

A CRITIQUE OF THE KALAHI PROGRAM

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Purpose

This paper analyzes the program components, strategies and structures of the KALAHI (*Kapit-bisig Laban sa Kahirapan*) Program, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's response to alleviate poverty in the Philippines. This also examines the status of its implementation, with the end in view of defining its strengths, the areas where improvements could be made, and ultimately be able to provide recommendations in order to refine or enhance its design and the process of implementation.

The sources of information include: review of secondary materials and interview of key informants.

Background

Components. The KALAHI Program is one of President Arroyo's priority programs, mainly undertaken through the process of "raising the poor's share in the country's resources and their access to public services" (NAPCa 2001). KALAHI has identified five "strategies" which actually intersect social, economic, and administrative development requirements of the poor. These are through:

- **Asset reform** by redistributing land and credit resources to the poor based on existing government programs like agrarian reform, protection of fisherfolks, social housing for the urban poor, and programs for the indigenous peoples;
- **Human development services** through access to basic services like education, health, nutrition, shelter, water, sanitation and electrification, with the end in view of "increasing the capacities of the poor" (NAPCa 2001).
- **Employment and livelihood** by creating job opportunities through agriculture and fisheries; apart from extending seed capital for small businesses;

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- **Participation in governance of basic sectors** by providing them opportunities to be represented in local government bodies, policy making bodies, and being able to recognize different ethno-linguistic groups; and
- **Social protection and security against violence** by providing social safety nets through "quick response basic services" (i.e., food aid, emergency

employment, medical services, etc.) to the poor to reduce the “risk and vulnerability” brought about by economic shocks and natural and human-caused disasters. Longer-term assurance for social security is to be provided by extending them health insurance.

Immediate response to victims of violence and those displaced by shall also be provided.

In terms of strategies, KALAH I basically subscribes to the “convergence” approach earlier propagated in the Social Reform Agenda (SRA), as it formally recognizes the need for “joint programming, implementation, and monitoring among national and local agencies, civil society sectors and people’s organizations in the poor communities.”

It also sustains the principle of “focused targeting” as it considers the need to deliver services to the “poorest municipalities and barangays”.

However, KALAH I considers as its added feature that of “applying an “expanded strategy” as it combines basic services, asset reform and social protection in the intervention.

Further, it argues that it would like to make its intervention “accelerated” by responding *immediately* to the most pressing problems of the community.

Structure. Structurally, the KALAH I is operationally managed by a composite team from four agencies such as the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP), the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), under the coordination of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC). Other agencies also participate in providing services to the poor communities such as the: Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Housing Urban and Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), National Food Authority (NFA), National Youth Commission (NYC), Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Philippine Credit Finance Corporation (PCFC), Philippine Information Agency (PIA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ). In rural areas, such agencies are being tapped as: Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Agriculture (DAR), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

In the pilot areas, KALAH I Workers are deployed to oversee the implementation of the projects and to ensure the mobilization of community participation, including those of the local government.

Process of Implementation. Pilot-testing of the KALAH I Program targets 30 urban poor barangays in seven cities and three municipalities, all in the National Capital Region which were identified with the assistance of the PCUP. Initial implementation entailed distribution of Kahilingan Sheets among members of the community who participated in the public forum, to disclose the urgent problems of the locality. Eventually, some localities applied the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) Information System Information System. However, coverage of the families had not been done in a systematic way, according to one key information since those who were available were the ones targeted to answer the MBN forms, rather than saturating all the households like what is normally undertaken in localities covered by the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS).

CIDSS is a legislated program embodied in Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act which caters to the basic needs of the poor in three poorest barangays in all 5th and 6th class municipalities, including selected pockets in urban centers. It has distinguished itself for having applied a participatory strategy; convergence of efforts of national and local governments, non-government organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations; utilization of Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) information system composed of 33 indicators as a basis for planning; and, focused targeting of the poorest families using MBN indicators.

To ensure that there is involvement on the part of the community in the planning process, some localities proceeded to community mobilization, like the process adopted in CIDSS. However, participatory planning normally conducted in CIDSS has not yet been fully installed.

