

90178

June 2014

# CASE STUDY

## Grievance Redress System of the Conditional Cash Transfer Program in the Philippines

### ABSTRACT

The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (Pantawid Pamilya) is the Government of Philippines' flagship social assistance program. It is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program that targets poor households with children and/or pregnant women. Introduced in 2007 as a pilot program for 6,000 households, Pantawid Pamilya was rolled out nationally in 2008. Through a series of expansions, Pantawid Pamilya has now become one of the largest CCT programs in the world. The program features a systematic, professional, and rules-based procedure for handling grievances and appeals. The grievance redress system (GRS) of Pantawid Pamilya has made great strides and has resolved nearly 500,000 grievances since its launch. Well-designed structures, sound business processes and standards, and dynamic staff are some of the salient features in the current GRS. This note describes the Pantawid Pamilya experience in rolling out a large-scale system to redress grievances. It discusses the accountability context of Pantawid Pamilya and the role of grievance redress; outlines the institutional arrangements for Pantawid Pamilya and the GRS within the program; provides a summary of the GRS process and its performance; elaborates on the strengths as well as areas that need further strengthening in the GRS; and finally, provides operational implications for practitioners implementing similar GRSs in large-scale social programs.

### *Enhancing Program Accountability by Addressing Complaints and Improving Implementation*

#### 1. Introduction and Overview of Pantawid Pamilya

The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (Pantawid Pamilya) is the Government of Philippines' flagship social assistance program. It is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program that targets poor households with children and/or pregnant women. The Pantawid Pamilya program has dual objectives: to provide cash grants to poor households for short-term poverty alleviation and to break intergenerational poverty through investments in human capital. Under the program, beneficiary households receive health and education grants as long as they comply with program conditions (see annex 1). Depending on their composition, beneficiary households receive monthly grants ranging from PhP 500 to PhP 1,400 (US\$11–32).<sup>1</sup>

Pantawid Pamilya was introduced in 2007 as a pilot program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Through a series of expansions, Pantawid Pamilya has now become one of the largest CCT programs in the world. The program's annual budget allocation in 2014 is PhP 62 billion (US\$1.4 billion), covering nearly four million households in all 1,627 cities and municipalities in 79 provinces in 17 regions. This represents three-fourths of the 5.2 million poor identified by the poverty targeting mechanism, Listahanan. While centrally designed and led by the DSWD, the program also relies heavily on interagency coordination at various national, regional, provincial, and municipal levels—particularly in the health and education sectors—to reach its beneficiaries.

A systematic, professional, and rules-based procedure for handling grievances and appeals was integrated into the core design of the program to minimize and manage risks, but also to ensure that the program achieves its goals and meets the needs of beneficiary households. The Pantawid Pamilya grievance redress system (GRS) was designed to facilitate due process in resolving the complaints and grievances of beneficiary households and citizens at large. The rapid expansion of Pantawid Pamilya in terms of its scale and scope to meet the growing needs of poor households led to an increase in queries, clarifications, and problems related to program policies and procedures. This stretched the GRS to its limit and necessitated continuous improvements.

This note is intended to share the experience of Pantawid Pamilya's GRS and guide project teams and governments in designing GRSs for similar social programs. It is divided into seven sections. Section 2 details governance and accountability mechanisms in Pantawid Pamilya. Section 3 outlines the institutional arrangements for Pantawid Pamilya and the GRS within the program. Sections 4 and 5 provide a summary of the GRS process

1. All U.S. dollars noted in this report are approximate according to current exchange rates.





and key grievance trends. Section 6 details the initial design features that have been successful as well as areas that need further strengthening as Pantawid Pamilya continues to scale up. Finally, Section 7 provides policy and operational implications for task teams and governments implementing similar GRSs.

## 2. Governance and Accountability in Pantawid Pamilya

The administration of CCT programs is typically complex, requiring involvement from multiple sectors, such as social welfare, education, and health, ranging from the national to local levels. Operationally, CCT programs entail handling and processing voluminous administrative and financial transactions, managing and continuously updating data on a large number of beneficiaries, carrying out beneficiary selection and registration, monitoring compliance, and administering payments (see annex 2 for the implementation cycle of Pantawid Pamilya). Given this complexity, CCT programs are prone to risks of error, fraud, corruption, and leakages (Arulpragasam et al., 2010). Further, there are several governance risks unique to the Philippines, such as the large geographic spread and diversity and the high level of corruption and pervasive patronage politics that affect all national programs, especially those like Pantawid Pamilya, which aim to deliver benefits based on objective, need-based data.

Pantawid Pamilya has incorporated various governance and accountability mechanisms in its design and implementation to address and mitigate these risks, including embedding control and accountability mechanics in program design (see annex 3 for additional details), improving accountability and implementation capacity of the implementing agency (supply side), and empowering beneficiaries and promoting community participation (demand side). Examples of these accountability measures include the following:

- The program utilizes **geographic targeting** based on the incidence of poverty to ensure better targeting.
- In identified areas, a supply-side assessment is conducted to **ensure that health and education services are available** so that beneficiaries can comply with program conditions.
- Pantawid Pamilya selects beneficiaries based on an **objective and transparent methodology—i.e., the proxy means test<sup>2</sup>**—and only poor eligible households are registered to receive program benefits.
- Health and school facilities regularly **monitor beneficiary compliance** with program conditions.

2. The proxy means test examines each household through certain variables, such as ownership of assets, type of housing, education of the head of the household, sources of livelihood for the family, and access to water and sanitation. Households are considered eligible if they are classified as poor based on Listahanan data, have children up to age 14, and/or include a pregnant woman, and if they agree to meet the conditions specified in the program. In 2014, the program plans to extend the age bracket to 18.

### BOX 1

#### Principles of the Pantawid Pamilya GRS

The Pantawid Pamilya GRS has two key objectives: to provide a mechanism to facilitate due process in resolving grievances and complaints related to project implementation and to refine program design and implementation by obtaining data on the vulnerabilities of the project. Thus, the GRS not only resolves grievances but also allows program management to learn from filed grievances in order to further refine program policies and improve implementation. At its foundation, the GRS has the following underlying principles:

- **Simplicity and accessibility.** GRS procedures for filing grievances and seeking redress are simple and easy to understand; grievances can be submitted by the beneficiaries and the community in general through a range of means.
- **Transparency.** The system is publicized to a broad audience—beneficiaries, citizens, CSOs, media, and government officials—at all levels—from barangay/village to the national level.
- **Empowering and participatory.** Communities, project implementers, and the media are encouraged to share feedback and file grievances.
- **Timeliness.** Guidelines include timelines that ensure grievances are handled in a timely manner.
- **Right of appeal.** Channels for appeal are available if complainants are not satisfied with the resolution of a problem.
- **Confidentiality.** The identity of complainants remains confidential unless otherwise requested.
- **Pro-community.** The GRS aims to involve the community in order to address complaints.

Source: DSWD 2014b.



