

# A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BALIK PROBINSYA, BAGONG PAG-ASA PROGRAM: BASIS FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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## ABSTRACT

### *Article History*

Received: 3 May 2021

Revised: 9 October 2021

Accepted: 2 November 2021

Published: 30 January 2022

**Keywords**— Case study, Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-Asa Program, Davao Occidental, Strategic Development Plan

This qualitative case study delved into the comprehension and experiences of beneficiaries of the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa (BP2) Program in Davao Occidental to formulate a strategic development plan. The study was grounded in the work of Srivastava et al. (2020), which emphasized development theories and literature acknowledging the intricate interplay between migration and development. Seven program beneficiaries participated in individual, in-depth

interviews. Five significant themes emerged regarding the participants' understanding of the BP2 Program: pandemic response measures, advocacy for individual well-being, initiatives for rural and economic development, employment and income-generation strategies, and socioeconomic support. Additionally, six major themes surfaced concerning beneficiaries' experiences in social welfare, health, and employment support: orderly provision of financial and food assistance, availability of social and psychosocial services, access to medical and nutritional services, regular monitoring of health status,



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clear employment and livelihood opportunities, and feasible employment packages. In conclusion, the study yielded five strategies based on beneficiaries' experiences with BP2 implementation: enhancement of financial and logistic support, establishment of health assistance centers, creation of help and employment centers, augmentation of social services, and the need for program review and evaluation.

## INTRODUCTION

The principal drivers of internal and international migration include prevailing unemployment, competitive labor markets, and improved livelihood prospects in destination areas. However, the nationwide lockdown and sealing of inter-state and international borders to control the COVID-19 pandemic in Asian countries, notably India, triggered reverse migration, requiring governments to devise strategies for the reintegration of returnees into the post-COVID economy (Khan & Arokkiaraj, 2021).

Migration across national borders, particularly from less developed to more affluent countries, has substantial impacts. First, migrants benefit from higher incomes and increased productivity in their destinations. Second, destination countries experience effects on labor markets, productivity, innovation, demographic structure, and fiscal balance. Third, countries of origin are impacted through flows of remittances and increased international connections via trade and technological transfers (Koczan & Loyola, 2021).

In the Philippines, the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program was institutionalized under Executive Order No. 114 s. 2020 as a pillar of balanced regional development, aiming to decongest metropolises by encouraging people, especially informal settlers, to return to their home provinces and assisting them in this transition. The program aspires to achieve rural prosperity through equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, fostering cohesive, resilient, and sustainable communities (Alonzo, 2020).

The provincial government has observed an increasing number of beneficiaries of the BP2 program, a trend expected to continue. This underscores the need for sound regulations, robust implementation mechanisms, and updated monitoring to empower local governments in managing the program and creating coordinated, connected communities. Furthermore, there is a lack of published research critical to understanding the program context—hence, the rationale for this study.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the aims of this investigation on the implementation of the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program, the following questions were addressed:

1. What is the understanding of beneficiaries regarding Executive Order No. 114, series of 2020?

2. What are the beneficiaries' experiences concerning social welfare services, healthcare, and employment support?
3. What strategic development plan can be derived from these experiences?

## **THEORETICAL LENS**

This research was anchored on the development theories and literature presented by Srivastava (2020), which has long recognized the relationship between migration and development. With complete and accurate information, individuals make economically rational migration decisions that benefit both themselves and economic development. Often, structural economic disequilibrium drives the poor and unemployed to migrate from rural to urban and industrialized areas. In India, for example, the growth of advanced states has been underpinned by migrant laborers—workers typically unskilled, low-paid, in hazardous conditions, and lacking social security. The COVID-19 pandemic heightened their vulnerabilities, particularly for those in informal work.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study used a qualitative research approach employing the case study method. The qualitative process involves emerging questions and procedures, collection of data in participants' settings, inductive analysis from particulars to general themes, and researcher interpretation of meaning (Creswell, 2014). The case study method enables in-depth understanding of specific phenomena (Mabry, 2008) and the development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a case (Robson, 2002).

### **Research Participants**

Following Creswell's (2014) guidance, a sample of seven participants was selected, suitable for phenomenological inquiries. Participant profiles were obtained prior to in-depth interviews (IDI). Browne (2005) highlights purposive sampling as being based on the researcher's understanding of the population, enabling the selection of the most informative respondents (De Vos et al., 2009). For homogeneity, the inclusion criteria required that participants were professionals and skilled workers who had participated in the BP2 program from 2020 to the present in Davao Occidental and agreed to participate in the study.

