



The Philippines' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Learning from Experience and Emerging Stronger to Future Shocks

Celia M. Reyes, Editor of the Book

Former PIDS President

Thursday, 26 May 2022 | 2:00 - 4:30 PM (Manila Time)

Outline of the Presentation



01

About the Book

02

Status and Impacts

03

Government Policy Response

04

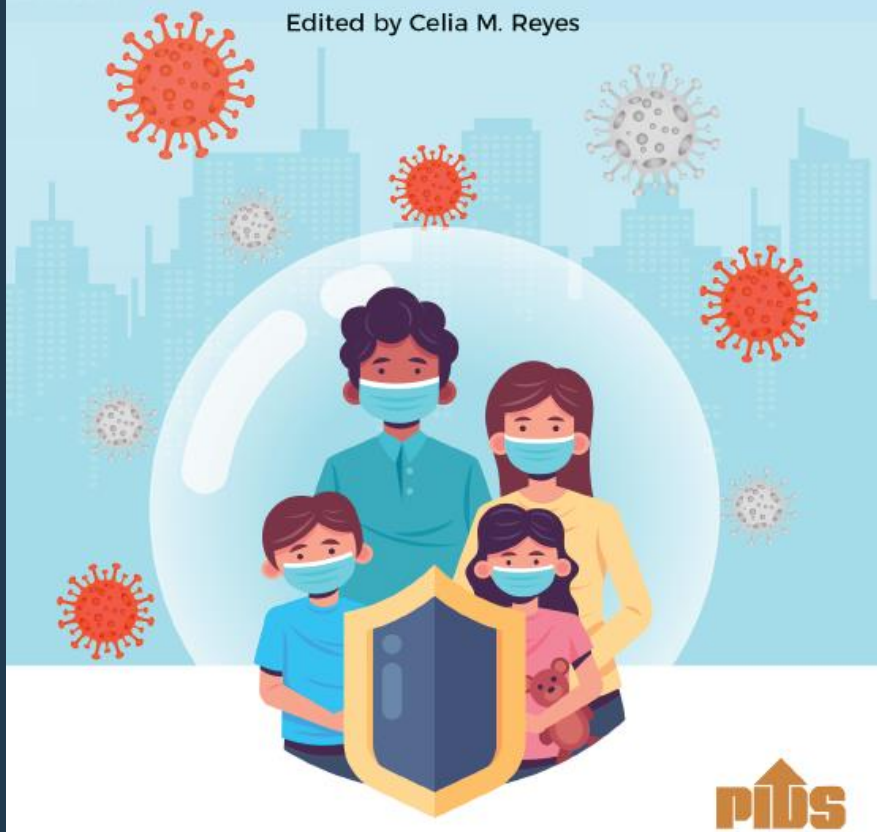
Issues and Concerns in the
Pandemic Response

05

Lessons Learned by Sector

THE PHILIPPINES' RESPONSE TO THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC
Learning from Experience and Emerging
Stronger to Future Shocks

Edited by Celia M. Reyes



ABOUT THE BOOK

01

SECTION 1

OBJECTIVES OF THE BOOK



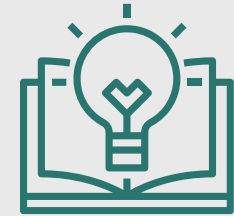
Examine the observable impacts of the pandemic on various sectors of the Philippine economy and society



Document the government's response to the pandemic



Identify gaps, issues and challenges in the government response to the pandemic



Provide recommendations to help decisionmakers craft and implement better policies

Covered period is only from the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak up to early 2021

THEME PAPER

The Philippines' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: *Learning from Experience and Emerging Stronger to Future Shocks*

C.M. Reyes, M.K. Ortiz, A.A. Arboneda, and A.R. Vargas

BACKGROUND PAPERS

01

Projected Disease Transmission, Health System Requirements, and Macroeconomic Impacts
M.R. Abrigo, J. Uy, N.J Haw, V.G. Ulep, and K.A. Francisco

03

Navigating the COVID-19 Storm: Impact of the Pandemic on the Philippine Economy and Macro Responses of the Government
M. Debuque-Gonzales

02

The Multifaceted Health Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic
V.G. Ulep

04

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Food Security in the Philippines
R.M. Briones

BACKGROUND PAPERS

05

The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Filipino Migrant Workers

A.D. Tabuga and C.C. Cabaero

06

Inequality and Human Development in the Philippines

A.M. Navarro

07

Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Poverty

C.M. Reyes, R.D. Asis, A.A. Arboneda, A.R. Vargas

08

Poverty, the Middle Class, and Income Distribution amid COVID-19

J.R. Albert, M.R. Abrigo, F.M. Quimba, J.F. Vizmanos

09

Basic Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic: What do Enrollment by Learning Modality and Household Characteristics Tell Us?

A.C. Orbeta, Jr.

