

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

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# 1. Introduction

## Republic Act (RA) 9994 (Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010)

**Indigent senior citizens** are entitled to a monthly stipend amounting to **Five hundred pesos (Php500.00)\***



### Food and medicines

\*Monthly cash assistance have remained at Php500, though SocPen beneficiaries got assistance from Train Law's UCT, and SAP. Pending legislation seeks to double the amounts.

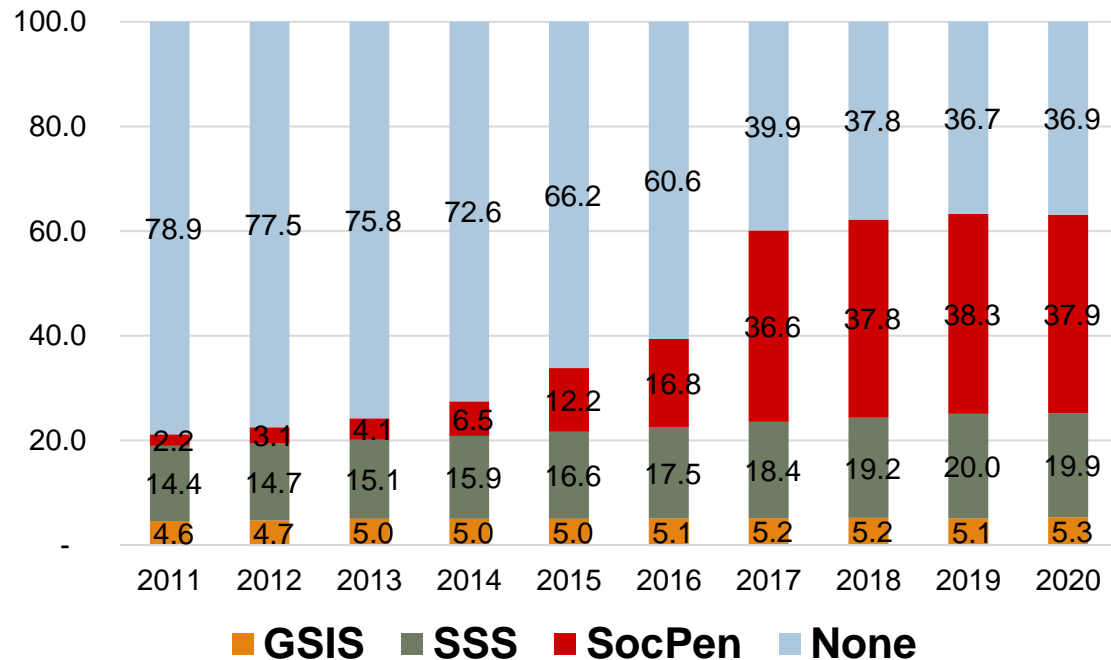
## Budget allocation and disbursement and number of indigents served based on age requirement (2011-2020)

Age requirement	Inclusive years	No. of indigent seniors served	Budget allocation (in million PhP)	Actual funds disbursed (in million PhP)
77 and older	2011-2014	280,802	1,685.08	1,640.81
65 and older	2015	930,222	5,962.63	5,946.97
60 and older	2016-2020	2,960,816	18,294.01	16,064.95

- **2,540%** increase of SocPen budget since 2011
- **2,634%** increase in the physical target for 2021
- 2020 physical target is **two-fifths (37.8%)** of senior citizens in PH

# 1. Introduction

**Share of senior citizens in the Philippines by old age pension (2011-2020)**



Source: Authors' estimates based on Data from SSS, GSIS, and DSWD's SocPen Program Management Office

## Objectives of the Study

To assess SocPen implementation by reviewing its policy theory/rationale, delivery and implementation, as well as organization.

In particular, this study aims to:

- ✓ examine to what extent SocPen has been executed, especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✓ identify implementation deficits, if any, taking note of the issues/challenges encountered by DSWD and LGUs in implementing SocPen;
- ✓ document the benefits and experience of seniors receiving SocPen assistance; and,
- ✓ provide recommendations for improving the program.

