



Impacts of COVID-19 on Communities in the Philippines

Results from the Philippines High Frequency Social Monitoring of COVID-19 Impacts Round 2: April 8-14, 2021

About the survey

The World Bank, in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), conducted two rounds of a high frequency social monitoring survey that aimed to assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the poorest and most vulnerable rural communities. This survey aimed to also determine the level of understanding and source of information of the communities pertaining to the COVID 19 vaccine, the compounding impact of calamities, and the effectiveness of distance learning modalities. This second round of phone-in survey was conducted across National Community Driven Development Project (NCDDP, implemented by DSWD) communities in nine regions in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao. Two hundred respondents composed of community volunteers and barangay officials randomly selected from a list provided by DSWD through the existing NCDDP project structure participated in the survey that was conducted on April 4-13, 2021. This brief outlines the findings from the second round.

It is important to note that the respondents acted as key informants and provided their observations on the situation in their respective communities. The jobs losses, social safety nets and education related statistics reported are therefore indicative of the general development and observation in the community as reported by the respondents. They should not be interpreted as absolute estimates of job loss/rates, statistical values of those accessing social safety net programs, and quantitative measurements of the distance learning programs of the government.

Key findings

Respondents reported the following views and observations:

COVID-19 Information

- Communities were markedly concerned about vaccine safety and effectiveness and looked to doctors and health practitioners for information about vaccination plans.
- Though they knew vaccine could prevent COVID, communities were aware that health protocols were still needed.
- Getting vaccinated would likely be difficult for seniors, persons with comorbidities, and children because of health reasons.

Social Safety Nets

- There is a slight drop in the share of people who received assistance, with the city government as the top source of assistance.
- Communities preferred food, cash, and livelihood assistance.
- The negative effects of natural calamities on livelihood made the COVID-19 situation worse.

Economic Impact



- Lack of income was the main problem for most people, with many of them citing limited or loss of employment opportunities.
- Construction workers and public transport drivers were worst hit by job cuts, and job losses were experienced equally by both men and women.
- The economic situation of IP (indigenous peoples) barangays stayed the same.

Government Services

- Local governments could do better in implementing health protocols.
- Generally, there was no increase in the number of health workers and non-COVID patients.

Social Cohesion

- There was an increase in COVID-related problems in peace and order, with the cause shifting from lack of medical supplies in R1 to loss of employment in R2.
- Cases of COVID-related discrimination similarly increased.
- Sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence did not increase.

Education

- Distance learning was not effective due to lack or limited access to learning gadgets and learning losses among children.
- Paper-based modules were the preferred learning modality.
- People believed that in-person classes should resume when the national government says so and when vaccines become available for most people.

COVID-19 Context

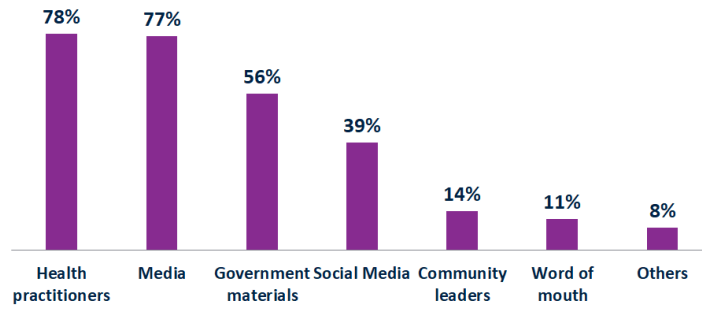
The Philippine government has implemented varying degrees of quarantine restrictions depending on critical COVID 19 key indicators, such as reproduction rate and testing and health care capacity. During the fourth quarter of 2020 until the second quarter of 2021, majority of the provinces, cities, and municipalities in the country were placed under the more lenient level of quarantine categories of General Community Quarantine (GCQ) and the Modified General Community Quarantine. Exceptions to this were the province of Lanao del Sur and the cities of Iloilo and Bacolod, which were all placed under the Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine (MECQ) due to the uptick of COVID-19 cases. By March 2021, Metro Manila and the surrounding provinces of Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, and Rizal were placed under GCQ “with additional restrictions” due to increasing COVID 19 cases. However, by the end of March 2021, the surge in the number of COVID 19 infections and death led the government to place the said areas under the most stringent Enhanced Community Quarantine status (ECQ) for two weeks, while the rest of the country were under MGCQ or GCQ.