10

Crisis and Risk Communication: What We can Learn from the COVID-19 Pandemic

S.V. Siar

11

National and Local Government's Fiscal Response and Role in Recovery

C.J. Diokno-Sicat

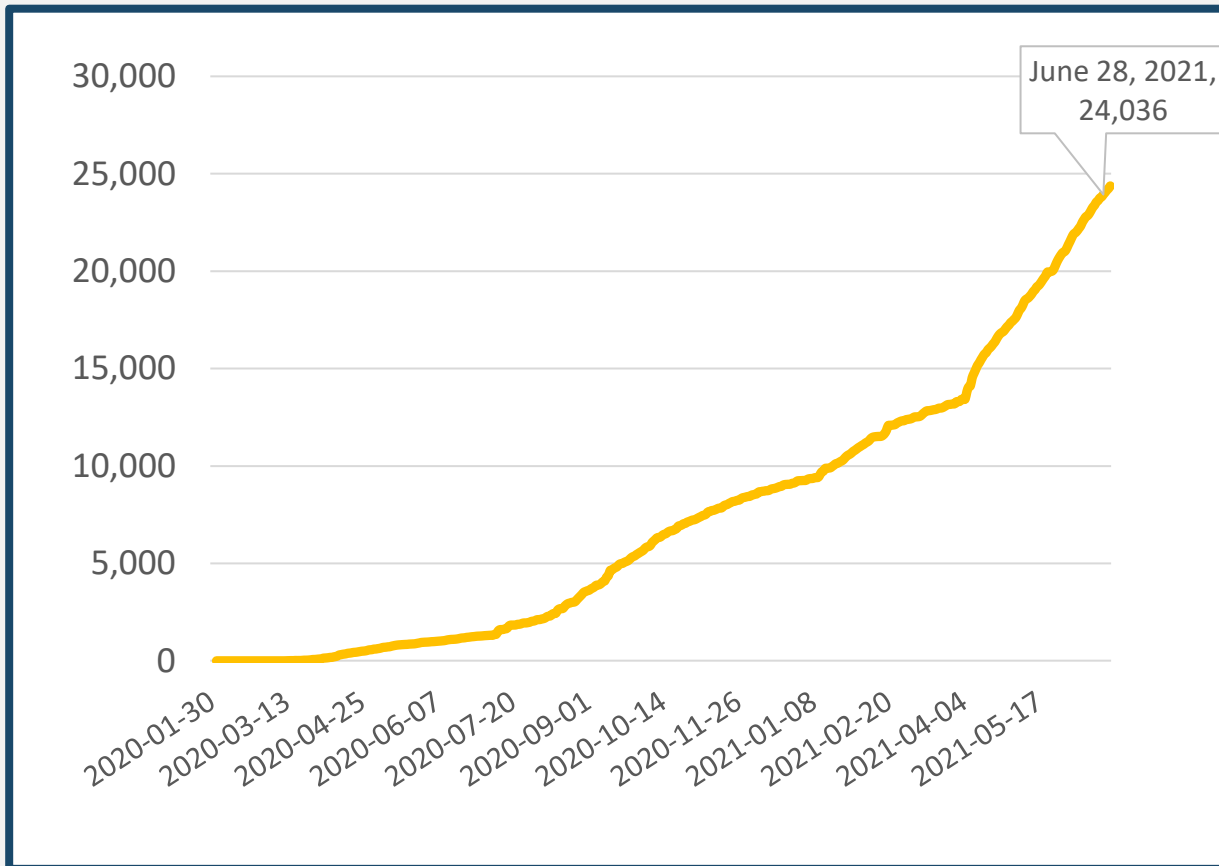
STATUS AND IMPACTS

02

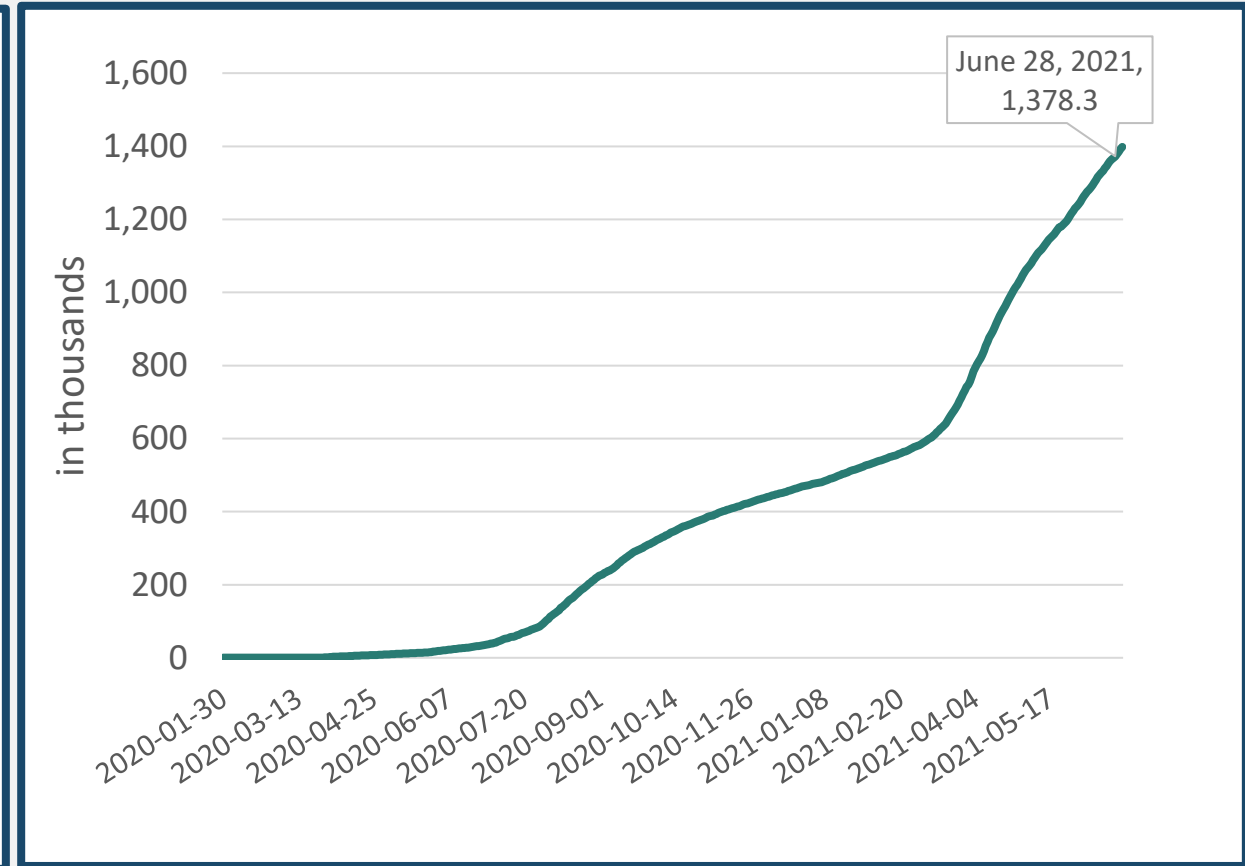


PH placed 24th and 26th with the highest cumulative cases and deaths, respectively, among 236 economies as of June 2021 (WHO 2021)

COVID-19 cumulative total deaths, Philippines



COVID-19 cumulative total cases, Philippines



Among ASEAN member states, PH ranks second with highest cases and deaths, and biggest economic contraction in 2020

COVID-19 cumulative number of cases and deaths as of June 8, 2021

Country	Cases ^a	Deaths ^a	Population (in M) ^b	% Share Cases	% Share Deaths	GDP Growth Rate (%)	
						2019	2020
Indonesia	1,863,031	51,803	270.63	0.69	0.02	5	-2.1
Philippines	1,276,004	21,969	108.12	1.18	0.02	6.1	-9.6
Malaysia	622,086	3,460	31.95	1.95	0.01	4.3	-5.6
Thailand	182,548	1,297	69.63	0.26	0.00	2.3	-6.1
Myanmar	144,456	3,227	54.05	0.27	0.01	6.8	3.3
Singapore	62,210	33	5.70	1.09	0.00	1.3	-5.4
Cambodia	34,833	266	16.49	0.21	0.00	7.1	-3.1
Viet Nam	9,027	53	96.46	0.01	0.00	7	2.9
Lao PDR	1,968	3	7.17	0.03	0.00	4.7	-0.5
Brunei	244	3	0.43	0.06	0.00	3.9	1.2

Note : a – cumulative; b – estimated population 2019;

At the onset, what was the initial response of the government?