# 2. Literature Review

## Social Protection

*“policies and programs that seek to reduce poverty and vulnerability to risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalized by promoting and protecting livelihood and employment, protecting against hazards and sudden loss of income, and improving people’s capacity to manage risks.”*

Resolution No. 1 of 2007 of the Social Development Committee (SDC) of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).



**SDG indicator 1.3.1 on effective coverage for old-age protection: Comparison of percentage of persons above statutory retirement age receiving an old-age pension in ASEAN member states, 2000 and 2015–20**

ASEAN member state	in 2000	Year	in 2015–20	Year	Statutory pensionable age
Brunei Darussalam			100.0	2020	60+
Cambodia	1.0	2000	6.6	2018	55+
Indonesia	6.0	2002	14.8	2020	58+
Lao PDR	3.0	2000	6.3	2020	63+ Men   58+ Women
Malaysia	15.0	2000	18.6	2020	60+
Myanmar			14.9	2020	60+
Philippines	20.0	2000	20.5	2019	60+
Singapore			33.1	2020	62+
Thailand	5.0	2000	89.1	2019	60+
Viet Nam	16.0	2000	40.9	2019	60+ Men   55+ Women

Sources: UN Statistics Division. Global SDG Database

# 3.1 Overview of SocPen and its Design

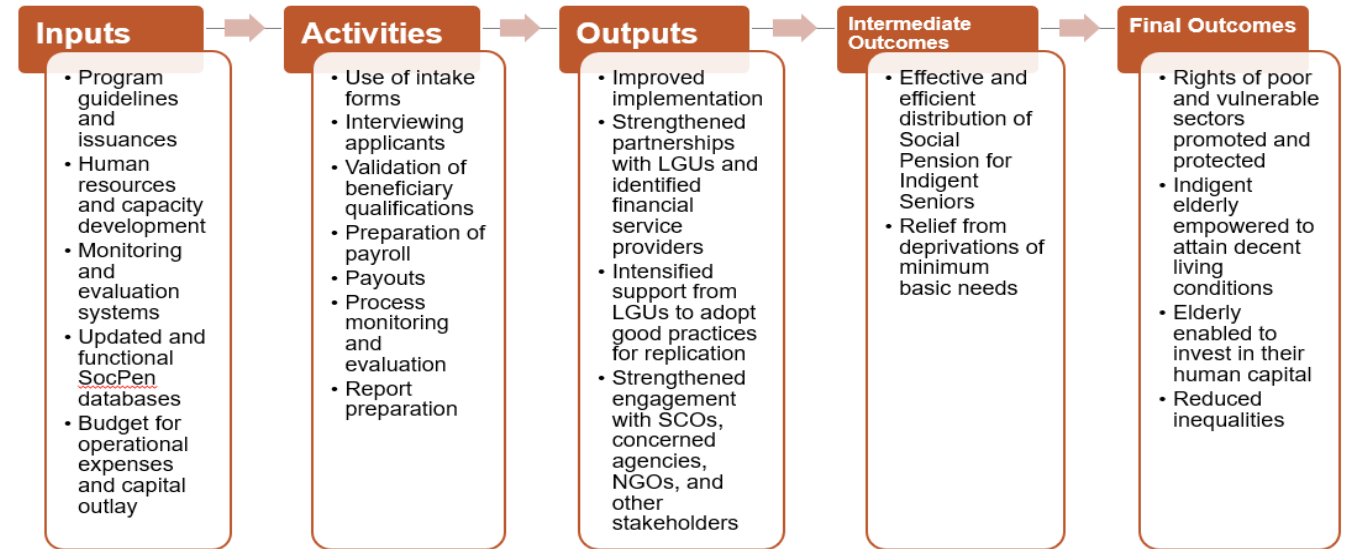
## Description

SocPen is a non-contributory pension targeted for indigent elderly who are not covered by GSIS, SSS or any form of pension.

## Objectives

- ✓ Augment capacity of indigent senior citizens to meet their daily subsistence and medical requirements;
- ✓ Reduce incidence of hunger among indigent senior citizens; and,
- ✓ Protect indigent senior citizens from neglect, abuse or deprivation.