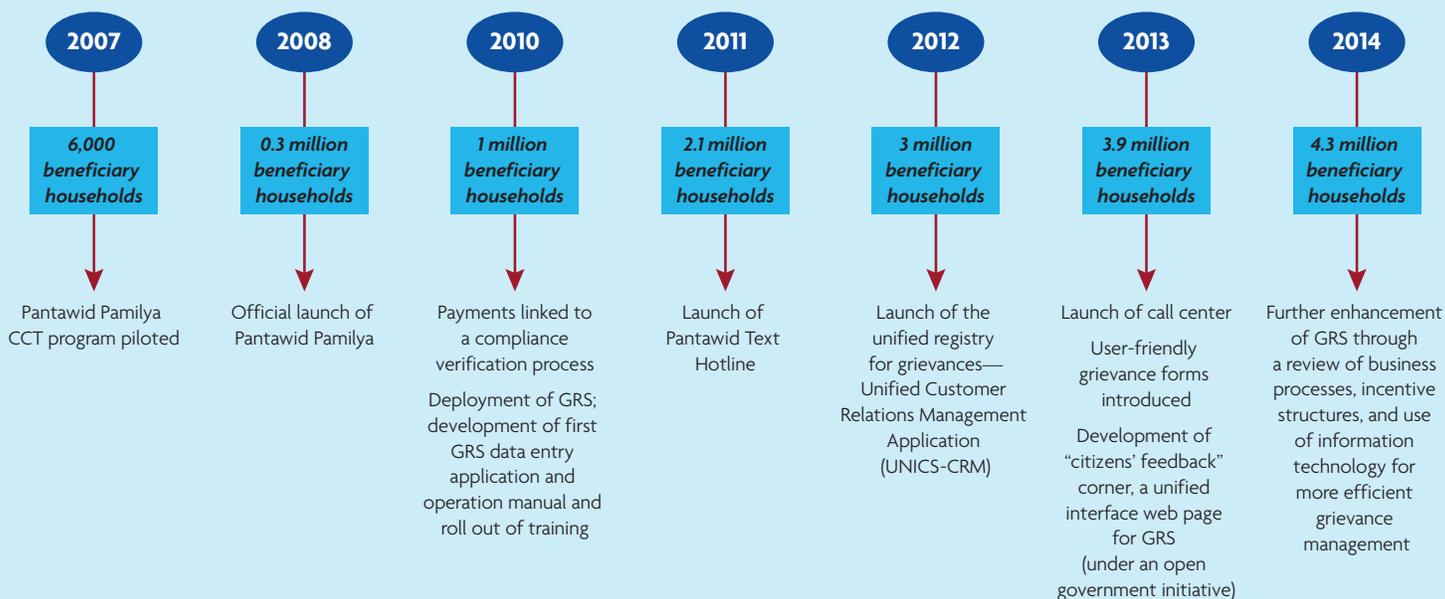
- Payments are released directly to beneficiaries primarily via **cash cards or over the counter**.
- A sophisticated **management information system (MIS)** handles the large volume of data generated by the program, thereby improving the quality and integrity of program implementation.
- **Monitoring and evaluation is embedded in program design**, and regular monitoring and “spot checks” by third parties are conducted.
- The DSWD implements a **strategic communication campaign** to empower beneficiaries and to strengthen partnerships with various stakeholders.

**BOX 2**

**Milestones in the Development of Pantawid Pamilya’s GRS**

The GRS is one of the key institutional systems<sup>a</sup> that has been incorporated in the design of Pantawid Pamilya in order to address its vulnerability to errors, fraud, and corruption. The GRS has evolved considerably since its formal launch in 2010. The Grievance Redress Division has established business processes and operational guidelines on how to handle grievances and has rolled out numerous trainings for grievance officers, city/municipal links, and parent leaders to address queries and problems at all levels. The mechanisms for filing grievances have also been diversified, now including forms, texts, phone calls, emails, and social media, and the MIS currently supports more efficient grievance management. Through these efforts, the GRS has become much more widely known. An independent spot check conducted in 2012 found that among those interviewed, 81 percent of beneficiaries, 92 percent of parent leaders, and 89 percent of municipal/local government unit links were aware of the GRS. A World Bank team conducted a rapid assessment of the GRS in 2012, confirming that the GRS is fully functional and meeting its objectives; it also provided recommendations for further improvement. This GRS continues to strive to be more effective and client-centric, particularly through a review of its business processes, performance management structure, and management of customer relations.

**MILESTONES**

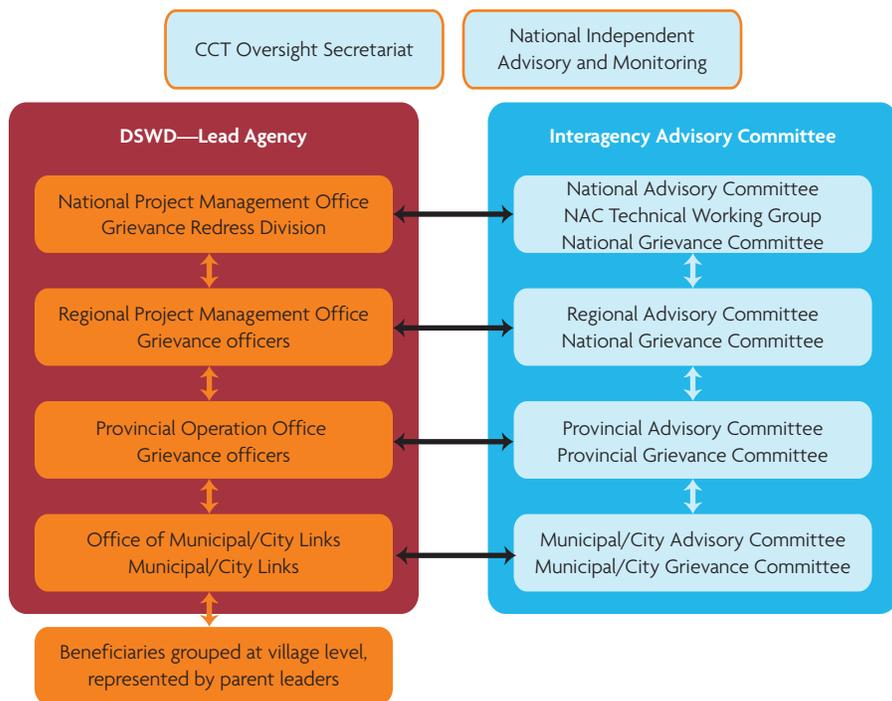


Source: Authors’ compilation.

a. The other key systems are the Beneficiary Data Management and Compliance Verification, and Payment Systems. The Beneficiary Data Management System seeks to validate and update the profiles of the eligible beneficiaries for compliance monitoring. The Compliance Verification System is the mechanism used to check compliance of household beneficiaries on conditions on health, education, and attendance at family development sessions as the basis for payment of grants. Based on the results of compliance verification, cash transfers are made to beneficiary households.



**FIGURE 1**  
**Institutional Arrangements for Pantawid Pamilya**



Source: Authors' compilation based on Pantawid Pamilya NPMO Operations Manual (DSWD 2012).

- The DSWD partners with **civil society organizations (CSOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** that serve as “**watch dogs**” for project implementation.
- The DSWD has expanded **staffing** and continuously invested in **training** of staff and stakeholders.
- **The GRS was part of the original program design** to capture any complaints and feedback, not only from program beneficiaries, but also from citizens at large.

### 3. Institutional Arrangements for Pantawid Pamilya and Its GRS

The DSWD is the lead agency for the implementation of Pantawid Pamilya. Over 11,000 program staff at all levels—national to city/municipal—serve approximately four million beneficiary households. The DSWD Secretary acts as the national program director and is responsible for providing the overall program direction. A national project management office (NPMO)—housed in the DSWD—and its subnational offices manage the day-to-day operations of the program with a PhP 62 billion budget (US\$1.4 billion). The NPMO executes all plans, policies, and activities of the program and is composed of 12 divisions/units that also include the Grievance Redress Division

(GRD).<sup>3</sup> Ninety-seven percent of the project staff is decentralized and deployed at the regional, provincial, cluster,<sup>4</sup> and city/municipal levels (see figure 1). Each city/municipal link covers approximately 800 beneficiary households as a focal point of communications to beneficiaries. A group of 20–30 beneficiaries in the same barangay<sup>5</sup>/village selects a parent leader to serve as a representative to communicate with the city/municipal link and as a coordinator for the group.

Advisory committees at the national, regional, provincial, and city/municipal levels serve to enhance national ownership and promote joint efforts with partner agencies (e.g., the Departments of Health and Education), local implementers (i.e., local government units), and CSOs. Advisory committees also act as grievance committees. At the national and regional levels, advisory/grievance committees are chaired by the Secretary and Regional Director of the DSWD, respectively, with a co-chair from the Departments of Education and Health. At the provincial and city/municipal levels, advisory/grievance committees are usually headed by local chief executives and consist of representatives from partner agencies and NGOs.