JANUARY

[Jan. 5] Tighter screening of inbound travelers

[Jan. 23] Halting of flights from Wuhan; Strict monitoring of flights from rest of China

[Jan. 28] Convened the 1st meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, created through EO No. 168, s. 2014; restrict the issuance of visas - Hubei, China

[Jan. 31] Ban of entry of Chinese nationals from Hubei, China upon reported first case

FEBRUARY

[Feb.] Public was encouraged to practice minimum health protocols (e.g., regular handwashing, wearing of surgical masks if needed)

[Feb. 2] Flight restrictions extended to inbound passengers from Mainland China, HK, and Macau

[Feb. 10] Extended to inbound travelers from Taiwan

MARCH

[Mar. 15] Imposition of Community Quarantines such as Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), General CQ (GCQ), and modified GCQ



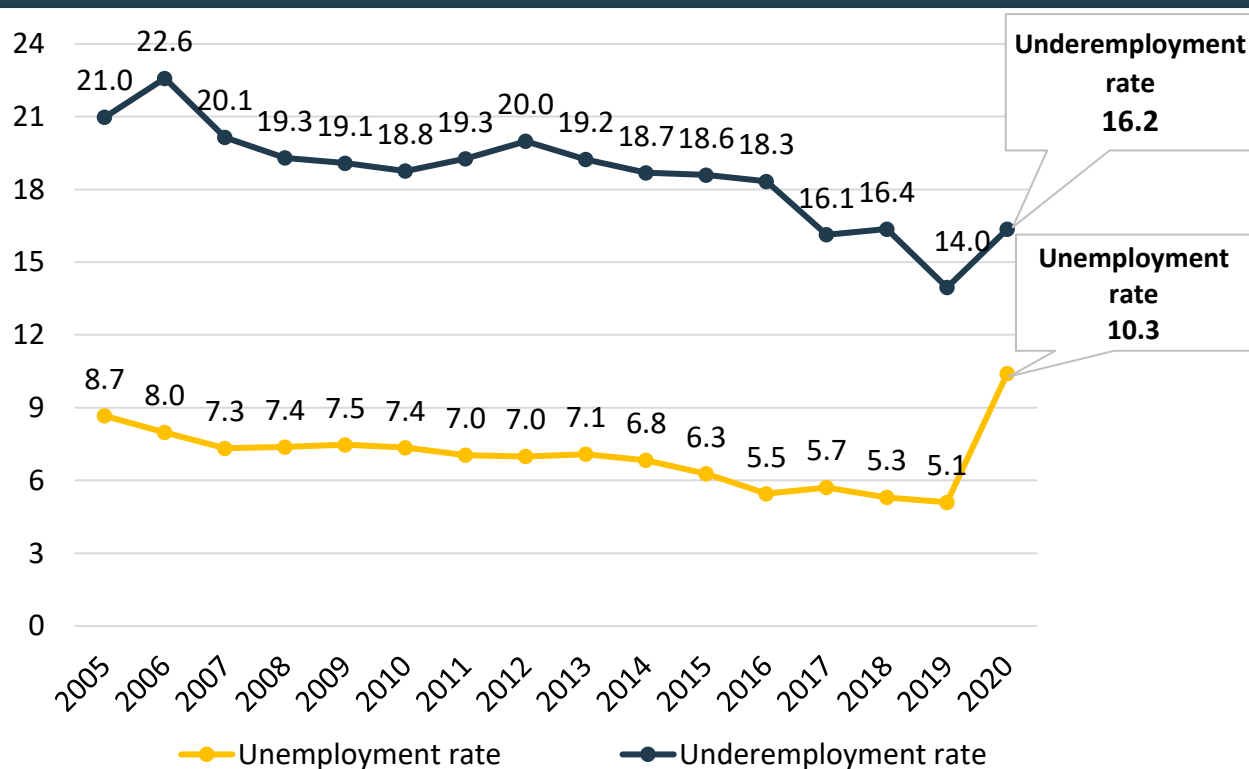
Monitoring of borders and restriction of entry of inbound travelers



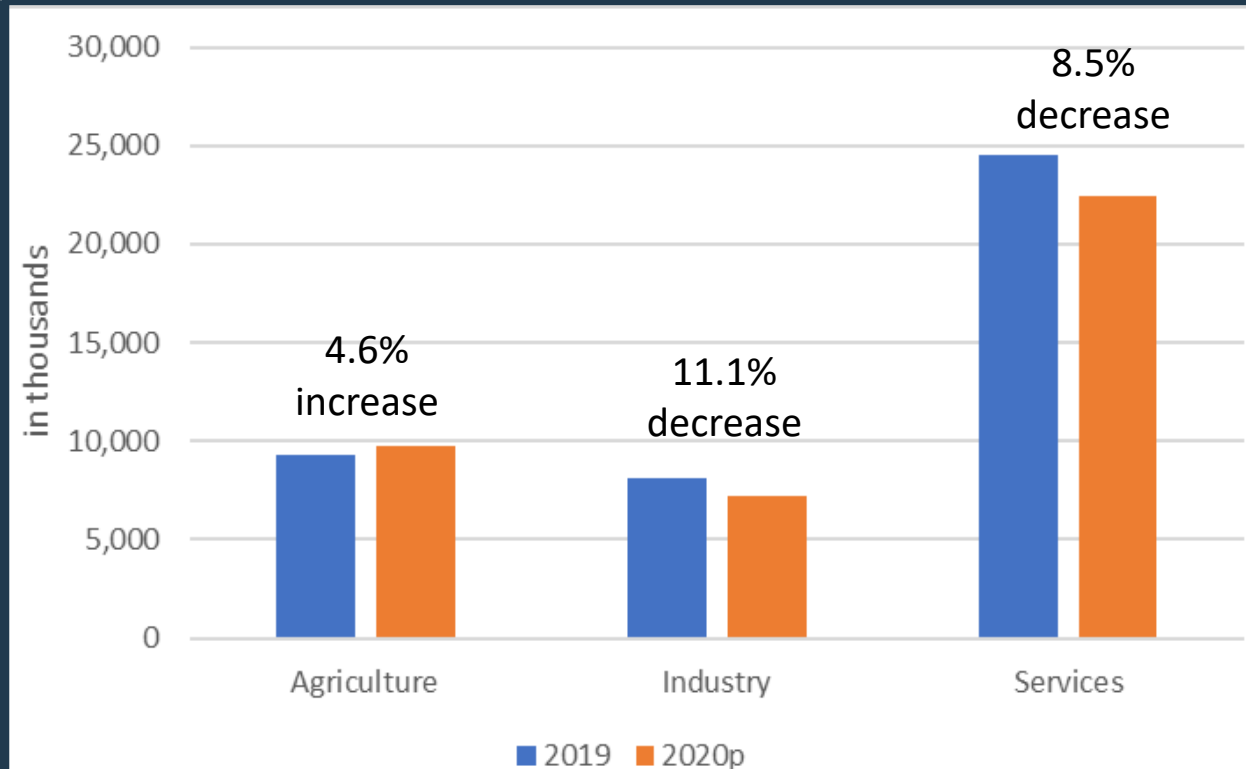
Restrictions on the mobility of the people within the Philippines

Sudden and prolonged community lockdowns seriously affected businesses, creating massive unemployment especially in NCR

