

Adenauer Young Leaders' Blueprints for Change

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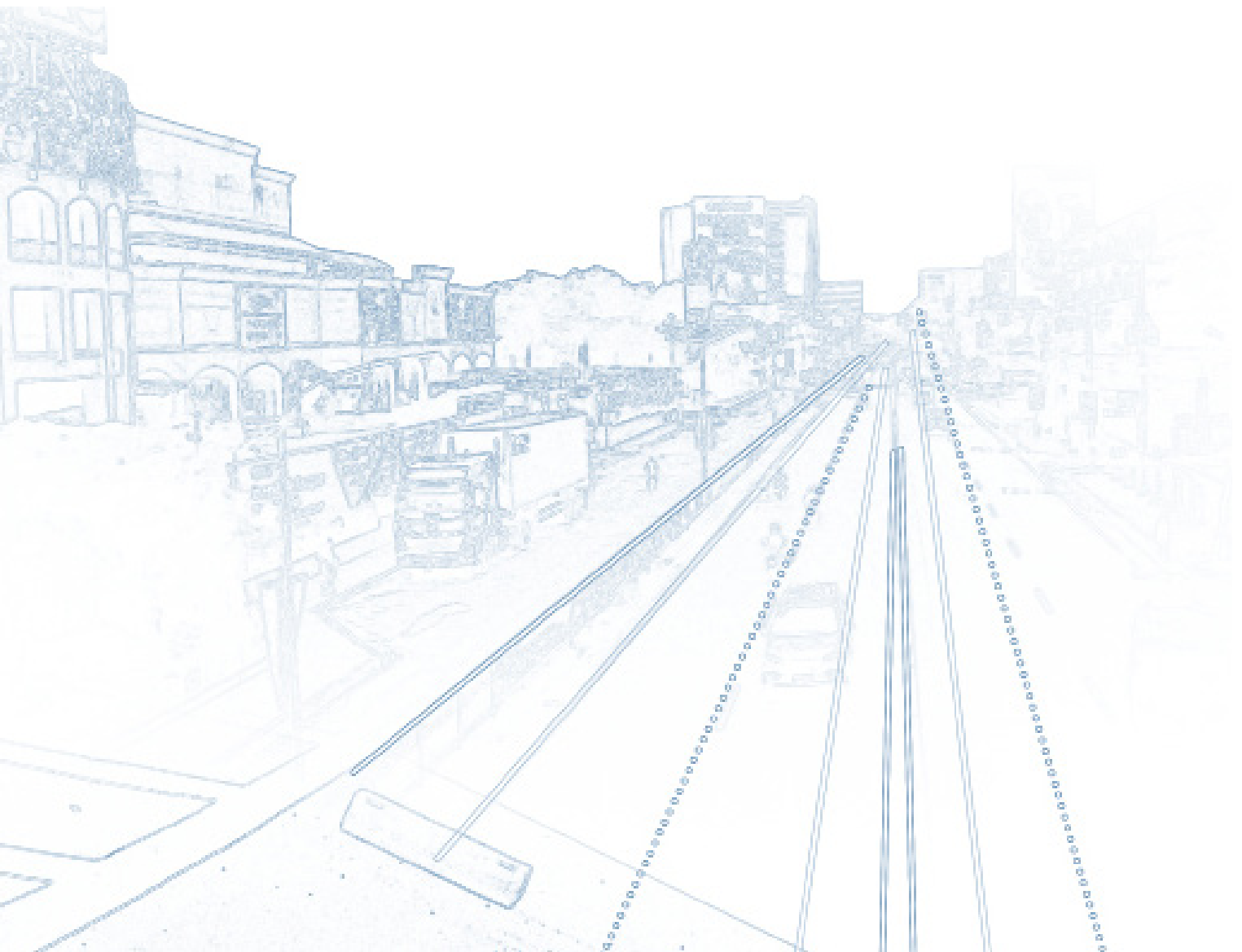


KASama Ka

Adenauer Young Leaders' Blueprints for Change

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About the Publication

KASama Ka (*Together with You*) is a Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Philippines publication featuring a collection of policy briefs from the Adenauer Young Leaders Program fellows. This collection stems from the comprehensive policy creation and lobbying session, where fellows actively articulate their ideas, insights, and actionable policy recommendations on select issues in their communities, groups, and organizations.