**Table 1.** *Participant's Work Profile*

Type of Work	Job
Skilled	
Housekeeper	2
Hotel Staff	2
Driver	1
Professional	
Engineer	1
Teacher	1
Total	7

### Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher conceptualized the focus of the study, centering on assessing the implementation of the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program in the Province of Davao Occidental. A research guide was used as a primary data-gathering tool, serving as a questionnaire. Related literature was consolidated to corroborate the data. After defending the study outline virtually, the following steps were employed in gathering the qualitative data:

- 1. Permissions and Coordination:**

The researcher began by seeking permission to conduct the study. A formal letter was sent to the Municipal Mayor, coursed through the Office of the Municipal Local Government Operations Officer, to request the list of program beneficiaries and to secure approval for data collection.

- 2. Selection and Informed Consent of Participants:**

Participants were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate. The researcher ensured they fulfilled the inclusion criteria and had direct experience with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2014). Participants were informed about the nature of the study and asked to sign a consent agreement, affirming voluntary and cooperative participation.

- 3. Orientation and Interview Preparation:**

Before each interview, participants were oriented regarding the study's purpose, protocols, and data collection process. The researcher expressed gratitude for their participation, explained the study's goals and selection rationale, and emphasized confidentiality.

- 4. Conducting In-Depth Interviews:**

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, in accordance with prevailing health protocols. Each in-depth interview (IDI) lasted about 30 minutes and was carried out conversationally, guided by a set of prepared questions. Though subject to some possible bias, IDI

offers the advantage of eliciting rich, detailed information essential for developing an in-depth case study (Wood et al., 2008).

##### 5. **Documentation:**

After each interview, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and contributions. Interviews were documented through written transcripts, ensuring authenticity and secure handling of the gathered information.

## **Data Analysis**

Prior to analysis, the researcher ensured that all in-depth interviews had been completed and thoroughly documented. Data was reviewed, synthesized, and organized to ensure thoroughness and detail. Once data collection was complete, the analysis commenced.

**Responses from the interviews were carefully noted.** For confidentiality, participants' identities were coded as BPB-01 to BPB-07. Transcriptions were organized according to the research questions, facilitating deep understanding and accurate representation of participants' experiences and perspectives.

**A thematic approach was utilized for qualitative data analysis.** According to Caulfield et al. (2022), this process involves six key steps:

**Familiarization:** Transcribing audio recordings and becoming closely acquainted with the content, making initial notes, and gaining an overview of the data.

**Coding:** Highlighting relevant phrases and sentences and assigning shorthand labels or codes to capture content and meaning. The researcher coded all transcripts, refining codes as necessary and grouping data accordingly.

**Generating Themes:** Reviewing codes and identifying patterns to develop overarching themes.

**Reviewing Themes:** Revisiting the data set to compare and refine the themes, combining or redefining as needed to ensure accuracy and relevance.

**Defining and Naming Themes:** Precisely describing each theme and assigning concise, descriptive labels that enhance understanding.

**Writing Up:** Compiling and presenting the analysis, with a clear write-up to communicate findings coherently.

## **Trustworthiness of the Study**

To ensure trustworthiness and accuracy during data collection and analysis, the researcher closely followed Lincoln and Guba's (2000) framework for qualitative research rigor. The four pillars of trustworthiness employed were: Credibility (confidence in the truth of the findings), Transferability (applicability in other contexts), Dependability (consistency and reproducibility), and Confirmability (objectivity and neutrality).

Findings and interpretations were aligned with the arguments and procedures outlined by Marongwe et al. (2016).

## **Ethical Considerations**

The study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines set by the University of Southeastern Philippines (USEP) Ethics Committee. Permission from the Municipal Mayor and the Office of the Municipal Local Government Operations Officer was obtained prior to the study's commencement. The researcher ensured that participant recruitment was appropriate and that all potential physical, psychological, economic, and social risks were considered, with measures put in place to mitigate these. All participants were fully informed, and consent was obtained prior to participation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Understanding of the Executive Order No. 114 s. 2020**

Presented in this section is the understanding of the beneficiaries of Executive Order No. 114 Series of 2020. They were asked about how they understand and discern the context of the Balik Probinsya – Bagong Pag-asa Program (BP2) of the government as the program beneficiaries.

