnerability and poverty. Improvements were largely driven by wider coverage and effective social assistance given to the poor, especially to the extremely poor. Building on this platform and given the vulnerabilities that surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector will focus on proactively minimizing Filipinos' exposure to risks and increasing their capacities to manage shocks so that they can continue to achieve their full potential and pursue their aspirations. The proposed initiatives will guarantee that the country's SP system is responsive in keeping the country healthy and resilient as it adjusts to the changes brought about by emergencies and adapts to the new normal.

Assessment and Challenges

The government has improved SP financing and institutional arrangements during the first three years of Plan implementation. The initiatives include, the convergence of government efforts by using the *Listahanan*, approval and adoption of SP Plan 2020-2022, enhancement of the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps), and the expansion of Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) and social pension coverage. Further, landmark legislation and reforms were passed, such as the Universal Health Care (UHC) Act, Mandatory PhilHealth Coverage for All Persons with Disability, 4Ps Act, Social Security Act, 105-Day Expanded Maternity Leave Law, Magna Carta of the Poor, Safe Spaces Act, *Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino Act*, National Commission of Senior Citizen Act, Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) Act, Philippine Identification System (PhilSys) Act,

Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, and the *Bayanihan* to Recover as One Act.

The importance of SP was also demonstrated with the inclusion of measures to protect those most likely to be adversely affected by reforms. The Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law included an Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT) program to mitigate its possible inflationary impact in low-income households. The Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) contributed to food security and resiliency, especially among low income households, and provided assistance to rice farmers to improve their competitiveness given this new trading regime.

With such initiatives, coverage of the different SP programs has improved: PhilHealth coverage increased from 91 percent in 2016 to 100 percent

in 2019; Social Pension for Indigent Senior Citizens beneficiaries expanded from 1,412,598 in 2016 to 2,690,916 in 2019; and Social Security System (SSS) coverage of the economically active population rose from 34 percent in 2016 to 41 percent in 2019. In 2019, the *Pantawid Pamilya* also started replacing households that exited the program to cover more poor Filipinos.¹ More importantly, SP programs have contributed to poverty reduction. Based on the estimates from the World Bank (WB), the *Pantawid Pamilya* helped reduce poverty incidence and income inequality by 1.3 percentage points (ppts) and 0.6 ppts in 2017² while social insurance programs reduced poverty headcount ratio of the poorest quintile by 1.2 percent in 2016.³ In particular, the enactment of the RTL in 2019 reduced the price of rice and ensured stable and low inflation for low-income families. A study by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)⁴ showed that the implementation of the RTL will reduce the number of malnourished children and population at risk of hunger by 2.8 percent and 15.4 percent, respectively, by 2025. However, there are still pressing challenges: (a) the target of zero deaths due to disasters was not met because of limited capacity and limited coherent actions from multisectoral actors in disaster risk management, particularly in addressing underlying vulnerabilities of communities; (b) SSS coverage among economically active population remains low at 41.48 percent due to affordability concerns among informal sector workers; and (c) impairments/health condition and physical and social barriers severely disabled 12 percent of Filipinos 15 years old and above in 2016.⁵

The scale and severity of the COVID-19 crisis brought to the surface many vulnerabilities of Filipinos. The We Recover as One (WRAO) report noted that almost 40 percent of survey respondents claimed that their income declined, and that “... various interpretations about the quarantine imposition held up cargoes and hindered delivery trucks carrying food and other basic items needed by residents of Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon.” Compounded with policies that restrict the mobility of individuals (e.g., stoppage of public transportation services) to contain the spread of the virus and build up health system capacity, many individuals and families found it difficult to access food and other goods and services to go to work. In particular, 45 percent of families with senior citizens, persons with disability, and pregnant women had limited access to basic necessities. The Philippine Coalition on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons also noted that persons with disability may have difficulty getting information on COVID-19 if these were not provided in accessible formats. Furthermore, with mobility restrictions, cases of violence against women and their children (VAWC) become a concern because of the proximity of the abuser to the victim and the disruption of preventive services and support systems.