A typical launching day for the KALAH I entails distribution of food packs, medical mission, and dissemination of information regarding employment opportunities, with different government participants indicating pledges to support the key problems identified in Kahilingan Sheets or MBN forms. Apart from commitments given by support agencies, local governments also make pledges to support the program such as for instance: the enforcement of ordinances on curfew ordinances for the young in a barangay in Makati City, to conduct community dialogues to thresh out action points for the immediate solution of identified problems such as the one conducted in an area in Tondo; and, asking for assistance from a congressman to set up public schools as mentioned in a site in Marikina City. However, the participation and pledging of people's organizations is sparse since not all localities had been mobilized for community participation.

The other phase of KALAH I is its implementation in the rural areas. This shall take into consideration: the means for identifying priority target communities and poor sectors in these communities and the means for involving the poor communities and civil society sectors in planning and monitoring of the programs and services (NAPCa: 2001).

There is also a plan to have a wider coverage of KALAH I under the support of the World Bank, which shall be patterned after the combined features of CIDSS and a successful poverty program in Indonesia called the Kecamatan Development Program (KDP). The proposed program shall be called *KKB or Kapangyarihan at Kaunlaran sa Barangay*, which is estimated to cover about 500 municipalities. A major improvement in the KKB would be the provision of financial support to barangays without requiring the endorsement of intermediate structures, like the region, which is a feature of the CIDSS.

To ensure that community members have a direct role to play in crafting the proposed projects, approval shall not depend on local officials and/or technical people from government, above the barangay. The decision shall be based on a pooled effort of representatives of the different barangays, composed of the leaders of people's organizations and to a limited extent, its local officials, numbering about three per barangay. These different representatives will review and prioritize proposals from the different barangays. The details of the inter-barangay type of council that will review and prioritize the project proposals to be submitted for funding within a given financial ceiling, are still being worked out.

Basic Sector Interface. Representatives from fourteen basic sectors had been invited to participate in a multisectoral forum in July in order to determine their representatives who will assume the role in monitoring the performance of KALAH I. These fourteen sectors had been

officially identified as the groups which should be represented in the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Program as institutionalized in Republic Act 8425. These sectors include:

- women,
- children,
- youth and students,
- persons with disabilities,
- victims of disaster and calamities,
- urban poor,
- senior citizens,
- farmers,
- fisherfolks,
- indigenous peoples,
- informal labor,
- formal labor
- nongovernment organizations, and
- cooperatives.

At least three representatives per island grouping of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao were elected in each sector by the delegation to this forum. (See NAPCb 2001: 4). A total of 12 representatives constitutes each basic sector council, with the exception of the indigenous peoples whose representatives were based on the ethnographic regions (such as the Cordillera Administrative Region, Region II, Rest of Luzon, Visayas, Central Mindanao and Southeastern Mindanao) and the migrant sectors (i.e., NCR-based labor organization representatives, regional communication center representatives, and private/public/migrant sector worker representatives). Dubbed as the KALAH I Consultative Council, this structure is treated as an “interim structure that will function until January 31, 2002” (NAPCb, 2001: 4). This structure is considered as “independent” and has no relation with the NAPC sectoral representation (NAPCb, 2001: 4).

However, issues raised in the multisectoral forum concerned the relationship of the basic sector representatives in KALAH I vis-à-vis the commissioners of the NAPC. A participant was fearful that creating this consultative council could only “reinforce the conflict and factionalism within the sectors” (NAPCb 2001: 21). A NAPC representative argued that President Arroyo directed for the “reconstitution of the basic sectors” because of flawed selection process adopted by the past administration (NAPCb 2001: 21). However, another basic sector representative retorted that there is a Department of Justice Opinion which states that the all executive orders signed by the former president are “executory and valid” (NAPCb 2001: 21).

Laudable Features

There are laudable features in the KALAH I program. For one thing, it is able to intersect the different program components of Social Reform Agenda (SRA) under the Ramos administration which was legislated into a republic act in 1997. While each of these programs was implemented before, the KALAH I ensures that all these components are responded to, where necessary, in target localities. The SRA tended to be implemented per program component, rather than what it wanted to achieve: converge all the different flagship programs in a target locality, where necessary.

The KALAH I program offers projects pertaining to asset reform, human development services, employment and livelihood, and governance. For instance, asset reform which was embodied in the SRA, includes such program areas as agrarian reform, aquatic reform, housing,

and response to ancestral domain claim areas. Human development services incorporate such services as health, education and water and sanitation, which are also addressed in SRA. However, KALAH I program has also added infrastructures services such as *kuryente sa barangay* or electrification and anti-flooding program under human development services.

