



Republic of the Philippines
Senate

OFFICE OF SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA

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MEMORANDUM

FOR: CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

THRU: SENATE PRESIDENT VICENTE C. SOTTO III
SEN. FRANKLIN M. DRILON
SEN. PANFILO "PING" M. LACSON
SEN. CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE T. GO
SEN. PIA S. CAYETANO

FROM: SEN. LEILA M. DE LIMA

RE: COMMENTS ON THE 12th WEEKLY REPORT OF THE
PRESIDENT DATED 15 June 2020

DATE: 17 June 2020

I humbly submit my comments on the President's 12th Weekly Report dated 17 June 2020, in compliance with Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11469:

- 1) Is it the end of the road already for the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in its task of distributing the first tranche of cash aid? Despite the lapse of more than three (3) months from the effectivity of RA 11469, or the "Bayanihan Heal as One Act", and having expended so much government time and other resources, the DSWD still failed to reach 291,722 poor families, thereby missing its own adjusted target of benefitting 17,938,647 impoverished households. Did the Department of Finance (DOF) and DSWD merely peg a wrong target, or are there more serious problems here?
- 2) The blunder is so glaring that, after three (3) months of lockdown, 48,551 4Ps families – the poorest of the poor – remain without the promised cash aid. How is this possible considering that, as much publicized before, there is supposedly a well established distribution scheme for cash grants under the 4Ps system? Why are these families included in the list of 4Ps households if they cannot be reached? Where they not receiving aid before, i.e., during pre-pandemic period? What is DSWD's plan for them and their aid allocation?

3) It is reported in the news that that the DSWD will commence the distribution of the 2nd tranche of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP). Can the DSWD provide the following data and information in the next report:

- a. Target date of deadline for the full implementation of the 1st tranche of cash aid;
- b. The agency's plan of action regarding the 291,722 targetted households which are still not served by the DSWD in the 1st tranche;
- c. Total number of beneficiaries who have returned their cash aid due to duplication, with a breakdown of the amounts and their respective areas;
- d. The results of the validation and cross checking processes by the DSWD and other concerned agencies conducted on the 1st tranche.

Please note that Items (b) through (d) have been repeatedly requested by several Senators, including this representation, in the previous comments to the past weekly reports.

4) In relation to the distribution of the second tranche of cash subsidies:

- a. We noted that per Joint Memorandum Circular no. 2 s. 2020, ECQ areas namely: i) the National Capital Region, ii) Region III, except Aurora iii) Region IV-A, iv) Benguet, v) Pangasinan, vi) Iloilo, vii) Cebu Province, viii) Bacolod, ix) Davao City, x) Albay province and xi) Zamboanga City, plus the additional 3.5 million families (instead of the 5 million beneficiaries earlier announced) should expect to receive the second tranche of aid. Given this decision, the total number of beneficiaries for the second tranche and the regional distribution of the households remain to be unclear.

May the concerned agencies submit in the next report the final target number of beneficiaries for the second tranche, and the total budget to be spent for this?

- b. May we ask the DSWD to determine the target completion date of the second tranche?

We wish to point out that our request for this data and information is being made out of a concern for transparency and public accountability, while acknowledging the importance of the oversight function of Congress to ensure the effective implementation of the law in order to prevent or remedy the problems encountered in the distribution of the 1st tranche of cash aid.

- c. According to previous official and media reports, it is DSWD's conclusion that its failure to meet the deadline for the distribution of the 1st tranche of cash aid was mainly because of the problems with the LGUs, particularly: (a) there were threats against DSWD personnel from some LGU officials; and (c) there has been slow processing at the barangay level because of politicizing or inaccurate lists of qualified beneficiaries. What has the DSWD and other relevant agencies done so far by way of legal actions, such as initiating formal investigation, and filing of administrative and criminal cases against those concerned LGU officials and employees?
- 5) The distribution scheme of the SAP in the Joint Memorandum Circular 2 s. 2020 and the DSWD Memorandum Circular 12 s. 2020 failed to consider the conditions of the vulnerable sectors, especially the senior citizens, PWDs and pregnant women. Is the DSWD open to the proposal of door-to-door delivery of cash aid for these disadvantaged persons?
- 6) As in the previous weeks, we again commend the Social Security System (SSS) and its partner agencies for the successful implementation of its Small Business Wage Subsidy (SBWS) having served a total a total of 3.05 million, or 98% of the 3.09 million qualified beneficiaries for the first tranche. For the second tranche, a total of 2.96 million, or 97% of qualified beneficiaries have received their wage subsidies.

We just would like some detailed explanation in future reports on the results of SBWS Task Force's preliminary matching between DOLE's CAMP (COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program) and SBWS program lists showing that around 193,000 out of 680,000 CAMP recipients are also SBWS beneficiaries. What has been done regarding this finding? What corrective measures have been put in place to avoid a recurrence of leakage or waste of resources?

