

Gains and Challenges in Implementing a Principles-based Inclusive and Business Sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility in the Philippines¹

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Abstract

This study focuses on a recent and pioneering initiative called Principles-based Inclusive Business Sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility (PBIBS CSR), a pilot program supported by the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) and implemented by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) and the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) from 2016-2019. The aim of the project was to determine the feasibility of a novel form of CSR anchored on three “ideals,” e.g., adherence to national laws and international standards (principles-based), co-produced and implemented by labor and management (inclusive); and contributing to the continuing viability of enterprises

1 This article is based on the evaluation report conducted by the authors on the PBIBS CSR project entitled “Promotion of Principles-based, Inclusive and Sustainable CSR Approach in the Philippines (2016-2021)” implemented by DTDA, ECOP and FFW.

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(business sustainable). As a pioneering approach in the world of CSR, the PBIBS CSR encountered many challenges. The major hurdles were the reluctance of stakeholders to commit to become part of the pilot enterprises; the uneven and complex contexts of the implementing pilot enterprises; gender-blindness in CSR programs; and the prioritization and institutionalization of CSR programs. Among the vital recommendations in the recently concluded evaluation process were: to institutionalize PBIBS CSR programs (i.e., integrate in company policies for day-to-day implementation) to ensure its space in the priorities of enterprises; synchronize PBIBS CSR programs within the social dialogue mechanisms; and include gender equality issues and concerns in the implementation of PBIBS CSR programs and activities.