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Survey Among BNS Supervisors on the Implementation of PD 1569 in Selected Areas in the Philippines

ABSTRACT

The survey among BNS Supervisors on the implementation of Presidential Decree (PD) 1569 "Strengthening the Barangay Nutrition Program by Providing for a Barangay Nutrition Scholar in Every Barangay, Providing Funds Thereof, and for Other Purposes" was assessed through a survey completed by 178 out of the 209 trainers/supervisors of barangay nutrition scholars (BNSs) who participated in the different batches of Training of Trainers on Basic Course for BNSs, but excluding those from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

Almost all (98%) of the respondents trainers/supervisors cited presence of at least one BNS in their areas of assignments. Other provisions of the law particularly those that relates to the recruitment/selection/hiring of BNSs, their benefits, trainings and supervision were also implemented but not consistent and were in varying extent.

Overall, there is a need to introduce amendment to the law to strengthen the BNS program to further improve the nutrition situation in the Philippines. Priority should be given to standardizing qualifications, duties and benefits of BNSs and in implicitly citing the responsibilities of the local government units in the BNS program implementation. It is strongly suggested that the minimum educational qualification for BNSs be revised to at least reaching secondary school and the benefits be parallel to those received by other community workers in the areas, such as Barangay Health Workers and Barangay Nutrition Action Officers.

INTRODUCTION

The definition of roles of various sectors and disciplines at different levels of operation involved in nutrition program planning and management is necessary to address the multifaceted problem of malnutrition. Increasingly recognized are the contributions of well-trained cadre of volunteers at the grassroots level who are tasked to mobilize people in the community to accept and practice good nutrition (Solon, 2006).

In the Philippines, these nutrition movers in communities or villages, locally called *barangays*, are referred to as Barangay Nutrition Scholars or BNSs. The BNSs are barangay-based volunteer workers responsible for delivering nutrition services and other related activities such as community health, backyard food production, environmental sanitation, culture, mental feeding, and family feeding to the barangay (NNC, 1981). According to the official website of the Department of Health, the BNS is different from the other indigenous workers called the Barangay Health Workers (BHWs), who are likewise trained health workers tasked to provide information, education, and motivation services for promoting health care, maternal and child health, child rights, family planning and nutrition. Like the BNSs, the BHWs conduct regular weighing of children and administer immunization.

The concept of the BNS was first launched in 1977 as a means of meeting manpower needs of the Philippine Nutrition Program, now known as the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN). On June 11, 1978, the importance of the BNSs and the need for nationwide implementation of the BNS program was acknowledged through Presidential Decree 1569 (PD 1569) entitled "*Strengthening the Barangay Nutrition Program by providing for a Barangay Nutrition Scholar in Every Barangay, Providing funds thereof, and for other purposes*".

Aside from the provision of having one Barangay Nutrition Scholar for every barangay, PD 1569 laid out the roles of these community based volunteer workers such as delivering nutrition services and other related activities such as community health, backyard food production, environmental

sanitation, mental feeding, and family planning to the barangay. PD 1569 also stipulated the qualifications, recruitment, benefits, trainings, supervision of the BNSs, and the contributions of various local nutrition committees and local chief executives (LCEs) in the implementation of the BNS program. PD 1569 was supplemented by the Implementing Guidelines formulated by the National Nutrition Council (NNC) in 1981.

The law provides the legal basis for the implementation of the BNS program. More than three decades since its passage. There was no published study on the assessment of PD 1569 although NNC has conducted annual assessment on how the BNS program is implemented. While PD 1569 has not been amended, there have been several bills filed and is being filed in the 16th Congress for the amendment of PD 1569 but these did not push through. The RA 7160, the Local Government Code, significantly changed the manner of BNS Program implementation, devolving the manner of implementation of the program to the local government units. Thus, local ordinances and resolutions have been passed related to the implementation on PD 1569.

neither an assessment of the implementation of the law nor an amendment has been introduced. Meanwhile, the BNS continues to be among the critical factors in the implementation of the PPAN and their functions have undeniably evolved in response to the changes in the country's food and nutrition situation, nutrition programs and interventions, directions and priorities, and political milieu.

This study, thus aimed to assess or determine the status of implementation of PD 1569 in selected areas of the country and present similarities and differences in the island groupings (Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao) and NCR in terms of: (1) recruitment/selection/hiring of BNS; (2) benefits granted to the BNS; (3) training of BNS; (4) supervision of BNS; (5) support provided by Local Government Units (LGUs) and (6) innovations or enhancements in the implementation of the BNS program. Results would be useful in identifying measures to strengthen the Barangay Nutrition Program that will help bring about a well-nourished population.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a cross-sectional study design. A three-page survey questionnaire was administered among the BNSs' trainers and/or supervisors who were the District/City Nutrition Program Coordinators, Provincial/City/Municipal Nutrition Action Officers, and nutritionist-dietitians.

The respondents of the study were those who attended the ten batches of the Training of Trainers on Basic Course for Barangay Nutrition Scholars (TOT-BNS) implemented by the National Nutrition Council (NNC) and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) from September 2009 to February 2010.

The questionnaire focused on six areas of concerns pertinent to the law, namely: (1) recruitment/selection/hiring of BNS; (2) benefits granted to the BNS; (3) training of BNS; (4) supervision of BNS; (5) support provided by LGUs; and (6) innovation or enhancements made by the LGUs in the implementation of the BNS program.

The results of the study are based on the perception of the respondents and may not necessarily reflect the actual scenario in the covered areas.