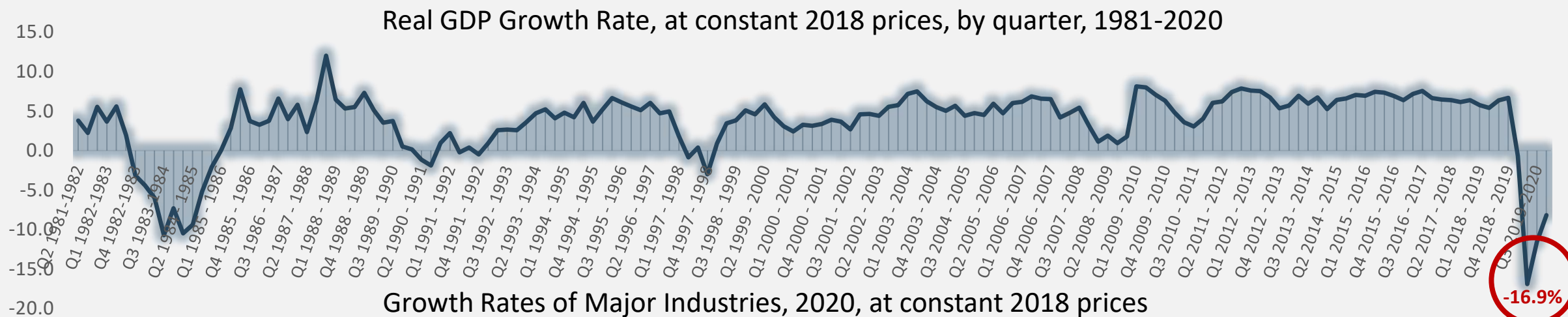
Unemployment and underemployment rate, 2005-2020



Number of employed persons, by sector, 2019-2020^p



The Philippines entered recession in Q2 (-16.9%); Real GDP contracted by 9.6% in 2020



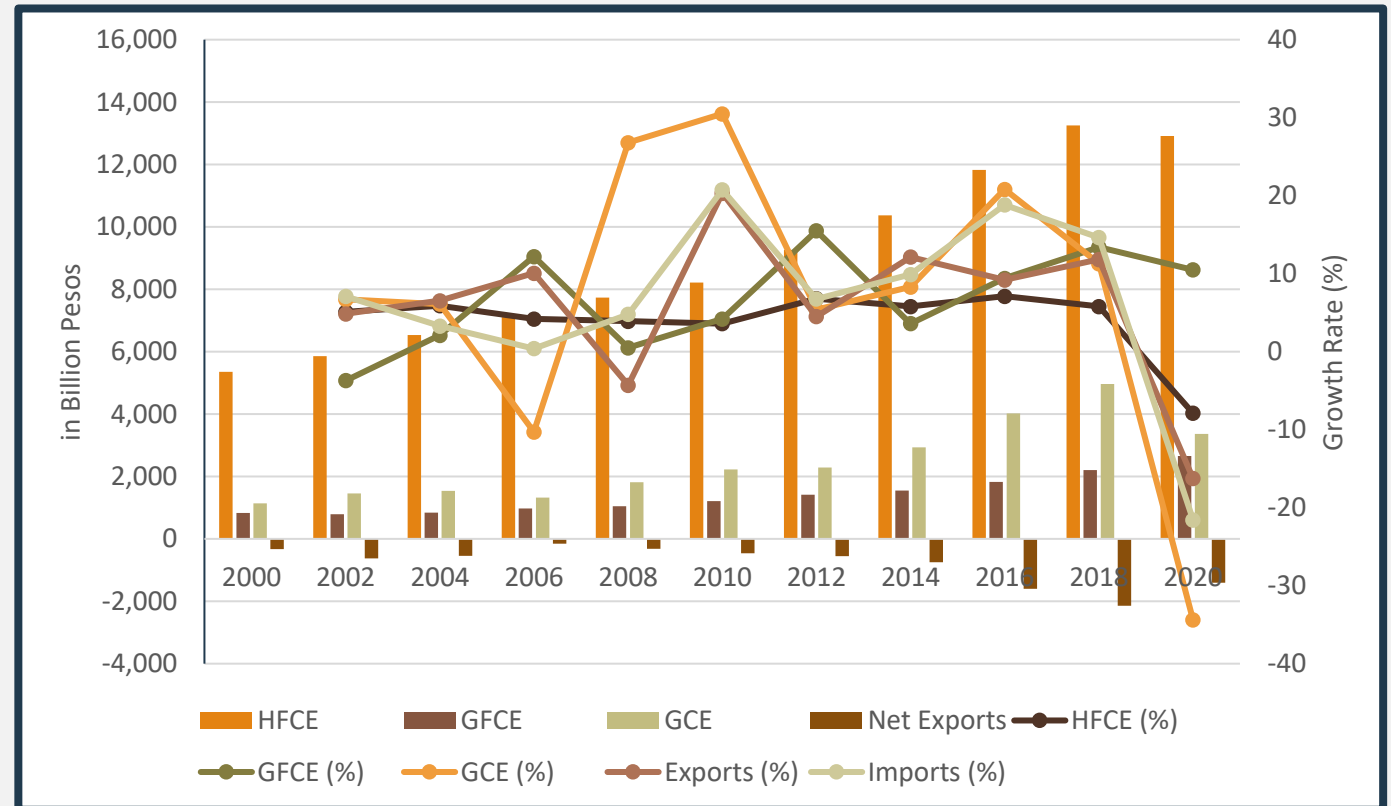
(0.2) Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	(0.4) Electricity, Steam, Water and waste Mgmt.	(45.4) Accommodation and Food Service Activities	(10.0) Professional and Business Services	(41.1) Other Services
(18.9) Mining and Quarrying	(25.7) Construction	5.0 Information and Communication	4.6 Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Activities	
(9.8) Manufacturing	(6.0) Wholesale and Retail Trade Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	5.5 Financial and Insurance Activities	(10.8) Education	
	(30.9) Transportation and Storage	(17.0) Real Estate and Ownership of Dwellings	(3.8) Human Health and Social Work	

Only Government Expenditure experienced positive growth in 2020

- Gross capital formation (-34.4%)
- Household final consumption expenditure (-7.9%)
 - Recreation and culture (-44.1%)
 - Restaurants and hotels (-43.1%)
 - Transport (-33.5%)
 - Alcoholic beverages and tobacco (-25.6%)
- Trade – Exports (-16.3%); Imports (-21.6%)

Consumer confidence also remained very low for the latter half of 2020, hitting a record low of -54.5% in the Q3 2020 since the start of the nationwide survey in 2007 (BSP 2020)

Gross Value Added by expenditure, constant 2018 prices (April 8, 2021)



HFCE = Household Final Consumption Expenditure; GFCE = Government Final Consumption Expenditure, GCF = Gross Capital Formation

Schools in all levels had to temporarily close, compelling students to continue schooling remotely

- There is about 3% decrease in enrolment in basic education.
- Elementary school students are the most affected in terms of enrollment.

