

INSIGHT FROM A DBM JUNIOR LEADER

The Birth Pains of the GAA-as-Release Document

“Birth is an opportunity to transcend. To rise above what we are accustomed to, reach deeper inside ourselves than we are familiar with,” wrote author Marcie Macari². I agree, but in another sense. While we were rolling out the GAA-as-Release Document (GAARD) in December 2013, I realized that simplifying a complex process was like human birthing, as Macari had described it: I rose above what I was not used to and accessed from within myself, allowing me to fulfil the pressing task at hand.

During the first stages of implementing the GAARD, my team at the Standards and Policy Division of the Budget Technical Service was to create a process to consolidate data coming from the different Budget and Management Bureaus. This process would churn out the data needed to group the funds into two: either under the “For Comprehensive Release (FCR)” or the “For Later Release (FLR)” categories. At first, I was apprehensive not only about the process we were to create, but also about how this reform would actually be implemented. Nobody knew because it was never executed before, as far as we were concerned.

Nevertheless, we moved fast to get it done. I created an Excel worksheet to consolidate the data needed for the FCR and FLR (also known as the “Negative List”). The FCR and FLR, both in Excel format, were eventually used as Annexes to the Guidelines on the Release of Funds for the inaugural implementation of the GAARD in 2014. But on the last working day of that year, December 27, we discovered that DBM’s e-Budget System was not ready for the GAARD, even as the Annexes were already designed. The Unified Accounts Code Structure (UACS) code and amount of each program, activity, and project (P/A/P) under the Negative List in the e-Budget System still had to be encoded for the IT system to recognize the remaining balance of each agency’s appropriations.

By Loremee L. Pereda¹

Consumed by pressure, my thoughts were on two things: the management needed to release the FY 2014 National Budget Circular for Fund Release but I needed to file a leave of absence so I could prepare for my January 4, 2014 wedding, which was just a week away.

Nevertheless, my quick response was to solicit help from the IT staff. They encoded the UACS code of each P/A/P that was in the Negative List and backed up the data in the e-Budget System. It was midnight when we finished encoding, while also checking the appropriations of each agency and making sure that the figures matched the combined amounts of the comprehensive release and the amount included in the Negative List.

Not enough words could describe the hurdles we went through to help make the GAARD possible. This reform has brought us to where we are now: dramatically increased percentage in allotment releases, as well as more time spent on analytical work such as evaluating agency performance and identifying bottlenecks in implementing certain programs and projects.

Albeit all the challenges that evening of December 27, 2013, my January 4, 2014 wedding happily pulled through and I am now joyfully married and have experienced the true human birthing process through my twin boys.

¹ As of this publication, Pereda is a Supervising Budget and Management Specialist of the Budget Management Bureau for Economic Development Sector, but was formerly with the Budget Technical Service (now the Budget Technical Bureau).

² Macari is a natural childbirth advocate and author of *She Births: A Modern Woman's Guidebook for an Ancient Rite of Passage*.