KAS Philippines hopes that KASama Ka will serve as invaluable reference material for young leaders and passionate individuals who want to facilitate necessary policy reforms to drive positive and meaningful change in their communities.

In its first edition, the publication addresses the fellows' various challenges. It draws inspiration from the maiden batch of the Adenauer Young Leaders Program.

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Foreword

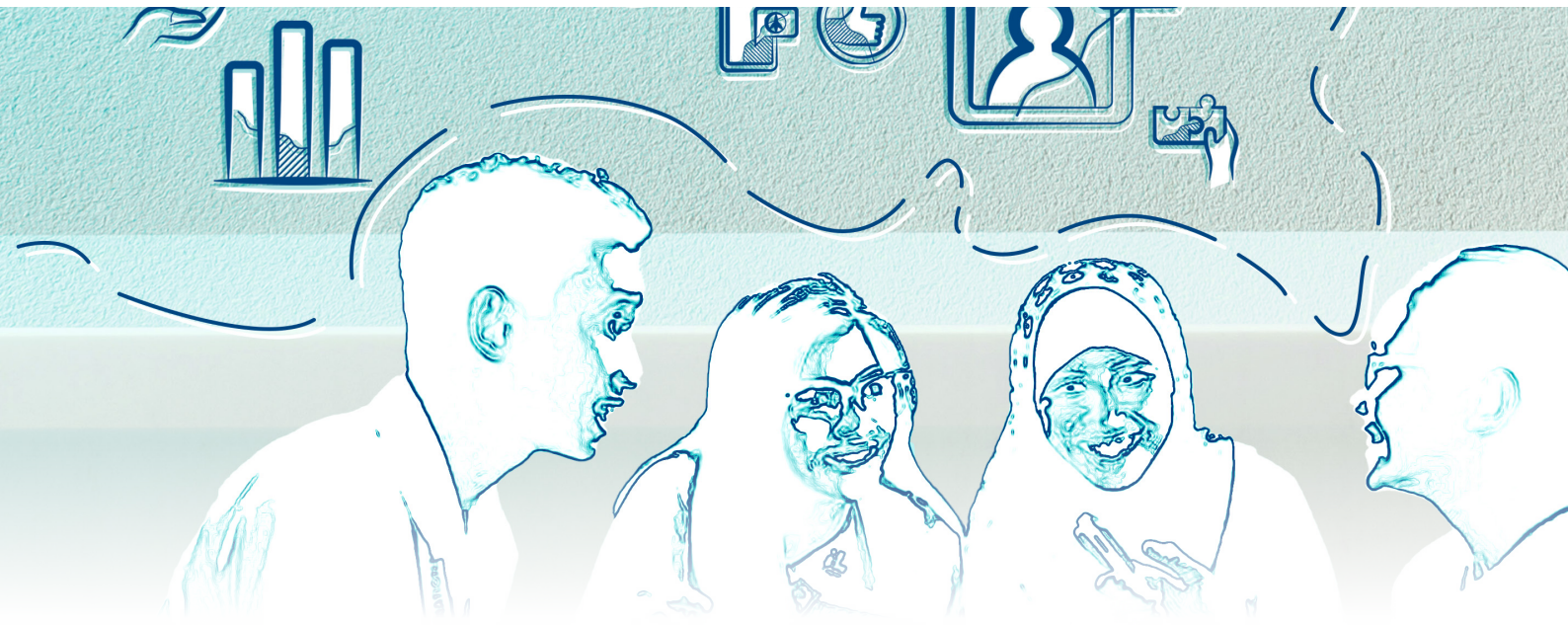
KASama Ka

by Daniela Braun

Young people represent not only the future but are also a vital force in shaping the present. Worldwide and across generations, youth have driven change, challenged norms, and built the foundations for social, political, and economic progress. We at Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung are deeply committed to investing in and empowering the young generation to uphold strong democratic systems and to build inclusive and prosperous societies. Empowering the youth means capacitating them with the necessary tools to ensure they have a meaningful say in decisions that shape their lives. In an era defined by rapid technological progress, global interconnectedness, and pressing challenges like rising geopolitical tensions and climate change, the importance of youth empowerment has never been more pronounced.

