



World Food Programme

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# WFP's support to strengthening the national social protection system in the Philippines

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The study draws from interviews, consultations, and information provided by WFP staff, as well as documented sources primarily available between August and October 2023. It forms part of a series of country case studies conducted by IDS for WFP, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of WFP’s efforts in enabling social protection globally. The analysis and views expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the WFP and/or IDS.

# Acronyms

<b>4Ps</b>	The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>ASRSP</b>	Adaptive Shock Responsive Social Protection
<b>CCS</b>	Country Capacity Strengthening
<b>CSP</b>	Country Strategic Plan
<b>DA</b>	Department of Agriculture
<b>DepEd</b>	Department of Education
<b>DOLE</b>	Department of Labour and Employment
<b>DRMB</b>	Disaster Response and Management Bureau
<b>DSWD</b>	The Department of Social Welfare and Development
<b>ECP</b>	Employees' Compensation Program
<b>ESCAP</b>	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FSN</b>	Food Security and Nutrition
<b>GIDA</b>	Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas
<b>GSIS</b>	Government Service Insurance System
<b>IDS</b>	Institute of Development Studies
<b>LGU</b>	Local Government Unit
<b>MSSD</b>	Ministry of Social Services and Development - BARMM
<b>MOA</b>	Memorandum of Agreement
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NCIP</b>	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples
<b>NFA</b>	National Food Authority
<b>NFP</b>	National Feeding Programme
<b>NGA</b>	National Government Agency
<b>NPMO</b>	National Program Management Office
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SRSP</b>	Shock Responsive Social Protection
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme



# 1. Introduction

This case study reviews WFP's support to the national social protection system in the Philippines since 2018, in particular to the government's flagship nutrition-sensitive social protection programme *Walang Gutom*. It also examines WFP's efforts aimed at improving the shock-responsiveness of the national system. It assesses how WFP has supported the various building blocks of the national system, emphasizing the recent shift from direct implementation to capacity strengthening and enabling the national system. This is a light-touch exercise, undertaken through a rapid literature review and four interviews with WFP current and former staff. It is part of a suite of country case studies undertaken by researchers at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) for WFP, creating a portfolio of learning on WFP's work on enabling social protection around the world.

## 2. Context

The Philippines is classified by the World Bank as a lower middle-income country with a population of approximately 115 million people (World Bank 2022). The poverty rate has declined from 23.5% in 2015 to 18.1% in 2021 with economic growth of 5.7 % in 2021, 7.6% in 2022 and 5.6% in 2023 (World Bank, 2024). Despite this positive trajectory, food insecurity and malnutrition rates remain significant, with national level statistics showing that 33.4% of the population is food insecure (GoPH, PPAN, 2023). At the regional and demographic level there exists wide disparities for particular groups, with the highest levels seen in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and within households that rely on agricultural livelihoods (WFP 2022c). Furthermore, there are high numbers of 'at risk' groups who do not have any mechanisms through which they could survive a shock, such as a natural disaster. The Philippines is an archipelago of over 7,600 islands. According to the INFORMS Risk Index, the country ranks first in the world in natural hazards and exposure risks. It has suffered a high number of natural disasters in recent years, including Super Typhoons in 2020, 2021 and 2023, the eruption of Taal Volcano in 2020 and Tropical Storm Megi

in 2022, and the BARMM is recovering from conflict. This high level of existing food insecurity and malnutrition and large numbers of people 'at risk', combined with a continual barrage of natural disasters creates a complex picture for social protection and humanitarian programmes.

Coverage rates of social protection schemes in the Philippines are limited, with only 36.7% of the population protected by at least one scheme (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 1.3.1) (ILO 2022). In comparison, the global average sits at 46.9%, while the regional average for the Southeast Asia and Pacific region is 61.5% (Ibid). Budgetary allocation by the government for social protection programmes also remain lower than other countries in the region (KII3). In 2020, this equated to 2.6% of GDP, which is lower in comparison to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) reported regional average of 4.9% (ESCAP 2022). However, the Government of the Philippines remains committed to leveraging social protection as a priority instrument for addressing food insecurity and malnutrition as well as building resilience to shocks, and has over time taken significant steps to improve

the efficiency and effectiveness of the national social protection system. The Philippine Development Plan for 2023-2028 has set out the priorities and intended impact of Social Protection interventions and The Philippines Social Protection Plan 2023-2028 operationalizes these priorities through three strategic focus: 1) Full Implementation of Social Protection Floor, 2) Development of Adaptive and Shock Responsive Social Protection Programmes, 3) Rationalization, Modernization and Integration of Social Protection Systems.