Second, KALAH I encompasses a fifth program component called social protection and security, which entails a quick response to the “immediate effects of economic shocks and natural and human-caused disasters such as the provision of food aid and basic services as social safety nets for vulnerable groups.” And for the long term, it also offers social security and insurance programs for access to basic services such as the provision of health insurance. The provision of security among those victimized by violence is also highlighted under the umbrella of social protection. This component ensures that those who necessitate immediate or emergency support are extended relief services.

Third, KALAH I entails convergent effort of the different agencies of the national government and those of the locality, a feature which can also be witnessed in the Social Reform Agenda.

Fourth, it continues to uphold the essence of participatory governance, but this time ensuring that the basic sectors are represented in local government and in economic policy making bodies. This is presently manifested in the Consultative Councils where representatives per broad islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao are present. In the implementation of CIDSS, there was an executive order which mandated representation of the basic sectors, particularly women, children, youth and students, persons with disabilities, victims of disaster and calamities, senior citizens, and urban poor in each interagency body in CIDSS in each level of government. This was embodied in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Executive Order 443 passed on July 1998.

Fifth, it implements programs that capitalizes on existing resources of the different offices and therefore ensures flow of services to the different groups that will be targeted for prioritization. However, it is another matter to consider if there are enough funds to cover the requirements of the program and if the different institutions have adequate resources to channel to KALAH I.

Areas for Improvement

Considering that the program is still in its incipient stage of implementation, with selected groups of urban communities being initially targeted for piloting, the following are the areas where improvements/modifications can take place.

First, there is a need to distinguish program components from management strategies/approaches that enhance the delivery of services to the target clientele. KALAH I brief does not make a distinction between the two. In fact, the program components are also labeled as strategies. On the other hand, the “strategies” or approaches it avows to implement include: 1) being expanded—as it provides basic services in conjunction with asset reform, participation in governance and social protection; 2) being accelerated—by responding immediately to the most pressing problems and issues of poorest communities; and, 3) focused—by ensuring that the poorest municipalities and barangays are targeted by the intervention.

Second, in terms of program components, the delivery of human development services incorporates electrification, waste management services and anti-flooding program. The latter

projects pertain to infrastructures and redound to improvement of the entire community rather than of the poor households directly. There is a separate program component that deals with “capital and infrastructure provision for marginalized sectors in urban and rural poor areas.” In the “strategy” of “social protection and security from violence,” “barangay-based small infrastructure and services” are also undertaken.

Third, there is a lack of clarity in terms of the distinction between the fast-track measures for social protection and security from violence; and, the other programs which will be delivered to other poor groups that do not necessitate emergency relief. There are other programs that can not be subjected to quick relief like asset reform. Or is it really the intention of the program to implement mainly fast-track and quick relief interventions to all groups being the peculiar features it avows to implement?

Fourth, the criteria for identifying target beneficiaries need clarification. This set of criteria can ensure that the resources being provided—like rice distribution, cash/food for work and social security to informal sector—are being extended to those who deserve immediate services, identified in an objective manner. Furthermore, sheer provision of these resources without using solid information of need might only lead to transfer of resources to those who are not deserving of assistance. Furthermore, lack of clarity regarding the corresponding responsibility on the part of the community to pursue self-reliant development initiatives, can lead to further mendicancy and make the delivery of services appear as doleouts.

While Kahilingan Sheets had been disseminated to some individuals in pilot urban areas in the National Capital Region, this could be filled up by individuals who are not legitimate members of the community and who might expect to benefit from the services in the program package. In some pilot areas, some families had a follow up of their needs in terms of the MBN Information Sheet adopted in the CIDSS. However, this was not filled up by all families in the target area and was not implemented according to the process adopted in the CIDSS approach which applies a participatory process. CIDSS does not automatically respond to an unmet need without the benefit of community assessment of the root cause of the problem. CIDSS also engages community participation in defining the services to respond to the unmet needs.

Fifth, program-wise, there is no differentiation in terms of the program components for the urban and rural poor. While a set of program components had been designated to be delivered to the pilot urban areas for quick relief purposes (i.e., medical mission, food pack, dissemination of employment opportunities), it can be anticipated that there could be a bifurcation of needs between rural and urban communities for quick relief. This could also be said of long-term program requirements. For instance, the poor in the countryside would require agrarian reform. The poor in urban areas could prioritize housing and employment. Thus, pilot-testing in urban areas would be helpful for replication in other urban centers and may be difficult to duplicate for rural areas.