One hundred seventy eight (178) out of the 209 participants in the ten batches of the TOT-BNS returned the accomplished questionnaire, constituting a response rate of 85%. About two to three persons per province composed of District/City Nutrition Program Coordinators (D/CNPCs), Province/City/Municipal Nutrition Action Officers were invited to participate in the training program. A total of 91 Local Government Units (LGUs) were represented in the study from the 52 provinces, 21 cities, and 19 municipalities. Almost half (48%) were from Luzon; followed by 17% from Visayas, 16% Mindanao, and 17% from NCR (Table 1). The survey excluded participants from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) since the BNS program is yet to be instituted in the region.

Data collected were encoded and summarized using mean and frequency distribution. Results are presented as percentage of responses since most of the questions yielded multiple responses.

Table 1. Distribution of Local Government Unit (LGU)-respondents according to island grouping

LGU	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	% (N=58)	Freq	% (N=58)	Freq	% (N=58)	Freq	% (N=58)	Freq	% (N=58)
Province	28	63.60	13	81.20	12	80.00	-	-	52	56.50
City	3	6.80	2	12.50	2	13.30	15	93.70	21	22.80
Municipality	13	29.50	1	6.20	1	6.70	1	6.20	19	20.70
TOTAL	44	100.00	16	100.00	15	100.00	16	100.00	91	100.00
% per island grouping	48.40		17.60		16.50		17.60		100.00	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' profile: trainers/ supervisors

Of the 178 trainer respondents included in the study, 41% belonged to the middle age group 40-49 years (Table 2). The mean age of the respondents was 45 years old. Those coming from the Visayas were slightly older (49 years old) while those from Mindanao and NCR were fairly younger (41 years old and 43 years old, respectively). Only two respondents were above 60 years old.

A large proportion of the respondents were college degree holders (86.5%) with more than half of them having finished nutrition and dietetics and allied fields. The table further shows that, an overwhelming majority of those coming from Luzon and NCR were college graduates. Majority (63%) were employed as nutrition officers or coordinators, and nutritionist-dietitians, many of whom were from Luzon and the rest were presently holding other positions (32%) in their respective areas, such as health officers, population officers, midwives, and nurses. It was also noted that

there were more trainers/supervisors respondents (82%) who were designated as nutrition coordinators, municipal/city/provincial nutrition action officers and nutritionist dietitians. In NCR, there were more trainers/supervisors who were designated as nutrition action officers and nutritionist-dietitians as compared to those in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Table 2 presents that the number of years in service ranged from two weeks to 35 years. Mean number of years in service was 16 years. The average number of years in service of respondents did not differ much across geographical location. Other positions include Medical/Health Officer/Assistant Provincial Health Officer, Community Affairs Officer, Health Education and Promotion Officer, Home Management Specialist, Sanitation Inspector, and Social Welfare Assistant. Some of the participants were also designated as Health Education and Promotion Officer, Administrative Aide, Case Study Report Maker, Community Affairs Assistant, Population Program Officer, and Coordinator of Specific Projects.

Table 2. Characteristics of trainer/supervisor respondents

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Age										
<30	6	7.70	-	-	4	15.40	4	9.80	14	8.00
30- 39	13	16.70	3	10.00	8	30.80	5	12.20	29	16.60
40-49	28	35.90	11	36.70	9	34.60	24	58.50	72	41.10
50-59	29	37.20	16	53.30	5	19.20	8	19.50	58	33.10
>60	2	2.60	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.10
Average	45.55		48.77		41.00		43.20		44.90	
Range	21-61		30-60		23-58		23-56		21-61	
Educational attainment										
AB	1	1.30	2	6.70	2	6.90	-	-	5	2.80
Midwifery	3	3.80	3	10.00	-	-	1	2.40	7	3.90
BS	71	91.00	22	73.30	24	82.80	37	90.20	154	86.50
MA	2	2.60	2	6.70	1	3.40	3	7.30	8	4.50
Others	1	1.30	1	3.30	2	6.90	0	-	4	2.20
BS Food and Nutrition	38	53.50	12	54.50	7	29.20	23	62.20	80	51.90

Continued Table 2. Characteristics of trainer/supervisor respondents

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Position/Job										
1. Nutritionist-dietitian	31	39.70	9	30.00	4	13.80	31	75.60	75	42.10
2. Nutrition Officer	22	28.20	3	10.00	6	20.70	7	17.10	38	21.30
3. Public Health Nurse	7	9.00	3	10.00	1	3.40	1	2.40	12	6.70
4. Administrative Aide/Officer	5	6.40	1	3.30	6	20.70	-	-	12	6.70
5. MNC/PNC Secretariat/Nutrition Staff	3	3.80	1	3.30	3	10.30	-	-	7	3.90
6. Rural Health Midwife	3	3.80	2	6.70	1	3.40	2	4.90	8	4.50
7. Population Program Officer	1	1.30	3	10.00	4	13.80	-	-	8	4.50
8. Agriculture Technologist/Livestock Coordinator	2	2.60	1	3.30	1	3.40	-	-	4	2.20
9. Others	4	5.10	7	23.30	3	10.30	-	-	14	7.90
10. Total	78	100.00	30	100.00	29	100.00	41	100.00	178	100.00
Designation										
1. Nutrition Coordinator	29	37.20	17	56.70	16	55.20	-	-	62	34.80
2. Mun/City/Provincial Nutrition Action Officer	14	17.90	3	10.00	5	17.20	7	17.10	29	16.30
3. Nutritionist-Dietitian	20	25.60	2	6.70	2	6.90	31	75.60	55	30.90
4. Nutrition Staff/MNC Secretariat	5	6.40	1	3.30	5	17.20	2	4.90	11	6.20
5. Midwife Supervisor	2	2.60	1	3.30	-	-	1	2.40	5	2.80
6. Nurse/ Public Health Nurse	2	2.60	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1.70
7. Others	6	7.70	6	20.00	1	3.40	-	-	13	7.30
8. Total	78	100.00	30	100.00	29	100.00	41	100.00	178	100.00

