Learning Exchange on Strengthening Transparency, Participation and Accountability in Social Protection: Lessons from 4Ps and BARMM
November 10-11 | Isabela City, Basilan

Concept Note and Program (as of 8 October 2026)

Social protection programs are a crucial component of a country's poverty reduction and people empowerment strategy. It caters to the poorest and most marginalized, providing services and assistance that are most needed, especially during times of disasters, while ensuring that basic rights are upheld and advanced. In the context of Philippine governance, for social protection programs to be effective, they need safeguards to insulate them from inefficiencies and partisan political interferences. These safeguards are complemented by mechanisms that enable beneficiaries and other stakeholders to access information, participate in program processes, provide feedback, and seek redress when concerns arise.

The *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps) is a conditional cash transfer program with the aim of "reducing poverty in the short term through cash transfers while at the same time trying to encourage investments into the human capital of the next generation by making these transfers conditional upon regular school attendance or the regular use of preventive health care services" (World Bank 2009). With its beneficiaries reaching over 4 million households and a total of at least Php1 trillion (US$20 billion) allotted to it from 2009 to the present, 4Ps is the biggest social protection program of the government sustained across four administrations (Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Noynoy Aquino, Rodrigo Duterte and Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.).

Arguably, some of the central features of 4Ps that enabled it to perform its main mandate of alleviating the poor from poverty across different administrations are mechanisms of transparency, participation and accountability. Specifically, these are as follows:

- Family Development Sessions (FDS) – "the venue for *Pantawid Pamilya* household grantees and parents to enhance and acquire new skills and knowledge in responding to their parental roles and responsibilities particularly on health and nutrition, education and psychosocial needs of children; promotion of positive family values; and strengthening marital relationships." (DSWD) Attending the FDS is one of the conditionalities in 4Ps.
- Grievance Redress System (GRS) – "a mechanism to address grievances relative to the implementation of the Program, essentially ensuring that its goals and objectives are achieved. The system is a venue where both the qualified household-beneficiaries and the general public can report their grievances for resolutions." (DSWD 4Ps National Advisory Council Resolution No. 4)
- Advisory Councils – multi-agency bodies at the national, regional, provincial and municipal/ city levels convened by DSWD that guide policy, oversee execution, and ensure local convergence in

4Ps and provide a platform for inter-agency coordination, stakeholder participation, policy feedback and shared accountability in the implementation of 4Ps.

- Monitoring and Evaluation System – involves the continuous tracking of beneficiary compliance and program implementation, periodic impact evaluations and independent monitoring.

These mechanisms are intended to provide meaningful avenues for beneficiary participation, stakeholder engagement, feedback, grievance redress, oversight and evidence-based program improvement.

G-Watch has been tracking 4Ps implementation and progress for several years now, in partnership with Accountability Research Center (ARC). It released a report in 2021 that presents its monitoring findings on the state of 4Ps citizen engagement and accountability mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic and a TPA Now! paper that documents an initiative on 4Ps monitoring. In 2022, G-Watch held an online forum that looks into how DSWD lists beneficiaries for 4Ps through the *Listahanan* and how to improve its integrity and credibility. Finally, in 2025, G-Watch released another TPA Now! study that argues for the imperative of reinstating the 4Ps budget that was cut drastically in 2024.

For almost five years now, G-Watch has been collaborating with the *Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid* (SNPP) in the latter's efforts to ensure the effective implementation of 4Ps and other poverty reduction programs. G-Watch supported SNPP's validation of the list of 4Ps beneficiaries for delisting/ graduation in 2022. From 2023 to the present, G-Watch and SNPP are undertaking a health rights organizing initiative called PRO-Health. PRO-Health involves mobilizing 4Ps leaders to monitor health services at barangay health units that are part of the conditionalities in 4Ps.

One of the areas engaged by PRO-Health is the province of Lanao del Sur in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). G-Watch has had a strong local core group in Marawi since 2019 that is a continuation of long-standing engagement of G-Watch in advancing TPA in Muslim Mindanao.

With the signing of the peace agreement and the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, BARMM is undergoing promising transformation in politics and governance. Given the high incidence of poverty in BARMM, effective social protection programs are most crucial. Learning from what worked in existing programs and from related experience and studies would be useful for BARMM. Learning about BARMM's progress in its efforts to advance moral governance in all its programs, including social services, would be enlightening for implementers and advocates of social protection programs and TPA reforms.

On 10-11 November 2026, G-Watch is proposing to co-convene a **Learning Exchange on Strengthening Transparency, Participation and Accountability in Social Protection: Lessons from 4Ps and BARMM**

with SNPP, DSWD Central Office and the Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) in BARMM. Around twenty key officials and leaders of different organizations will come together to share knowledge and experience on social protection and TPA reforms to learn and improve current practice and explore areas of future collaboration.

