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Country Report

*Philippines**

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Country Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, one of the distinct traits which remains to be entrenched in Filipino families, is the high regard for older persons. Considering the family as a basic unit of society, the role being played by the elderly in the development of their families and communities can never be downplayed. In recognition of their wisdom and worth, the country fully counts older persons as active part of its human resource; as such, their welfare and protection are emergent concerns of the national government.

It has been acknowledged that setting policy directions would entail a four-fold approach: a) understanding the issues and implications of population ageing on society; b) the preparation of the population for an ageing process that is productive and fulfilling; c) the development of a service infrastructure and environment based on traditional and modern institutions that will meet present and future needs; and d) the delivery of essential services needed by the growing number of senior citizens.

To respond to the challenges of an ageing population, the country has developed programs and championed legislative actions enhancing the well being of older persons while promoting their significant contributions. Guided by the Philippine Constitution, laws that recognize the positive role of older persons in the society have been enacted, encouraging them to contribute to nation-building and

mobilize families and the communities they live with and to re-affirm the Filipino tradition of caring for older persons.

The Philippines continues to strengthen its efforts towards the promotion of multi-generational solidarity enhancing the social position of older persons in the community, the improvement of health and nutritional benefits for them, and actualization of opportunities and active participation in national development.

Most elderly Filipinos live with their children, spouse or other relatives. In a developing country like the Philippines, the quality of life of older persons depends largely on the family support system. The family and the home are the pivotal points of support and care among older persons and younger generations. Thus far, Filipino children remain as the caretakers and providers of support to their aging parents. With this, constancy of filial support of children to parents can hardly be disregarded.

The Philippine government has been successful in initiating and facilitating efforts for the promotion of older persons' welfare. Having an Inter-Agency Committee has also been an effective mechanism as it provides opportunity for the representatives of the older persons sector and the government to interact on a quarterly basis to discuss and develop interventions or actions appropriate to emerging issues and concerns. The National Poverty Sectoral Council for Older Persons has been established to involve the older persons in the planning and implementation of programs and activities to address poverty issues of this sector.

II. NATIONAL SITUATIONER

There were 4.6 million senior citizens accounting for almost 6 percent of the Philippine population in 2000. The elderly population growth rate from 1995 to 2000 is 4.39% per annum. If such growth rate continues, the number of senior citizens is expected to reach seven million in 2010 and to double to 9.2 million in 2016. With such projected increase, the ageing of the Philippine population pose growing social and economic challenges. The increase in population in absolute and relative terms poses challenges in both developmental and humanitarian needs of senior citizens requiring special attention.

It is universally acknowledged that the family plays a unique role in supporting the older persons. Traditionally, the Filipino family has a built-in system of old-age support 1) having a family that respect its elders to begin with; 2) bilaterally extended family that is close-knit; and 3) the acceptance of the daughter, daughter-in-law or female spouse as the primary care-giver. However, even these built-in, expected systems of old-age support characterized as largely human-resource based, are eroding.

There are many factors that have adversely affected the capacity of the family to support and care for its senior members. Unemployment and poorly paying jobs force productive citizens to choose overseas options. Traditionally, full-time care giving family members are by necessity taking employment outside the home and declining economic opportunity have made the youth rethink of marriage and reduce their family size.

Health Characteristics

Statistical figures show that the life expectancy at birth and at age 60 has been increasing. In 2002, it was recorded at 66.9 years for males and 72.2 for females. And while female older persons tend to live longer than the males, it appears that more females are disposed to live longer, inactive lives, except at age 80 years.

In a 2000 survey conducted by the University of the Philippines – College of Public Health and the country's Department of Health (DOH), roughly 63 percent of 2,460 elderly persons interviewed said they felt healthy, especially those from rural Luzon and urban Mindanao. The perception of health was lowest in rural and urban Visayas, and the Manila-National Capital Region.

It was reported that 20 percent of the respondents had accidents, injuries, or chronic illnesses that affected their daily activities. Among those who experienced accidents, injuries, and illnesses, the following conditions were frequently cited: respiratory problems (4.2 percent), neurologic problems (3.5 percent), musculo-skeletal complaints (2.7 percent), cardio-vascular disease (2.6 percent), sensory impairment (1.8 percent) and trauma (1.7 percent). The most common type of disability affecting elderly people is poor eyesight or low vision at 54.1 percent. The incidence of poor vision is higher in males at 51.2 percent than in females at 56.5 percent.