Continued Table 2. Characteristics of trainer/supervisor respondents

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Years in Service										
< 1 year	2	2.60	-	-	2	6.90	-	-	4	2.20
1-5 years	13	16.70	5	16.70	6	0.70	5	12.20	29	16.30
6-9 years	3	3.80	2	6.70	4	13.80	5	12.20	14	7.90
10-19 years	27	34.60	10	33.30	6	20.70	19	46.30	62	34.80
20-29 years	24	30.80	9	30.00	7	24.10	8	19.50	48	27.00
> 30	7	9.00	1	3.30	2	6.90	3	7.30	13	7.30
No answer	2	2.60	3	10.00	2	6.90	1	2.40	8	4.50
Total	78	100.00	30	100.00	29	100.00	41	100.00	178	100.00
Average	17.6		16.1		13.0		15.9		16.3	
Range	2 weeks-35 years		2-30 years		0.41-33 years		1-32 years		2 weeks-35 years	

Number of BNS per barangay

The most basic provision of PD 1569 is the recruitment, selection, and hiring of at least one BNS per barangay. According to Heaver and Hunt (1995), a number of BNSs were recruited, on a semi-volunteer basis, in about 10% of Philippine barangays by 1987. The coverage was notably increased by 1995 where one BNS per three barangays was documented. In a more recent report, the NNC presented that a total of 22,083 BNSs are deployed in 954 municipalities covering a total of 19,032 barangays nationwide (www.nnc.gov.ph). These BNSs were under the supervision of 316 District/City Nutrition Program Coordinators (D/CNPCs). The figures reflect only the number of BNS that has requested for NNC assistance. The number excludes BNS from LGUs without request for assistance like the National Capital Region (NCR).

With the country's 44,000 barangays (www.nscb.org.ph), this translates to one BNS for every two barangays. However, there are LGUs that hire one BNS per barangay while some LGUs have not deployed any BNS at all. Hence, the ratio may not be too accurate.

In the present study, all the trainer/supervisor respondents from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao cited that the LGUs which they are working do hire BNSs (Table 3). In NCR, two cities did not hire BNS. Reasons for non-hiring included: (1) barangay chairman did not see the need to hire one, (2) no budget allocation for the position, (3) nobody applied for the position, (4) political issues, or the mayor disapproved the hiring of the BNS and 5) Barangay Health Worker/Barangay Health Aide already existed to perform the duties of a BNS.

For the LGUs who hire BNSs, a one to one (1:1) BNS per barangay ratio was common except in Luzon and NCR where the number of BNSs was varied and was usually higher in cities and urban areas with higher population density.

Table 3. Number of hired BNS in LGUs

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Number of LGUs which hired BNS	44	100.00	16	100.00	15	100.00	14	87.50	89	98.0
Number of BNS per barangay										
1	28	63.60	12	75.00	9	60.00	11	11.00	60	67.40
2	2	4.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2.20
4	1	2.30	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.10
1-2	7	15.90	4	25.00	5	33.30	1	1.00	17	19.10
1-3	4	9.10	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4.50
2-4	1	2.30	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.10
2-3	1	2.30	-	-	-	-	1	1.00	2	2.20
1-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.00	1	1.10
Depends on LGU	-	-	-	-	1	6.70	-	-	1	1.10
Total	44	100.00	16	100.00	15	100.00	14	14.00	89	100.00

Recruitment/Selection/Hiring of BNS

As contained in the Implementing Guidelines on the BNS Program (NNC, 1981), a screening committee shall be organized by the City/Municipal Action Officer (C/MAO), now known as City/Municipal Nutrition Action Officer or C/MNAO, at both barangay and municipal/city levels to choose the most qualified from among the applicants. The barangay captain acts as the committee chairman, while the members are the head teacher or teacher co-coordinator and the president of any of the community organizations such as the Parents Teacher Organization (PTA), Rural Improvement Club (RIC), or 4-H club. The C/MNAO endorses the final recommended applicants to the mayor for approval.

The screening and recruitment of the BNS shall be guided by the following qualifications as listed in the law: (1) bonafide resident of the barangay for at least four years and can speak the local dialect well; (2) possess leadership potentials and the initiative and willingness to serve the barangay for at least one year; (3) willing to learn, and to teach what s/he has learned to the barangay people; (4) at least elementary graduate; (5) physically and mentally fit; and (6) more than 18 years old, but younger than 60 years old.

As presented in Table 4, the process of BNS recruitment had been shortened and relied heavily on individual (notably the barangay chairman) rather than committee appointment as mentioned by an overwhelming majority of the respondents (81.0%). Across regions, respondents from Luzon stated that almost all (96.2%) of their BNS were appointed by the Barangay Chairman. However, LGUs were said to follow the basic qualifications for BNSs.

Noticeably, there were LGUs that required a higher minimum educational attainment from the prospective BNS from at least elementary to at least secondary or even collegiate level (Table 5). An important qualification in hiring of BNSs was the presence of leadership potential. This was underscored by 98.7%, 96.6%, 100%, and 85.4% respondents in Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and NCR, respectively. Based on the results of the training needs assessment (NNC and UPLB, 2009), this was necessary in response to the type of tasks carried out by the BNSs in recent times.