For instance, the regional advisory committee is chaired by the regional director of the DSWD field office and composed of regional directors of the partner agencies and representatives from CSOs. Similarly, the provincial advisory committee is headed by the provincial governor, while the city/municipal advisory committees are headed by the mayor. Frontline field workers, such as city/municipal links and local government unit links work directly with program beneficiaries with support from volunteer parent leaders nominated by beneficiaries.

#### The GRS Architecture

At the national level, the GRD is housed in the NPMO and has 17 staff dedicated to overseeing and managing the GRS. The GRD monitors and supervises the overall complaint handling process, coordinates monthly meetings of the National Grievance Committee, prepares monthly grievance reports, investigates and resolves complaints that have been referred to the national

3. Administrative expenses for the program are capped at 10 percent of the total program budget. The grievance redress staff is funded through the administrative budget.

4. A cluster is comprised of approximately 25,000 households and is usually a group of 5–10 municipalities.

5. A barangay is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines and is the native Filipino term for a village. Municipalities and cities are composed of barangays.



level, categorizes and distributes complaints to the appropriate level for resolution, maintains the grievance MIS database, and builds the capacity of the grievance monitors at field levels. The GRD also analyzes trends in grievance reporting, identifies strategies to address major problems, and reviews GRS guidelines to continuously improve them.

Over 200 grievance officers are deployed in field offices to serve as focal points at regional, provincial, and cluster levels. City/municipal links are the primary grievance redress focal points on the front lines, entrusted with the responsibility of accepting, recording, and investigating complaints. They work closely with parent leaders in barangays to provide complainants with updated information on the status of complaints. They also keep track of all grievances in their work areas. Additionally, city/municipal links receive complaints from service providers during their regular visits to schools and health clinics in their work areas. The city/municipal links, local government unit links, and regional health and education focal persons are trained on the GRS.

Parent leaders are usually the first contact point for beneficiaries when issues arise, and they assist city/municipal links in communications related to grievances with project beneficiaries. A parent leader acts as a conduit of information between beneficiaries and Pantawid Pamilya staff, playing an important role in capturing grievances and facilitating grievance redress. Parent leaders are responsible for flagging potential problems that beneficiaries might face in their cluster. They are given complaint forms to distribute to potential complainants.

Barangay/village assembly meetings provide a venue for beneficiaries to report grievances about the program. In these

meetings, grievances are discussed, and if they cannot be resolved at this level, they are reported to the city/municipal link, where they are formally logged into the grievance redress mechanism MIS and acted upon.

Grievances related to a particular level are addressed by the grievance unit just above that level. For instance, the national unit facilitates the resolution of serious grievances at all levels but particularly those that relate to the regional level. However, grievances that relate to the performance or behavior of the city/municipal link can be reported directly to the provincial, regional, or national Pantawid Pamilya office.

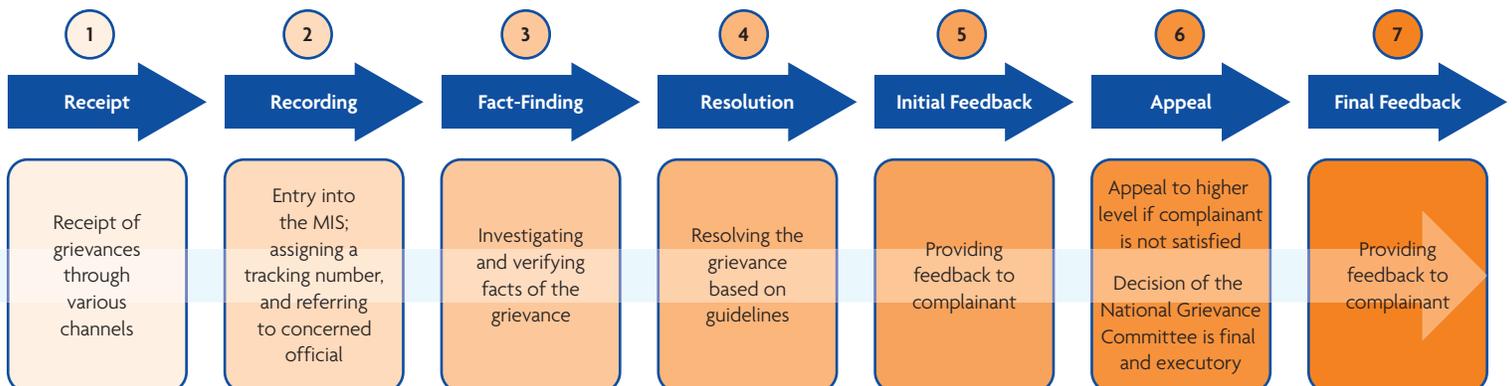
*“The GRS is the heart of operations. It connects, like a heart does to other organs, to all other departments.”*

-Joel Galicia, Assistant Regional Director of Region 6

#### 4. Grievance Redress Procedure

Pantawid Pamilya’s grievance redress procedure has seven steps (see figure 2), beginning with the receipt of the grievance. The program provides various means to file a grievance. Complainants can directly submit grievances through complaint boxes, faxes, emails (4psreklamo@gmail.com), text messages (09189122813), calls to a national hotline (952–6929), Facebook (Tanggapan ng Reklamo), Twitter (@4psreklamo), or face-to-face—directly to independent NGO monitoring teams, Pantawid Pamilya officials (primarily city/municipal links), and/or parent leaders. Most grievances are submitted through grievance forms. Indirect submissions include issues raised in monitoring reports by program staff or other independent monitors, media reports, internal

**FIGURE 2**  
The GRS Process



Source: DSWD 2014b with authors’ edits.



and external audits, and through elected officials during local legislative assemblies.

Every **grievance is recorded** into the logbook at the city/municipal level or into the program’s MIS at provincial and higher levels. Information recorded includes the means by which the complaint was reported; the date it was submitted; the complainant’s name, address, and contact details—if provided; and details of the complaint. Grievances received through grievance forms are entered manually into a database and are automatically assigned a tracking number. At the provincial level, complaints can be directly entered into the system if online access to the database is available. Where online access is unavailable, forms can be sent to regional offices so that the grievance can be entered in the MIS. The grievance is then transferred to the appropriate level, depending on its nature and location.

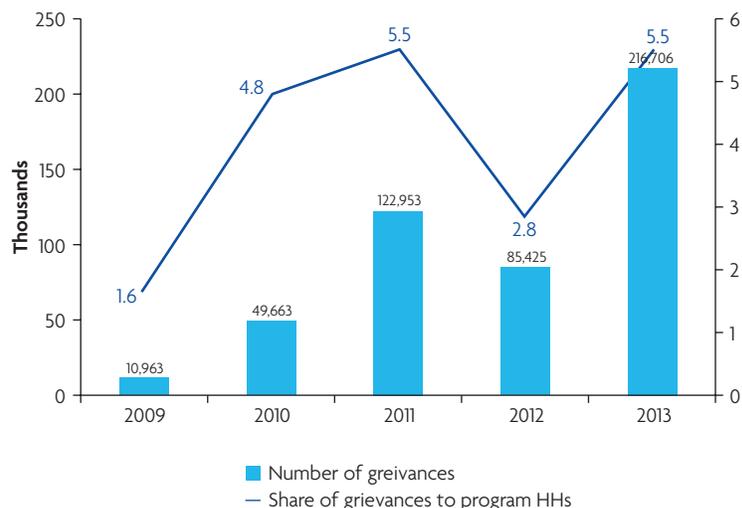
The third step of the process includes **gathering facts** related to the grievance. In principle, the official assigned the grievance—often the city/municipal link—is responsible for the fact-finding. In cases where the grievance is about the municipal/city link, the assigned grievance officer is at the provincial or cluster level. The fact-finding process involves the verification of the identity of the complainant and the nature and status of the complaint as well as the compilation of supporting evidence. The body responsible for the fact-finding then makes recommendations for a resolution to the appropriate bodies for consideration (e.g., the various grievance committees or the health and/or education departments).

