

THE 2022 PHILIPPINE PEOPLE'S SCORECARD ON THE





Social Watch Philippines (SWP) with participation from representatives of: Global Call to Action Against Poverty – Philippines; Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement; Civil Society Network on Education Reforms (E-Net) Philippines; POST; Teachers Inc.; Caseca; Unang Hakbang Foundation; Center for Migrant Advocacy Philippines; Life Haven Center for Independent Living; Association of Education Researchers and Trainers, Inc. (ASSERT); Pagtinabangay Foundation; Health Justice Philippines; SWP-ABI Health Cluster;; Civil Society on the Convention on the Rights of a Child; Save the Children Philippines; Women’s Legal Bureau; Philippines; Aktibong Kilusan Tungo sa Iisang Bayan (AKTIB), and with the support from Action for Sustainable Development (A4SD), as grantee of Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), and as represented by GCAP Global Foundation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	1
POLICY ENVIRONMENT	3
Policies, National Frameworks, Strategic Plans and Programs	3
Budgets.....	7
IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS	8
Impact of COVID-19 to the Effectiveness of Policies and Programs	8
Inter-Agency Coordination.....	10
National Implementation and Governance	11
<i>Cross-cutting impacts of policy implementation</i>	11
<i>Conflicting policy measures</i>	14
<i>Slow / delayed implementation</i>	16
<i>Implementation at the Local Level</i>	17
MONITORING, TRANSPARENCY AND PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION	19
THE 2022 PHILIPPINE PEOPLE’S SCORECARD ON THE SDGs	21
Goal 1. End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere.....	22
PEOPLE’S SCORECARD	22
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	23
CHALLENGES	24
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	25
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	25

Goal 2. End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture	27
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	27
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	28
CHALLENGES	30
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	31
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	31
 Goal 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages	 32
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	32
SITUATION AND POLICY UPDATES	33
CHALLENGES	34
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	37
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	37
 Goal 4. Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All	 40
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	40
SITUATION AND POLICY UPDATES	41
CHALLENGES	42
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	45
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	47
 Goal 5. Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls	 49
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	49
SITUATION AND POLICY UPDATES	50
CHALLENGES	52
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	53
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	55

Goal 6. Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All	57
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	57
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	58
CHALLENGES	59
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	61
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	61
 Goal 7. Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable, and Modern Energy for All	 63
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	63
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	64
CHALLENGES	64
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	65
 Goal 8. Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All	 67
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	67
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	68
CHALLENGES	72
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	76
 Goal 9. Build Resilient Infrastructure, Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization and Foster Innovation	 80
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	80
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	81
CHALLENGES	81
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	82
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	83

Goal 10. Reduce Inequality Within and Among Countries.....	86
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	86
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	87
CHALLENGES	89
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	93
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	94
 Goal 11. Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable	 98
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	98
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	99
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	99
 Goal 12. Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns.....	 100
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	100
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	101
CHALLENGES	102
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	104
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	104
 Goal 13. Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts	 106
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	106
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	107
CHALLENGES	107
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	108
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	108
 Goal 14. Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development.....	 109
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	109
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	110
CHALLENGES	111

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	112
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	112
 Goal 15. Protect, Restore, and Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainably Manage Forests, Combat Desertification, and Halt and Reverse Land Degradation and Halt Biodiversity Loss	 115
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	115
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	116
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	116
 Goal 16. Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for All and Build Effective, Accountable, and Inclusive Institutions at All Levels	 118
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	118
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	119
CHALLENGES	119
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	120
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	120
 Goal 17. Strengthen the Means of Implementation and Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	 122
PEOPLE'S SCORECARD	122
SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES	123
CHALLENGES	126
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES	129
SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	132
 References:.....	 137

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased poverty and inequality in the country and has laid bare the weaknesses of the public health and social protection systems, educational systems as well as provision of livelihoods and employment to Filipinos. This has led to catastrophic consequences for workers and their families, the majority of whom are in the informal sector and many of whom are women.

Yet, two years since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been no fundamental change in the government's developmental strategy to address these systemic weaknesses and prioritize the care programs and services that our people need. Emerging from the worst period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country is slowly returning to semblance of 'normalcy' (or what is also referred to as 'the new normal').

The dominant mindset of policymakers, especially those managing the economic levers, is that it is back to business as usual, where the private sector is seen as the main driver of development and with the government providing the 'enabling policy environment.' Here, the premise flows from the conventional notion that the gains of GDP growth will 'trickle down' to benefit the poor and socially excluded groups. This premise, which has underpinned development policy across decades should have been long discredited, as the country, even during periods of relatively high growth, continued to be saddled with significant levels of poverty, thereby fueling inequality across various quality of life dimensions.

The urgent challenge therefore to the new administration is to promote the realization of our people's economic, social, and political rights—elusive goals thus far, with a view to ensuring their dignity and well-being as well as care for and protect our environment. Furthermore, citizens have a right to influence and shape public policies and programs, especially as these affect them, their families and communities and thereby actively engage in actions to claim their rights. It is within this perspective that this People's Scorecard is undertaken.

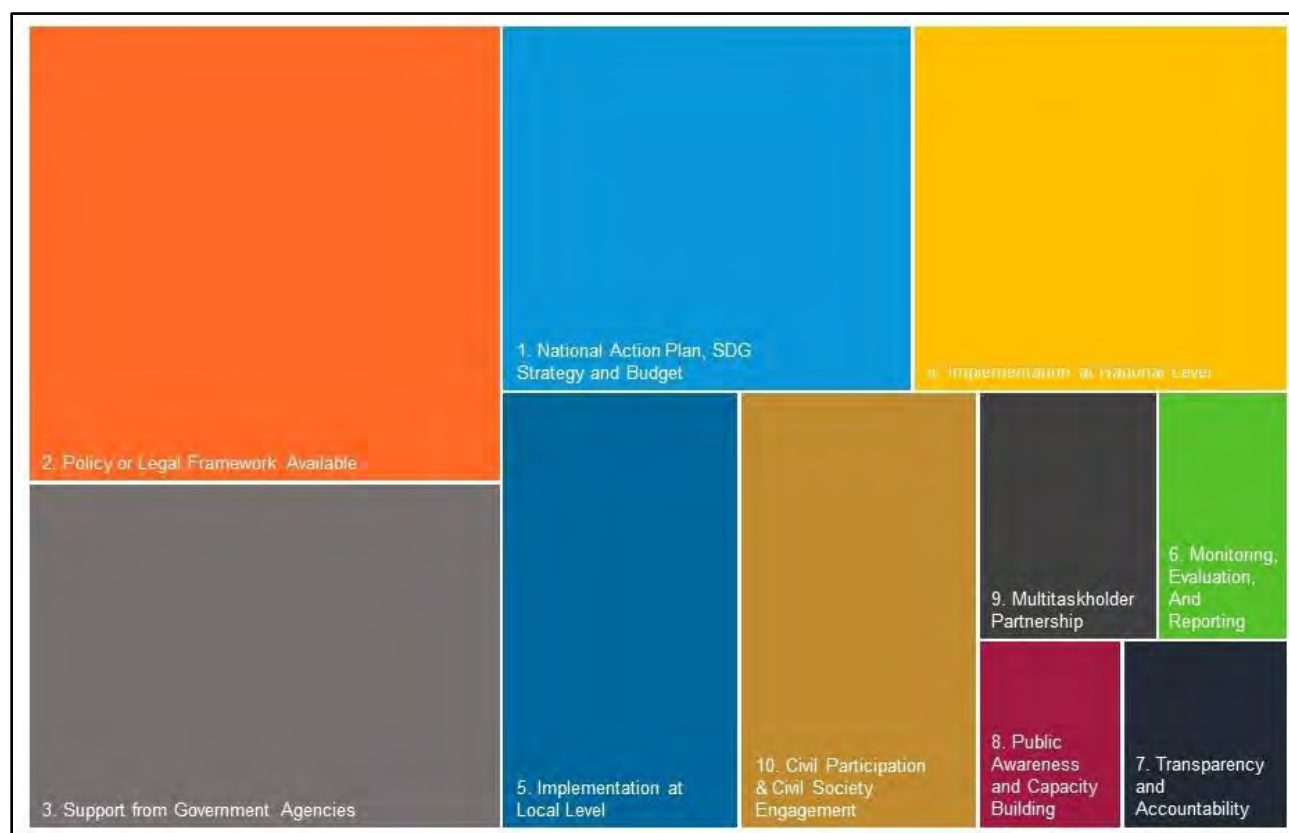
In general, the availability of policy or legal framework had the highest mean score among the indicators, at 2.50. Understandably, support from national agencies and the issuance of national action plans, including SDG strategies which are also considered policies and frameworks, followed the ranking with mean scores of 1.88 and 1.74, respectively. We believe, however, that budget should be a distinct indicator and de-linked from frameworks, policies, and programs. This is because there have been too many times where good and even progressive frameworks, plans, projects, and activities (PPAs) are inadequately funded by the national budget and in some cases, not at all. The widespread phenomenon of 'unfunded mandates' which refers to laws that are not budgeted through public investments also speak to this reality. As such, it can be argued that many of the

progressive laws and PPAs are generally good on paper, but are not substantially realized due to inadequate financing, among other things.

In the middle ground are the indicators on government actions, particularly on implementation at the national and local levels, with mean scores of 1.58 and 1.22, respectively.

Below average and very low scores go to spaces for citizens' participation and actual engagement of civil society, with mean score of 1.06. Partnerships between government, civil society and stakeholders follow with a mean score of 0.58.

The lowest and most dismal scores are for indicators related to monitoring, public awareness, and transparency. The indicators Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting as well as Public Awareness and Capacity Building, both had mean scores of 0.37. Transparency and Accountability was at the bottom of the list with a 0.36 mean score.



POLICY ENVIRONMENT

For this paper, policy environment covers the availability of laws, frameworks, and strategic plans that are supposed to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This section also covers the budget, which reflects Government priority. We noted earlier that in practice, many progressive or good laws, programs, projects, and activities are either inadequately funded or not at all.

Policies, National Frameworks, Strategic Plans and Programs

The *Build Build Build* program, which is the Government's major infrastructure project to tie together the country's supply chain, was identified as one of the administration's flagship programs to address poverty, generate jobs, ensure resilient infrastructures and achieve economic growth. The Government launched the *Ambisyon 2040* plans in 2016.

The *AmBisyon Natin 2040* initiative, which was launched in 2015, states that what Filipinos aspire for in 2040 is achieving a strongly rooted, comfortable, and secure life. It was only under the Duterte Administration that inequality-reducing measures were identified as a major strategic outcome or pillar in the country's five-year development plan.

However, the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 (PDP 2017-2022)—the government's blueprint for achieving the SDGs — lacks policies that will support small fishers and farmers. Its *Strategic Framework on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries*, showcases its neoliberal value chain concept presented as science-based, sustainable, and resilient production, food availability, access to market and safe food. The Government focused on importation more than the need to significantly improve productivity and incomes of small fisherfolk and farmers.

For instance, the Philippine Fisheries Code and its amendments such as *Republic Act (RA) 10654* and *RA 8550* favors commercial fishing while it restricts small municipal fishers their right to fish and deprives them of much needed subsidies. Also, the Government's soft stance with Chinese incursion in its EEZ in the West Philippine Sea deprived Filipino fishermen of their right to freely and safely fish in these areas, therefore, drastically affecting their incomes. This also impacted heavily on the country's marine food security.

A *National Food Policy* has been crafted to address hunger and ensure sustainable consumption. There is also an *Organic Agriculture Act*, but there is the promotion of the genetically modified (GM) technology through Golden Rice and BT *Talong*. Moreover, the recent passage of the *Rice Tariffication Law (RTL)* has created a humongous transitional problem that must be managed. Rice imports have shot up posing steep competition to

locally produced rice that are more expensively produced and distributed due to inadequate public support to unprecedented levels which is being blamed for the steep decline in palay prices at the farmgate. Harvest fresh palay fetches a very low buying price because it has yet to be dried. Frequent rains and the lack of drying facilities at the farm are also major reason for the very low prices of palay.

With many Filipino families living below the poverty line, experiencing hunger, and faced by access to social services such as education and health, the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)* serves as the Philippines' national poverty reduction strategy and human capital investment program. The 4Ps is the fourth largest CCT program in the world in terms of population coverage. It is funded by the national government with the support of loans from foreign sources.

The Government also outlined strategies to expand economic opportunities in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector; create more jobs and businesses in the industry and services sector; accelerate human capital development by reducing vulnerability of individuals and families; and to build safe and secure communities. The country's *Inclusive Filipinnovation and Entrepreneurship Roadmap* has been conceived and have identified public vehicles, boat and shipbuilding and higher value agricultural crops as some of the sectors to target.

The *Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act (CREATE)* was enacted in March 2021. That law reduced corporate income tax rates from 30 to 25 percent and streamlined fiscal incentives to investment. The corporate income tax rates for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) were pushed down even lower, to 20 percent. The Department of Finance (DOF), which dubbed the tax reform law the “largest fiscal stimulus program for enterprises in the country's history,” is hopeful that CREATE will improve the country's ability to attract investments. Also, the *Shared Service Facility (SSF)* is geared towards increasing the productivity of MSMEs that comprise the overwhelming majority of businesses in the country.

However, in the Philippines, only the richest 30 percent of the population are net savers—that is, their incomes are higher than their expenditures on average—and therefore potentially can lend money to the government. The CREATE Law is expected to boost the savings of the rich even further. Its revenue-eroding measures, along with increasing debt servicing, may also lead to reduced public spending on agricultural development and social services, which have never been among the government's top priorities, to the detriment of the poor, who depend on these investments.

CSOs call for the government return to its previous 75:25 deficit financing policy. This shift will help avoid crowding out private borrowing and minimize the risk of worsening inequality in a country where only a small proportion of the population are net savers. The government should also make sure that future interest repayments will not displace much-needed investments in agricultural development and social services. CSOs also call for

a stronger policy thrust on social protection and unemployment insurance, given the pervasive character of automation risks.

An equal playing field is also in question when the country gives priority to foreign investments. *Republic Act 11647* was signed in March 2022 to promote foreign investments by amending the Foreign Investments Act of 1991. The new law would now allow foreign investments in more areas formerly reserved for Filipinos. Even the reservation on entry into micro and small domestic enterprises has been eased by lowering the paid in equity capital requirement from \$500,000 in the old law to \$200,000.

Meanwhile, the enactment of the *Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN)* law came 20 years after the last comprehensive tax reform program was ratified in 1997. The new revenue law updated income tax rates, broadened the tax base, simplified the computation and administration of several taxes, and indexed consumption tax rates to inflation. Several critics pointed out, however, that the tax reform package led to a steeper rise in commodity prices, likely making it more difficult for the poor to improve their quality of life.

The Government is also cognizant of the vulnerabilities of Filipino migrant workers and their families. The government enacted laws developed programs and services and set up structures that focus on migration to ensure protection for migrant workers at all stages of the migration cycle. Job specific policies as well as gendered programs, such as the *Household Service Workers Policy Reform* package for migrant domestic workers, as well as bilateral agreements/ memorandum of understanding with countries of destination were forged. The Philippines perhaps is the only country of origin that has forged the greatest number of bilateral labor agreements for its land-based and sea-based workers. Moreover, a single Department that will serve as the umbrella department to respond to all concerns of Filipinos overseas and their families will be created. Consequently, various existing migration agencies will be abolished.

A legislation for job creation in the country, while ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and combating hunger and climate change is the *Green Jobs Act*, however, the big-ticket projects of the government such as the continued use of coal-fired power plants (CFPP), mega dams (Kaliwa dam), and the proposed nuclear power runs contrary to the so-called “green jobs”. Worse, there are no clear national commitments to cut CO2 emissions and move towards a just transition of energy. While we may say otherwise during the Conference of Parties, the Philippine Government’s insistence on continuing with coal-fired power plants and the proposed nuclear energy power plant demonstrates half-heartedness towards contribution to solutions against climate change.

There are indeed policy directions that pose dangers to environmental sustainability and may result to increased poverty, hunger and inequality. The country is also reliant on extractive industries, as evidenced by the non-passage of the Alternative Mining and Resource Bill. Moreover, the Philippine Government only adopted one target out of 10

targets for the SDG on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The *National reclamation plan* covers more than 38,272 hectares of coastal areas across the Philippines. This will displace thousands of fishing and farming communities, destroy marine life, and compromise food security.

The Philippines has also passed a few significant national laws related to the SDG targets on health in the past six years. This includes the *Universal Health Care Law*, *Mental Health Law*, *Cancer Control Law*, and the *Sin Tax Law*. However, despite laws aiming to increase the financial resources for health, the out-of-pocket expenses of Filipinos remain high. One national strategy that has been criticized by the citizens' groups is the privatization of state hospitals and facilities, which has reduced the already limited number of public hospitals from 730 in 2010 to 433 in 2018.

For education, the *Basic Education Development Plan 2030* serves as the blueprint for formulating, implementing and monitoring plans and programs for formal and non-formal basic education for the next decade. The enactment of *RA 11510 Institutionalizing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in Basic Education* in December 2020 and *RA 11650: Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education* in March 2022 are major milestones in reducing inequalities. RA 11510 institutionalizes a second chance for adults who did not complete their basic education so that they can get up-skilled and expand the jobs open to them. The Philippines has also enacted *Republic Act 11713* to strengthen teacher education in the country. The challenge will be in translating these policies into action in terms of crafting Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) and policy guidelines, creating administrative structures with clear lines of responsibility, ensuring a dedicated budget especially for the establishment of Community Learning Centers (CLCs), Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs), teachers' trainings and capacitating implementors and ensuring participation of stakeholders.

Meanwhile, supporting progress towards the SDG on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are more than 37 laws and executive and administrative orders on the protection and development of women. This includes the *Anti-Child Marriage Law*, the law increasing the age of statutory rape, and the *Safe Spaces Act*, which were enacted during the term of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. These are anchored on the *1992 Women in Development and Nation Building Act (Republic Act No. 7192)*, which mandated equal rights and opportunities for women and men, institutionalized gender mainstreaming in Philippine development planning.

A policy which cuts across challenges in gender, health and education is *Executive Order No. 141*, signed by President Duterte in 2021, adopting as a national priority measures to address the root causes of the rising number of teenage pregnancies.

Meanwhile, policies on peace and justice are mostly on the law enforcement side for the past 5-6 years. Preventive strategies are lacking or not sustained. The administration of justice has some progress, but it is still slow and more favorable to individuals who are

rich or have connections with the government officials. The Anti-discrimination laws and policies were cancelled out by anti-people policies and statutes that restrict democratic spaces such as the *Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020*.

Budgets

It was ironic that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the national budget for health, as compared with other sectors, had a meager share, accounting for less than 2 percent of the country's GDP. The 2021 national budget for health pales in comparison with spending on defense and infrastructure. The budget reflects a short-term response to the pandemic and ongoing privatization of the public health care system.

Also, during the pandemic, other regions received smaller shares of expenditures of the 2020 COVID-19 budget than did NCR. Although the nationwide budgets for the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), DOH, and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) increased by at least 50 percent, the budgets of DepEd, DA, and DSWD sharply declined.

Meanwhile, while the budget for basic to higher education and vocational training continued to get the highest allocation in the national budget, there is little wiggle room in the budget for spending on other than personnel services and maintenance and operations.

It is important to note that, in terms of inequality in education, funds for the establishment of Alternative Learning Centers were included in the 2022 national budget only because of the strong pressure exerted by CSO groups. Local governments must now be convinced to look for land on which such centers can be built or for structures that can be converted for use as community learning centers.

For the SDG on gender equality and empowerment of women, the *Gender and Development (GAD) Budget Policy* requires government agencies and subnational governments to set aside at least five percent of annual budget appropriations for GAD activities. The Commission on Audit (COA) monitors if the budget is properly utilized.

For water and sanitation goals, particularly Water Sanitation and Supply (WSS), public financing is the most reliable, sustainable, and equitable source of financing. Hence, there is a call for greater transparency in the allocation for WSS by consolidating the budgets into one investment plan for better monitoring. There is also a need to provide specific appropriations amounts for WSS projects in multipurpose funds to ensure that allocation for WSS is not crowd out by other expenditures from the same fund. Another budget advocacy by CSOs is the call for an increase in the national government grants for lower income municipalities and strive to raise the share of the national government in the total financing requirement under Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan.

Another call for transparency in public finance is on the budget for the Manufacturing Revival Program (MRP) budget, which is embedded across specific budget line items of the relevant agencies. Its details are not disclosed in the budget documents and there are no clear budget line items for the MRP budget.

Public investment on sectors like agriculture remained low and dependent on foreign capital. There is also a question on who benefits from the policies because small, medium, and micro businesses are struggling in accessing capital or any form of government assistance or benefits.

Meanwhile, a sizeable portion of debt was incurred, and huge budgets were allocated for counter-insurgency program and anti-drug war campaign; while most child protection programs are underfinanced, especially on the component of prevention mechanisms and services.

ODA has been and will continue to be an invaluable and dependable source of financing for development in the Philippines. For the Philippine government, the highest-priority sectors for ODA are education and transportation infrastructure. General administration, health, public order and safety, social welfare, domestic security, and agriculture and natural resources are the other sectors receiving major government funding. Throughout the decades, ODA has served as a stable source of significant funding for the government's infrastructure and human development programs and projects. Despite going through several periods of financial instability, partly owing to uncontrolled fiscal deficits and excessive government borrowing, the Philippines was able to introduce and sustain reforms that helped it achieve the sound macroeconomic fundamentals that it currently enjoys.

IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

This section covers presentation of issues and analyses related to the implementation of the policies / strategies previously discussed. This includes the impacts of implementation of SDG-related laws and programs as well as the implementation mechanisms, including national government agencies coordination and local government actions to operationalize the provisions stipulated in the laws and guidelines. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the implementation and progress towards SDG achievement will also be discussed.

Impact of COVID-19 to the Effectiveness of Policies and Programs

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically delayed or slowed down the implementation of laws and programs. It has laid bare systemic weaknesses that have plagued our

economic and social systems across generations and set off multiple crises: public health, mobility/transportation, and livelihoods.

Prior to the pandemic, government already reported a decline in the poverty rate from 23.5% in 2015 to 16.7% in 2018. But COVID-19 lockdowns highlighted and aggravated a vicious cycle of poverty. It caused more poverty amongst the poorest and affected progress towards SDGs 2 and 3. It also had implications on nutrition, food security, and food systems. The rapid spread of the disease led to strict community quarantine measures and imposed lockdowns resulting in a significant economic slowdown affecting food supply chains.

The economic recession due to COVID-19 led to a dramatic 40 percent drop in expected public revenues for 2020, causing the deficit to more than double. The increase in public spending in response to COVID-19 has been minimal, with the *Bayanihan* to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan II) allotting only \$2.8 billion in supplemental appropriations. The situation prompted the government to accelerate borrowing. Program and project loans for 2020 tripled from the amounts initially projected before COVID-19.

The severe restrictions imposed by the government had a drastic effect on the economy. The NCR and the central and southern Luzon regions, where national economic activity is highly concentrated, went through the longest period under the strictest quarantine category. Businesses were allowed to open gradually starting in June 2020 but still do not operate at full capacity anywhere in the country. To mitigate the effects of business closures and loss of jobs caused by the lockdowns, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has been tasked with issuing an emergency cash subsidy called the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), which includes 4Ps beneficiaries.

Inequality worsened during the pandemic with continuing implementation of decades-old market-driven and private profit-biased neo-liberal development framework. There was huge unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant number of OFWs have been displaced during the pandemic — affecting at least 10% of the population dependent on remittances. This put a spotlight to questions about the sustainability and desirability of economic development propped by remittances that fueled the country's consumption driven economy.

The crisis underscored the centrality of the provision of care as an essential and critical public service which requires public recognition matched with policy and budgetary support. COVID 19 exposed the weaknesses of the health system especially when the number of cases rose and people found it difficult to avail of hospital care not only for COVID treatment, but also for other morbidities. Confusing information on how the public should deal with COVID-19 also caused widespread anxiety and helplessness.

The Department of Education (DepEd) faced implementation issues with the shift to online classes and later in the return to face-face and hybrid classes. It had to implement a COVID-19 adaptive programming. DepEd experienced implementation issues

especially in the shift to online classes and later in the return to face-face and hybrid classes. The quality of learning amongst cohorts in the pandemic times is yet to be seen.

The crisis served as a litmus test of institutional capacity to provide widespread medical testing and treatment as well as social provisioning (e.g., safety nets) much of which was off-loaded at the LGU level. The health crisis and economic crisis resulting from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic laid bare systemic challenges that have plagued the country's economic, social, and environmental systems across generations. It has deepened poverty, discrimination, and inequality. We know that while almost all have been negatively impacted, there are vulnerable groups disproportionately affected persons with disabilities, the elderly, children, women, LGBTQ+, indigenous peoples, youth, farmers and fisherfolk, urban poor, Bangsamoro people.

This situation evidently needs to be addressed, not only through subsidies and cash transfers, but through support to small and medium entrepreneurship.

Inter-Agency Coordination

There are existing policies that promoted partnerships to attain the SDGs.

The Government addressed the problem of hunger by creating an *Inter-Agency Task Force on Zero Hunger* in January 2020. Chaired by the Office of the Cabinet Secretary, it aims to ensure a “whole-of-government” approach to ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Meanwhile, for education, the Philippine Statistics Authority consolidates data through the *SDG Watch*. The latest submission was supposedly April 2022.

For gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the 1992 Women in Development and Nation Building Act (Republic Act No. 7192) assigned the NEDA and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women — now known as the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) — the responsibility to monitor the gender-mainstreaming efforts of Government departments. Moreover, committees in the Senate and Congress (Senate Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality and House of Representative Women and Gender Equality) work to ensure implementation of policies at the national level.

There is a localized presence of the PCW and Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), and an identified GAD focal point system in all government agencies and GOCCs based on the *Magna Carta of Women* (RA 9710). However, gender mainstreaming should be strengthened in CWC; there is a need to have a subcommittee that will focus on the gender-based needs of children.

The Philippines is ranked 17th out of 156 countries in closing the gender gap largely due to the presence of the PCW, Gender Ombud of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR)

- Center for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights working in partnership with Child Rights Center, which ensure gender equality and protect rights of children.

For economic growth and employment, the Philippines is the only country in the world where the migrant sector is represented in tripartite bodies of the Labor Department such as the Decent Work Advisory Committee and the National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council. Currently the Philippine government extends its social protection programs to migrant workers (PhilHealth, Pag-Ibig, SSS), but migrant workers pay the full contribution to these programs (except sea-based workers). Meanwhile, the Government must conduct a performance and finance audit of all migration agencies to rationalize their abolition towards the creation of the new Department for Filipino migrant workers.

For infrastructures, convergence budgeting classification was introduced in 2017. Ten departments and other executive offices received allocations for the Manufacturing Resurgence/Revival Program (MRP), which is one of the many convergence programs of the Government. With this, MRP was integrated in various agencies, such as the DA, DOE, DILG, DOLE, DND, DOST, DSWD, DOT, DOTr, DOT.

National Implementation and Governance

Despite the abovementioned inter-agency coordination mechanisms for SDG-related policies and programs, implementation is not on the same level among all Government agencies. Moreover, corruption weakens effectiveness and implementation of laws and programs, and therefore affects the progress towards the SDG targets. During the pandemic, there were reports of massive corruption at the national and local levels. Corruption incidences in the procurement of medical equipment were documented but the culprits have not been meted with punishment. Corruption is also making water expensive for the general public.

Cross-cutting impacts of policy implementation

The impact of policies and programs are seen to cut across the different SDGs during the implementation phase.

- The farm-to-market roads were seen to double the income by providing farmers direct access to markets and reducing insurgency at the same time.
- Cash transfer is one of the Government's strategies to reduce poverty and address inequality. During the pandemic, government sought to ease the strain on families by expanding its cash transfer programs amounting to over P300 billion in various

forms. With this, there was less social unrest despite the extreme drop in GDP growth, at -9.6%, in 2020.

- In terms of hunger, health, and education, the CSOs called for the recognition of child hunger as an education issue. Malnutrition among very young children leads to stunting and brain underdevelopment. This puts them on a track that brings into question equity in education.
- Muslim and IP learners' access to schools is an issue of inequality, education, and peace. The lack of culturally sensitive curricula and learning materials and the shortage of capable teachers remain serious challenges that impede Muslim and IP learners from claiming their right to education. Attacks by state-forces on *Lumad* schools have increased even amid the pandemic. Lumad schools have been forcibly closed or burned / destroyed by state forces.
- On poverty, gender equality, protection of women, health and education, the country is now faced with the problem of early pregnancies which has increased the number of girls dropping out of school. Despite a Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act enacted in 2012, there is still a need to scale up programs to promote adolescent reproductive health and development. Moreover, health and mobility restrictions during the pandemic paused all activities intended to promote measures to address teenage pregnancies. CSOs are calling for full implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health (RPRH) Act and the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Reproductive Health Law to "grant free care and services to indigents" (Section 7, RPRH Act) especially prioritizing access to Sexual and Reproductive Health information and services such as family planning, contraceptives, maternal health care, among others for all Filipinos.
- According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020, the Philippines is ranked 1st in Asia and 17th in the World in terms of closing the gender gap. However, relating to the SDGs on gender, decent work and economic growth, citizens are calling for Government to provide wider options for decent job opportunities for women, outside of care work; a wide array of skills options should also be made available to women workers. There is call to change the narrative of women's work, whether in the country or overseas, so there is proper valuation and recognition of women's work.
- Health and inequality are also an issue among women and people with disabilities. Women face challenges in getting access to health care. The privatization of hospitals and health care makes it more difficult for women to access high-quality health services. Moreover, GAD projects remained susceptible to changes in administration; the inadequacy of funds dedicated to GAD activities; the uncertain impacts of small loans on poor women; and the uncertainty over whether the benefits are reaching the poorest women in the poorest regions. Meanwhile, citizens' groups are lamenting on the failure to successfully implement the law that automatically and mandatorily enroll persons with disabilities in the Philippine Health

Insurance because of conflict in the essence of the law and the implementing guidelines.

- To address inequality in education, CSOs are calling for the cascade of DepEd's *Basic Education Development Plan 2030* to the school divisions and districts and to the individual schools. This shall serve as DepEd's blueprint for formulating, implementing, and monitoring rights-based plans and programs for formal and non-formal basic education for the next decade. The Implementing Rules and Regulations of *Republic Act 11650 or the Inclusive education for Learners with Disabilities and Republic Act 11713 to strengthen teacher education in the country should also be finalized*. There is also a call to reverse / revoke Department of Education's order to close Lumad community schools and to increase support for poor, conflict-affected Muslim children as per Dep. Order No. 55.

