



Leading in My Sphere of Influence

Cynthia Gabasa

Indirect Beneficiary

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

In 2012, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) launched a 10-month project using the stimulus fund granted to it by the executive arm of the Philippine government under the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP). They needed people to obligate, disburse, and liquidate the funds set aside for programmes in DSWD. I was hired for the remaining six months of the project, from July to December 2012. After that short stint

ended, I went back to working for a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) firm. I had held jobs with BPOs ever since I graduated from university in 2005, but I did not like what I was doing. After the work with DSWD in 2012, however, I thought I might have finally found my career path.

I kept an eye out for job openings I could apply for after my contract ended with DSWD. I submitted my application sometime in 2013 but did not hear from them. I took on another job and did a little business on the side while waiting.

When I got the call from DSWD in May 2014, I had almost forgotten about my application. I was offered a job and I took it. I was placed in the Technical Assistance Unit, where I stayed from July to December 2014. Before the year ended, I had applied for a position at the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps), a national program aimed at eradicating extreme poverty by investing in health and education.

I learned about the job opening at 4Ps through the online posting which the Human Resource Planning and Performance Management Division made. They were urgently trying to fill positions in the program at the time and I saw it as an opportunity to apply for work I wanted to do, which was in the Grievance Division. I thought it was similar to customer service, a field I was exposed to during my years working for BPOs. I went through the application process, took an exam, and sat in an interview with a panel.

It turned out that, during the interview, the panel found me more suited to work at the Compliance and Verification Division (CVD). They learned about my education degree and thought that I would be an asset in the CVD because the Division was in constant communication with the Department of Education (DepEd). The CVD checked beneficiaries' compliance with the 4Ps requirements by coordinating with the DepEd regarding grades and attendance of student beneficiaries in the program, among other things.

I was overwhelmed by the news that I was assigned to the CVD because I felt I knew nothing about it, but that did not last long. I was given a very detailed field and operations manual

which became my bible for the job. At first, I could not understand the lingo they had in the Division but after reading the manual, poring through email exchanges in the office, and attending all the meetings, I caught on.

The CVD, I realize, is a great place to be. I am a Project Development Officer 3 (PDO3) and I handle four out of the 17 regions in the Philippines. My responsibilities include facilitating and coordinating capacity building trainings with the Department of Health (DOH) and the DepEd, monitoring and evaluating the 4Ps beneficiaries, preparing cycles of activities for training, enhancing policies for better compliance among the beneficiaries, and updating our database of beneficiaries. We do spot checks on the ground, receive complaints and suggestions from our regions, and report feedback to our director. We get to lobby for improvements in the system because we have exposure to the field and access to the policy makers.

My job as PDO3 allows me to participate in decisions that can affect the whole country. Recently, DepEd suggested withdrawing from the list of 4Ps beneficiaries students who failed

subjects in high school. We are considering opposing this proposal because it runs counter to our goal of supporting student beneficiaries and ensuring they graduate from high school. It is the CVD that has to do the research, adjust the policy, and create better monitoring forms. There is the opportunity to lead in our spheres of influence and our abilities are always challenged by the work we need to do.

When I was in high school, my boyfriend who was working for DSWD brought me with him to his work in the mountains. I did not pay much attention and the experience did not make an impact. I ended up marrying that boyfriend and he still works for the DSWD, but it was my own experience here that has ignited my passion for program development and implementation.

Cynthia Gabasa hopes to take further studies in Public Administration. Meanwhile, she spends her weekends teaching Bible School at her church and bonding with her growing family.