

## REACTIONS/COMMENTS ON

# SocPen at Ten: A Process Evaluation of the DSWD Social Pension (SocPen) Program for Indigent Senior Citizens amid the COVID-19

from the Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc. (COSE)

Presented by:

**Dennis C. Destacamento, RSW**



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**Policy Recommendation 1:** Increase the value of cash assistance/ pensions but reexamine who should benefit from the SocPen program



The benefit level of PhP 500 per month has become insignificant and its purchasing power has been fully eroded considering the inflation rate for the past 10 years.

**Policy Recommendation 2:** Clarify the definition of indigents, and tie this to poverty status of a senior: differentiate pensions for (a) subsistence poor (1000 PhP), (b) poor but not subsistence poor (750 PhP), (c) low income but not poor (500 pesos).

COSE believe that maintaining social pension for only indigent senior citizens will:



only perpetuate corruption, favoritism, and nepotism as part of the targeting errors.



further reinforce the existing inefficiencies in program implementation



stoke further the disunity and fragmentation among the senior citizens



**Policy Recommendation 2:** Clarify the definition of indigents, and tie this to poverty status of a senior: differentiate pensions for (a) subsistence poor (1000 PhP), (b) poor but not subsistence poor (750 PhP), (c) low income but not poor (500 pesos).

The proposed categorization of beneficiaries will make the application process more difficult and costly. Why?



require more time  
in the selection  
process



need more human  
resources to do the  
tasks



emotional stress/ burden  
to older persons trying to  
prove their eligibility



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*“Sa rekomendasyon na yan mas lalong magkakaproblema sa proseso ng pagpili ng beneficiaries dahil parang mas mahirap na siyang tukuyin. Hindi rin nito sinusolusyunan ang kasalukuyang problema ng social pension, mukhang mas papalalain pa nya” – Senior Citizen, 80 years old*

What is your stand on **Universal Social Pension (USP)**?

## Policy Recommendation 3: Deploy dedicated staff to the SocPen program alone.

Having dedicated staff to focus on social pension program will help to ensure that:



Staff will have more chance to master all the implementation processes



More time to address complaints and grievances about the program

## Policy Recommendation 4: Update the SocPen OM, at least annually



We agree that it must be revisited regularly. However, we want to propose doing it every other year or as the need arises to give ample time for the program implementers to properly practice the content of the program.

## Policy Recommendation 5: Standardize SocPen application process.



- Some of the LGUs are not following the prescribed standard, and implement their own standards instead.
- The DSWD/NCSC may consolidate all the good practices about social pension program and consider them in making the standard SocPen application process.



## Policy Recommendation 6: Regularly update the SocPen beneficiary database, and conduct analytics on it.

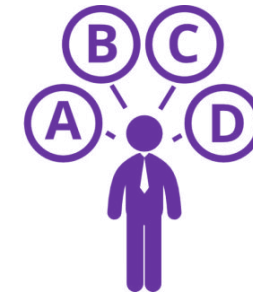


- It will ensure that all data used are still relevant when identifying social pension beneficiaries, allocating budgets, and others.
- create a database for older persons that are based at the local government units where they can regularly update the data and immediately transmit it to the server at the regional or national level.
- Maximize the existence of older persons' organizations in collecting and updating data of older persons.

**Policy Recommendation 7:** Adopt a digitalization mode of cash payment to SocPen beneficiaries, by using e-payments and e-wallets for cash distribution.



Safeguarding features and mechanisms must be properly installed.



Must be treated as an option for the beneficiaries along with other modes of payment.

**Note:** *The digitalization mode of cash payment alone will only add to the susceptibility of older persons to financial abuses.*

**Others:** Social pension program is being politicized.

**Do you have any recommendations on how to concretely address it?**

**enhance the social accountability mechanisms  
for the social pension program**



**strengthen the complaints  
and grievance mechanism  
of the program (i.e. creating  
senior citizen's helpdesk)**



**increase the involvement and  
engagement of older person's  
organizations in the monitoring and  
implementation of social pension  
program (i.e. Older Citizens  
Monitoring)**



**creation of a selection  
committee or a task force at  
the local level to screen all the  
applications for social pension  
before sending them to the  
region.**

