Philippines: 700,000 people to benefit from improved access to health services

Manila, April 16, 2012 – The World Bank, acting as administrator for the Global Partnership on Output-Based Aid (GPOBA), has approved a grant of US$3.6 million to increase access to affordable maternal health services for low-income families living in the provinces of Leyte, Southern Leyte, Samar, Northern Samar and Eastern Samar in the Eastern Visayas region.

The project will be implemented over a 4-year period by Population Services Pilipinas Incorporated (PSPI) supported by Marie Stopes International Australia (MSIA), established providers of maternal and child health care in the Philippines since 1990. About 145,000 poor families (an estimated 700,000 individuals) are expected to benefit through subsidized access to services including birth delivery and pre- and post-natal care.

The National Health Insurance Program (NHIP) has a mandate to provide universal health insurance coverage to all Filipinos and a solution is needed for the large numbers of indigent and informal sector workers that remain excluded from social health insurance coverage. A 2010 Philippine Health Sector Review found that reforms in the past decades have improved overall health outcomes; however disparities in access to quality health services and health insurance coverage remain an issue for the poor.

The GPOBA-funded scheme explicitly targets the poor to help address some of the barriers to their access to quality health services, with a 3-part approach:

1. Accreditation of 45 service providers in the project area to ensure improved quality of care and the capacity to meet increased demand;
2. Enrolment of about 145,000 families, identified and determined as poor by the National Household Targeting System, to ensure that the project reaches those who need it most; and
3. A subsidized voucher scheme to bridge the gap between co-payments charged by health service providers and the amount that target project beneficiaries can afford to pay for approved services.

“This output-based aid scheme supports the new government’s reform agenda to achieve universal access to health care,” said Motoo Konishi, World Bank Country Director for the Philippines. “The project also makes access to quality health services affordable through the subsidized voucher component and more inclusive by explicitly targeting the poor.”

The project will address barriers to health service access by expanding insurance coverage of the poor and by supporting the upgrade of additional service providers in order to meet the national Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) accreditation requirements.

Consistent with the OBA approach, GPOBA will retain an independent verification agent to verify output delivery, including service provider upgrading, and that pre-agreed targets have been met.
by the project partners before subsidy payments are made. Independent verification makes aid more transparent by linking payment to the delivery of specific services or “outputs.”

“We are enthusiastic about using an innovative approach, as part of a joint effort with PhilHealth, to meet the needs of a population that cannot afford to pay for access to basic health services and to support the government’s commitment to reducing maternal and infant mortality,” said Viegilio Pernito, Chief Executive Officer of PSPI.

Globally, more than 350,000 women die each year due to pregnancy or childbirth-related complications. For the Philippines, this initiative is an important step towards the goal of reducing maternal mortality rates to 52 deaths per 100,000 live births, although past experience suggests that goal may be difficult to attain.

This program is in direct response to the Government of the Philippines’ commitment to pilot interventions that improve the health outcomes, particularly the maternal and reproductive health status, of poor populations.

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GPOBA is a global partnership program administered by the World Bank. GPOBA was established in 2003, as a multi-donor trust fund, to develop OBA approaches across a variety of sectors including infrastructure, health, and education. The GPOBA grant for the Philippines project draws on funds from the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAID).

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