Basic education enrollment in SY 2019-2020 and SY 2020-2021, by level (as of January 2021)

Level of Education	2019-2020	2020-2021	% Change
Kindergarten	2,044,745	2,055,635	0.53
Elementary	13,226,174	12,539,961	-5.19
Elem - Learners with Special Education (LES)	61,787	55,208	-10.65
Junior High School	8,501,509	8,337,693	-1.93
JHS – LES	2,141	1,698	-20.69
Senior High School	3,194,035	3,236,827	1.34
TOTAL	27,030,391	26,227,022	-2.97

Enrollment in private schools declined by one-fifth, while enrollment in public schools remained almost the same as in the previous year

National enrollment in private and public schools (K-12, Alternative Learning System and Non-Graded Learners), as of January 15, 2021

School Year	Public School		Private School	
	No. of Enrollees	Annual Growth Rate (%)	No. of Enrollees	Annual Growth Rate (%)
SY 2017-2018	22,096,820	—	4,065,515	—
SY 2018-2019	22,558,138	2.09	4,298,566	5.73
SY 2019-2020	22,572,923	0.07	4,304,676	0.14
SY 2020-2021	22,712,409	0.62	3,375,748	-21.58

Major mode of learning is modular (print); “Digital divide” exists, large gap in terms of access to computer – an important tool in remote learning

A significant proportion of basic education students in private schools use pure online and blended learning, **while students in public schools mostly rely on printed modules** (Orbeta, this volume)

Proportion of households with access to TV, Radio, Computer, and Mobile Phone, by income decile

Income decile	Number of households	Proportion (%) of households with:			
		TV	Radio	Computer	Mobile Phone
Poorest	2,475,274	51.28	33.62	1.37	73.42
2nd	2,474,182	66.00	35.30	3.07	81.22
3rd	2,474,910	73.79	36.94	5.10	84.79
4th	2,474,570	79.84	38.78	7.90	87.64
5th	2,474,662	84.34	40.27	10.53	88.69
6th	2,474,915	87.62	41.04	16.18	89.71
7th	2,474,557	90.69	42.87	23.00	91.50
8th	2,474,778	92.36	43.09	32.13	93.06
9th	2,475,122	94.32	44.02	44.55	94.88
Richest	2,474,204	96.56	44.13	62.76	96.08
Total	24,747,174	81.68	40.01	20.66	88.10

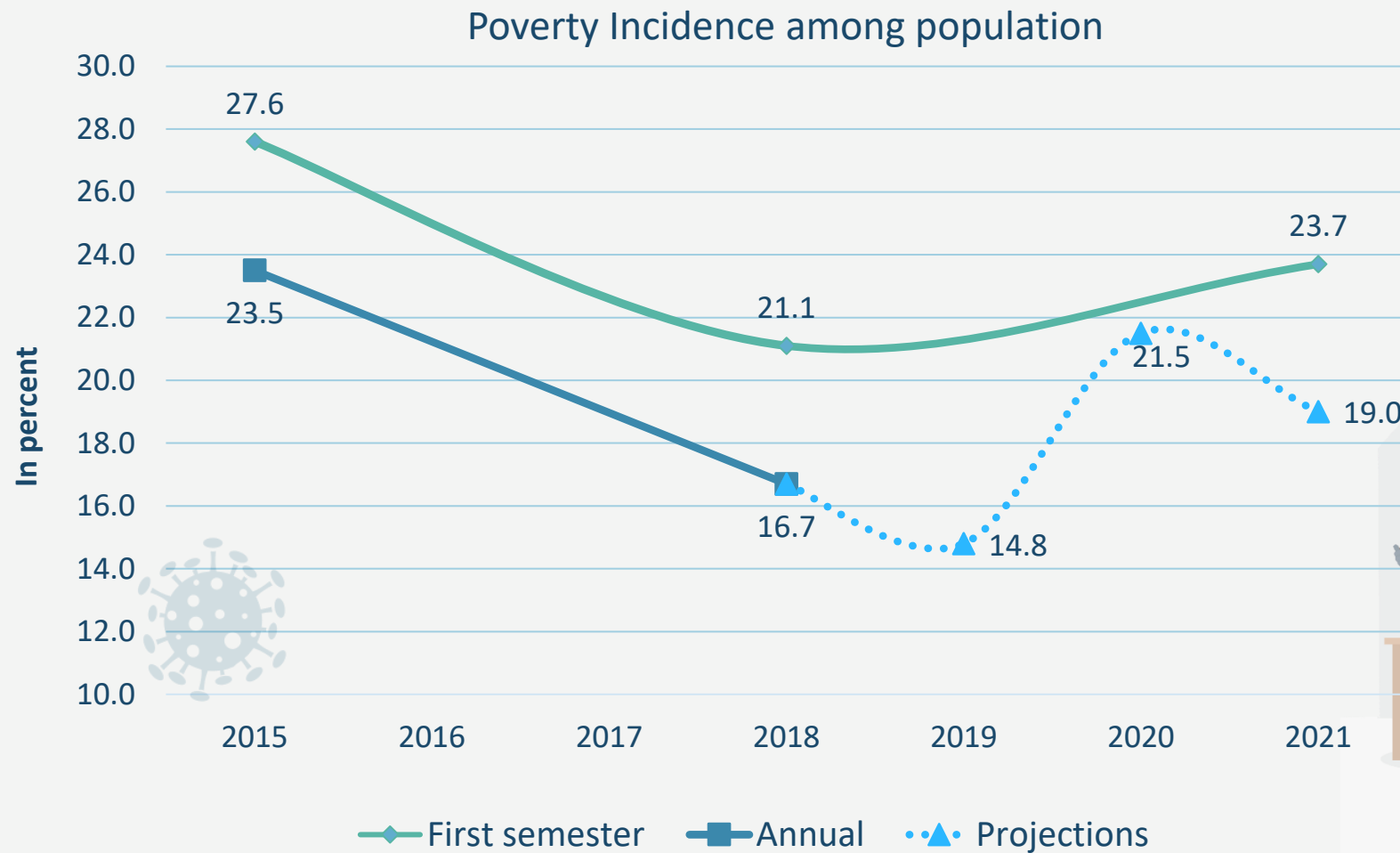
Poverty incidence and magnitude is expected to worsen due to the pandemic – reversing recent gains in poverty reduction