Overall, CSOs noted the slow implementation of national plans and that a consolidated update report from DepEd is yet to be disseminated. The IRR of R.A. 11510 or the ALS Act is finished and the Bureau of Alternative Education within DepEd created in November 2021, almost a year after the passage of the ALS law. With DepEd itself slow to implement RA 11510, the creation of community learning centers to house ALS classes has not begun.

In relation to the SDGs on combating climate change and ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, the CSOs noted that the Government has not actively shifted policy and implementation to the use of more renewable energy sources and sustainable agriculture practices. In fact, farmers are locked in the old farming systems where technologies are not maximized to reduce their vulnerabilities to climate change impacts.

The Department of Energy (DOE) bias for baseload plants (coal, nuclear) is reflected in assumptions that favor baseloads. The main driver for renewable energy deployment are the following: declining prices, which increasingly make the process consumer-/market-driven; the climate crisis, which is perceived as a climate emergency; the global disinvestment in fossil-fuels, which is most discernible in the coal sector but is also palpable in mainstream industry; and projections around "peak demand", which is projected to happen before 2030. Hence, CSOs are calling for the DOE to review assumptions and redo the Philippine Energy Plan based on realistic assumptions; review the government's coal-based baseload projects in the pipeline; and use an aggressive program in Energy Efficiency and Conservation and Renewable Energy as a jump off point for industrial diversification and development based on green investments and green job.

Conflicting policy measures

At this junction, it is crucial to call attention to the need to immediately review and correct the design and implementation of policies and programs with conflicting result in terms of the attainment of the SDGs on poverty, land, sustainable terrestrial ecosystems, infrastructure, economic growth, inequality, and decent work. Implementation of policies to end inequality is not sustained or not as aggressive as expected. With inequality as a major concern are government actions and priorities that are resulting in marginalization or worsening poverty among vulnerable populations or causing more harm to the environment, thus affecting food security and environmental sustainability.

Midway into Agenda 2030, so many more millions of Filipinos are left behind and there are still many instances when government agencies work in silos that result to confusing or contradictory policies. This result in systemic issues that hinder eradication of poverty and inequality remain unaddressed. While government has undertaken certain measures such as increased funding for human development with free tertiary education as a prime example, as subsequent sections will underscore, the desire to reduce inequality is generally not matched by adequate political action. More than that, other policy measures are seen to deepen poverty and inequality such as the imposition of a fuel tax as embedded in the recently enacted tax law pointing to policy incoherence in the fight against poverty and inequality.

For instance, large-scale mining operations destroy food production systems and large-scale farming areas and fishing grounds cause pollution. The physical displacement and economic dislocation result to increased food insecurity; increased job insecurity / unemployment; and increased urban congestion as farmers and their families are driven towards the cities. Hence, citizens are calling for a review of the IPRA and its implementation including its implementing arm; repeal of the Mining Act of 1995 to be replaced by a People's Mining Bill; and implementation of a genuine agrarian reform program starting with genuine land redistribution.

Apart from certain policy statements to undertake agrarian reform and eliminating other disparities like gender and other dimensions of inequality, addressing this issue with decisive action, including serious redistributive reforms, seems a marginal concern across the country's medium-term development plans across the last three decades, in spite widespread evidence of dramatically unequal distribution of income and wealth.

Inequality worsened during the pandemic with continuing implementation of decades-old market-driven and private profit-biased neo-liberal development framework. The push to make the country more attractive to investors and lenders was made possible largely through the reduction of social expenditures while imposing regressive taxes. Most regular workers are paid the minimum wage, indicated by the average wage for the Philippines being very close to the minimum wage. This is also reinforced by the prevalent practice of job outsourcing.

CSOs are calling for Government to complete agrarian reform in Private Agricultural Lands (PAL) and significantly increase public investment in support services so that agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) can adequately earn from their newly acquired land. This will also stem the widespread practice of ARBs re-selling their land due to lack of government support to make their lands productive.

Land grabbing continues as speculation of land increases. There are allegations that land grabbing happens because of the Government's *BBB* infrastructure program and that these result in dislocation of IP communities and upland settlers in areas covered by large infrastructure projects, such as large dam projects.

Although public-private partnerships (PPPs) play a major role in financing BBB, the program remains heavily reliant on ODA, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 29 percent of the \$86 billion cost of approved projects is planned to be funded through this scheme. ODA was slated to fund 49 percent of the total amount, while the remaining 22 percent would be funded from government coffers.

While SDG 17 serves to ensure the means to achieve the other sustainable development goals, negative impacts of debt distress, corporate capture of development and militarization of aid have only served to worsen the state of development in recipient countries. In the Philippines, unequal and exploitative partnerships resulted in rising debt, inaccessibility of services and shrinking of civic spaces. Civil society groups are advocating for a “debt brake” -- While sound macroeconomic fundamentals may cushion its impacts, the country might have to consider a “debt brake” if government borrowing exceeds manageable levels.

The neo-liberal development framework frustrated the country's national industrialization, leaving Philippine manufacturing and agriculture sectors underdeveloped. Many modernization programs consist of promoting the adoption of imported technology, beyond the means and capacity of small producers. The government also continues to prioritize liberalization policies favoring foreign corporations instead of boosting local corporations as main drivers of post-COVID economic recovery. Citizens groups are calling attention to the need provide microcredit schemes based on the earning capacity of small producers and micro players as well as to provide support to strengthen organizing efforts of end-users to ensure scale economies.

The Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) has reduced the NFA's function to domestic procurement and buffer stocking. But even prior to the RTL, its procuring capacity has been encumbered by lack of funds allocated for *palay* purchases at the farmgate. This is not sufficient to influence prices and break cartels at the farmgate especially in the light of the entry of more imported rice. NFA is likewise hobbled not just with trust issues (farmers think they end up buying from traders anyway), but with it being a GOCC, it has its own charter which mandates it to earn its keep while trying to serve farmers. This has placed NFA in a straitjacket.

In terms of sustainable consumption, the Government needs to provide support to sustainable agriculture programs such as organic rice/food production. Its food security concept is still anchored on food availability and mostly achieved through importation. Also, organic agriculture is being promoted alongside with chemical farming or the conventional farming. This is clearly a progress and a regression at the same time.

Moreover, various mega-projects in coastal waters like deep seaports, power plants, sand mining, mining of mineral resources and reclamation for tourism deny fishing communities the access to fishing areas. These projects also dislocate them from their living and settlement areas and cause harm to fish spawning and natural production areas. These also destroy natural fish habitats like mangroves, coral reefs and seagrasses.

Results of other economic activities, such as mine tailings, pollutants, and oil spills also harm fish stocks and fish habitats affecting corals, seagrasses, mangroves. Environmental issues such as pollution, displacement of fishers from livelihood source and settlement or shelters have negative impacts to fishing communities as well as ocean inhabitants.

Slow / delayed implementation

There are still many other SDG-related laws with slow or delayed. Snags in implementation of BBB have caused the program to proceed slowly since even before the pandemic. For instance, the master list of projects had to be modified as some of the planned big projects—which eventually turned out to be infeasible—were replaced with smaller, more doable ones. The low rate of disbursement of BBB funds—less than half of total obligations on average from 2017 to 2019—by the two agencies mainly responsible for the program, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Transportation (DOTr), “signals slow, inefficient project implementation.”

For gender equality and women protection laws, a full and strict implementation of Magna Carta of Women is still needed. Meanwhile, to close the gap towards universal access to clean water and sanitation requires the construction of needed WSS facilities, such as water systems, toilets, septic and sewerage systems—all of which are capital intensive. The implementation of the Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (PPAEVAC) is yet to be reviewed and there is a need to continue and strengthen current efforts on the implementation of Philippine Program Against Child Labor (PPACL) with higher budget allocation and improved monitoring and evaluation to lift children out of child labor sooner than later.

The Government failed to increase the productivity and rural incomes of farmers, much less facilitate their access to innovative farming techniques as outlined in its Philippine Development Plan. Small farmers, tenants and agricultural workers are now left more and more at the mercy of market forces, with hardly any support from government as

evidenced by its dismally low productivity levels and the sputtering of the agrarian reform program.

Despite the presence of laws and government structures in place, violations of migrants' rights continue and persist. It could be for various reasons such as low level of awareness of their rights and the laws that express these rights; weak implementation of the laws; lack of monitoring mechanism; lack of coordination between and amongst agencies of government; lack of support and cooperation from countries of transit and destination.

There is weak law enforcement and low compliance to regulations related to conservation and sustainable use of oceans. This is primarily due to the lack of government resources to impose regulations (human capital and otherwise). Environmental Impact Assessment are also not properly done. Unregulated aquaculture contributed to depletion of marine resources due as overstocking/overcapacity, fish kills, pollution, and conversion of fish habitats like mangroves.

There is also conflict in policies in the area of peace and justice, development and sustainability. Some examples are the closure of Lumad schools red tagged amid their promotion of sustainable agriculture, IP rights for self-determination and their right to their ancestral domain, and development. There are military operations in IP areas with active struggles against destructive infrastructure projects. There is the use or investment defense forces (IDF) that attack and intimidate IP communities.

Implementation at the Local Level

The country's policy framework is based on the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 with the NEDA at the helm. This was cascaded to the local level through Executive Order No. 27 (2017). With this, SDG should be mainstreamed by all national agencies, including the Department of Interior and Local Government, which should cascade it to the Local Government Units (LGUs) with technical /financial assistance.

However, CSOs lamented that local government implementation of policies and programs on SDGs related to ending poverty is almost nil. Officials at the local level remain dependent on plans and projects directed or allocated to them by the national government. It was noted, however, that city and municipal governments emphasized the implementation of the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)*.

The national government budget is the most significant and influential financing source, along with the LGU's IRA considering the recent implementation of the Mandanas Ruling. However, in the COVID-19 pandemic national budget (2020), all regions other than the NCR and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) posted negative growth rates in allocations from the GAA (2020). CSOs and other stakeholders are also anxious on how local governments will perform given the new dispensation

created by the implementation of the Mandanas Ruling which gives local governments an increased share of national taxes and other imposts.

In fact, to attain SDG targets on health, citizens groups are calling on the National Government to renationalize devolved health services. They are proposing that the Government rescind RA 7160 on the devolution of health services.

At the local level, CSOs underscored the need to strengthen capacity building support provided by the Department of Interior and Local Government to fully implement national policies and laws at the local level, especially on capacity building/development for service providers (healthcare, teachers/educators, police officers/law enforcement agents) catering to key populations such for trans persons having difficulty accessing services.

Citizens also noted the need to focus on the needs of the working class in city planning. This includes efficient public transportation system, decent living standards including affordable energy, clean water and sanitation, and a disaster risk reduction and mitigation plans.

In addition, Local Government Units are in need of capacity building on adaptation to climate change to ensure that local development plans are climate-proofed from production to consumption, are well-resourced and protects women, children, PWDs and the most vulnerable from extreme weather events and disasters.

However, localized implementation of policies to promote responsible consumption and production is uneven or non-existent. LGUs in coastal areas have low capacity to manage municipal and commercial capture fisheries in territorial waters. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has only one or two regular personnel in Provinces. There is absence of Use Zones and delineation and Mapping of Municipal waters to define boundaries are not yet complete. For management and protection of terrestrial ecosystems, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has a small budget and is dependent on LGUs.

For LGU actions for inclusive education, the *Child Friendly Local Government Audit (CFLGA)* became a platform to monitor performance of LGUs (but has been highly politicized).

In the use of GAD funds at the local level, there are cases wherein the budgets for Civil Society, Persons with Disabilities, and Barangay Council for the Protection of Children are also lumped in the 5% GAD budget. There are also differences in the implementation of the allocation for GAD due to the practice of lumping of funds. Moreover, not all municipalities and cities have Local Committees on Anti-Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Children (LCAT-VAWC).

MONITORING, TRANSPARENCY AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

The Government launched the *Ambisyon 2040* plans in 2016; however, there had been no updates received by CSOs on the status of the implementation of the plans in 2019-2022. The *Build Build Build* plans have been centrally driven with insufficient citizens' monitoring mechanisms. However, the public has been invited to monitor projects through a geo-tagging system created by the public works department. It is also notable that Government and CSOs are helping each other to address poverty by creating jobs and livelihood programs.

However, the recent emphasis on excise taxes, including on petroleum products and sweetened beverages, has exacerbated inflation while decreasing the transparency of taxation through fiscal illusion. Fiscal illusion refers to the tendency of taxpayers to systematically misperceive their tax burdens when taxes "are included in the cost of goods, and taxpayers may not know what portion of the price the tax constitutes or even that they are being taxed at all. CSOs are calling for greater transparency and good governance in national tax incentives to effectively detect and stop harmful tax incentives.

The membership of the multi-sectoral anti-hunger initiative "*Pilipinas Kontra Gutom*" (PKG), launched in 2020, are largely private companies, industry associations, and corporate foundations; it does not include peoples' organizations or civil society organizations (CSOs).

CSOs also noted that during the pandemic, the Government is not welcoming opportunities for partnerships to address the pandemic. Peoples' participation in public policy making during the COVID -19 period, including in the drafting of the 2022 VNR, has declined. There is a growing trend for nominal and technocratized participation of CSOs in times of public health emergencies. Civil society groups and private sector stakeholders who were willing to help in the COVID-19 response were discriminated against. It was Government who selected which civil society group to consult. The Government gave bigger role for business and private sector, easing out CSOs working with the marginalized sectors. Vilifying and red tagging civil society initiatives, such as community kitchens and community pantries, discouraged volunteerism.

Meanwhile, NGOs actively supported and engaged local schools in providing information to strengthen child protection, school development plans and DRRM plans. Regional councils are very active when it comes to monitoring and implementation of education programs at the sub-national levels. Budget advocates among CSOs have lobbied hard for the expansion of day care and in-school feeding programs for pre-school to Grade 3 students. There has been some success in the increase in the per capita budget for feeding programs and the provision of meals for all Kinder students.

However, there is a need to intensify campaigns to increase public awareness on the need for adult learning and education in order to pressure local governments to prioritize

the creation of community learning centers to house Alternative Learning Systems, as mandated in RA 11510.

Meanwhile, on gender goals, PCW has an active partnership with CSOs and women's groups in implementing programs at the national level. It has a gender pool of consultants coming from different organizations that supports the need for gender-responsive programming. There is also a National GAD Resource Pool of Trainers accredited by PCW. GAD fund and budget is being accessed by women's groups like self-help groups in rural communities e.g., Catanduanes, Negros, Sarangani.

However, citizens' groups recognized the need to strengthen the monitoring of the utilization of the GAD budget as part of the seal of good local governance. There are established systems to implement and monitor gender equality agenda and empowerment of women and girls, e.g., the Women and Children Protection Desks, Gender and Development Office. Yet, there is still a need to provide evidence on how the impact of these systems really benefit women and children particularly in eliminating all forms of sexual exploitation. There is also a need to assess the functionality of these mechanisms especially at the Barangay LGU level.

Advocates working on gender-based violence also called for the need for public awareness on the boy-victims of different forms of sexual exploitation since the number of boy-victims has been significantly increasing. They emphasized the importance of conducting further study on the depth and magnitude of sexual exploitation of boys in the Philippines and publicizing and popularizing the existing studies on different forms of gender-based violence for public awareness and capacity building.

Indigenous peoples' groups and women organizations have also been calling for data disaggregation to determine extent of 'not-being-left-behind'. They recommend the institutionalization of data disaggregation based on ethnicity to determine extent of inclusion or exclusion and to inform planning and targeting. The latest Philippine Report to CEDAW talks of initiatives to harmonize data on women from various agencies, but the report does not reflect disaggregation based on ethnicity.

Meanwhile, democratic, and civil society spaces were restricted over the years for program on sustainable management of water and sanitation. This led to less of dialogues and token participations. In addition, CSOs had limited technical capacity and funds to engage in this area. There is also insufficient documentation of challenges, achievements, and contributions of CSOs for SDG targets on WASH.

Despite these limitations, Climate action and climate justice are strongly being pursued through advocacy actions of CSOs and their organized communities. For instance, the SWP WASH Cluster pushed for the passage of Green Jobs Act. Moreover, citizens groups are calling for strengthening of local and inter-LGU partnerships with CSOs and private sector for global partnerships for sustainable development. CSOs emphasized that many of the actions needed to be done to achieve the goals can be done at the LGU level, especially with respect to climate actions and those that involve the protection of the environment and natural resources.



THE 2022 PHILIPPINE PEOPLE'S SCORECARD ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

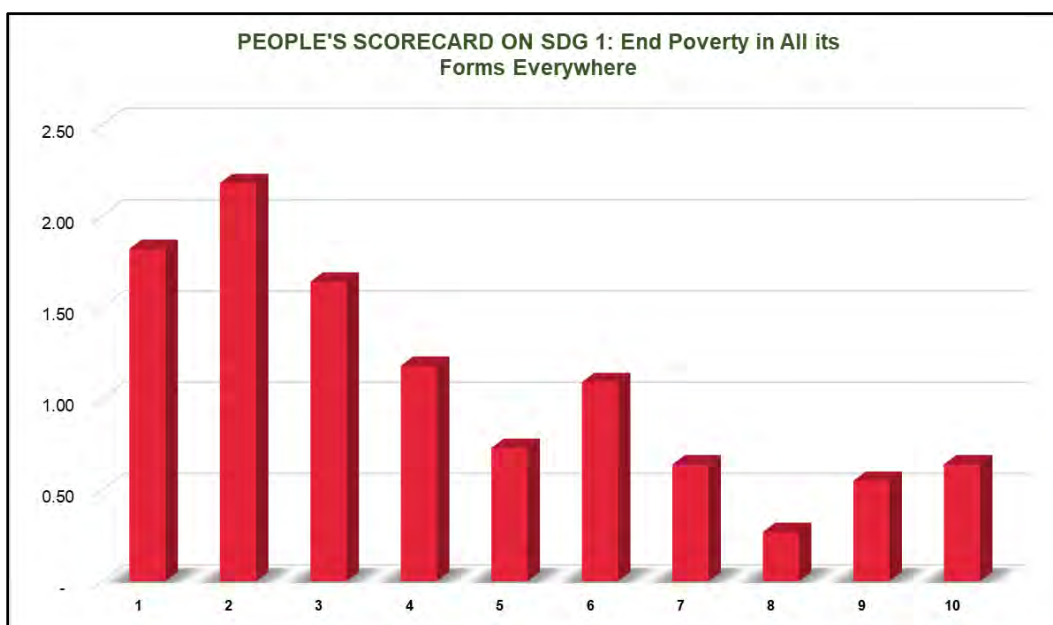
1 NO POVERTY



Goal 1. End Poverty in All its Forms Everywhere

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of policy and legal framework for SDG 1 had the highest mean score at 2.18, while initiatives on public awareness and capacity building ranked lowest with 0.27 mean.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.82
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	2.18
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.64
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.18
5.	Implementation at Local Level	0.73
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	1.09
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.64
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.27
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.55
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	0.64

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- Government created jobs through its *Build Build Build* program, a major infrastructure project to construct/improve farm-to-market roads, seaports, airports, trains, bridges, etc., to tie together the country's supply chain system as well as improve access to existing and new tourism sites. While *Build Build Build* plans have been centrally driven with insufficient citizens' monitoring mechanisms, the public has been invited to monitor projects through a geo-tagging system created by the public works department.
- Reports on the ground confirmed that farm-to-market roads doubled incomes by providing farmers direct access to markets and reducing insurgency at the same time. Prior to the pandemic, the government reported a decline in the poverty rate from 23.5% in 2015 to 16.7% in 2018. Based on World Bank reports, the growth had become more inclusive¹.
- COVID-19 lockdowns highlighted and aggravated a vicious cycle of poverty. It caused more poverty amongst the poorest and affected progress towards SDGs 2 and 3.
- Economic gains were erased by the pandemic, with the poverty incidence among families ratcheting up to 18% in the first half of 2021. Government sought to ease the strain on families by expanding its cash transfer programs amounting to over P300 billion in various forms. With this, there was less social unrest despite the extreme drop in GDP growth, -9.6%, in 2020.
- ADB (2021): poverty incidence to 20 percent this year from 16.7 percent in 2018 which means an equivalent of about 22 million poor Filipinos. In contrast, the number of poor Filipinos in 2018 was estimated at 17.7 million.²
- WB (2021): number of poor Filipinos increased by an estimated 5.23 million (from 17.67 million or 16.7% of the population in 2018, to 22.9 million or 21% of the population in 2020)³
- NEDA: Philippines could still bring down poverty incidence to its target of 14 percent by 2022 despite the pandemic (based on anticipated recovery⁴
- Officials at the local level remain dependent on plans and projects directed or allocated to them by the national government.

¹ https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/SM2021/Global_POVEQ_PHL.pdf

² Social Watch Philippines (SWP) and Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI). (2020). Budget Serye sa Kongreso

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

- Implementation of SDG 1-related programs by Local Government Units is almost nil.

CHALLENGES

- The impact of the pandemic is increasing the number of poor in the country. With current incomes remaining below pre-pandemic levels, low-income households have had difficulty coping with the steady increase in the prices of food and other basic commodities. With more families living below the poverty threshold of \$215 a month (2018 government estimate for a family of five), many households with diminished incomes are likely to become chronically poor.⁵
- For cultural reasons, women bear the burdens of caring for family members and doing domestic work. They are also the ones who promptly look for other means to augment the meager family income and resort to loans that they can barely repay. They end up falling into a debt trap, borrowing money just to pay their outstanding loans.⁶
- Those with double/triple burden are the most vulnerable, including women in informal economies, rural women, children & young people with disabilities, indigenous people, children with disabilities; elderly who are homeless or living with disabilities, urban and rural poor, small scale farmers and fishers, and migrants or undocumented persons, including the *Bangsamoro*. There is failure in terms of reflecting the multidimensional form of poverty, such as those experienced by persons with disabilities and their families.
- The Philippine Government aims to eradicate subsistence poverty by 2030 and income poverty by 2040. It was able to achieve a decline in poverty rates from 23.3% in 2015 to 16.6% in 2018. However, with the pandemic, the latest Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data showed that the poverty incidence in the country increased by 2.6 percent points to 23.7 percent in the first semester of 2021 from 21.1 percent in the first semester of 2018. This means that 26.24 million Filipinos are living below the poverty line at an average P12, 082 threshold for a family of five. Also, there are about 10.94 million Filipinos whose income is not enough to meet even the basic food needs.
- The Government is coming up with a catch-up plan because the pandemic resulted in a wipe out of at least two years' gain in poverty reduction. The NEDA is aiming to achieve 13 to 15 percent poverty incidence in 2022 so that it can meet its target of zero poverty incidence.⁷

⁵ Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Philippine Statistics Authority. (17 December 2021). Proportion of Poor Filipinos Registered at 23.7 Percent in the First Semester of 2021. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/proportion-poor-filipinos-registered-237-percent-first-semester-2021>

- The National Economic and Development Authority warned that the Philippines' poverty eradication goal -- both for subsistence and income poverty -- may be unachievable due to the pandemic's economic impact.⁸ Economic gains were erased by the pandemic, with the poverty incidence among families ratcheting up to 18% in the first half of 2021. Government sought to ease the strain on families by expanding its cash transfer programs amounting to over P300 billion in various forms.
- Meanwhile, the World Bank reported that the country will see little improvement in economic output because of the rising prices of commodities. This is due to increases in food and fuel prices in relation to the Ukraine-Russia war. The Washington-based World Bank downgraded its 2022 GDP growth forecast for the country to 5.7 percent from the original target of 5.9 percent. It estimated that the poverty in the Philippines will decrease to 16.2 percent in 2022 from the original estimate of 18.3 percent.⁹

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- Government and CSOs are helping each other to address poverty by creating jobs and livelihood programs.
- CSOs and other stakeholders are anxious on how local governments will perform given the new dispensation created by the implementation of the Mandanas Ruling which gives local governments an increased share of national taxes and other imposts.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the near term, the priority should be on rehabilitating the economy by building the capacity of business enterprises and retooling and retraining the labor sector. After revitalizing the economy, the government should refocus its attention and continue its reforms to taxation and revenue administration to ensure that it has enough resources to sustain its development efforts. Emphasis should be given to progressive tax policies rather than regressive and less transparent indirect taxes, as inequality remains a major hindrance to achieving inclusive development and poverty alleviation. Donor countries and institutions should support these interventions to allow the Philippines to become once again an able partner in pursuing global prosperity.

⁸ Cai Ordinario. (April 5, 2022). Pandemic sets back PHL's targets to wipe out poverty. Business Mirror. <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/04/05/pandemic-sets-back-phl-targets-to-wipe-out-poverty/#:~:text=Based%20on%20the%20Upper%20middle,and%2040.9%20percent%20in%202024.>

⁹ The World Bank. Philippines. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/philippines/overview>

- Strengthen/adopt a people-centered, human rights-based development framework to address systemic issues and challenges not addressed with continuing implementation of decades-old market-driven and private profit-biased neo-liberal development framework hindering the eradication of poverty, discrimination, and inequality.
- For indigenous peoples, Muslims, and other diverse groups, employ culturally appropriate development approaches in the provision of their needs.
- Re-orient social protection from its residual policy framework and link it to a broader developmental agenda that is transformative, and which upholds universal social policy. In this light, promote the progressive version of the universal social protection floor and work closely with various citizens' movements in the country and abroad, government agencies, and the International Labor Organization (ILO).
- Significantly increase public investments in agriculture (which includes fishing and forestry) and focus on increasing the productivity and incomes of farmers and fisherfolk.
- Complete agrarian reform in Private Agricultural Lands (PAL) and significantly increase public investment in support services so that agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) can adequately earn from their newly acquired land. This will also stem the widespread practice of ARBs re-selling their land due to lack of government support to make their lands productive.
- Stop the rampant practice of agricultural land conversion to industrial, commercial, and residential estates. Instead, the government should come up with a National Land Use Plan that provides a premium to ensure the country's food security/sovereignty and consider sustainable development principles in the use of the country's land and other resources.
- Decisively address the lop-sided character of Agricultural Venture Agreements (AVAs) where farmers are generally disadvantaged. To this end, the government should tap an independent and competent research entity to assess DAR's AVA program and make the necessary recommendations with a view to ensuring that farmers equally benefit from any joint partnership with the private sector.
- The Philippine government and UNCTAD to champion the adoption of international social protection floors as a necessary remedial measure for mitigating the risks of employment displacement.

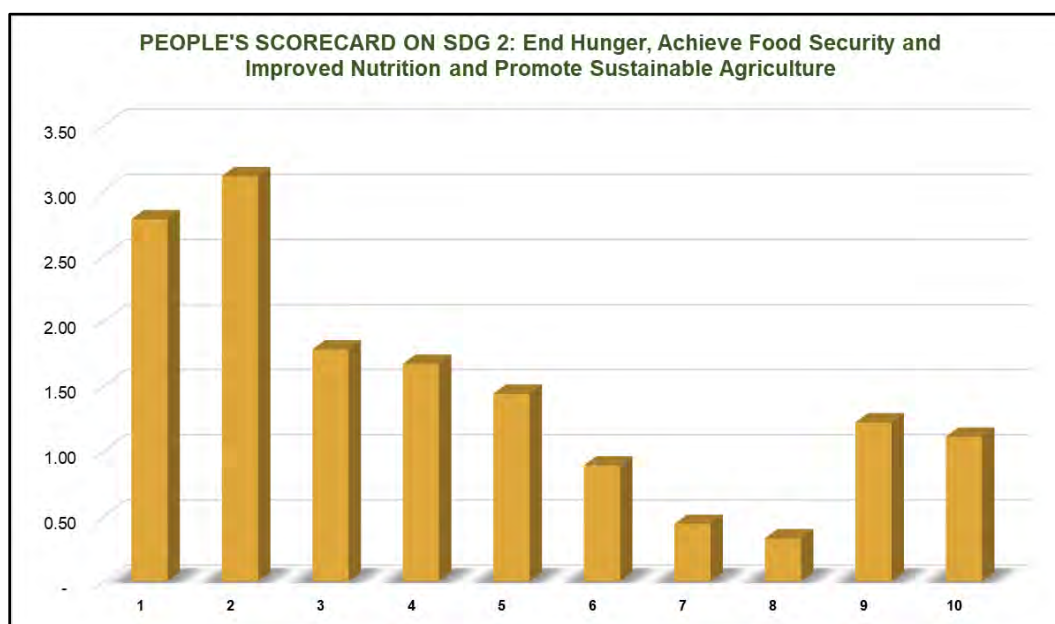
2 ZERO HUNGER



Goal 2. End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of policy and legal framework for SDG 2 had the highest mean score at 3.11, while initiatives on public awareness and capacity building ranked lowest with a mean score of 0.33.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	2.78
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	3.11
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.78
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.67
5.	Implementation at Local Level	1.44
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.89
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.44
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.33
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	1.22
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	1.11

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- DOST RNA Survey (Nov-Dec. 2020): 62.1% or six out of 10 households reported they experienced moderate to severe food insecurity, while food security is highest in households with children (7 out of 10), and those with pregnant family members (8 out of 10).¹⁰
- COVID-19 pandemic has implications on nutrition, food security, and food systems. The rapid spread of the disease led to strict community quarantine measures and imposed lockdowns resulting in a significant economic slowdown affecting food supply chains. The Rapid Nutrition Assessment Survey (RNAS) conducted in 2020 provided a snapshot of the country's food security situation, coping mechanisms, and nutrition services availed during the COVID-19 pandemic [10].¹¹
 - 71.7% of the households said they purchased food through credit, 66.2% said they borrowed from relatives and/or neighbors, and 30.2% through barter, while 21.1% of adults said they limited food intake in favor of children.
 - 22.1% said they experienced food insecurity because they had no money, 21.6% due to limited public transportation, 19.55% said because they lost their job, 10.8% said due to limited access to food stores, and 5.1% are the elderly who do not have other members of the family to buy food.
 - Majority received food assistance from their local government or the private sector. They were given food packs usually containing rice and cereals, canned and other dry goods, instant coffee, and milk and other dairy products.
 - 6 in every 10 households experienced moderate to severe food insecurity.
 - Food insecurity highest during April and May 2020 where Luzon was under the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ).
 - Food insecurity was highest in households with children (74.7%) and pregnant members (80.8%)
 - Lack of Access to food was due to no money to buy food, no or limited transportation, no money due to lost jobs, limited food stores in the area, no other members to buy food for the elderly.