To help Filipinos manage such shocks, the government issued policies that deferred the payment of obligations such as tax and rent, and provided emergency financial subsidies such as the social amelioration program (SAP) and small business wage subsidies. According to the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), these SP initiatives helped curb the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by preventing about four million Filipinos from slipping into poverty.⁶

¹ 4Ps National Advisory Committee, Resolution No. 43, Institutionalizing replacement policy allowing for continuous replacement of Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) households, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), December 13, 2018.

² Pablo Acosta, Jorge Avalos, and Arianna Zapanta, “*Pantawid Pamilya* 2017 Assessment: An Update of the Philippine CCT’s Implementation Performance,” WB Social Protection Policy Note no. 18, WB, Washington, DC, 2019.

³ Aubrey D. Tabuga and Carlos C. Cabaero, “Towards Inclusive Social Protection Program Coverage in the Philippines: Examining Gender Disparities,” Discussion Paper Series No. 2019-11, PIDS, November 2019.

⁴ Nicostrato D. Perez and Angga Pradesha, *Philippine Rice Trade Liberalization: Impacts on agriculture and the economy and alternative policy actions*, NEDA-IFPRI Policy Studies, 2019.

⁵ Philippine Statistics Authority’s (PSA) 2016 National Disability Prevalence Survey considers disability as an outcome of the interaction of individuals’ impairment/health condition and their physical and social environment.

⁶ Jose Ramon G. Albert, et. al., “Poverty, the Middle Class, and Income Distribution amid COVID-19,” Discussion Paper Series No. 2020-22, Philippine Institute for Development Studies, August 2020.

The crisis highlighted inefficiencies in the delivery of SP programs. While generally flexible in responding to shocks and crises, adjustments to SP programs often take time to be implemented. In the case of the SAP, data limitations prevented efficient targeting and provision of assistance, while logistical problems caused delays in certain localities. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) was able to immediately distribute SAP grants to *Pantawid Pamilya* beneficiaries with cash cards but they had difficulty distributing grants through physical payments, especially in geographically

isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs), localities with high rate of COVID-19 cases, and conflict-affected areas. Moreover, there were bottlenecks in local government units (LGUs) distribution due to the need to validate the list submitted by the barangays and to respond to grievances among their constituents, and the stringent procedure of local treasurers.⁷ In terms of unemployment benefits, workers who lost their jobs had difficulty getting financial support due to the tedious process of availing the benefit, closure of SSS offices, and limited understanding of the program.

Targets

Strategies under the SP sector of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 aim to ensure access to nutritious food even during emergencies, reduce each type of risk, and enable people to manage individual, economic, natural and human-induced disasters, and governance and political risks.

Table 11.1 Updated Targets to Ensure Food Resiliency and Reduce Vulnerabilities of Filipinos

INDICATOR	BASELINE VALUE (YEAR)	TARGETS			
		2020	2021	2022	END OF PLAN
Ensure food resiliency					
Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale	-	-	-	-	-
Severely food insecure	5.12 (2019)	TBD	TBD	0.00	-
Moderately food insecure	39.06 (2019)	TBD	TBD	25.78	-
Mitigate risks faced by vulnerable groups					
Out-of-pocket health spending as percentage of total health expenditure	45.0 (2016)	*	*	TBD	TBD
National Health Insurance Program availment rate (%)	80.52 (2017)	*	*	100	100
Percentage of population covered by social health insurance"	91 (2016)	100	100	100	100

⁷ DSWD. DSWD SAP 1st Tranche Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Report, May 2020.