Simulation of the impact of COVID-19 on the magnitude and incidence of poverty

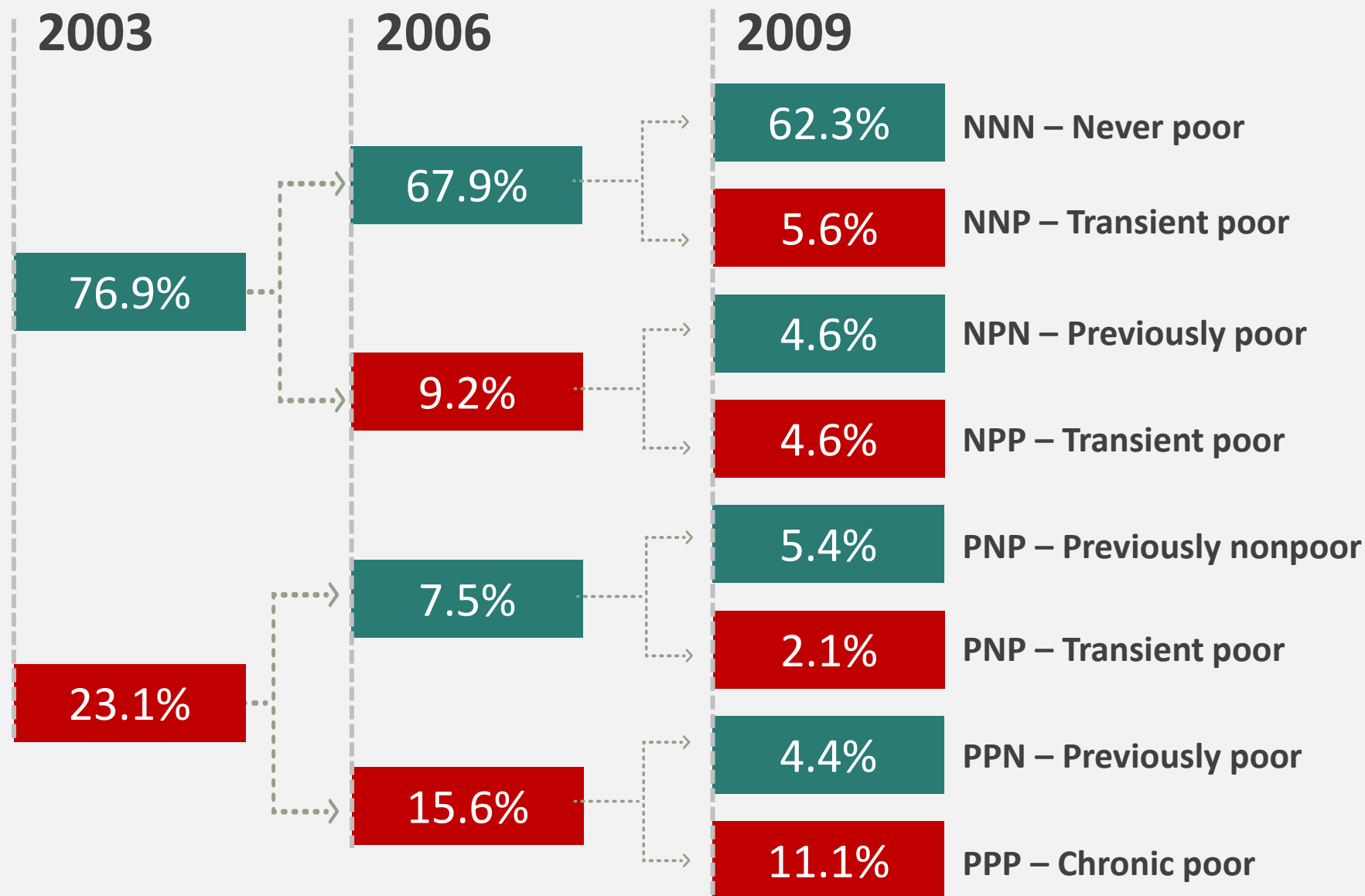
	2018	2019	2020	2021
<u>Among families</u>				
Magnitude ('000)	3,004.6	2,631.3	3,964.4	3,465.1
Incidence (%)	12.1	10.6	16.0	14.0
<u>Among population</u>				
Magnitude ('000)	17,670.2	15,612.8	22,697.7	20,107.2
Incidence (%)	16.7	14.8	21.5	19.0

Note: Official poverty estimates in 2018. The simulations assumed that household incomes change based on the growth of the sector of employment of the household head.

Poverty incidence and magnitude is expected to worsen due to the pandemic – reversing recent gains in poverty reduction



Movements in and out of Poverty



Government Policy Response

03

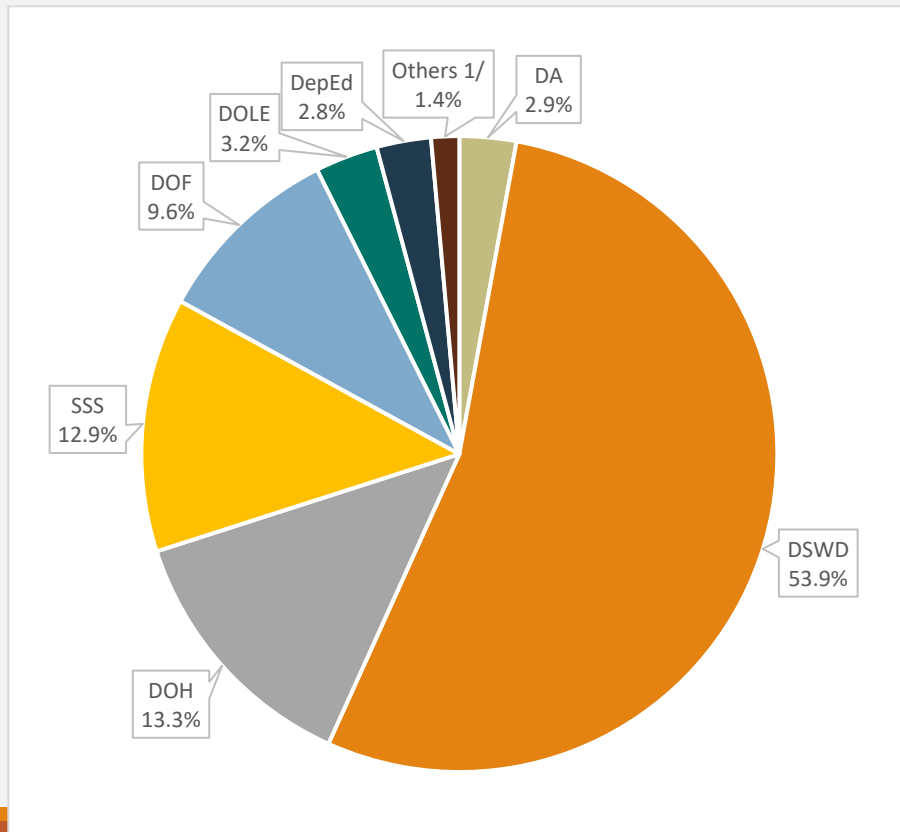
LEGISLATION: BAYANIHAN I AND BAYANIHAN II

BAYANIHAN TO HEAL AS ONE ACT

(RA 11469)

Enacted in March 2020 granting the PH President special powers to combat the COVID-19 pandemic;

As of June 2021: **Total budget - PHP394.4 B**
(PHP357.9 B disbursed amount; 96.8% rate)