The Philippines is considered one of the youngest countries in the world, with almost 30 percent of the Philippine population comprised of youth. They are a powerful political force in shaping the future of the nation. Working with Filipino youth and helping them make a meaningful impact on political decisions is high on our agenda. In this context, the Adenauer Young Leaders Program (AYLP) is our flagship initiative. Every year, we look for young talents who are already taking over responsibility in their organizations and communities and willing to step up and work toward a resilient and inclusive democratic society. This intense leadership journey aims to capacitate young people with the necessary skills to make their voices heard in political, economic, and societal decision-making. With AYLP, we want to prepare young individuals to become responsible models of citizenship and holistic and effective leaders.





A critical component of AYLP is learning how to craft effective policies to contribute to solving real-world problems. Questions like who the target audience is and how to formulate actionable policy recommendations are important to consider when bringing policy solutions forward. In this regard, we are very proud to present KASama Ka, the collection of the policy briefs of the AYLP Batch 2 fellows. The topics of the briefs are diverse, but I believe they are all making meaningful contributions to strengthening inclusive economic development and democracy.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our authors and AYLP fellows for their contributions and for making this project successful. This publication could not have been possible without the expertise and guidance of Ms. Maxine Tanya Hamada. Thank you very much to Tanya for her work and dedication. In addition, I extend my appreciation and gratitude to our very own Jerome Jogno, program manager for leadership and strategic communication at KAS Philippines, for his passion and hard work on AYLP and this project. Furthermore, we are very grateful to Project LegisLahok as an outcome of our inaugural AYLP and their team members Michelle Cabillan, Atty. Reynold Orsua, and Edu Macabatas. Their project became the impetus for us to include policy creation and lobbying as an integral part of AYLP.

As you delve into this publication, I hope it encourages you to consider the voice of the youth and to help bring the proposed recommendations into action. Let us continue to work toward youth empowerment—not just as a goal but as a fundamental principle of our shared commitment to democracy, freedom, and peace.

Thank you and I wish you an inspiring read!



Introduction

Jerome Jogno

The challenges communities face today are complex, varied, and deeply entrenched. We at KAS Philippines are committed to helping solve these myriad challenges, and when they seem too much to handle, we remember why we are doing what we are doing.

At the height of the pandemic, KAS Philippines envisioned a room filled with young leaders from all walks of life, each carrying their perspectives, advocacies, and desires to improve things. While they are unique, one thing unites them: their passion for solving the challenges that have long plagued their communities. These young individuals are not seasoned policymakers or veteran politicians. They are young leaders who believe they can spark the change they want in their organizations, groups, and communities.

Political participation of young Filipinos

Political participation of young people in the Philippines is more crucial than ever. In the 2023 - 2028 Philippine Youth Development Plan, the vision for the youth is to be “represented in adult-dominated decision-making structures at local and national levels, and more young women assume leadership roles and responsibilities in youth and community-based organizations.”¹ In the 2020 Census of Population and Housing, 31.4 million Filipinos belong to the age group 15 to 30 years old.² This is equivalent to 28.9% of the Philippine population. These numbers are crucial

as individuals of this age range are qualified to vote for the Sangguniang Kabataan (local youth council). In the 2022 Philippine National and Local Elections, there are 21.6 million registered youth voters, 16.9 million of whom cast their votes, equivalent to 78.3% voter turnout for the age group.³ If this magnitude of people unites and form a bloc voting or the “youth vote,” they could easily send a candidate straight to Malacañang.