Information on COVID-19 Vaccine

The survey results indicate that 78% of the respondents sourced their information on COVID-19 vaccines from health practitioners, media was the second at 77%, while government materials became the third source of information at 56% (Figure 1). Consistent with this, respondents also preferred that most of the vaccine-related information came from doctors and health professionals (89%), local government units (54%), and media (39%).

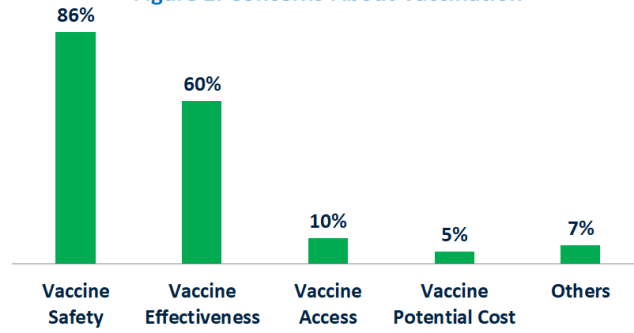


Figure 1. Sources of COVID-19 Information



For most of the respondents, vaccine safety (86%) and effectiveness (60%) were the top-most concerns for the vaccination (Figure 2). Majority of the respondents (59%) suggested that information about vaccine effectiveness and safety would be useful. Eighty-three percent of the respondents were aware that COVID-19 could be prevented with a vaccine, but everyone (100%) was aware that individuals should

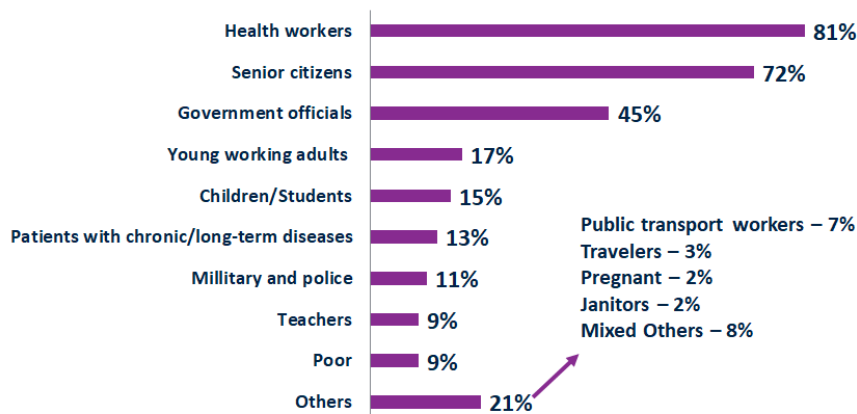
Figure 2. Concerns About Vaccination



still practice social distancing, wearing face mask, and hand washing.

Respondents agreed that the top three priority groups for vaccination should be health workers (81%), senior citizens (72%) and government officials (45%) (Figure 3). In addition, the survey also indicates that senior citizens (78%), patients with long-term/chronic disabilities (44%), and children/students (39%) would have difficulties in accessing vaccines. Top factors identified as affecting accessibility of vaccines were health reasons (69%), transportation to health facilities (22%), and costs of vaccines 18%. With this, the government should ensure that accessibility and inclusivity issues are addressed in the vaccination roll-out.

Figure 3. Priority Groups for the Vaccine





Social Safety Nets

Key informants perceived that lack of income was a major problem for most of the communities (98%) (Figure 4). Result for this round is significantly higher compared to the first round of the survey, which was at 78%. This finding also correlates to the most common cause of grievances and complaints in the community, which was loss of employment and limited opportunities (Figure 5). On a positive note, communities reported an improvement in access to health facilities for COVID-19 cases, with only 11% reporting lack of access compared to the 19% during the first round of survey.