- 7) Concerning the *Livelihood Seeding Program- Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay*, it is stated in the 12th Weekly Report that of the PhP203 Million downloaded to the provincial offices by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), 20.15% of it, or PhP 40,913,546.00 has already been utilized. That money was just apparently used for some preliminary tasks devoted primarily to the "soft" aspect of the project, which ostensibly should not cost too much, such as identification of beneficiaries, profiling, consultation with LGUs, business planning workshop and similar activities. Will the DTI please submit a detailed expense report on this initial phase of *Livelihood Seeding Program- Negosyo Serbisyo sa Barangay*?

- 8) In the section on transportation, repatriation and mobility assistance, it is reported that the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) has successfully facilitated the repatriation of 4,258 OFWs consisting of 2,005 sea-based workers and 2,253 land-based workers from 10 countries. This is laudable.

As in our comments in the past two (2) reports, we are nonetheless interested in knowing any plan of the DFA and DOLE to repatriate almost 100,000 OFWs who are stranded abroad, per data from 40 Philippine Overseas Labor Offices (POLOs), as of 29 May 2020. It is claimed that this huge number of OFWs are either affected by lockdowns in their host countries or their work contracts have expired, but they cannot return to the Philippines due to absence of commercial flights.

- 9) In the same section on transportation, repatriation and mobility assistance, it is reported that, under the “*Hatid-Probinsya para sa OFWs*” program, 9,714 OFWs have been assisted, as of 11 June 2020. May we know if this number has already covered the more than 2,000 OFWs who have been stranded in the various quarantine facilities in Metro Manila. According to media reports, they have been complaining about the deplorable conditions of the facilities, and the 2-month delay in the release of their COVID-19 tests.
- 10) Still on the subject of transportation and mobility assistance, the 12th weekly report says that, as of 08 June 2020, 24,069 locally stranded individuals (LSIs) have been successfully returned to their respective provinces. We commend this development.

May we just know if this group of assisted LSIs pertained only to those persons covered by 2 June 2020 referral to the DILG field offices, as stated in the 11th weekly report? Or, does it also include later referrals, plus those persons who recently camped out below the NAIA Expressway because they apparently did not have booked flights?

- 11) There are still no updates concerning the NBI’s earlier report two (2) weeks ago about the discovery of an underground medical facility in Fontana Leisure Park in Pampanga, and the arrest of two (2) Chinese nationals allegedly running an illegal pharmacy in Angeles City, Pampanga. May we be given progress reports on these two (2) incidents, as well as the discovery of another underground hospital for POGO works in Makati City?
- 12) Under the section on Other Forms of Assistance and Partnership with LGUs, in contrast with previous reports where “*Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pagasa*” (BP2) program had been highlighted, there is in the latest submission however a mere perfunctory mention of being a subject of a DSWD Circular. Recent news reports now indicate that the program is being put in the back burner to

give way to “*Hatid Probinsya*” project for returning OFWs and locally stranded individuals (LSIs). Is it the real reason for sidelining the BP2 program, or isn’t there not a realization that it is a faulty and hasty project in the first place?

We take note of the news reports that in Northern Mindanao and Lanao del Sur there is a surge of COVID-19 cases since accepting returning residents who were stranded in various parts of the country during the lockdown through the *Hatid Probinsya* program. There were 30 new COVID-19 cases recorded in Lanao del Sur since June 6, when the provincial government chartered a flight for 124 returning residents from Manila, classified as locally stranded individuals (LSIs) and Returning Overseas Filipinos (ROFs). This was the highest increase in cases in the province in 49 days.

- 13) In the section on other assistance to MSMEs, we repeat our observation about low turn out of beneficiaries in the lending programs of the Department of Agriculture (DA). All this time, after three (3) months of rolling out the programs, there are only 17,682 beneficiaries served from the targeted number of 40,000 for MSFFs, and only 70 recipients out of the target 150 agri-fishery MSEs? Why isn’t the DA receptive to the idea that maybe the lending programs have “factory defects” from the very start? As consistently pointed out in our comments on previous reports, maybe it will be much better to convert them into simple subsidy projects, just like the SBWS program for small businesses, and the cash aids for poor households and small rice farmers?

Likewise, the DA or the Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC) should be asked to reconcile its figures and explain the obvious discrepancy in the indicated utilized amount from the budget for the lending program for MSFFs. In the 11th weekly report, it was already stated that PhP863.93 million, or more than 80% of the PhP 1 billion budget, was already utilized. However, in the 12th weekly report, the amount utilized was only PhP 386.29. The older tally has a much bigger figure – more than almost half a billion! – compared with the amount reported in the recent submission from Malacanang.

- 14) If not satisfactorily explained by DA, the seeming anomaly in the MSFF lending program could even add fuel to the growing suspicion of several farmer groups that the DA may have been embroiled again in another wave of corruption. There are media reports of overpricing in the procurement of urea fertilizer worth P1.8 billion in DA’s “*Ahon Lahat, Pagkaing Sapat KONtra COVID-19*” (ALPAS sa COVID-19). This should be addressed by the DA and looked into by Congress and investigative agencies of the government.