INDICATOR	BASELINE VALUE (YEAR)	TARGETS			
		2020	2021	2022	END OF PLAN
Number of eligible senior citizens who received social pension	1,412,598 (2016)	3,796,791	4,107,324	4,550,220	4,550,220
Number of child laborers (in '000)***	1,066 (2017)	0	0	0	0
Proportion of women in especially difficult circumstances reported in DSWD served	100 (355,133 cases served) (2016)	100	100	100	100
Proportion of violence against women cases reported in DSWD served	100 (1,749 cases served) (2016)	100	100	100	100
Proportion of child abuse cases reported in DSWD served	100 (3,857 cases served) (2016)	100	100	100	100
Manage economic risks					
Percentage of economically active population contributing to SSS	34.1 (2016)	41	42	44	44
Percentage of families covered by social insurance****	68.1 (2016)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Deal with natural hazards and human-induced shocks					
Number of deaths attributed to natural disasters per 100,000 population	0.09 (91 deaths) (2016)	0	0	0	0
Number of deaths attributed to human-induced disasters per 100,000 population	0.200 (207 deaths) (2016)	0	0	0	0
Number of missing persons attributed to natural disasters per 100,000 population	0.03 (29 missing persons) (2016)	0	0	0	0
Number of missing persons attributed to human-induced disasters per 100,000 population	0.017 (18 missing persons) (2016)	0	0	0	0
Number of directly affected persons attributed to natural disasters per 100,000 population	7,144.557 (7,376,237 persons) (2016)	0	0	0	0
Number of directly affected persons attributed to human-induced disasters per 100,000 population	140.036 (144,577 persons) (2016)	0	0	0	0

INDICATOR	BASELINE VALUE (YEAR)	TARGETS			
		2020	2021	2022	END OF PLAN
Percentage of families affected by natural and human-induced disasters provided with assistance	100 (969,470 families) (2016)	100	100	100	100
Percentage of households with damaged houses provided with emergency shelter assistance	100 (261,617 households) (2016)	100	100	100	100
Proportion of emergency loan applications by calamity-affected Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) members and pensioners granted	100 (2016)	100	100	100	100
Achieve universal social protection					
Total government expenditures in SP as percentage to gross domestic product (GDP)	1.7 (2016)	TBD	TBD	3.7	3.7
Share of total government expenditures in SP to the national budget	9.4 (2016)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

* Note that the Responsible Agency (e.g. Department of Health [DOH], PhilHealth) did not provide annual targets for these indicators as data are not available for these years (or only end of plan target was provided by the concerned agencies).

** Coverage rate is the aggregate count of PhilHealth beneficiaries (eligible member and qualified dependents) under formal economy (private, government, household help/*kasambahay*, enterprise owner and family drivers), informal economy (migrant worker, informal sector, self-earning individual and organized group, and others), indigents, sponsored members, senior citizens and lifetime members as a percentage of the total population.

*** Data generated from the Labor Force Survey (LFS) October 2017 Survey Round. It is based on Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Department Order (DO) No. 149 Series of 2016 and DO No. 149-A Series of 2017 that enumerate the work that would render a person below 18 years of age to be engaged in child labor. As this data satisfy only a few of the criteria for child labor, it cannot be compared to the results (data) from the 2011 Survey on Children.

**** This refers to the total number of families with at least one member covered by any (one or more) social insurance programs (i.e., SSS, GSIS, PhilHealth, private insurance, others) divided by the number of families covered and not covered by any social insurance.

Strategic Framework

Strategies that reduced the vulnerability of Filipinos and built the capacity of individuals and families to manage and cope with various risks and shocks will be enhanced.

Figure 11.1 Strategic Framework to Ensure Food Resiliency and Reduce Vulnerabilities of Filipinos



Strategies

The government will continue to implement policies and programs that will empower and build the resilience of Filipinos and further reduce poverty and vulnerability. Policies and services will be updated and upgraded to ensure individual and institutional agility in managing shocks and providing timely assistance.

Ensuring food resiliency

This chapter features strategies which ensure people's access to nutritious food even during emergencies. Related food security measures on ensuring the stability of food supply are discussed in Chapters 8 and 20, while initiatives for proper nutrition are found in Chapter 10. The Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Zero Hunger⁸ ensures that these strategies are supported by policies and programs that will end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

Strengthen efforts to link food demand and supply. Linkages between public institutions and relevant actors involved in food and nutrition security will be strengthened through existing convergence partnerships and multisector platforms such as Enhanced Partnership Against Hunger and Poverty, Early Childhood Care and Development, First 1000 Days, and Scaling Up Nutrition Movement with the aim of fortifying local value chain employment. These will also consider government's efforts that link products and markets, such as the Department of Agriculture's (DA) *Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita* and the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) *Negosyo sa Barangay*.