Individuals receiving assistance had a slight dip from 99% in the first round to 96% in the second round. Note that the first round (September 2020) was conducted after the government passed the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act (Bayanihan 1) in March 2020, which allocated a bigger portion of funds for social amelioration to Filipino families. Bayanihan 2, signed into law in September 2020 and prior to the second round of the survey, focused on a financial stimulus package and assistance for firms. Most of the respondents reported that the top source of assistance came from the city or municipal government (75%), barangays (68%), and national government (56%). The preference for assistance package ranges from food (59%), cash (50%), and livelihood (50%) assistance. Among the vulnerable groups, senior citizens (46%), victims of natural disasters (36%), and IPs (33%) needed more assistance (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Groups that Need More Assistance in Coping with COVID-19 (R1, R2)

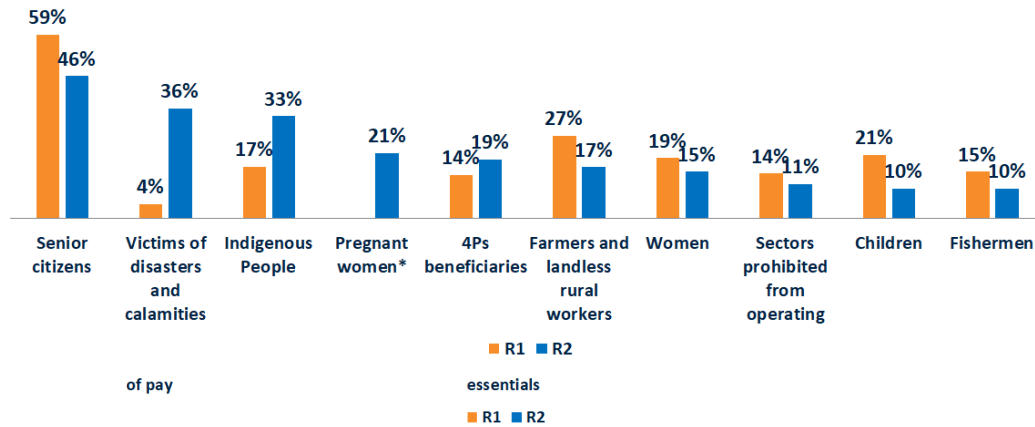
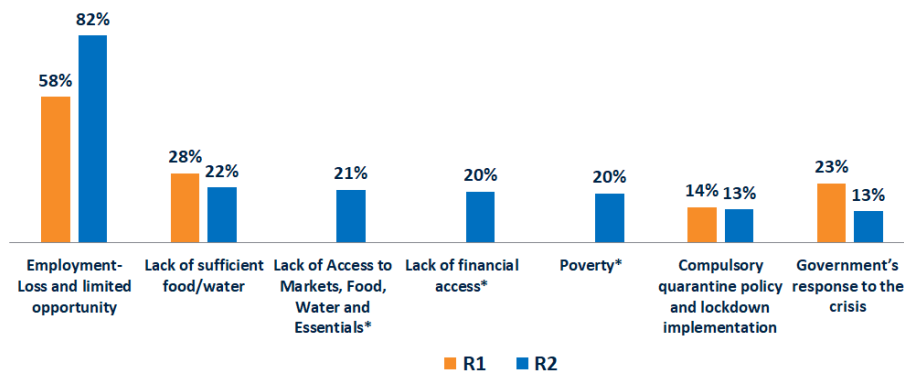
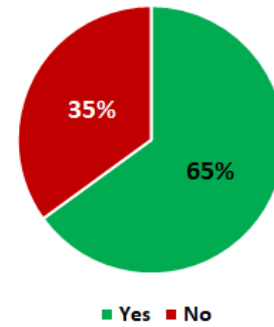


Figure 5. Common Causes of Grievances and Complaints (R1, R2)



Sixty-five percent of the respondents reported that their communities had experienced natural calamities since September 2020 (Figure 7). Of those that were affected, 74% said that this aggravated the COVID-19 situation in their communities. The three factors that aggravated the COVID-19 situation include negative effects on livelihood (55%), mobility constraints (33%), and social distancing constraints (22%).