The **resolution** step includes the action and decision-making process undertaken at different levels. Annex 4 describes the common types of grievances that can occur at different stages of program implementation as well as possible resolutions. If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance resolution, he/she can **appeal** the outcome as far up as the National Grievance Committee, whose decision is final. Once a grievance is resolved, the complainant is **informed** of the outcome of his/her complaint. If the complainant is anonymous, information about the resolution of the complaint is posted on the relevant city/municipal and barangay/village bulletin boards.

## 5. Key Grievance Trends

The enormous amount of data about grievances that the GRS captures on a regular basis allows for an analysis of trends. This section presents some key grievance trends in Pantawid Pamilya based on the data managed by the GRD.

**FIGURE 3**  
Number of Grievances Received



Source: Authors based on GRD data (DSWD 2014a).

**Volume of grievances.** In the past five years, the Pantawid Pamilya’s GRS has received and recorded over 485,000 grievances (figure 3) that have been stored in three databases: the GRS Data Entry Applications Database,<sup>6</sup> the Pantawid Text Hotline, and the Unified Information and Communication System–Client Relation Management (UNICS-CRM). The volume of grievances has increased significantly over time, from approximately 50,000 in 2010 to approximately 217,000 in 2013. In 2013, the share of grievances over the number of beneficiary households was approximately 5.5 percent, indicating that the GRS is well known and being widely utilized.

In addition to the grievances recorded in the three databases, a significant number of households are recorded and managed in a separate sheet for exclusion errors due to their high volume. For example, in 2013, more than 300,000 households were included in the sheet for exclusion errors against the 130,000 grievances<sup>7</sup> that were encoded into the databases (figure 4), primarily because local governments (cities and municipalities) can claim exclusion errors on behalf of households in their areas in addition to individual households filing grievances.

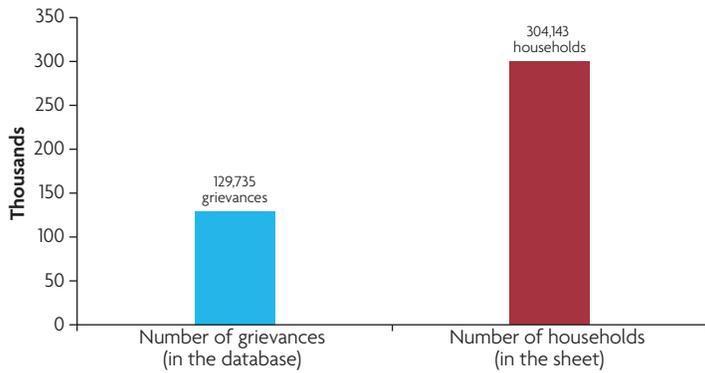
**Modes used for submitting grievances.** Most grievances—80–90 percent for the past three years—are submitted face-to-face, either through grievance forms or personal interviews (figure 5). Since the activation of the Pantawid Text Hotline, an

6. The utilization of the first application—GRS Data Entry Applications Database—ended in 2012; it has been replaced by UNICS-CRM.

7. Each grievance can include more than one household.



**FIGURE 4**  
Exclusion Errors (in 2013)



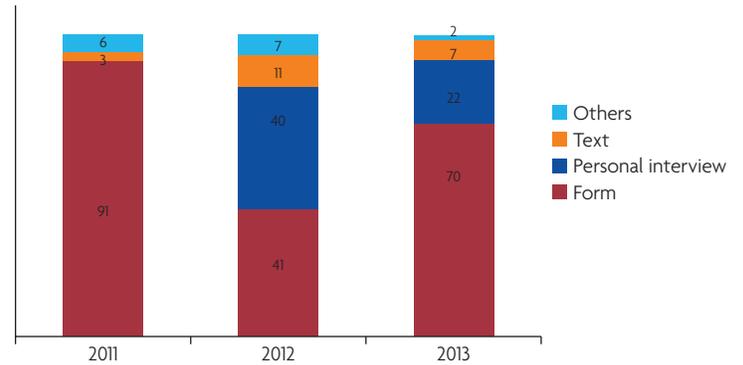
Source: Authors based on GRD data (DSWD 2014a).

increasing number of grievances are being received through text messages. Due to the accessibility and cost, grievances filed through the Internet are still limited (2 percent in 2013).

**Category of grievances.** In the first two years, the dominant grievance was related to payments, comprising almost two-thirds of all received grievances (figure 6). Improved program implementation has contributed to a decrease in grievances related to compliance monitoring and payments. Over time, exclusion errors have increased, accounting for more than half of total grievances in 2012 and 2013, primarily due to program expansion and an increase in people’s awareness of the process and their expectations.

**Grievance by type of complainant.** The composition of complainant categories has changed over time: program beneficiaries accounted for 76 percent of total grievances received in

**FIGURE 5**  
Modes for Submitting Grievances

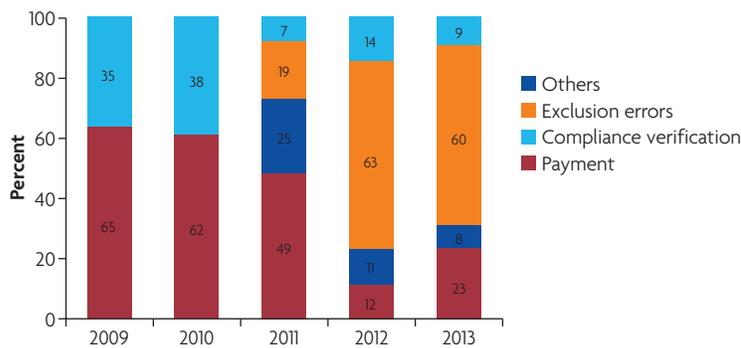


Source: Authors based on GRD data (DSWD 2014a).

2011; non-beneficiaries accounted for 79 percent and 67 percent of total grievances received in 2012 and 2013, respectively (figure 7). Most grievances from non-beneficiaries relate to their exclusion from the program.

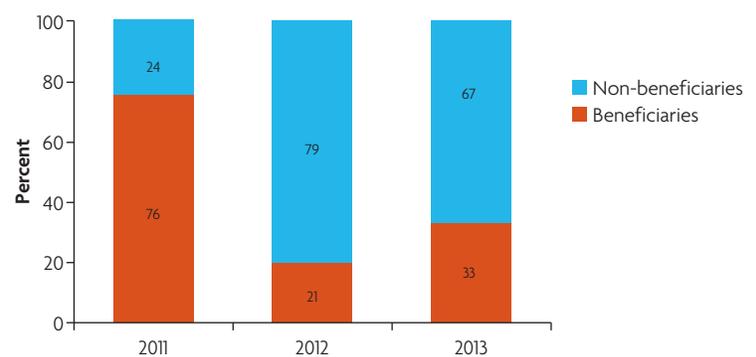
**Redress of grievances.** Received grievances are usually acted upon. The grievance redress rate is almost 100 percent. This includes referrals by the GRS division to other relevant units/departments responsible for taking action on received grievances. Therefore, in some instances, grievances are not resolved from the complainants’ perspective. Processing time has significantly improved since 2011. On average, the resolution time declined from 98 days in 2012 to 32 days in 2013. To illustrate, a total of US\$71 million was retroactively paid to program households after verification as resolution for compliance- and payment-related grievances, (figure 8).

**FIGURE 6**  
Category of Grievances Received



Source: Authors based on GRD data (DSWD 2014a).