Table 4. Process of recruitment/selection/hiring of BNS

Process	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Appointed by the Barangay Chairperson	75	96.20	26	89.70	30	100.00	14	34.10	145	81.00
2. Recommended by the Sangguniang Barangay	26	33.30	5	17.20	11	36.70	10	29.40	52	29.10
3. Recommended by the previous BNS	40	51.30	13	44.80	18	60.00	8	19.50	79	44.10
4. Recommended by the C/MNAO	38	48.70	16	55.20	13	43.30	12	29.30	79	44.10
5. BNS applied for the position	25	32.10	8	27.60	10	33.30	17	41.50	60	33.50
6. Recommended by LCE	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-

Data based on multiple responses

Table 5. Qualifications/criteria for hiring BNSs as adopted by LGUs

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Resident of the barangay for at least four (4) years	73	93.60	28	96.60	29	96.70	29	70.70	159	88.80
2. Able to speak the local dialect	74	94.90	25	86.20	27	90.00	22	53.70	148	82.70
3. Has leadership potential	77	98.70	28	96.60	30	100.00	35	85.40	170	95.00
4. Willing to serve the barangay	72	92.30	27	93.10	28	93.30	32	78.00	159	88.80
5. Willing to learn and to teach people in the barangay	51	65.40	14	48.30	15	50.00	22	53.70	102	57.00
6. At least a primary school graduate	76	97.40	27	93.10	27	90.00	33	80.50	163	91.10
7. Physically and mentally fit	71	91.00	24	82.80	24	80.00	27	65.90	146	81.60
8. At least 18 years old but not more than 60 years old	71	91.00	25	83.30	23	79.30	27	65.80	146	82.00

Data based on multiple responses

Table 6 shows the list of other criteria/qualification used in hiring of BNS as adopted by LGUs. Across regions, the most common were (1) must have reached or graduated high school level and (2) must be chosen or recommended by the Barangay Captain. However, additional points were given if the applicant reached at least college level or college graduate as mentioned by respondents from Luzon, Mindanao, and NCR while only the respondents from the Visayas stated that having finished elementary education would be enough to be hired as BNS. Only the respondents from NCR mentioned that having been a past volunteer in the area would already merit a consideration as a BNS.

As mandated by the law, one of the qualifications of a BNS is that he/she must at least be a primary school graduate. However, since the establishment of the BNS Program, in 1978, the roles and tasks of a BNS has already evolved, thus, with the current voluminous and oftentimes technical nature of their work, a BNS who has attained only primary schooling may find difficulty in coping with the multiple roles of the BNS.

Table 6. Other criteria/qualification used for hiring BNS

Criterion/ Qualification	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	NCR
1. Reached/ graduated from high school	+	+	+	+
2. Chosen/ recommended by the barangay captain	+	+	+	+
3. Reached/ graduated from college	+	-	+	+
4. With political affiliation/ally	+	-	+	-
5. At least 18 years old but not more than 50 years old	+	-	-	-
6. Willing to serve	+	-	-	-
7. At least elementary graduate	-	+	-	-
8. Chosen by the Mayor	-	-	+	-
9. Trained BHW	-	-	+	-
10. Past volunteers in the area	-	-	-	+

+ criterion/qualification applied in the area

- criterion/qualification not applied in the area

Results also indicated that the process of selecting and recruiting a BNS was not an easy task for the D/CNPCs. It was not a matter of simply adhering to the basic qualifications based on the law. As mentioned by many of the respondents, there were issues and problems encountered in the hiring of BNS in the LGUs.

Among these were: (1) political issues, the most common issue raised across regions; (2) hiring/changing of BNS every election; (3) hiring of BNS who was not capable of doing the task since the BNS was chosen only because he was a relative of the Barangay Captain/local officials or who has served as campaign manager of the Barangay Chairman; (4) the BC/officials were not aware of the qualification of the BNS; and (5) *palakasan* system where BNS was appointed by the incumbent Barangay Chairman without appropriate screening.

Seemingly, those from NCR have identified more pressing issues such as age and educational attainment of the BNS mattered to them due to the nature of the activities they have to do. Thus, notably they would prefer more matured BNS to do the tasks. In some areas in NCR, preference was given to changing the title of BNS to BHWs to cover not only nutrition but also health programs and services. Other reasons for non-hiring include no budget allocation for the position of the BNS as mentioned by respondents from Luzon and NCR, low honorarium or incentive, lack of knowledge and skills that the BNS should possess, conflict between BNS and BHW, and nutrition program was not a priority.

The issues in hiring the BNS can be categorized into two, namely: political and non-political issues. Political issues include primarily the appointment of BNSs by elected officials who would hire individuals they prefer or who had the same affiliation with them or hiring even those not qualified to the position as long as they were the preferred ones. The non-political issues were primarily about the support given to the BNS, such as low incentive, long duration of processing, and releasing of appointment papers.

In terms of hiring/recruitment, one glaring reality, which somehow worked to its disadvantage was the volatility of the position of BNS. The present study shows that the appointment of the BNS depended on the discretion of the Barangay Chairman. Despite the BNSs' numerous functions in the community, there was a rapid turnover of position in the barangay. As political appointees, any change in local leadership during election signals uncertainty for their renewal in service. Changes in leadership or the turnover of local leaders have great effect in the continuity of the program. With every term may come a different set of priorities, which may not always include the BNS program.

The spirit of volunteerism was very much alive among the BNSs who are considered as the front liners in delivering nutrition, health, and services in the barangays. They serve as key implementers in the advocacy for community development projects. The multi-sectoral and multilevel nature of BNS' tasks enriches the volunteer work they do in the community. Keeping the spirit of volunteerism alive in the community is a difficult task because of the ever-changing times and shift in values.

This same community involvement, participation and volunteerism in health activities and in all aspects of development also existed in Burma (Myanmar) as embodied in the long tradition of Theravada Buddhism which preaches the concept of doing something good to others (Tontisirin, 2008). The multiple tasks of their volunteer workers called Community Health Workers (CHWs) were to provide not only health related activities like, health education, maternal child health, immunization, environmental sanitation, among others but it included delivery of nutrition services. A 1:1 ratio is also adopted to cover over 60,000 villages in Myanmar.

