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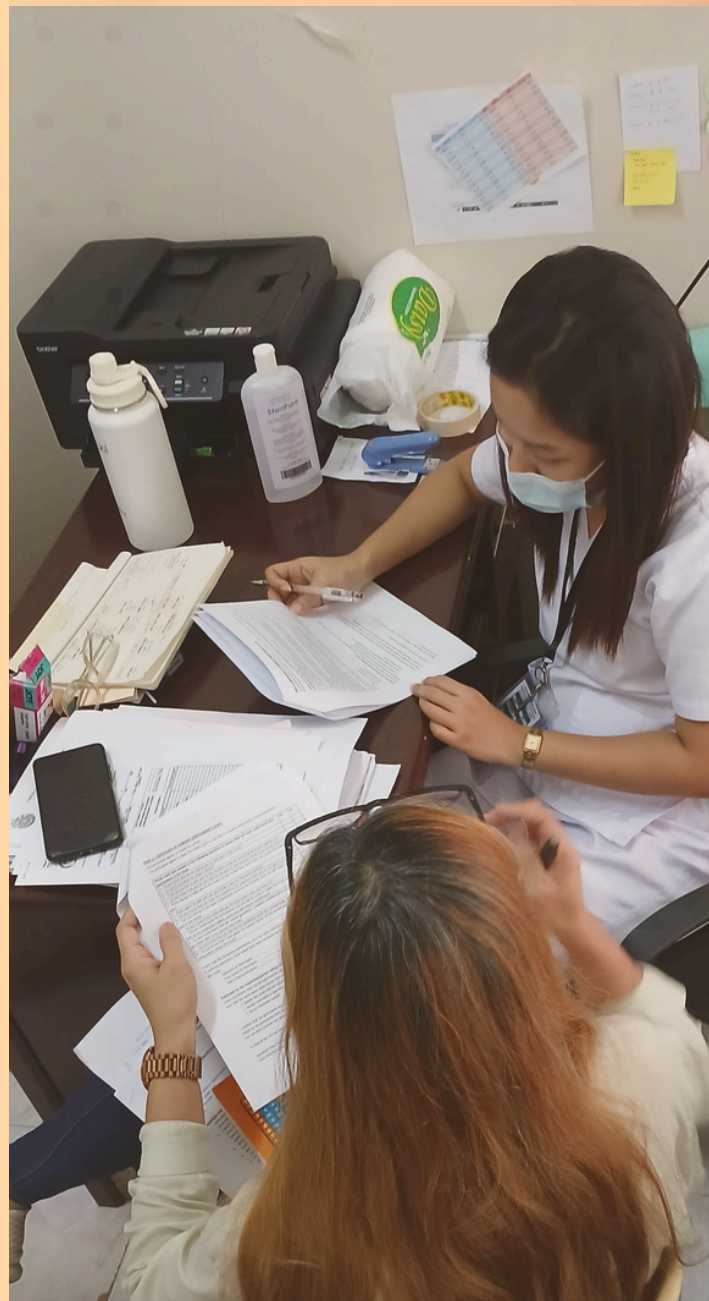
THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

JULY 2025

ENHANCING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE:

SDRC Leads National Study on Telemedicine Implementation

With telemedicine emerging as a critical mode of healthcare delivery in the Philippines, the Social Development Research Center (SDRC) is leading a national study titled *“Process Evaluation of the Implementation of Telemedicine in the Delivery of Individual-Based Health Services in the Philippines.”* This initiative is conducted in partnership with the Department of Health (DOH), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under the oversight of the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev, formerly NEDA).





RURAL HEALTH UNIT STA. RITA, SAMAR

SDRC Project in Focus



Policy Context and Timeliness

The project comes at a pivotal moment. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippine government expedited the implementation of telemedicine to reduce physical contact and ensure continuity of care. This was formalized through the issuance of DOH-NPC Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) 2020-0003, which laid down the foundational data privacy and operational guidelines. It was later reinforced by DOH-DILG-PHIC Joint Administrative Order (JAO) 2021-0001, the legal basis of this study, which provided a more comprehensive framework for the standardized, safe, and efficient delivery of telemedicine services across the country. SDRC's evaluation seeks to assess the grassroots implementation of these policies, identify local challenges and best practices, and recommend improvements to strengthen telemedicine delivery across the country.

Methodological Approach

The study employs a mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative surveys with key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The research is anchored on the WHO Health System Building Blocks and the Telehealth Solution Assessment Tool (TSAT), focusing on key domains—including governance, service delivery, digital infrastructure, financing, and human resources for health—evaluated through the lens of the OECD criteria.

SDRC Project in Focus



Nationwide Data Collection

Data gathering is currently in progress in selected areas across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Field researchers are engaging with local government units, health care facilities, healthcare providers, and patients to capture diverse experiences and insights on the ground, reflecting varied local realities of telemedicine implementation. In parallel, key informant interviews with representatives from regional and national government agencies are being conducted to examine existing policies, institutional initiatives, and strategic directions for the development and sustainability of telemedicine services in the country.

