



► Social Protection in Action: Building Social Protection Floors for All

2022

Philippines: Assessment-based national dialogue – a process to define a national social protection floor

Summary

During 2014–2016, the Government of the Philippines engaged ministries, social security institutions, employers, workers, civil society and international organizations in a multipartite national dialogue. The objective was to arrive at a consensus on what needs to be done to establish a social protection floor (SPF) in the Philippines.

The national dialogue process was conducted using the Assessment-based National Dialogue (ABND) methodology. The resulting recommendations to policymakers served as inputs into the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022, the Social Protection Operational Framework (SPOF), the Enhanced SPOF, and the Social Protection Plan 2020–2022 of the Philippines. The ILO provided technical and financial support under the ILO/Korea Partnership Programme.

Main Lessons Learned

- The ABND process should be institutionalised through a government decree to ensure that it engages all relevant stakeholders working in the field of social protection in the country, is completed within a specified period and has an impact on policymaking. A working group mandated by the decree and led by a ministry should conduct the process.
- The ABND process was adapted to the Philippine context by following national decision-making processes and utilising existing coordination mechanisms. This facilitated the endorsement by policymakers.
- The scope and final outputs should be decided at the beginning of the process to manage expectations of different stakeholders.

Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)

SDG 1.3 aims to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030, achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

Social protection floors (SPFs) guarantee access to essential health care and basic income security for children, persons of working age and older persons. 187 countries have adopted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), to achieve universal social protection.

The Assessment-based National Dialogue (ABND) process in the Philippines followed the core principles of the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), including the tripartite participation of representative organizations of employers and workers and promotes transparency.

- Conducting dialogue workshops at the local level was instrumental in understanding ground-level realities and area-specific challenges and thus, in having a better understanding of existing policy gaps and implementation issues.
- The ABND contributed to capacity development on social protection concepts and quantitative methodologies.

Background of the ABND process

The Philippines aims to empower and protect its poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged people within the inclusive development goals and poverty reduction strategy of the country. The ABND exercise is an effort of the Government of the Philippines towards establishing a nationally defined social protection floor for all people in the country, with a focus on the poor and vulnerable.

The ABND assesses the social protection, employment promotion and disaster management programmes in the country, identifies gaps in design and coverage according to the vulnerabilities of the people, explores recommendations to establish an SPF in the Philippines and estimates the cost of these recommendations. The process was led by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). The SPF recommendations are validated at the technical level by the national and local governments, employers, workers, civil society and development partners, while it is endorsed at the cabinet level by policymakers.

A participatory approach uniting many actors

A Core Group (CG) co-chaired by DOLE and NEDA was mandated to conduct the ABND process. Its responsibilities included technical validation of the assessment data and planning of the ABND process. Members of the CG included representatives of the following agencies:

- Ministries and government agencies, such as DOLE, NEDA, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Social Security System, Government Social Insurance System (GSIS),

Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) and others;

- Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) and Federation of Free Workers (FFW); and
- UN agencies, such as ILO, UNICEF and WHO.

Other ministries, including the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and civil society organizations, such as Social Watch, also participated in the CG workshops.

The Government's commitment to conducting a transparent and inclusive national dialogue process greatly helped to engage different national stakeholders working in the field of social protection. The ABND process was institutionalised and supported through DOLE Administrative Orders. It is also part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012–18: Strategic Focus 4 on "Pursuit of a nationally- defined, context-specific Social Protection Floor".

Three stages of the ABND

The ABND was started in May 2014 and completed in 2016. It comprises three main stages.

Stage 1: Assessment matrix

The assessment matrix is an inventory of the existing social protection, employment promotion and disaster management programmes in the country. It identifies policy gaps and implementation issues, as well as recommendations to address them and establish a nationally appropriate SPF. The matrix was developed through joint national and regional consultations and presented at the cabinet level in 2016, with a follow-up presentation on the progress made since scheduled for 2022.

The assessment matrix is segregated into the four SPF guarantees, namely access to health care and social protection for children, working-aged people and the elderly. It is further segregated into the (enhanced) SPOF components of contributory social insurance, social welfare for the poor, social assistance for disaster victims and labour market interventions. In this way, the matrix is tailored to the national context (see figure 1).

Figure 1: The assessment matrix used in the Philippines

	Existing schemes	Policy gaps	Recommendations	Implementation issues	Recommendations
Health					
Children					
Working age					
Elderly		Labour market interventions			

► Source: ILO 2016.

Stage 2: Cost of the SPF recommendations

The cost of the recommendations, that is the additional cost of establishing a national SPF, was estimated using a tool known as the Rapid Assessment Protocol (RAP). Parameters such as benefit levels and beneficiary groups were determined through dialogue workshops. During this stage, members of the CG were trained on the RAP methodology.