Older persons in rural areas were generally more capable of undertaking activities related to independent living, with the exception of some respondents from Luzon. Walking was found to be the most difficult activity for older persons as a group. Sixty-seven percent are able to undertake all daily activities.

Economic Status and Income Security

Fifty-seven percent or more than half of elderly people were gainful workers in 2000. A majority of gainful older persons or 41% were involved in primary economic activities such as farming, forestry work and fishing. Around 10% were laborers and unskilled workers. Senior citizens constituted 13.77 percent of the total farmers, forestry workers or fishermen, and 6 percent of the total laborers and unskilled workers.

In terms of class, most of the gainfully employed older persons worked without pay in their own family-operated farms or businesses at 52.5 percent. Many were also self-employed without any paid workers at 20.6 percent such as in the National Capital Region. Based on the estimates of the country's Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the proportion of poor elderly persons in 2000 vis-à-vis the total number of older persons, was at 31.4 percent. However, the percentage of poor older persons in the Philippines at 31.4 percent was still less than the national poverty incidence of 34 percent.

III. RESPONSE

A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Older Persons in the Philippines have traditionally received due care and high regard from the family and the State.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution

Article II, Section 9 on State Policies mandates: "The State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full development, a rising standard of living and an improved quality of life."

Article XIII, Section 2 on Health/Social Services likewise mandates: "The State shall adopt an integrated and comprehensive approach to health development which shall endeavor to make essential goods, health and other social services available to all people at affordable cost. There shall be priority for the needs of the underprivileged sick, elderly, disabled, women and children."

Article XV, Section 4 on the Filipino Family also mandates: "It is the duty of the family to take care of its older person members while the State may design programs of social security for them."

Statutes and other Legislation

- Republic Act No. 344 or the Accessibility Law of 1982 provides for the minimum requirements and standards to make buildings, facilities, and utilities for public use accessible to persons with disability, including older persons, who are confined to wheelchairs and those who have difficulty in walking or climbing stairs, among others.
- Republic Act No. 7432 or the Senior Citizens Act of 1991 was entitled "An Act to Maximize the Contribution of Senior Citizens to Nation-Building, Grant Benefits and Special Privileges and for Other Purposes." It provides for the

granting of a 20% discount for senior citizens on fares for domestic transportation, availment of services from hotels, lodging houses, restaurants, theaters, recreation centers, and purchase of drugs and medicines anywhere in the country. It also exempts senior citizens from payment of individual income tax and establishes the Office of Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA) to be lodged at the City or Municipal Mayor's Office.

- Republic Act No. 7876 entitled "An Act Establishing a Senior Citizens Center in all Cities and Municipalities of the Philippines, and Appropriating Funds Therefor" provides for the establishment of Senior Citizens Centers to cater to older persons' socialization and interaction needs as well as to serve as a venue for the conduct of other meaningful activities. The Department of Social Welfare and Development in coordination with other Government Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and People's Organizations, shall provide the necessary technical assistance in the form of social and recreational services, health and personal care services, spiritual services, livelihood services and volunteer resource services.
- Republic Act No. 8425 provides for the institutionalization and enhancement of the social reform agenda by creating the National Anti-Poverty Commission. Through its multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral approach, it provides a mechanism for senior citizens to participate in policy formulation and decision-making on matters concerning poverty alleviation.
- Republic Act No. 9257 otherwise known as the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003 expands the coverage of the benefits and privileges for senior citizens by making it mandatory for business establishments to grant the 20% discount on goods and services. It also installs a process for organizing the Office of Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA) including the selection of the OSCA Head, and more importantly, provides for a comprehensive health care and rehabilitation system for disabled senior citizens to foster their capacity in attaining a more meaningful and productive ageing.
- The General Appropriations Act of 2006 under Section 32 mandates that all government agencies and instrumentalities should allocate one percent (1%) of their total agency budget to programs and projects for older persons and persons with disabilities.

Presidential Proclamations and Executive Orders

- Presidential Proclamation No. 470, Series of 1994, declaring the first week of October of every year as "Elderly Filipino Week."
- Presidential Proclamation No. 1048, Series of 1999, declaring a nationwide observance in the Philippines of the International Year of Older Persons.