# Takeaways:



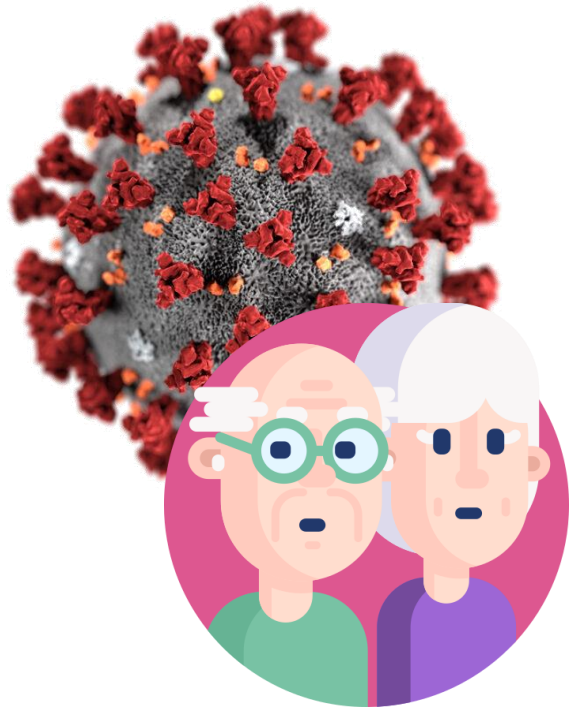
IMPROVEMENT

1

The social pension program **provided significant impact/improvement in the lives of social pensioners especially if we will increase or widen the coverage.** However, the change of pay-out schedules from quarterly to semestral **defeated the main purpose of the program.**

Therefore, the pay-out must be done quarterly or monthly if the amount increased.

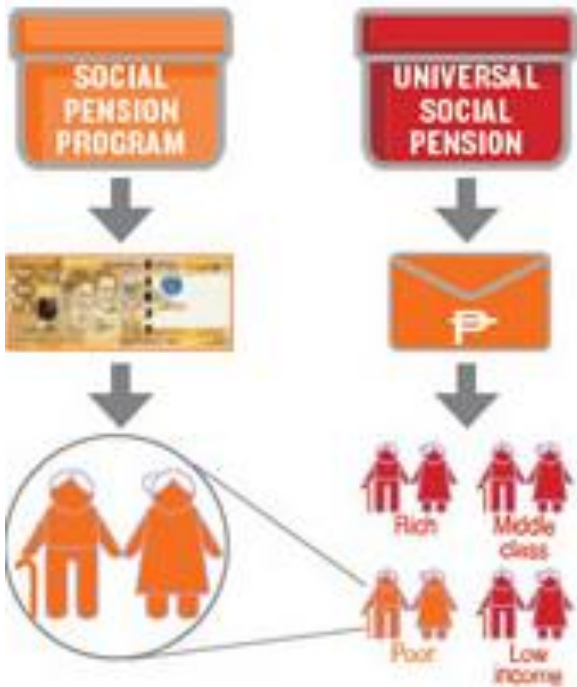
# Takeaways:



**2** COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the needs of Senior Citizens, pushing most of the older persons struggling to make ends meet due to loss of income or loss of support from children whose livelihoods are also affected by the pandemic.

Therefore, COSE is calling the DSWD/NCSC and **program implementers to re-think how to expedite the delivery of pensions and make it more accessible for all the beneficiaries to at least minimize the current burden faced by the sector.**

# Takeaways:



3

The result of this **study validates the need to push for the universal social pension**, as USP will remove the **targeting and exclusion error that the current social pension program has**, thereby capturing the majority of Senior Citizens who are marginalized.

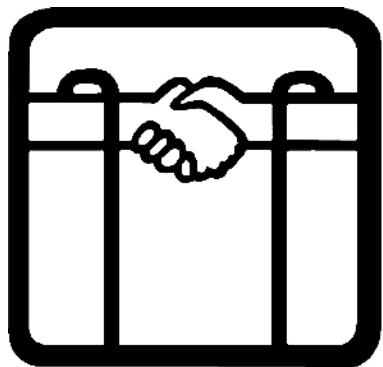
USP is also a **feasible and affordable investment** for the Philippines, and it would **recognize the lifelong contributions to nation-building made by senior citizens** throughout their lives.

# Thank you!



*Do you have any questions or clarifications?*

# Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc.



**COSE**

**Address:**

1407 Quezon Avenue  
West Triangle, Quezon City  
1104 Metro Manila, Philippines

**Telephone no.:**

(02) 8374-6416

**Tele-fax no.:**

(02) 8709-6567



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