Young Filipinos have their fair share of monumental episodes in the annals of Philippine history. Jose

Rizal wrote the *Noli Me Tángere* at 25; Andres Bonifacio founded the Katipunan at 29; Emilio Jacinto became the lead thinker of Katipunan at 20; Gregorio del Pilar became a general at 24; Gregoria de Jesus joined the 1896 struggle at 21; and Emilio Aguinaldo assumed the presidency at 29. Young Filipinos have also been at the forefront of social movements, from the First Quarter Storm to the EDSA Revolution and from the EDSA II Uprising to peace rallies.^{4,5}

Participation, then and now

However, observers have stated the contrasting differences in youth political participation. The dysfunction of contemporary politics and the absence of large, compelling collective projects have driven young people away from traditional politics into less formal, more voluntary, and more effective channels.⁶ Young people's disengagement from the conventional political system can also result from their perception that traditional politics is corrupt, ineffective, and unrelated to their more profound ideals.^{7,8} Other literature explains that modernization affects the young generation's value orientation, and they participate in new, self-organizing, and self-expressive forms of participation.⁹ What is common among the studies reviewed points to how young people today prefer issue-based lifestyle politics¹⁰ and personalized politics of expressive engagement.^{11,12,13}

Other voices note that young Filipinos provide mixed results on whether they are critical or apathetic toward politics. Young Filipinos know how politicians use politics and the young generation to pursue their interests. There are contrived steps toward meaningful youth participation, and young Filipinos are only given the rhetoric and motherhood promises during campaign sorties and rallies. On the contrary, these venues for participation also serve as a point for young Filipinos to learn and participate in political acts. Cabo (2018, 259) argues that young Filipino students who participated in monitoring campaign finance for the 2013 Philippine Midterm Election expressed the need for a critical voter to decide the country's fate.¹⁴ Direct engagement with the youth and cultivating values where young people thrive, e.g., classroom, workplace, and home, can

effectively empower them.

Social forces shaping participation

Previous research attributes numerous social forces transforming Philippine society to shaping Filipino youth. These social tragedies influence the kind and depth of involvement in political processes and activities. The first is the economic uncertainties and well-entrenched poverty that remain one of the formidable challenges confronting young Filipinos. Many young Filipinos drop out of school due to financial problems and must work early to alleviate their families' financial situation. Their aspirations to move within society and obtain a quality life are frustrated by the availability of tenured jobs, meager labor rights and benefits, and income inequality.¹⁵

Second is the modernization and loosening of traditional values. Modernization gives way to changes from traditional to secondary institutions and accompanying changes in society's sociopolitical structures and cultural values. Information and communications technology enables low-cost and barrier-free interconnectedness that generates mechanisms that effectively penetrate the traditional spatial boundaries fortified by families and religion. Social media platforms have paved the way for the re-conceptualization of political engagement, especially among youth.¹⁶ Cyberspace-mediated technologies undermine traditional values by countervailing values opposed to the ideologies disseminated by families, schools, and religious institutions. With the advent of globalization, mass media are increasingly making their way into youth cultures and subcultures. The digitization of information and its consequences for knowledge production and the perception of space are rapidly altering the landscape of Filipino youth culture.

The third is the international migration and restructuring of the Filipino family. Almost ten percent of the Philippine population works abroad. Many contemporary young Filipinos grew up with a family member living or working abroad.¹⁷ Overseas Filipino parents are now raising their families beyond the usual boundaries, affecting how collective memories are shared and how

young Filipinos, during their formative years, socialize and learn about politics. Young Filipinos rely on their peers and the mass and digital media to educate and guide them as they traverse political life.

Lastly, young Filipinos nourished a sense of political detachment in their communities and largely in the whole country.¹⁸ The political reality in the Philippines, where elites dominate politics and dynasties consolidate powers in their hands, made young Filipinos feel helpless and powerless. The persistence of political dynasties can also bring adverse effects on Philippine development. For Purdey, Encarnacion-Tadem, and Tadem (2016, 5), political dynasties breed incoherent economic policy that has stunted the development of a strong state apparatus and policies created to favor the vested interest of those who are in power.¹⁹ The Filipino society will consequently steer toward political delay and insulate the nation-state from the people it serves if structural, political, and electoral reforms are not instituted. Thus, non-participation in politics can be the most moral decision for some young Filipinos.