### **Box 1: The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)**

The 4Ps is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) social protection programme that operates nationally, launched in 2008. It is targeted at extremely poor households, aiming to improve health, nutrition and educational outcomes of children. Since its launch in 2008, it has been responsible for one quarter of the total poverty reduction in the Philippines (World Bank 2019). Cash transfers are distributed every two months to beneficiaries who fulfil health and education conditions including attending school and monthly family education sessions that focus on food and nutrition, and health. It is being phased out during 2024. (WFP 2022a)

There are multiple government actors involved in delivering, coordinating, and overseeing nutrition and food security related social protection programmes in the Philippines (see Table 1 for list of government departments and nationally led social protection programmes). The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is the lead social protection agency and is responsible for most social protection programmes. It has responsibility for overseeing the country's largest social protection programme, the 4Ps (Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program), with implementation carried out by a dedicated National Program

Management Office (NPMO) (see Box 1 for further information). Following the change in government in 2022, the DSWD developed a new 'flagship' social protection programme, the *Walang Gutom* (No Hunger) e-voucher programme, detailed in Box 2, the pilot of which is jointly being implemented by WFP and DSWD, and through funding from the Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific (JFPR), Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD) through the Asian Development Bank (ADB) ; the OPEC Fund for International Development (or the OPEC Fund), and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. In October 2023, the President of the Philippines issued Executive Order Number 44 declaring *Walang Gutom* 2027 as the new flagship social protection programme of the government.

### **Box 2: *Walang Gutom* 2027**

This nutrition-sensitive social protection e-voucher programme will provide food assistance to the poorest households facing severe food insecurity and contribute to the prevention of child malnutrition. The pilot programme targets 3,000 households for six months and will provide electronic vouchers that enable the purchase of food items based on a pre-approved nutritious food basket from registered retailers, alongside social and behavior change communication intervention aimed at improving knowledge of dietary diversity (WFP 2023e). Lessons learned from the pilot will inform the implementation strategy for scaling up to a national program by 2024. Previously existing social protection programmes had not explicitly addressed the immediate problem of food insecurity and malnutrition, especially for poor households who were excluded from these programmes. DSWD, with funding assistance from ADB, requested WFP to be the implementing partner, recognizing the global and country level experience of WFP in implementing nutrition sensitive social protection programmes.

The Office of Civil Defense under the Department of National Defense is administering the National Disaster and Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) which is responsible for ensuring the protection and welfare of the people during disasters or emergencies. The Disaster Response and Management Bureau (DRMB) is the part of DSWD that is responsible for disaster relief response programmes. The Government of the Philippines has instituted comprehensive legislative arrangements for managing shocks caused by disasters and has one of the most advanced SRSP systems in the region (OPM, 2017). In the 2023-2028 Philippines Development Plan (PDP), the operationalization of the Adaptive Shock Responsive Roadmap, including the development and implementation of anticipatory actions for various types of disasters and emergencies, is one of the key strategic frameworks for strengthening the social protection system in the country. One of the key features of successful SRSP delivery has been the existing relationship between the government and implementing agencies, including WFP, as well as the political buy-in and 'champions' within the government, helping the establishment of the necessary regulatory and legislative environments required to move quickly when disasters happen (Ibid).

In order to improve nutrition in the Philippines, the government established the National Feeding Programme that targets specific vulnerable age groups. The *Tutok Kainan* Supplementation Program of the National Nutrition Council provides dietary supplementation in the First 1000 Days to contribute to the reduction of child stunting and wasting. Following the life cycle approach, other programmes like the

Supplementary Feeding Programme for 3- to 5-year-old children is implemented through DSWD and the national School Based Feeding Programme (SBFP), which comes under the direction of the Department of Education, targets children between the ages of 6- to 12-year-old. Coordination between the various agencies delivering social protection has been recognized as an ongoing challenge.

For the last decade, SDG 2 on *Zero Hunger* is the only SDG indicator that Philippines has lagged on, and consequently achieving food security and nutrition remains one of the foremost priorities for the government for the next 5 years (Philippines' Government 2023). The Philippines faced a double burden of malnutrition, with 12.3% of children underweight and 5.5% experiencing wasting in 2021, alongside high levels of overweight and obesity among adults (40.2% in 2021)<sup>1</sup>, high consumption of sweetened drinks, and diets that do not include enough nutrition (particularly lacking fruit and vegetables), especially in urban areas (NNS of FNRI-DOST 2021 and World Bank 2021). While there exist multiple social protection programmes in the Philippines aimed at addressing malnutrition, the biggest challenge for them all has been reaching the people need them the most. The Philippines intends to address these through its current Social Protection Plan (2023-2028) focusing on three key strategic areas, i) the full implementation of the social protection floor (a national set of basic social protection guarantees), ii) Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) and iii) updating the social protection systems.