¹⁰ Social Watch Philippines (SWP) and Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI). (2020). Budget Serye sa Kongreso

¹¹ DOST RNA Survey, Nov.-Dec. 2020 as cited in Social Watch Philippines (SWP) and Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI). (2020). Budget Serye sa Kongreso

- While the government and private groups worked together to provide food assistance to affected households through "ayuda" food packs, the food items were insufficient to meet Filipinos' recommended energy and nutrient intakes.
- The food packs included rice and cereals, canned goods (sardines, canned tuna, corned beef, meatloaf), instant coffee, and milk and other dairy products (milk, yogurt, and cheese).
- COVID-19 pandemic did not drastically affect breastfeeding practices, either exclusive or any form of breastfeeding (60.8% and 59.7%),
- However, 19.0% of children 0-23 months old stopped breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic due to mothers deciding not to breastfeed, mothers returning to work, the child not wanting to breastfeed, or the mother not being able to go home.
- Complementary feeding practices were not affected, with 93.3% of young children meeting the minimum meal frequency.
- Breastmilk substitutes (BMS) were included in the donations for families with babies less than two years old. Donations of milk formula during disasters, calamities, emergencies, and public health crises, including pandemics, are prohibited under Executive Order 51 or the Philippine Milk Code.
- Due to lockdowns and limited resources, programs such as Operation Timbang (OPT) Plus, supplementary feeding, micronutrient supplementation, and deworming were interrupted.
- The RNAS reported that 48.9% of children were not weighed nor measured for height.
- Non-participation in OPT Plus was due to the closure of health centers during the lockdown, the health and nutrition workers did not visit house-to-house, and that some households do not know that the program exists.
- Closure of schools resulted in delays in delivering nutrition-related services. UNICEF reported a 30 percent reduction of nutrition services in schools in low- and middle-income countries, especially those that imposed total lockdown like the Philippines.
- The school-based feeding program of DepED was tweaked for blended, home-based learning. Instead of hot meals, schoolchildren are now given nutritious food products delivered to their households or picked up by parents in schools.

- The dietary supplementation program was also shortened to 60 days for the regular component and 50 days for the milk component.
- Social Weather Stations has estimated that hunger incidence has increased to 4.2 million households in May 2021 from 2.1 million households in December 2019.¹²
- At the peak, one in four people in NCR were hungry (NEDA, 2021)¹³
- The Government addressed the problem of hunger by creating an *Inter-Agency Task Force on Zero Hunger* in January 2020. Chaired by the Office of the Cabinet Secretary, it aims to ensure a “whole-of-government” approach to ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.
- A *National Food Policy* has been crafted and an anti-hunger initiative “*Pilipinas Kontra Gutom*” (PKG) was launched in 2020. The members of this multi-sectoral initiative are largely private companies, industry associations, and corporate foundations. It does not include peoples’ organizations or civil society organizations (CSOs). Transparency and accountability issues are similarly not high on the agenda.
- At the local level, city and municipal governments emphasized the implementation of The *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)*.
- The national Social Weather Survey of June 23-26, 2021 found that 13.6% or an estimated 3.4 million families experienced involuntary hunger – hunger due to lack of food to eat – at least once in the past three months.¹⁴ That is at least 10.2 million children going hungry, equivalent to about 20% of the estimated 50 million children and adolescents, 0-19 years old, in 2021.
- The Department of Agriculture’s food security concept is still anchored on food availability and mostly achieved through importation. It needs to give ample support to sustainable agriculture programs such as organic rice/food production.
- Traders have greater control of marketing and transport of farmers’ produce.

CHALLENGES

- The pandemic has caused hunger for those who lost their jobs. Food was not sufficient for many families.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ [https://www.sws.org.ph/downloads/media_release/pr20210728%20-%20SWR2021-II_Hunger%20in%20Families%20\(media%20release\).pdf](https://www.sws.org.ph/downloads/media_release/pr20210728%20-%20SWR2021-II_Hunger%20in%20Families%20(media%20release).pdf) as cited in Social Watch Philippines (SWP) and Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI). (2021). Budget Serye sa Kongreso

- The 2019 Expanded National Nutrition Survey of the DOST-FNRI reports that 28.8% of children under-5 are stunted, 19% are underweight, and 5.8% are wasting. This means a good number of children are entering kindergarten suffering from long-term undernutrition and its negative effect on cognitive development which in turn impacts learning and attention span in the classroom.¹⁵
- Government focus more on merely addressing the severity of wasting and stunting among school children than the overall well-being of children.
- Food and relief packs do not meet / consider nutritional requirements for pregnant and lactating mothers as well as for infants and toddlers. No provision for milk and food supplements including vitamins.¹⁶ Inadequate food, care, and nutrition of pregnant and lactating mothers, and their children impacts IMR in the country.
- Despite the enactment of *The First 1,000 Days Law*, the rate of exclusive breastfeeding until 5.9 months has been a low of 35.9%. Moreover, three in 10 children were not introduced to complementary feeding at six months. Among those who were, eight in 10 were not meeting the minimum dietary diversity with only one in 10 children receiving the appropriate minimum acceptable diet.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- Budget advocates among CSOs have lobbied hard for the expansion of day care and in-school feeding programs for pre-school to Grade 3 students. There has been some success in the increase in the per capita budget for feeding programs and the provision of meals for all Kinder students.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Department of Agriculture's food security concept is still anchored on food availability and mostly achieved through importation. It needs to give ample support to sustainable agriculture programs such as organic rice/food production.
- Appropriate programs to address food insecurity and the dismal state of agriculture and raise the incomes and productivity of farmers and fisherfolk.
- Expansion of day care and in-school feeding programs for pre-school to Grade 3 students.

¹⁵ Social Watch Philippines (SWP) and Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI). (2021). Budget Serye sa Kongreso

¹⁶ CHR report on discrimination. UNDP Philippines 2021

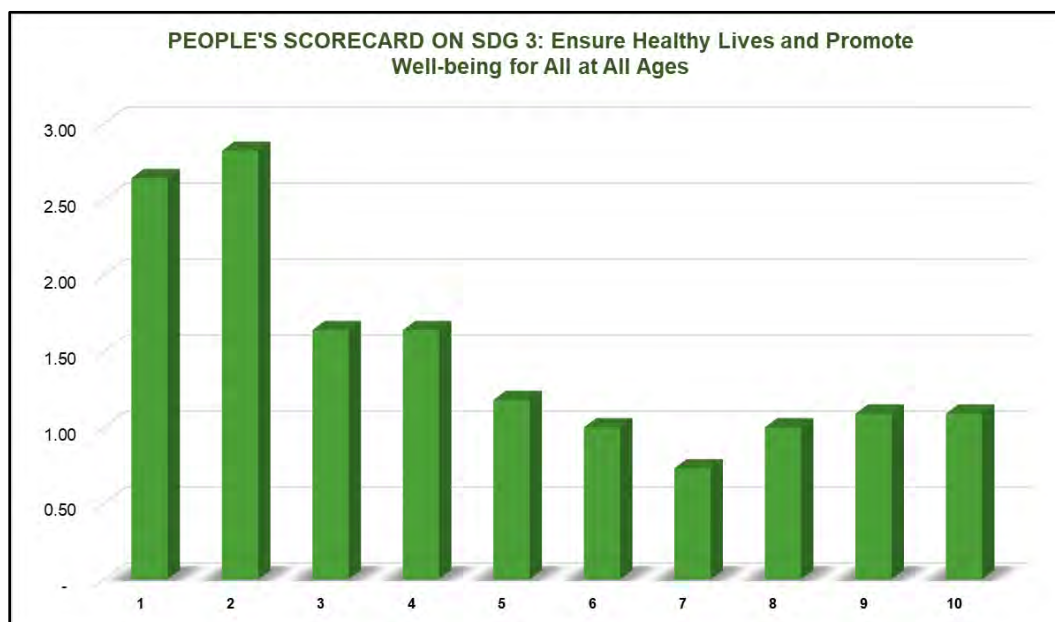
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Goal 3. Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-being for All at All Ages

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of policy and legal framework for SDG 3 had the highest mean score at 2.82, while transparency and accountability ranked lowest with a mean score of 0.73.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	2.64
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	2.82
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.64
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.64
5.	Implementation at Local Level	1.18
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	1.00
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.73
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	1.00
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	1.09
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	1.09

SITUATION AND POLICY UPDATES

- **New Health Policies.** The Philippines passed a number of significant national laws related to health in the past six years such as the *Universal Health Care Law*, *Mental Health Law*, *Cancer Control Law*, and the *Sin Tax Law*. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of these laws was delayed or slowed down dramatically.
- **National Health Budget.** Compared with other sectors of the national budget, the health sector has a meager share, accounting for less than 2 percent of the country's GDP.¹⁷ The 2021 national budget for health pales in comparison with spending on defense and infrastructure. The budget reflects a short-term response to the pandemic and ongoing privatization of the public health care system. According to news reports, the 2021 health department budget is \$400 million lower than its 2020 budget of \$3 billion.²⁹¹⁸
- **Social Health Insurance.**
 - Out of pocket expenditure for health services remains high.
 - The law that automatically and mandatorily enrolls persons with disabilities in the Philippine Health Insurance was not implemented in the spirit of the law. There is conflict in the essence of the law and the implementing guidelines. Before the law, many persons with disabilities enjoyed the subsidy program of their local government. Presently, most people with disabilities are not enrolled in health insurance.
- **Disease Prevention and Control**
 - None of the SDG 3 targets are on track. SDG 3.3 on fighting communicable diseases is noted to be regressing.¹⁹
 - Incidence of mental health problems and suicides increased during the pandemic.
 - The Philippines has the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in Asia and the Pacific with a 237% increase of new HIV infections from 2010 to 2020. Misinformation about HIV/AIDS, as well as stigma and discrimination, are the barriers to HIV testing, access to health care and protection. Discriminatory norms, practices, and misconceptions such as “condoms

¹⁷ <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/health-nutrition-and-population-statistics> (last accessed 1 May 2021) as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

¹⁸ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

¹⁹ People's Review of the SDGs, 2021. PH Civil Society SDG Watch

do not sexually satisfy men continue to hinder the use of contraceptives like condoms, which can help prevent HIV transmission.

- **Maternal and Child Health**

- The maternal mortality rate in the country, while decreasing, remains high at 90 deaths per 100,000 live births. The lack of access to health professionals and facilities limits mothers from enjoying healthy pregnancy and delivery.
- Infant mortality rate, (IMR) also increased from 12.6 per 1,000 live births in 2018 to 13.0 per 1,000 live births in 2019.
- A study conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) revealed that 5.168 million, or 67 percent, of Filipino women of reproductive age 15 to 49 are unable to access family planning services. The study estimated that unintended pregnancies would reach 2.5 million by the end of 2020.²⁰

- **Tobacco control.** Latest Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GYTS) still pegged smoking prevalence in the country at 23.8%. Meanwhile, increasing vape use among the youth is also alarming with 1 out of 7 youth aged 13 - 15 admitted to currently use e-cigarettes. Around 110,000 Filipinos die every year due to tobacco related diseases (TRD). Estimates reveal that Philippines suffer 210 billion economic losses (health, productivity, and early death costs) from TRD. These multi-dimensional impacts hamper the achievement of other SDG targets. The industry sponsored Vape Bill, which seeks to overturn RA 11467, proposed regressive regulation on vape products. This bill lapsed into law in July 2022.

CHALLENGES

- **COVID-19 Pandemic**

- COVID 19 exposed the weaknesses of the health system especially when the number of cases rose and people found it difficult to avail of hospital care not only for COVID treatment, but also for other morbidities.
- Confusing information on how the public should deal with COVID-19 caused widespread anxiety and helplessness.
- It was a struggle between saving lives and livelihoods.

²⁰ C. Bonquin, "Maternity Deaths, Unplanned Pregnancies, Domestic Violence Worsen amid Pandemic in PHgroups," CNN Philippines, 29 September 2020 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

- Migration to digital platforms such as e-consultations and monitoring and reporting of cases was slow and inconsistent.
- There were reports of massive corruption at the national and local levels. Corruption in the procurement of medical equipment, treatments were documented but the culprits have not been met with punishment.
- Amid the health crisis, when families can no longer make ends meet, economic challenges that hinder access to Sexual and Reproductive Health have worsened.
- Maternal health services were also greatly affected by imposed lockdowns. In fact, 15.5% of pregnant women were not able to have their prenatal check-ups. Some expressed their fear of going to a health facility or were not aware of their current pregnancy.²¹
- Although the Gender Gap Index study mentioned that Filipino women can have good health longer than men, there is a strong possibility that women's health status will change with the spread of the virus, especially now that COVID-19 cases have surpassed 1 million.³¹²²
- Access to healthcare by pregnant women further deteriorated during the pandemic.

- **Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**

- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) remain a major challenge to the Philippine health system. NCDs have become the leading cause of deaths in the country in recent years. These diseases continue to cause economic losses, especially in lower socioeconomic classes. This report aimed to gather current evidence on the impact of NCDs on Filipinos and to examine the risk factors associated with these NCDs.
- Non-communicable diseases have risen as the top cause of mortality in the country. Seven (7) out of the top ten causes of death in the Philippines are NCDs, with the top being ischemic heart disease (17.3% of all deaths), followed by cancers (10.8%) and cerebrovascular diseases (10.4%). Hypertension remains a major biological risk factor to NCDs with 16.1% of adults aged 20-59 years affected. Fasting blood glucose, affecting 6.7% of the same age group, is another risk factor to look out for.
- In terms of behavioral risk factors, alcohol consumption, tobacco use, diet, and physical inactivity are most studied. These behaviors link to

²¹ Social Watch Philippines (SWP) and Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI). (2021). Budget Serye sa Kongreso

²² Flores and Pacapac, 2021

prevailing environmental factors, namely economic development, urbanization, and advancement of technology.

- There is a high prevalence of NCDs and risk factors among the 20–39-year-old age bracket. However, children and adolescents are seen to be exposed early on to some behavioral risk factors which may cause increased risk for NCDs later in life. In addition, the NCDs and risk factors studied are more common in people living in urban areas and in richer wealth quintiles. These groups need to be monitored and targeted for prevention and control programs for NCDs.
 - From 2015 to 2019, the national expenditure for NCDs has generally followed an increasing trend. In 2018, the direct and indirect costs for NCDs reached Php 756.5 billion (4.8% of GDP). Most direct costs were spent on medication and medical services. The financial burden associated with indirect costs, such as workforce and productivity losses, is 9 times greater than the direct costs of NCDs.
 - The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has also been seen to impact on the trends in NCDs and risk factors. Some behavioral risk factors, specifically alcohol and tobacco use, were seen to have lessened over the period of the pandemic. However, the impact on the prevalence of specific NCDs and other risk factors need to be studied further.
 - In conclusion, the battle against NCDs continues in the Philippines. Recent trends provide insight not only on some successes in controlling hypertension, alcohol consumption, and tobacco use, but also on what else needs to be addressed, specifically diet quality, physical activity, and other health-promoting behaviors. Population-based programs to target healthy behaviors and illness behaviors need greater investment to drive NCDs lower. Prevention and control is key to the successful management of NCDs.
- **Health Facilities.** Privatization of state hospitals and facilities has already reduced the limited number of public hospitals, from 730 in 2010 to 433 in 2018. With fewer state hospitals, which now also have to focus on attending to COVID-19 patients, other health concerns.²³
 - **Social Health Insurance.** Their requirement to only use the Philippine Registry of Persons with Disabilities as a basis for budgeting is problematic. Many local governments are complaining that the database is not always accessible. Not to mention, the lack of personnel or internet (on the side of local government) to fulfil

²³ Ibid.

this extra work. No budget was also allocated to fund those who are already in the database.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- **People's Participation Mechanisms**

- Government is not welcoming opportunities for partnerships to address the pandemic (civil society, private sector, and other government agencies willing to help in the COVID19 response were discriminated against). Government selected civil society who they want to consult with in relation to COVID response and recovery, including for SDGs.
- Discouraged volunteerism by vilifying and red tagging CSOs and civil society initiatives such as community kitchens and community pantries.
- The Government gave bigger role for business and private sector, easing out CSOs working with the marginalized.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide free, comprehensive, and progressive health care services for all Filipinos.
 - The Government should develop and strengthen the public health care system anchored on a community-based approach to health care from the barangay to the town/city, district, province, regional and national levels.
 - Give priority to delivery of health care services and medicine to the impoverished sick, aged, and disabled, women and children.
 - Build, upgrade and rehabilitate primary, secondary, and tertiary hospitals and barangay health stations, especially those in far-flung areas, using public funds.
 - Public health care should focus on disease prevention, mass health education, nutrition, sanitation, and immunization.
- Stop the privatization of other anti-people, anti-health worker policies.
 - Reverse the privatization of public hospitals.
 - Stop large-scale mining and use of coal for energy.

- Stop labor-export policy and brain-drain of health professionals by increasing their salaries and providing adequate protection including guarding their rights as humanitarian workers delivering health services to disadvantaged communities.
- Reverse the salary standardization law IV and wage rationalization law.
- Scrap the no-home birthing law policy.
- Repeal EO Nos. 102 and 365 on streamlining and rationalization plan.
- Renationalize devolved health services. Rescind RA 7160 on the devolution of health services.
- Provide adequate health budget commensurate to the health needs of Filipinos. Allocate at least 5% of the country's GDP for health to the national budget. Funds should be allocated to public health services instead of being coursed through PhilHealth.
- Establish a clear health human resource development plan.
- Nationalize and build a pharmaceutical industry that will provide safe, accessible, affordable, essential, and effective medicine for Filipinos.
- Regulate the operation of transnational pharmaceutical corporations – including price control and marketing.
- Conduct independent health research projects beneficial to Filipinos.
- Remove the VAT on medicines.
- Stop and investigate all corrupt practices.
- Address systemic barriers to achieving free, comprehensive, and progressive health care founded on equity, social justice, and people's rights.
- Dismantle foreign dominance in the country's economy. Build national industry.
- Develop the countryside – address landlessness and food insecurity.
- Promote people's welfare – provide meaningful jobs, access to health and sanitation, education as well as housing.
- Fully implement the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health (RPRH) Act and the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Reproductive Health Law to “grant free care and services to indigents” (Section 7, RPRH Act) especially

prioritizing access to SRH information and services such as family planning, contraceptives, maternal health care, among others for all Filipinos.

- Challenge the corporations to shift to non-plastic container alternatives to PET for water, soda, and other beverages, and regulate its use, to prevent further widespread plastics pollution. For example, the government should invest in free, publicly available potable water systems to reduce consumption of plastic water bottles and contribute to the health and well-being of the people.
- Passage of a comprehensive Smoke-Free Environment Law to institutionalize and expand smoke-free public places.
 - Protect the current regulations on vape and related products from industry lobby.
 - Emphasize the need for sustainability of tobacco control projects and other health promotion efforts both at the national and local levels.
- Protect public health policies against corporate lobby.
- Strengthen public health policies at the local level with regards to the implementation of the Mandanas - Garcia Ruling.

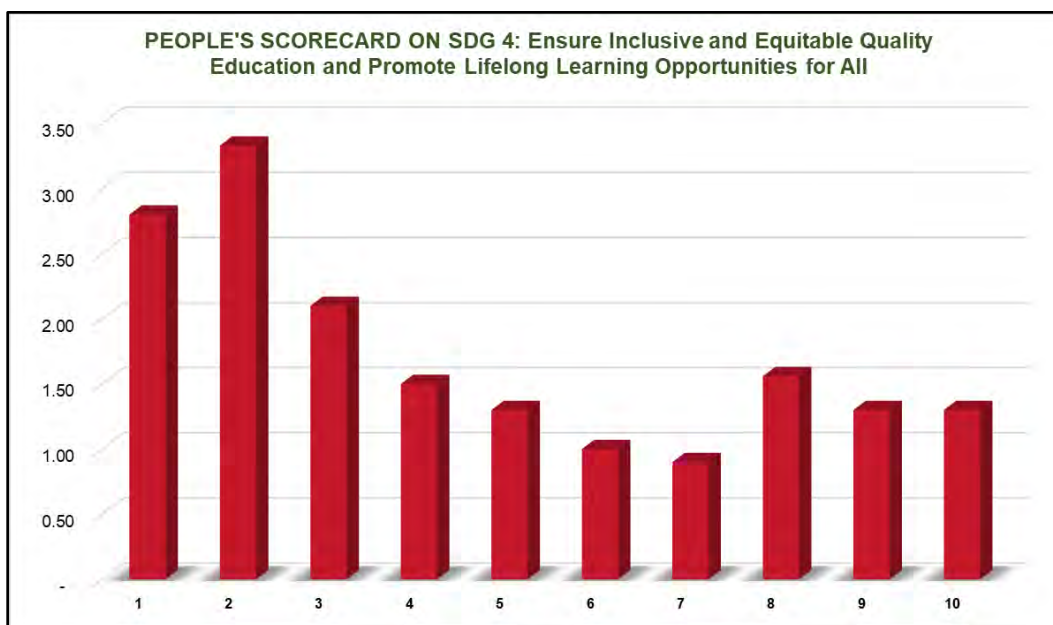
4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Goal 4. Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of policy and legal framework for SDG 4 had the highest mean score at 3.00, while transparency and accountability ranked lowest with a mean score of 0.67.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	2.80
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	3.33
3.	Support from Government Agencies	2.10
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.50
5.	Implementation at Local Level	1.30
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	1.00
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.90
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	1.56
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	1.30
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	1.30

SITUATION AND POLICY UPDATES

- DepEd launched its *Basic Education Development Plan 2030* to serve as its blueprint for formulating, implementing, and monitoring plans and programs for formal and non-formal basic education for the next decade. The plan has adopted a rights-based education framework meant to bring the rights of the child to and in education at the center of policymaking and of programs, projects and activities. Much work, however, is needed to cascade this framework down to the school divisions and districts and to the individual schools.
- The enactment of RA 11510 Institutionalizing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in Basic Education in December 2020 and RA 11650: Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education in March 2022 are major milestones in reducing inequalities. RA 11510 institutionalized a second chance for adults who did not complete their basic education so that they can get up-skilled and expand the jobs open to them. The Philippines has also enacted Republic Act 11713 to strengthen teacher education in the country.
- Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) consolidates data through the *SDG Watch*. The latest submission was supposedly April 2022.
- *Child Friendly Local Government Audit (CFLGA)* became a platform to monitor performance of LGUs (but has been highly politicized).
- The Department of Education (DepEd) implemented COVID-19 adaptive programming.
- **Education in the context of COVID-19:**
 - At the start of the pandemic, basic public schools numbering 47,013 suspended classes disrupting the lives of more than 27 million students. School Year (SY) 2020-2021 saw 1.5 million children and youth drop out of school as their parents lost their jobs or became unemployed.
 - The Department of Education rolled out its Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) to limit further disruption but faced implementation issues with the shift to online classes and later in the return to face-face and hybrid classes.
 - Situation of households that made it more difficult to adjust to online and blended learning - 6 % of households did not have electricity - 53.5 % did not have radios - 21.1 % did not have televisions - 79.7 % did not have computers - 84.3 % did not have access to the internet.

- The pandemic also impacted on the right to protection of children and youth, especially girls. According to a report from the Office of Cybercrime of the Department of Justice, there has been a 260% increase in cyber-tips related to online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC) and the major helpline in the country registered a 167% increase in calls for reporting cases of child abuse and an 867% increase for counselling services when compared to the same time frame in 2019. Increased vulnerability of children during COVID19 is also a result of poverty, discontinuity in the delivery of essential social services and interruptions in children's support systems.
- There was a significant decrease in private sector enrollees with only 34.1% returning to private schools. DepEd recorded nearly 400,000 students migrating from the private to the public sector.
- The Listahanan 2.0 data indicates that 2 out of 3 poor children with disabilities are not in school.

CHALLENGES

- Access to education among the poor and other disadvantaged groups, particularly secondary education, remains to be a critical issue. Poverty remains a major factor for dropping out of school.
- Skills and readiness of teachers, parents, and students to online learning, absence of gadgets, access to internet, and inefficient connection and worse, absence of electricity pose as challenges from taking full advantage of using educational online platforms especially among poor teachers and students in remote areas. The digital divide exacerbates existing inequalities.
- While the budget for basic to higher education and vocational training continued to get the highest allocation in the national budget, there is little wiggle room in the budget for spending on other than personnel services and maintenance and operations. Despite strong appeals made by CSOs, there is underinvestment in creating and putting in the hands of children the appropriate learning materials for learners with disabilities, indigenous and Muslim children.
- BEDP implementation for quality, inclusive education is facing challenges in terms of budget constraints due to fiscal consolidation policy; not sufficient budget for community learning centers and inclusive education program; devolution of functions to LGUs; cascading BEDP framework to divisions/district/schools, reaching out to the marginalized.
- There are challenges in translating ALS policies into action in terms of crafting Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) and policy guidelines, creating

administrative structures with clear lines of responsibility, ensuring a dedicated budget especially for the establishment of Community Learning Centers (CLCs), Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs), teachers' trainings and capacitating implementers and ensuring participation of stakeholders.

- The biggest challenge for education would be in the fight against disinformation and fake news, and how this will be taught to the younger generation.
- **Education in the context of COVID-19:**
 - Teachers are burdened with the significant amount of extra work and extra cost required of them this pandemic time. They worked double time to upskill and equip themselves with the digital tools and alternatives needed for blended learning; wrestled with module preparation, printing, collating, and organizing of learning packets; experienced hardships distributing modules to students in remote areas. Low morale and motivation among the teachers, excessive workload, and poor professional development are factors that impact on teaching and quality of education.
 - DepEd experienced implementation issues especially in the shift to online classes and later in the return to face-face and hybrid classes. The quality of learning amongst cohorts in the pandemic times is yet to be seen.
 - The importance of public awareness in education remained in the community even during the pandemic, but it might still not be enough due to the lack of face-to-face meetings.
 - Unemployment of parents because of the pandemic restrictions became a big challenge. Many students stopped studying during the pandemic in order to help their parents with their daily needs, especially with basic needs such as food.
 - Some students stopped studying due to difficulty in adjusting to online learning. Others lacked funds to buy prepaid load and data packages for internet connection and the lack of available gadgets.
 - Capacity development among young people was reduced during the pandemic due to limited community engagement. There is online workshop-training, but not everyone can participate in the training provided. Hence, few young people benefited from the training opportunities.
- **Political climate**
 - With the political situation shifting to a new presidency, there is a need to strengthen education for civic consciousness and global citizenship especially in the context of learning through digital technologies.

- There is slow implementation of national plans to cover national scope of implementation. A consolidated update report from DepEd is yet to be disseminated.

- **Educators**

- The narrow curriculum content that is weak on critical thinking, social awareness, and sustainable development concepts may have contributed to the students' low mastery of subjects.
- The low morale and motivation among the teachers, excessive workload, and poor professional development are factors that impact on teaching and quality of education.
- The massive disruption in the educational system across levels during the pandemic has brought home the challenge of providing instruction in alternative ways, underscoring the need for non-traditional modes and platforms of teaching and learning.
- The declining educational quality as seen in various assessment tests (e.g. In NAT—math, science and languages, grade 6 students got 40% average while grade 10 students got 44%)
- Low quality of teaching- Very low passing rate of teachers in the LET (ranges from 22 -29%)

- **Access to technology**

- The digital divide will exacerbate existing inequalities:
 - About 52 % of public schools have no internet connections.
 - 18% of public schools are in areas with internet service providers but have not yet connected.
 - About 87 % of teachers have access to computers; 49% with internet access at home, 41% no internet access, 10% no signal in their area.
- Teachers would have to be trained in the use of technology for learning delivery.
- Early grade levels need to be closely supervised by parents in the use of technology. Orienting the parents will be a major challenge, and there are questions as to whether parents are ready to take on this role.

- **Children in vulnerable situations**

- Child hunger should also be recognized as an education issue. Malnutrition among very young children leads to stunting and brain underdevelopment. This puts them on a track that brings into question equity in education.
- Access to education among the poor and other disadvantaged groups, particularly secondary education, remains to be a critical issue. Poverty remains a major factor for dropping out of school.
- Children with disabilities face great difficulties in accessing education.
- Low enrolment in ALS among the out-of-school children and youth, with only 43.3% expected to return when the program resumes in October 2020.
- Similarly, Muslim and IP learners have little access to schools. The lack of culturally sensitive curricula and learning materials and the shortage of capable teachers remain serious challenges that impede Muslim and IP learners from claiming their right to education. Attacks by state-forces on *Lumad* schools have increased even amid the pandemic. Lumad schools have been forcibly closed or burned / destroyed by state forces.
- The country is now faced with the problem of early pregnancies which has increased the number of girls dropping out of school.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- **CSO-National Government Partnerships**

- The Government launched the *Ambisyon 2040* plans in 2016; however, there had been no updates received by CSOs on the status of the implementation of the plans in 2019-2022.
- *World Vision* and *Educo* partners with DepEd on the Brigada *Pagbasa* Project. The DepEd officially appointed World Vision as the lead co-convenor of Brigada Pagbasa, a project that intends to bring together educators, policymakers, and stakeholders across sectors to equip Filipino learners with improved functional literacy skills.
- *World Vision* strives to improve learning outcomes in the Philippines by working closely with children, schools, and private and government partners. Its partnership with the DepEd, specifically on the implementation of the *Abutin Na10* fundraising campaign, and the Brigada Pagbasa literacy program, ensured that children would have access to learning materials and activity sheets even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- *Stairway's* collaboration with the Department of Education is on mainstreaming the Cyber safety program into the education curriculum.

- **Disaster Risk Reduction and Management**

- *Plan International's Safe Schools Project* focus on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) where students are being trained to create their own groups.

- **Local Level Engagement**

- NGOs are very supportive in engaging local schools in providing information, i.e., in strengthening child protection, strengthening school development plans and DRRM plan together with LGUs. Regional councils are very active when it comes to monitoring and implementation at the sub-national levels.
- *ERDA Foundation*, a member of CRC Coalition, continuously promotes the importance of education in the community, even through online platforms. Despite encountering difficulties in the availability of gadgets, prepaid load, and stability of internet connection, capacity development was still conducted even with the limited opportunity (i.e., no face-to-face interaction).
- *Educo* implements a project with DepEd and UNICEF in Samar, Southern Leyte, and CARAGA with a component on back-to-school advocacy with children. This includes development of IEC materials.
- Recent efforts to institutionalize and to involve communities in CFLGA are now mandatory. CFLGA ensures that CSOs are represented in the validating team. *Educo* is part of the validating team in Bicol.
- Partnerships of schools, LGUs, and CSOs in the formulation and implementation of child protection policy including case management.
- *VIDES* is a member and auditor of the city council for the protection of children in a city in Cavite province.
- Localization of humanitarian efforts especially in education are conducted with multiple partners, i.e., UN OCHA, CSOs, and DepEd Regional.
- *ERDA Foundation* works to assist the learning situation in families and communities to cope up through continuously collaborating with generous individuals and groups in providing tutorial services, gadget, and load provision.