The rapid reduction of the prevalence of malnutrition in Thailand, which has been sustained for the last 30 years (Tontisirin, 2008) was likewise attributed to a strong people's participation through the development of a Poverty Alleviation Plan. It was established that a primary health care

approach was used as a practical, community based and participatory mechanism to address the problem of health and malnutrition. Unlike the Philippines and Myanmar, Thailand deployed more health volunteers called mobilizers with a ratio of one per ten households. At present, there are now 700,000 trained volunteers/mobilizers covering every village in Thailand.

Benefits available to the BNSs

As stipulated in PD 1569 Section 6, the BNS shall be granted a civil service eligibility equivalent to second grade after the completion of at least two years of continuous and satisfactory service in the barangay. In addition, the BNS shall be entitled to a training stipend, kit, and travel allowance of at least P120.00 a year. Other allowances from the municipality not exceeding P150.00 may also be granted to the BNS.

Table 8 shows that 87.6% of the respondents stated that their LGUs provided benefits to their BNSs. Travel allowance was the most (66.0%) common form of benefit of the BNS, followed by trainings (39.1%), and civil service eligibility (24.0%). Highest percentages for all these benefits were noted among LGUs in Luzon. Based on the results of the study, it appeared that civil service eligibility was not readily granted to BNS from NCR with only 9.0% of the respondents having said so.

The amount of the travel allowances in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao depended on LGUs' discretion. Relative to the mandated amount of P120 per year, travel allowances for the BNSs have significantly increased to P100-2000 per month with NCR having the highest range of P300-P2000. Moreover, LGUs in Luzon and Mindanao reimburse the actual travel expenses incurred by the BNSs (Table 9).

Table 7. Identified issues on hiring of BNS

Specific Issues	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	NCR
	1. Hiring/changing/rapid turn-over of BNS after election	+	+	+
2. Hiring of BNSs who did not meet the qualifications or not capable of doing the tasks (officials not aware of the qualifications)	+	+	+	+
3. Exercise of prerogative of officials (relatives of the appointing officials, preference, palakasan system)	+	+	+	+
4. Low number of applicants/persons interested to become BNS (due to too many reports/paperworks, not interested to work as volunteer; too low incentive/allowance)	+	+	+	+
5. Proper process in the selection was not properly followed (no funds for the program, officials do not appreciate the BNSP, long duration of processing the BNSs' appointment papers)	+	+	+	+
6. Rivalry/conflict between BHW and BNS	+	-	-	-
7. Political affiliation (BNS appointed by mayor was not recognized by the barangay captain and vice versa; thus there would be two BNSs in the same barangay due to political conflict; trained BNS was replaced by the untrained BNS who was politically connected with the barangay chairperson)	+	+	+	+
8. BNSs were appointed to permanent position w/o consulting the NDs in-charge due political reasons	-	-	-	+
9. Hiring of BNS who are above 60 years old	-	-	-	+
10. LCE and the city health officer had changed the title of the volunteer worker from BNS to BHW to cover all the health programs including nutrition of the city	-	-	-	+

* criterion/qualification applied in the area

- criterion/qualification not applied in the area

Table 8. Benefits available to the BNS

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
BNS with Benefits	70	89.70	27	90.00	25	86.20	34	82.90	156	87.60
Travel Allowance	64	91.40	15	55.60	12	48.00	13	38.20	103	66.00
Civil Service Eligibility	22	31.40	6	22.00	7	28.00	3	9.00	38	24.00
Training	32	46.00	9	33.30	11	44.00	9	26.50	61	39.10

Data based on multiple responses

All areas continued to adhere to PD 1569 in providing civil service eligibility equivalent to second grade among the BNSs (Table 10). In compliance to the law, the LGUs considered the completion of two years of continuous and satisfactory service/performance as basis for the eligibility. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has a uniform requirement for granting of civil service eligibility, however, other requirements have been arbitrarily provided by LGUs, not necessarily by the CSC. It was pointed out that in Luzon; the MNAO participated in recommending the BNS who performed well. In Mindanao, a completion of 72 units in tertiary education was noted as an additional requirement.

The BNSs in NCR were motivated to acquire eligibility since plantilla position may be awarded to them. Furthermore, it was noted that not all qualified BNSs availed of this benefit. In Mindanao, the inability or lack of interest to prepare many supporting documents was mentioned as a reason while shouldering the money to process the papers was expressed in Luzon.

Table 9. Travel allowance provided to the BNS by the LGU

	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	NCR
Range	Php 20 to 1000 per month	Php 100 to 1000 per month	Php 100 to 2000 per month	Php 300-2000 per month
Amount depends on LGU/no specific amount	+	+	+	-
Actual Expenses	+	-	+	-

+ criterion/qualification applied in the area
 - criterion/qualification not applied in the area

The type and number of benefits were given to the BNSs had evolved in 30 years. Table 11 presents the various benefits received by the BNSs in all areas. Commonly, honorarium from the different levels of LGUs (barangay, city/municipality, and provincial) and medical or health care assistance were enjoyed by the BNSs. Logistics such as office supplies, uniform, umbrella, hats, and rain boots were listed by respondents from Luzon and Visayas. Annual incentives such as 13th month pay and/or productivity were noted in Luzon and NCR. Aside from the monetary incentives, BNSs

Table 10. Eligibility according to major island grouping

	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	NCR
Civil Service 2nd grade eligibility	+	+	Allowed only when the BNS completed 72 units in college If the BNS applied for eligibility; and the BNS passed the requirements	BNS were allowed to take the eligibility test anytime
Provision of 2nd grade eligibility after 2 years of continuous satisfactory/ outstanding service/ performance	+	Granted after two years of service as BNS	LGU granted CS eligibility but depended on eagerness of the applicant to complete requirements	Only given to BNS w/ exemplary performance

+ criterion/qualification applied in the area
 - criterion/qualification not applied in the area

in Luzon received certificate/plaque of recognition for outstanding performance and were given opportunities for field/exposition visits.