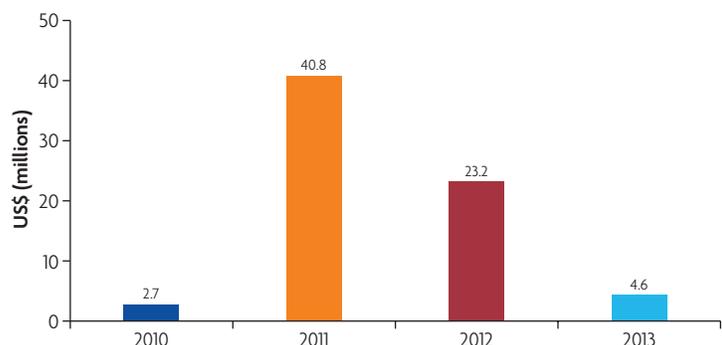
**FIGURE 7**  
Grievances by Type of Complainant



Source: Authors based on GRD data (DSWD 2014a).



**FIGURE 8**  
**Resolution of Payment-Related Grievances:**  
**Amount of Retroactive Payment**



Source: Authors based on GRD data (DSWD 2014a).

However, the resolution of some types of grievances can be time-consuming. For example, in the case of exclusion errors, action is initiated upon the receipt of the grievance, but the process for final resolution involves many intermediate steps, some of which are outside of the purview of the Pantawid Pamilya project management office. The Listahanan targeting database,<sup>8</sup> which is managed by a separate entity outside the project management office, must be checked to ascertain whether or not the excluded households have been assessed and then whether or not they are actually eligible. Consequently, only some types

8. The National Household Targeting System–Listahanan is a separate entity from the Pantawid NPMO. The NPMO draws the lists of beneficiaries from Listahanan, but the household assessment is conducted by the National Household Targeting Office rather than by the Pantawid NPMO.

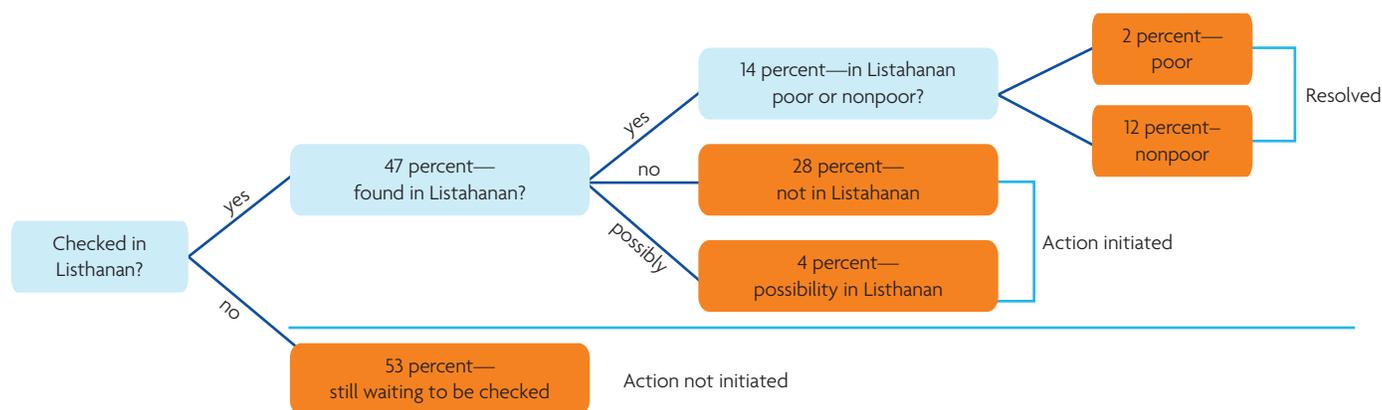
of grievances related to exclusion errors can be verified by the project management office. Grievances involving household requests for reassessment or addition to Listahanan cannot be verified because those issues are handled by the National Household Targeting Office. A recent analysis found that among received grievances related to exclusion errors, only 47 percent were checked against the targeting database (the remaining 53 percent still needed to be checked), of which 14 percent were found in the database (another 28 percent were not found). Only 2 percent were actually found to be poor as opposed to 12 percent that were found to be non-poor (figure 9). Twenty-eight percent of complainants were not found in the targeting database; they will be assessed in the next round of household assessments scheduled in 2014.

The GRS played an important role in the de-listing of approximately 40,000 households—one percent of total active households in the program. Of these households, 23 percent were de-listed after having been found to be ineligible with regard to grievances related to inclusion errors, 40 percent were found to have regular sources of income, and 9 percent were found to have reported fraudulent information (figure 10). Forty percent of these households submitted voluntary waivers for de-listing because they felt they were not entitled to program benefits.

### 6. GRS Strengths and Areas for Improvement

The GRS has made great strides since its launch and has contributed to improving Pantawid Pamilya’s performance. Well-designed structures, sound business processes and standards, and dynamic staff are some of the salient features in the current

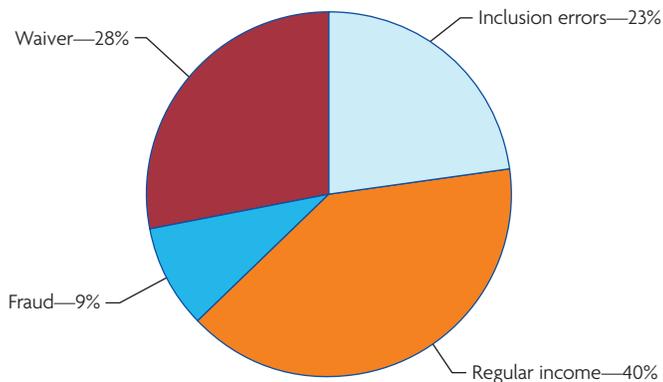
**FIGURE 9**  
**Addressing Grievances Related to Exclusion Errors**



Source: Authors based on GRD data (DSWD 2014a).



**FIGURE 10**  
**Resolution of Grievances Related to Exclusion:**  
**Reasons for Delisting Households**



Source: Authors based on GRD data (DSWD 2014a).

system. With the rapid expansion of Pantawid Pamilya, however, the GRS has been stretched to its limit. Periodic assessments have identified its strengths and challenges, helping with its continued improvement. This section discusses the key strengths of the GRS as well as areas for further improvement.<sup>9</sup>

### Key Strengths

**The DSWD demonstrates a strong commitment to invest and continuously strengthen the GRS.** Program management and staff recognize and value the grievance redress process as a means of strengthening performance, improving public relations, and enhancing accountability and transparency. Grievance redress is integrated into the program's design and operation since inception. Pantawid Pamilya management integrates grievance redress functions into staff job descriptions, regularly reviewing grievance data and trends and ensuring that the GRS is properly staffed and resourced. In May 2013, the DSWD introduced a new GRS framework, which is being rolled out gradually, that shifts from a “case-centric” to “client-centric” approach.

**The program invests in highly motivated GRS staff and training.** Pantawid Pamilya's GRS has in place well-designed structures and 200+ dedicated staff. While the GRD at the national level steers the overall grievance structure, units at lower levels are the “eyes and ears” for this large program. Frontline grievance monitors work hand-in-hand with beneficiaries and service providers to address and resolve grievances. Further,

9. Some of the observations listed in this section are based on a November 2012 World Bank mission to assess the GRS. Field visits during the mission to Iloilo Province—one of the better performing provinces with regard to grievance redress—influenced these observations.

direct involvement of beneficiaries has improved the DSWD's understanding of implementation challenges.

**Multiple channels exist for grievance submission, while the majority of grievances are still submitted face-to-face.** While this GRS offers several channels to file grievances, most grievances are submitted in person by complainants through parent leaders to city/municipal links. The share of grievances received through the recently activated Pantawid Text Hotline, which allows complainants to submit anonymous complaints through text messaging, is growing.

**At all levels, GRS business processes are conceptualized and implemented well.** The effectiveness and sustainability of a large program is often determined by the extent to which its business processes are standardized and practiced. A GRS field manual, a comprehensive guide for the consistent handling of complaints, serves as a quick and easy reference to the GRS's business processes and their application for field staff. Regarding the fact-finding process, information is often triangulated and verified through multiple sources. Finally, process flows for each grievance type and subtype, along with corresponding procedural guidelines, resolution indicators, and timelines, are revisited and updated based on the experience and documentation of the national and regional grievance officers.