## Theory of Change



The program is successful if all **intermediate outcomes are translated into final outcomes**, e.g. the indigent elderly becoming empowered to attain decent living conditions, the elderly being enabled to invest in their human capital, and inequalities reduced in the country.



# 3.2 Implementation Arrangements

## SOCIAL PENSION FOR INDIGENT SENIOR CITIZENS



Indigent senior citizens shall be entitled to a monthly stipend amounting to Five Hundred Pesos (PhP500.00) to augment the daily subsistence and other medical needs of senior citizens

The Social Pension for indigent senior citizens is an additional government assistance mandated under Republic Act 9994 otherwise known as "The Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010"

### OBJECTIVE

To augment the daily subsistence and other medical needs of senior citizens

### COVERAGE

The Social Pension for indigent senior citizens is implemented in all regions including Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA



Frail, sickly or with disability



Without pension from SSS, GSIS, or from any sources of pension in government and private agencies



Without permanent source of income, compensation or financial assistance from relatives to support basic needs

### REQUIREMENTS



The senior citizen or his/her relative shall submit either a photo copy of any valid ID (indicating the birth date of the qualified beneficiary) or birth certificate of the senior citizen to the nearest Office of the Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA) or City/ Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (C/MSWDO)

### BENEFITS

**P500**

### SCHEDULE OF PAYMENT

SEMESTRAL AT  
**P3,000**

### DELIVERY SCHEMES

DSWD-led Payout

## PROCESS OF SOCIAL PENSION FOR INDIGENT SENIOR CITIZENS



- ✓ List of Poor Households with Senior Citizen (\*NHTS 2009 Data) from Listahanan-NPMO forwarded to DSWD Field Offices to \*\*LGUs
- ✓ Non-NHTS senior citizens or identified by the OSCA/MSWDO



Application to (OSCA) Office of the Senior Citizens Affairs



Home Visitation by M/CSWDO



DSWD Field Office to inventory the masterlist for pay-out



Submission of Masterlist to DSWD Field Office



Identification for Qualified Social Pension Beneficiaries

\*The LGU thru its OSCA and MSWDO validated the Listahanan 2009 Data of Poor Senior Citizens to determine his/ her current condition; if he/she is still living and not receiving pension from GSIS, SSS, etc.

\*\* The NHTS 2009 Data of 1.2M poor households with senior citizens was used in 2011-2014 for Social Pension implementation.



# 3.3 SocPen Program Design

## Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160)

Administration of social services has been devolved to LGUs. The current existing law (RA 9994) provides for the responsibility of the SocPen to be implemented by DSWD, but the Department has been jointly implementing this with the LGUs.



**2011-2013**

Identify masterlist of potential program beneficiaries (i.e., elderly from poor households).



**2014**

LGUs have taken a pivotal role in the identification of social pensioners.

Definition of social pensioner relaxed.



**2015**

Minimum age of targeted beneficiaries reduced to **65**.



**2016**

Minimum age for beneficiaries further reduced to **60**.