- **Child protection**

- There are conflicts arising from BCPC, schools, and CSOs working on child protection mechanisms.
- *Consuelo Foundation* implemented a project with *CREDe* on the integration of rights-based education in the basic education curriculum.
- *VIDES* has a partnership with DepEd and public schools on a school-based program on advocacy of CRC.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Substantially increase the national education budgets. Provide highest budget priority to public education.
- Cascade DepEd's *Basic Education Development Plan 2030* to the school divisions and districts and to the individual schools. This shall serve as DepEd's blueprint for formulating, implementing, and monitoring rights-based plans and programs for formal and non-formal basic education for the next decade. Review K to 12, for amendment or repeal.
- Strengthen education for civic consciousness and global citizenship especially in the context of learning through digital technologies.
- Invest in remote learning that helps mitigate the immediate disruption caused by COVID-19 and establish approaches to develop more open, flexible, inclusive, and equitable education systems for the future.
- Ensure safe transition to face-to-face learning. Address knowledge gaps resulting from disruptions due to the pandemic. Proactively seek out-of-school and COVID 19-affected learners and provide a budget for their education through ALS.
- Inclusion of Social-Emotional and Character Development Programs in K-12 especially as learners return to face-to-face sessions and establish support programs for teachers and all educators in transitioning to face-to-face learning.
- The Implementing Rules and Regulations of *Republic Act 11650 and Republic Act 11713* should be finalized.
- Use a pro-poor approach and link education and training for decent work at the local level to relevant job opportunities in the country.

- Strongly encourage child participation in schools and strengthen school child protection for a positive and safe learning environment.
- Child hunger should be recognized as an education issue.
- Ensure non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, respect for the right to education, in schools.
- Provide additional resources and develop and strengthen programs and pathways to learning opportunities for marginalized, excluded, and vulnerable (MEV) groups.
- Pilot the establishment of Resource Centers for Learners with Disabilities and strengthen support (instructional materials, assistive devices, essential equipment) (P90M).
- Establish community learning centers in the 100 identified IP communities without access to government schools (P35M).
- Stop attacks on schools especially Lumad and other IP schools. Respect and support Lumad schools as centers for education, cultural heritage, and self-determined development Reverse / revoke Department of Education's order to close Lumad community schools.
- Increase support for poor, conflict-affected Muslim children as per Dep. Order No. 55.
- Provide pre-Kindergarten education in well-functioning day care centers with teachers trained in early childhood education in all barangays to ensure equal access to early childhood development programs.
- Conduct a GAD analysis of DepEd plans, budget, and implementation (P3M)
- Strengthen the CSE programme and its delivery, for both in-school and out-of-school youth and adolescents, bringing it into line with international guidelines and best practices, especially regarding sexuality education.
- Ensure the provision of and access to age-appropriate information, education and adolescent-friendly comprehensive, quality and timely sexual and reproductive health services at both government and non-government led health facilities for adolescents and youth, including those with disabilities.

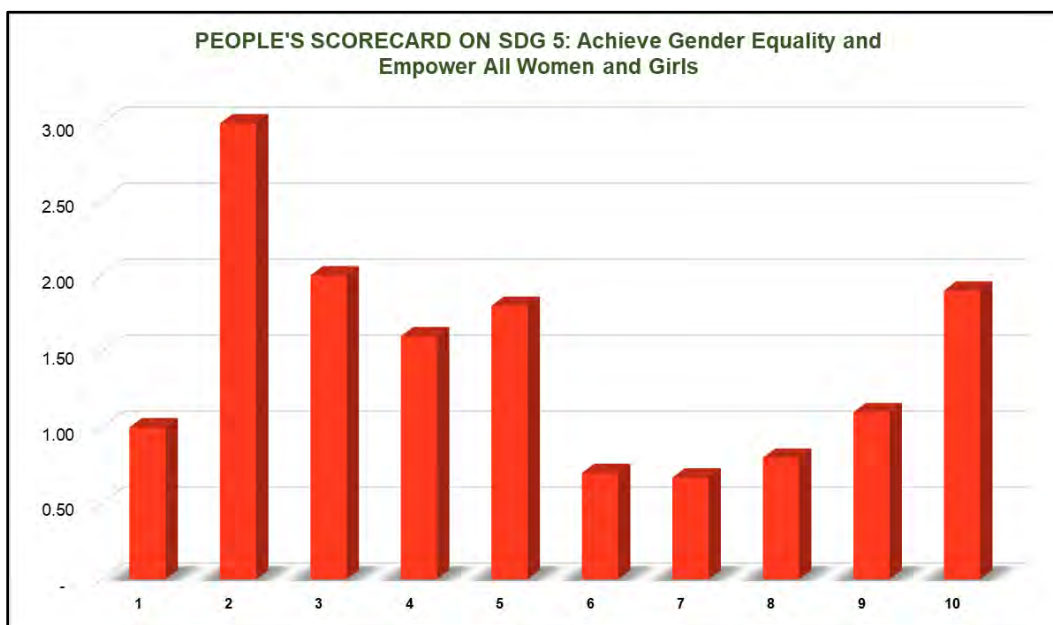
5 GENDER EQUALITY



Goal 5. Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

SDG 5 scored highest in terms of the “availability of policy and legal framework” and “national action plan, SDG strategy and budget” with mean scores of 3.00. Meanwhile, transparency and accountability ranked lowest with a mean score of 0.67.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.00
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	3.00
3.	Support from Government Agencies	2.00
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.60
5.	Implementation at Local Level	1.80
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.70
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.67
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.80
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	1.10
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	1.90

SITUATION AND POLICY UPDATES

- The country has produced more than 37 laws and executive and administrative orders on the protection and development of women.²⁴
- The 1992 Women in Development and Nation Building Act (Republic Act No. 7192), which mandated equal rights and opportunities for women and men, institutionalized gender mainstreaming in Philippine development planning. The law assigned the NEDA and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW)—now known as the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW)—responsibility for monitoring the gender-mainstreaming efforts of government departments.²⁵
- The country, since 1989, has been issuing gender-mainstreaming strategy which involved the implementation of gender-focused plans. The latest strategy document is the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Plan (GEWE 2019–2025). These framework plans were translations of the state’s commitment to international agreements, such as the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action Financing for Development in the Philippines 17 (BPfA). The NCRFW/PCW facilitated the formulation of the GAD plans, which reflect the gender-responsive provisions of the Philippine Development Plan at the time of their formulation. The GEWE Plan 2019-2025 covers four years of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022, and the remaining years of the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD) 1995-2025²⁶
- The 1995 General Appropriations Act (GAA), the first to include what is now known as the GAD Budget Policy, was a pioneering piece of legislation on gender-responsive budgeting in the Asia-Pacific region.²⁷ The GAD Budget Policy requires government agencies and subnational governments to set aside at least five percent of annual budget appropriations for GAD activities. The Commission on Audit (COA) monitors if the budget is properly utilized.²⁸
- Republic Act No. 9710 (RA 9710), also known as the Magna Carta of Women, was signed into law by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on August 14, 2009. This law called for the stronger enforcement of women’s rights and the promotion of equal opportunities for women.²⁹

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ R. Sharp, D. Elson, M. Costa, and S. Vas Dev, “Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Asia Pacific Region: Republic of the Philippines” (Adelaide: University of South Australia, 2011) as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

²⁸ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

²⁹ Ibid.

- Despite a *Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act* enacted in 2012, there is still a need to scale up programs to promote adolescent reproductive health and development.³⁰
- Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte signed *Executive Order No. 141 s. 2021* adopting as a national priority measure to address the root causes of the rising number of teenage pregnancies. The following laws were also enacted during his term: *the Anti-Child Marriage Law*, the law increasing the age of statutory rape, and the *Safe Spaces Act*.³¹
- The Senate and the House of Representatives separately ratified the bicameral conference committee report on the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 2209 and House Bill No. 10703 or the proposed *Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC)* and *Anti Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act*, respectively.³²
- Committees in the Senate and Congress (Senate Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality and House of Representative Women and Gender Equality) work to ensure implementation of policies at the national level.³³
- There is a localized presence of the Philippine Commission of Women (PCW) and Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), and an identified GAD focal point system in all government agencies and GOOCs based on the *Magna Carta of Women* (RA 9710). However, gender mainstreaming should be strengthened in CWC; there is a need to have a subcommittee that will focus on the gender-based needs of children.
- Not all municipalities and cities have Local Committees on Anti-Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Children (LCAT-VAWC).
- **Gender Gap**
 - According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020, the Philippines is ranked 1st in Asia and 16th in the world in terms of closing the gender gap.
 - However, in the latest global poll, the Philippines—once a consistent member of the top 10 in the Gender Gap Index — has fallen eight spots to rank 17th. According to the survey, the country is improving in three of the four dimensions of the index: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival. In contrast, the country has widened the gap in political

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

empowerment for the past two years. The study attributed this result to lower female representation in government positions.³⁴

- The Philippines is ranked 17th out of 156 countries in closing the gender gap largely due to the presence of the Philippine Commission on Women, Gender Ombud of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR)-Center for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights working in partnership with Child Rights Center, which ensure gender equality and protect rights of children.
- Women workers' voices, participation and agency must be promoted and respected especially in crafting policies that impact on them; they must not be seen as mere recipients of government programs and services but as critical stakeholders in migration governance.

CHALLENGES

● Gender rights

- Women face challenges in getting access to health care. The privatization of hospitals and health care makes it more difficult for women to access high-quality health services.

● GAD fund utilization

- Concerns have persisted about the continuity of GAD projects, which remained susceptible to changes in administration; the inadequacy of funds dedicated to GAD activities; the uncertain impacts of small loans on poor women; and the uncertainty over whether the benefits are reaching the poorest women in the poorest regions.³⁵
- There were several issues in the use of GAD funds at the local level e.g. at least 5% of Barangay LGU Internal Revenue Allotment should be allocated, but there are cases wherein the budgets for Civil Society, Persons with Disabilities, and Barangay Council for the Protection of Children are also lumped in the 5% GAD budget.
- There are differences in the implementation of the 5 % budget allocation for GAD due to the practice of lumping of funds.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ J. Jimeno, "Government Women's Budget Goes to Frivolous Projects," Business World, 8–9 March 1999, as cited in J. Francisco, "The GAD Budget: Examining Public Financing with a Gender and Poverty Lens," in J. Lacaba, M. Razon, and R. de Guzman-Castillo, eds., Social Watch Philippines 2001 Report (Quezon City: Social Watch Philippines and Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement, 2002), p. 30.

- **Teenage pregnancies**

- Health and mobility restrictions during the pandemic paused all activities intended to promote measures to address teenage pregnancies.
- The country is now faced with the problem of early pregnancies which has increased the number of girls dropping out of school.
- The Commission on Population and Development projected that by the end 2021, one hundred sixty thousand (160,00) adolescent minors will have become or would continue to be heads of families. This is a significant number of adolescents that need to be educated about their sexual and reproductive health as well as on the impact of unintended pregnancies on young women and girls. (Source: See Executive Order 141, Adopting as a National Priority the Implementation of Measures the Root Causes of the Rising Number of Teenage Pregnancies and Mobilizing Government Agencies for the Purpose, 2021.)

- **Gender-based Violence**

- The Child Rights Coalition advocates for awareness and capacity on violence against children, which had slow progress in the last 5years. There has been a sustained threat to children with regards to gender-based violence including sexual exploitation. The need for public awareness on the agenda of eliminating all forms of violence against children becomes more important today and the pandemic even exacerbated the situation. According to Disrupting Harm household survey data, in the past year alone, 20% of internet-using children aged 12-17 in the Philippines were victims of grave instances of online sexual exploitation and abuse. In spite of this sustained threat, there is low awareness of the public including children and young people of the different forms of violence and how to prevent it. There is also a low awareness among child-victims and at-risk on where to report or who to talk to. Children would also tend to disclose to friends and peers. This would call for a capacity building program for children and youth responders and peer counselors.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- PCW has an active partnership with CSOs and women's groups in implementing programs at the national level. It has a gender pool of consultants coming from different organizations that supports the need for gender-responsive programming. There is also a National GAD Resource Pool of Trainers accredited by PCW.
- The *Child Rights Coalition* recommends that existing national plans should be anchored to international commitments in closing the gender gap.

- *Plan International* launched research on Assessing Risks and Adaptive Capacities to Child Marriage in Mindanao was presented to BARRM. They also finalized a Research Management Response & Action Plan for presentation to the Management of Plan.
- *UNFPA* partners with different CSOs in addressing teenage pregnancy.
- *KNH Philippines*, through its partners, is promoting approaches in facilitating women to form Self-help groups towards sustaining community empowerment, also implementing child-focused community development programs that will fight severe child rights violations. *KNH Philippines* developed two gender modules for self-help groups and cluster-level associations through its 14 partners in 18 different areas in the country.
- *ASMAE* Study on awareness on gender and GBV at the barangay level - Lack of appropriate info about gender and gender-based violence at the barangay level. There remains some confusion on how to differentiate gender, sex, and GBV in the community.
- *BPFA+25* reporting has been established and different CSOs (*PKKK*, *SIKAT*) and networks contribute to this mechanism.
- Gender-based violence watch groups were established in some areas particularly in Basey and Marabut Samar. VAWC officers in these areas are women leaders of self-help groups.
- Women's federations *LIKAS* sit in the monitoring team at the municipal level in Tuy, Batangas.
- Gender indicators are indicated in monitoring plans of CSOs and partners e.g., Guiuan and Salcedo in Eastern Samar, Lantawan in Basilan, Kabankalan Negros Occidental, Sibutu Tawi-tawi.
- Good case studies of IACAT - PNP, e.g., DOT Pampanga, Palawan hotspots of trafficking which were able to establish one stop reporting booths.
- *ECPAT Philippines* actively partners with the local governments and private sectors in tourism destinations for the enactment of gender-inclusive and rights-based legislations on protecting children in travel and tourism. This partnership raises the accountability of the tourism sector and empowers them in protecting women and children as they contribute efforts in raising public awareness including their clients and guests, capacity building on women and children protection among their personnel and reporting to authorities. This also ensures the accountability of the government in fulfilling their duties and delivering gender-inclusive programs and services for the benefit of women and children in the tourism destinations.

- *KNH Philippines* through its partners are working closely with some local DSWD in providing FDS particularly on GST. There are partnerships with religious groups as well on FDS.
- *UNOCHA* ensures functionality of protection clusters in emergencies (women and children protection) in partnership with CSOs, and government agencies. There were coordination meetings in which indicators in humanitarian action developed to ensure protection of women and children e.g., Typhoon Rai in CARAGA region. CSOs' membership to the various sub-committees of CWC and the Inter-Agency councils (e.g., IACAT, IACACP, IACVAWC) currently in place.
- CSOs are active partners of the government in pushing for the agenda of eliminating gender-based violence and all forms of sexual exploitation. One coalition example comes from *ECPAT Philippines*, which provides thematic expertise in all government discussions including lobbying of gender-inclusive policies and legislations, capacity building of relevant stakeholders, facilitating child participation in the national and regional platforms, among others. It partners with the Department of Tourism for the program *Tourism Integrates, Support and Minds Women's Respect and Child Safety (TourISM WoRCS)*, which includes training and seminars to promote sustainable tourism practices that ensure that the rights of children and women are protected. It also works in partnership with the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordination Center in operating the Internet Reporting Hotline that receives reports from the public on online CSAM.
- GAD fund and budget is being accessed by women's groups like self-help groups in rural communities e.g., Catanduanes, Negros, Sarangani.
- Indigenous people groups and women organizations have been calling for data disaggregation to determine the extent of 'not-being-left-behind'. They recommend the institutionalization of data disaggregation based on ethnicity to determine extent of inclusion or exclusion and to inform planning and targeting. The latest Philippine Report to CEDAW talks of initiatives to harmonize data on women from various agencies, but the report does not reflect disaggregation based on ethnicity.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Existing national plans should be anchored to international commitments in closing the gender gap.
- Full and strict implementation of Magna Carta of Women is still needed. A review of the GAD Budget Policy in 2010 revealed low compliance and poor-quality plans

and reporting systems on implementation of Magna Carta of Women on the part of agencies.³⁶

- Strengthen capacity building support provided by the Department of Interior and Local Government to fully implement national policies and laws in the local level, especially on capacity building/development for service providers (healthcare, teachers/educators, police officers/law enforcement agents) (e.g., for trans persons having difficulty accessing services)
- Strengthen monitoring of the utilization of the GAD budget as part of the seal of good local governance. Monitoring is sometimes only done out of compliance.
- There are established systems to implement and monitor gender equality agenda and empowerment of women and girls, e.g., the Women and Children Protection Desks, Gender and Development Office. However, there is still a need to provide evidence on how the impact of these systems really benefit women and children particularly in eliminating all forms of sexual exploitation. There is also a need to assess the functionality of these mechanisms especially at the Barangay LGU level. In some instances, these mechanisms are just in paper and for compliance only to name a few are areas in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Manjuyod.
- Conduct consultation among young people themselves on why teenage pregnancies are rising and what can be done.
- There is a need for public awareness on the boy-victims of different forms of sexual exploitation since the number of boy-victims has been significantly increasing. Conduct further study on the depth and magnitude of sexual exploitation of boys in the Philippines. Publicize and popularize the existing studies on different forms of gender-based violence for public awareness and capacity building.
- The latest Philippine Report to CEDAW talks of initiatives to harmonize data on women from various agencies, but the report does not reflect disaggregation based on ethnicity. Data disaggregation is important in determining the extent of 'not-being left-behind'. Institutionalize data disaggregation based on ethnicity to determine extent of inclusion or exclusion and to inform planning and targeting.
- Women workers' voices, participation and agency must be promoted and respected especially in crafting policies that impact on them; they must not be seen as mere recipients of government programs and services but as critical stakeholders in migration governance.

³⁶ Senate Economic Planning Office, "Engendering a Gender-Responsive Budget: A Look at the GAD Budget Policy," Policy Brief 10, no. 1 (2010): 1–15 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

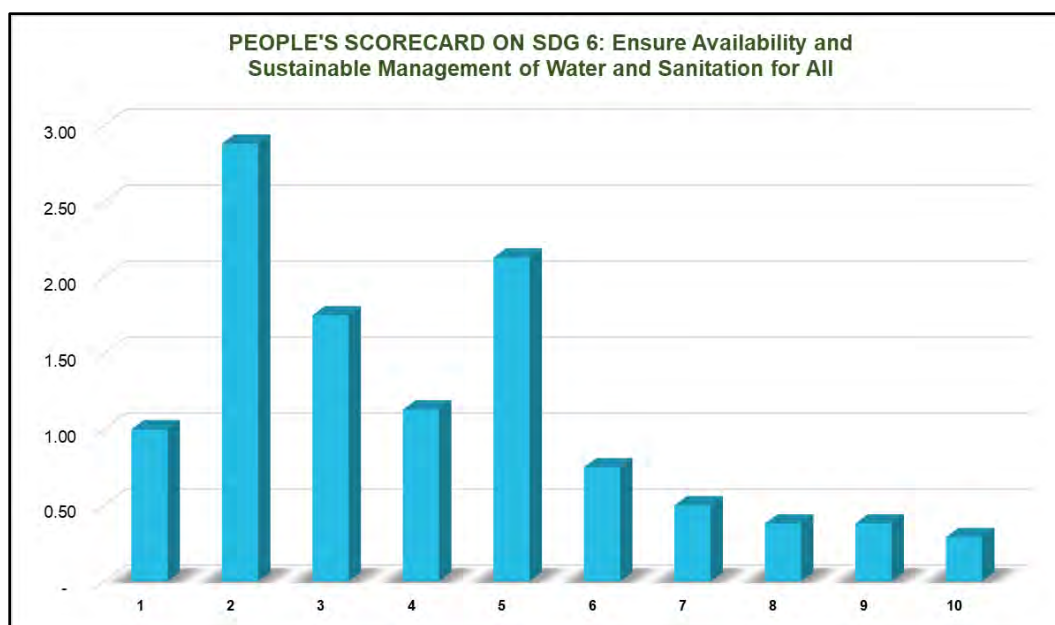
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Goal 6. Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of policy and legal framework for SDG 6 had the highest mean score at 2.88, while citizen participation and civil society engagement ranked lowest with a mean score of 0.29.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.00
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	2.88
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.75
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.13
5.	Implementation at Local Level	2.13
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.75
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.50
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.38
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.38
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	0.29

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- National Water Resources Board (NWRB) revealed that 11 million families still rely on “unprotected” deep wells, springs, rivers, lakes, and rainwater.³⁷ In addition, there are 905,000 families still practicing open defecation due to no access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities.³⁸
- 80% or 21 million families used an improved sanitation facility not shared with another household.³⁹
- 15.7% or 2.1 million families in the urban areas use improved facilities shared between two or more households while families in rural areas is at 11.2% (1.4 million families).⁴⁰
- 3.5% or 905,000 families have no sanitation facility and still practice open defecation.⁴¹
- Rural families practicing open defecation (5.6% or 700,000 families) is higher than that of urban families (1.6% or 213,000 families).⁴²
- Of the 1,634 cities and municipalities in the country, only 6% have achieved municipal-wide Zero Open Defecation (ZOD) status (or Grade 1 sanitation certification).⁴³
- Expenses related to water affect families from different income classes as about 59% of families in urban areas (8 million families) and 36% in rural areas (4.5 million families) buy drinking water from water-refilling stations.⁴⁴ In urban poor communities in NCR that Social Watch Philippines (SWP) is working with, about a quarter of the wages of a single-income family of five go to the expenses on water for drinking and domestic use.

³⁷ National Water Resources Board. 2023

³⁸ Philippine Statistics Authority, Annual Poverty Indicators Survey. 2020

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ UNICEF Philippines. “Sanitation targets are off-track: DOH, WHO and UNICEF ask local governments to invest in sanitation.” 19 November 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/sanitation-targets-are-track-doh-who-and-unicef-ask-local-governments-invest>

⁴⁴ Ibid

CHALLENGES

- **Affordability**

- The high cost of water connectivity. For example, LGU-run and private water utilities in some municipalities require households to pay about PhP 4,000 to PhP 7,000 to be connected. This may still go up depending on the location of the house.
- Water providers from the private sector, while they often provide good quality service, may not always be affordable for more economically disadvantaged groups. This is where the government needs to step in and undertake their developmental mandate to enhance the welfare, well-being and dignity of these groups.
- Water providers from the private sector may not always be affordable for more economically disadvantaged groups.

- **Governance**

- Organizational Fragmentation. There is a need to improve the organizational/administrative coherence and coordination of the various agencies, as there are about 32 agencies with overlapping roles related to WASH. There is no central government agency that oversees the policy, coordination, regulation, and monitoring of the entire WSS sector. As such, it is not surprising that national government budgets for WSS are not consolidated under one agency or program.
- Inadequate and inconsistent water sector data. The water sector is one of the most fragmented services in the Philippines with many agency roles overlapping. This has added to the confusion as to which agency is to collect data, and of what kind. This is generally because the institutional concerns of the involved agencies in the WSS sector are also varied. In one of the earlier studies conducted by Rola et al. (2015) on the “Challenges of Water Governance in the Philippines”, the results showed that the many legal documents for water are a source of confusion; and water data for planning are insufficient. “While there are a multitude of water agencies, these are not connected vertically nor horizontally.”⁴⁵
- Lack of public investment in water. In 2021, The National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) developed a Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan which serves as the country’s action plan to achieve universal access to safe, sufficient, affordable, and sustainable WASH. The

⁴⁵ Rola, A.C., Pulhin, J.M., Tabios, G.Q., Lizada, J.C., Dayo, M.H.F. (2015). Challenges of water governance in the Philippines. Philippine Journal of Science, 144 (2), 197-208.

Masterplan estimates a 1.07 trillion-peso investment requirement to attain universal access to safe water supply and sanitation by 2030.

- The Climate Crisis. Groundwater currently supplies more than 50% of our potable water supply and 85% of piped water supply in the Philippines. The El Nino phenomenon and climate change that heats up the temperature facilitates the drying up of our water sources which in turn can lead to inadequate and intermittent water supply in Metropolitan Manila and other parts of the country.
- The lack of WASH facilities and services impact social development.
 - Communities without WASH infrastructure and hygiene awareness are affected by waterborne diseases and overburdened health centers. In the first quarter of 2023, the DOH reported a surge in food and waterborne diseases, especially bloody diarrhea, typhoid fever, and rotavirus infections, as the country entered the dry season.
 - Health centers without WASH infrastructure can become high-risk areas for infections.
 - Without WASH infrastructure and hygiene awareness, diarrhea leads to poor nutrient absorption, immune reduction and malnutrition, particularly stunting, affecting a child's cognitive abilities when they get older thereby also affecting their productivity. About 3.9 million or 30.3% of children under-5 were stunted in the Philippines (FNRI, 2018), and this figure has not changed much for nearly three decades.
 - Without WASH infrastructure and hygiene education, food production (slaughterhouses, restaurants, canteens, domestic cooking...) can be a source of health risks. The Department of Health partly attributed the significant increases in food and waterborne diseases to water supply issues in some parts of the country.
- Corruption is making water expensive for the general public.
- Construction of needed WSS facilities, such as water systems, toilets, septic and sewerage systems—all of which are capital intensive - to close the gap towards universal access to clean water and sanitation. There is an urgent need to mobilize finances to address this challenge.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- Democratic and civil society spaces were restricted over the years. This led to less dialogues and token participation. CSOs now need to claim spaces more aggressively.
- Many CSOs are limited by their lack of technical capacity and funds not to mention the restrictions in democratic spaces and participation. Also, there is a lack in documenting their challenges, achievements and contributions.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Public financing is the most reliable, sustainable and equitable source of financing for Water Sanitation and Supply (WSS). There is a need for WASH budget advocacy at the national level that look into:
 - Call for greater transparency in the allocation for WSS by consolidating the budgets into one investment plan for better monitoring.
 - Provide specific appropriations amounts for Water Sanitation and Supply (WSS) projects in multipurpose funds to ensure that allocation for WSS is not crowd out by other expenditures from the same fund.
 - Invest in public health human resources playing important roles in the prevention and control of diseases related to WASH from spreading in community, such as the Sanitation Inspectors.
- Increase national government grants for lower income municipalities and strive to raise the share of NG grants in the total financing requirement under Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan.
- Increase, through national government budget and policy support, the ability of and Government Owned and Controlled Water Districts to improve, expand, and upgrade their water and sanitation grade levels. Well-studied incentive programs may increase local leaders' interest and prioritization of WASH.
- Prioritize investment in areas with high incidence of unimproved facilities and those with no WSS facilities at all.
- Ensure affirmative action clearly expressed and implemented in government policies, programs and services for WASH such as provision of disability inclusive & climate resilient WASH especially during emergencies.

- More support for research and development on modern technologies for water supply (rainwater harvesters, impoundment of water, desalinization of salt water)
- Promote participatory approach to water management by supporting Local Development Councils with enhanced participation of citizens' groups to plan and implement WASH programs and activities.

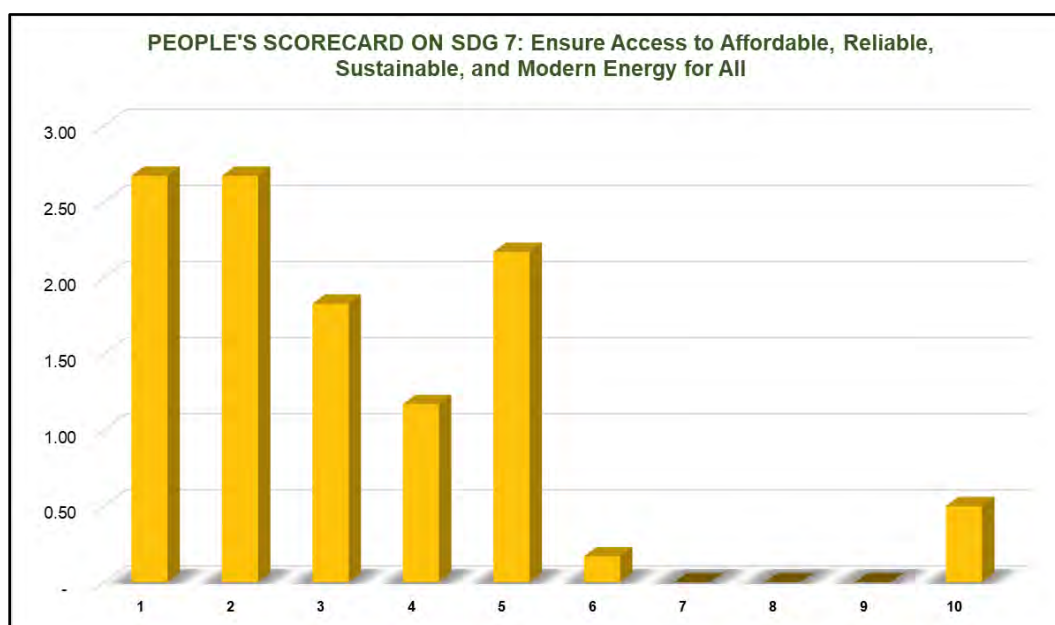
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Goal 7. Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable, and Modern Energy for All

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

SDG 7 scored highest in terms of the “availability of policy and legal framework” and “national action plan, SDG strategy and budget” with mean scores of 2.67. Meanwhile, “transparency and accountability”, “public awareness and capacity building”, and “multistakeholder partnerships” all registered zero (0) mean.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	2.67
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	2.67
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.83
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.17
5.	Implementation at Local Level	2.17
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.17
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	0.50

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- The Philippines pushed for the passage of the Green Jobs Act, however, the big-ticket projects of the government such as the continued use of coal-fired power plants (CFPP), mega dams (Kaliwa dam), and the proposed nuclear power runs contrary to the so-called “green jobs”.
- Leyte is one of the sources of clean energy for the country with the Leyte Geothermal Power Plant.
- As of start-2018, 2.78 million households (~13.9 million persons) still have no access to electricity.⁴⁶
- A comparable number of households do not have 24-hour electricity service.
- Where 24-hour electricity is provided, service is often poor (long and/or frequent power outages, very high electricity rates).
- Fossil fuel share in the generation mix remains at around 75%, most of it from coal power plants.

CHALLENGES

- The Department of Energy (DOE) bias for baseload plants (coal, nuclear) is reflected in several questionable assumptions that favor baseloads:
 - baseload share in the capacity mix will remain at 70% until 2040.
 - change in calculation method of baseload share from % of peak load to % of total supply.
 - change in reserve requirement from 4% of peak plus backups for the 2 largest generating units on the grid, to 25% of peak, which effectively means backups for more than 15 of the largest generating units on the grid.⁴⁷
- There is still a huge dependence on fossil-fuel energy sources amid the slow momentum towards shifting to renewable energy. The 'just transition' still needs to be planned.