**A comprehensive database allows for the efficient recording and tracking of grievances.** Received grievances are encoded into one of three databases: the Pantawid Text Hotline, the GRS Data Entry Applications Database<sup>10</sup> and the Unified Information and Communication System–Client Relation Management (UNICS-CRM). The first two legacy databases are being integrated into the UNICS-CRM, which tracks the nature, origin, location, and status of complaints, such as targeting errors, payment irregularities, fraud, and corruption. The MIS program,<sup>11</sup> which stores large volumes of data on each of the 4 million beneficiary households from the initial assessment stage to the payment stage, assists grievance officers in the quick resolution of registered grievances.

**Regular reporting and monitoring help flag implementation issues early.** An elaborate system of regular internal monitoring and reporting at various levels allows staff to be aware of and efficiently resolve grievances. Frontline grievance officers keep

10. The utilization of the first application, the GRS Data Entry Applications Database, ended in 2012. It has been replaced by UNICS-CRM.

11. The Pantawid Pamilya MIS has modules that validate household data at the assessment stage, continuously updates data on beneficiary households, monitors beneficiary compliance of program conditions based on reports from schools and health centers, controls and produces payment data, and captures filed grievances about the program. The MIS also connects the NPMO with 17 regional DSWD offices, allowing real-time data updates to the system.



case records and grievance logbooks to record and monitor grievances.<sup>12</sup> A system of spot checks by senior officials from the GRD and third-party ex-post reviews are used as rapid evaluation instruments that seek to determine the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the GRS.<sup>13</sup> Advisory committees at the municipal/city level produce monthly and quarterly accomplishment reports for the provincial advisory committee. The GRD regularly prepares reports for the DSWD on the volume and status of grievances to identify systemic vulnerabilities in project implementation and design. The resolution rate and response time are regularly monitored. Other aspects of grievance redress—such as impartiality, accuracy, and complainant satisfaction—will be captured in the future.

**A series of strategic communications activities has improved public knowledge of the program and of the GRS.** The well-implemented strategic communications plan increases public knowledge of both Pantawid Pamilya and its GRS. The communications plan disaggregates and targets various groups, including beneficiaries, partners, NGOs, civil society, and the media, among others. For instance, the plan addresses specific behaviors to enhance parental awareness of the CCT program conditions, to discourage the pawning of cash cards, and to encourage the submission of grievances. These communication activities significantly influence public opinion about the program—so much so that it is now the government's flagship antipoverty program despite the strong resistance to it in earlier years. General awareness about the GRS has increased over the years, but GRS-related communication activities still continue to enhance beneficiary awareness about its processes, such as resolution timelines and appellate procedures. For instance, grievance monitoring boards and drop boxes have been installed in barangays/villages, and radio programs funded by cities/municipalities are regularly held to address queries about the program.

**The GRS has helped to improve trust between program officials and beneficiaries.** Grievances that are received are usually acted upon. Because of the resolution for compliance and payment-related grievances, a total of US\$71 million was retroactively paid to program households, enhancing the credibility of the program and improving trust between program

officials and beneficiaries. The GRS is also instrumental in improving targeting through the validation of beneficiaries of Pantawid Pamilya, evidenced by the de-listing of approximately 40,000 households—1 percent of the total active households in the program.

### Areas for Improvement

Despite these impressive strengths, in the spirit of continuous improvement, Pantawid Pamilya's GRD has identified several areas that can further improve the GRS.

**The GRS can be more user-friendly.** In practice, channels for submitting grievances do not protect the confidentiality and anonymity of complainants, despite the fact that this is a GRS principle. While face-to-face grievance submissions are suitable for complaints that relate to targeting, payments, and compliance verification (the top three grievance types), this channel excludes complaints regarding issues such as staff behavior and informal payments. The Pantawid Text Hotline allows complainants to submit anonymous complaints, but it is not yet a preferred channel. Further, the availability and user-friendliness of the existing, complex, grievance submission forms—only available in English in the offices of grievance officers and city/municipal links—can be enhanced. The GRD recently introduced a complaint submission form that is easy to fill out, which will be widely available to program beneficiaries/complainants in local languages at convenient locations, such as schools, health centers, barangay halls, and family development session venues as well as with parent leaders. Beneficiaries are also encouraged to use other channels, like the text hotline, that offer more anonymity.

**Direct communication with the complainant can be enhanced.** A good practice principle for effective grievance redress is to send an acknowledgement to the complainant—preferably in writing<sup>14</sup>—upon the receipt of the complaint as well as a response after the grievance has been resolved. This practice of universally acknowledging receipt of grievances is being standardized. Grievances received through the mail are now also being acknowledged and assigned a unique case tracking number. The UNICS-CRM allows for automatic generation of acknowledgements. The practice of sending written responses after final resolution is not common but is also being streamlined. Most grievance officers and city/municipal links tend to communicate with complainants verbally, informally, and often indirectly through parent leaders.

12. The existing GRS database does not capture the profile of the complainants. However, data on characteristics (e.g., indigenous people) exists in the targeting database and the indigenous people's unit. The GRD is considering linking these different databases to facilitate deeper analysis. This will allow the program to reach vulnerable populations more effectively.

13. The spot check methodology includes interviews with beneficiaries, parent leaders, city/municipal links, health providers, school teachers, banks, local governments, regional offices, and the central office, as well as a review of health facility records and school attendance records.

14. The acknowledgment usually contains the unique tracking number assigned to the grievance, the estimated time required for resolution, and the contact details of the official they should approach if the grievance is not resolved.



### **Grievance resolution timelines can be made more realistic.**

Initially, the stipulated resolution timeline for grievances was 26 days (DSWD 2012), regardless of the type of complaint. In most cases, resolution involves action by other departments over which the GRD has no authority. Consequently, in practice, most grievances were not resolved in the stipulated timeframe. Grievance redress officers were held accountable for grievance resolution, but other departments, without whose cooperation grievances can not be resolved, are not. In November 2013, a new set of resolution timelines specific to the type of complaint and clear-cut accountabilities for staff and other units involved were put in place to expedite grievance resolution. The new resolution timelines range from a minimum of 20 days to a maximum of 156 days.

**Grievance redress indicators can be client-centric.** A key performance indicator for staff responsible for grievance redress is the percentage of grievances resolved. This, compounded with an unrealistic stipulated resolution timeline, creates a strong tendency for treating grievances as resolved when they have been referred to other units or departments for further action, resulting in high rates of grievance resolution despite grievances not actually being resolved from the complainants' perspective. This leads to complainant dissatisfaction. Complainants are not interested in the intermediate steps, but in the final resolution of their grievances. The grievance tracking system can be made client-centric so that it focuses on final rather than partial resolutions. The GRD is undertaking the relevant assessments to reconcile this.

**Grievance data analysis capacity can be further enhanced to realize the full potential of the GRS as a performance management tool.** The rich repository of grievance data collected through diverse channels is an unparalleled source of information for evidence-based decision making to improve program performance. An Analysis and Evaluation Services Unit within the GRD captures and classifies a wide variety of grievance data in regular reports. The NPMO has recently taken steps to enhance the quality of these reports in order to improve analysis of the program and provide more disaggregated data. While aggregated figures at the national/regional level help in the understanding of overall trends, disaggregation at the lower levels (i.e., the cluster and municipal levels) can help identify problems and tailor context-specific solutions. Further, while the existing GRS database does not capture the profile of the complainants, data on characteristics (e.g., indigenous people) exists in the targeting database and the Indigenous People's Unit. These databases can be linked to facilitate deeper analysis,

thereby allowing the program to more effectively reach vulnerable populations.