After analyzing the sentiments of the participants about their understanding of Executive Order No. 114, five major themes emerged: 1) Pandemic Response Measure; 2) Individual Well-Being Advocacy; 3) Rural and Economic Development Initiative; 4) Employment and Income-Generation Strategy; and 5) Social and Economic Support.

### **Pandemic Response Measure**

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented threat to public health, food systems, and the workplace. The pandemic has wreaked havoc on the economy and social system. COVID-19 is more likely to spread in crowded, poorly ventilated places where infected people spend lengthy periods together in close quarters.

Cognizant of this, the Philippine national government, through its Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases, outlined various quarantine measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, ranging from keeping only essential businesses open to allowing all establishments to operate at a specific capacity. Depending on the intensity of the pandemic in their area, local government units, municipalities, and provinces took measures.

This scenario is linked to the response of BPB-03, who described EO114-2020 as:

*“Ang tumong sa maong programa kay aron makatabang sa pandemic. Kung daghan kaayo ug tao sa sydad, mas daghan ang matakdan sa virus.” (BPB-03) (The aim of the program per EO – 114 is to help lessen community transmission of the virus.)*

In line with this, participants coded as BPB-05 expressed the same understanding of the provisions embedded in the executive order. The participant conveyed:

*“Tungod sa kadaghan sa tao didto sa city, lisod kayo mapatuman and social distancing – magtapok ang tao. So, dapat likay sa tapok para iwas sa COVID.” (BPB-05) (There is a need to ensure social distancing is in place to avoid COVID-19 infection exposure.)*

Participant BPB-06 likewise expressed support for the same statement. The participant narrated:

*“Ang balik probinsiya sigurado na makabawas sa dagsa sa tao. Ang mga manguli sa ilang lugar di na makadugang sa tapok-tapok ilabina kung moadto ug mall or sa crowded places.” (BPB-06) (The balik probinsiya, bagong pag-asa program regulates influx of people and limit the tendency to mass gather.)*

At the onset of the pandemic, the number of COVID-19 cases continued to increase, especially in urban centers where many of the population are daily wage earners engaged in economic activities in which social distancing is impossible. In response, Executive Order 114, institutionalizing the Balik Probinsya (Return to the Province) Program, was issued on May 6, 2020. The main goal of Balik Probinsya is to improve rural development and keep the pandemic from overwhelming urban health facilities (Atienza, 2020).

### **Individual Well-Being Advocacy**

Economic activity came to a halt and has just recently resumed. In the middle of a new wave of towns worldwide being locked down once more, it was thought it would be preferable to look forward — there is a lot to be optimistic about in the future. As a barometer of hope, the program aims to provide opportunities for a better future. It is the desire for better economic lives that compels most beneficiaries to move and provides the lure and promise of better opportunities. In addition, participant BPB-04 rekindled:

*“Bag-ong paglaum ug bag-ong kinabuhi mao na ang importante para namo sa pagkakaron.” (BPB-04) (Hope and new beginnings are definitely what matters to us as of the present time.)*

Ergo, when migrants indeed move back to their respective provinces, there must be enough reasons for them to stay there for good. It is in this light that BPB-02 participants hoped for:

*“Kanindot ra magpuyo diri sa Davao Occidental. Gawas sa presko na gulay ug pagkaon, presko sab ang hangin.” (BPB-02) (The province offers healthy atmosphere and abundant organic foods and vegetables.)*

Interestingly, the participant coded as BPB-07 affirmed:

*“Peaceful sa province kompara sa syudad walay samok, relaxing – makawalag stress.” (BPB-07) (The province is a peaceful haven compared to the busy vibes of the metropolises.)*

Given a fresh start amid the pandemic, despite being retrenched and losing their jobs, program beneficiaries will surely be able to start again in the province (Debuque-Gonzales, 2021).

