

HONORABLE RISA HONTIVEROS
Chairperson
Committee on Women, Children,
Family Relations and Gender Equality
Senate of the Philippines
Pasay City

ATTN: Ms. Gemma Genoveva Tanpiengco
Committee Secretary

Dear **SENATOR HONTIVEROS**,

This refers to your request for comments and recommendations on the following bills:

Senate Bill (SB) No.	Title	Author
375	Gender Responsive and Inclusive Pandemic and Disaster Management Act of 2022	Sen. Risa Hontiveros
1339		Sen. Loren B. Legarda

Consistent with its mandate to lead in the formulation, implementation and coordination of social welfare and development policies and programs, including provision of social protection, for and with the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) **strongly supports** the proposed legislations.

The DSWD welcomes the proposed legislation in ensuring our commitment in formulating plans, policies and programs that would provide direction to intermediaries and other implementers in the development of social welfare and development services including social protection and disaster response management.

Likewise, we believe that the proposed legislations would further enhance our operational guidelines along disaster risk reduction and management and special concerns including camp coordination and management.

At present, the DSWD adheres and adopts universal norms, principles and standards in humanitarian assistance. We continuously enhance existing procedures, structures and mechanisms on disaster data management and information dissemination, including ensuring that clientele taking refuge in camp facilities are safe and secured, free from any form of gender-based violence as well as ensuring that the provisions of needs and services are gender-responsive and inclusive.

We strongly believe that these legislations will institutionalize these practices and mechanisms for implementation not only by the DSWD but as well as other agencies, Local Government Units and intermediaries.

At this juncture, the DSWD submits the following comments and recommendations for the consideration of the Committee:

- Definition of "Women in Especially Difficult Circumstances"¹
 1. It is suggested that the definition under Republic Act No. 9710 or the "Magna Carta of Women" be adopted in order to ensure uniformity in context. For easy reference, "**Women in Especially Difficult Circumstances**" (**WEDC**) shall refer to victims and survivors of sexual and physical abuse, illegal recruitment, prostitution, trafficking, armed conflict, women in detention, victims and survivors of rape and incest, and such other related circumstances which have incapacitated them functionally. Local government units are therefore mandated to deliver the necessary services and interventions to WEDC under their respective jurisdictions."
- As to SBN 375, Article III. General Duties of National Government Agencies and Local Government Units, and Article IV. Programming and Management to Address Gender-Differentiated Needs of Women During a Pandemic²
 2. We recommend revision of the title of the Article III of SBN 375 to not limit the measures during a pandemic but rather for disaster preparedness in general including in cases of state of emergencies, calamities, pandemics, and public health emergencies

The expansion of scope of the measure to not be limited to pandemic but to cover disasters, other emergencies and even in the context of climate change, consistent with the commitment of the country under UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as provided under General Recommendation No. 37. It may be noted that the objective of General Recommendation No. 37 is to underscore the urgency of mitigating climate change and to highlight the steps that need to be taken to achieve gender equality as a factor that will reinforce the resilience of individuals and communities globally in the context of climate change and disasters. The general recommendation also seeks to contribute to coherence, accountability and the mutual reinforcement of different international agendas on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by focusing on the impact of climate change and disasters on women's human rights.

¹ As provided under Section 4 of SBN 375 and Section 5 of SBN 1339

² Particularly Section 8 of SBN 375 which provides that a gender-responsive pandemic preparedness plan must be formulated by every government agency and LGUs

In view of the foregoing, the DSWD reiterates its support for the passage of the proposed bills.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

REX GATCHALIAN
Secretary

For the Secretary:



EDUARDO M. PUNAY

Officer-in-Charge

Per Special Order No. 1726, s. 2023

Date: MAY 11 2023