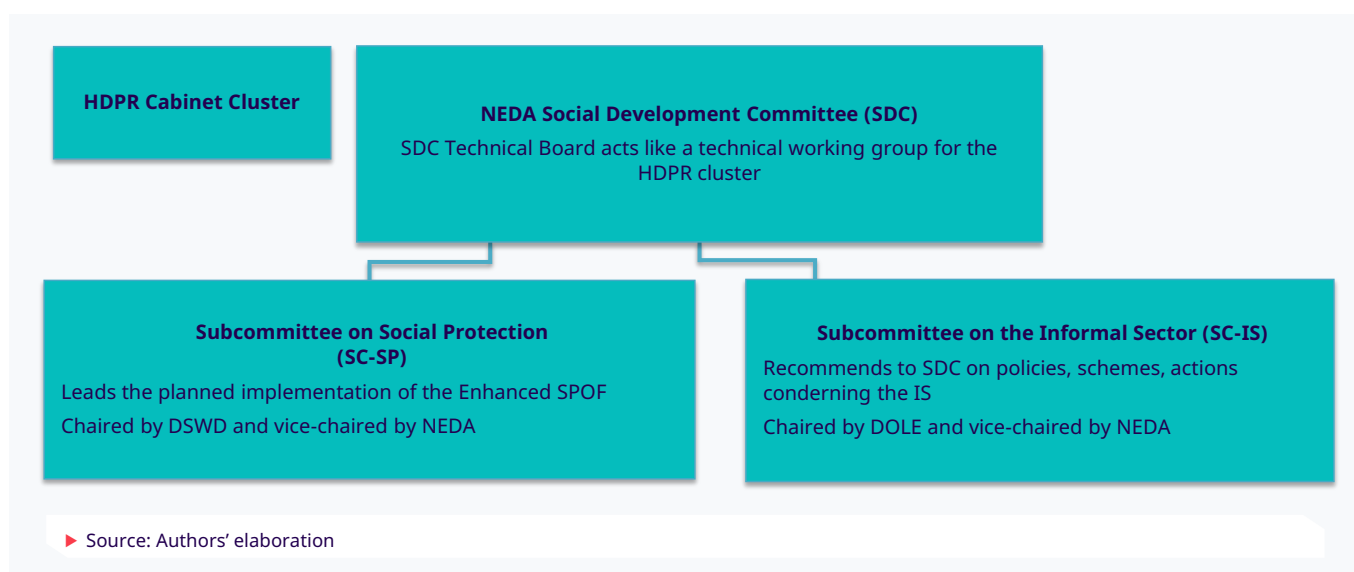
The results of the RAP were used as a basis to prioritize recommendations and phase their implementation from

now until 2028. This was done as a way to monitor the establishment of the SPF in line with the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

Stage 3: Endorsement of the SPF recommendations

The recommendations for establishing a national SPF were technically validated at the national level by the Core Group and at the local level through multipartite consultations held in the three island groups of the Philippines, namely Visayas, Luzon and Mindanao. This helped to ensure that

Figure 2: The assessment matrix used in the Philippines



the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders and ground-level realities were considered. This also contributed to making the process transparent and inclusive.

Progress on the ABND process and its findings were regularly presented to high-level coordination committees, including the Human Development and Poverty Reduction (HDPR) cabinet cluster, NEDA Social Development Committee (SDC) and the Subcommittees on Social Protection. Thus, adapting the process to existing decision-making processes and coordination structures facilitated endorsement by policymakers. Figure 2 provides information on the structure of NEDA SDC.

Since the ABND was completed in 2016, two follow-up exercises have been conducted. Firstly, an exercise was held in 2017–18 to align it with the incoming government's policies and goals. A second exercise was held in 2020–21, in which a subsection on social protection responses in

light of the COVID-19 pandemic was added to the ABND matrix.

What's next?

The Philippines is currently working to institutionalize a national SPF and has set a target of 2022. The recommendations of the ABND process served as inputs into the Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022, the SPOF, the Enhanced SPOF and the Social Protection Plan 2020–2022, which collectively set out the vision and strategy towards the establishments of a national SPF. The ABND's consensus-based practice ensures that its recommendations offer a clear and context-appropriate path towards the extension of social protection systems. Furthermore, the Core Group represents an inclusive mechanism to conduct national dialogue on social protection issues and could be utilised for future exercises.

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This policy brief was prepared by Loveleen De and Katharina Bollig. It was reviewed by Sven Engels and Quynh Anh Nguyen, Social Protection Department, International Labour Organization (ILO).

The Editor of the Social Protection in Action series is Valérie Schmitt, Deputy Director, ILO Social Protection Department.

Contact information

**International Labour Organization
Social Protection Department**
Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

T: +41 22 799 7239
E: socpro@ilo.org
W: www.ilo.org
www.social-protection.org