Figure 7. Affected by Natural Calamity since September 2020



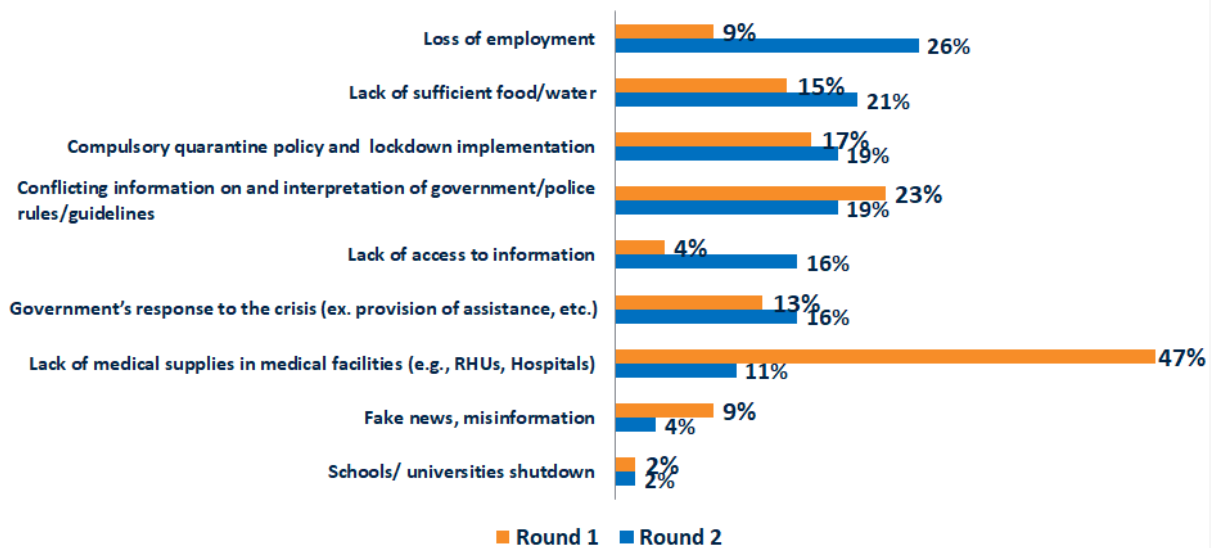
Social Cohesion

Communities experienced an increase in peace and order problems, including petty crimes, arguments and violent protests related to COVID-19, from 26% during the first round to 78% in the second round. The main cause of peace and order problems shifted from lack of medical supplies (in the first round) to loss of employment in the second round (26%). Lack of water and food came second with 21%, while compulsory quarantine policy, lockdown, and conflicting information of quarantine guidelines constitute the third cause of peace and order problems at 19% (Figure 8).

Discrimination due to COVID 19 increased to 30% in round 2 from 25% in round 1. The most discriminated groups were COVID 19 patients (41%), locally stranded individuals (25%), and health care workers (15%).

It is worth noting that 94% of the respondent communities observed no increase in cases of sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence for this survey period.

Figure 8. Causes of Peace and Order Problems (R1, R2)





Employment and Economic Impact

There are notable positive developments with the decrease in the incidence of job losses in the service, industry, and agricultural sectors. The average decrease was 4% in informal services, formal services, financial institutions, informal manufacturing, farming and formal agriculture. The most improved sector is the formal retail where reported incidence of job losses decreased by 13%. However, construction workers and public transport drivers continued to be the sectors worst hit by job cuts at 56% and 52% respectively (Figure 9). A majority of key informants (1 in 2) noted that men and women were equally affected by job losses (Figure 10).