**2018-2020**

Extensive validation process



# 3.4 Expenditure and Financing

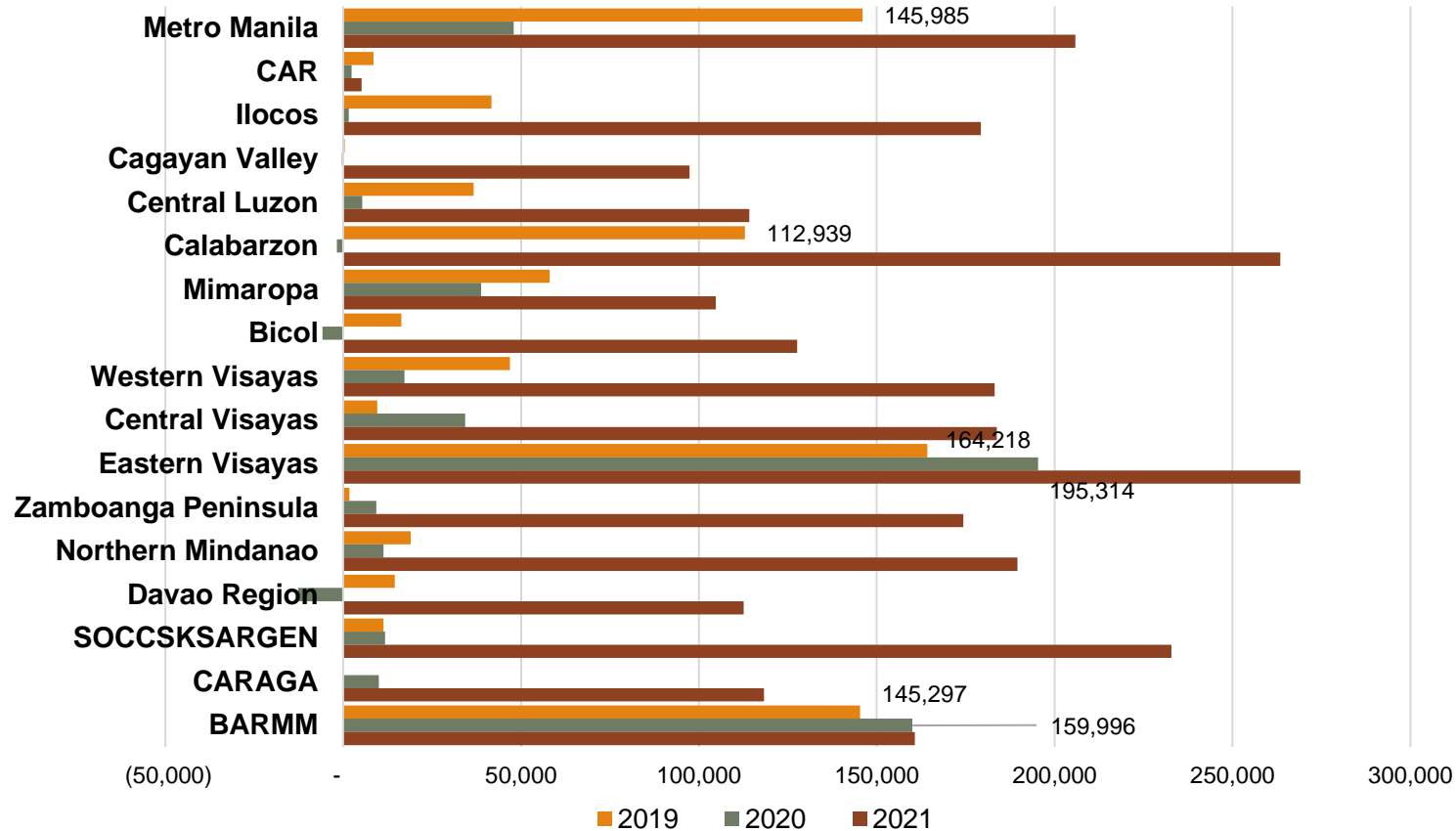
Annual Physical Targets, Actual Served for Social Pension: 2011-2020.

Year	Physical Target	Actual Served	Budget Allocation (in Million PhP)	Actual Budget Disbursed (in Million PhP)
2011	138,960	140,576	871.0	843.5
2012	185,194	211,657	1,227.5	1,231.7
2013	232,868	289,371	1,533.0	1,553.6
2014	479,080	481,603	3,108.9	2,934.4
2015	939,609	930,222	5,962.6	5,947.0
2016	1,368,944	1,343,943	8,711.2	8,593.5
2017	2,809,542	3,058,355	17,107.5	15,804.6
2018	3,027,531	3,306,265	19,282.9	18,288.5
2019	3,796,791	3,490,454	23,184.2	16,286.4
2020	3,789,874	3,605,064	23,184.2	21,351.7

Source: DSWD (personal communication)

# 3.4 Expenditure and Financing

Gaps Across Regions between Annual Physical Targets and Actual Served for Social Pension Program: 2019-2021\*



**2019**

Eastern Visayas - 164,218

BARMM - 145,297

Metro Manila - 145,985

Calabarzon - 112,939

**National Aggregate - 832,978**

**April 2021**

Metro Manila – 205,785

CALABARZON – 263,421

Eastern Visayas – 269,071

SOCCSKSARGEN – 232,844

BARMM – no cash distribution

Note: \*= Data for 2021 is as of April 30

Source: DSWD personal communication

# 4. Research Methods and Empirical Findings



Desk Review



Secondary Data Analysis  
(DSWD documents, APIS 2020)