On the other hand, the attendance to technical and social events organized by NNC Regional Office was viewed as additional benefit in Mindanao while attendance to BNS Congress was identified as a benefit by respondents from Visayas. Among all areas, the additional compensation received by the

BNSs in NCR was comparable with those regularly employed in government offices namely: basic salary, subsistence allowance, hazard pay, Magna Carta, cash gift bonus, clothing allowance, rice allowance, overtime payment, laundry allowance, and Christmas goods/groceries.

Table 11. Other benefits given to the BNS

Specific Issues	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	NCR
1. 13th Month pay bonus + gifts (i.e. x-mas time)/goods/ groceries	+	-	-	+
	(P1500)			(P1000-2000)
2. Cash award-given to outstanding BNS; reward/plaque of recognition	+	-	-	-
3. Certificate of Recognition- given to BNS with service more than 20 years	+	-	-	-
4. Honorarium/ salary				
• Php 50 from barangay				
• Php 800/month barangay, municipality, and province				
• Honorarium from province (P1,200 annually), municipality (P300-500 quarterly), and barangay (P100-300 monthly)				
• Php 1,650 per month - subsistence allowance; 10-25% of monthly salary - hazard; basic monthly income; laundry allowance; productivity benefits included in the Magna Carta	+	+	+	+
5. Php 15/month from NNC Office	+	-	-	-
6. Attendance to the BNS Congress	+	+	+	
7. Supplies; calculator supplies of BNS-bond paper, record book, ballpen, yellow paper	+	-	-	-
8. Medical assistance/medical aide of P1000 for the BNS and at least 24 hours confinement/ Medical Assistance-P 5,000 per BNS/once a year	+	+	+	-
9. Mortuary Php 10,000 given to the family	-	-	+	-
10. PhilHealth	+	+	+	+
11. Free hospitalization of BNS and PHIC covered and qualified dependents	-	+	-	-
12. Uniform (t shirt)/clothing allowance Php 4000/year - clothing allowance	+	+	-	+
13. Umbrella, hats, rain boots, bag	+	-	-	-
14. Access to loan facilities (MPL Loans)	-	-	-	+
15. Overtime pay (P 3,500)	-	-	-	+
16. Rice Allowance	-	-	-	+
17. Contributions to Pag-ibig fund, GSIS	-	-	-	+
18. Permanent position	-	-	-	+

* criterion/qualification applied in the area

- criterion/qualification not applied in the area

Training of BNS

Section 7 of PD 1596 states that prior to the actual barangay service, the BNS shall undergo a ten-day training on selected topics based on defined task expectations such as nutrition, health, food production and environmental sanitation. The training shall be conducted by a provincial training team in coordination with the municipal and the barangay nutrition committees. It shall be supplemented by a twenty-day practicum to be conducted in the barangay where the scholar is assigned in coordination with a local training team. The local training team of the municipality shall be composed of two members chosen from among the members of the Municipal Nutrition Committee (PD 1569 Section 9). The team shall follow up the activities of the trained BNS.

Among the respondents, 83.2% expressed that LGUs conducted Basic Training for BNSs. However, only 12.3% facilitated the ten-day training while 25.1% executed the twenty-day practicum

(Table 12). Due to inadequate funds appropriated by the LGUs for this activity, the number of days of training has been dramatically been reduced to 1-5 days only. With the complexity and multiple tasks expected of the BNS, this number of days was insufficient to attain efficient delivery of nutrition services. Given the many tasks expected of the BNS, a shorter duration but more frequent updates could be more effective.

Apparently, the current practice in the conduct of trainings failed to adhere to the provisions of the law. In general, the usual topics for training were basic nutrition; BNS program; PPAN and other updates on nutrition interventions; growth monitoring and promotion; nutrition program management; and how to fill up forms and report preparation. Continuous training, monitoring, and evaluation of BNS by their supervisors and trained evaluators helped in capacity building of BNS towards an effective and efficient delivery of basic health and nutrition services in their respective areas, thus, improving the nutritional status of

pre-school and school children and addressing the challenges of maternal and child health and nutrition.

Notably, based on experiences shared by nutrition officers during conventions and seminars, there are many factors that contribute to the improvement of nutritional status among preschool children and not solely based on inputs provided by the BNS supervisors.

Table 12. Basic BNS Training according to island grouping

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Basic training for BNS	66	84.60	23	79.30	24	80.00	36	87.80	149	83.20
2. Ten-day theoretical training	6	7.70	3	10.30	1	3.30	12	89.30	22	12.30
3. 20-day practicum	27	34.60	6	20.70	3	10.00	9	22.00	45	25.10

Note: responses based on multiple answer

Table 12a. Usual topics for training

Specific Issues	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	NCR
1. Basic Nutrition	+	+	+	-
2. The BNS Program	+	+	-	+
3. How to fill up forms and prepare reports	+	+	+	+
4. Growth monitoring and promotion	+	-	-	+
5. PPAN and other updates on interventions	+	-	-	+
6. Program management	+	-	-	-
7. Leadership training	+	-	-	-
8. Growth monitoring and promotion	-	+	+	-
9. PPAN and other updates on interventions	-	+	+	-
10. Barangay Nutrition Program management	-	+	-	+

+ criterion/qualification applied in the area

- criterion/qualification not applied in the area

Supervision of BNS

Based on the implementing guidelines, the D/CNPCs have the main task to provide technical supervision and continuing education to BNSs. The main function of the C/MNAOs is to provide administrative supervision of the BNSs. At present, the BNSs are supervised either by a D/CNPC, M/CNAO, and in certain areas by the BNAO. The D/CNPCs remain to be technical supervisors. However, the C/MNAOs provide both technical and administrative supervision. The BNAOs do not have technical or administrative supervision of BNSs. However, in the few areas where they exist, such task is also performed.