Strengthen the food fortification program. The Department of Health (DOH) in coordination with other concerned agencies such as the National Nutrition Council (NNC), Department

of Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI), and the Food and Drug Authority (FDA), among others, will enhance the country's food fortification program, a complementary intervention to micronutrient supplementation, to produce fortified staples and raw materials for use in disasters and safety net programs. This will be pursued through partnership between national and local governments, business networks, and local organizations.

Encourage small-scale planting for the consumption of the households and community. This strategy includes the Plant, Plant, Plant Program of the Department of Agriculture (DA) focusing on available technologies for both urban and rural homes and partnering with institutions to augment food supply in communities and among households. To foster effective backyard gardening and ensure access to healthy food, the DOST and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) will be engaged to explore and implement not only new technologies but also indigenous knowledge systems and processes.

Fully implement the *Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino* Act (RA 11037) and provide nutritious food packs to children through the Supplementary Feeding Program and School-Based Feeding Program. RA 11037 institutionalized government-feeding programs⁹ for Filipino children in day care centers, kindergarten, and elementary schools. To address emerging nutrition concerns during emergencies, food supplementation through the Supplementary Feeding Program and School-Based Feeding Program can be enhanced. Instead of hot meals, day care and elementary school students will be provided with nutritious food packs, which may include vegetable noodles (*malunggay*/squash/carrots), iron-fortified rice, and enhanced nutribun, among others. Said food packs will then be

⁸ Executive Order No. 101, s. 2020, Creating an IATF on Zero Hunger, January 10, 2020.

⁹ Supplementary Feeding Program for Day Care Children, School-Based Feeding Program, and Milk Feeding Program.

distributed by the DSWD and the Department of Education (DepEd), in close coordination with the LGUs and other concerned government agencies/entities, using a scheduled grab-and-go system in consideration of the safety of everyone involved.

Facilitate the provision of food and other necessities to vulnerable and high-risk individuals during emergencies.¹⁰ The DSWD and NNC will work with LGUs in ensuring that those who have difficulty accessing food due to risk of infection or difficulty in mobility have sufficient and nutritious food.

Provide designated service time for older persons and other groups highly susceptible to infection. Groceries and drug stores may open earlier and designate the first two hours to older persons, persons with disability, and pregnant women to ensure cleanliness of facilities and avoid exposure to other individuals.

Continue cash-for-work programs. Emergency cash-for-work programs by the DSWD and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) would help provide temporary employment and income to severely affected workers due to COVID-19, even after the community quarantine has been lifted.

Provide wage subsidy. The Employment Recovery Plan of DOLE will continue to help establishments retain their workers amidst temporary closures and adoption of flexible work arrangements. The program will cover small and medium-scale enterprises.

Mitigating risks faced by vulnerable groups

Ensure financial risk protection through improved PhilHealth coverage and benefit packages. With the passage of the UHC Act, all

Filipinos are now automatically covered by the National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) and will have access to a comprehensive set of quality and cost-effective health care services. PhilHealth will develop new or enhance existing health benefit packages as recommended by the Health Technology Assessment process.¹¹ Outpatient benefit packages including diagnostics, laboratory, dental, medicines, and other preventive services will be provided to all Filipinos. PhilHealth should also guarantee the availability of case rate packages for emerging and re-emerging diseases. Moreover, implementation of the No Co-payment Policy, wherein no other fees or expenses will be charged to those who will be admitted to basic or ward accommodations, will be ensured.