Sixth, there is a separate discussion on the Youth Component which aims to develop social values and a sense of self-worth among the urban and rural poor youth. This is a component that is not incorporated in the matrix on the profile of the program although there is a separate “strategy” on participation that incorporates capacity building and involvement of sectors, of which the youth is considered as one of the basic sectors. The same can also be said of the KALAHI cultural component which is discussed separately like the Youth Component.

Seventh, there is a need to delineate how KALAHI relates with other programs on poverty, such as the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) which is

legally mandated to operate in poorest barangays of fifth and sixth class municipalities, and other programs on agrarian reform and housing, as part of the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act.

Eight, the mechanism of converging different groups can overlap with other interagency bodies that deal with poverty, such as the interagency body in CIDSS areas, and the technical working group on MBN in other local government units which still implement MBN parallel to CIDSS. Also, the basic sector Consultative Council has a very short lifespan since it will only exist until January 2002. Meanwhile, meaningful participation on the part of the NAPC basic sector representatives will expectedly be demanded and can cause conflict and dissension with the creation of this new Consultative Council.

Ninth, there is lack of clarity regarding the integration of the participatory process in the implementation of the different programs in target areas. The mechanism for the participatory process have yet to be spelled out, although, in some pilot urban areas, community interface was facilitated by KALAHIs workers, springing from the CIDSS principles, though not as extensively as the CIDSS intervention process.

Recommendations

Considering, these issues regarding KALAHIs, the following are the suggested measures to enhance its implementation:

1. Label the major strategies as program components to distinguish them from the methodologies/approaches to deal with the program—such as convergence, focused targeting, and expansion of SRA.
2. Infrastructures services like electrification and anti-flood measures should not be tucked in under human development services, as the latter primarily cater to improving non-material aspects of quality of life of individuals and families. These measures can be incorporated under asset reform, distinguishing:
 - asset reform that caters to particular sectors of the community (i.e., fisherfolks, farmers); and,
 - assets that will redound to the good of a cross-section of the basic sectors, like what electrification and anti-flooding can do.
3. There should be a clarification of the processes that will be applied in order to identify the poverty groups that will be given priority attention, preferably using existing tools to ascertain the quality of life of the families in the community. This can rely on existing community-based information monitoring system, such as MBN approach as implemented in CIDSS, MBN as implemented in other localities outside of CIDSS intervention, and MBN as modified in pilot areas using the Community based Poverty Indicator Monitoring System (CBPIMS).

Selection process of poor families in urban communities can be distinguished from rural barangays, since the former may not be able to disclose the problem of pockets of poverty using macro-data alone. Information on GNP for cities could

appear high but may not be able to disclose numerous persons residing in slum/squatter areas. In the case of Quezon City, for instance, the total number of poor persons is equivalent to the population of the Cordillera Administrative Region (DOH-UP-CPH 1995) and constituted 54% of the population in the city.

Urban centers can use geo-information system to depict the location of pockets of poverty groups—with prioritization being based on number of persons in these locations and vulnerability. Thereafter, the MBN can be implemented to all the families in the locality, using the CIDSS approach, to ensure the application of the participatory process

Rural barangays, can be initially identified, using available data on health (i.e., average income, infant mortality rate, average education). Thereafter, MBN data collection can be implemented in the different households in the target barangay, to identify the priority needs and to determine the families requiring immediate assistance.

4. There is a need to consolidate the information system of MBN as applied in CIDSS, CBPIMS and non-CIDSS areas to provide direction to target areas in CIDSS, KALAHI and other localities not covered by CIDSS/KALAHI. CBPIMS can be adopted as the information tool that could be implemented in CIDSS and KALAHI areas since it has been simplified and officially tested by the National Statistics Office. Furthermore, CBPIMS is able to determine the number of persons afflicted by MBN problems, which the MBN information system in CIDSS is not able to do since unmet MBNs are identified on a family basis. However, adoption of CBPIMS should be able to ensure the application of CIDSS processes such as:

- Community preparation for community participation in situation analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation;
- Convergence efforts of the different sectors—government, nongovernment organizations and basic sector groups; and,
- Focused targeting of the most deprived members of the community using MBN indicators.

CBPIMS can be improved by adding information on the profile of other sectors, which the forms are not able to capture. CBPIMS can include information on persons with disabilities in a family; and indications of employment in each family to be able to distinguish who are farmers, fisherfolks, children in school, children at work, etc. These data will enable the determination of the sectors that dominate in a locality and lead to a differentiation of the specific needs of the dominant sectors that have to be attended to.