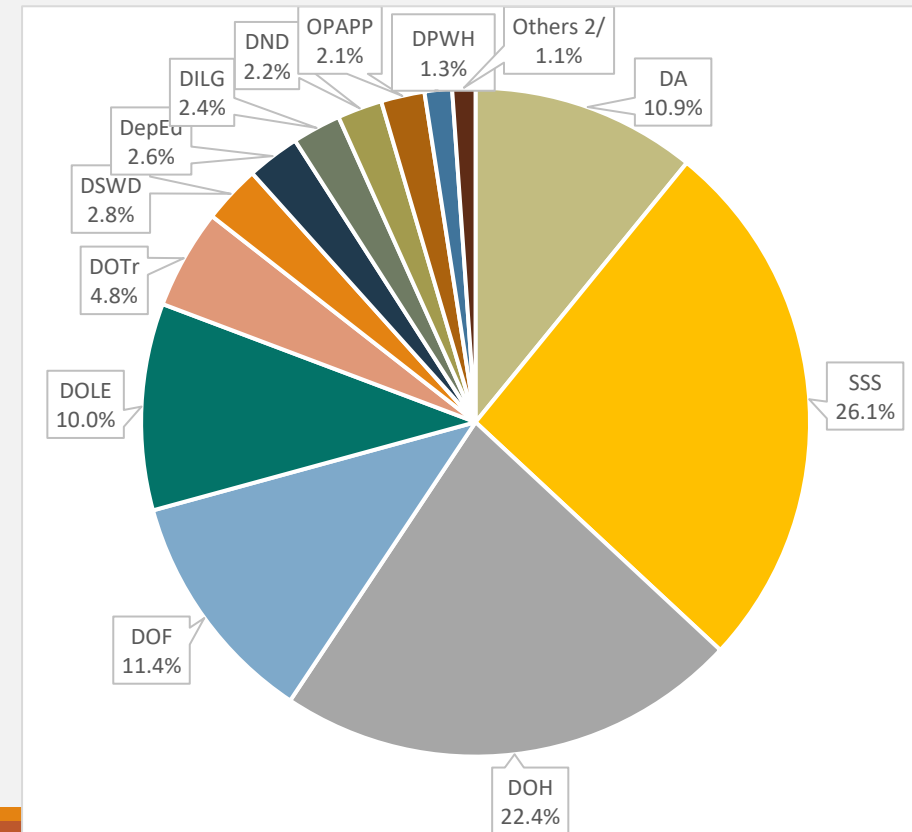


BAYANIHAN TO RECOVER AS ONE ACT

(RA 11494)

Enacted in September 2020, providing for pandemic response and recovery interventions

As of June 2021, **Total budget - PHP 214.1 B**
(PHP178.9 B disbursed amount; 89.3% rate)



Emergency measures implemented during the ECQ

Anchored on the emergency measures provided under the Bayanihan I



CASH ASSISTANCE

- (DSWD) Social Amelioration Program
- (DA) Rice Farmers Financial Assistance Program
- (DOLE) COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program – for OFW and workers in the formal sector



GRANTS/LOAN ASSISTANCE

- (DA) Expanded Survival and Recovery Assistance Program
- (DTI) Livelihood Seeding Program and Pondo sa Pagbabago at Pag-asenso program – for MSMEs



IN-KIND ASSISTANCE

- (OWWA) Transportation, food, accommodation
- (DA) agricultural products to LGUs
- (DOTr) Free Bus Ride Program for Health Workers
- (MMDA) Libreng Sakay Program and Point-to-Point Bus Augmentation System
- (DSWD) Food and Non-food items



EMERGENCY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

- Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers *Barangay ko, Bahay ko Project* – employs displaced workers



WAGE SUBSIDY FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

- (DOF) Small Business Wage Subsidy Program – for workers in the formal sector



EMERGENCY/CALAMITY LOAN ASSISTANCE

- (SSS) Calamity loans of up to PHP20,000 (or equivalent to one-month salary)

The government has assisted low-income families, displaced workers, farmers, and OFWs among others affected by the pandemic

	Social Amelioration Program/Emergency Subsidy Program	COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program	COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program – Abot-Kamay and Pagtulong (CAMP AKAP)*	Financial Subsidy to Rice farmers
Total Allocated Amount	First Tranche: PHP101 B Second Tranche: PHP83 B	PHP3.2 B	PHP2.5 B	PHP 3 B
Target Beneficiaries	Low income households	Formal workers	Displaced Overseas Filipino Workers	Rice farmers
No. of Target Beneficiaries	First Tranche: 18M Second Tranche: 14M	657,201	250,000	591,246
Benefits given	PHP5,000 to PHP8,00	PHP5,000	PHP10,000 or its equivalent in local currency	PHP5,000

Social Amelioration Program – Emergency Subsidy Program

Target beneficiaries:

- **Poor families** registered in the Pantawid Familyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)
- **Informal economy workers** (e.g. self-employed, small-scale producers and distributors)
- **Vulnerable sectors:**
 - Senior citizens
 - Persons with disability
 - Pregnant and lactating women
 - Solo parents
 - Overseas Filipinos in distress
 - Indigent indigenous peoples

Financial assistance amounting to **PHP 5,000 to 8,000**, depending on the regional minimum wage rate, will be provided for **two months** per qualified family

Total budget:

PHP 206.7 billion

Data as of November 13, 2020

Target beneficiaries:

First tranche

Second tranche

17,946,554

14,335,127

Actual beneficiaries*:

17,597,757
(98.1%)

14,011,500
(97.7%)

Amount disbursed:

PHP 99.2 billion

PHP 83.7 billion

*About 1.1 million families received emergency assistance twice during the 1st tranche.

Cash transfers from the Social Amelioration Programs reduces poverty

Scenarios	Estimates		Increase (Decrease)	
	Magnitude ('000)	Incidence (%)	Magnitude ('000)	Incidence (%)
Poverty incidence among families				
<i>2018 (Before COVID-19)*</i>	3,004.6	12.1
<i>2020 (without SAP)</i>	3,964.4	16.0	959.8	3.9
<i>2020 (with SAP)</i>	3,015.5	12.2	10.9	0.05
Poverty incidence among population				
<i>2018 (Before COVID-19)*</i>	17,670.2	16.7
<i>2020 (without SAP)</i>	22,697.7	21.5	5,027.5	4.6
<i>2020 (with SAP)</i>	18,330.8	17.3	660.6	0.6

SAP = Social Amelioration Program; ".." = no data available

Note: *Official poverty estimates in 2018

Other government responses



MOBILITY RESTRICTIONS

Localized
lockdowns/
community
quarantines



IMPROVE AWARENESS

Information
dissemination
campaigns



GENERAL GUIDELINES

Creation of a
National Action Plan
(e.g., “Test, Trace,
Treat”)



HEALTH SYSTEM SUPPORT

Augmentation of
human resources for
health and expansion of
facilities for treatment
and isolation