**Frontline staff requires additional training on grievance management.** The GRS in Pantawid Pamilya has a fairly sophisticated arrangement for categorizing, routing, and tracking grievances. Although internal processes for resolving common grievances are well documented, field staff need more clarity on these processes in detail. As the primary grievance redress focal points, city/municipal links receive on-the-job technical assistance from the more experienced cluster/regional grievance officers on an as-needed basis. This ad hoc system works well in some provinces/clusters, but not in others. Additionally, there is a high rate of staff turnover/mobility due to the short duration of employment contracts. Further, while a GRS operational manual and a field handbook exist, they are not easily available to all city/municipal links and cluster grievance officers. The availability of reference material and training will go a long way in improving grievance redress skills and the productivity of existing and new staff.

### **Way Forward**

Pantawid Pamilya management is committed to the continuous improvement of the program and has embarked on a series of initiatives to further improve the existing GRS. A recent World Bank mission that conducted a rapid assessment of the GRS in November 2012 helped identify several areas for further improvement. Pantawid Pamilya management is now reviewing existing GRS business and quality assurance processes to move from a case-centric to a client-centric approach. An assessment of the existing organizational structure and human resource requirements is also underway. Finally, a review of the client relations management information system is being undertaken to facilitate the effective access and use of information.

## **7. Implications for Practitioners**

The operational lessons learned from the rapid expansion of Pantawid Pamilya may be relevant for practitioners interested in setting up grievance redress mechanisms in similar large-scale social programs. The key lessons are summarized in this section.

**Management of human resources.** GRSs for programs that serve a large number of beneficiaries tend to be more complex and hence require dedicated staff for grievance management. Staff in charge of grievance redress should be skilled and professional. Therefore, project management should identify high-caliber staff at all levels of their projects, assign them responsibilities for handling grievances, and create incentives to



retain them. Setting up a small grievance management unit at the central level helps in the effective roll-out of GRS-related activities. At lower levels of the project, existing project staff can be assigned grievance redress functions. Volunteer community members—such as Pantawid Pamilya’s parent leaders—can also be trained to undertake basic grievance redress activities. The Pantawid Pamilya’s case is a robust example of a well-functioning multilevel GRS with a data collection and a verification system. However, in lower-capacity environments, it is better to start small and build on existing and even informal mechanisms for redress in selected areas.

**Coordination with other departments and ministries.** A number of interdepartmental coordination issues and challenges exist in large programs like Pantawid Pamilya that hamper the effectiveness of a GRS. While some can be addressed within the GRS structure, most concern other departments of the program and require collective action by management. Some also require the attention of other line ministries. Consequently, holding the GRS structure accountable for grievance resolution is not sufficient. Mechanisms and incentives are required for other departments and line ministries to act on grievances for smooth interdepartmental coordination. Additionally, higher-level bureaucratic and political support—to resolve higher-level grievances, to ensure interdepartmental coordination, and to drive required systemic changes—are critical. Mechanisms to foster such support include educating parliamentarians, identifying and fostering champions, and increasing meaningful public awareness on the GRS.

**The GRS as a performance management tool.** Program management needs to recognize the utility of a GRS as a tool to improve program performance. This means that staff needs to change their perceptions on grievances and the GRS. Citizens should be encouraged to file their grievances. If collected and analyzed properly, grievances and other stakeholder feedback provide a pulse on program implementation and performance. Equally importantly, they help in the understanding of how the GRS is functioning. Specific incentives must be created for program and GRS staff at all levels to expeditiously, appropriately, and satisfactorily resolve grievances. Likewise, incentives should also help to prevent the recurrence of similar grievances. The underlying idea of building in incentives is to motivate staff to identify and implement ways to continually improve program performance.

**The GRS as a complement to other internal controls.** A grievance redress system alone is not a panacea. Even a

well-designed and fully functional GRS cannot capture all the problems faced by a large program. Experience suggests that some types of grievances are more likely than others to be underreported because of their sensitivity. Grievances related to misdemeanors and external pressures are cases in point. If misdemeanors and external pressures are widespread and systemic, and if a large number of people are affected in a certain area, then it is likely that the GRS will pick up the problem because some complaints will be filed. However, if the practice is isolated and sporadic across several geographic areas with few people affected, the GRS may not capture the problem because people may be reluctant to file complaints. The GRS must be complemented with other tools, such as financial controls, regular monitoring, and spot checks, so that isolated and sporadic cases can be detected or prevented.

**GRS monitoring and quality assurance.** Monitoring is the cornerstone of an effective GRS. Broadly speaking, these are the three key stages in the GRS monitoring process: data collection, analysis, and reporting. Due to the complexity of large programs, several issues and challenges that relate to integrating data collection/management, developing analytical capacity, and measuring the quality of grievance handling are likely to emerge as a program rapidly expands. Developing operational procedures, guidelines, and flowcharts for standardizing grievance management helps with quality control. Finally, the performance of the GRS should not be solely measured by the number of grievances received or resolved but should also include complainant satisfaction.

**Disseminating information about the GRS.** The GRS should focus on creating awareness of beneficiaries about the GRS, its processes, organizational structure, resolution timelines, appellate procedures, and so on. Often, management feels that any communication regarding the GRS results in adverse publicity. This may be the case in the immediate term, but not so over the medium to long term when a well-functioning GRS enhances program visibility and credibility. Properly sequencing GRS-related communication activities can prevent potential adverse publicity. Providing information to potential GRS users about actions that have been taken to resolve grievances enhances the trust of beneficiaries in the system, encouraging and reassuring them to use the GRS. Effective grievance redress mechanisms often provide feedback by contacting the complainant directly (if his/her identity is known) and/or posting the results of cases in high-profile locations and conveying the results through radio broadcasts and other media. They also inform GRS users about their right to appeal if they are dissatisfied with decisions.



## Annex 1. Conditions for Receiving Cash Grants

To take advantage of the cash grants available under Pantawid Pamilya, beneficiaries should comply with the following conditions:

- Pregnant women must avail themselves of pre- and post-natal care and be attended by a trained health professional during childbirth;
- Parents must attend family development sessions;<sup>14</sup>
- Children 0–5 years old must receive regular growth monitoring check-ups and vaccines;
- Children 3–14 years old must enroll in day care, pre-school, elementary, or high school and must attend at least 85 percent of the time;

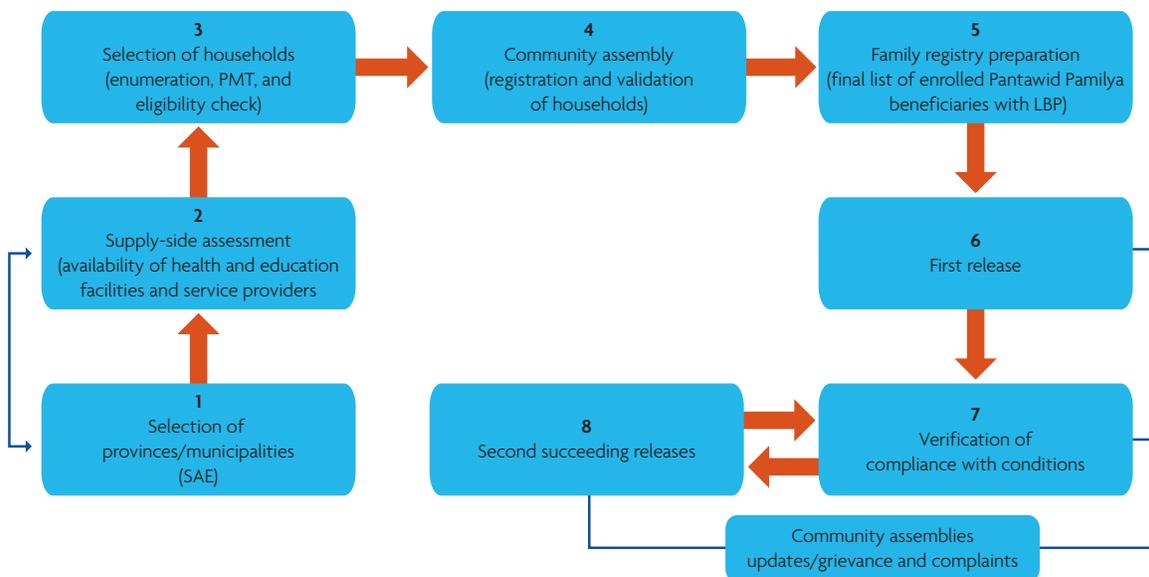
- Children 6–14 years old must receive deworming pills twice per year.
- The health grant is a lump sum of PhP 500 (US\$11) per month per household, and the education grant is PhP 300 (US\$7) per month per child, to a maximum of three children per household. Beginning in June 2014, the education grant is extended to 18-year-olds (until high school), with an increased amount of PhP 500 per month per child in high school.