- Executive Order No. 266, Series of 2000, approving and adopting the Philippine Plan of Action for Older Persons (1999-2004), which was later captioned as Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens.
- Executive Order No. 105, Series of 2003, approving and directing the implementation of the program providing group homes and foster homes for neglected, abandoned, abused, detached, and poor older persons and persons with disabilities.

***B. PHILIPPINE PLAN OF ACTION FOR OLDER PERSONS (1999-2004)
PHILIPPINE PLAN OF ACTION FOR SENIOR CITIZENS (2006-2010)***

The Philippines has concluded the implementation of the Philippine Plan of Action for Older Persons (PPAOP) covering the period 1999-2004. It has addressed the need to institute appropriate policies, strategies, mechanisms and programs/projects to ensure that senior citizen's rights are upheld. The PPAOP provided us with the perspective in developing an Inter-Agency Plan for Older Persons. It also promoted the rights and welfare of senior citizens and set priority areas and action points that guide efforts towards attainment of the goal in ensuring the promotion of security and dignity of older persons while maintaining their full participation and human rights.

In response to the challenges posed by population ageing, the country's National Coordinating and Monitoring Board created by virtue of Republic Act No. 9257 or the Expanded Senior Citizens Act, formed an Inter-Agency Committee to develop the Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (PPASC) 2006-2010. This Plan includes strategies, programs, projects and activities that will contribute to the attainment of action plans for older persons outlined in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010. The PPASC was also aligned with the country's commitment to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

The formulation of PPASC 2006-2010 is guided by national policies and legislations recognizing the role of older persons and promoting their active participation in development. It sets out priority areas and action points that guide efforts toward the goal of ensuring that societies and individuals age with security and dignity while maintaining their full participation and human rights. It also provides policy direction in three major areas: (a) ageing and development; (b) health and well-being into old age; and (c) enabling and supportive environments for ageing. The plan aims to allow policy makers to focus on the key issues associated with ageing. It calls for changes in attitudes, policies and practices in order to include ageing in global development agenda, to see development as a right of the elderly and to see an end to age discrimination.

The PPASC is a product of a series of consultations with multi-stakeholders and recommendations from the older persons sector. It serves as the strategic framework of all concerned Government agencies, Non-Governmental Organization and People's Organization in developing their plans of action to address the current challenges brought about by the trend of population ageing and its enormous implications, not only to individuals but also in every aspect of community, national and international life.

The formulation of the Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (2006-2010) as a successor plan to the PPAOP 1999-2004 takes off and builds on the gains and lessons learned from the previous Plan and from the main recommendation of the PPAOP evaluation workshop in developing a responsive national strategy on how to prepare the society from the challenges of ageing and ensuring that the goals of active ageing are achieved. Priority shall be given to the needs of the underprivileged and sick or ailing senior citizens and the development of indicators for every major goal for senior citizens in every Region, Province, Municipality and Barangay.

Under the Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens is a continuing mechanism paving the way for the implementation of various programs, projects and activities undertaken in response to the needs of the elderly. These mechanisms are the following:

A. Older Persons and Development

- Senior Citizens Volunteer Resource Project (SCVRP) and community volunteer resource development for Older Persons to assist in the implementation of various social welfare and development programs of DSWD, FSCAP and LGUs;
- Life-long Education Programs for Ageing Preparation;
- Non-Formal Education for 60 years old and Above, spearheaded by the Bureau of Non-Formal Education under the Department of Education;
- Pensioner's Day in all branches of government and private insurance organizations initiated by the Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System, which also includes free medical check-ups, establishment of express lanes and privileges for the elderly;
- Inter-Generational Program, a social technology that brings together different generations in new and ongoing mutually beneficial structured activities to meet the needs of individuals and families throughout the life cycle;

B. Advancing health and well-being into old age

- Creation and operationalization of Crisis Intervention Units (CIUs) in DSWD offices and Medical Social Service in some public hospitals in cooperation with the Department of Health and LGUs which will cater to the needs of older persons;
- Establishment of Geriatric Ward in some public and private hospitals;
- Integrated Day Center for Older Persons and Children;

C. Ensuring enabling and supportive environments

- Foster Care Program for Older Person, a joint initiative of DSWD, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) in compliance with Executive Order No. 105, Series of 2002;
- Operation and Maintenance of 24-Hour public and private Residential Care Facility for abandoned, abused, and neglected older persons;
- Peer Counseling Project of the Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc. (COSE);
- Group Home Program; and
- Establishment of Senior Citizens Centers in cities and municipalities.