Figure 9. Incidence of Severe Job Losses

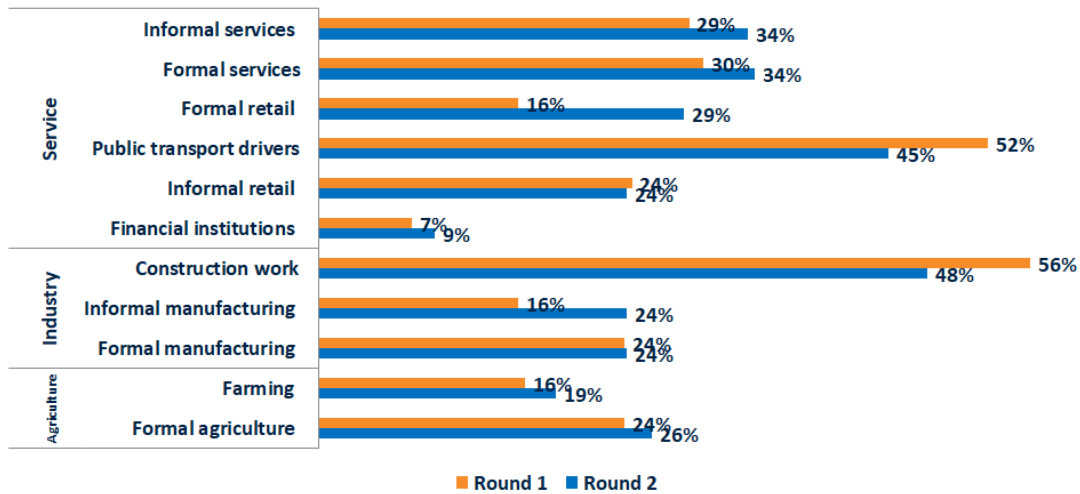
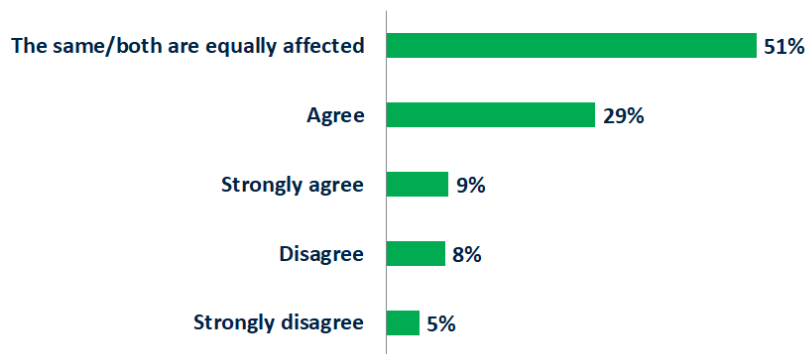


Figure 10: Agreement Rating: Women in your community are affected by job losses more than men

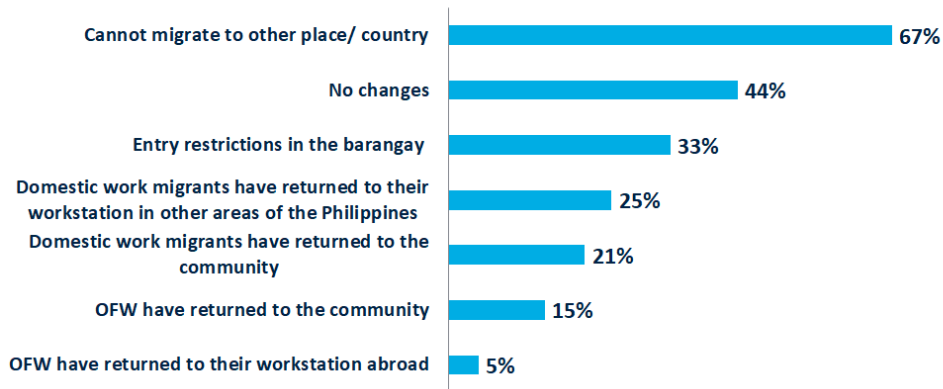


In terms of the overall economic conditions of barangays, survey results show that respondents from barangays with IP communities reported the same conditions (68%) since the beginning of the COVID-19 situation, while the conditions worsened in non-IP barangays (60%).

In terms of the impact of mobility restrictions to the migration or movement of people, a majority of key informants pointed to the following top reasons for population changes: 67% responded that the restrictions resulted in an inability to migrate to other places or countries; 44% reported that there were no changes, while 33% pointed to stricter entry restrictions in the barangays (Figure 11).