Collection and analysis of  
new primary data (KIIs,  
FGDs, profile sheets)

## Profile of Senior Respondents

Category	NCR	Balance Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	Total
Beneficiary	0	4	4	2	10
Waitlisted	0	0	1	0	1
Delisted	0	0	0	2	2
Rejected	1	1	2	5	9
Did not apply	2	1	1	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>28</b>

## Profile of Program Implementers

Category	Number of Respondents
DSWD-CO	7
DSWD-RO	18
OSCA	3
PSWDO / CSWDO / MSWDO	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>

# 4.1 Key Findings from Interviews

## Senior Citizens



SocPen is a means of providing **social protection**. All seniors are **grateful** for the cash assistance.



As designed, cash assistance actually goes to **food and medicines**.



Based on computation for monthly spend on senior medicines, **Php1,500/month** is needed to cover medical expenses.



**Delay in payouts** is a problem for seniors. Currently payouts are done semestral, but they prefer quarterly.



**Benefits** that the elderly receive **vary**. Some cities, provide pension to the elderly **on top of the SocPen**.



**Application process into SocPen varies considerably** and can be easily **politicized**.

# 4.1 Key Findings from Interviews

## Program Implementers

- Program design was to **augment existing allowance** the elderly already has.
- **1 in 5 indigent seniors** does not get the assistance because of DSWD's definition of '**indigency**'.
- For the implementers, **semestral** cash distribution is optimal.
- **Hybrid MOP practices** accommodate the existing situations of the elderly on the ground.
- There are only a **fixed number of SocPen slots** allocated per barangay.
- **Practices on getting waitlisting varies. Sometimes, survivors** of social pensioners who die still receive benefits during the current semester while the **waitlisted** elderly **receives the cash in the next half**.
- **Cross-matching of SocPen list with SSS** is not institutionalized because of **privacy issues**.
- Perennial problem is **lack of staff devoted to SocPen**