Sectoral profiles can be done, where necessary, by the different basic sectors. Initiatives to spell out more specific needs of particular sectors can be done by interested stakeholders, such as the one undertaken by the Country Program for Children to define the attainment of “child-friendly indicators” in local government units.

5. The monitoring system can be improved by distinguishing MBN of the family as against, MBN for facilities that should be existent in the community—such as average number of Barangay Health Station that should serve a given population; average number of Day Care Center to the total number of children, garbage disposal system, sewerage system, electrification, etc.

Furthermore, the community profile adopted in CBPIMS is helpful in terms of identifying the number of persons who are in special need such as: victims of crime against person and property, victims of calamity, etc. *However, this information should be regularly collected to serve as targets for quick relief measures of the program.*

6. There is a need to show the relationship between KALAHÍ and other existing programs on poverty alleviation—such as CIDSS, agrarian reform, microfinance, etc., which had been legitimized in the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act. It can be indicated that KALAHÍ converges all these different programs in target localities, which had not been undertaken in previous interventions. It can be stressed that KALAHÍ aims to ensure convergence of these different programs, to showcase the importance of implementing the existing programs in a multi-sectoral and area-based manner. KALAHÍ can also distinguish itself by addressing the needs of the most vulnerable localities requiring emergency relief, separate from other poor families where emergency relief may not be necessary.

However, KALAHÍ should avoid extending quick relief services to individuals/families who do not have sufficient evidence of requiring “quick relief” to ensure that provision of emergency services really cater to those who are qualified to get benefits.

7. There is a need to ensure that services are being offered based on the needs of the community through a participatory process, ensuring that community and local government counterparts are spelled out, to ensure self-reliant processes in poverty alleviation, like what CIDSS areas had been able to effectively do. There should be a more systematic way of implementing CIDSS approach in KALAHÍ areas to ensure that the essence of the approach is consistently applied in these localities.
8. There is a need to work with existing structures in poverty alleviation to avoid duplication or overlap of initiatives. Enhancing existing structures can be done, where necessary to ensure that multi-sectoral services are addressed in the poverty alleviation efforts, if convergence has not been effectively done in these local government units.
9. There is a need to define quick-response intervention where government provides amenities immediately, without requiring initially, community participation in governance. This intervention could be for such groups being displaced by calamities and armed conflict, and those victimized by crime against person/property. However, this should be immediately followed by community preparation activities to ensure that subsequent services will be planned, implemented and monitored, based on a participatory process, to ensure self-reliant initiatives.

In other localities (urban and rural) where such emergency problems are not existent, the preparation for the participatory process can be immediately undertaken, after a careful selection of the localities that will be given priority attention, before services are extended.

Special desks can be opened to respond to individuals who are victimized by violation against persons (i.e., rape) even in areas that are not targeted by KALAH I as they need quick assistance and or relief.

10. Treat program components for the youth and socio-linguistic group not as a separate feature and as parallel to other basic “strategies” like asset reform and human development. These can be subsumed under governance since the objective is to conduct capacity building activities and to ensure that basic sectors (which include the youth and indigenous groups) as distinct sectors whose needs are to be addressed, and are legitimate participants in social reform and poverty alleviation.
11. Representation of various ethno-linguistic groups in governance of poverty programs in KALAH I could be assured by advocating to the different basic sector assemblies under the NAPC to consider this commitment. Identification of the representatives to the different basic sector assemblies can take into consideration equity in the distribution of representatives from the different ethno-linguistic groups, similar to the constitution of the KALAH I Consultative Council.
12. There is a need to distinguish the representation of NGOs in the NAPC and its counterpart coordinative bodies in lower government levels. Selection of NGOs should take into consideration varying types such as: development NGOs, professional groups, religious groups and academe. Furthermore, there is a need to ensure that NGOs are represented as NGOs and not as representatives of other basic sectors. Representations of marginalized basic sectors should originate from their own group and need not depend on NGOs to be their spokespersons.

NGOs need not be treated as “basic sectors,” the latter being referred to as “disadvantaged sectors” of Philippine society. Rather, NGOs can be considered as partner institutions in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring/evaluation.

In a similar manner, cooperatives need not be considered as “basic sectors” but as partner institutions in governance since they need not be considered as disadvantaged.

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