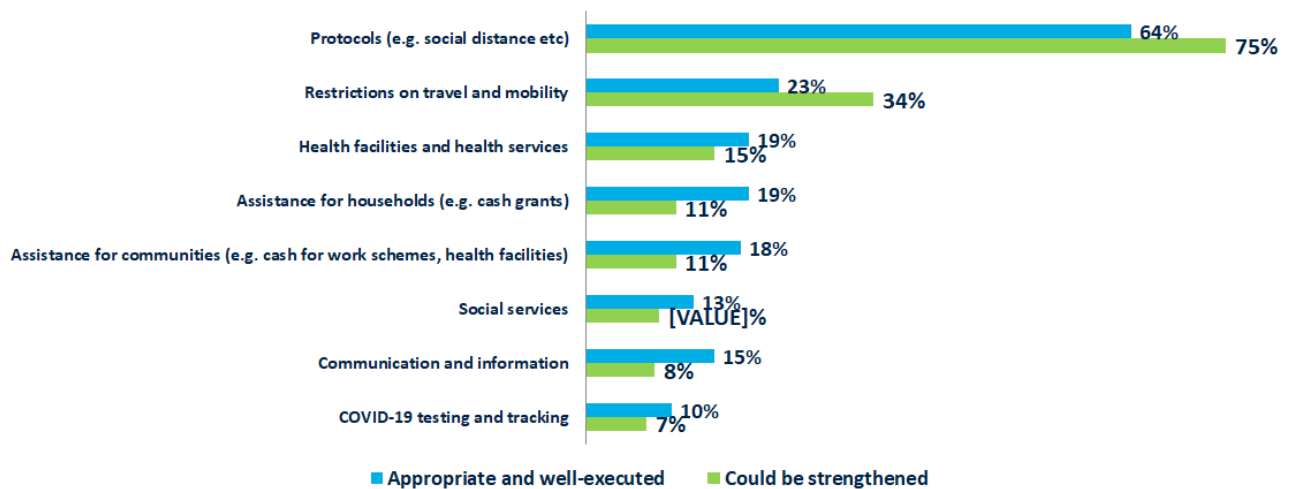
Figure 11. Population Changes due to Migration/Movement of People



Government Services

An interesting trend can be noted in the community’s views regarding the response of local government units (LGUs) towards COVID-19 and the action areas that need to be strengthened (Figure 12). More concretely, while the community agreed (64%) that the protocols such as social distancing were appropriate and implemented well, 75% also responded that the protocols could still be strengthened. The answers to the probing questions showed that while the communities acknowledged that the government response was appropriate, they also wanted a more stringent, consistent and sustained implementation of such protocols. The survey also showed that despite the almost one year of quarantine implementation, 34% of the communities still thought that the policy and implementation of restrictions on travel and mobility needed to be strengthened.

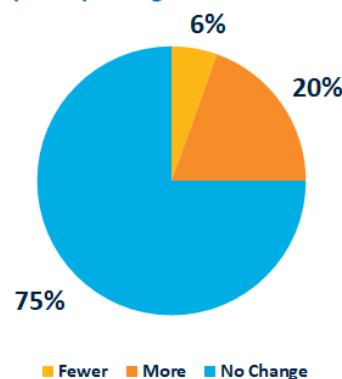
Figure 12. Areas of LGU Response that the Community Found Appropriate and Could be Strengthened



For barangay health services, 75% of the respondents said that there were no changes in terms of the number of barangay health workers (BHWs) during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 13). Of the 20% respondents that hired more BHWs, 74% said there was a higher volume of barangay patients needing attention, while 26% said they needed to offset the number of people needing jobs.

Fifty-five percent of the communities did not observe any change in the volume of non-COVID 19 patients accessing health care services in their barangays, while 35% reported an increase in the volume of non-COVID 19 patients in their health centers.

