



Contributing to Human Development in the Philippines

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 Indirect Beneficiary
 DSWD - Competency Modelling
 and Enhancing the Recruitment
 System (CMERS)

“*Namimigay ng sardinas* (They distribute sardines)” were the very words my parents used to describe social work to me when I was deciding on what to take up in university. I wanted to study agriculture but my parents who come from a family of educators suggested social work.

Of course, it was so much more than that and I thoroughly enjoyed myself in school. I was taught to study myself first. I can only help others if I understand them, but I would not be able to understand them if I did not understand myself. I studied well and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Social Work from Leyte Normal University in 2001.

My first job out of school was as a volunteer medical social worker at a hospital in Leyte. Six months later, I moved to Manila and sent out applications.

The first to call me was Child Hope Asia, a nongovernment organisation (NGO) that promoted street education. I took the job and did ground work, developed rapport with and got to know the children, led them to shelters, and started case management there. For those that stayed on the streets, I would talk about healthcare, substance abuse, and the protective behaviour they had to possess. I stayed with that NGO for three years.

In 2005, I started working with the Street Children Development Centre. I still did street education, but there was also the additional element of community organising. I dealt with parents and coordinated with *barangays*; taught human rights and had parent effectiveness seminars. I would often do counselling, coordinate seminars, and act as resource person.

Six years later, in May 2011, I finally got my chance to work for the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). I had applied twice before—the first time when I arrived in Manila in 2002 and the second after my first job in 2005—but the NGOs responded faster and by the time DSWD called, I was already employed.

I found out about the new job opening through a friend and immediately applied. They gave me a standard exam and scheduled an interview. I was accepted and assigned to the pioneering Convergence Team (CT).

The CT was assigned to carry out DSWD's convergence strategy, which harmonised the three core social protection programs of the Department: the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps), KALAHI CIDSS-NCDDP, and Sustainable Livelihood Program. My tasks were to coordinate, collaborate, and communicate across the programs. It was a big project and I did

administrative work. After over three years in the CT, though, the outgoing social worker in me wanted to get closer to the beneficiaries.

I found my chance when I saw a posting for vacant positions at 4Ps on October 2014. I wanted a job that would allow me to concentrate on individual cases of beneficiaries, work that would put my social work education and experience to much better use. I would be able to look at situations from both micro and macro perspectives and provide technical assistance—and if my guidance resolves the issues and the problems, the beneficiaries win. I would have directly contributed to the development of a person and his or her family.

This time, my application and recruitment was processed much faster. I even enjoyed the interview because they had asked more personal questions about my previous experiences and how I could relate these to the work I wanted to do. I was hired in January 2015 and started my first day as Social Welfare Officer 3 of 4Ps on 12 February 2015.

I may have just started work at 4Ps but I am far from being new to it, actually. I was connected with 4Ps when I was part of CT, but the work I did with them then was broader because I monitored and exercised oversight functions over their affairs. Also, the Human Resource Development Section of DSWD's National Capital Region Field Office had been instrumental in making my transition to 4Ps seamless. They provided me with a detailed Terms of Reference document, which specified my tasks. It is the guide I use to study the focus and scope of my job. I had been taught to be proactive and to go beyond what is required of me, but I find it is also important to have detailed job descriptions at work so that professional relationships remain harmonious and there are no overlapping of tasks and bypassing of authority.

That being said, I am excited to begin with 4Ps!

Noemi Labaydan wants to do social work for the rest of her life. The DSWD organises, facilitates, and makes helping others so much easier for people like her whose ministry in life is service, but even if she were not working here, she would still be doing the work she is doing now someplace else. In fact, her weekends are spent continuing her life's ministry in Church.