<sup>1</sup> data based on the 2021 Expanded National Nutrition Survey of FNRI-DOST

**Table 1: Overview of Philippines Social Protection Programmes (WFP 2022a)**

Programme	Government Agency Responsible
<b>Labour Market</b>	
Special Employment Programme for Students	Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE)
Education Assistance Programme	National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)
<b>Social Welfare</b>	
Livelihood and Self Employment Programme	Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)
Walang Gutom 2027	DSWD
The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)	DSWD
Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services	DSWD
Malusog na Simula, Mayaman na Bansa	DSWD
Tutok Kainan Dietary Supplementation Program.	National Nutrition Council
Supplementary Feeding Programme	DSWD
School Based Feeding Programme	Department of Education (DepEd)
Rice Price Subsidy	National Food Authority (NFA)
Seed and Fertilizer Subsidy	Department of Agriculture (DA)
Family Welfare Programme/Workers with Special Concerns	DOLE
Implicit Subsidy	NFA
<b>Social Safety Net (Emergency Response)</b>	
Core Shelter Programmes	DSWD
Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations	DSWD
Katas ng VAT para kay at Lola; Social Pension for Indigent senior citizens	DSWD
Katas ng VAT Pantawid Kuryente	DSWD
Emergency (calamity) loan	Government Service Insurance System (GSIS)
Social Insurance	National Nutrition Council
PhilHealth Indigent Programme	Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth)



The non-governmental humanitarian programmes have a closer alignment with The BARMM as an autonomous region is also implementing regionally funded social protection programmes through the MSSD, such as the following (WFP 2022a):

Programme	Objective
<b>Labour Market</b>	
Kupkop Programme – Financial Assistance for Orphans	Providing eligible children with a monthly cash transfer to enable access to nutrition, education, and alternative care arrangements.
Kalinga Sa May Kapansanan Programme – Financial Assistance for PWDs	Providing monthly cash and other assistance to improve living conditions.
Women’s Welfare Programme	Providing assistance to address violence against women and trafficking, and provide for the needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women.
Bangsamoro Sagip Kabuhayan (BSK) Programme	Providing cash grants to eligible people, including indigent people, women, youth, sole caregivers, former combatants and for COVID19 recovery.

The BARMM government is in the process of developing its own Social Protection Plan that will articulate the regional government’s own strategy for improving its social protection systems in line with the priorities stipulated under the 2nd BARMM Development Plan for 2023-2028 and the Philippines Development Plan 2023-2028.



As per the findings of the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) study, the barriers that marginalized groups face in the Philippines for their effective inclusion and access to social protection programmes, and by extension improvements to their food security and nutrition can be divided into i) societal and structural factors, and ii) programme related factors (WFP 2023b) - see below. WFP' objectives and activities in relation to these issues are outlined in the following sections which were informed by key informant interviews (KII1-4) and documented WFP sources.

### **i) Societal/structural factors**

- Residents of geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas struggle with limited access to information and essential services, such as healthcare and education, due to poor infrastructure and communication systems, with these challenges exacerbated for individuals with disabilities and in emergency situations.
- Economic hardships lead to restricted access to government services and insurance for people in situations of poverty, who often resort to child labour to supplement household income, thereby impacting educational opportunities for children, especially boys.
- Certain population groups, particularly those with disabilities and from the LGBTQIA+ community, reported exclusion from beneficiary lists and discriminatory practices in hiring and justice systems due to biases and non-inclusive policies.
- Discussions around sexual and reproductive health are considered taboo, and economic dependencies coupled with restrictive cultural practices limit women's autonomy, affecting their ability to address issues like early pregnancy, HIV, and escape from abusive situations.

### **ii) Programme related factors:**

- Programme designs often feature a uniform approach that fails to fully address specific needs, with improvements needed within key social protection programmes to better reflect the current economic realities and incorporate intersectional issues and vulnerabilities.
- Programme implementation on the ground often deviates from official policy guidelines due to challenges in funding availability, collaboration across government levels, issues with the reliability and accessibility of registration and community-based targeting systems, and common difficulties in the disbursement and distribution processes (information dissemination, frequency or scheduling, and accessibility of distribution sites).
- Programme transparency and accountability are compromised by a lack of awareness about official feedback mechanisms, concerns over the transparency of selection processes, and perceived corruption and misallocation of benefits at the local level.

### 3. WFP's objectives and role

WFP's operations in the Philippines began in 2006 through the provision of humanitarian assistance in conflict and disaster affected communities. Since then, WFP has continued to provide emergency and shock responsive social assistance when requested by the government, with a relatively recent shift towards building the capacity of the government to implement programmes themselves.

#### Shifting role from implementer to enabler

There are multiple actors working in the social protection space in the Philippines, including the World Bank, the ADB, FAO, UNICEF, and the ILO, who are working on a range of thematic areas including conditional cash transfers, shock-responsive social protection, anticipatory action, child poverty, and improved coverage. In alignment with its expertise, WFP operates primarily within the food security and nutrition-sensitive social protection space, as well as improving the ability of social protection systems to manage risks and shocks. The organization has been shifting from an implementing role to supporting and facilitating government departments in delivering their own programmes. However, this shift has not prevented WFP from continuing to implement parallel programmes, particularly in emergency situations (WFP 2023c).