Figure 13. Change in Number of Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) during the COVID-19 Pandemic

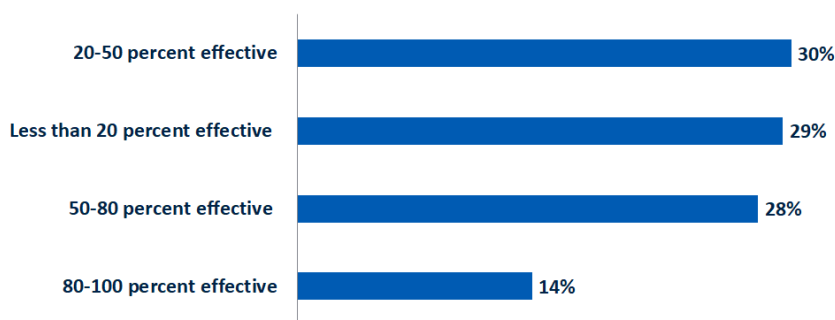


Education

The survey asked the respondents to rate the effectiveness of the current distance learning compared to face-to-face schooling (Figure 14). Thirty percent of the respondents agreed that the current modality was only 20-50% effective, while 28% found it 50-80% effective. A quarter of the respondents found that distance learning was less than 20% effective.

The top three concerns related to distance learning included limited or no access to gadgets or devices for learning such as mobile phones, tablets, and laptops, (45%); learning losses or a general decline in knowledge and skills (42%); and limited or no learning guidance from household members (36%). Students were also reported to experience social and emotional challenges, including psychological stress (21%) and absence or limited physical communication with friends (17%). Among the IPs, one of the major challenges was limited or no access to internet service in their communities (37%).

Figure 14. Perception of Effectiveness of Current Distance Learning Compared to Face-to-Face Schooling



Paper-based modules remained the preferred effective distance learning modality among 92% of the respondents, followed by online classes at 23%.

Respondents agreed that in-person classes should resume only when the national government approves such (47%) and when vaccines are available to a majority of people in the community (32%).



Conclusion

The second round of High Frequency Social Monitoring of COVID-19 Impacts Community Survey showed the pandemic's lingering effects on the economic conditions of poor communities, specifically from loss of jobs and income opportunities. It also demonstrated the obvious that with less stringent mobility and quarantine protocols, economic activity will improve.

It is important to note that while the government laid out the COVID-19 vaccination plan and began the roll out, the safety of vaccines and efficacy are still major concerns that may affect vaccination rates.

Finally, this survey also surfaced the challenges and gaps of the government's distance learning modalities, which a majority of community respondents found to be ineffective for learners. In particular, there is a need for the government to look into the basic challenges that learners encountered, including the lack of access to learning gadgets and equipment, access to free internet service, and adult support for the learners.

DSWD started the implementation of the Kalahi-CIDSS NCDDP Additional Financing project to support the early recovery of rural poor communities. Through the KC-NCDDP Disaster Risk Operations Modality, several local government units, together with their communities, will undertake projects that promote inclusive service provision and support economic recovery, such as cash-for-work programs.

The World Bank is also supporting the government in its COVID-19 response and recovery interventions by providing the much needed resources for strengthening emergency COVID 19 health care response, including the provision of vaccines and expanding testing and laboratory facilities at the national and sub-national public health laboratories.

The survey results will be shared with government and other stakeholders as a component of the Real Time Monitoring of COVID-19 Impacts in the Philippines Project and complementing the findings from the Firm and Household Surveys.

Acknowledgment

The note was prepared by the World Bank team led by Ditte Marie Fallesen (Senior Social Development Specialist, SEAS2) and Paul Adolfo (Social Development Specialist, SEAS2), with inputs from Sharon Faye Piza (Economist, EEAPV), Maria Padua (Senior Social Development Specialist, SEAS2), Juliette Wilson (Social Development Specialist, SEAS1), and Corinne Canlas (Consultant, SEAS2). The survey is a component of the Real Time Monitoring of COVID-19 Impacts in the Philippines Project supported by the Australian Government. Survey preparation, implementation and data processing were supported by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), along with Arianna Francesca Zapanta and Rina Gonzalez (Consultants, EEAPV). The survey design, implementation, and results analysis received the guidance of Janmejay Singh (Practice Manager, SEAS2), with inputs from Carlos Tomas Perez-Brito (Senior Social Development Specialist, SEAS2), Sutayut Osornprasop (Senior Health Specialist, HEAHN), Sachiko Kataoka (Senior Economist, HEAED), Clarissa C. David (Senior External Affairs Officer, ECREA), and David Llorito (External Affairs Officer, ECREA).