Contributions to Health Policy and System Strengthening

Findings from the evaluation will help inform policy and programmatic decisions on telemedicine, contributing to the Philippine Development Plan (2023-2028), DOH's National Objectives for Health (2023-2028), and the Sustainable Development Goals. By leading this initiative, SDRC reinforces its commitment to generating evidence that supports inclusive, innovative, and resilient health systems.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Title: Process Evaluation of the Implementation of Telemedicine in the Delivery of Individual-Based Health Services in the Philippines

Project Lead Investigator: Dr. Marites M. Tiongco

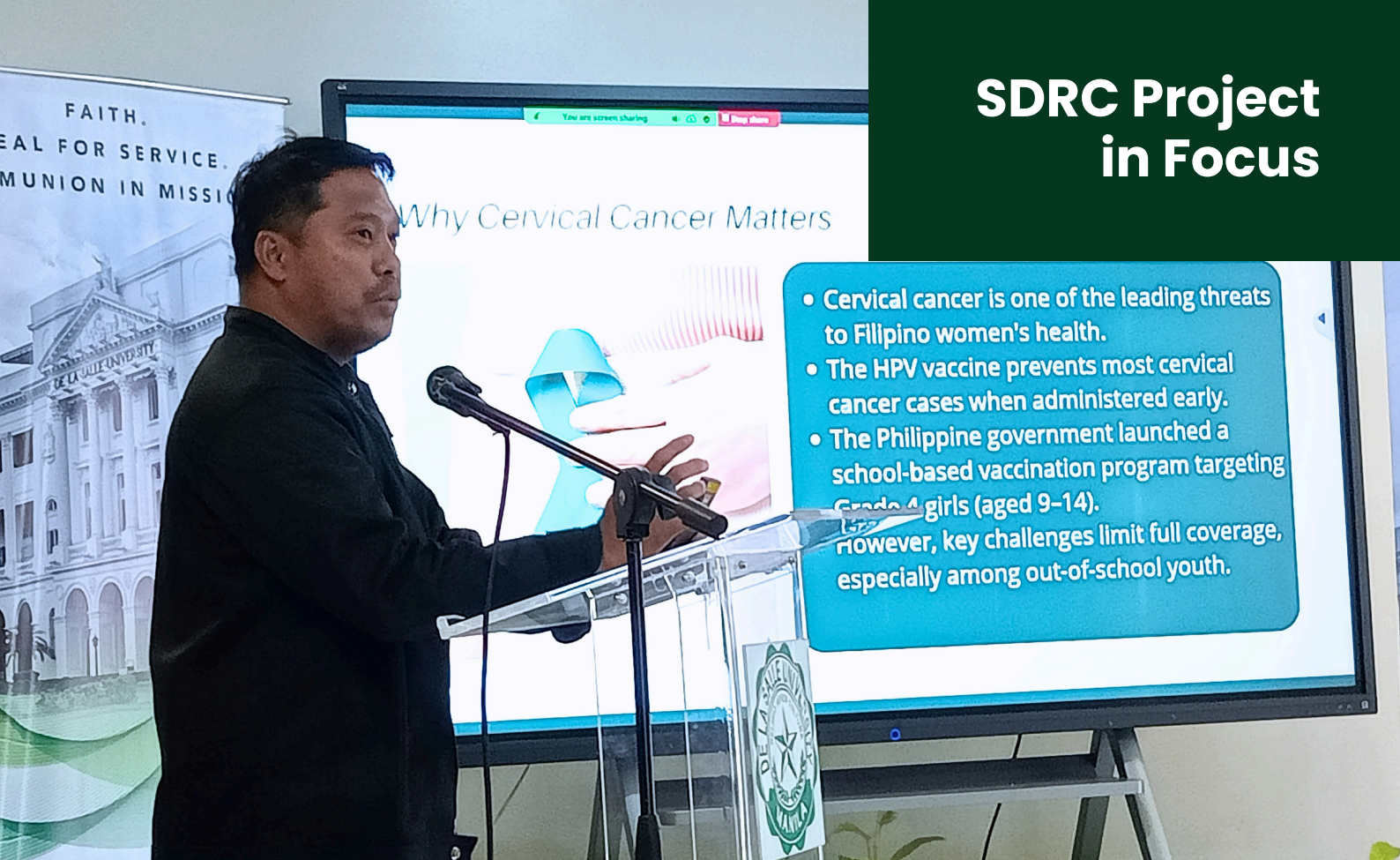
Co-Investigators: Dr. Melvin Jabar, Ms. Ella Oplas and Dr. Zaldy Collado

Evaluators: Mr. Vergil de Claro, Mr. Bernardo Cielo II and Dr. Mitzie Irene Conchada

Project Manager: Ms. Mona Pindog

Funding Agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev, formerly NEDA)

SDRC Project in Focus



HAPPI Project Phase II: **Advancing HPV Vaccination Through Learning and Local Action**

The HPV Vaccination Acceleration Program Partners Initiative (HAPPI) is a multi-phase learning and implementation support project aimed at strengthening the Philippines' HPV vaccination program. Entering its second phase, HAPPI Phase II focuses on improving HPV vaccine uptake through systems analysis, local engagement, and evidence-based recommendations for policy and programming.