The same guidelines explained that a supervisor shall handle 30 to 50 BNS depending on the location and distribution of BNSs, geographical terrain of the province, and funds provided by the LGU. The study showed that NCR has the highest number of D/CNPCs but with the lowest number of C/MNAOs.

In addition to training, D/CNPCs and C/MNAOs are also expected to provide technical supervision to BNSs. This means that the D/CNPCs, C/MNAOs, and BNAOs, given their expertise, shall prescribe the procedures or methods or formats that would enable the BNS to perform their functions. Administrative supervision on the other hand may involve the day-to-day activities particularly on the performance and evaluation of their duties. According to the respondents, supervision takes form in the performance of specific activities such as monitoring the BNSs' programs and activities, providing technical assistance, coordinating and holding of meetings, barangay/field visits, checking of reports prepared by BNSs, and administrative functions such as preparing the appointment papers of BNSs and their allowances. Of these activities, the supervisors' time were focused more on monitoring, providing technical assistance, and conducting meetings with the BNSs.

Table 13. Number of supervisors of BNS per area

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
D/CNPC	37	41.00	16	50.00	14	40.00	33	89.00	100	51.50
MNAO	45	50.00	13	40.60	19	54.30	4	11.00	81	41.80
BNAO	8	9.00	3	9.40	2	5.70	-	-	13	7.00

Table 14. Summary of supervisory activities conducted

	Percentage											
	Luzon			Visayas			Mindanao			NCR		
	D/ CNPC	C/ MNAO	BNAO	D/ CNPC	C/ MNAO	BNAO	D/ CNPC	C/ MNAO	BNAO	D/ CNPC	C/ MNAO	BNAO
1. Monitor programs and activities	51.40	31.10	25.00	43.80	38.50	33.30	35.70	65.50	50.00	-	9.80	-
2. Provide technical assistance	32.40	2.20	25.00	25.00	7.70	33.30	28.60	52.60	-	-	-	-
3. Organize and hold meetings	21.60	46.70	50.00	25.00	53.80	33.30	42.90	15.80	50.00	-	25.00	-
4. Conduct barangay visitation/ field visit	16.20	24.40	37.50	18.80	7.70	-	14.30	36.80	-	-	50.00	-
5. Check reports submitted	10.80	15.60	-	18.80	30.80	-	14.30	15.80	-	-	-	-
6. Administrative matters	-	13.30	-	-	23.10	-	-	15.80	-	-	25.00	-

Note: responses based on multiple answers

The frequency of monitoring/supervisory visits in a year was varied and arbitrary. Most of the supervisors conducted monthly or quarterly visits. Too frequent or too few visits was not the norm and probably not effective. However, the frequency of visits could also be arbitrary as this would depend on the LCE or as the visits were done because it is needed. This implies that monitoring/supervisory visits were irregularly done and probably not allocated with funds.

Support provided by Local Government Units

Many LGUs provide support to the BNS program with the highest percentage (83.3%) reported in Luzon area. The kind of support varied from training to allocation of funds at the municipal and barangay levels. The funding support to implement the BNS program was sourced from the province, 20% development fund, different agencies like the health department, regular/general fund, and GAD fund, among others. It is best that LGUs provide yearly funds to sustain the implementation of the BNS program.

Table 15. Frequency of supervision by D/CNPCs and C/MNAOs

	Percentage							
	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR	
	D/CNPC	C/MNAO	D/CNPC	C/MNAO	D/CNPC	C/MNAO	D/CNPC	C/MNAO
1. 1-2 times a year	21.60	4.40	6.30	-	7.10	10.50	-	25.00
2. 2-5x a month	-	6.60	56.20	-	-	-	3.00	-
3. Monthly	24.30	55.60	6.30	46.20	78.60	63.20	48.50	50.00
4. Quarterly	35.10	35.60	37.50	2.30	14.30	10.50	3.00	-
5. Weekly	8.10	4.40	-	7.70	7.10	10.50	24.20	25.00
6. Everyday	-	2.20	-	-	-	-	3.00	25.00
7. As the need arises/from time to time/as often as supervisor could do/LCEs prerogative	24.30	4.40	12.50	9.20	-	10.60	24.20	75.00

Note: responses based on multiple answers

Table 15. Frequency of supervision by D/CNPCs and C/MNAOs

	Percentages							
	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. With support from LGU/BNC	65	83.30	20	69.00	26	86.70	29	70.70
2. Support provided								
• Presence of local training team	22	33.80	9	45.00	11	42.30	4	13.80
• Barangay Captain/BNC provided financial support	49	75.40	18	90.00	24	92.30	16	55.20
• Municipal mayor provided financial support and organize local training team	44	67.70	13	65.00	18	69.20	3	10.30
• BNS staff secretariat	23	35.40	13	65.00	16	61.50	11	37.90
• Appropriate annual budget	38	58.50	11	55.00	19	73.10	21	72.40

Note: responses based on multiple answers

Other innovations or enhancements introduced

Although the law did not explicitly indicate the nature/type of innovations to be introduced in the implementation of the Barangay Nutrition Program, results of the survey showed that more than half of all respondents (65%) and three quarters of respondents in Luzon (76%) claimed that they did some innovations in implementing the BNS program in their areas (Table 17).