In 2021, the DSWD and WFP signed a five-year Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) under which WFP has a significant role to work alongside the government in the areas of food security and nutrition. In relation to social protection specifically, WFP agreed to provide assistance with improving beneficiary management and communication systems, strengthen the capacity of government agencies to deliver social

protection programmes, develop policies and guidelines for the integration of food security and nutrition into the national social protection system, and in disaster preparedness and emergency response, support local government in managing adaptive and shock-responsive social protection (ASRSP), and monitoring vulnerable communities. The close working relationship with DSWD has also led to WFP implementing *Walang Gutom*, the ADB funded food e-voucher programme which will target 1 million people. The pilot, targeting 3,000 households across five regions until July 2024, is being implemented by the government jointly with WFP, but with the expectation that during the pilot process the government systems will be further strengthened to ensure that the government is able to implement the full programme itself and achieve the scaled target of 1 million households by 2027.

#### Societal/structural factors

WFP's objectives and role in tackling the societal and structural factors that are inhibiting effective delivery of nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes have been explored in the WFP 'Leave No One Behind' report, the findings of which will be used to support policy and programme design (WFP 2023b). The recommendations include strengthening access to information about social protection programmes and their eligibility criteria to increase awareness, embedding anti-discrimination principles into programming and bolstering monitoring and accountability mechanisms to foster inclusivity and equity, and improving access for those who are most vulnerable to exclusion, including indigenous people, youth, people with disabilities and geographically isolated communities (Ibid, KII3)).

# Programme related factors

WFP's objectives and role in tackling programme related factors (some of which also tackle societal/structural factors) are primarily captured in three key strategic documents, the recently released Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for 2024-2028 (WFP 2023c), the previous CSP for 2018-2023 (WFP 2018), and the 2022 Social Protection and the World Food Programme in the Philippines scoping study (WFP 2022a).

The previous CSP 2018-2023 objectives had been focused on supporting the Philippines to achieve SDG 2 – Zero hunger and SDG 17 – Partnerships for Goals, by 2030. While social protection is not included within the key headline activities, it is, however, an integral part of the listed sub-activities. These include supporting the existing social protection programmes of DSWD and advocating for improved nutritional content of food packages. WFP uses social protection programmes as entry points for advocacy to ensure improved nutrition-sensitive approaches and responses to shocks to protect people living in poverty and vulnerability. WFP Philippines' strategic objectives for both the 2018-2023 and the 2024-2028 periods are also aligned with the national development plans and priorities of the government, ensuring ongoing partnerships and engagements are made possible.

To address the issues related to coordination, WFP planned to support the Government to enhance multi-sectoral, multi-level coordination, particularly in relation to programmes aimed at addressing all forms of malnutrition and food and nutrition security challenges, enhancing the access of vulnerable communities particularly those in geographically isolated and

disadvantaged areas, and reducing vulnerability to shocks, emergency response and supply chain issues.

In response to addressing challenges related to climate change and disasters, the CSP 2018-2023 included a plan for WFP to provide social protection to increase adaptive capacities and resilience of ecosystems, as well as to assist the Government in implementing the climate change adaptation and mitigation, and disaster risk reduction roadmap for 2018-2022 with a focus on food security and nutrition.

Within the draft CSP for the Philippines for 2024-2028 two of the key activities are directly focused on social protection programmes (marking a shift from the previous CSP for 2018-2023). Strategic Outcome 2 of the CSP adopts a long-term lens to improve resilience at the individual, household, community and institutional levels through strengthened food systems, improved access to health, education and nutrition services and social protection schemes to enhance food security and nutrition. Both activities sit at the nexus between development-humanitarian responses:

- Activity 1: Provide nutrition-sensitive emergency food assistance and restore assets, directly or through the Government's social protection programmes or through partners, along with appropriate supply chain and emergency telecommunications services to crisis-affected communities. (WFP 2023d p11)
- Activity 4: Strengthen the government social protection system, including through the provision of integrated food and nutrition assistance to vulnerable communities using conflict-sensitive and inclusive approaches. (WFP 2023d p14)

Outcome indicators of other key activities include improved coverage of social protection and improved capability of national and local government to prepare for and respond to emergencies through SRSP.

The 2022 scoping study, *Social Protection and the World Food Programme in the Philippines*, highlights that WFP has a strong role in the provision of social protection in emergency response as well as with hard-to-reach populations. The report recommended that WFP uses this role to leverage the Adaptive and Shock Responsive Social Protection (ASRSP) agenda, collaborate with other actors in this area and help inform government policy and programmes.







## 4. Activities and Results





WFP's activities touch upon many 'Building Blocks' of the national social protection system (as per the categorization of the WFP Strategy for Support to Social Protection), with varying levels of policy and technical support (See Table 2 below for more details). The organization's long-standing and trusted relationship with the Government has been built on its acknowledgement and recognition of WFP's added value in specific areas,

including programme implementation and data management, particularly within the humanitarian, development, anticipatory action, and emergency response space. WFP Philippines has, in recent years, started to shift from solely providing emergency responses towards longer-term development led approaches that strengthen the capacity of the government to implement programmes themselves.