⁴⁶ Olap, Marc Louie, OIC, Rural Electrification Administration and Management Division, Dept. of Energy. “Total Electrification by 2020 and its Support Program”. June 26, 2018. https://www.doe.gov.ph/sites/default/files/pdf/announcements/e_bs_epimb_01_total_electrification_by_2020.pdf

⁴⁷ Verzola, Roberto, “Can the Philippine electricity sector reduce its carbon emissions by 70%?”. microRenewables Magazine. Vol. 3 Issue 8 2018. <https://rverzola.wordpress.com/2018/09/14/microrenewables-issue-no-8/>

- The prices in solar, wind and battery storage are declining. This provides new opportunities to improve access. However, the DOE's bias for baseloads and electric utility resistance, particularly to solar rooftops, makes renewable energy deployment sluggish because utilities perceive it as a threat.
- The main driver for renewable energy deployment are the following:
 - declining prices, which will increasingly make the process consumer-/market-driven.
 - the climate crisis, which is more and more perceived as a climate emergency.
 - the global disinvestment in fossil-fuels, which is most discernible in the coal sector but is also palpable in mainstream industry; and
 - projections around "peak demand", which is projected to happen before 2030.⁴⁸

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review the DOE assumptions which led it to expect that the base load share in the energy mix will remain at 70% of peak demand until 2040 and redo the Philippine Energy Plan based on a more realistic set of assumptions.
- Harmonize the Philippine Energy policies with the country's international climate commitments.
- Initiate a planned gradual phase-out of fossil-fuels as the technologies and business models for renewables become viable.
- Give priority to 100% electrification of communities in a way that is both affordable and sustainable through energy efficiency and conservation and renewable energy deployment.
- Use an aggressive program in Energy Efficiency and Conservation and Renewable Energy as a jump off point for industrial diversification and development based on green investments and green jobs.
- Remove existing barriers to the deployment of solar, wind and other renewables.

⁴⁸ World Energy Council. "World Energy Insights Brief 2019: Global Energy Scenarios Comparison Review". 2019.
<https://www.worldenergy.org/assets/downloads/WEInsights-Brief-Global-Energy-Scenarios-Comparison-Review-R02.pdf>

- Include renewables among priority industries that will receive government support.
- Review the government's coal-based baseload projects in the pipeline. Meet all new demands with renewables.
- Renewable energy is a sunrise industry and provides countries with an opportunity to invite green investments and create green jobs. They also provide an opportunity to build other industries around them and create new business ecosystems around climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. A wrong government/private sector decision on the fossil-fuel vs. renewables options may saddle the country with stranded assets, even higher electricity rates in the future, and lost opportunities by taking the wrong road.

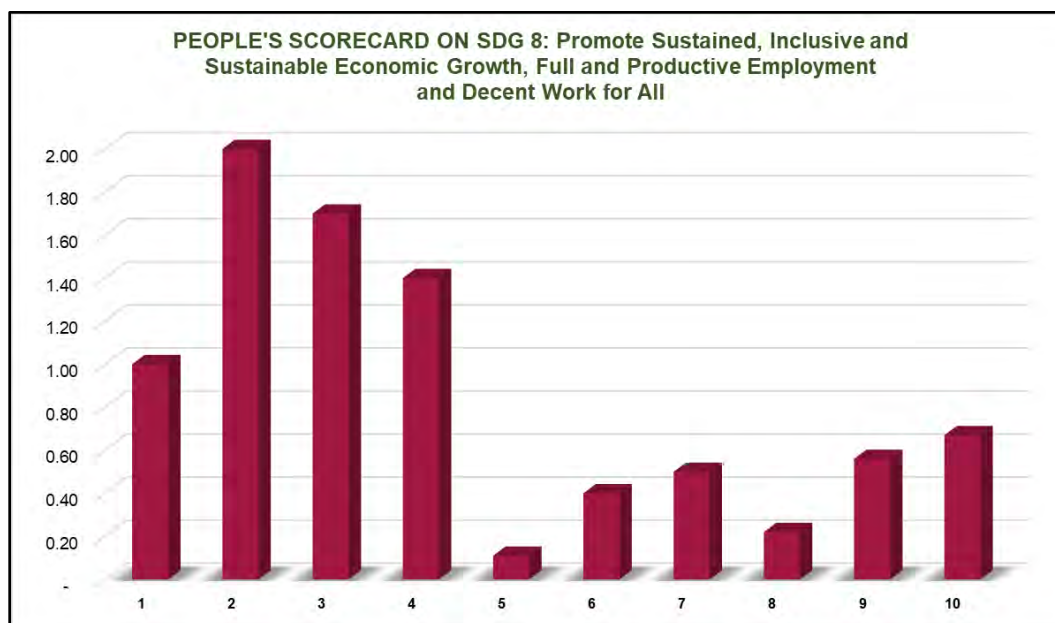
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Goal 8. Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of policy and legal framework for SDG 8 had the highest mean score at 2.00, while implementation at the local level ranked lowest with a mean score of 0.11.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.00
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	2.00
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.70
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.40
5.	Implementation at Local Level	0.11
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.40
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.50
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.22
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.56
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	0.67

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- The NEDA launched the *AmBisyon Natin 2040* initiative in 2015. Through surveys and focus group discussions, NEDA reached out to citizens, especially youth, to understand how Filipinos envision national development in the long term.⁴⁹ The results of this study served as the basis for NEDA to conclude that what Filipinos aspire to in 2040 is achieving a strongly rooted, comfortable, and secure life.⁵⁰
- The policy framework is based on the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 with the NEDA at the helm. This was cascaded to the local level through Executive Order No. 27 (2017). With this, SDG should be mainstreamed by all national agencies, including the Department of Interior and Local Government, which should cascade it to the Local Government Units (LGUs) with technical /financial assistance.
- The national government budget is the most significant and influential financing source, along with the LGU's IRA in light of the recent implementation of the Mandanas Ruling.
- **Private and Foreign Investments**
 - The Philippines assigns an important role to the private sector in pursuing economic growth and national development. Article II, section 20 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution declares that the "State recognizes the indispensable role of the private sector, encourages private enterprise, and provides incentives to needed investments."⁵¹
 - Duterte signed last March 2, 2022, Republic Act 11647, which aims to promote foreign investments by amending the Foreign Investments Act of 1991. The new law would now allow foreign investments in more areas formerly reserved for Filipinos. Even the reservation on entry into micro and small domestic enterprises has been eased by lowering the paid in equity capital requirement from \$500,000 in the old law to \$200,000.
 - The Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act (CREATE) was enacted in March 2021. That law reduced corporate income tax rates from 30 to 25 percent and streamlined fiscal incentives to investment. The corporate income tax rates for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) were pushed down even lower, to 20 percent. The Department of Finance (DOF), which dubbed the tax reform law the "largest fiscal stimulus program for

⁴⁹ NEDA, "AmBisyon Natin 2040: A Long-Term Vision for the Philippines" (Pasig City: NEDA, 2016 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam

⁵⁰ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

⁵¹ Ibid.

enterprises in the country's history," is hopeful that CREATE will improve the country's ability to attract investments.⁵²

- **COVID-19 Pandemic**

- Enjoying impressive economic growth in the past two decades by its own historical standards, the Philippines was on the cusp of becoming an upper-middle-income country when the COVID-19 pandemic struck in the first quarter of 2020.⁵³
- The economic recession due to COVID-19 led to a dramatic 40 percent drop in expected public revenues for 2020, causing the deficit to more than double. The increase in public spending in response to COVID-19 has been minimal, with the *Bayanihan* to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan II) allotting only \$2.8 billion in supplemental appropriations.⁵⁴
- The Philippine economy contracted by 9.5 percent in 2020, although the decline slowed from -16.9 percent in the second quarter to -8.3 percent in the fourth quarter. It is becoming clearer that economic recovery will be more U-shaped than V-shaped, even as some pundits expect it to regain its lost vitality in late 2022 at the earliest. In any case, the pandemic has had a profound impact on how growth and development are to be pursued from this point forward. Enterprises are forced to rethink their business models as industries experience dramatic shifts in their economic importance. Labor was particularly affected: unemployment peaked at 17.6 percent in April 2020 and eased down to 8.7 percent in October 2020, where it has remained as of January 2021. However, several sectors such as transportation, tourism, and leisure continue to have limited operations. Underemployment remains at 16 percent in January 2021 after reaching 18.9 percent in April 2020.⁵⁵
- Some economists predict not a V-shaped or U-shaped recovery, but a K-shaped one. They anticipate that the growth trajectories of different segments of the economy post-COVID-19 will follow diverging paths. The pandemic clearly does not affect the various economic sectors equally. Several industries are expected to recover quickly and perform well thereafter, while other industries will continue to decline. For instance, the profitability of technology, online retail, and digital financial services have skyrocketed during the pandemic while the travel, tourism, and entertainment industries have seen a prolonged contraction.⁹ This asymmetric impact will worsen inequality, especially in the Philippines,

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

where a significant proportion of workers earning a living wage or lower are employed in services that are adversely affected by the pandemic.⁵⁶

- The economic recession due to COVID-19 has led to a dramatic fall in public revenues, prompting the government to accelerate borrowing. Program and project loans for 2020 tripled from the amounts initially projected before COVID-19. The severe restrictions imposed by the government had a drastic effect on the economy.⁵⁷ The NCR and the central and southern Luzon regions, where national economic activity is highly concentrated, went through the longest period under the strictest quarantine category. Businesses were allowed to open gradually starting in June 2020 but still do not operate at full capacity anywhere in the country. Large mass gatherings were still prohibited nationwide as of January 2021.⁵⁸
- During the COVID-19 lockdowns, to mitigate the effects of business closures and loss of jobs, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has been tasked with issuing an emergency cash subsidy called the Social Amelioration Program (SAP), which includes 4Ps beneficiaries. The SAP program was expected to distribute cash aid of \$100–160 for two months and in tranches, prioritizing poor households. By April 2020 the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) had released half of the \$4 billion pledged by the government to some 18 million poor households.⁴⁶⁵⁹

- **Migrant Workers**

- The country's growth rates in 2020 are impressive. What has largely been invisible in the official narrative is that the impressive growth rate is significantly driven by household consumption fueled by large-scale remittance inflows from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to the tune of US\$25 to 30 million a year. These OFWs comprise about eleven percent of the population (1) Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos.⁶⁰
- Cognizant of the vulnerabilities of Filipino migrant workers and their families, the government enacted laws, developed programs and services and set up structures that focus on migration to ensure protection for migrant workers at all stages of the migration cycle.
- Job specific policies as well as gendered programs such as the Household Service Workers Policy Reform package for migrant domestic workers including

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ University of the Philippines COVID-19 Pandemic Response Team, "Modified Community Quarantine beyond April 30: Analysis and Recommendations," 13 April 2020, <https://up.edu.ph/modifiedcommunity-quarantine-beyond-april-30-analysis-and-recommendations/> as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

⁵⁸ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos: As of December 2013; Commission of Filipino Overseas; ; <http://www.cfo.gov.ph/images/stories/pdf/StockEstimate2013.pdf> 2) McKenzie; The Unlucky Country: The Republic of the Philippines in the 21st Century; page 138 as cited in Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

bilateral agreements/ memorandum of understanding with countries of destination are forged. The Philippines perhaps is the only country of origin that has forged the greatest number of bilateral labor agreements for its land-based and sea-based workers.

- In terms of representation, the Philippines is the only country perhaps in the world where the migrant sector is represented in tripartite bodies of the Labor Department such as the Decent Work Advisory Committee and the National Tripartite Industrial Peace Council.
- To ensure their political participation, the Overseas Absentee Voting act was enacted in 2003 to give back the right of suffrage to overseas Filipinos so they can participate in national elections in the Philippines.
- The Philippines is also commended for its information and education programs for migrants such as the CPDEP (Comprehensive Pre-departure education program), pre-employment orientation seminar, pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) and post-arrival orientation seminar (PAOS). A law was just enacted for the production and distribution of an OFW Handbook.
- Currently the Philippine government extends its social protection programs to migrant workers (Philhealth, Pag-Ibig, SSS). But migrant workers pay the full contribution to these programs (except sea-based workers).
- The Philippines will create a single Department that will serve as the umbrella department to respond to any and all concerns of Filipinos overseas and their families. Consequently, various existing migration agencies will be abolished.

• MSMEs

- The Philippines trails behind its neighbors when it comes to financing for its MSMEs. According to an ADB report, bank loans to MSMEs in 2019 was equivalent to 30.3% of Thailand's GDP, followed by Malaysia (18.5%), Singapore (15.1% [2018]), the Lao PDR (8.5%), Indonesia (7.0%), the Philippines (3.2%), and Myanmar (1.0% [2018]). In US dollar terms, Thailand's MSME lending was \$218 billion in 2019, followed by Indonesia (\$80 billion), Malaysia (\$68 billion), Singapore (\$57 billion), the Philippines (\$12 billion), the Lao PDR (\$1.6 billion), and Myanmar (\$772 million) (ADB).
- There are inclusive business models involving marginalized sectors, however, credit assistance for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) remains inaccessible to workers in informal economies, which are mostly women. There is also a need for technical and financial assistance for organizing and making the MSMEs a legal entity.

- Allocation for MSME rose to at ₱2B-₱3B levels in 2017 onwards due to *the Pondo Para sa Pagbabago at Pag-asenso* Program (5P). Small Business Corporation allocated ₱100 million for financing services in 2014; financing facility for MSME increased substantially upon the implementation of the 5P starting in 2017 GAA amounting to ₱1 billion. For the 2019 GAA and 2020 Budget Law, the allocation for the program increased to ₱1.5 billion.
- *Listahanan* 2.0 data indicates that about 70 percent of persons with disabilities are not working.

CHALLENGES

- The new commitments under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) and trade agreements coupled with policies that ease restrictions on foreign investments constitute a one-two punch against small Filipino businesses, and the negative impact would inevitably affect their workers as well. MSMEs provide for more than 62 percent of jobs in the Philippines. The default policy now is to subject MSMEs to more foreign competition without the requisite level of support that would make them competitive.
- **Economic Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic**
 - The ability of the Philippine economy to reclaim its pre-COVID-19 growth momentum remains uncertain. Without rapid economic expansion, pursuing sustainable and inclusive development may prove to be even more difficult. Worse, previous gains might have already been reversed. Radical shifts in the economy within a short period of time have varying effects on the different income classes, likely exacerbating inequality and driving the hardest-hit households toward intergenerational poverty.⁶¹
 - Former socioeconomic planning secretary Solita Monsod pointed out that the reduction in corporate tax rates will deprive the government of much-needed resources to help people cope with COVID-19. Further, she noted that although MSMEs comprise 99.5 percent of the total number of establishments in the country (1,000,506), only 2 percent of them will benefit from CREATE, as the overwhelming majority of these businesses are not incorporated. Large enterprises, which make up the remaining 0.5 percent, are set to enjoy huge tax cuts. Monsod also expressed concern about whether enterprises will invest the estimated \$12 billion in forgone government revenue over the next five years in revitalizing their businesses and creating more jobs for Filipino workers, as the DOF assumes.^{36 62}

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

- The government's research agency, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), has noted that even with the SAP, about 2.8 million Filipinos will become poor as a result of the pandemic. Thus, there is a need to address the long-term impact of the pandemic on poverty. PIDS has estimated that poverty incidence will spike at between 15.5 and 17.5 percent in 2021.⁶³
 - There is huge unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This needs to be addressed, not only through subsidies and cash transfers, but through support to small and medium entrepreneurship.
 - The government continues to prioritize liberalization policies favoring foreign corporations instead of boosting local corporations as main drivers of post-COVID economic recovery. It seems opening up the economy to the entry of foreign corporations is the best this government can offer.

- **Agriculture**

- After thirty years of agrarian reform implementation in the post-Marcos era, vast tracts of land remain in the grip of private hands due to a stalled agrarian reform program. As of May 2019, DAR still has a whopping 600,000 hectares to be distributed to farmers under its agrarian reform program with only three years left under the current dispensation.⁶⁴
- The Government failed to increase the productivity and rural incomes of farmers, much less facilitate their access to innovative farming techniques as outlined in its Philippine Development Plan. Small farmers, tenants and agricultural workers are now left more and more at the mercy of market forces, with hardly any support from government as evidenced by its dismally low productivity levels and the sputtering of the agrarian reform program.⁶⁵
- The current policy initiatives of the government such as accelerated conversion of agricultural lands into industrial, commercial and residential estates and the rice tariffication law has meant the further marketization of agriculture to benefit big business, including those representing global capital.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ DAR website 2019 <http://www.dar.gov.ph/articles/news/101257> as cited in Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

⁶⁵ Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

⁶⁶ Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

- **Employment**

- As people in the country cannot generally afford to be unemployed, especially with no adequate social security or safety nets to fall back on, a huge chunk of the population has no choice but to work. Many of them are underemployed, engaged in precarious and vulnerable work, and can be found in both the formal and informal sectors.⁶⁷
- Given women have lower labor force participation rates, they are more likely to register in the informal sector, many of them working as unpaid family workers.⁶⁸

- **Migrant Workers**

- The Philippines has become a nation dependent on sending its people to work in other countries to keep its coffers full and keep the bodies and souls of Filipino families together. For as long as the country's growth rates remain significantly bloated due to the 'forced migration' of Filipinos working abroad, then GDP levels cannot, should not, be an indicator of development. In this regard, the 'source' of growth matters in determining the 'quality' of development.⁶⁹
- Filipino families are largely subsidized by foreign-denominated currencies converted into pesos, thanks to an OFW relative, has translated into the emergence of a growing middle-class with money to burn; consequently, oligarchic corporate networks have 'followed the money,' so to speak, by providing services such as in real estate, construction of malls, houses and condominiums, rentals and other economic activities that generally cater to this recently risen demographic, further cementing the observation that the Philippines is a consumption-driven economy (rather than investment-driven).⁷⁰
- The Philippines is approaching its 5th decade of overseas employment. It started in the 1970s with only tens of thousands of migrant workers. By 2006, the one million mark was breached and 10 years later, the number doubled to more than 2 million migrant workers or some 6,000 workers/ day.
- More than half of the migrant workers are in semi-skilled and low-skilled job categories –characterized by low wages and exclusion from social protection programs.

⁶⁷ Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

⁶⁸ Albert and Vizmanos 2018 as cited in Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

⁶⁹ Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

⁷⁰ Ibid.

- With the Philippine economy remaining underdeveloped, labor migration out of compulsion will continue in the years to come, despite developments in major countries of destination such as the Gulf States implementing more stringent measures to restrict entry of migrant workers. Moreover, countries of destination likewise experience the impact of prolonged economic crisis and thus compel both men and women in the households to find employment, and thus paves the way for a steady demand for domestic workers and caregivers whose situation we can predict to go from bad to worse as the households are not spared from the impact of the crises.
 - Notwithstanding these realities in the countries of destination, without viable decent job options in the Philippines, migrant workers will endure their living and working conditions for as long as they can until they can no longer postpone their eventual return.
 - Mass migration drains the Philippines of its own workforce, many of whom we invested in in terms of their education and training. The exodus of our competent health workers leaves us with an inferior health care delivery system; A similar trend goes for other professions in applied sciences who are much needed for our own development requirements.
 - "More than 20% of male migrant workers are 45 years and above and remain active OFWs; by the time they come back home for good, they will have difficulty finding jobs in the Philippines because of their age (despite the Anti-Age Discrimination Law in place);
 - Despite the presence of laws and government structures in place, violations of migrants' rights continue and persist. It could be for various reasons such as low level of awareness of their rights and the laws that express these rights; weak implementation of the laws; lack of monitoring mechanism; lack of coordination between and amongst agencies of government; lack of support and cooperation from countries of transit and destination.
 - GATS mode 4 is purposively for highly skilled workers only and does not ease immigration procedures for all other types of migrant workers; the same is true for JPEPA and related agreements where there are strict requirements for migrant workers.
- **MSMEs**
 - MSMEs, which account for 99.5 percent of all enterprises in the country, are constantly praised for their very important role in developing the Philippine economy, creating jobs and reducing poverty. Yet the default policy now is to subject these enterprises to more foreign competition without the requisite level of support that would make them competitive.

- Increased funding for 5Ps in 2017 onwards is a step in the right direction but still insubstantial if the country is to make a dent in moving most MSMEs into formality, increased business and financial stability.
- Shared Service Facility (SSF) is geared towards increasing the productivity of MSMEs that comprise the overwhelming majority of businesses in the country. Yet only a miniscule amount is provided: at its peak it received 1B in 2018 while the country's conditional cash transfer program has consistently received anywhere from P40 to 70B a year. This raises questions on why there is significant funding for social assistance but very little for productivity-enhancing schemes. Furthermore, since 2018, funding for SSF has been decreasing.
- Budget increase, while welcome, is insubstantial. This is because 99.6 % of all businesses in the Philippines come from this sector. So a budget of P4.17 M is way too small.
- There are laudable programs involving miniscule budgetary allocations. Considering that these can be considered productivity-enhancing investments targeting the poor working majority, significantly hiking public investment (to rival CCT at the very least) in these programs should be ensured.
- Why are banks regularly penalized for not faithfully adhering to the Magna Carta for MSMEs which dictate that 10% of a bank's portfolio go to MSME financing such that an amount of around P21M is actually raised?
- **Child Labour.** There is a need to continue and strengthen current efforts on the implementation of Philippine Program Against Child Labor (PPACL) with higher budget allocation and improved monitoring and evaluation to lift children out of child labor sooner than later.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **MSMEs**
 - Develop the state's 'activist' orientation so that it proactively intervenes to develop the country's domestic industries, including MSMEs, effectively regulates the private sector and upholds the rights of its people, especially poor and low-income groups, including the marginalized and socially excluded, and protects and promotes the environment.⁷¹
 - Need data on MSMEs that is easily available, including on budgetary allocations.

⁷¹ Ibid.

- Government should address the structural barriers that hamper MSMEs ability to access financing from the formal lending sector.
- Government needs to assess how the loans performed in enhancing the productivity and business and financial stability of the recipient programs.
- There is a need to emphasize social protection for workers as an essential part of the bottom-line.

• Trade Agreements

- Promote the political space and generate resources to help strengthen social movements, trade unions and civil society so that they can effectively tip the balance of power and ensure that policies and programs benefit most Filipinos who are poor and socially excluded.⁷²
- Formulate a Treaty among ASEAN members states (participated in by governments, the ASEAN Trade Union Council, the ASEAN Confederation of Employers, CSOs and international organizations –e.g., ILO, UN, OECD, etc.) to hold accountable the TNCs in the ASEAN region to comply with the international standards for human rights due diligence for responsible business conduct. These international standards are as follows: (a) The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; (b) The ILO's Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (ILO MNE Declaration); and (c) The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and related Due Diligence Guidance. This will ensure that TNCs will enforce the application of human rights (including labor rights) due diligence by all their companies wherever they operate as well as all their suppliers at different levels of the global supply chain. At the minimum, the following rights should be respected: (a) The right to a living wage and to a healthy and safe workplace; (b) The right to organize in trade unions and bargain collectively; (c) The prohibition of child labor and forced labor; and (d) The prohibition of discrimination against workers based on their gender, race, ethnicity, etc.
- Important elements to these include a sound industrial policy, sustainable agricultural policy, decent living wages and other rights at work, social protection, as well as promotion of social dialogue and workers organization.
- Trade agreements must be reviewed; the terms of reference changed drastically to ensure that the benefits of these redound to equality and empowerment of the population.

⁷² Ibid.

- Trade policies must be one that promote growth and development for all and prevent displacement and further impoverishment of the population. Otherwise, it can lead to forced migration/ migration out of compulsion.
- **Decent Work⁷³**
 - Catalyze the process of structural transformation through clean, green agro-industrialization and the creation and strengthening of decent work.
 - Significantly increase public investment in all sectors: agriculture, industry and manufacturing, services so that labor productivity growth significantly increases.
 - Ensure that the ‘fruits’ of labor productivity growth is equitably shared between capitalists and workers so that decent incomes, including benefits, are adequately provided.
 - Transition workers from informal to formal, from vulnerable to stable, and from precarious to regular employment across all three sectors so that decent work is achieved.
 - Significantly invest in clean and green technologies, renewable energy and reduce, if not ultimately phase out, dirty technology in the country’s production system
- **Women workers**
 - Government should provide wider options for decent job opportunities for women, outside of care work; a wide array of skills options should also be made available to women workers.
 - We must change the narrative of women’s work, whether in the country or overseas, so there is proper valuation and recognition of women’s work. Changing the narrative of women in the world of work includes embracing their being women with sexual and reproductive health rights as different from male workers.
 - Women workers’ voices, participation and agency must be promoted and respected especially in crafting policies that impact on them; They must not be seen as mere recipients of government programs and services but as critical stakeholder in migration governance.

⁷³ Ibid.

- **Migrant Workers**

- To break the vicious cycle of (forced) migration, a sound sustainable return and reintegration program should be developed and made available to returning workers. But this can only thrive in an environment where our national economy thrives.
- In the short and medium term, the unilateral extension of social protection programs to all migrant workers is good. But government must continue efforts to advocate and negotiate with countries of destination so migrant workers can access social protection programs.
- Where migrant workers are already included, for Philippine government to facilitate portability and totalization of social security contributions through the forging of social security agreements (SSAs)
- For return and reintegration – the National Reintegration Center for OFWS should convene consultations amongst returned and active OFWs for ideas on sustainable reintegration programs and projects.
- Government must conduct a performance and finance audit of all migration agencies to rationalize their abolition and to serve as basis for the creation of the new Department. For effective implementation, monitoring mechanisms must be put in place. Adequate human and financial resources must be allocated in a timely manner. Periodic assessment and evaluation must be conducted in a transparent manner.

- **Children⁷⁴**

- More livelihood programs for parents and more scholarships to support children and not force them to work to sustain their education.
- As long as it is not forced and they work after school hours, children 15 and above should be provided a safe work environment so there should be stricter implementation of laws on this.
- There should be career assessment, and studies on job trends and Skills learned in school should match the jobs needed by companies.
- Strengthen 4Ps by improving it's monitoring system, and more accountability platforms.
- Children should be consulted about the changes in laws affecting them.

⁷⁴ Save the Children, 2019 as cited in Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

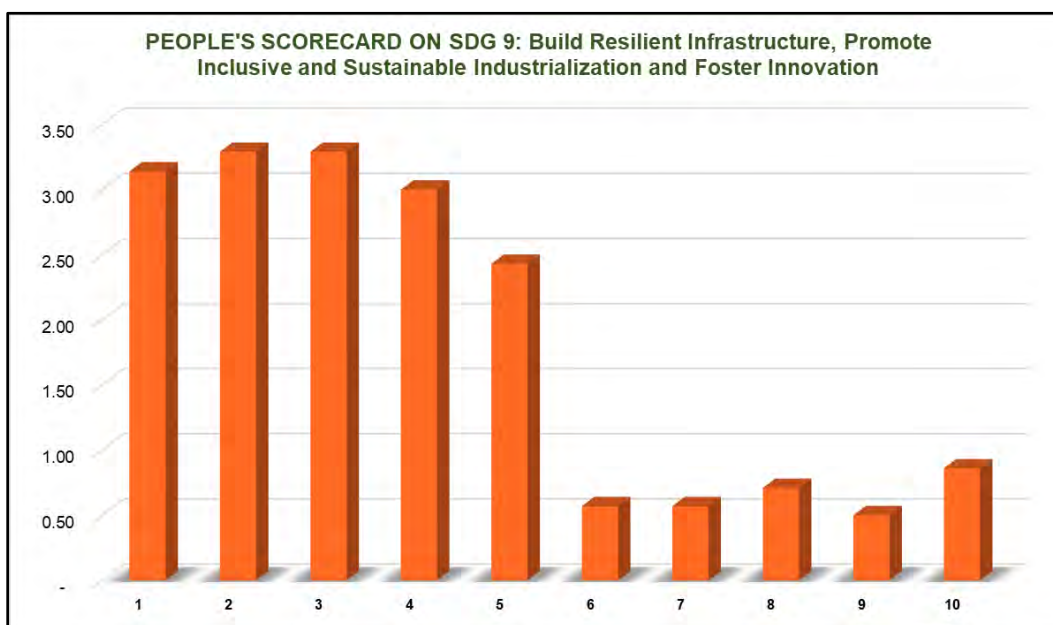
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Goal 9. Build Resilient Infrastructure, Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization and Foster Innovation

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

SDG 9 scored highest in terms of the “availability of policy and legal framework” and support from government agencies” with mean scores of 3.29. Meanwhile, multistakeholder partnerships ranked lowest with a mean score of .50.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	3.14
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	3.29
3.	Support from Government Agencies	3.29
4.	Implementation at National Level	3.00
5.	Implementation at Local Level	2.43
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.57
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.57
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.71
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.50
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	0.86

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- The government embarked on the *Build, Build, Build (BBB)* program, which seeks to accelerate infrastructure spending to 7.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of President Duterte's term of office in 2022.⁷⁵ Before the *Build, Build, Build (BBB)* program, greatly needed investments in infrastructure have been largely neglected since the 1980s, as the Philippines grappled with one fiscal and financial crisis after another until the late 2000s.⁷⁶
- The Department of Trade and Industry established the Competitiveness and Innovation Group to implement the Inclusive Innovation Industrial Strategy (i 3S), which puts innovation and targeting leading and priority economic sectors as the heart of the country's new industrial policy. To achieve manufacturing resurgence and industry roadmaps, initiatives in establishing an inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem in collaboration with the private sector and academe is underway. The Philippine Inclusive Filipinnovation and Entrepreneurship Roadmap has been conceived and has identified public vehicles, boat and shipbuilding and higher value agricultural crops as some of the sectors to target. These efforts should be supported by all sectors including the international trade and financial sectors.
- The transport sector is a clear priority for ODA funding to the Philippines year on year. One-fifth of total ODA disbursements from 2009 to 2018 were allocated to transportation, with funding averaging \$US166 million a year. Three-quarters of funding was from Japan. In most years, it tops the list of sectors in terms of ODA disbursements.⁷⁷
- Convergence budgeting classification was introduced in 2017. Ten (10) departments and other executive offices received allocations for the Manufacturing Resurgence/Revival Program (MRP), which is one of the many convergence programs of the government. With this, the Manufacturing Revival Program (MRP) integrated into various agencies, such as the DA, DOE, DILG, DOLE, DND, DOST, DSWD, DOT, DOTr, DOT.