Strengthen the information, education, and communication campaign on health and the available insurance and benefits. The DOH will improve health promotion to ensure that all Filipinos are aware of and have access to health information and benefits that they can avail. Targeted risk communications in precise and culturally resonant messages that integrate COVID-19 infection prevention and control will also be developed. Importantly, a cost-effective communication strategy and plan will need to be drawn up and funded adequately. Moreover, broadcast media (i.e., radio and television) and various online platforms including social media, as well as other low-tech modalities for areas with no access to these technologies, will be utilized to inform and increase health awareness of the public. Other agencies and stakeholders, including the DepEd and LGUs, will also be tapped to integrate health literacy in the curricula and in the activities in the community, respectively. These will include key information about the NHIP of PhilHealth, its importance, and benefits, as well as other concerns, such as ensuring mental health amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

¹⁰ These include older persons, immunocompromised individuals, persons with disability, adolescent mothers, children, solo parents, pregnant and lactating mothers, internally displaced persons, and urban poor.

¹¹ DOH and PhilHealth, Implementing Rules and Regulations of the UHC Act (RA 11223). October 10, 2019, Section 34.

Implement a holistic approach in addressing child labor. Aside from initiatives to address poverty and ensure employers' compliance to employment standards, the government as led by the National Council Against Child Labor (NCLC), will also implement specific programs that will strategically help end child labor. These include engaging non-government organizations (NGOs) and community members, addressing the needs of both children and their parents, and gathering and sharing data. Educating parents on child labor through the Family Development Sessions of the 4Ps (under the DSWD) and Parents-Teachers Associations (under the DepEd) will be a central strategy in this endeavor.

In terms of data collection and management, DOLE and DSWD will roll out the child labor registry, which lists all profiled child laborers and the appropriate services for the child and their parents. Aside from coordinating interventions, the registry will also be helpful in monitoring children at risk of engaging in or returning to child labor.

Study the necessity of establishing a governmental body on Filipino families. Many developmental issues such as VAWC primarily concern families and their members. The NEDA Social Development Committee (SDC) may therefore look into the creation of a governmental body that will lead in the development of policies and programs aimed at promoting the well-being of families. Among others, it may work on values formation and prevention of violence among family and household members.

Conduct advocacy programs aimed at preventing the occurrence of VAWC. Venues such as the Family Development Sessions will be useful in providing VAWC education to individuals, especially those from poor families. With this, the Inter-Agency Council on VAWC (IACVAWC) will spearhead behavioral communication and advocacies on gender sensitivity and VAWC for the general public. Here, it is important to fully engage everyone as strategic partners in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Implement community-based programs to address VAWC, including the development of a standardized VAWC manual. A standardized VAWC manual of operations/protocol will be developed by the IACVAWC to better assist abused women and children, as well as improve the referral system between the DSWD and the institutions where the cases are being reported. Among others, the document will help improve the functionality of Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPC) and the VAW desks and harmonize existing VAWC databases (i.e. Philippine National Police [PNP], DSWD) to ensure that all victims are provided with the needed support services. There is also a need to prioritize the continuity of child-centered services, especially during disasters and emergencies, to avoid disruption of preventive services and support systems. With this, it is important to ensure the availability of 24/7 helplines as well as the adoption of mobile and online platforms for reporting child and women protection issues and accessing government assistance and services.

Increase social pension and expand its coverage. To address the vulnerability of older persons, the amount of the social pension being granted will be further increased. Its coverage will also be broadened to include not only the indigent older persons, but also those who are not receiving any pension. This entails improved coordination among the GSIS, SSS, National Commission of Senior Citizens (NCSC), and DSWD towards smooth sharing of the necessary information to identify and verify beneficiary overlaps. To improve targeting and coverage, a registry of older persons will also be established.

Conduct information campaign on disability. The government, with the leadership of the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), will continue conducting information and education campaigns among stakeholders to improve their understanding of disability, as well as increase people's awareness of the rights of persons with disability. These campaigns should help address the negative attitude and behavior towards persons with disability.

Improve the accessibility of SP services for persons with disability. The members of the NCDA Board will continue their work on addressing the physical and social barriers that prevent persons with disability from accessing services, including SP programs. This includes ensuring the availability of facilities and services (e.g. allied health professionals) in the different localities in the country (*see also Chapter 10 on related health services*). Related strategies are in Chapter 7 (on culture), and Chapter 19 (on the accessibility of infrastructure). Amidst the mobility restriction due to the COVID-19 crisis, services to persons with disability may be expanded to include the provision of information in accessible formats and financial and specialized support, such as free transportation to medical and rehabilitation facilities, income generating activities, and delivery of necessities.