**Table 2: WFP activities in Philippines between 2018 and 2023 - mapped as per the Social Protection Building Blocks categorization within the WFP Strategy for Support to Social Protection**

Building blocks of Philippines national social protection system		Activities
SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE	 <b>Policy and Legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018 – supporting DSWD and NEDA with ASRSP Roadmap (with FAO and UNICEF)</li> <li>• 2021 – MoA between DSWD and WFP which includes the provision of support on policies and guidelines to integrate FSN components into national social protection schemes</li> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind study includes recommendations for policy makers to improve social protection coverage and inclusion.</li> <li>• 2023 – Supporting the drafting of a national legislation bill on the Declaration of State Imminent Disaster (Anticipatory Action (AA) and SRSP) and actively advocating for its passing within the lower (House of Representatives) and upper (Senate) houses of the Congress of the Philippines. The bill is set to allow national and local government units to access funding for anticipatory action.</li> <li>• 2024- The Anticipatory Action Bill has been filed in both the Senate and Congress, co-authored by three. congressmen/representatives, and has been approved on its first deliberation in Congress, subject to style.</li> <li>• Ongoing – opportunities to influence policy, legislation and prioritisation, most recently through the e-voucher programme.</li> </ul>
	 <b>Governance, capacity and coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018 – collaboration between DSWD and WFP to improve data management and strengthen capacity to deliver SRSP.</li> <li>• 2021 – MoA between DSWD and WFP which includes capacity strengthening of SRSP implementation.</li> <li>• 2023 - Assisting DSWD with implementation of e-voucher pilot scheme – and in doing so building capacity for transfer of implementation to DSWD for full roll-out at the national level.</li> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind study includes recommendations for improved local partnerships with civil society organisation in order to better support marginalised groups and improve capacities in GIDAs.</li> </ul>
	 <b>Platforms and infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018 onwards – assisting DSWD through use of SCOPE (WFP’s beneficiary information and transfer management platform), to identify beneficiaries and deliver assistance in SRSP.</li> <li>• 2021 – MoA between DSWD and WFP which includes the provision of technical assistance to DSWD to strengthen information, communication and payment systems.</li> <li>• 2023 – Assisting DSWD with creating new digital platforms and infrastructure for implementation as part of the Walang Gutam project.</li> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind study includes recommendations for improved digital infrastructure in order to increase inclusion of GIDAs.</li> </ul>
	 <b>Planning and financing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023 – The pilot <i>Walang Gutom</i> programme will provide opportunities for DSWD to plan the financing for the full scaled up roll out processes.</li> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind study includes recommendations for budgeting and investment in social protection programmes.</li> </ul>

Building blocks of Philippines national social protection system		Activities
KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING	 <b>Assessments and analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019 – Enhanced School Feeding with Iron Fortified Rice (IFR) in Maguindanao, Philippines – pilot programme which demonstrated successfully that IFR from local farmers can be used in school feeding programmes.</li> <li>• 2018 – Fill the nutrition gap – nutrition situation analysis.</li> <li>• 2020 – Remote monitoring of food security, nutrition and SAP cash assistance.</li> <li>• 2020 – Study on food security and peacebuilding in BARMM (with forum ZFD)</li> <li>• 2021 – Testing the WFP SRSP capacity assessment tool</li> <li>• 2022 – WFP Study on Iron Rice Fortification Capacities, Supply Chain, and Campaign Initiatives in the Philippines</li> <li>• 2022 – Understanding the Rice Value Chain in the Philippines: Defining the Way Forward for Rice Fortification – with recommendations to scale up fortification domestically.</li> <li>• 2022 – Climate Change and Food Security Analysis</li> <li>• 2022 - Feasibility Study for Cash Transfer and Food Voucher Program in the Philippines</li> <li>• 2023 – Survey of the National School Feeding Programme in the Philippines: A Case Study</li> <li>• 2023 – e-voucher <i>Walang Gutom</i> programme - Market Feasibility Index Assessment, Beneficiary Digital Readiness Assessment, SBCC Strategic Plan these documents will inform the scale up of the Walang Guto 2027 to 1 million poor households</li> <li>• Ongoing - The data produced by WFP both in emergency and 'normal' situations is used in the design of government and WFP programmes.</li> </ul>
	 <b>Advocacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind study includes recommendations to embed anti-discrimination principles within programming.</li> <li>• Ongoing - School feeding programmes – WFP has been influencing at national level to strengthen school feeding policies and programmes.</li> <li>• 2024- As the Co-Chair of the AA Policy Financing and Institutionalization Sub-Technical Working Group (PFI-TSG), WFP, together with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), and with support from the AA TWG, is leading the coordination and groundwork to advocate for the passage of the AA Bill on the Declaration of State of Imminent Disaster.</li> <li>• To promote AA institutionalization in the Asia-Pacific region, WFP, as part of its Country Strategic Plan, facilitated a South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) learning exchange on Anticipatory Action between the Indonesian and Philippine governments in 2023 and the Bangladesh and Philippine governments in 2024.</li> </ul>
	 <b>Engagement and communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind study includes recommendation for improved access to information on social protection programmes through investing in communication systems.</li> </ul>
	 <b>Monitoring, evaluation and learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2024 – <i>Walang Gutom</i> e-voucher programme - WFP providing training to DSWD staff in conducting Distribution and Post Distribution Monitoring, and Retailer Performance Monitoring and Evaluation.</li> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind study includes recommendations for bolstering monitoring and evaluation at community level.</li> </ul>