CHALLENGES

- Most infrastructure projects in recent decades were foreign assisted, emphasizing the role of ODA as a stable source of development funding for the Philippines.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

- Although public-private partnerships (PPPs) play a major role in financing BBB, the program remains heavily reliant on ODA, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 29 percent of the \$86 billion cost of approved projects is planned to be funded through this scheme. ODA was slated to fund 49 percent of the total amount, while the remaining 22 percent would be funded from government coffers.⁷⁹
- Snags in implementation of BBB have caused the program to proceed slowly since even before the pandemic. For instance, the master list of projects had to be modified as some of the planned big projects—which eventually turned out to be infeasible—were replaced with smaller, more doable ones.⁸⁰ Further, in 2019 Congress set the annual budget for capital outlay (\$14.07 billion) lower than what was proposed by the executive branch (\$15.52 billion).³⁹ The low rate of disbursement of BBB funds—less than half of total obligations on average from 2017 to 2019—by the two agencies mainly responsible for the program, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Transportation (DOTr), “signals slow, inefficient project implementation.”⁸¹
- Digital innovations are corporate-controlled and corporate-driven.
- It is most likely that the MRP budget is embedded across specific budget line items of the relevant agencies, but unfortunately, the details are not disclosed in the budget documents. There is no clear budget line items for the MRP budget
- The neo-liberal development framework frustrated the country’s national industrialization, leaving Philippine manufacturing and agriculture sectors underdeveloped. It remains a labor exporting country unable to generate meaningful jobs. It depends on imported goods for its food security as its resources are plundered by big local and foreign corporations. Farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, urban poor communities are driven out of their sources of livelihoods and abodes to accommodate projects and businesses that discriminate against their right to development and governance.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- Promotion of the political space and generation of resources to help strengthen social movements, trade unions and civil society so that they can effectively tip the balance of power and ensure that policies and programs benefit the majority of Filipinos who are poor and socially excluded.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Z. Suzara, R. Mangilit, J. Punongbayan, L. Abad, and L. Villanueva, “Analysis: Why We Can’t Build, Build, Build Our Way out of This Pandemic,” Rappler, 14 May 2020 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

⁸¹ J. Acheron, “(Analysis) Challenges Facing Social Amelioration for the Coronavirus,” Rappler, 2 April 2020 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

⁸² Ibid.

- Advocacy towards formulation of a Treaty among ASEAN member states to hold accountable the TNCs in the Region to comply with the international standards for human rights and due diligence for responsible business conduct.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve the quality and outreach of education at all levels with a view to building a medium to high skilled workforce that can undertake industrial upgrading, diversification, and innovation.
- Promote technology innovation as a public good. Pricing and access to digital technologies must be regulated by the government to make them widely available especially for education.⁸³
- Government partnerships with the private sector in R & D usually involve a single enterprise, which tends to slow down, if not limit technology transfer across industry. Industry associations need to be strengthened as innovation hubs.
- There is a need for the DBM and concerned agencies to be more transparent by providing a rundown of the relevant budget line items and the corresponding allocations in the Budget and Expenditures and Sources
- DSWD and DOT should have budgetary allocations related to the Manufacturing Revival Program given that their institutional mandates lie elsewhere (social protection and tourism, respectively)
- **Industrial Policy**
 - Industrial policy should be the main development strategy to establish efficient, beneficial firms that generate positive multiplier effects throughout the economy.
 - The special and differential treatment (SDT) agreed upon in WTO and other regional trade agreements should be renegotiated given the latest economic theories that show industrial policy is a necessary, legitimate and doable goal for developing countries.
- **Innovation**
 - Even if developed countries are resistant, developing countries' governments should proceed with efforts to collaborate with private industry, academe, science and technology sector, the labor and legal sectors to set

⁸³ Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

up institutionalized mechanisms to identify and develop priority economic sectors. These efforts affect both economic and political reforms to ensure positive development outcomes. Subsidies, R&D and S&T initiatives, technical, financial, and legal support should be given to priority key sectors.

- Many modernization programs consist of promoting the adoption of imported technology, beyond the means and capacity of small producers. There is a need to provide microcredit schemes based on the earning capacity of small producers and micro players as well as to provide support to strengthen organizing efforts of end-users to ensure scale economies.
- "The growth of the micro, small, and medium enterprises in the era of greater trade liberalization will depend on their access to research and development (R&D) resources and activities. R&D informed by the current capacities of the domestic industry as well as concrete local conditions, needs and tastes of end-users will help promote competitiveness of MSMEs, enabling them to capture a sizable segment of the domestic market.
- Universities have a vast reserve of research and development outputs that have yet to be tapped for the use of domestic industries. There is a need to provide funding support for technology transfer that will harness the full potential of laboratory outputs toward strengthening the manufacturing sector.
- Promote technology innovation as a public good. Government partnerships with the private sector in R & D usually involve a single enterprise, which tends to slow down, if not limit technology transfer across industry. Industry associations need to be strengthened as innovation hubs.
- There is a need to base technological innovations on sound appropriate technology choices for sustainable development. Simple, modern and intermediate technologies for agricultural production and climate resiliency must be pursued in rural agricultural areas in order to protect the environment (e.g., solar powered facilities, water systems, etc.) and ensure sustainability.
- Pricing and access to digital technologies must be regulated by the government to make them widely available especially for education. Technology should not replace humans (AI) and must not be dehumanizing.
- Improve the quality and outreach of education at all levels with a view to building a medium to high skilled workforce that can undertake industrial upgrading, diversification, and innovation;⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

- **Manufacturing Sector**

- While part of the mandate of many agencies is to support the manufacturing sector, the logical agencies for this are DTI (primarily), DA, DOE, DOLE , DOST, DOTr, DILG and DND, it is extremely curious that DSWD and DOT should be part of the convergence. This is the focus of the MRP should be on productivity enhancing activities through industrial upgrading, diversification, and innovation. Tourism and social assistance and social protection programs are not within the main purview of the MRP.
- How does one explain the significant fluctuations in the MRP budget from P6.5 B in 2017 to P18.3 B in 2018, then a decline to 11.4 B in 2019 and to no recorded budget in 2020? This speaks to inadequate budgetary allocation with inconsistency in budget levels.
- There is a need for the DBM and concerned agencies to be more transparent by providing a rundown of the relevant budget line items and the corresponding allocations in the Budget and Expenditures and Sources of Financing. It is unclear how much exactly goes to the productivity-enhancing component of the MRP that involves industrial upgrading, diversification, and innovation for domestic industries.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Goal 10. Reduce Inequality Within and Among Countries

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of policy and legal framework for SDG 10 had the highest mean score at 1.90. Meanwhile, both “monitoring, evaluation and reporting” and “public awareness and capacity building” ranked lowest with a mean score of -0.20.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.00
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	1.90
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.60
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.30
5.	Implementation at Local Level	1.00
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	-0.20
7.	Transparency and Accountability	-0.10
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	-0.20
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	0.20

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- It was only under the Duterte Administration that inequality-reducing measures were identified as a major strategic outcome or pillar in the country's five-year development plan. Along this line, strategies were outlined to expand economic opportunities in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries (AFF) sector—create more jobs and businesses in the industry and services (I&S) sector; accelerate human capital development by reducing vulnerability of individuals and families and to build safe and secure communities.⁸⁵
- The Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022 was anchored on the following vision statement: *By 2040, the Philippines is a prosperous middle-class society where no one is poor. People live long and healthy lives and are smart and innovative. The country is a high-trust society where families thrive in vibrant, culturally diverse, and resilient communities.*⁸⁶
- In the Philippines only the richest 30 percent of the population are net savers—that is, their incomes are higher than their expenditures on average—and therefore potentially can lend money to the government. The CREATE Law is expected to boost the savings of the rich even further. Its revenue-eroding measures, along with increasing debt servicing, may also lead to reduced public spending on agricultural development and social services, which have never been among the government's top priorities, to the detriment of the poor, who depend on these investments.⁸⁷
- During the pandemic, other regions received smaller shares of expenditures of the 2020 COVID-19 budget than did NCR. Although the nationwide budgets for the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), DOH, and Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) increased by at least 50 percent, the budgets of DepEd, DA, and DSWD sharply declined. The nationwide budgets of DepEd, DA, and DSWD decreased by \$544 million, \$355 million, and \$133 million, respectively. Meanwhile, nationwide appropriations for DOH, DOLE, and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) increased by \$618 million, \$126 million, and \$85 million, respectively.⁸⁸
- Under Bayanihan I, the DOLE received \$100 million to assist displaced overseas Filipino workers returning to the country and \$150 million to fund financial assistance programs for workers affected by the pandemic.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ National Economic Development Authority, Philippine Development Plan: 2017-2022 Abridged version; 2017; pages 12, 19-28 as cited in the SDG Spotlight Report 2020

⁸⁶ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

- In the COVID-19 pandemic national budget (2020), all regions other than the NCR and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) posted negative growth rates in allocations from the GAA (2020). The increase in the nationwide and region-specific budgets of DILG, except for its central, Region IX, and Region XII offices, was offset by the contraction of DepEd allocations in all regions besides the NCR and BARMM.⁹⁰
- The enactment of RA 11510 Institutionalizing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in Basic Education in December 2020 and RA 11650 Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education in March 2022 are major milestones in reducing inequalities. RA 11510 institutionalized a second chance for adults who did not complete their basic education so that they can get up-skilled and expand the jobs open to them.
- Since 2014, there are more women workers migrating for work than male workers. In 2018, the proportion was 55.8% women migrant workers. About 60% of them work as domestic workers. This is reinforced with the ageing of the world population creating a steady and high demand for care workers cum domestic workers.
- In the Philippines, informal employment is the norm. The share of the informally employed is estimated to be more than 80 percent of Filipino workers, of which 65 percent are in the informal sector (e.g. unincorporated or unregistered enterprises), and the rest are informally employed in the formal sector and in private households.
- The push to make the country more attractive to investors and lenders was made possible largely through the reduction of social expenditures while imposing regressive taxes.⁹¹
- When the country's HDI is adjusted for inequality, it is only 0.587, a whopping 18.2 percent drop from its non-adjusted rating.⁹² Taking inequality into account, the Philippines actually ranks toward the tail end of countries at the medium level of human development. Among Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia and Vietnam have comparable levels of IHDI to the Philippines. Interestingly, the country's IHDI is the same as the global average.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Rovik Obanil. (2021). From "Revival" to Reversal Where are we in 2021? Freedom from Debt Coalition.

⁹² United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports, 1990-2015, www.hdr.undp.org

(last accessed 1 May 2021) as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

⁹³ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

CHALLENGES

- Policymakers, academics and even some CSO members openly worry about poverty but the problem of glaring inequalities in the country generally remains unproblematized. There is, as is often the case, a sense that for as long as poverty is reduced, ‘then there should be no principled objection to the unrestricted gains of the very rich’ (UNRISD 2010, p.59).⁹⁴
- The high economic growth rates have generally benefitted those involved in the growth sectors of the economy while those de-linked from these sectors generally remain excluded from benefitting from the gains of growth and continue to languish in low-productive, low value work, especially in agriculture, industry, and a section in the services sector, thereby intensifying inequality.⁹⁵
- While the government has undertaken certain measures such as increased funding for human development with free tertiary education as a prime example, as subsequent sections will underscore, the desire to reduce inequality is generally not matched by adequate political action. More than that, other policy measures are seen to deepen poverty and inequality such as the imposition of a fuel tax as embedded in the recently enacted tax law pointing to policy incoherence in the fight against poverty and inequality.⁹⁶
- While the Department of Education (DepEd) at the national level has expressed its support for RA 1150 and RA 11650, the implementing rules and regulations of R 11510 still has to be written as it awaited the establishment of the Bureau of Alternative Education within DepEd which was only completed in November 2021.
- Inequalities between persons with disabilities and those without disabilities increased due to the lack of support from policy makers and government agencies to tackle root causes of inequalities. For instance, there is no budget to cover the cost of assistive devices. Also, modernization of jeepney does not include accessibility as design criteria in the modern design.
- Apart from certain policy statements to undertake agrarian reform and eliminating other disparities like gender and other dimensions of inequality, addressing this issue with decisive action, including serious redistributive reforms, seems a marginal concern across the country’s medium-term development plans across the last three decades, in spite widespread evidence of dramatically unequal distribution of income and wealth⁹⁷

⁹⁴ SDG Spotlight Report 2020

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Ibid

- Inequality remains a major concern. Midway into Agenda 2030, so many more millions of Filipinos are left behind. Systemic issues that hinder eradication of poverty and inequality remain unaddressed.
- Implementation of policies to end inequality is not sustained or not as aggressive as expected. Systemic issues and challenges are not addressed with the continuing implementation of decades-old market-driven and private profit-biased neo-liberal development framework hindering the eradication of poverty, discrimination, and inequality.
- **Vulnerable Sectors**
 - Excluded and de-linked from the growth bonanza are those in the agricultural sector, especially farmers and fisherfolk who remain in hand-to-mouth existence, and comprise the poorest section of the country's labor force.⁹⁸
 - The government's problematic method of counting the poor and unemployed and data generation for identifying the vulnerable sectors left millions more of the Filipino poor and vulnerable, uncounted, further aggravating social exclusion, inequality and poverty. Hence, workers' wages are low, jobs insecure and under precarious conditions; basic social services i.e., health, education, housing including adequate relief assistance remain mostly inaccessible to indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, elderly, women, children, youth, LGBTQ+, Bangsamoro, homeless and informal workers.
 - According to the Center for Women's Resources (CWR), the number of economically insecure Filipino women increased from 16 million in 2019 to an estimated 19.54 million in 2020.⁹⁹ Most working women are daily wage earners, and the pandemic lockdown reduced their wages below the minimum wage, reducing the capacity of working women and their families to cope with the pandemic.¹⁰⁰
 - With DepEd itself slow to implement RA 11510, the creation of community learning centers to house ALS classes has not begun. There is a need to intensify campaigns to increase public awareness on the need for adult learning and education in order to pressure local governments to prioritize it.

⁹⁸ Philippine Statistics Authority; Selected Statistics on Agriculture 2018, p.5; <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/Selected%20Statistics%20on%20Agriculture%202018.pdf> as cited in Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020.

⁹⁹ J. Ellao, "Nearly 20M Filipino Women Now 'Economically Insecure' – Research Group," Bulatlat, 2 March 2021 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

¹⁰⁰ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

• COVID-19 Impact

- Inequality worsened during the pandemic with continuing implementation of decades-old market-driven and private profit-biased neo-liberal development framework.
- The health crisis and economic crisis resulting from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic laid bare systemic challenges that have plagued our economic, social and environmental systems across generations. It has deepened poverty, discrimination, and inequality. We know that while almost all have been negatively impacted, there are vulnerable groups disproportionately affected persons with disabilities, the elderly, children, women, LGBTQ+, indigenous peoples, youth, farmers and fisherfolk, urban poor and informal workers, Bangsamoro people.
- The government's debt-ridden pandemic response reached Php12.8 trillion. But these were mostly for infrastructure projects under the build-build-build program largely benefitting private local and foreign corporations.
- A significant number of OFWs have been displaced during the pandemic — affecting at least 10% of the population dependent on remittances; an economy propped by these remittances as it fueled our consumption driven economy—raises questions about the sustainability, much less the desirability, of this type of development.

• Taxation

- The push to make the country more attractive to investors and lenders was made possible largely through the reduction of social expenditures while imposing regressive taxes.¹⁰¹
- Government fiscal measures to generate funds for public spending are borne by the poor through regressive tax measures while giving more incentives for the big business.
- The rich and above middle families continue to enjoy more benefits through tax free or low tax policies on their activities. The middle-income families are usually mandated to contribute through taxes but don't enjoy many benefits. The low-income families enjoy some form of benefits but it is not uniform or sustainable.

¹⁰¹ Obanil. (2021)

- The low interest, low inflation regime so jealously guarded by the country's economic technocrats came at the cost of austerity and additional taxes.¹⁰²

- **Wages**

- Informal employment is characterized by very low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of social security and collective representation.
- There is a surge in economic growth in some countries but huge social and economic imbalances globally, regionally and nationally. Wage workers have been squeezed by the Race to the Bottom promoted by the MNCs, who take advantage of “borderless” markets in search of cheap, malleable and non-unionized work force and investment areas hospitable to these corporate behemoths.
- The resulting squeeze on labor rights and wages have deepened social and economic inequality, weakened unionism and bargaining rights of workers in many countries of Asia.
- The all for skills upgrading has become pointless given the lack of balance in the supply and demand in a globalized economy, for example, parts of the GVCs for certain industries can be disrupted or relocated anytime.
- Labor precarity affects majority of the workers in both the formal and informal sectors.
- Most regular workers are paid the minimum wage, indicated by the average wage for the Philippines being very close to the minimum wage. This is also reinforced by the prevalent practice of job outsourcing.

- **Technological change, labor share, and inequality**

- Several studies (e.g., ILO 2016, Francisco et al. 2019) have established the vulnerability of Philippine waged workers to automation risks, with workers in call centers being replaced by AI software being the most well-known example. Francisco et al (2019), using the Frey-Osborne framework (2013), found that 67.9% of all employment in the country are in areas that are vulnerable to automation, with younger workers, lower-waged jobs, and more casual jobs being at higher risk.
- Using the Autor-Salomons Framework (2018), Castillo and Cruz (forthcoming) have generated preliminary evidence that general patterns of technological change and innovation among Philippine firms in recent years have served to displace the labor share of value-added (and thus income)

¹⁰² Ibid.

in favor of capital. This mirrors research at the global level by Autor and Salomons (2018) that automation, even when not labor-displacing, may have significant inequality effects through its impacts on the labor share of national income. Especially since the 2000s, this trend has become especially pronounced among OECD countries.

- **Women Migrant Workers**

- Women migrant workers are rendered more vulnerable because of the nature of their work as domestic workers and caregivers whose places of work are the private households of their employers. A big push factor or driver for women out-migration is their low level of labor force participation in the country, which plateaued at almost 50% maximum since the last few years because they were preoccupied with housework and taking care of their children.
- "More than half of women migrants do not have access to social protection abroad because they are not 'eligible' and/or have no access as 'low-skilled workers' or those in elementary occupation; the same goes for 10% of male OFWs who also fall under the elementary occupation category.
- As workers in the elementary occupation, they are low waged and without social protection. They will keep working abroad for as long as they can until they can no longer put off their eventual return to the country.
- As regards women migrants, 67% of them between the age of 25-39 years old continue to work overseas. They come back home for good earlier than their male counterparts, with a significant number coming home distressed and unable to complete their contracts.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- Funds for the establishment of Alternative Learning Centers were included in the 2022 national budget only because of the strong pressure exerted by CSO groups. Local governments must now be convinced to look for land on which such centers can be built or for structures that can be converted for use as community learning centers.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Systemic Challenges**

- In the near term, the priority should be on rehabilitating the economy by building the capacity of business enterprises and retooling and retraining the labor sector. After revitalizing the economy, the government should refocus its attention and continue its reforms to taxation and revenue administration to ensure that it has enough resources to sustain its development efforts. Emphasis should be given to progressive tax policies rather than regressive and less transparent indirect taxes, as inequality remains a major hindrance to achieving inclusive development and poverty alleviation. Donor countries and institutions should support these interventions to allow the Philippines to become once again an able partner in pursuing global prosperity.¹⁰³
- There is a need to strengthen/adopt a people-centered, human rights-based development framework.
- Correctly tax those who have significantly benefited from the growth within the last decade by improving tax administration, address tax evasion and avoidance so that additional public revenues are generated; suspend regressive taxation (e.g., fuel tax) borne by the poor and low-income groups.

- **Social Service for Vulnerable Sectors**

- Provide universal quality social services that are affordable and accessible education, health, housing and in the provision of water and sanitation and target hard-to-reach groups, especially those in far-flung, remote, and upland areas.
- For indigenous peoples, Muslims, and other diverse groups, employ culturally appropriate development approaches in the provision of their needs.¹⁰⁴
- For IPs as well as for Persons with Disabilities, the elderly, children and the youth, women, and other socially excluded and discriminated groups, ensure participatory approaches in the design, implementation and monitoring of programs which can enhance their well-being and productivity.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

¹⁰⁴ Spotlight Report on the SDGs, 2020

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

- Re-orient social protection from its residual policy framework and link it to a broader developmental agenda that is transformative, and which upholds universal social policy. In this light, promote the progressive version of the universal social protection floor and work closely with various citizens' movements in the country and abroad, government agencies, and the International Labor Organization (ILO).¹⁰⁶

- **Agriculture**

- Significantly increase public investments in agriculture (which includes fishing and forestry) and focus on increasing the productivity and incomes of farmers and fisherfolk.¹⁰⁷
- Complete agrarian reform in Private Agricultural Lands (PAL) and significantly increase public investment in support services so that agrarian reform beneficiaries.
 - (ARBs) can adequately earn from their newly acquired land. This will also stem the widespread practice of ARBs re-selling their land due to lack of government support to make their lands productive.¹⁰⁸
- Stop the rampant practice of agricultural land conversion to industrial, commercial, and residential estates. Instead, the government should come up with a National Land Use Plan that provides a premium to ensure the country's food security/sovereignty and consider sustainable development principles in the use of the country's land and other resources.¹⁰⁹
- Decisively address the lop-sided character of Agricultural Venture Agreements (AVAs) where farmers are generally disadvantaged. To this end, the government should tap an independent and competent research entity to assess DAR's AVA program and make the necessary recommendations with a view to ensuring that famers equally benefit from any joint partnership with the private sector.¹¹⁰

- **Labour policies**

- Review the wide coverage of exemptions from minimum wage legislations.
- Pursue strategies that would facilitate the transition from informal employment to formal employment – e.g. (b.1) strengthen the enforcement of Domestic Workers Act enacted in 2013 which provide protection to

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

domestic workers against low wages; very long work hours, abuse, and slavery; (b.2) review the bills on the Magna Carta of Workers in the Informal Economy and advocate for its enactment into law.

- Strengthen partnerships between CSOs and concerned government agencies (DSWD, DTI, DILG, DOST, TESDA, etc.) to organize informal workers into viable and more productive cooperatives or enterprises.
- Strengthen and capacitate trade unions and labor groups to engage in industry-level collective bargaining. If wages are set through a collective bargaining agreement at the industry level – e.g., janitorial services industry; nursing industry; security personnel industry, then this would minimize any abusive use of market power by employers to reduce wages towards poverty levels.
- There needs to be a stronger policy thrust on social protection and unemployment insurance, given the pervasive character of automation risks.
- The Philippine government and UNCTAD to champion the adoption of international social protection floors as a necessary remedial measure for mitigating the risks of employment displacement. Like the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, UNCTAD deliberations should reflect commitments for a 'global compact' on enhancing social protection initiatives worldwide, which may include the provision of universal basic income measures (3) The Philippine government has made major strides towards promoting skills development and as well as establishing a government-business-academe innovation ecosystem, but the quality of such efforts needs to be further enhanced, especially at the local government level. UNCTAD could encourage such efforts by endorsing and supporting bilateral and multilateral efforts to improve skills development mechanisms in developing countries.

- **Innovation / technologies**

- The findings of Castillo and Cruz suggest that the DTI's I³S strategy needs to not only promote an innovation ecosystem, but to have industrial policy targets dedicated to the expansion of sectors where new work tasks are likely to be generated for labor vis-a-vis emerging technologies (e.g., data analytics). This is the main measure needed to ensure that the labor share of value-added and income does not deteriorate further.
- As with broader concerns on automation and employment displacement, the need for creating new tasks further underscores the necessity of robust skills development mechanisms, and bilateral/multilateral initiatives for supporting these.

- **Women Workers**

- Government should provide wider options for decent job opportunities for women, outside of care work; a wide array of skills options should also be made available to women workers.
- We must change the narrative of women's work, whether in the country or overseas, so there is proper valuation and recognition of women's work. Changing the narrative of women in the world of work includes embracing their being women with sexual and reproductive health rights as different from male workers.
- Women workers' voices, participation and agency must be promoted and respected especially in crafting policies that impact on them; They must not be seen as mere recipients of government programs and services but as critical stakeholders in migration governance.

- **Migrant Workers**

- Government should prioritize the creation of decent job opportunities in the country for male, female, and young workers. This is the only way that labor migration will be one of free choice and not out of compulsion so that our migrant workers are not put in harms' way.
- In the short and medium term, the unilateral extension of social protection programs to all migrant workers is good. But the government must continue efforts to advocate and negotiate with countries of destination so migrant workers can access social protection programs.
- Where migrant workers are already included, for Philippine government to facilitate portability and totalization of social security contributions through the forging of social security agreements (SSAs).

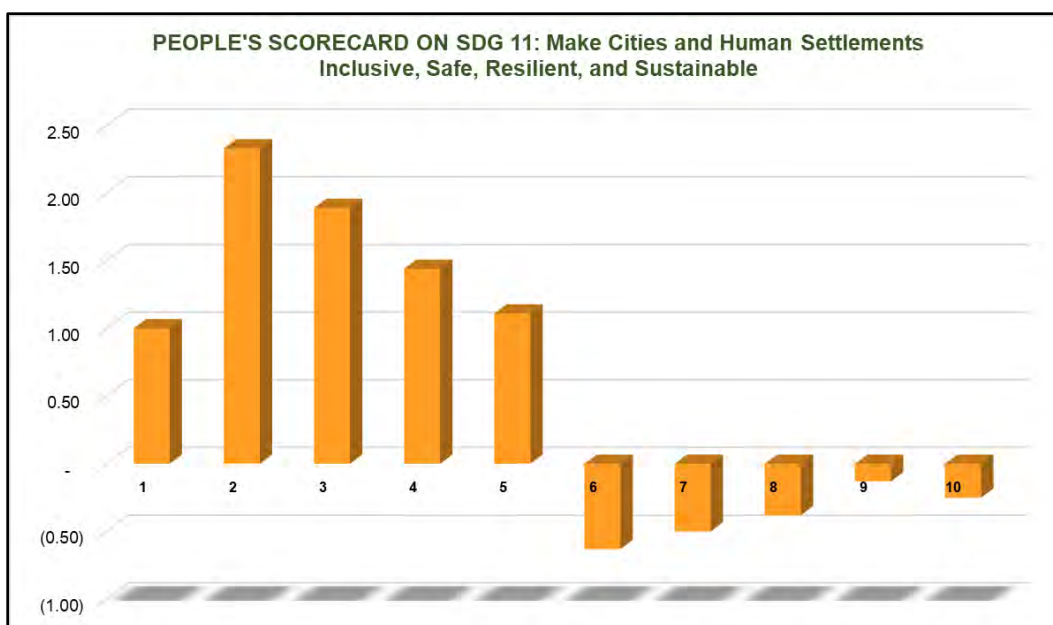
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Goal 11. Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

SDG 11 scored highest in terms of the “availability of policy and legal framework” with mean scores of 2.33. Meanwhile, “monitoring, evaluation and reporting” ranked lowest with a mean score of -0.63.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.00
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	2.33
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.89
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.44
5.	Implementation at Local Level	1.11
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	-0.63
7.	Transparency and Accountability	-0.50
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	-0.38
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	-0.13
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	-0.25

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- The conversation around sustainable cities and communities has revolved mainly around climate change mitigation and disaster risk reduction and mitigation.
- Philippine cities lack parks and open spaces for children to play and young people to congregate in safety. There is a need to include development planning to ensure that cities and communities are child- and family-friendly.
- Cities are the most well-resourced amongst LGUs. They are also the most densely populated areas and where the problems of housing, transport are most felt.
- As evidenced by the struggle of commuters and pedestrians daily, what the transportation sector has invested so far are big ticket car-centric projects than projects that move people.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need to focus on the needs of the working class in city planning. This includes an efficient public transportation system, decent living standards including affordable energy, clean water and sanitation, and disaster risk reduction and mitigation plans.

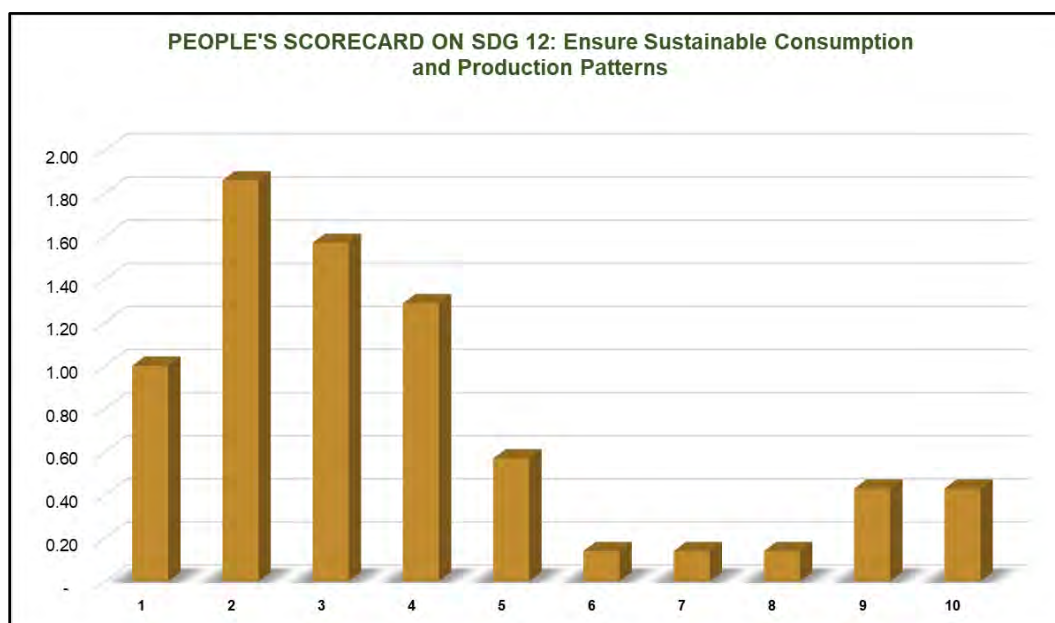
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Goal 12. Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of “policy and legal framework” and “national action plan, SDG strategy and budget” for SDG 12 had the highest mean score at 1.86. Meanwhile, “monitoring, evaluation and reporting”, “transparency and accountability”, and “public awareness and capacity building” all garnered a mean score of .14.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.00
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	1.86
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.57
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.29
5.	Implementation at Local Level	0.57
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.14
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.14
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.14
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.43
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	0.43

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- Public investment on sectors like agriculture remain to be low and dependent on foreign capital. There is also a question on who benefits from the policies because small, medium, and micro businesses are struggling in accessing capital or any form of government assistance or benefits.
- The passage of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) has reduced the NFA's function to domestic procurement and buffer stocking. According to the manifesto of farmers and food sovereignty advocates: "The law not only "tariffed" rice at a rate that unfairly caused huge losses in farmers' incomes. It also unilaterally liberalized the rice industry by removing almost all major government controls over rice imports and domestic trade.
- Since January 2019, over 3 million tons of recorded imported rice entered the country, most of them following the enactment of the RTL. This is more than double the import requirements of the country and has made the Philippines the world's top rice importer this year."
- Data shows around a 33% drop in prices and farmers' income, which in effect has meant taking away Php19 billion from the pockets of small farmers at annual palay production at 19 million tons. The farmers estimated total losses for 2019 alone could reach Php140 billion, or Php30,000 per hectare. This is more than 10 times the damage wrought by Typhoon Yolanda to the agriculture sector in 2013, and it is all man-made.
- The RTL is not without safeguards. Embedded in the law is the special and general safeguards measure which would allow the government to adjust tariffs to protect farmers should imports go haywire. The Agriculture Secretary can, *mutuo proprio* invoke the special safeguards measure to raise tariffs up to 1/3 of the existing tariff rates.
- There is an *Organic Agriculture Act*, but there is the promotion of the genetically modified (GM) technology through Golden Rice and BT *Talong*.
- The country is reliant on extractive industries, as evidenced by the non-passage of the Alternative Mining and Resource Bill. However, advocacies are gaining ground with the recent renewal of South Cotabato's commitment against Open Pit Mining and the resolution in the Marcopper case in Marinduque.
- Organic agriculture is being promoted alongside chemical farming or conventional farming. This is clearly a progress and a regression at the same time.
- The enactment of the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law came 20 years after the last comprehensive tax reform program was ratified in 1997. The

new revenue law updated income tax rates, broadened the tax base, simplified the computation and administration of several taxes, and indexed consumption tax rates to inflation. Several critics pointed out, however, that the tax reform package led to a steeper rise in commodity prices, likely making it more difficult for the poor to improve their quality of life.¹¹¹

- The government is promoting sustainable consumption and production by discouraging the use of plastics and encouraging reusable and recyclable bags for consumers, especially in urban areas.
- Localized implementation of policies to promote responsible consumption and production is uneven or non-existent.