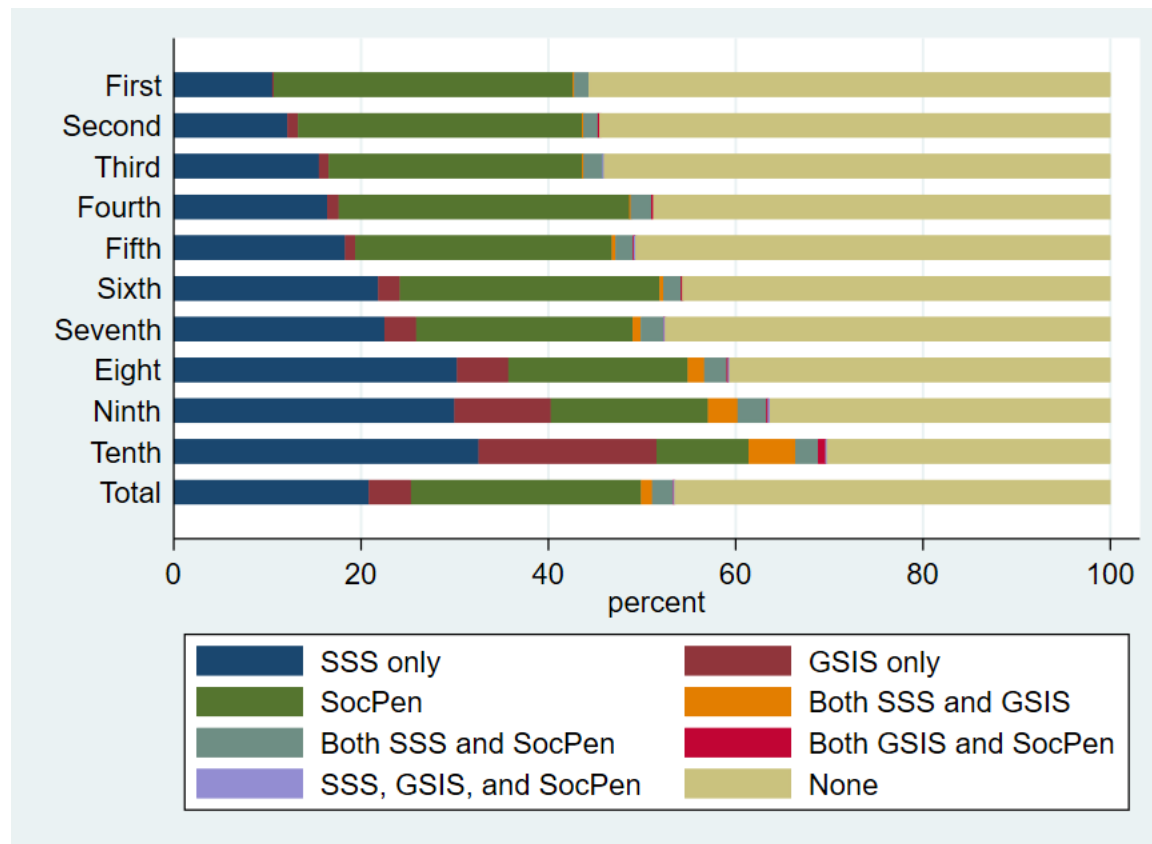


# 4.2 Survey Says...

## Results of **APIS 2020**

- Among **bottom 50 percent** of per capita exp distribution, **5.38 million seniors are without SSS or GSIS**, and of these **3.56 million were not covered by SocPen** (thus SocPen had an **undercoverage rate of 66.1%** among the bottom 50%)
- **2 out of 5 SocPen beneficiaries (41.2%)** belong to **upper 50 percent** of per capita exp distribution, thus we can think of this as the program **leakage rate**
- **282 thousand** out of an estimated 3.2 million SocPen beneficiaries (equivalent to about 8.9%) are reported to be **availing of SSS or GSIS pensions (aside from SocPen)**.

**Distribution of senior citizens by per capita expenditure decile and by pension system**



Note: Authors' computations using microdata of the APIS 2020.



# 4.2 Survey Says...

## Results of **FIES 2018 (adj to 2020 prices)**

- The current SocPen cash assistance of PhP 500.00 is only 7.5% of the average expenditures on food and health of the bottom half of per capita income distribution.
- The DSWD and Congress may need to seriously consider having three levels of cash support, P1000.00 for the lowest income decile, P750.00 for the second decile, and maintain P500.00 for the third to the fifth deciles.
- This will not only provide bigger assistance to those in bigger need of assistance, but will also correspondingly give a bigger relative impact on spending for the needy

**Average Monthly Household Food, Health and Total Expenditures of Senior Citizens and Total Number of Senior Citizens by Per Capita Income Decile : 2020**

Decile	Average Monthly Food Expenditures	Average Monthly Health Expenditures	Monthly Total Expenditure	Total Number of Seniors
1	5,496	144	6,154	1,180,290
2	5,870	225	7,406	1,179,942
3	6,282	296	8,498	1,179,935
4	6,760	415	9,837	1,180,886
5	7,161	485	11,728	1,179,102
6	7,887	679	13,747	1,180,477
7	8,679	847	16,469	1,180,250
8	9,496	1,103	20,470	1,181,791
9	10,521	1,732	26,022	1,177,677
10	11,505	3,216	44,177	1,179,647
<b>TOTAL</b>	7,966	914	16,451	11,799,997

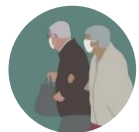
Note: Authors' computations using microdata of the FIES 2018.

- Suggested scheme will reach 5.0 million low income seniors without pension with a budget of 40.1 Billion PhP.

# 5. Policy Recommendations



Increase the value of pensions but reexamine who should benefit from the *SocPen* program



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).



Deploy dedicated staff to the *SocPen* program alone



Update the SocPen Operations Manual, at least annually



Regularly update the SocPen beneficiary database, and conduct analytics on it.



Adopt a digitalization mode of cash payment (e-payments and e-wallets for cash distribution)





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# Thank you!



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