C. PROGRAMS and SERVICES/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Philippine government, together with the Non-Governmental Organizations, senior citizens associations and other intermediaries, has modest accomplishments in initiating and facilitating efforts for the welfare of senior citizens. These are evident in the existence of strong and active organizations such as the Federation of Senior Citizens Association of the Philippines (FSCAP) and the establishment of Offices of Senior Citizens Affairs around the country.

The participation of the senior citizens associations/organizations in community-based projects was noted. Their presence was evident in their respective locality through volunteer works, participation in socio-economic activities and advocacy efforts in the promotion of their rights and privileges.

I. OLDER PERSONS AND DEVELOPMENT

As the population ages, more attention has been paid to strengthen solidarity between generations, as called for in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

a. Mainstreaming ageing into development policy and promoting full integration and participation of senior citizens

- Nine (9) out of 15 Regional Inter-Agencies Committees conducted meetings to discuss and evaluate performance based on the targets identified in the CY 2006 Regional Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (PPASC) and to develop the Plan of Action for CY 2007;
- Two Hundred Ninety-Five (295) cities and municipalities in eight (8) regions of the country were organized and now have a functional Office of Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA);
- The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) as the Chairperson of the National Coordinating and Monitoring Board (NCMB) has continuously coordinated and monitored the implementation of Republic Act No. 9257 or the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003;
- The DSWD directed the conduct of 15 meetings and consultation dialogues among different regional and provincial senior citizens associations to discuss problems encountered in implementing the law and how these will be resolved; and
- Thirty-Five (35) municipalities were successfully approached to integrate senior citizens concerns in their local plans.

b. Social Protection and Security

- 5,501 indigent older persons availed of the non-paying program of the PHILHEALTH;
- Offices of Senior Citizens Affairs and the Federation of Senior Citizens Association of the Philippines (FSCAP) were strengthened; and
- Pensioner's Day, Elderly Filipino Week, Senior Citizen's Forum, General Assemblies and Pre-Retirement Seminars were held and celebrated.

c. Alleviation of Poverty in Old Age

- Involvement of older persons in economic activities such as farming, forestry work and fishing.
- Payment of retirement and pension allowance for retirees/pensioners.
- 68 senior citizens availed of financial assistance worth P618,000 for livelihood programs such as hog dispersal, sari-sari stores, and poultry raising; and
- 21 Senior Citizens Associations availed the Self Employment Assistance-Kaunlaran (SEA-K) Program while 25 senior citizens operators were identified and assessed for extension of Tindahan Natin outlets.

d. Promoting Positive Attitudes

- Advocacy and tri-media exposures through distribution of brochures and flyers, as well as radio programs were used as regular venue to promote the rights and welfare of the senior citizens; and
- The Inter-Generational Program was enhanced by a pool of selected volunteers trained to render services to senior citizens.

II. ADVANCING HEALTH AND WELL BEING INTO OLD AGE

a. Ensuring the quality of life at all ages, including independent living, health and well-being

- More than 4,100 senior citizens have participated and benefited from activities that included regular weekly exercise, educational training, rice assistance, free purchase slips, and water supply and sanitation facilities;
- Thirty (30) FSCAP members were involved in the Alay Kalinga's campaign for the prevention of dengue and 115 OSCA members participated in the clean and green program;
- A total of 2,295 senior citizens in Regions I, V, CAR and CARAGA were provided with medical check-ups and medicines. In addition, 1,297 indigent senior citizens were extended with financial assistance and micronutrient supplement. Also, 10,327 indigent senior citizens attended the PhilHealth orientation and became members to enable them to cope with crisis or emergency situations; and
- Around 2,382 senior citizens were provided varied services by the Crisis Intervention Units (CIUs) nationwide.

b. Providing Quality Health and Long-Term Care

- Around 501 senior citizens were served in three (3) residential care facilities of DSWD that cater to abandoned, abused, neglected, and needy male and female senior citizens, who were provided with homelife services which include basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter, health services-medical, psychological and dietary care, as well as opportunities for recreational, spiritual, and livelihood activities.
- Seven (7) government and private hospitals in Luzon (Region II) increased the number of their geriatric wards
- The DSWD has designed and implemented a number of new and enhanced social technologies:

- 1) Integrated Network of Community Support for the Able Bodied Senior Citizens;

- 2) Managing Older Persons with Alzheimer's Disease (Phase III), which is being piloted in Golden Acres catering to ten (10) clients diagnosed with this ailment;
- 3) Neighborhood Support Services for Older Persons (NSSOP), which was replicated to 11 Local Government Units to respond to senior citizens who are unattached, who belong to low-income families and who were abandoned by their families.