PROTECTION

Vaccination
rollout; among
others

01

02

03

04

05

Issues and concerns in the pandemic response

04



ISSUES AND CONCERNS IN THE PANDEMIC (1)

Communication issues

The communication interventions for COVID-19 response in the Philippines can be characterized as late, incoherent, vague, and confusing (Siar, this volume)

Lack of expanded and targeted testing and aggressive contact tracing

The country lagged in contact tracing and ramped-up testing, which are, among the most effective response strategies employed in most countries

Reactionary responses

The government was late in implementing much-needed preventive measures at the onset of the health crisis. The implementation of community quarantines became the go-to response whenever there is an impending surge of cases. Unfortunately, lockdowns were complemented with weak contact tracing and testing efforts

ISSUES AND CONCERNS IN THE PANDEMIC (2)

Data Issues

Having clear, accurate, timely, and granular data is important to identify appropriate response strategies and policies promptly. Unfortunately, serious data issues were evident in the Philippines. Data issues were also observed in targeting beneficiaries for the provision of assistance to affected individuals and families, which, in turn, led to delays in the distribution of aid

Inadequate stakeholder consultation

Inadequate consultation with public health professionals and experts led to poorly planned policies that are in contrast with the advice of medical experts

Lack of a strongly coordinated implementation framework

Vertical and horizontal plans and operations were not fully aligned (NTF n.d.-a)

Lessons learned by sector

05



HEALTH AND COMMUNITY QUARANTINES

Imposing community quarantines or **lockdowns** is **helpful but not sufficient** in suppressing the outbreak

Ensure that **supply chains** for essential goods and services **remain unhampered**

Local governments are crucial in ensuring that **public health initiatives and surveillance** are implemented according to plan

Providing a **more humane approach** to imposing health protocols may be more desirable and effective

Genuine and holistic reforms in the **health sector is essential** for **national development** not just in times of crisis

Protecting and providing a wide range of **support to healthcare workers** is a must

The **COVID-19** has **multifaceted health impacts**, apart from the direct health impacts, that require serious attention



MACROECONOMIC RESPONSE

Amid the pandemic, **monetary easing, public spending, and certain demand substitution** helped spur growth in some subsectors

For developing countries, it is ideal to **address public health concerns foremost**—through containment, widespread testing, and contact tracing—as this would alleviate the tradeoffs between health and economy early on

The **timely passage** of the **national budget** matters a lot during a crisis

To address the recession, experience has emphasized the **need for a swift and strong policy response** in the form of combined monetary and fiscal stimulus

Based on empirical research on modern pandemics, countries with **greater initial government spending** (particularly on health care) **displayed faster recovery**, in terms of GDP growth, and a decline in unemployment right after the crisis

It is also important to keep the economy alive **without endangering the safety** of the public

Although the central bank exhibited strong monetary response and aggressive monetary loosening at the initial stage of the pandemic, these **measures were not able to incite wide-scale bank lending** due to persistent tight financial conditions



EDUCATION



It is important to **support the learning** of students through **printed modules** and supplement these with the **most feasible or accessible medium** (i.e., cell phone) to improve the interaction among teachers, students, and parents



Learning delivery through broadcast modalities, such as TV and radio, **should be improved**



Ways through which the **quality of home support** may be improved should be explored



As next steps, the government should look at the **extent of learning achieved** through various learning modalities

DATA, ICT, AND DIGITALIZATION



More **granular data** are necessary to formulate and implement data-driven responses



The national government direly needs to **strengthen digitalization strategies** to improve the use and access to ICT



The government must **accelerate investments in ICT infrastructure** to prevent the worsening of inequalities in the education sector



The government plays a significant role in enhancing digitalization in the economy by **supporting financial innovations** to reach the unbanked and promoting digital payments in public transactions



The **full implementation of the National ID system**, as a foundational digital ID system, and its **linking to the existing social protection information systems** is essential in ensuring the efficient and effective execution of crisis-related social assistance programs

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social safety nets that are **effective, properly targeted, and well distributed** are **necessary** to help Filipino families cope with the damaging effects of the pandemic

In line with the imposition of community quarantines, the national government must also **ensure that people have access to food and other necessities** through massive **safety nets programs**

Emergency subsidies (e.g., monetary assistance, food and nonfood items) are essential to augment the needs of Filipino families during a pandemic

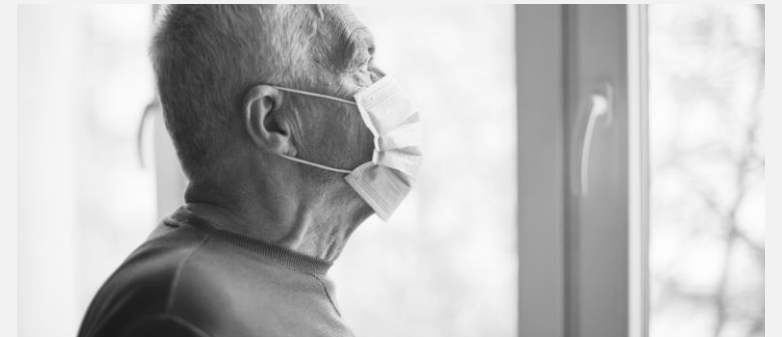
Equally important are **strong leadership and data-driven decision-making** in executing the pandemic response

Adequate universal health coverage can greatly help in future public emergencies, especially health-related ones

Establishing **interoperable databases** across government agencies is vital in crafting effective and timely policies during public emergencies

Modifying existing assistance programs, instead of creating new ones with new mechanisms for implementation, may be a more efficient approach in crisis response

While emergency cash transfers and food relief packages are needed to smooth consumption, **programs that will assist households to have jobs and restart their businesses** are necessary



ROLES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

A **whole-of-government approach** is necessary for implementing the pandemic response

The **interoperability of databases across government agencies** is an important foundation of a working WGA

There should be **improved planning, investment programming, and coordination** across all tiers of government

As local governments are often at the forefront of crisis response, national government oversight agencies must ensure that **LGU funds are used efficiently on well-planned and well-designed investment programs**

The **role and responsibilities** of each government body within the task force **should be clear and consistent**

COMMUNICATION



There is a need to **harmonize messages** used at the national and local levels to ensure accuracy and consistency



Policies and protocols should be **widely disseminated ahead** of implementation dates



Citizen engagement should be widely promoted



The role of **local public information officers** (PIOs) should be strengthened

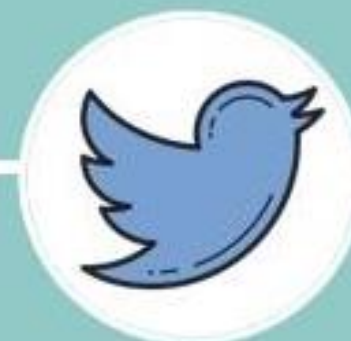
Thank You!



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 *Service through policy research*