## Rural and Economic Development Initiative

In the long run, the pandemic may alter consumption and production patterns, as well as remote working habits and modes of movement, creating new opportunities for rural communities to thrive sustainably. The participant coded as BPB-06 shared the same insight. The participant disclosed:

*“Siguro duna nay daghan pang projects ang atong gobyerno sa atong province kay daghan naman nag-uli.” (BPB-06) (Perhaps, various projects funded by the government in the provinces will materialize given the goals of the program.)*

Conversely, during the pandemic, everyone recognizes the importance of a welfare strategy based on knowledge of the scope of the problem. It is vital to provide human needs, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, the participant coded as BPB-02 appended:

*“Sa among pagbalik sa probisnya, nanghinaot me na masustentohan among mga panginahanglanon sa tabang sa Balik-Probinsya Program.” (BPB-02) (Through the help of the program, we hope that our daily needs are provided and defrayed.)*

Accordingly, the importance of striking a balance between addressing the pandemic crisis with urgency and using long-term development as a solid foundation in the post-pandemic period should be emphasized. Considering this, participant coded BPB-03 quipped:

*“Isa sa rason nganong ni-avail ko ani na programa kay sa akong pagsabot makatabang ni sa pagpalambo sa mga resort, mga farm ug mga ginadayo na lugar sa atong dapit.” (BPB-03) (The promotion of tourism industry including agro-tourism is one of the good things I heard about the program.)*



As part of the BP2 program, the administration encourages multinational companies and investors to create rural and agribusiness enterprises to attract returnees and create more livelihood opportunities (Gutierrez et al., 2020).

## Employment and Income-Generation Strategy

The Balik Probinsya, Balik Pag-asa Program assures the availability of essential services, income opportunities, and settlements that would satisfy the beneficiaries' needs. This tenet convinced the beneficiary coded as BPB-01 to apply for the program, where the participant recalled:

*"Trabaho, mao gyud na ang pinaka-importante na oportunidad na naka-engganyo sa akong pag-uli ug pag-apply niining programa..." (BPB-01) (The most important reason why I decided to apply for the program is job opportunities.)*

The same principle persuaded the participant coded as BPB-02 to avail of the Balik Pag-asa Program for the quality of life in the province, with its long-term plans for various investments in infrastructure, agriculture, business, and training related to these areas. BPB-03 expected:

*"Naa koy napalit na gamayng luna, pwede ra nako ni gamiton para sa pagmanokan ug pagtanom-tanom." (BPB-03) (I bought a portion of land where I can convert to a farm including a poultry farm.)*

A viable job is also why beneficiary-coded BPB-07 opted to apply for the program. The BP2 program would benefit low-income families and provide livelihood assistance and employment facilitation. BPB-04 iterated:

*"Livelihood na mga oportunidad. Naa man tay skills so puhunan nalang ug dugang training ang kulang." (BPB-04) (Since I have technical skills, perhaps I could use them to pursue livelihood opportunities coupled with enhancement trainings and enough starting capital.)*

Some of the economic responses that the government and the public may have thought of may not be fully applicable, effective, or welfare-improving in this version of a health-crisis-induced economic downturn (Correa & Abueg, 2020).

## Socio-economic Support

Globally, human social disintegration plummeted to levels not seen in years. The patterns of human welfare development are dramatically different, and knowing these differences would help ensure socio-economic development. About this, a participant coded as BPB-07 said that:

*"Kining maong programa base sa akong pagsabot, usa ka assistance program sa panggamhanan para sa mga taong naglisod ilabina kadtong*

*nanrabaho layo sa ilang pamilya.” (BPB-07) (This program based on my understanding is an assistance program for those in dire difficulties specially those working away from their families.)*

Moreover, a parallel situation was insinuated by the participant coded as BPB-05. The participant narrated:

*“Usa ka dakong tabang sa matag pamilya na programa, mao kana ang balik probinsya para sa ako.” (BPB-05) (It is a great help to each family - to every family beneficiary of the Balik Probinsya Program.)*

Congruently, the goal of the Balik Probinsya is to reduce socioeconomic vulnerability by attaining equitable voluntary spatial distribution of the population and strengthening the resiliency of families and communities (Mendoza et al., 2013).

### **Experiences of the Balik Probinsya Program Beneficiaries on Social Welfare Services, Health Care, and Employment Support**

The participants were asked about their experiences with the programs and activities related to the social welfare services support of the Balik Probinsya program. Following a thorough examination of the participants’ experiences with social service support, two (2) primary themes emerged: 1) the orderly provision of financial and food assistance, and 2) the availability of social and psychosocial services.