III. ENSURING ENABLING AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

While societies and communities are experiencing the impact of population ageing, there is an increasing attention to the importance of creating environments that support people as they age, to live independently and remain "active part" of the community.

a. Social Service and Community Support

- Issuance of Senior Citizens identification cards through the different OSCAs nationwide;
- 10 LGUs were provided by the country's Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) with a standard template for purchase booklets;
- Development of the Foster Care Program for Older Persons as a joint initiative between the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), and the National Anti-Poverty Council (NAPC);
- Implementation of the Group Home Program; and
- Continuing operation and maintenance of Residential Care Facilities for Older Persons.
- Establishment of dedicated lanes and seats in some public/private offices, transport and other facilities for senior citizens.

b. Housing and Enabling Environments

- Nineteen (19) social welfare and development agencies and two (2) social welfare agencies providing services to senior citizens were registered and four (4) were licensed. In CARAGA, 150 service providers for senior citizens were accredited.

c. Protection of the Rights of the Elderly

- Local legislations in the form of city ordinances were passed and policy development was accomplished through DSWD Field Office advocacy; and

- The DSWD conducted 32 capability-building activities designed to improve the services given to senior citizens for the 2nd semester, as provided by 16 Field Offices to 365 SWD implementers and intermediaries.

d. Mechanism for Plan Implementation and Follow-Up

- National mechanism on ageing in the form of the Inter-Agency Council on the PPASC; and
- The creation of the National and Regional Coordinating and Monitoring Boards (N/RCMB) to monitor the implementation of national policies on ageing and the development of Plan of Action for Older Persons for the succeeding years.

IV. CHALLENGES: ISSUES AND GAPS

Some major concerns of this sector are the rising numbers of senior citizens who are victims of violence and abandonment due to in-and-out-migration of younger family members. Another one is the non-compliance of some residential buildings and establishments in terms of making their facilities accessible to senior citizens. There is likewise a pressing challenge in the difficulty of gathering disaggregated statistics and developing a database for senior citizens due to limited funds.

Moreover, despite of efforts to advocate strict compliance with Republic Act No. 9257 or the Expanded Senior Citizens Act, a lot of drugstores and food establishments are not yet extending the full benefit of the 20% discount for senior citizens, and complaints have not reached the courts yet to render the law effective against violators.

Coherent to these concerns are six (6) major challenges that need critical attention:

- (1) Full implementation of Republic Act No. 9257 otherwise known as the “Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2003” and other elderly policies, as well as the need to refocus programs to empower communities instead of individuals;
- (2) Limited and inadequate data on Senior Citizens with particular emphasis on geographical and sex-disaggregation in every local government unit, including researches;
- (3) Understanding the issues and implications that ageing population brings about to the society;

- (4) Preparation of the populace for an ageing process that is both satisfying and productive for the individual;
- (5) Development and improvement of service infrastructure and management of centers and institutions in an environment based on both traditional and modern institutions that will be able to meet present and future needs of an ageing citizenry; and
- (6) Delivery of social and human services needed by the growing number of Senior Citizens in the Filipino society.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Government through the DSWD should continue its linkages with the Offices of Senior Citizens Affairs, the Local Government Units, Non-Governmental Organizations and People's Organizations providing services to senior citizens by engaging their expertise and resources to develop and implement programs on social services for senior citizens.
2. Enhance the advocacy plan and programs to gain the support of the stakeholders and intermediaries.
3. Ensure the documentation of the Neighborhood Support Services for Older Persons (NSSOP) Project implemented by the Local Government Units for replication purposes.
4. For the ensuing year, the agencies should continue to prioritize advocacy, information dissemination and compliance monitoring relative to conformity and observance of the provisions of the "Expanded Senior Citizens' Act of 2003".
5. Ensure that the Office of Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA) has been established in remaining cities and municipalities and ensure that those who are appointed as Head of OSCA perform their roles.
6. Monitor the implementation of Republic Act No. 9257, in all Local Government Units and other Government and Non-Government Organizations.
7. Enhance support for family and caregivers to promote quality home care for the Senior Citizens.
8. Promote the establishment of more Geriatrics Wards especially in the tertiary government and private hospitals.