CHALLENGES

- The recent passage of the Rice Tariffication Law (RTL) has created a humongous transitional problem that must be managed. Imports have shot up to unprecedented levels which is being blamed for the steep decline in palay prices at the farmgate. Harvest fresh palay fetches a very low buying price because it has yet to be dried. Frequent rains and the lack of drying facilities at the farm are also major reasons for the very low prices of palay.
- Even prior to the RTL, the NFA's procuring capacity has been encumbered by lack of funds allocated for *palay* purchases at the farmgate. This is not sufficient to influence prices and break cartels at the farmgate especially in the light of the entry of more imported rice. NFA is likewise hobbled not just with trust issues (farmers think they end up buying from traders anyway), but with it being a GOCC, it has its own charter which mandates it to earn its keep while trying to serve farmers. This has placed NFA in a straight jacket.
- Smallholder farmer are unable to have direct access to markets because (1) traders who are able to provide capital/production inputs have control over their outputs and are the ones capturing the price differential between the farmgate and the retail market; and (2) there is little, if any value adding activity that takes place in farming communities.
- Coconut farmers are still stuck on copra production that is subject to price volatilities when there are a lot of other higher value adding activities that can be made of coconut.

¹¹¹ E. Quismoro, "TRAIN 'Payback' in 2019 – Lawmaker," Manila Bulletin, 5 January 2018 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

- Farmers are locked in the old farming systems where technologies are not maximized to reduce their vulnerabilities to climate change impacts; marketing and transport of their produce are controlled by traders; credit facilities are not accessible to small producers. COVID 19 lockdowns showed this vicious cycle, causing more poverty amongst the poorest, also affecting SDG2 and SDG3.
- The food security concept of the Department of Agriculture is still anchored on food availability and mostly achieved through importation.
- Quarantine measures on travel and social distancing disrupted the food supply chain, especially in the early months of the pandemic, and some challenges have lingered. The resulting closures of agribusiness establishments have hampered the ability of farmers and fisherfolk to secure inputs. Stoppages in the operation of banks and creditors have affected the financing of agricultural production. Other workers across the food supply chain have had difficulties reporting for work because of the lack of public transportation. Though considered essential, some food businesses remain closed owing to anticipated weak sales and safety concerns. Public health safety measures “have severely affected livelihoods and the ability of households to purchase food.” ¹¹² This has been exacerbated by production shocks such as the onset of African swine fever, avian influenza, fall armyworm, and adverse climate events, which significantly affected the availability and prices of pork, poultry, cereals, and other food commodities in the market. These short-term shocks have added to the list of perennial problems in the Philippine agricultural sector, which include weak growth of agricultural output, low income of producers, declining labor supply, a deteriorating resource base, lack of inputs and finance, especially for small farmers and fisherfolk, poor logistics infrastructure, a disconnect between small farmers and fisherfolk and the value chain, the high cost of nutritious food, and dependence on concentrated distribution points located in urban areas. ¹¹³
- The recent emphasis on excise taxes, including on petroleum products and sweetened beverages, has exacerbated inflation while decreasing the transparency of taxation through fiscal illusion. Fiscal illusion refers to the tendency of taxpayers to systematically misperceive their tax burdens when taxes “are included in the cost of goods, and taxpayers may not know what portion of the price the tax constitutes or even that they are being taxed at all.” ¹¹⁴
- It is unclear how the government is promoting sustainable consumption and production, except perhaps for discouraging the use of plastics and encouraging reusable and recyclable bags for consumers, especially in urban areas.

¹¹² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rapid Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 on Food Supply Chains in the Philippines (Manila: FAO, 2021) as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ W. Alfonso, “Fiscal Illusion in State and Local Finances: A Hindrance to Transparency,” State and Local Government Review 46, no. 3 (2014): 219–228 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

- The levies and funds have so far not been put to good use to improve rice production productivity. Only credits are disbursed by Land Bank to entities not certified to put the money to proper use. Implementation lags behind the plan. There is a need to be transparent in the Agricultural Roadmap. With the abolition of NFA's monitoring role, there are no safeguards against fighting monopoly trader-lenders that abuse the law.
- Credit facilities are not accessible to small producers.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- For advocates, GM technology as a part of the larger biotechnology is not sustainable. CSOs and international scientists presented evidence on dangers and harm of genetically modified products. They advocate for precautionary measures as debates about the technology are still ongoing and consequences are yet unknown.
- There are varying CSO positions on the RTL, particularly to either repeal, amend or suspend.
- Given the current impact of massive rice importation, there is demand among rice farmers to be adequately compensated for their actual and projected losses over successive cropping seasons and be given subsidies to help them cope with higher prices of fertilizers and other farm inputs and services.¹¹⁵

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Imports of food must be consistent with making the domestic agricultural sector competitive. This means industrial policy in agriculture --make it productive to benefit farmers.
- Farmers must be organized into functioning cooperatives that will go into direct marketing, value adding activities and enterprise development at the farm level.
- The Department of Agriculture needs to provide support to sustainable agriculture programs such as organic rice/food production.
- Farmers registration system should ensure equal treatment of male and female farmers, adopting the definition of the small farmers in accordance with the Magna Carta of Women.

¹¹⁵ No To RTL Manifesto, 18 No 2019

- The Philippine Competition Commission and the DTI must go after colluding traders who are hoarding rice at their warehouses to keep rice prices up.
- Serious thought must be made in amending the NFA charter given the new rules but nonetheless recognize the importance of the state's role in making the rice industry competitive and protecting farmers' livelihoods.
- The devolution of agriculture support and extension services would work better if there were clear development plan laid down from above guided by a comprehensive land and water use policy. The Mandanas Decision may be an opportunity for LGUs, which NGOs and POs must prepare for.
- The removal of quantitative restrictions and the shift to tariffs is a rational policy that makes the protection transparent. Further, revenues derived from the tariffs imposed on rice imports can be used to fund productivity enhancement programs like farm machineries, high quality seeds and farmers' training. But the question as to the correct level of tariff imposition remains.
- Cash transfers, farm machineries and inputs provided by the state must be conditioned on their ability to organize themselves and take advantage of productivity enhancing research and technologies.
- There is a need to be transparent in the Agricultural Roadmap. With the abolition of NFA's monitoring role, there are no safeguards against fighting monopoly trader-lenders that abuse the law.

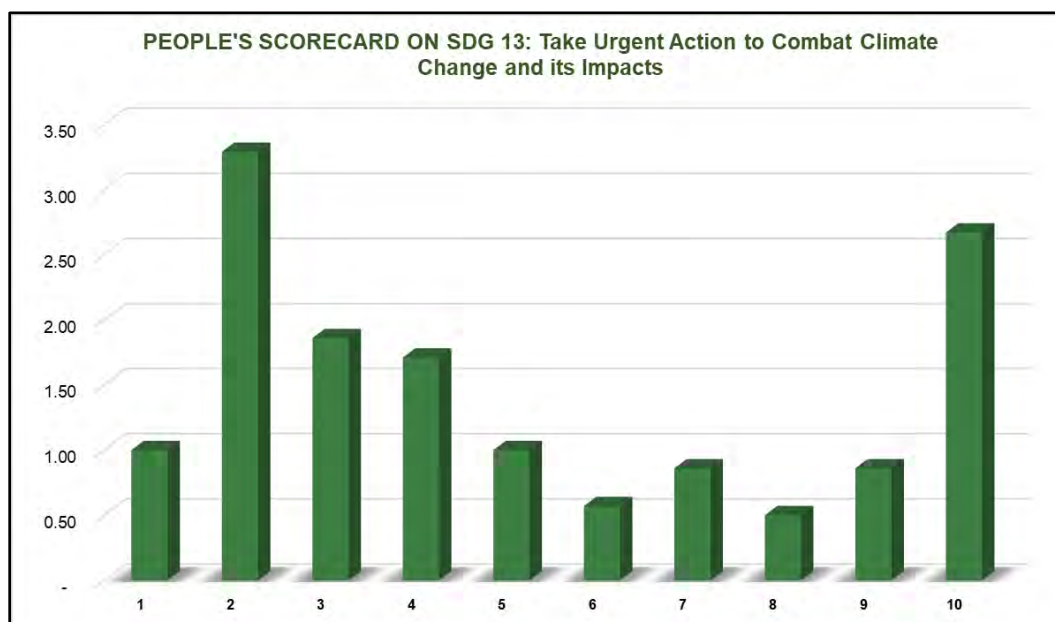
13 CLIMATE ACTION



Goal 13. Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of policy and legal framework for SDG 13 had the highest mean score at 3.29, while initiatives on public awareness and capacity building ranked lowest with a mean score of 0.50.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.00
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	3.29
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.86
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.71
5.	Implementation at Local Level	1.00
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.57
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.86
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.50
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.86
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	2.67

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- There are no clear national commitments to cut CO2 emissions and move towards a just transition of energy. While we may say otherwise during the Conference of Parties, the Philippine Government's insistence on continuing with coal-fired power plants (CFPPs) and the proposed nuclear energy demonstrates half-heartedness towards contribution to solutions against climate change.
- Disasters lead to spikes in funding for emergency response and for reconstruction, relief, and rehabilitation. With Typhoon Haiyan hitting the Philippines in 2013, emergency response was the top ODA priority that year, accounting for 17 percent of ODA (\$125 million). The following year, reconstruction, relief, and rehabilitation were the focus. The sector received almost a quarter of ODA disbursements (\$257 million) in 2014, while support for emergency response continued, accounting for 12 percent (\$131 million) of ODA. Support for reconstruction, relief, and rehabilitation continued until 2015, when it still received significant ODA funding (\$214 million).¹¹⁶.
- The Philippines experienced record-breaking drought due to greenhouse gas emissions, massive flooding due to deforestation, dying aquatic species and water systems due to plastic pollution.
- The pandemic has a disastrous impact on society; there are similar catastrophes that are currently building up on the environment, including the climate front. Climate change impacts occur on top of and exacerbate many other external stresses on the coastal ecosystems already beleaguered by the above-mentioned problems. It raises alarm over the vulnerability of coastal areas, fishers' communities, and the fisheries sector to climate change. The 2020 scenario leading to further rise in sea level, further increased warming of sea surface temperature and more extreme weather events can greatly damage coastal ecosystems and displacement of fishing communities.

CHALLENGES

- Farmers are locked in the old farming systems where technologies are not maximized to reduce their vulnerabilities to climate change impacts.
- The Government has not actively shifted policy and implementation to the use of more renewable energy sources and sustainable agriculture practices.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

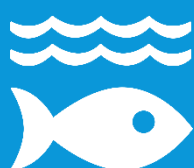
CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- Climate action and climate justice are strongly being pursued through advocacy actions of CSOs and their organized communities, yet the government has not actively shifted policy and implementation to the use of more renewable energy sources and sustainable agriculture practices.
- SWP WASH Cluster pushed for the passage of the Green Jobs Act.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promote renewable energy, invest in climate proofing activities, regenerate, and nurture our environment. Now is the time to place front and center the issue of consumption and production patterns, not just within our country but really acknowledging the North-South divide on this question.
- Pass and enact the Green Jobs Act.
- Give priority to vulnerability assessments, adaptation and mitigation financing and support to coastal communities to combat the impact of climate change.
- Review and implement the recommendations of the CHR National Inquiry on Climate Change
- Adaptation to climate change requires capacity-building at the level of LGUs to ensure that local development plans are climate-proofed from production to consumption, are well-resourced and protects women, children, PWDs and the most vulnerable from extreme weather events and disasters.

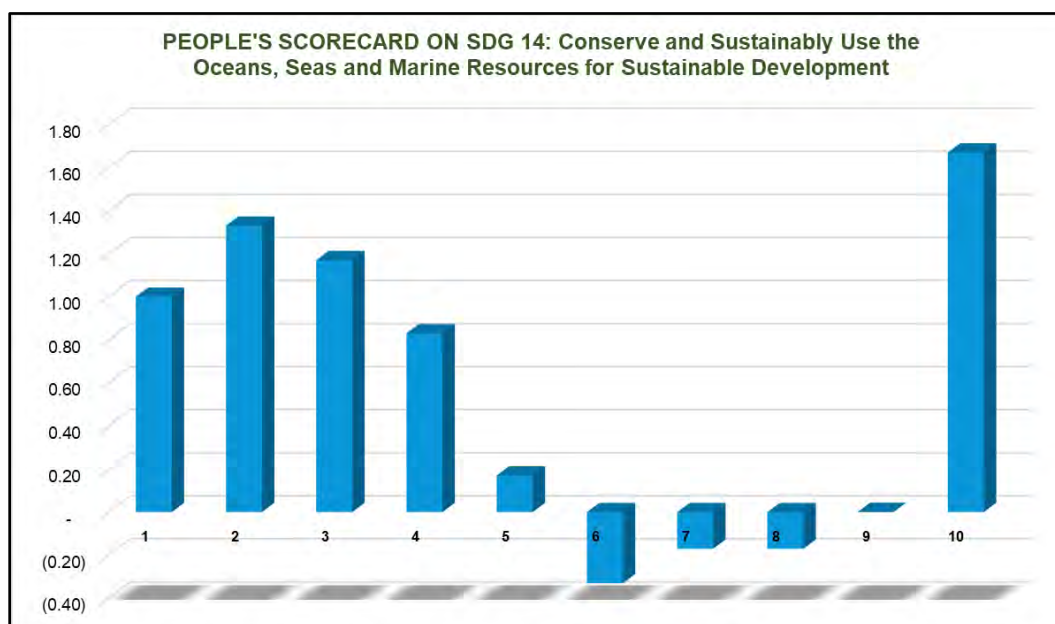
14 LIFE BELOW WATER



Goal 14. Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of “policy and legal framework” had the highest mean score at 1.33 for SDG 14. Meanwhile, “monitoring, evaluation, and reporting”, “transparency and accountability” both had garnered mean scores of -.17.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	1.00
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	1.33
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.17
4.	Implementation at National Level	0.83
5.	Implementation at Local Level	0.17
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	-0.33
7.	Transparency and Accountability	-0.17
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	-0.17
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	1.67

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- The Philippine Government only adopted one target out of 10 targets for SDG 14.
- There is weak law enforcement and low compliance to regulations as well as low capacity to manage municipal and commercial capture fisheries in territorial waters. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources has one or two regular personnel in provinces.
- LGUs in coastal areas have a common position to protect municipal waters and ensure fish catch, but the dwindling supply is affected by trade policies.
- National reclamation plan covers more than 38,272 hectares of coastal areas across the Philippines. This will displace thousands of fishing and farming communities and destroy marine life and compromise food security.
- The Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 (PDP 2017-2022)—the government's blueprint for achieving the SDGs — lacks policies that will support small fisherfolk. Its Strategic Framework on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, showcases its neoliberal value chain concept presented as science-based, sustainable, and resilient production, food availability, access to market and safe food.
- The Government focuses on importation more than the basic problems faced by the fisheries sector.
 - The country's top produce in Marine waters, both for cages and pens is milkfish.
 - About 97% of the production from Mariculture is supplied by seaweeds
 - Milkfish is exported in frozen form in 30 countries canned product in 23 countries and dried or smoked form in 7 countries.
 - Shrimp is exported in fresh/chilled/frozen form Markets include Japan, Korea, USA, Spain & Guam.
 - Tilapia is exported as fresh & frozen fillet, whole and gutted form, and can't compete with Thailand & Taiwan which sell at lower prices Not reflected in current official statistics.
 - The Philippines is one of the top world's suppliers of Eucheuma seaweeds. The major export markets are France, Korea, China, USA and HongKong (66.5% raw form; 33% as carrageenan & kelp powder).

- The Philippine Fisheries Code and its amendments such as Republic Act 10654 and RA 8550 favors commercial fishing while it restricts small municipal fishers their right to fish and deprives them of much needed subsidies.
- The Government's soft stance with Chinese incursion in its EEZ in the West Philippine Sea deprived Filipino fishermen of their right to freely and safely fish in these areas drastically affecting their incomes. This also impacted heavily on the country's marine food security.

CHALLENGES

- Fisheries and marine resources need to be protected, and this includes the resolution of international political boundaries from disputes.
- Current policies and programs on trade liberalization of fishery products have not protected men and women in small-scale fisheries and instead give biased protection to investments that resulted to overfishing and further degradation of fishery resources affecting access and livelihood.
- There is weak law enforcement and low compliance to regulations. Unregulated Aquaculture contributes to depletion of marine resources due to overstocking/overcapacity, fish kills, pollution, and conversion of fish habitats like mangroves. Weak policy implementation is due to lack of government resources to impose regulations (human capital and otherwise)
- There is absence of Use Zones. Delineation and Mapping of Municipal waters to define boundaries not yet completed.
- Environmental Impact Assessment are not properly done.
- Various mega-projects in coastal waters like deep seaports, power plants, sand mining, mining of mineral resources and reclamation for tourism deny fishing communities access to fishing areas. These projects also dislocate them from their living and settlement areas and cause harm to fish spawning and natural production areas. These also destroy natural fish habitats like mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrasses.
- Results of other economic activities, such as mine tailings, pollutants, and oil spills also harm fish stocks and fish habitats affecting corals, seagrasses, mangroves. Environmental issues such as pollution, displacement of fishers from livelihood sources and settlement or shelters have negative impacts to fishing communities as well as ocean inhabitants.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- **CSO actively advocates for the following:**
 - For national and local governments and relevant Agencies to consider reducing human threats to corals, mangrove areas, sea grass beds, estuaries, living shorelines and others by protecting and restoring ecosystems to increase the ability of coasts and its people to cope with climate change and strictly enforcing fishery laws.
 - For governments to practice and seek coastal community's prior and informed consent and conduct socio-environmental impact assessments before setting up coastal/fishery related so-called "development" projects.
 - Urgent State support to the National Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Industry.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Resolution of international political boundaries from disputes.
- National and local governments and relevant agencies to protect and restore ecosystems to increase the ability of coasts and its people to cope with climate change. Government should practice and seek coastal communities' prior and informed consent and conduct socio-environmental impact assessments before setting up coastal/fishery related "development" projects.
- Establishment of Communal Fisheries Zones — 20-kilometer or 10.8-nautical mile sea zone from the coastal lines, at its lowest tide — as free fishing grounds for small fisherfolk, ensuring free access for poor fisherfolk to larger fishing grounds according to the Open Access Fishing Rights to the Contiguous Communal Fisheries Zone, and exclusive use of Communal Fisheries Zone for Small Fisherfolk (vis-a-vis against the illegal poaching done by foreign fishing vessels)
- Elimination of exorbitant registration, license, landing, and other fees, wage increase for fishing boat workers and/or reforms in the unequal sharing ("*partihan*") system. In line with this, scrap the "*consignacion*" system which sets a low price for their catch and in its place, the administration of cooperatives.
- Dismantling of the monopoly of huge commercial fishers, traders, and distributors.
- To ensure that marine life is sustainably utilized, small-scale fishing should be the primary system of fishing (in lieu of destructive commercial fishing). This goes hand-

in-hand with the promotion and protection of small-scale fishing and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises or MSMEs.

- Review and amend or repeal accordingly if proven contradictory to a right based, sustainable and ecologically – sound fisheries the Philippine Fisheries Code and its amendments such as Republic Act 10654 and RA 8550. Likewise, the Fisheries Management Areas (FMAs) through the 2019 Fisheries Administrative Order 263.
- Stop reclamation of coastal areas for conversion to commercial, recreational, and residential use. Scrap the National Reclamation Plan covering 38,272 hectares across the country as this will cause destruction to fish habitat and breeding grounds which will worsen the depletion of marine food supply.
- Stop the privatization of coastal areas for tourism and other uses that displace whole fishing and farming communities depriving them of livelihood and further compromising food security.
- BFAR to reorganize as Department of Fisheries and increase support for local government units to enhance or strengthen capacity to manage territorial waters and EEZ.
- Implement laws on Illegal, unreported and unregulated Fishing (IUUF) as embodied in RA 10654
- Complete the delineation of municipal waters (without offshore islands) BFAR to immediately issue guidelines (for those municipal waters with offshore islands)"
- Continue implementing closed season of certain species during spawning period.
- Resource management bodies in common/shared water bodies and territories must be established and consider representation from small- scale fisheries.
- A sustainable fisheries management framework should be adopted by ASEAN country members to guide management efforts.
- Institutionalize Good Aquaculture Practices (GAqP) in the national law and local ordinances. This includes GAqP basic compliance on proper site selection, stocking within carrying capacity, animal health, other food safety issues, and environmental and social standards.
- Valuation of natural resources and the ecological services to include in investment and revenue accounting.
- Implement the law which requires all projects and Investments undergo Environmental Impact Assessment and ensure public consultation to inform the communities and the possible impacts to their livelihood, settlements, and environment.

- The government and relevant agencies take into consideration that sustainability of fisheries products highly depends on ecological balance and therefore should be given special and differential treatment.
- A sensitive list (products that are proven to be threatened or overfished) must be drawn up. Commodities in the sensitive list should be exempted from tariff reduction in multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations and should be given protection during the spawning period. Some examples are the small pelagic species such as roundscad, mackerel, sardines, and anchovies among others.
- Government should consider harmonizing fisheries trade policies with the Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, and Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.
- Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the UN-FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and must be recognized in the ASEAN Charter and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

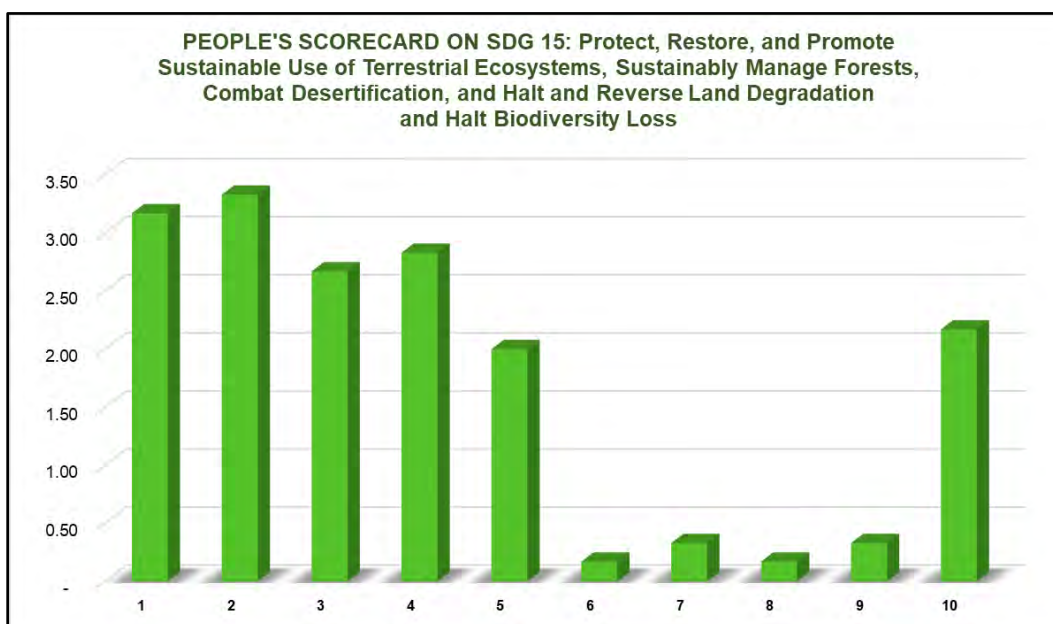
15 LIFE ON LAND



Goal 15. Protect, Restore, and Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainably Manage Forests, Combat Desertification, and Halt and Reverse Land Degradation and Halt Biodiversity Loss

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of “policy and legal framework” for SDG 15 had the highest mean score at 3.33. Meanwhile, “monitoring, evaluation and reporting” and “public awareness and capacity building” both garnered a mean score of .17.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	3.17
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	3.33
3.	Support from Government Agencies	2.67
4.	Implementation at National Level	2.83
5.	Implementation at Local Level	2.00
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	0.17
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.33
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.17
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.33
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	2.17

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has a small budget and dependent on LGUs.
- The conversion of agricultural lands to urban housing (including gentrified suburban housing for the rich) continues.
- Extractive industries and new explorations continue to harm the environment, hasten desertification. These also cause disasters that result in losses and damages to lives.
- Land grabbing continues as speculation of land increases. There are allegations that land grabbing happens because of the Government's BBB infrastructure program.
- Demolitions by state forces, security agents of private developers and corporations of abode of farming communities and economic displacement of farmers because of land use conversions for recreational, commercial, industrial use and for commercial plantations as well as large infrastructure projects.
- Dislocation of IP communities and upland settlers in areas covered by large infrastructure projects i.e., large dam projects - Gened 1, Chico Dams, Alimit Dams in the Cordillera Administrative Region; New Centennial Water Source Project (Kaliwa, Kanan and Laiban Dams) in Rizal and Quezon Provinces in Region IV-A; Pulanggi V dam in Bukidnon province; Jalaur Dam and Panay Integrated River Development Project in Panay and Iloilo provinces; New Clark City project in Pampanga province.
- Large-scale mining operations destroy food production systems and large-scale farming areas and fishing grounds cause pollution.
-
- The physical displacement and economic dislocation result in increased food insecurity with massive LUC of food producing areas; increased job insecurity / unemployment; and increased urban congestion as farmers and their families are driven towards the cities.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review the IPRA and its implementation including its implementing arm.
- Recall / stop all projects that violated the free, prior and informed consent of IP communities (including fraudulent and manipulated FPICs).

- Revoke statute creating IDFs and their installation in communities.
- Implement genuine agrarian reform program starting with genuine land redistribution.
- Repeal Mining Act of 1995 and in its place legislate the People's Mining Bill.

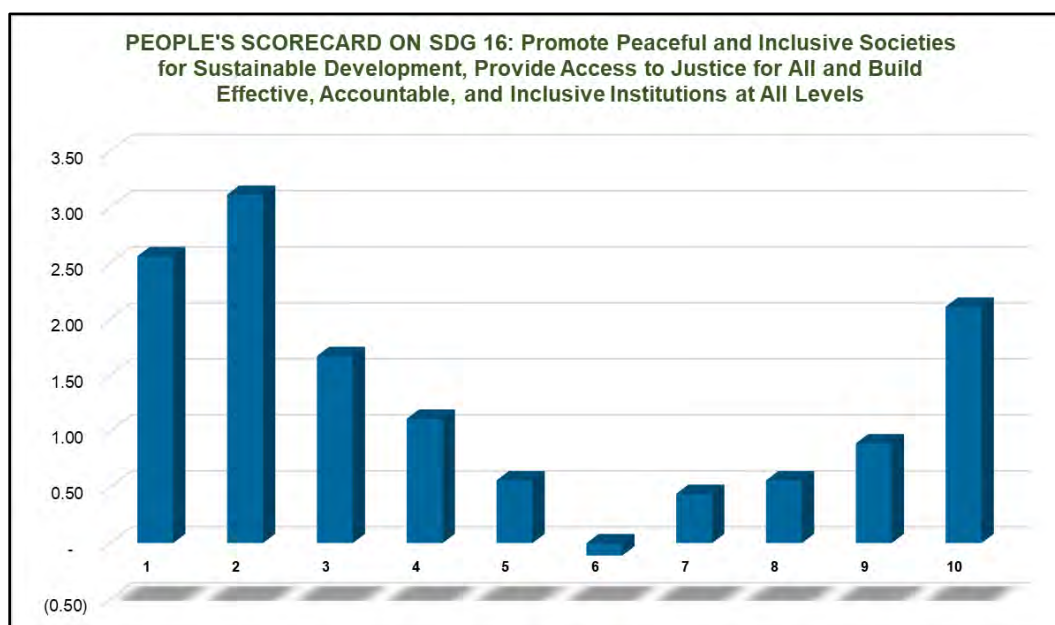
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Goal 16. Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for All and Build Effective, Accountable, and Inclusive Institutions at All Levels

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of “policy and legal framework” for SDG 16 had the highest mean score at 3.11. Meanwhile, “monitoring, evaluation and reporting” had the lowest mean score at -0.11.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	2.56
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	3.11
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.67
4.	Implementation at National Level	1.11
5.	Implementation at Local Level	0.56
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting	-0.11
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.44
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.56
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.89
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	2.11

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- In the past 5-6 years, policies on peace and justice are mostly on the law enforcement side. Preventive strategies are lacking or not sustained (if there are any). The administration of justice has made some progress, but it is still slow and more favorable to individuals who are rich or have connections with the government officials.
- The implementation of the Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (PPAEVAC) is yet to be reviewed.
- Most child protection programs are underfinanced, especially on the component of prevention mechanisms and services.
- High prevalence of violence against children. A study found that 80 per cent of the youth ages 12 to 24 years old have experienced violence.
- Closure of Lumad schools red tagged amid their promotion of sustainable agriculture, IP rights for self-determination and their right to their ancestral domain, and development.
- Military operations in IP areas with active struggles against destructive infrastructure projects. Use or investment defense forces (IDF) that attack and intimidate IP communities.

CHALLENGES

- The Philippine Justice System remains biased against the poor, while being protective and partial to the rich, politically influential families and big business.
- Safety security and protection issues exist even for church workers advocating for justice issues.
- Corruption such as issues on PhilHealth and Pharmally during the time of COVID-19 pandemic.
- Honoring Hague rulings on West Philippine Sea.
- The commission on elections junked disqualification cases against son of dictator running for presidency.