Implement measures to improve access of vulnerable individuals to necessities and support services and protect them from COVID-19. The government, led by the Task Group on Recovery, needs to adopt clear policy guidelines to ensure that high-risk individuals (i.e. older persons and those with serious underlying medical conditions) are protected and have access to food, medicine, and other necessities while the risk of COVID-19 is still high. At the same time, there should be measures to help reduce possible exposure of these vulnerable individuals to the virus.

Ensure equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine once available. The IATF for Emergency Infectious Diseases Sub-Technical Working Group (IATF-EID-sTWG) on Vaccine Development will continue to spearhead the research and development, testing/trials, regulation, and accreditation of potential COVID-19 vaccines entering the country. The sTWG will likewise explore multiple avenues (i.e., World Health Organization [WHO] Solidarity trials, COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access [COVAX] facility, bilateral or multilateral agreements) to acquire the vaccines. In anticipation, a procurement and distribution plan will be developed to prepare budgetary and logistical requirements, among others, and ensure equitable access nationwide.

Continue the implementation of minimum health standards. The prescribed minimum public health standards in transport, workplaces, and public places will be continuously implemented and monitored by the LGUs and national government agencies in partnership with the private sector to prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 as well as ensure the safe re-opening of the economy. Further, the national government agencies (NGAs) need to ensure that the minimum health standards are observed in the delivery of SP projects and services to avoid the spread of COVID-19. (*see PDP Chapter 10 for further discussion on the matter*).

Reach out to Filipinos in GIDAs. Working with the LGUs, the NEDA-SDC Subcommittee on Social Protection (SCSP) will determine and address the barriers that prevent Filipinos, especially those living in GIDAs, from accessing SP programs. With this, the SDC-SCSP shall also identify appropriate assistance measures to be provided to individuals living in GIDAs during pandemic and emergency situations.

Managing economic risks

Broaden SSS coverage and benefits availment. The SSS aims to broaden its coverage by ensuring simple registration, payment, and benefit application processes through physical and online platforms. It will also continue conducting information campaigns and providing programs such the *AlkanSSSy* and *KaltaSSS*, which help workers, especially those in the informal sector, gain SSS coverage. With the increase of income opportunities through online platforms, the government will ensure that those engaging in these platforms have access to health and emergency assistance and SSS benefits, including old-age pension. To facilitate coverage, partnerships will be established between gig economy platforms (i.e. Grab, *Angkas*, Lalamove, FoodPanda, Transportify, among others) and government social security agencies (SSS, PhilHealth, and Employees' Compensation Commission [ECC]). With this, the coverage of the Employment Compensation Program (ECP) may also be expanded.

Enhance people's access to unemployment insurance (UI) and related services. The SSS, in partnership with other relevant agencies, will implement an information drive on UI nationwide. This will draw attention to and increase knowledge on UI benefits, qualification, and availment process. Given the new normal and to ensure timely provision of assistance, the SSS will also fast-track systemic upgrade to allow for digital application and transactions.

Furthermore, the SSS UI will be tightly linked to active labor market policies. The SSS, in partnership with DOLE, will tap the Public Employment Services Office (PESO) and PhilJobNet to facilitate the matching of demand for workers in emerging industries and UI recipients. Simultaneously, upskilling and retooling trainings will be offered by concerned stakeholders, including Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), to UI recipients to improve their skills and qualifications given the new normal.

Conduct further studies on UI. To further improve the country's UI system, studies will be conducted to explore the creation of a separate program fund, UI linkage to active labor market policies, optimal benefits (i.e. higher compensation benefit or longer duration of benefit), and the criteria to avail the benefits, especially during pandemic, among others. Furthermore, to ensure financial viability, the proposed reforms to the UI system should be supported by an actuarial study.