- 15) In the section on assistance to women, children and other vulnerable groups, it is reported that, as of 11 June 2020, there are

2,083 cases of violations against women, and 2,077 cases of violations against children since the inception of ECQ. These are alarming numbers.

May we know what the PNP and the NBI have done with the reported cases?

Also, women and children's desks are not technically in the frontline of the government response to the pandemic, may the DILG be asked how are they functioning in this current crisis, and what are the mechanisms in place to activate the desks and how they can work seamlessly with our law enforcement agencies?

- 16) In the section on assistance to Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), there are no more updates on any other elderly PDLs who may have been released, in addition to the 90 who have been ordered released by the courts, as of 22 May 2020. We would like to hear updates on this aspect, especially since the 5th weekly report has indicated that 1,927 elderly PDLs have existing medical conditions and 804 are non-recidivists, making them all qualified for early release.
- 17) We commend the report from the Board of Pardons and Parole (BPP) that 165 PDLs were granted parole, 21 were recommended to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for conditional pardon without parole conditions and 24 with parole conditions, while 46 have been recommended for sentence commutations. We would like to know of any further progress on this matter in subsequent reports.
- 18) The 12th weekly report, just like the previous ones, is conspicuously quiet on the government's efforts in cracking down cybercrime activities. May we be given status reports on this important concern, especially those that adversely affect women, children and other vulnerable groups? Specifically, may the next report also include updates on the cases and actions of the NBI and the PNP on cybercrime activities such as online scams, sexual harassments and most especially the online child sexual exploitation, which is reportedly prevalent at this time of lockdown?
- 19) In the section on human resources for health (HRH), we are still saddled with the problem of low hiring and poor deployment of HRH by the DOH. Three (3) months have lapsed and only 3,541 HRH have been hired out of the DOH-approved 8,494 slots and the DBM-allotted positions for 15,757 for temporary health workers. This seemingly unsolvable problem at the DOH has to be decisively addressed as it definitely hampers the operations of our testing centers, laboratories and hospitals.
- 20) We note that the 12th Weekly Report provided updates on the compensation given to beneficiaries of health workers who died from COVID-19. However, we are receiving reports that there are

new cases of healthcare workers getting infected with the COVID-19, which prompted me to file Senate Resolution no. 442. The WHO sounded the alarm on phenomenon in the Philippine health system, which they consider as an “outlier”. May the DOH include in the report a sub-section that provides us the number of the active cases of health care workers with COVID-19 and those who were able to recover including our fatalities?

21) Experts from the University of the Philippines (UP) projected that the number of people infected with COVID-19 in the country could hit 40,000 by the end of June given the current rate of community transmission. However, DOH remains unable to cope with the demands of our health care system to outpace the pandemic, given that:

- a. There are only 4 new accredited laboratories from hundreds of pending applications;
- b. Despite the increased number of licensed laboratories in the country that are capable of conducting a maximum of nearly 50,000 tests a day, the average number of tests being processed remains at 10,000 in the past week, as mentioned in the report;
- c. There is a failure to scale up the testing and tracing aspect of our response, which is reportedly one of the weakest in the region.

22) On the strengthening of contact-tracing measures, the 12th Weekly Report continues to be silent on the status of hiring or tapping around 94,000 contact tracers, which can be sourced from our barangay health workers and parent-leaders in the 4Ps program who are spread all around the country. As early as 14 May 2020, Secretary Duque already proposed in a televised briefing, that the ideal contact tracers per population ratio is 1 contact tracer for 800 people in order to further curb the transmission of the virus. There seems to be a deliberate inaction on this matter.

23) Likewise, the digital applications being used in our contact tracing efforts i.e StaySafe.ph, COVID-KAYA and SafePass are fragmented and fail to integrate information on COVID-19 developments, which are supposed to help decision makers with real-time data.

24) The table on budget allocated and spent per agency has been removed which in the latest report, unlike in the previous weekly reports. May we know why the table was omitted in the latest submission?

25) As in the previous reports, the 12th submission just casually stated that “no additional allotments and cash allocations have been released pursuant to Sections 4 (v), (x), and (y) of RA 11469.

However, as we previously commented, Section 5 of the Bayanihan Act directs the President to include in the weekly reports not only the amounts used and augmentation but also those that were "reprogrammed, reallocated and realigned". This significant information has never been reported in any of the reports submitted to Congress.


Pursuant to the said provision of the law, the weekly reports should include a detailed list of unreleased appropriations and unobligated allotments of each department. We therefore expect an attachment with this detailed list in succeeding reports.

26) In the 12th Weekly Report, the DOF stated that the government has signed a US\$750 million loan agreement with the Asian Infrastructure Development (AIDB), and budgetary support financing that totals US\$6.4 Billion from the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and AIDB, as of 11 June 2020.

May we be provided with a comprehensive report on the total number of loans and the aggregate sums being borrowed from foreign banks in response to the current pandemic? May we also be given copies of the loan contracts, financing agreements and related papers for purposes of transparency and the right to public information?

For your consideration, please.

Thank you very much.


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