- A sizable portion of debt was incurred, and a huge budget was allocated for counter-insurgency program anti-drug war campaign that resulted in worsened impunity.
- Anti-discrimination laws and policies were cancelled out by anti-people policies and statutes that restrict democratic spaces such as the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020.
- Unionism and collective bargaining have been repressed in export processing zones.
- Abuses against workers' rights and decent work deficits are likewise committed by Transnational Companies (TNCs) across the different levels of the global supply chain, as less developed countries compete against each other to attract foreign direct investments through tax holidays and the lowering of labor standards and costs.
- Illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing, in both national fishing territories and borders in the shared water bodies, remains a problem. This contributes to further depletion of fishery resources and increases cases of trafficking in persons. There are documented stories of our small fishers arrested for fishing in disputed territorial boundaries and receiving inhumane treatment from police authorities, without Appropriate assistance from their own country's government authorities. This may be largely due to unclear territorial boundaries and the overlapping territorial claims among ASEAN members countries.
- There is an alarming situation of trafficking of persons in the ASEAN Region. Many workers are being forced to work in fishing boats illegally in the Region.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- Civil society participation exists but it is highly selective and not sustained.

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Human rights and SDGs are interconnected. Civil and political rights must be protected by the state and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) must continue to function at its best capacity and its incoming leaders must be known for their integrity and commitment to uphold HR. The danger of historical revisionism and outright disinformation to obliterate the violations committed by the Marcos dictatorship is real with his family determined to clear his name in history. This is a major challenge under the new administration.

- There is a need for a sunset review of the implementation of the Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children (PPAEVAC).
- ASEAN governments and relevant Agencies to discuss and implement guidelines on illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing (IUU) in the Southeast Asia Region in accordance with the United Nations.
- In the absence of clear territorial decisions, ASEAN governments and relevant Agencies should be able to develop and strengthen mechanisms on cross-border cooperation of shared or common water bodies at least for clearer fishing rules for artisanal fishers.
- Consider instituting measures and mechanism to address the human trafficking within ASEAN member states forcing persons to work illegally in distant water fleets.
- Investigate cases of human rights violations - CPR and ESCR - committed against farmers, IPs, land rights defenders and environmental defenders and according bring to justice the violators especially duty bearers.

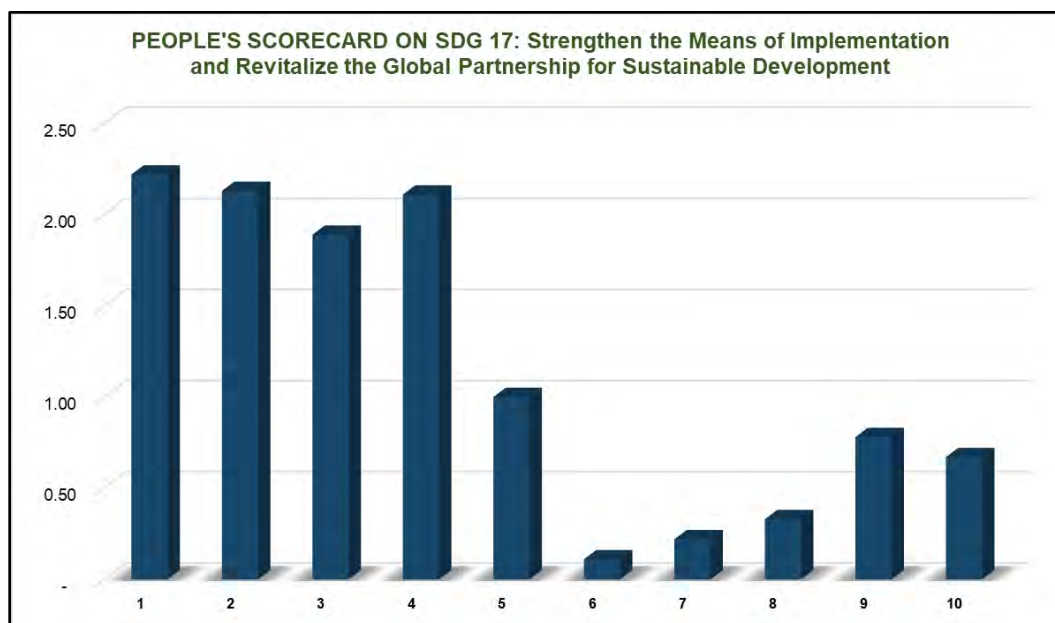
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Goal 17. Strengthen the Means of Implementation and Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

PEOPLE'S SCORECARD

The availability of “National action plan, SDG strategy and budget” for SDG 17 had the highest mean score at 2.22. Meanwhile, “monitoring, evaluation and reporting” had the lowest mean score at 0.11.



1.	National Action Plan, SDG Strategy and Budget	2.22
2.	Policy or Legal Framework Available	2.13
3.	Support from Government Agencies	1.89
4.	Implementation at National Level	2.11
5.	Implementation at Local Level	1.00
6.	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting	0.11
7.	Transparency and Accountability	0.22
8.	Public Awareness and Capacity Building	0.33
9.	Multistakeholder Partnerships	0.78
10.	Citizen participation & Civil Society Engagement	0.67

SITUATION & POLICY UPDATES

- There are existing policies that promote partnerships to attain the SDGs. However, implementation is not on the same level among all government agencies. There are still instances when government agencies work in silos that result to confusing or contradictory policies.¹¹⁷
- ODA has been and will continue to be an invaluable and dependable source of financing for development in the Philippines. Throughout the decades, ODA has served as a stable source of significant funding for the government's infrastructure and human development programs and projects. Despite going through several periods of financial instability, partly owing to uncontrolled fiscal deficits and excessive government borrowing, the Philippines was able to introduce and sustain reforms that helped it achieve the sound macroeconomic fundamentals that it currently enjoys. Earlier investments in the country's physical and human capital have also translated into rapid and continuous economic growth, even as several deeply rooted development challenges such as poverty and inequality remain—exposing inadequate efforts to promote equity and inclusion in government programs and projects. Exacerbated by the onset of COVID-19, which brought growth to a halt, these concerns could be addressed partly through sound fiscal policy together with the strategic and inclusive utilization of ODA. Having shown solidarity in swiftly extending assistance to developing countries devastated by the pandemic, the donor community demonstrated that ODA could be a reliable funding source even during crisis situations.¹¹⁸
- Throughout the decades, ODA has played a significant but diminishing role in supporting the country's economic expansion. From 1990 to 2018, ODA as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) decreased from 2.9 percent to 0.4 percent. ODA providers have also adopted evolving approaches to supporting the country in the fight against poverty, socioeconomic inequality, and gender inequality amid the evolving landscape of development finance.¹¹⁹ The government uses ODA heavily to rehabilitate areas hard hit by calamities and internal conflict, such as in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and the aftermath of the Marawi Siege in 2017.¹²⁰
- The top three—the World Bank, ADB, and Japan—account for almost two-thirds of total financing over the period 2009 -2018.¹²¹
 - ADB's Country Partnership Strategy 2018–2023 focuses on three priority areas: accelerating infrastructure and long-term investments, promoting local economic development in Mindanao and Visayas, and making social

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Flores and Pacapac (2021)

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Flores and Pacapac (2021)

investments in the bottom 40 percent of the population. The Bank is the largest source of Philippine ODA, comprising 28 percent from 2015 to 2018.

- The World Bank's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) aims to help the Philippines achieve inclusive growth. The World Bank's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) aims to help the Philippines achieve inclusive growth. The Bank has shifted its finance in the past decade from traditionally hard infrastructure projects to investments in human development and the resilience of vulnerable populations. The CPF prioritizes the creation of quality jobs and workforce competitiveness, peacebuilding, the expansion of social safety nets, and improvements in disaster risk management and climate resilience.
 - Japan is the Philippines' largest bilateral ODA partner. Mirroring Japanese engagement elsewhere in the world, infrastructure projects are a cornerstone of Japan's development assistance to the Philippines. Aligning with the priorities of the Philippine government's BBB program, Japanese development focuses especially on transport infrastructure such as railways, roads, and bridges.
 - More than one-quarter of grants received by the Philippines is from the U.S. government. Two-thirds of these grants qualify as ODA and are for economic, development, and humanitarian assistance, while the rest are for military assistance.¹⁰⁹¹²²
- The General Appropriations Act from 2015 to 2020 shows that the total budget of the national government grew from \$45.2 billion in 2015 to \$96.9 billion in 2020. This rise amounts to an increase in public spending of more than 20 percent a year. Taking inflation into account, government expenditure still grew by an average of 9 percent a year, based on constant 2000 prices. Aid, recorded through program loans and project loans, accounts for less than five percent of the government's sources of financing every year.¹²³
 - For the past few years, the Philippine government has set a target for its financing mix of 75:25 in favor of domestic borrowing in order to reduce the country's exposure to foreign exchange risks. Domestic revenues increased substantially from \$46 billion in 2014 to \$70 billion in 2018.⁶⁴ The remaining deficit is financed through domestic and foreign borrowing from the private sector.¹²⁴
 - Over the 10-year period from 2009 to 2018, annual aid flows to the Philippines were generally stable, normally ranging from \$1.59 billion to \$2.25 billion a year. The Philippines received more in other official flows (OOF), however, than in ODA

¹²² United States Agency for International Development, Foreign Aid Explorer (<https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd>) (last accessed 1 January 2021) as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

during this time. The growth of OOF was driven by loans from multilateral institutions, whereas ODA to the Philippines was channeled mostly through grants. The top 10 donors accounted for more than 90 percent of total aid disbursed to the Philippines from 2009 to 2018.¹²⁵

- For the Philippine government the highest-priority sectors for ODA are education and transportation infrastructure. General administration, health, public order and safety, social welfare, domestic security, and agriculture and natural resources are the other sectors receiving major government funding.¹²⁶
- The tripling of ODA loans from what was planned means it will now account for 21 percent of foreign financing, surpassing net foreign direct investments, which account for 15 percent.¹²⁷
- The Philippines has received more other official flows (OOFs)¹²⁸ than ODA in the past decade. OECD/DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS) data covering 2009–2018 show that 52 percent of total disbursements to the Philippines consisted of OOFs, while ODA accounted for 48 percent. Private development finance figured very little, comprising less than 1 percent of total disbursements.¹²⁹
- The rising level of OOFs shows loans are the preferred type of financing to the Philippines. Total annual OOF levels showed an upward trend from 2009 to 2018, from a low of \$387 million in 2009 to a high of \$2.43 billion in 2015. In contrast, ODA remained generally stable over the same period, averaging \$1.14 billion a year. As a result, OOFs constituted an increasing portion of aid flows, from only one quarter of aid in 2009 to as high as two-thirds in 2015. Aid loans represent a small percentage of government debt.¹³⁰
- In 2015–2016 the Philippines received \$1.245 billion, making it the third-largest recipient of the total aid targeting gender equality and women’s empowerment as either a principal or a significant objective.¹³¹
- The NEDA reported that from 2017 to 2019 gender-responsive and gender-sensitive projects received \$23.78 billion, or 77 percent of total ODA. Another 18

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ OOFs are official sector transactions that do not meet ODA criteria. They include grants to recipient countries with representational or commercial purposes and official bilateral transactions aimed at promoting development but with a grant element of less than 25 percent. Official bilateral transactions that primarily facilitate exports, whatever their grant component, are also considered OOFs. The following are categorized as OOFs: export credits extended directly to an aid recipient, net acquisition by governments and central monetary institutions of securities issued by multilateral development banks at market terms, subsidies to the private sector to soften its credits to developing countries, and funds in support of private investment. (Flores and Pacapac, 2021)

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Aid to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (Paris: OECD-DAC, 2018) as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam

percent (\$5.62 billion) of aid went to projects with promising GAD prospects while only 5 percent (\$1.52 billion) was allocated to GAD-invisible projects. The social reform and community development sector received the largest share of gender-responsive and gender-sensitive projects.¹³²

- The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) serves as the Philippines' national poverty reduction strategy and human capital investment program. The 4Ps is the fourth largest CCT program in the world in terms of population coverage. It is funded by the national government with the support of loans from foreign sources.¹³³ Within the implementation period of 2016 to 2022, total foreign financing programmed for the 4Ps amounts to \$750 million. Owing to implementation delays, however, the government incurred commitment fees amounting to \$550,000 in 2018.¹³⁴
- The Philippine government recognizes the possible existence of so-called illegitimate debts, as the General Appropriations Acts (GAA) of 2017 and 2018 included a special provision calling on the government "to conduct a debt audit to determine the legitimacy of 20 government-contracted foreign loans."¹³⁵
- At present, the Philippines is in a good fiscal position considering its manageable debt-to-GDP ratio and investment-grade credit ratings. From 2015 to 2019 the country's debt-to-GDP ratio remained below 45 percent. As of the end of first quarter of 2021, the Philippines had a BBB+ credit rating from S&P, Baa2 from Moody's, and BBB from Fitch.¹³⁶

CHALLENGES

- While SDG 17 serves to ensure the means to achieve the other sustainable development goals, negative impacts of debt distress, corporate capture of development and militarization of aid have only served to worsen the state of development in recipient countries. In the Philippines, unequal and exploitative partnerships resulted in rising debt, inaccessibility of services and shrinking of civic spaces.
- The issue of tied aid or tied loans—that is, aid or loans tied to the condition that the recipient procure goods or services from the donor—persists in the Philippines. Unsustainable government borrowing has led to periods of macroeconomic instability, but reforms to public financial management, including the adoption of

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Asian Development Bank, Gender Analysis of the Expanded Social Assistance Project (ESAP) for the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) (Mandaluyong City: Asian Development Bank, 2019) as cited by Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam.

¹³⁴ Flores and Pacapac, 2021

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

debt sustainability management principles, led to a steady improvement in the country's fiscal and macroeconomic performance.¹³⁷

- The country's debt is now at Php12.8 trillion as of April 2022. A huge portion of this debt has not gone to COVID-19 response but to the government's debt-driven Build-Build-Build Infrastructure program, military expenditure for its anti-drug war campaign and counter-insurgency program which were also directed at unarmed civilians, rights defenders and humanitarian workers.
- In 1993 the Philippines officially became a lower-middle-income country, signaling an era of accelerating GDP growth. Yet with this increasing productivity, the Philippines has also faced growing inequality, including gender inequality.
- There was a shift from grant forms of ODA (highly concessional finance) to loans (non-concessional) risks increasing the country's debt burden. This situation may cause the government and donors to shift available resources toward investments that guarantee higher rates of return and, in turn, could lead to less financing for social sectors that are proven to help fight poverty.¹³⁸
- There is too much concentration on macroeconomic stability and import liberalization to the detriment of development.
- Inflation stems mostly from supply side problems -- such as food production problems and high international oil prices. The government's main way of reducing inflation was massive imports of rice and fishes, plus increasing policy interest rates.
- Investors and rating agencies' insistence on strong fiscal position force governments to implement regressive sales taxes. Tax reforms to fund government spending are regressive -- concentration on sales taxes, not income taxes.
- Volatile global economy and vulnerability to external shocks brought about by trade wars, Brexit, and global slowdown. Tax reforms to fund government spending are regressive -- concentration on sales taxes, not income taxes. The Philippines has undertaken massive capital account liberalization. A global economic downturn or collapse will trigger massive 'hot money' outflows that will destabilize the exchange rate and the external financial position of the country as well as threaten economic growth.
- For the Philippines, domestic demand stimulation has caused imports to explode, so much so that trade deficits are now larger than OFW remittances. This has caused a decline in the country's international reserves. As developing economies rebalance their economies towards domestic demand generation, their imports are naturally stimulated, trade deficits balloon

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

- Growing the manufacturing sector is confronted with challenges, not least of which is the intensifying competition in a rapidly globalizing economy. Considering the slowing economies, advanced countries have set their sights on the vast consumer markets of Asia. This rebalancing of the global economy toward Asia has implications on small economies that are still trying to build their industrial base. Moreover, changes in the global economy hit the manufacturing industries especially hard given their nature of having extensive links to global value and supply chains and due to sunk costs.
- The challenge today is how to transform existing globalization by making global trade fair, balanced and inclusive. The free-trade one-size-fits-all liberalization formula is clearly a narrow anti-development formula. The world should cast aside the neo-liberal ideology of unregulated markets in favor of a more flexible, balanced, and calibrated program of liberalization and protection in the economy on a sector-by-sector basis as needed.
- Corporate tax rates have been consistently falling and the use of tax incentives has become more widespread across countries of varying income levels over the past three decades. Tax competition is driven by the belief that giving up greater taxing rights of countries will effectively induce global capital investments. This is problematic. "First, tax competition hurts Southern countries the most. Corporate income and profits are a substantial tax base from which countries such as the Philippines can raise tax revenues without resorting to regressive types such as consumption taxes. Low corporate tax rates, tax holidays and other tax incentives yield foregone revenues. Second, there is mounting evidence that tax incentives are not as effective as conventionally believed. In the Philippines, more than half (56.9%) of the incentives granted to 2,844 firms in 2015 are considered purely unnecessary, since their investments would have occurred even without offering tax incentives. (ibid.) Third, with the apparent ease of tax avoidance by transnational corporations, estimated to be billions of dollars, tax competition disproportionately benefits global capital that puts into question the integrity and fairness of the international institutional architecture of tax systems.
- Illicit financial flows (IFFs) drain Southern countries of much needed resources for development and undermine the integrity of their governance institutions. There is no agreed definition of IFFs, but conventional measurements used limit IFFs to illegal/criminal activities. Illegal and criminal activities include smuggling, money laundering, drug and people trafficking, etc. This definition is problematic because it leaves out IFFs arising from commercial transactions that are legal but nonetheless illicit. A recent report estimates that Southern countries lose USD416 billion due to aggressive tax avoidance and abuse of tax regimes such as trade mispricing, offshore wealth, and corporate tax abuse.
- Investor Protection/Investor State Dispute Settlement Mechanism (ISDS). Over the last decade we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of ISDS cases. From 2018-2019 investors initiated over 100 (107) known ISDS cases. UNCTAD

estimates that the total number of publicly known arbitration cases against host countries has now reached 983. The signing of more investment treaties, including FTAs with more expansive investment chapters like RCEP, are partly to blame for the rise in ISDS cases. Clearly these agreements have emboldened the corporations to use this mechanism to challenge the States' right to regulate. More than 60 % of awards handed down by these tribunals in favor of corporations are between US\$10 million to over a billion. Add to this the enormous cost of litigation, it's not hard to surmise the tremendous strain these cases exact on public budgets and therefore the ability of governments to support development goals and the public welfare.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS & ADVOCACIES

- **Participation Mechanisms**

- CSOs recognize the efforts to address the gap of a mechanism for Civil Society Participation in the implementation, monitoring, reporting and review of the SDGs, particularly through the Stakeholders' Chamber forum. There was an attempt to disaggregate data for the 2020 Population Census, although the results have not yet been disseminated widely. However, the late/lack of consultations among wider society for the country's Voluntary National Review (VNR) is a serious concern.
- There is lack of democratic space and participatory governance on pandemic management and on SDG engagement, including in the formulation of the 2022 Phil VNR. Meanwhile, in 2019, few CSO members of the Coalition were able to attend sub-consultations.
- In April 2019, Plan International Philippines, in partnership with Girls Advocacy Alliance and the Joining Forces Alliance organized a VNR Consultation with thirty child-focused CSOs to provide inputs and comments on the draft VNR report. NEDA and PIDS explained the VNR process and presented the draft report. CSOs shared their contributions, achievements, challenges, and recommendations about attaining the SDG targets. However, since the pandemic started and up to the present, CSO members were not able to participate in any other consultations organized on the VNR and are unaware of who/which organization is taking the lead in the stakeholders' chamber organized by NEDA. Other comments on the governance framework include the unclear information on
- It is not well-known by CSOs and as shown by limited knowledge of the CSOs on how to engage government mechanisms for SDGs implementation and/or oversight. Communicating the mandate of NEDA on SDGs and VNR can be further strengthened. It can also make the

participation structures in the oversight more inclusive to more CSOs and widen the spaces for participation (e.g., inform CSOs on how to participate in the stakeholders' chamber and on how to be invited in consultations it is conducting).

- WTO and bilateral and regional agreements signed by developing economies have unnecessarily forced them to prematurely open up their economies to imports, and have locked them into commitments where the state, academe and CSOs are prohibited from giving technical, credit and institutional support and assistance to the priority and beneficial economic sectors of the economies. Latest literature of market failures show that developing economies need strong state and institutional support for beneficial economic sectors to succeed and have multiplier effects in the economy. The literature also implies this MUST be accompanied by drastic institutional and bureaucratic reforms in the governance of the economy.

- **Official Development Assistance**

- The civil society-based European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD) argues that, even if untied, “procedural restrictions” in aid contracts give companies from donor or rich countries an unfair advantage over local firms. For instance, it is common for donors to insert into the aid contract specifications for technologies and consultancy expertise that can be fulfilled only by more developed economies. In 2020 EURODAD reported a surge in tied aid, with the world’s major donors reserving “almost \$21 billion of their bilateral aid for suppliers from their own countries in 2018, \$4.7 billion more than the year before.” The figure represented almost 20 percent of bilateral aid. The group lamented that the increase in tied aid in 2018 “puts donors’ commercial priorities before the priorities of people living in poverty”.¹³⁹

- **Globalization / Trade Liberalization**

- UNCTAD commits to promote and support the following:
 - Creation of viable regional intergovernmental tax cooperation mechanisms that will foster tax cooperation and prevent a “race to the bottom” that leads to billions of foregone government revenues.
 - Greater transparency and good governance in national tax incentives to effectively detect, deter, and stop harmful tax incentives. The rules and process for approving tax incentives must be clear and transparent, and information on compliance and impact (costs and benefits) must be available and accessible. Participation

¹³⁹ V. Chadwick, “Japan Leads Surge in Tied Aid,” Devex, 14 February 2020 as cited in Herisadel Flores and Jose Antonio Pacapac. (2021). Financing for Development in the Philippines. Social Watch Philippines and Oxfam

by parliaments and CSOs are essential in strengthening checks and balance.

- Protection of taxing rights of Southern countries against commercial practices by transnational corporations that yield IFFs.

- **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP)**

- CSOs noted the lack of transparency and public participation and limited consultation process on the agreement among stakeholders for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP):
 - There was no public disclosure of the text of the negotiations. In the past, the text of the agreements are made public as soon as negotiations were concluded. There is a strong call from CSOs and movements for RCEP governments to release the text immediately.
 - At the regional level, a formal Stakeholder Engagement Process was initiated in 2016 (4 years into the negotiations). CSOs and movements engaged the process in good faith, using the limited space to articulate directly to government negotiators their issues and concerns. There was very little response and not much meaningful participation from the negotiators and the process has been described as no more than a 'ticking the box' exercise.
 - At the national level (Philippines), the previous administration under Benigno Aquino put in place a One Country, One Voice mechanism for public consultation. This space however was designed more for participation of exporters to "maximize the benefits from FTAs" rather than a genuine, and open process for stakeholder consultation.
- The CSO opposition to RCEP has been sustained over the last seven years, and the message has consistently been to call on governments to reject the agreement. RCEP is seen as a threat to peoples' lives and livelihoods. It is an agreement that advances the agenda of corporations first and foremost. It is an agreement cloaked in secrecy and negotiated with limited public scrutiny. Groups called on their respective governments to heed the concerns of the people and cease from forging this deal.

- **Intellectual Property Rights**

- UNCTAD and local CSOs echo the recommendations in a 2012 UNDP and UNAIDS study entitled The Potential Impact of Free Trade Agreements on Public Health: "To retain the benefits of TRIPS Agreement flexibilities countries at minimum should avoid entering FTAs with TRIPS-plus

obligations that can impact on pharmaceuticals price or availability. Where countries have undertaken TRIPS-plus commitments, all efforts should be made to mitigate the negative impact of these commitments on access to treatment by using, to the fullest extent possible, remaining public health related flexibilities available.

- **CSO Positions on Accountability**

- The country would still benefit, however, from the vigilance of the international community in monitoring the use of government funds as it grapples with the pandemic and the erosion of some of its democratic institutions in recent years. The urgency of responding to the pandemic has also highlighted inefficiencies in procurement and other administrative processes of the government. These shortfalls should be addressed to enhance the absorptive capacities of agencies and maximize the utilization of ODA funds.¹⁴⁰
- ODA utilization should be aligned with and monitored against the achievement of development targets under the AmBisyon Natin 2040, the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁴¹

SOLUTIONS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater transparency and good governance in national tax incentives to effectively detect, deter, and stop harmful tax incentives. Governments and global institutions should push for progressive tax reforms -- address underpayment of taxes by the rich and corps.
- UNCTAD and local CSOs echo the recommendations in a 2012 UNDP and UNAIDS study entitled The Potential Impact of Free Trade Agreements on Public Health: "To retain the benefits of TRIPS Agreement flexibilities countries at minimum should avoid entering FTAs with TRIPS-plus obligations that can impact on pharmaceuticals price or availability."¹⁴²
- **On Official Development Assistance**
 - Civil society groups are advocating for a "debt brake" -- While sound macroeconomic fundamentals may cushion its impacts, the country might

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Inputs of the Civil Society and Academe to Philippine Position on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XV)

have to consider a “debt brake” if government borrowing exceeds manageable levels. Meanwhile, donors may emphasize grants in providing aid to the Philippines and other developing countries—whether lower- or middle-income countries—in this time of global health crisis. Development aid should also focus on building the self-reliance of recipient countries based on localization and the untying of financial assistance as well as support for transparent and progressive revenue-raising policies. This way, ODA can remain a potent and beneficial source of development financing for poverty reduction and economic and gender equality.¹⁴³

- Aid should focus on building self-reliance of the recipient. Technical assistance should continue to focus on building the capacities of local stakeholders, including the private sector, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises. Development assistance should also promote gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. Indigenous ways and culture must be considered and respected in designing and implementing development interventions.
- For partnerships between countries in achieving the SDGs and people-centered development, and for ODA to be truly-transformative, the neoliberal economic development framework must be overhauled. People Economics as a framework that promotes social justice and democratic rights of the people can reverse the pro-business, profit-oriented, and anti-democratic legislations that maintain underdevelopment and social exclusion.

- **On Strengthening Local Capacities**

- There is a need to strengthen local and inter-LGU partnerships with CSOs and the private sector for SDG 17. Many of the actions needed to be done to achieve the goals can be done at the LGU level, especially with respect to climate actions and those that involve the protection of the environment and natural resources.
- The developing economies should be encouraged to rebalance their economy more towards domestic demand stimulation.
- There is a need to harness digitalization to facilitate education and financial inclusion. This includes making digital technologies/communication widely accessible and reliable.
- Short run macro policies should be consistent with long-term economic and human development goals of the country. Otherwise, the macro policies are

¹⁴³ Flores and Pacapac (2021)

just short run palliatives to placate the foreign and domestic investors, not to ease the pain of the majority.

- The government returned to its previous 75:25 deficit financing policy. This shift will help avoid crowding out private borrowing and minimize the risk of worsening inequality in a country where only a small proportion of the population are net savers. The government should also make sure that future interest repayments will not displace much-needed investments in agricultural development and social services.¹⁴⁴

- **On Globalization / Trade Liberalization**

- Support Southern countries in shaping a wider definition of IFFs and wider coverage of monitoring and measuring the same.
- Support the establishment of global and regional institutional arrangements and mechanisms that increases the financial transparency and empowers Southern countries to decisively tackle the development drain caused by IFFs.
- Increasing interest rates during inflations is a MUST for foreign investors and multilateral institutions. This view must be tamed. The domestic need to address the food shortages should take priority over interest rate adjustments. Oil price increases must be addressed by policies reducing dependence on fossil fuel.
- Addressing high oil prices require massive planning and implementation to shift to renewable energy sources.
- Governments and global institutions should push for progressive tax reforms -- address underpayment of taxes by rich and corps.
- The Group of 77 and developing economies should unite to call for an end to trade wars and to encourage US to stop imposing unilateral tariffs on any economy. They should call for an immediate end (with a clear timetable) to the US-China trade war.
- Developing economies should be allowed to slow down import liberalization and even allow to increase their own tariffs as the US start imposing tariffs on products at its own whim.
- The Group of 77 and all developing economies should call for the right to re-impose capital controls on 'hot money'. The international financial

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

markets should be made to respect such rights without countermoves of sanctioning and boycotting countries imposing such capital controls.

- Developing economies should be allowed to impose more import controls, slow down their trade liberalization, and devalue their currencies as the US impose import controls and as the developing economies' trade deficits increase significantly.
- This, in essence, is the meaning of the “special and differential treatment” (SDT), a proviso in the WTO repeated nearly a hundred times in the WTO's own founding document. SDT means not all countries are created equally and each has the right to pursue and plan development based on one's level of development. This means trading arrangements should be concluded based on the principle of mutually beneficial exchanges, not an abstract free-trade system or an inflexible zero-for-zero tariff system which mainly benefits the big and powerful. This also means investment programming and campaigns for FDI should be based on a country's real development needs for technology, market, value addition, etc.
- A guiding reform principle should be how to put people at the center of development. This means officially abandoning the neo-liberal Friedmanesque framework of economic planning and programming based literally on the abstract notion of free trade, on the so-called free interplay of global market forces unmindful of the impact of such interplay on people's lives and jobs. Putting people at the center means there should be policy coherence in terms of economic, social, labour and, yes, environmental policies. Putting people at the center means there should be policy coherence at the national, regional and global levels.
- Putting people at the center means the global and regional financial institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and ADB should likewise change their lending policies by adopting the above principles as lending guidelines. Lending should be in support of people's development and capacity building, not lending to squeeze developing countries further through onerous debt obligations and policy conditionalities.
- There should be bolder and more pro-people reforms in the financial system at the national, regional and global levels. The primary purpose of financial institutions must be to provide responsible and sustainable financial services for society, not to make profits for shareholders. This means bringing back the original purpose of banking as a mediator of financial service in support of productive consumption, production, and circulation in the economy. There should be greater transparency in the operations and supervision of financial institutions, which can be achieved at minimal cost if the financial employees and their unions are mobilized for this purpose. One approach is the taxation of short-term selling as such activity is

obviously speculative and subversive of economic stability; on the other hand, society can provide incentives to investments that are truly directed towards job-creating productive activities.

- ISDS: Adopt the recommendation made by UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable international order Alfred de Zayas for States to abolish the ISDS system and put in place alternative mechanisms to resolve investment disputes such as : state-to-state dispute settlement; international collaboration to strengthen domestic legal systems.

- **On the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP)**

- Public disclosure of negotiating texts of RCEP and free trade and investment agreements. Make available to the public information about the status of the negotiations and adequate details of government positions.
- Put in place mechanisms for genuine public participation and inputs into the negotiating process. Conduct independent social, economic, environmental, and human rights impact assessments for these trade agreements. Put in place stronger mechanisms for Parliamentary scrutiny and inputs into the negotiating process.
- Roles of special interest groups in the process are made public, including publicly available information on number and participants of meeting, written communications and positions on advisory boards.

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