Notably, the most number of innovations were those along the areas for training as mentioned by a great majority of the respondents (74%) across all regions. In terms of selection/hiring, similarly, three quarters of the respondents (73%) mentioned other innovations like: hiring at least high school level or college level; requiring oral and written examination; and advocacy to LCEs/LGUs to hire at least one BNS.

Furthermore, some of respondents expressed that as an initial step they have conducted advocacy meetings to MNC/CNC/PNC members planning functionaries to solicit support and active participation in the implementation of the BNS program.

Other innovations identified were: (1) yearly increase of incentives for BNS (only for Luzon group); (2) cash awards for outstanding BNS; (3) provision of livelihood projects; (4) honorarium from the provincial, municipal, and barangay levels ranging from P100.00/month to P700.00/month across all regions; (5) travel allowances; (6) free health services, uniforms, shirts, and jogging pants. Only the respondents from the Visayas region mentioned providing scholarship grant to the children of BNSs, and free hospitalization to BNSs and their family members.

Table 17. Innovations or enhancements introduced in the implementation of the BNS program

	Luzon		Visayas		Mindanao		NCR		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
		<i>N=78</i>		<i>N=30</i>		<i>N=29</i>		<i>N=41</i>		<i>N=178</i>
With Innovation	59	75.60	15	51.70	20	66.70	23	56.10	117	65.40
Selection/Hiring	30	50.80	10	66.70	13	65.00	14	60.80	67	57.30
Benefits/ Incentives	46	78.00	10	66.70	18	90.00	11	47.80	85	72.60
Training	44	74.60	10	66.70	15	75.00	18	78.30	87	74.40
Supervision	45	76.20	10	66.70	12	60.00	17	73.90	84	71.80
Others	12	20.30	5	33.30	8	40.00	5	21.70	30	25.60

Note: responses based on multiple answers

Table 17a. Selection/hiring innovations

Specific Issues	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	NCR
1. Hiring at least high school level	+	+	+	
2. Oral and written exam/BNS Examination	+	-	+	+
3. Hiring at least college level	+	-	-	+
4. Attend sangguniang barangay meeting to inform officials regarding the criteria of selecting/ hiring of BNS	-	+	+	-
5. Advocacy to barangay captain to appoint BNS	+	+	-	-
6. Lobby at Sanggunian for an ordinance supporting the PD 1569	+	-	-	-
7. Advocacy to Mayor to appoint 1 BNS per barangay	+	-	-	-
8. BNS with permanent position	-	-	-	+
9. Screened by MNAO/Nutritionist dietitian	-	-	-	+

+ criterion/qualification applied in the area

- criterion/qualification not applied in the area

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presidential Decree 1569 entitled "*Strengthening the Barangay Nutrition Program by providing for a Barangay Nutrition Scholar in Every Barangay, Providing funds thereof, and for other purposes*" was passed and mandated on June 11, 1978 in order to deliver nutrition and related services.

After three decades, there was a significant improvement in the number of BNS. Almost all (98%) of the LGUs represented by the 178 respondents of the study cited to have at least one BNS per barangay, though there is still a need to strengthen advocacy to commensurate the number of BNS to the population size of each LGU and outreach. Upgrading the minimum qualification of BNS qualifies them for better salary/benefits, but does not solve the problem of limited outreach unless they multiply themselves within their outreach.

Other provisions of the law, on the other hand, were also being adopted but were subjected to different interpretations. The extent of implementation significantly varied from one LGU to another. The most notable changes were the variation in the minimum educational attainment required by the LGUs and the benefits granted to the BNSs. The variations across LGUs suggest the need to look deeply in these areas and amend the law accordingly. The BNSs remain to be a critical manpower resource of the country to promote good nutrition, and giving due recognition to this role is of utmost importance. Based on how the tasks of the BNSs have evolved through the years, the practice by a number of LGUs to hire BNSs who reached at least secondary school is supported due to the technical nature of their tasks. It is also proposed that the benefits be adjusted and/or standardize across regions, depending on the income and population of the LGU. Giving BNSs benefits parallel to that being granted to other community workers is also forwarded.

The amendment of the PD 1569 has long been overdue. However, there is a need for a deeper assessment of its implementation as far as the current political set up and the 1991

Local Government Code of the Philippines are concerned. Additional studies are suggested be carried out among BNS, LGUs and other policy makers to draw information and key experiences in implementation of the BNS Program in their own localities.

The study did not touch on the performance rating of BNSs or outputs in relation to impact on reduction or changes in nutritional status of children in their outreach. Thus, there is likewise a need to look into how the BNS can become more effective given additional benefits and training. We have almost 50,000 barangays and 100 million Filipinos. There are only 22,000 BNSs in the country. How would proposed amendments on qualifications of BNS and responsibility of LGUs increase the effectiveness of BNSs if their outreach were not only limited but not "in-depth" particularly with nutritionally-at-risk families? To support findings of the study, case studies among BNS Outstanding awardees be likewise done. Their real life testimonies will support the reforms and legislative agenda that are being put in place towards an efficient delivery of nutrition and health services.

The BNS outreach network organizations through organizing mother volunteers who will take care of 20 families with pregnant/lactating mothers, infants/young children 0-2 years old, should be experimented. Amendments can be made stipulating additional skills to BNS such as organizational communication skills and training and supervision with the exclusion of technical knowledge and skills. Priority targets are to be strongly emphasized among all children both preventive, promotive, and rehabilitative.

In provinces where malnutrition is high, not all barangays have BNSs hired by LGUs. The movement of volunteerism harnessing the caring nature of community members LGUs of municipal and provincial levels can be encouraged to employ a BNS trainer supervisor. Even NGOs can participate and train mother volunteers in all villages of a municipality-community mobilization.

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