9. Institutionalize Gerontology Training Curricula and Courses and ensure that all Caregiver Training School will require their students to provide community training and caregiving to frail Senior Citizens in the community as part of their curriculum.
10. Expand coverage/improve accessibility and affordability of social and health care to indigent Senior Citizens.
11. Ensure support to Accredited Residential/Group Homes/Senior Citizens Center to be provided with 50% discount for utilities and technical assistance.
12. Develop/implement/replicate new and existing innovative community based programs addressing the independent living concerns of Senior Citizens particularly those abandoned, sick, unattached and homeless.

13. LONG-TERM CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

Long-term care is the sustained provision of comprehensive programs and services to the Older Persons to enable them to have dignified, healthy and secured lives.

A Senate Bill has been proposed in the 14th Congress of the Philippines for the long-term care for older persons which shall include the following:

A. *Social Protection* shall constitute programs that seek to reduce poverty and vulnerability to risks and enhance the social status and rights of senior citizens by promoting and protecting livelihood and employment, protecting against hazards and sudden loss of income and improving people's capacity to manage risk through:

a.1. Social Welfare Curative and preventive interventions that seek to support the special needs of Senior Citizens to reduce risks associated with old age shall be provided. This shall include activities for the protection from abuse, exploitation and discrimination. Prevention and support services against physical, emotional and financial abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect and abandonment of senior citizens shall be provided within the family and at the community level. These shall include training for the prevention, detection and management of social problems of senior citizens as well as awareness of the public through education and support to family's/community's ability to address the issues and needs of senior citizens.

a.2. Livelihood/Job Generation Program. Older Persons shall be one of the target groups in livelihood programs and other local poverty alleviation programs. Further, livelihood programs shall be designed to guarantee a minimum

income and shall be undertaken in a manner that increases the older persons' participation.

a.3. Social Insurance. Provision of adequate social insurance to cover or protect them from loss of income and unemployment as a result of old age. It shall include economic and financial support through innovative social insurance and pension schemes especially designed for families caring for dependent/disabled senior citizens.

a.4. Social Safety Nets. Stop-gap mechanisms or urgent responses to shield the older persons from vulnerabilities due to effects of disasters, emergencies and displacement as a result of development projects, natural and man-made calamities.

B. Senior Citizens and Development. This shall include mainstreaming activities such as lifelong education instructional programs in preparation for ageing and non-formal education for sixty years old and above at the local levels and provision of equal opportunities that allow senior citizens to remain actively engaged in as many social, economic and community activities as possible.

C. Advancing Health and Well-being. An integrated and innovative elderly-focused health and social services shall be provided at the local level. Emphasis should be put on disease prevention, health and social services shall be provided at the local level. Focus shall be on disease prevention, health promotion, and wellness of mind, body and spirit. Health services should include preventive, curative and rehabilitative health care services in all government and private hospitals, local health facilities and other community-based care facilities. It shall include the following among others:

C.1. Homecare and hospice care as important community resource for the frail and dependent elderly.

C.2. Development and provision of geriatric training at the family and community level.

C.3. Mandatory PHILHEALTH coverage for non-contributory senior citizens especially the poor.

D. Enabling and Supportive Environment. Provision of low-cost, community-based facilities for respite care, programs on counseling and emotional support integrated into existing community social and health programs. This shall also include support services to local government units, people's organizations, and non-government organizations such as trainings, subsidies, allowances and respite leaves for caregivers.

The program shall be implemented by concerned agencies such as the Department of Finance, Department of Health, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Local Government Units (LGUs) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The National Inter-Agency Monitoring Board created under Republic Act 9257 otherwise known as the Expanded Senior Citizens Act shall monitor the implementation of this proposed Act.

VI. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Her Excellency, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, in her State of the Nation Address on July 23, 2007, advocated and asked the Congress of the Philippines to pass legislation that will bring an improved Long-Term Care Program for Older Persons. This shows how serious is our national government in putting attention and care to our Older Persons.