#### **Orderly Provision of Financial and Food Assistance**

With the program’s long-term goals of diverse investments in infrastructure, agriculture, business, transportation, and access to a responsive healthcare system, government agencies would be all hands-on in ensuring the systematic facilitation of the Balik Probinsya Program that would result in the improvement of provinces’ economies and quality of life. Consequently, the participant coded as BPB-01 recounted:

*“Wala gyud koy reklamo sa akong pag-avail ani na programa. Maayo kayo ang ilang pagdala. Among byahe kay tuloy-tuloy ug wala me nagutom pag-uli.” (BPB-01) (I have no complaints about how the program is facilitated. It is implemented and carried out well. Transport services were also excellent.)*

Participant BPB-05 narrated how the program is implemented:

*“Sa among orientation pa lang, amo ng nasabtan unsa ang dagan sa programa. Klaro kayo ang pagka-explain sa amoa unsa among dapat buhaton ug sundon.” (BPB-05) (Information were relayed substantially and in detail. Instructions are also handed with clarity.)*

Similarly, participant BPB-01 substantiated:

*“Maayo kaayo ang DSWD kay gihatagan me nila ug relief goods, bugas, can goods ug kwarta kaditong pagpauli na gyud namo dinhi.” (BPB-01) (DSWD distributed to each of us relief goods and other food items like can goods and rice supplied, including financial/cash assistance.)*

Families belonging to the marginalized sectors who wish to start afresh may avail of the program. In support of this initiative, the DSWD provides financial assistance to returning families, assesses their situation, and facilitates their reintegration into their former or new communities (Duma et al., 2022).

### **Availability of Social and Psychosocial Services**

A social welfare system assists individuals and families in need. For the Philippine government, social welfare is a development priority. In the case of the BP2 program, it could be achieved through benefits and services that assure or strengthen provisions for meeting the basic needs of its beneficiaries. Ultimately, the participant coded as BPB-03 commended the program:

*“Human sa among quarantine, giduaw dayon me personahe sa DSWD. Nakigstorya sila sa mga pwede nilang matabang sa amoa. Nadasig ko pag-ayo.” (BPB-03) (The Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office spearheads home visitation to BP2 to help beneficiaries with their social needs and the like.)*

The Department of Social Welfare and Development, one of the program implementers, provides transportation assistance and conducts psychosocial support activities for returning families to assess their situation and facilitate their reintegration into their former or new communities. Correspondingly, a participant coded as BPB-06 commented:

*“Maayo ang ako i-comment. One on one gyud me gihinabi sa DSWD, gihatagan ug advise para sa among kaugalingon ug pamilya. Gitambagan pud me na ug duna may problema, anytime, pwede moduol sa ila opisina.” (BPB-06) (DSWD helped us cope with the transition period through development sessions, self-focused talks and dialogues.)*

More significantly, most returning residents faced considerable difficulties amidst the pandemic. Considering these circumstances, beneficiaries will receive social, psychosocial, and other development help from local government units and national government agencies. Beneficiaries surely could relate to this, including participant BPB-07, who noted:

*“Makapanghinukot gid ka sa mga nahitabo karong pandemic. Pero di pwede mosurrender para sa akong mga anak. Nabimo ang DSWD na among dangpanan, andam sila sa pagpaminaw sa amo. (BPB-07) (DSWD became instrumental in motivating us to handle the situation at*

*hand through counselling, psychosocial activities, and other social service programs.)*

Collaboration and complementation between national and local governments would be crucial to ensure the coherence of development plans to prevent gaps in service delivery (Okitasari & Katramiz, 2022).

### **Experiences of the Balik Probinsya Program Beneficiaries on Health Care Support**

Revealed in the next section are the experiences of the Balik Probinsya program beneficiaries on health care support. The participants were asked about their experiences with the programs and activities related to the healthcare support of the Balik Probinsya program. After a comprehensive digest of the participants' experiences with the Balik Probinsya Program's health care support, two major themes emerged: Availability of Medical and Nutritional Services and Regular Health Status Monitoring.