The confluence of social and institutional factors forces individuals to navigate everyday life and create a unique behavior that best suits them. Young Filipinos often deploy personalized politics that appeal to their everyday experience rather than the spectacular expressions of politics.²⁰ These are often observed through young people's adherence to ethical lifestyles and consumer activism, including using environmentally friendly and sustainably produced products. Young Filipinos also devote time to joining volunteering activities to help poor communities and raising awareness of derogatory practices in schools and workplaces. Many young Filipinos also use the internet and social media platforms to express their positions on crucial political topics or their advocacies. However, their political engagements online do not significantly increase political efficacy.²¹

Now, what?

We can harness young people's participation by creating spaces that prepare them to become competent adults and co-authors in transforming

and evolving democracy, rather than treating them as mere statistics for measuring political engagement. The participation of young people is quintessential to the functioning of democracy. It allows the youth to communicate their needs and desires to the government. Their engagement in political life can affect the political processes and outcomes, including the attitudes of decision-makers and policymakers, implementation of public policies, and expression in support of or against the outcome of public policies and government processes. Casting their votes does not put an end to young Filipinos' political right. They, too, can be involved in many aspects of political participation, including writing a policy proposal and lobbying it to decision-makers.

Youth advocacy meets policy making

Young leaders are deeply aware of their communities' challenges—access to education, climate change, youth unemployment—and are eager to contribute to the solutions. The challenge, however, is to find a channel to turn their passion into tangible actions. This is where the policy brief becomes an effective tool, offering young leaders a platform to fill the gap between advocacy and meaningful change. KAS Philippines finds it essential for young leaders to improve their policymaking and lobbying skills to advocate for their causes as future leaders in their communities. This medium allows young leaders to communicate with stakeholders and offer actionable solutions to decision-makers that they can consider.

KASama Ka features the works of Adenauer Young Fellows and the change they want to see. The projects inspired this initiative during the Adenauer Young Leaders Program (AYLP) Batch 1. The AYLP Batch 1 Project KASama Ka inspired the title. AYLP Batch 1 Project LegisLahok inspired the policy creation and lobbying course, whose primary goal is to empower young leaders across the Philippines and improve their policymaking and lobbying skills.

As readers of this publication, you play an essential role in ensuring that these policy briefs are more than idle electronic resources available on the web. Whether you are a government official, a

civil society advocate, or an engaged citizen, the ideas presented by the authors offer solutions to the most pressing issues facing their communities, which could reflect the contextual issues present in your community. More importantly, the authors showcase the voices of young people invested in the future of the Philippines—individuals who refuse to wait for change to arrive at their doorstep.

Consider this publication as a call to action. If you are a decision-maker, we urge you to take these briefs as an impetus to drive positive change in your community. Reach out to our alumni, engage with them, and explore how we can replicate their ideas in your local context. If you are an engaged

public, share these ideas with others, discuss them in your communities, and consider how they might address your challenges.

The future of political participation of young Filipinos rests on how different factors align and shape the behavior and attitudes of our young ones. However, at KAS Philippines, we contribute to shaping the discourse, providing avenues such as the *KASama Ka* for young leaders to be empowered and get their ideas out to the public. No matter how volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous the period we live in, we shine the light of hope for young people to be inspired again to change society in partnership with KAS Philippines.

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Kabataang EntrePinoy

Mark Anthony Angeles

The Kabataang EntrePinoy policy aims to empower Malabon City's youth by fostering entrepreneurship, addressing unemployment, and promoting self-reliance. Through tailored training programs, business incubation centers, and collaborations with local businesses and government agencies, the initiative seeks to cultivate a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, leading to economic growth and job creation for the city's youth.

Malabon City's youth face a core issue: more economic opportunities. High unemployment and limited access to skills training and entrepreneurial resources mark this need, which hinders their potential to contribute to the local economy and achieve financial independence.