Dealing with natural hazards and human-induced shocks

Provide rapid assistance and insurance for farmers and fisherfolk. Concerned agencies, such as the DA and the DSWD, will work closely, in ensuring that impacts of disasters to farmers and fisherfolk are immediately assessed and addressed. Furthermore, the Philippine Crop

Insurance Corporation (PCIC) will continue and expand the provision of insurance for crops, livestock, fisheries, and even non-agricultural assets of farmers and fisherfolk to help them recover during disasters and prevent them from falling into or falling further into poverty (see *PDP Chapter 8 for further discussion on the matter*).

Promote proactive disaster preparedness among individuals. Filipinos will be informed and encouraged to use existing tools, such as the DOST's HazardHunterPH,¹² to understand natural hazards and help mitigate their effects. Information and advocacy campaigns will be intensified, especially in schools, work places, and communities. Fire and earthquake drills will also be conducted in urban and rural areas.

Promote disaster-resilient infrastructure. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) will conduct an assessment of the structural integrity of existing structures to ensure safety and resilience to natural hazards, particularly during earthquakes. Stringent implementation of policies on the issuance of permits for buildings, especially residential, will also be assessed.

Ensure the safety of disaster victims. To address the challenges faced by Filipinos before, during and after disasters, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) will ensure the provision of safe evacuation and transition houses, which will have women and child-friendly spaces. The DSWD and DOH will also make available appropriate and adequate mental health and psychosocial support services during disasters.

Establish a menu of SP programs to be implemented during disasters and emergencies. To address the responsiveness of SP programs to natural and human-induced disasters, the SDC-SCSP will develop a menu of SP programs which can be readily implemented, upon the occurrence of such events. These programs should be inclusive and

¹² HazardHunterPH is a tool that can be used to generate indicative hazard assessment reports on the user's specified location. It is helpful as a reference of property owners, buyers, land developers, planners, and other stakeholders needing immediate hazard information and assessment. (<https://hazardhunter.georisk.gov.ph/>)

cater to all those who are affected by the shock (i.e., both formal and informal sectors, among others). Doing so, will facilitate easier access of people to SP services in times of disasters and emergencies.

Continue building the capacities of disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) stakeholders and improve coordination of services. The NDRRMC will coordinate and spearhead information campaigns, trainings, and drills for DRRM stakeholders, as well as the purchase of early warning and emergency devices. There will be emphasis on inclusion to allow for effective participation of community members and population groups in DRRM. These efforts will be supported by data and information through the conduct of disaster and climate vulnerability and risk assessments and the production of hazard maps.

To strengthen institutional response to disasters, the NDRRMC will provide mechanisms for the conduct of post or rapid disaster needs assessment. Coordination between responders and aid organizations will be clearly defined to avoid inefficiencies and to ensure that all disaster victims are provided with support. This entails the production and dissemination of IEC materials, conduct of related orientation seminars, and establishment of communication systems, so that concerned service providers, including NGOs, have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities during disasters and emergencies.

Addressing governance and political risks

Integrate safeguards into development interventions and establish funding mechanisms for these safety nets. The NEDA, through various NEDA Board Committees, will see to it that new development interventions in the form of policies, programs, and projects already integrate safeguards that would prevent or mitigate negative impacts on economic sectors and population groups. This requires the identification of the affected population groups prior to the

implementation of development interventions. The NEDA, the Department of Finance (DOF), and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) will identify funding mechanisms that may be tapped by the NGAs and the LGUs to assist the adversely affected population groups.

Provide persons of concern (POC) with access to protective services. Engagements and partnerships of concerned agencies, such as the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the DSWD will continue to provide POCs with access to protective services. A database management system for the POCs will be developed to efficiently assess and monitor their concerns.

Achieving universal social protection

Develop the SP Code. The NEDA-SCSP will develop the SP Code to aid stakeholders, especially the LGUs, in developing responsive and effective SP programs and projects. This will also remove the duplication of SP interventions among government entities. Likewise, the SP Code will ensure that Filipinos living in GIDAs will have access to SP programs.