Building blocks of Philippines national social protection system		Activities
PROGRAMME FEATURES	 Design of programme parameters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023 – <i>Walang Gutom</i> e-voucher programme - supporting targeting, food basket and transfer value and designing SBCC strategy, Implementation Guidelines.</li> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind study includes recommendations for improved programme parameters to ensure wider inclusion.</li> </ul>
	 Registration and enrolment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018 – WFP partnership with DSWD to improve beneficiary management systems begins with use of SCOPE in various disaster responses including the Social Amelioration Program for COVID19.</li> <li>• 2021/2 – WFP partnership with DSWD to build capacity in 5 regions for the use of SCOPE.</li> <li>• 2023 - E-voucher pilot – <i>Walang Gutom</i> - WFP is providing SCOPE system to demonstrate and transfer learning of digitised registration and enrolment system that could be interoperable between departments and schemes.</li> </ul>
	 Benefit delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2018 onwards – WFP uses SCOPE to register beneficiaries and delivery assistance in advance of forecasted typhoons.</li> <li>• 2021 – Super Typhoon Odette response - WFP delivered more than USD8m as safety net cash transfers, as well as cash and fortified rice delivered through FFA programmes in BARMM.</li> <li>• 2023 – <i>Walang Gutom</i> e-voucher pilot scheme - WFP is co-delivering with DSWD the benefits.</li> <li>• Ongoing – School feeding programmes - WFP has been supporting local government in implementation and rice fortification for distribution.</li> </ul>
	 Accountability, protection and assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2023 – <i>Walang Gutom</i> e-voucher programme - WFP is working to support DSWD to ensure community feedback mechanisms are in place, particularly around quality of distribution, safety aspects, and do no harm principles.</li> <li>• 2023 – Leave No One Behind includes recommendations to bolster accountability through improved monitoring and feedback mechanisms.</li> <li>• Ongoing - WFP is held accountable through its own mechanisms when it is associated with programmes. As part of this, a Protection Risk Analysis was conducted in 2023 to understand protection risks and what mitigation measures need to be put in place.</li> </ul>



## LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

For the recently completed 'Leave No One Behind' publication, WFP Philippines conducted research within three sites with a focus on the groups most at risk of being left behind, their needs, and what can be done to ensure the inclusion of these groups within social protection programmes. The results of this research will inform the work of WFP and their partners moving forward. The six high level recommendations correspond to 9 out of the 12 building blocks (all except 5, 10 and 11) as outlined in the table above. (WFP 2023b).

## IMPLEMENTING THE WALANG GUTOM E-VOUCHER PROGRAMME

In 2022, WFP partnered with the ADB to undertake a Feasibility Study on the use of food vouchers in social protection programmes. The study assessed the potential for food vouchers to help reduce malnutrition by supporting access to affordable, healthy, and diverse food sources, and has eventually led to the development of the *Walang Gutom*, the government's flagship nutrition sensitive e-voucher social protection programme.

Since 2023, WFP has been assisting the government with the implementation of the *Walang Gutom*. It is funded by the JFPR, the AFD through the ADB, WFP's internal funding from The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) and the OPEC Fund, and is currently being implemented through a pilot for 3,000 households in 5 locations (with control groups to see how transformative the programme is) until July 2024, followed by a scale-up to reach 300,000 households in 2024 and 1 million households by 2027. The programme is being targeted in a similar way to the 4Ps, providing food for the poorest people as per the criteria of the government registry. It is aimed at ensuring eligible households: 1) receive a stable supply of food commodities; 2) have access to affordable, nutritious, and safe food, and; 3) improve individual and community behaviours by promoting healthy eating practices and dietary

diversity. The long-term objective is to reduce the persistent issues of high rates of child stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiency through the provision of a diverse and nutritious diet.

As per the programme, beneficiaries receive cash assistance through e-vouchers that can be used to purchase select food commodities from eligible partner merchant stores. In alignment with national nutrition policy priorities, the food credits are 'three-in-one' as per the following allocations: 1) 50% for carbohydrate-rich foods (such as rice and bread); 2) 30% for proteins (such as chicken or pork), and; 3) 20% for vegetables, fruits, oil, salt, and other condiments. The idea is to strengthen food security but also guide recipients towards healthy diets. Two other components of this project, while still being defined, are expected to focus on: 1) social and behavioural change communication to promote healthy feeding practices, nutrition education and 2) livelihoods that enable graduation from social protection programmes.