Each discussion will consist of presentation and discussion on lessons emerging and how this can be put to practice in current implementation of 4Ps and in other social protection programs.

Objectives

The learning exchange aims to facilitate mutual learning among 4Ps, MSSD-BARMM, civil society, beneficiaries and other stakeholders on approaches that strengthen transparency, participation and accountability in social protection programs.

Specifically, the activity aims to:

1. Identify effective practices in promoting transparency, participation and accountability in social protection programs;
2. Examine how existing 4Ps mechanisms, particularly FDS, GRS, Advisory Councils and M&E, contribute to beneficiary empowerment, stakeholder participation and program responsiveness;
3. Surface implementation challenges and contextual factors affecting the effectiveness of these mechanisms;
4. Identify practices from 4Ps, BARMM and civil society initiatives that may be adapted or strengthened; and
5. Identify potential areas for collaboration and concrete follow-through actions among participating stakeholders.

Expected Learning and Outputs

By the end of the learning exchange, participants are expected to:

1. Gain a shared understanding of approaches to transparency, participation and accountability in social protection;
2. Identify strengths, implementation gaps and challenges in existing mechanisms;
3. Surface promising practices that may be adapted or further explored in other contexts;
4. Identify opportunities for stronger inter-agency, beneficiary and civil society engagement; and
5. Agree on priority areas for collaboration and possible follow-through actions

Program

Day 1, November 10	
11:30 am -1:00 pm	Lunch and registration
1:00 - 1:30 pm	Opening program • Prayer and national anthem • Welcome and opening remarks • Expectations Setting
1:30 - 2:30 pm	Discussion #1: Vision and Goals of 4Ps and other Social Protection Programs and Status of their implementation Learning Question: What implementation practices and stakeholder approaches contribute to making social protection programs responsive to the needs of poor and vulnerable households? • DSWD Central Office • MSSD BARMM • Isabela City, Basilan Local Government Suggested reading: INCITEGov study on social protection program (15 minutes each for presentation and 15 minutes for the open forum)
2:30 - 3:30 pm	Discussion #2: Effective ways beneficiaries are empowered in government programs Learning Question:What approaches enable beneficiaries to meaningfully participate and become effective policy actors that help ensure the effective implementation of the program ? • DSWD Central Office (on 4Ps FDS) • SNPP (on how they got organized and empowered) • MSSD BARMM (on related efforts/ reaction to DSWD or SNPP inputs) (15 minutes each for presentation and 15 minutes for the open forum) *Working snacks*
3:30 - 4:30 pm	Discussion #3: Empowering citizens and supporting program responsiveness through effective consultation, feedback and complaint mechanisms

	Learning Question: How can feedback and grievance mechanisms be strengthened so that beneficiary concerns are not only resolved but also used to improve program implementation? ● DSWD Central Office (on 4Ps GRS and advisory councils) ● MSSD BARMM (on related efforts/ reaction to DSWD or PIDS inputs) Suggested reading: PIDS study on GRS (15 minutes each for presentation and 15 minutes for the open forum)
4:30 - 5:15 pm	Discussion #5: Persisting challenges and ways these are addressed ● Moderated open discussion to take on challenges such as inclusion/ exclusion errors in targeting, political interference/ lack of support from political leadership, unfavorable public opinions, etc.
5:15 pm -	Assignment: ● What are the key lessons and realizations from Day 1 discussions that you deem useful in improving practice?
Day 2, November 11	
8:30 - 9:00 am	Recap and energizer Sharing of answers to the assignment
9:00 - 10:15 am	Discussion #3: Ensuring accountability through monitoring and evaluation Learning Question : How can monitoring and evaluation, including participatory approaches, generate evidence that is used by program managers and stakeholders to improve implementation? ● DSWD Central Office (on 4Ps M&E System, including the Independent Regional Monitoring Committees) ● G-Watch's Participatory Monitoring ● MSSD BARMM (on related efforts/ reaction to DSWD or G-Watch inputs) (15 minutes each for presentation and 30 minutes for the open forum) Suggested reading: Sample Application of G-Watch Monitoring Approach

10:15 - 10:45 am	Closing discussion Learning Question : What lessons can be translated into concrete improvements, partnerships or collaborative actions after the learning exchange? • Key takeaways and/or emerging lessons relevant to practice • Possible areas of collaboration for next steps
10:45 - 11:00 am	Closing program • Closing remarks • Commitment circle