A Response to Uneven Coverage

Since its initial rollout in 2015, the Philippines' school-based HPV vaccination program has expanded from 20 to all 82 provinces. However, vaccination coverage remains inconsistent. Local government participation, school engagement, and community acceptance continue to vary across municipalities. HAPPI Phase II responds to these challenges by identifying what drives—or hinders—vaccine uptake, and how these insights can inform more inclusive and effective implementation.

SDRC Project in Focus



Learning from the Ground Up

HAPPI Phase II is designed as a strategic learning activity. The first component of HAPPI Phase II, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has so far focused on qualitative research to explore the factors affecting HPV vaccination uptake. This phase involved key stakeholders across national to municipal/city levels, including the Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Health (DOH), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and various local government units (LGUs). At the LGU level, participants included city and municipal health officers, rural health unit (RHU) personnel, midwives, nurses, and physicians. Through in-depth consultations, the project investigates health system, behavioral, and contextual influences on HPV vaccination implementation, reach, and coverage.

A second component of the project, supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), will be implemented from June to August 2025. This phase will focus on the field testing and validation of the WHO Behavioural and Social Drivers (BeSD) tools—both interview and survey instruments—designed to better understand and improve HPV vaccine uptake.

Led by Trusted Partners

The project is led by Jhpiego Philippines, a global health nonprofit affiliated with Johns Hopkins University, and is implemented in close coordination and support from the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Education (DEPED). HAPPI Phase II builds on Jhpiego's earlier work under the SUCCESS Project, which supported HPV vaccination in 14 provinces and 20 cities, and now extends to additional sites across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—including “bright spot” LGUs with over 80% vaccine coverage.

SDRC Project in Focus



Policy-Relevant and Nationally Aligned

HAPPI Phase II aligns with the DOH's 2024–2028 National Integrated Cancer Control Program and the WHO Global Strategy to Eliminate Cervical Cancer by 2030. It contributes to national and local planning efforts by generating actionable insights for policy development, systems strengthening, and risk communication.

By uncovering what works—and why—HAPPI Phase II is helping to pave a more equitable and effective path forward for HPV vaccination programs, ensuring better health outcomes for Filipino girls and their communities.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Title: Implementation of the HAPPI Phase II Learning and Other Learning-related Activities in Select Sites of the Philippines

Project Lead Investigator: Dr. Zaldy C. Collado

Co-Investigators: Dr. Rowalt Alibudbud, Dr. Homer Yabut and Dr. Jerome Cleofas

Consultants: Dr. Pilar Jimenez, Dr. Cecile Lantican and Dr. Marites Tiongco

Project Manager: Ms. Marion Abilene R. Navarro

Funding Agency: Gates Foundation thru Jhpiego US and Jhpiego PH

Researcher Spotlight

Dr. Ma. Elena Chiong-Javier

Honoring a Legacy in Community and Development Research



The Social Development Research Center (SDRC) at De La Salle University has named Dr. Ma. Elena Chiong-Javier as the inaugural recipient of the Evolutio Socialis Distinguished Researcher Award, in recognition of her decades-long commitment to community development, applied anthropology, and participatory research.

A senior research fellow and former director of SDRC, Dr. Chiong-Javier is a retired associate professor of the Department of Behavioral Sciences at the College of Liberal Arts. She holds a PhD in Community Development from the University of the Philippines Los Baños and an MA in Anthropology from Ateneo de Manila University. Her work is grounded in both academic rigor and deep engagement with grassroots realities.

Dr. Chiong-Javier led pioneering studies across a wide range of development issues, including agroforestry, gender and sustainable technology, indigenous peoples' land rights, rural health, participatory upland development, climate change adaptation, food security, and community-based natural resource management. These projects generated actionable insights that shaped national policy frameworks and local interventions, advancing inclusive, community-led approaches to sustainable rural transformation.

Among her most notable projects as project director are two long-term regional research initiatives: Agroforestry and Sustainable Vegetable Production in Southeast Asian Watersheds, funded by the USAID through North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and Negotiating Land Rights and Natural Resource Regulations for Local People: The Role and Effectiveness of Secondary Farmer and Community Organizations in Upland Watersheds of Southeast Asia, funded by the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry Southeast Asia Regional Research Programme. She also led Women and Sustainable Technology: Scaling Up Vermicomposting among the Talaandigs, funded by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and Piloting a Participatory Process and Tool to Establish IP Household Database for Ancestral Domain, funded by the Philippine Business for Social Progress and the Upland NGO Assistance Committee. Most recently, she served as project director of the study Habits and Preferences of Filipino Viewers of Local Films in Metro Manila, funded by the Film Development Council of the Philippines.

Through her lifelong dedication to research that uplifts communities, informs policy, and mentors future scholars, Dr. Chiong-Javier exemplifies the spirit of the Evolutio Socialis Award—research in service of social transformation.