In implementing the *Walang Gutom* pilot, WFP is leveraging its corporate beneficiary information and transfers management system, the System for Control of Operations and Enhance Analytics (SCOPE), for both registration (of beneficiaries) and distribution (of benefits), while simultaneously supporting the government to build its own system in preparation of the scale-up *and* as part of its overall support to strengthening the social protection system. In facilitating the scale-up, WFP has been undertaking a series of assessments on: 1) the business requirements for replacing SCOPE with a government owned interoperable system to be developed through a third-party developer, 2) scoping the IT infrastructure of the DSWD and the Development Bank of Philippine (DBP), 3) scoping the digital landscape in the Philippines, and; 4) defining the role, responsibilities, and action plan of WFP in the scale-up of the programme in support of the government (KII3).

The recent shift of the Government of the Philippines' focus towards the new e-voucher system has created opportunities for WFP to support the national system across the 12 building blocks. It is the flagship programme of the current government and a key policy instrument for the new Presidential agenda, and WFP will continue to avail this opportunity to serve as an enabler of social protection and strengthen the national system.

## **SUPPORTING SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION**

WFP is one of the first responders to emergencies in the Philippines, providing cash or food to affected populations in the event of shocks that overwhelm the Government's response capacities, as well as providing a range of emergency telecommunications, logistics and food aid packaging services in support of the government. Thus, WFP's expertise in disaster risk management (DRM) and the triple nexus has served as a key basis for the organization to become one of the leading agencies in advancing SRSP in the Philippines, recognized by both the government and partners for both its operational expertise and thought leadership in this key area.

One of WFP's earliest engagements within this space has been supporting the Government in profiling and registering internally displaced populations (IDPs) through SCOPE between October 2018 and March 2019, following the conflict in Marawi city. The *Karawi* project, as it was called, aimed to create an information database with a verified master list of displaced persons in order to improve their access to government services and assistance for recovery, including social protection programmes implemented by the DSWD. On the other hand, in 2019, following the development of a regional roadmap for shock-responsive social protection in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, WFP in partnership with FAO, UNICEF, and the ILO supported the development of an options paper for integrating shock-

responsive social protection in the government's social protection framework until 2021.

In 2020, following the Government's roll-out of the Social Amelioration Programme (SAP) that aimed to provide emergency cash for 18 million Filipinos affected by the pandemic, the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) in BARMM requested WFP's technical assistance on digital solutions to reach the most vulnerable populations through the SAP. WFP as a result conducted virtual and face-to-face training on the use of SCOPE to government personnel who undertook the beneficiary profiling and cash disbursement. Within 37 days, the Ministry deployed 600 enumerators, served 2.3 million people, and had their records placed in a single digital platform that was flexible and easy to use. To fast-track the operation, the Government's existing beneficiary data were migrated into SCOPE, while beneficiaries not yet included in any database were registered during the distribution. This significantly reduced registration time and physical contact with communities, limiting the risk of infection. More than 356,000 households were registered in SCOPE, and the Ministry of Social Services and Development provided cash assistance to almost 460,000 households.

In July 2021, WFP signed an agreement with the DSWD of Bicol Region to augment its capacity on beneficiary information and transfer management of DSWD's shock-responsive social protection programmes with the use of SCOPE. Bicol Region is in the eastern seaboard that is among the most vulnerable to typhoons and other natural hazards. WFP started the update and enhancement of DSWD's Emergency Shelter Assistance beneficiary registry under this agreement. This included the collection of additional beneficiary information (such as phone numbers and pictures) and a deduplication exercise to facilitate the use of the registry in an accountable and efficient manner for future emergency response. In 2021, WFP also led a capacity assessment exercise for shock-

responsive social protection in the Philippines to identify key capacities of the social protection system to provide more timely and effective assistance to people affected by shocks.

In 2021, WFP established a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the UN joint CERF Anticipatory Action (AA) Pilot Project that was initiated in the Philippines, with the objective of mitigating the negative impact of severe typhoons on people's food security, lives, and livelihoods by leveraging the government's Hydrometeorological Forecasts, Early Warning System, Early Action Protocols, shock-responsive social protection programs, and existing national and subnational funding. Anticipatory Action is defined as acting ahead of predicted hazards to prevent or reduce acute humanitarian impacts before they fully unfold. Particularly, to mitigate the impact of a typhoon hitting Region 5 (Bicol), Region 8 (Eastern Visayas), and/or Region 13 (Caraga), WFP, together with other UN agencies, NGOs, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent, will provide multisectoral assistance in close collaboration with local authorities. With this intervention, the most at-risk communities will have better financial resources to prepare for a storm before it makes landfall. For example, vulnerable families can use the funds to reinforce their homes, assist smallholder farmers and fisherfolk in protecting their critical livelihood assets such as farming and fishing equipment and livestock, conduct early harvesting, and prepare food and other essentials before the shocks. Under this project, WFP can cover either 24,908 households (124,540 people) in Bicol or 20,000 households (100,000 people) in Southern Leyte and Surigao del Norte.