#### **Accessible Medical and Nutrition Services**

Health systems oversee providing services that help people and communities improve, maintain, or regain their health. Accordingly, a series of processes is in place to ensure that health protocols are given weight and followed in the program. To testify to these protocols, the participant coded as BPB-02 quoted:

*"Di man hadlok i-swab. Wala ra gyud. Kampante kaayo ko ato, pagkahuman ato gidala dayon me sa barangay." (BPB-02) (Testing and health screening went okay and were done without interruptions.)*

Further, as different batches of returning residents arrive, the Local Government isolation facilities are fully operational. Beneficiaries are sent to quarantine facilities after disembarking from the transport vans and undergoing health testing and screening. Participant coded as BPB-01 shared the same experience and expounded:

*"Kining ginatawag nato ug quarantine, okay man among quarantine facility. Pila kabuok rapud me ato didto, naay CR ug lutuanan. Kumpleto pud, naay kutson, unlan ug habol." (BPB-01) (There were few occupants in the quarantine area, and we were all well provided with our basic needs and necessities.)*

The peculiarities of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) prompted the importance of rigorous adherence to necessary health regulations, including nutritional assessment of people under quarantine measures. Supplementing this story, participant coded as BPB-05 described how it feels in a quarantine facility:

*“Supplementation, kibali kasagaran gulay among sud-an ug naay prutas. Ila pud me gihatagan ug vitamins.” (BPB-05) (Meals served are healthy and nutritious. Vitamin and immunity-boosting kits were distributed.)*

### **Regular Health Status Monitoring**

The government promised that the program’s beneficiary families receive the necessary support and guarantees that BP2 is implemented successfully, with consistent checks and monitoring of beneficiaries’ health and safety. Relatively, participants coded as BPB-05 attested that:

*“O, naa may mga BHWs sige ug check sa amoa sa quarantine area, check sa amo temperature ug pati na ning akong BP.” (BPB-05) (We are closely monitored and checked from time to time by designated BHWs, including regular temperature and blood pressure monitoring.)*

BP2’s partner government agencies, including local government units, are always willing to assist the program beneficiaries in any way possible. In affirmation, the participant coded as BPB-02 likewise asserted that:

*“Naa. Wala gyud me pasagdi while nag quarantines me, hinatdan me pagkaon ug kanunya me ginamotor sa among bantay.” (BPB-02) (Yes, we were regularly monitored while undergoing quarantine. We are also regularly given food packs, and our concerns are regularly attended to by assigned personnel.)*

Additionally, the national government lauded various local government units (LGUs) in Mindanao for accommodating beneficiaries’ needs, especially their health and well-being, which were given utmost importance. In agreement, the participant coded as BPB-01 complimented:

*“Yes, naa. Naa gani tambal ug gi-make sure na mainom ug safe and tubig ug pagkaon.” (BPB-01) (Yes, there are medical supplies handed to us. They also made sure that our water and food supply were also available and safe.)*

The 2021 National Budget proposed by the Duterte Administration would be the primary asset and weapon for the difficult task ahead. Given the limited fiscal space, the budget was reprioritized to focus on preserving lives, livelihoods, health, and safety while facilitating economic recovery after the health crisis (Bierbaum & Schmitt, 2022).

### **Experiences of the Balik Probinsya Program Beneficiaries on Employment Support**

Elaborated herein are the experiences of the Balik Probinsya program beneficiaries on employment support. The participants were asked to share their experiences with the programs and activities related to the employment

support of the Balik Probinsya program using a set of interview questions. Regarding participants' experiences of the Balik Probinsya Program's employment support, two (2) primary themes emerged: 1) Comprehensible Employment and Livelihood Opportunities, and 2) Viable Employment Package.

### **Comprehensible Employment and Livelihood Opportunities**

The success of the BP2 Program is projected to be influenced by government agencies' widespread active participation in boosting economic opportunities in provinces by implementing a streamlined system of fiscal incentives for export-oriented and domestic-oriented businesses, as well as support for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. In response, the participant coded as BPB-06 confided:

*"Giguide me sa DOLE ug DTI sa mga possibleng trabaho na pwede na'ko masudlan kung ibase sa ilang gi-ingon, makasulti ko na ubay-ubay pud. Ang sigurado kay ila kaming tabangan maka-trabaho dinhi." (BPB-06) (DOLE and DTI provided us proper guidance as to the job opportunities we can venture but what's guaranteed to us is that we will be given employment and/or other means of livelihood.)*

On a more optimistic note, beneficiaries would be given priority in scholarship programs, which would provide them with employment opportunities and a customized program tailored to their specific needs. It could be food production and processing, agriculture, hospitality, and health care, among others.