Source: DSWD 2012 with updates in 2014.

## Annex 2. The Pantawid Pamilya Implementation Cycle

Pantawid Pamilya follows an eight-step implementation cycle. In Step 1, geographic targeting was used to roll out the program in phases, prioritizing poor province and municipalities to start with, based on poverty incidence (Small Area Estimate produced by NSCB).<sup>15</sup> In Step 2, the program undertakes a supply-side assessment of health and education systems at the city/municipality, and barangay/village level to ensure that local government units and key partner agencies are willing and able to meet the increasing demands of the new beneficiaries. In Step 3, once the geographical areas are identified, eligible households are selected through the Proxy Means Test (PMT), which examines each household through certain variables, such as ownership of assets, type of housing, education of household members, and access to water. Households are considered

eligible if they are classified as poor based on Listahanan data, include children up to 14 years old and/or a pregnant woman, and agree to meet program conditions (specified in annex 1). In Step 4, eligible households are validated and registered in a community assembly meeting, and in Step 5, the list of beneficiary households is confirmed and finalized by the NPMO within two weeks. In Step 6, grants are released to beneficiary households without conditions. Step 7 involves compliance verification that provides regular feedback on the beneficiaries' status and compliance to program conditions. Compliance verification is carried out every two months by the DSWD and the education and health service providers. Step 8 involves the release of succeeding cash grants after the verification of compliance of program conditions is completed.



Source: DSWD 2012.

14. As a unique feature of the program, family development sessions serve as important venues for enhancing beneficiaries' knowledge and skills, allowing them to become more productive and responsive in meeting family needs and enabling them to perform their parental roles and responsibilities.

15. Poor provinces, municipalities, and cities are selected based on poverty incidence according to 2003 Small Area Estimates produced by the National Statistical Coordination Board.



### Annex 3. Risks and Mitigation Measures in Pantawid Pamilya

Implementation Process	Potential Risks	Mitigation Measures
<p><b>Geographic targeting</b> sets priority areas in which program is rolled out in phases based on incidence of poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government officials or politicians may implement the CCT program in favored areas (corruption).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Geographic areas are selected based on official statistics on poverty incidence.</li> <li>Corruption cases are referred to the GRS unit in the NPMO or to regional grievance committees.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Politicians may claim credit for the CCT program to manipulate their constituency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mass communication efforts, especially before elections, inform citizens of this national, politically unbiased program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>A supply-side assessment</b> ensures that beneficiaries have access to health and education services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate education and health services do not allow beneficiaries to comply with program conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DSWD conducts supply-side assessment.</li> <li>Local government units commit to adequate provisions of health and education services through a memorandum of agreement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Selection of poor households</b> to be eligible beneficiaries based on proxy means test and if household includes children or pregnant women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households may provide false information to be eligible for the program (fraud).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary selection is strictly based on a proxy means test using observable characteristics.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion errors include non-poor in the program.</li> <li>Exclusion errors exclude actual poor from the program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The GRS receives grievances related to inclusion/exclusion errors.</li> <li>Data from household assessments is verified to rectify errors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Registration of beneficiary households</b> through community assemblies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Politician may register supporters or exclude opponents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Households are centrally selected by DSWD based on standardized criteria and without political interference.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household may not report updated status to keep eligibility for receiving CCT grants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expedited updates capture changes in eligibility status of beneficiaries.</li> <li>Education and health facilities monitor registered household members.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Compliance verification</b> through schools and health centers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools and health centers may not report compliance verification of beneficiaries.</li> <li>Fraud and errors in filling and encoding compliance verification forms can occur.</li> <li>Staffing and MIS may not be adequate to handle compliance processing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardized and detailed timelines are implemented for compliance verification.</li> <li>Compliance-related grievances are received by the GRS and investigations are conducted to determine whether or not beneficiaries actually complied with program conditions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Payments</b> generated based on the results of compliance verification; grants received via cash card or over the counter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weak processing capacity of implementation agency and financial conduits may result in delays and inaccuracies in payouts to beneficiaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial conduits are strengthened and diversified to allow for the efficient and timely delivery of grants to beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiaries may be charged illegal fees or obliged to give shares to others without valid reasons (extortion).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payment-related complaints are received by the GRS that are validated with payroll, compliance results, and beneficiary information.</li> <li>Grants are retroactively processed to beneficiaries as needed, based on validation.</li> </ul>

Source: Updated by authors based on inputs from Arulpragasam et al. 2011.



## Annex 4. Common Grievance Types and their Resolution

Grievance Relates to	Action by	Process for Validation and Resolution
Schools and health centers (supply side)	Advisory Committee <sup>a</sup>	Advisory committee discusses and addresses issues related to the provision of education and health services through additional investments and service improvement.
Household selection—exclusion error (exclusion of poor from program)	National Household Targeting Office, Pantawid Pamilya project management office, and/or municipality/city	The National Household Targeting Office verifies whether complainant households are included in the targeting database. If not, complainants are informed about the next household assessment. In the meantime, they are referred to the municipality/city for other available social services. If they are, the original household assessment result and poverty status of the households are validated. If the households are confirmed as poor, they are included in the program after a final eligibility check conducted by the Pantawid Pamilya PMO.
Household selection— inclusion error (inclusion of non-poor in program)	Pantawid Pamilya project management office and city/municipal grievance committee	The project management office verifies data from the original household assessment results and targeting database. If there appears to be an error, household assessment is conducted again. Results from the original household assessment and reconducted household assessment are provided to the city/ municipal grievance committee for deliberation and final resolution.
Compliance and payment (non-payment, reduced payment, or delays in payment)	Pantawid Pamilya project management office	The Pantawid Pamilya project management office verifies payment, compliance data, and/or registration data. Retroactive payment is processed if beneficiaries have complied with conditions or if compliance was beyond their control (e.g., service providers made errors in filling out compliance forms, if there were errors in MIS processing, etc.).
Corruption	Pantawid Pamilya national project management office and regional grievance committee	The NPMO and regional grievance committee take appropriate action and forward grievance to appropriate agency for further investigation, if warranted.

a. Given that health is decentralized to municipalities, grievances related to health services are referred to the municipal advisory committee. Grievances related to education are referred to the regional advisory committee. In parallel, supply-side gaps related to health and education are also addressed at the national advisory committee.

Source: Authors' compilation.



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### Acknowledgments

This note was prepared by Darshana Patel, Yuko Okamura, Shanna Elaine B. Rogan, and Sanjay Agarwal of the World Bank under the overall guidance of Helene Grandvoinet. The authors are grateful to the peer reviewers of the note Patricia Fernandes, Simon Carl O'Meally, Aleksandra Posarac, and Matthew James Keir Stephens for their constructive comments, and to Nazmul Chaudhury, Motoky Hayakawa, and Susan Wong for their invaluable insights and contributions. The note would have not been possible without the active cooperation and invaluable contributions of a large number of officials and employees at all levels of the Department of Social Welfare Development, Philippines, who work on Pantawid Pamilya and its GRS. In particular, the authors would like to express their gratitude to Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman, the National Project Director Rodora Babaran, and Grievance Redress Division Head Asuncion D. Basco and her staff. Lastly, the authors are grateful to Laura Johnson for excellent editorial support, design, and formatting assistance. This case study further benefited from GPF funding provided by the GAC-in-Operations Program. All errors and omissions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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