In addition, as the Co-Chair of the Anticipatory Action Policy Financing and Institutionalization Sub-Technical Working Group (PFI-TSG), WFP, together with the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) and with support from the AA TWG, is leading the coordination and groundwork to support the passage of the AA Bill on the Declaration of State of Imminent Disaster. This bill seeks to institutionalize and mainstream

AA in the country's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) system. The Anticipatory Action Bill has been filed in both the Senate and Congress, co-authored by three congressmen/representatives, and has been approved on its first deliberation in Congress, subject to style.

## **STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS AND ALIGNING WITH NATIONAL PRIORITIES**

WFP Philippines has achieved improved engagement with the government, in particular through the creation of sub-committees that focus on specific subjects in order to learn from each other and strengthen the capacity of the whole committee and embedding WFP staff in government one or two days per week in order to increase communication and mutual understanding (KII1, KII3). The 2021 DSWD and WFP MoA has also provided opportunities for WFP to have a significant role working alongside the government in the areas of nutrition and food security and social protection can also be seen as success for WFP in working towards both SDG 2 and 17.

The 2022 evaluation of WFP Philippines country capacity strengthening activities 2018-2022 found that WFP plays a key role in shaping government policies and systems through the provision of technical expertise and supporting partnerships (WFP 2022b). WFP Philippines has achieved this through aligning their CSP to the Philippines Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 and contributing towards the progress of SDGs 1, 2 and 17. The new iteration of the PDP, the 2023-2028 Philippines Development Plan includes 'strength social protection' as a stated objective within its overarching strategic framework. The strategies to achieve this include activities that are already underway in partnership with WFP: i) ensuring the establishment and updating of social registries, ii) creating synergies among stakeholders in designing and delivering programmes, iii) integrating the nutritional needs of vulnerable groups in social protection programs (Philippines Government 2023, WFP 2023a).

# Lessons Learned

The social protection sector in the Philippines remains a major platform for WFP to strengthen the capacity of the government to improve nutrition outcomes at scale. In this regard, some key challenges as identified by WFP Philippines staff have been:

1. Challenges resulting from the siloed implementation of the various social protection programmes by different ministries and/or departments.
2. Challenges related to navigating the complex and inherently political nature of the social protection space in the Philippines, vis-a-vis multiple actors and stakeholders.
3. Further challenges regarding coordination mechanisms with implementing partners.

To address some of these challenges, WFP has been working alongside the government, donors, and IFIs, to build on existing ways of working together as well as establish new ones. A measure taken by WFP in this regard has been the seconding of WFP staff within specific government institutions on a temporary basis, investing further in deepening existing relationships and ways of working as well as improving WFP's organizational knowledge of the dynamics of government institutions, the range of stakeholders involved, and identifying opportunities that may be leveraged to enact

change at scale. Additionally, the creation of Technical Working Groups and sub-committees that include both WFP and government staff, through which both entities work together on specific deliverables has also provided numerous opportunities for deepening collaboration. To formalize such measures, WFP and the DSWD signed a joint MoA in 2021 and established an accompanying action plan for implementation.

In further addressing the said challenges, some key recommendations identified by WFP staff for the coming years have been:

1. Continue working effectively with government counterparts and sister UN agencies, building relationships with private sector and academia, identifying innovative funding opportunities, and leveraging key opportunities for change.
2. Continue technical assistance and building the capacity of government departments to implement social protection, enabling the effective transition of WFP towards an enabler of the overall system.
3. Further review and formalization of coordination mechanisms with implementing partners.
4. Review of internal strategies and goal setting to consider longer-term outcomes and timelines for work vis-à-vis strengthening the system and government capacities.

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# Annex: Key Informant Interviews

Key Informant Interview 1, WFP Staff (2023). Interview by Becky Mitchell conducted online on 10th November 2023 via MS Teams. Case Study on WFP’s Support to the National Social Protection in Philippines.

Key Informant Interview 2, WFP Staff (2023). Interview by Becky Mitchell conducted online on 10th November 2023 via MS Teams. Case Study on WFP’s Support to the National Social Protection in Philippines.

Key Informant Interview 3, WFP Staff (2023). Interview by Becky Mitchell conducted online on 10th November 2023 via MS Teams. Case Study on WFP’s Support to the National Social Protection in Philippines.

Key Informant Interview 4, WFP Staff (2023). Interview by Becky Mitchell conducted online on 11th November 2023 via MS Teams. Case Study on WFP’s Support to the National Social Protection in Philippines.



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