### **Viable Employment Package**

Qualified beneficiaries get livelihood and employment opportunities, a transitory support package, and transitory shelter assistance via the program. Validating those above, the participant coded as BPB-05 puts on record:

*"Dako akong tinguha na di makawang akong pag-uli pinaagi sa tabang pinansyal ug sa pagbansay sa amo sa livelihood-magmanokan ba diha ug magbabuyan o pwede pud handicraft making." (BPB-05) (Aside from financial assistance, livelihood and profitable agro-farming applications are promising source of income.)*

The participants of this research undertaking are hopeful that, in the long run, the BP2 Program will contribute to the Philippines in attaining a highly developed countryside with vast opportunities for every Filipino.

Strategic Development Plan Derived from the Experiences of the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program

Outlined in this presentation are the strategic development plans derived

from the experiences of the Balik Probinsya and Bagong Pag-asa Program beneficiaries that could further be developed to help strengthen, enrich, and solidify the implementation of the Balik Probinsya and Bagong Pag-asa Program which encompasses the following themes: Improvement of Logistics and Financial Support; Establishment of Health Assistance Centers; Construction of Help and Employment Centers; Amplification of Social Services; and Program Review and Evaluation.

### **Improvement of Financial and Logistics Support**

Financial aid is given to recipient families of the Balik Probinsya and Bagong Pag-asa Program to support them during their transition period. Despite the financial assistance received, BPB-04 and BPB-06 requested:

*“Dili maigo daw kulang ang financial assistance gihatag sa amoa sa pang adlaw-adlaw namo na pagkaon ug gasto sa balay.” (BPB-04) (Financial assistance given to us is not enough for our daily needs.)*

*“Maglisod gihapon me pangita kwarta.” (BPB-06) (We still have difficulties in providing adequate daily income.)*

Regarding impact, evidence on other CCTs suggests that more frequent provisions of cash grants contribute to better consumption smoothing of beneficiaries (Melad et al., 2020). In addendum, BPB-03 and BPB-07 stressed out:

*“Nitry ko apply online gamit ako cp, medyo naglisod ko. Siguro much better kung naay mas dali na paagi para maka-apply.” (BPB-03) (There must be a better application process.)*

*“Daghang kaayo opisina need adtoan para magpapirma o magprocess. Di lalim usabay.” (BPB-07) (We need to go to many offices for document processing. It is exhausting sometimes.)*

State and local governments vary in their adaptation to the mobile environment. Customer service improvements are significant at the state and local levels as they are the direct service providers to citizens daily (Ziadeh, 2023). Therefore, state and local governments have created apps and technologies to facilitate citizen engagement.

### **Establishment of Health Assistance Centers**

Accessible and affordable quality healthcare services would provide people with added security. To immediately rejuvenate BP2 beneficiaries' well-being, local healthcare must improve its emergency services, ensure proper healthcare, and improve health capacity by building more hospitals and clinics, among others.

Along with the preceding plans, BPB-03 and BPB-06 appealed, “Hangyo lang unta na libre na ang laboratory ug uban pang medical exam.” (BPB-03) (We would like to request that laboratory and medical examinations be



accessible and made available.)

*“Basin diay pwede pud na apilon sa programa na i-cover ang mga need gyud na medical test sama sa x-ray, ultrasound, urinalysis ug blood sugar level test.” (BPB-06)*

*(We appeal that medical tests and other diagnostic examinations, like X-ray, ultrasound, urinalysis, and sugar level tests, be included in the free health package of the program.)*

### **Construction of Help and Employment Centers**

Milestones in Balik Probinsya initiatives, which include major interventions for returning residents, such as assisting various government agencies and units, speak of success in their initial phase. On the other hand, an all-in-one office or center in each strategic location where BP2 matters are addressed is seen as increasing the efficacy and efficiency of the program's designed process flow and organizational outputs, particularly with the influx of applicants and locally stranded individuals. BPB-02 and BPB-04, in consonance with the afore-stated, suggested:

*“Mag-construct ug center para lang mismo sa BP na programa kada lugar. (BPB-02) (An office or center must be constructed strategically to address exclusively BP2 program concerns.)*

*“Dugangan ang assistance, tabangan ug i-assist gyud para makakita ug work.” (BPB-04) (Provide additional assistance and assist beneficiaries in looking for jobs.)*

### **Amplification of Social Services**

The government rolled out the program to encourage families to move to the provinces to spur growth in the countryside. Moreover, basic services such as education, health, and social service facilities should also be present in the provinces where participants are returning. Aware of these services, BPB-05 and BPB-01 implored:

