Better HR Systems for Better Social Welfare Services

Joy Evangelista & Analiza Sta. Ana, Core Participants
DSWD - Competency Modelling and Enhancing the Recruitment System (CMERS)

Joy Evangelista and I, Analiza Sta. Ana, are a team. We belong to different units, but our most important legacy in the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is our involvement in the Competency Modelling and Enhancing the Recruitment System (CMERS) intervention supported by PAHRODF. Our CMERS training led to the creation of the Competency-Based Recruitment, Selection, and Placement (CBRSP) system, a vital HR system that DSWD now uses to properly staff its various programs and carry out its social welfare objectives.

Joy graduated from the University of the Philippines with a degree in history. She wanted to serve the country—perhaps the influence of a state-university education. She taught for one year, then later held a position in the Philippine Sports Commission, and eventually applied for a position with the DSWD. She says being in the Human Resource Development Bureau (HRDB) allows her to serve those who serve other Filipinos. She has been with the DSWD for six years now.

I have been here for nine years. I studied to be a business teacher at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines but ended up taking my internship and applying for my first job at DSWD. As an intern, I saw how the employees worked until very late without recompense, and it was inspiring. I was an administrative assistant before I ended up in HR. I discovered that I liked HR and would like to become an expert in it. It is challenging to handle people, and I enjoy this aspect of HR work.

In 2011, PAHRODF conducted an organisational assessment of DSWD. They found that our human resource management needed improvement. Recruitment usually took a long time and this affected the ability of the DSWD to run its social welfare programs because it could not provide adequate manpower to carry out the objectives. We were also unable to properly match jobs with applicants. We used only the minimum requirements set by the Civil Service Commission to select applicants, which were not the only competencies needed by an employee of the DSWD. Each position needed people with a particular and specialized skills set. Additionally, the job descriptions and terms of reference did not match the actual scope of work. Consequently, time and money were wasted on training because people quit their jobs often. They were simply not aware of what they signed up for. That was bad news, especially for the crucial *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps), which was a national programme aimed at eradicating extreme poverty by investing in health and education.

Joy and I recognized the rare opportunity PAHRODF was providing. We observed that the Department had been mostly focused on the program development side; human resource and organisational development (HR/OD) was often overlooked. This is where PAHRODF made an impact.

During the PAHRODF intervention, Joy and I were heavily involved in preparing assessments, analysing jobs and drafting more specific job descriptions, making step-by-step process maps, compiling the competency dictionary—a reference tool that contains information on all competencies and target levels for various types of jobs, and studying behavioural indicators we needed to spot during applicant interviews. We learned to organise our systems better, standardise our hiring and placement process, and promote meritocracy. There are some who believe that you need connections or *kaput* to work in government, but our CBRSP aims to disprove that. It professionalises the recruitment process.

The eight-month training was gradual but intense. Our learning service providers made sure to ingrain writing, critical thinking, and organisational skills in us, and we are able to practice it on just about anything at work and outside of it. We were sent to the field offices where our central-office perspectives were widened. We saw how general job descriptions were a far cry from what reality needed. Project development officers had to have more than a particular degree, some work experience, and seminar hours. They also needed to have strength of character which can withstand the challenge of reaching remote areas and organising a community—in bad weather or under threat of guerrillas.

Now, better HR systems enable DSWD to give better social welfare services to Filipinos by finding the right people to provide these services. There are 2,000 DSWD positions in the Central Office and 27,000 all over the Philippines. Our dream is to have a dedicated team that will profile jobs, make job descriptions, add to the competency dictionary, and do performance management. Strategic HR management just might be the key to continuously achieve DSWD's vision.

Even if Joy and I are in different departments, this dream binds us. We want to see it through, even if it is work we do on top of our main responsibilities at the DSWD.

Joy Evangelista is the unit head of the Employee Welfare and Labour Relations Section of the HRDB, while Analiza Sta. Ana heads the Career Development and Management Unit. Both dream to be future educators.