Institutionalize the SP Floor. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of institutionalizing the SP Floor. It is instrumental in securing access of people to SP services, as well as improving the SP service delivery in the country. Once the SP Floor is finalized, a policy directive will be issued, to officially adopt and enumerate its components, including the roles of the concerned agencies.

Encourage proactive resilience of households, including savings mobilization. Information and education campaign to encourage households to prepare for emergencies will be strengthened, through the financial literacy and advocacy program of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), among others. An important element in this strategy is encouraging households to have a bank account so that they can save and improve their resilience in coping with shocks.

Fast-track the implementation of the PhilSys and synchronize the *Listahanan* with PhilSys.

The implementation of PhilSys or the National Identification (ID) system should be fast tracked because it is critical in delivering responsive SP services. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) aims to cover five million low-income household heads by December 2020. Concerned agencies, such as the PSA and the DSWD, will explore linking the Philippine Identification Card (PhilID) to a digital payment system that will allow more efficient transfer of government assistance in times of crisis, pandemics, or disasters. Part of the plan for the registration process is to allow registrants to open a bank account with Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK) where cash transfers can be made.

The *Listahanan* database needs to be synchronized with the PhilSys to include information found in the PhilID, such as the registrant's demographic and biometric information, and the PhilSys Card Number (PCN), among others. This will allow better targeting of SP services.

Create a registry of vulnerable groups and address data constraints. To implement policies and SP programs in an effective and timely manner, the DSWD, in cooperation with the concerned councils and/or commissions, will develop a registry of vulnerable groups, especially for street children, older persons, persons with disability, and workers in the informal and gig economy, and those affected by development interventions. This initiative will consider integrating data from

the CBMS and other existing registries, and lessons learned from their operation. Said registry will also be configured to be interoperable with the PhilSys.

Digitalize the delivery of SP assistance and services. The government's SP approach will be updated and upgraded to allow institutional agility, in managing shocks and providing timely assistance. The concerned agencies, such as the DSWD, the DOLE, and the SSS, in coordination with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), will enhance their systems to make use of available technology (including digital cash transfers, online delivery platforms) in providing services and reaching every Filipino, including those in GIDAs, whenever possible. As mentioned above, government will explore linking the PhilID to a digital payment system that will allow more efficient transfer of government assistance, in times of crisis, pandemics, or disasters. This initiative will be accompanied by enhancements in individuals' technical know-how and improvements in digital infrastructure, especially in GIDAs.

Monitor and evaluate SP policies and programs. In accordance with the National Evaluation Policy (NEP) framework, SP programs will be regularly assessed and monitored by the SDC-SCSP to ensure that program and project objectives are met. Monitoring and evaluation activities will form part of the annual budget of implementing agencies and LGUs, reports of which will be uploaded to their respective websites to ensure transparency.

Legislative Agenda

To complement the strategies, the following legislative actions will be pursued to achieve universal and transformative SP program for all Filipinos.

Table 11.2 Legislative Agenda to Ensure Food Resiliency and Reduce Vulnerabilities of Filipinos

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA	RATIONALE
Individual Lifecycle Risks	
Philippine Adoption Act for Abandoned and Neglected Children and for Children with Special Needs	The proposed legislation seeks to improve the quality of foster care for abandoned and neglected children, particularly those with special needs.
Anti-Senior Citizen Abuse Act	The bill aims to protect senior citizens from all forms of abuse.
Increasing amount and coverage of Social Pension	This aims to increase the amount of the monthly social pension and expand the coverage of qualified beneficiaries of the social pension.
Environmental and Natural Risks	
Evacuation Center Act	This will establish permanent and resilient (i.e., earthquake and hydrometeorological hazards) evacuation centers with the necessary facilities to avoid the practice of using classrooms as evacuation centers during calamities. Under this bill, evacuation centers should have women, children, persons with disability, and elderly-friendly spaces. It should also be constructed with space that can be used flexibly during emergencies. The NDRRMC will be in charge of identifying which municipalities and cities will be given priority.