*“Pangusgan pa ang social service na programa. Naa koy nakauban sa program na na-stress ba pag-abot, pero karon okay na siya... arang-arang na.” (BPB-05) (Strengthen social services to truly benefit the program recipients as attested by one beneficiary's anecdote.)*

*“Ipalambo ka kini nga programa aron mas daghan pa ang mahatagan ug serbisyo.” (BPB-01) (Develop these social programs to maximie help and support to the beneficiaries.)*



## Program Review and Evaluation

This year, the BP2 council intends to sustain its program advocacy through increased awareness and consultation activities, especially with the production of the BP2 brochure, and to continue coordinating the dispatch operations. As part of the pioneering BP2 grantees, BPB-04 and BPB-05 articulated their takeaway:

*“Studyohan usa ug i-consult and dapat i-consult para mas maayo pagka-implement sa programang balik probinsya.” (BPB-03) (Review and conduct a series of consultations on how the program is being implemented.)*

*“Han-ay nga plano ug tan-awon nila ang problema aron mahatagan ug eksakto nga serbisyo ang mga benipisyaryo.” (BPB-05) (Plans must be evaluated to ensure that the services are delivered to program beneficiaries and problems are appropriately addressed.)*

Evaluations should uphold, promote, and contribute to achieving the goals and targets in Ambisyon 2040, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), and the Philippine Development Plan (PDP). All evaluations need to produce results that are relevant enough to influence decision-making and improve service delivery and accessible enough to facilitate learning and empower each stakeholder (Cadorna et al., 2023).

At length, it is evident that the beneficiaries' interest in the program affirmed the program's goal of helping Filipino families locked up in urban areas of the country. It gives new hope, possibilities, and opportunities for a better life in the province. This strategic proposal would address future adversaries in the program, support existing methodologies, and expedite measures that uphold the salient provisions of this program in our ongoing efforts to nurture and progress the Philippines. As we embark on this journey with new leaders-elect, we hope for a future with new and better beginnings.

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

This study identified five major themes that emerged in the context of participants' understanding of Executive Order No. 114, also known as the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program: Pandemic Response Measure, Individual Well-Being Advocacy, Rural and Economic Development Initiative, Employment and Income-Generation Strategy, and Socioeconomic Support.

Six major themes also emerged, respectively, concerning beneficiaries' experiences vis-à-vis Social Welfare Services, Health Care, and Employment Support, which include the following Social Welfare, Health, and Employment Support include the following: Orderly Provision of Financial and Food Assistance; Availability of Social and Psychosocial Services; Accessible Medical and Nutrition Services; Regular Health Status Monitoring; Comprehensive Employment and Livelihood Opportunities; and Viable

Employment Package.

The following are themes generated from beneficiaries' experiences that could be further developed to assist in strengthening, enriching, and solidifying the execution of Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program per Executive Order No. 114 S. 2020: Improvement of Financial and Logistics Support, Establishment of Health Assistance Centers, Construction of Help and Employment Centers, Amplification of Social Services, and Program Review and Evaluation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: The Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program and its social welfare, health care, and employment services are effective and consistent with the literature and theory presented in this study.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Balik Probinsya, Bagong Pag-asa Program to work better, the following are highly recommended to be given priority by the concerned government agencies/units, officials, or individuals:

It is high time for the Department of the Interior and Local Government to recalibrate monitoring, assessment, and instrumentalities by utilizing a digital, centralized, and 24/7 operational database. Using mobile apps for the application process and updating beneficiaries is also recommended.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development should spearhead mental health awareness caravans, stress-debriefing activities, self-development seminars, and host mini-sports festivals and daily exercise and Zumba sessions.

The Department of Health should prioritize providing free diagnostic and laboratory examinations, such as X-rays, urinalysis, and CBC tests, and revitalizing botika ng barangay and mobile clinics.

The Department of Labor and Employment and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority should conduct various financial literacy symposia and forums, as well as barangay job fairs, and establish a training and assessment center in every municipality.

The Provincial Government, Municipal, and Barangay Government Units should amplify the Balik Probinsya program through house-to-house campaigns, use customized Balik Probinsya vans or cabs, and forge partnerships with civic, youth, religious, academic, and women's organizations for information-dissemination drives. With the help of infographics and documentaries, LGUs could also use social media platforms.

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