Imagine graduating full of hopes and dreams but struggling to find a good job in your city. That is the reality for many youth in Malabon. It is not because they are not talented or hard-working but because they often need more tools to succeed. Traditional jobs might be scarce and starting a business can feel overwhelming without the right skills. This lack of opportunity can lead to frustration and even hold back the city's potential.

Per Figure 1, my research shows a gradual decline in youth labor force participation over the specified period in the Philippines. Despite the decrease in labor force participation, the employment rate has remained relatively high, indicating a substantial portion of youth in the workforce. There has been a notable decrease in underemployment among youth, which suggests an improvement in the quality of employment or better skill matching to jobs.

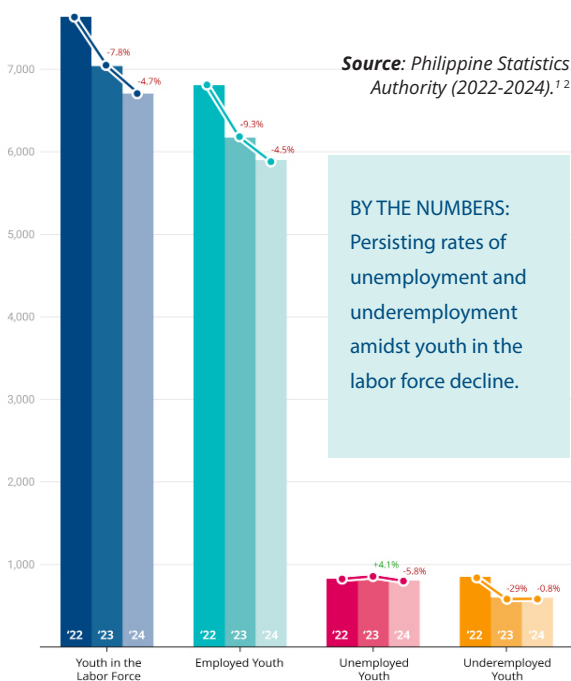


Figure 1. Key Employment Indicators of Youth Population (15-24 years old, Philippines).

The unemployment rate among youth has experienced fluctuations, with a slight increase in August 2023 compared to the previous year. In 2022, Malabon City had an unemployment rate of 8.7%, with approximately 14,000 unemployed individuals.³ The city has a significant youth

population, with the 20-24 age group having the highest number of residents. This number indicates a sizable pool of young people potentially contributing to the workforce, startup ecosystem, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) or facing unemployment challenges.⁴

Youth Entrepreneurs in Action

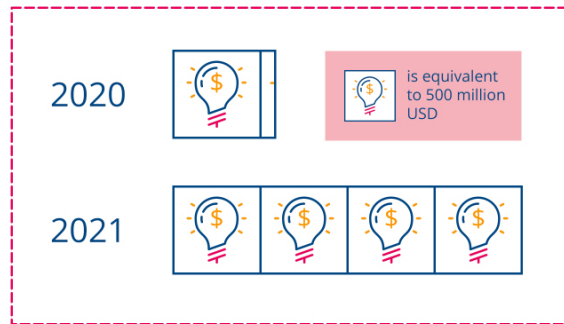


Figure 2. Total Value of the Startup Ecosystem in the Philippines in 2020 and 2021 (in million U.S. Dollars).

Figure 2 shows that the startup ecosystem in the Philippines has seen a remarkable surge in value over the past few years, reflecting the country's vibrant entrepreneurial spirit and the increasing support from both the government and private sectors. According to data from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Startup Genome, the total value of the Philippine startup ecosystem witnessed extraordinary growth from 2020 to 2021.

The Philippine startup ecosystem's meteoric rise from \$584 million in 2020 to \$2 billion in 2021 highlights the Philippines as an emerging hub for innovation and entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia. This growth will require continued investment, supportive policies, and a solid commitment to fostering innovation.

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a potent tool for economic empowerment, especially among the youth. Figure 3 shows the distribution of MSMEs across various sectors from 2020 to 2022 in the Philippines, underscored by these businesses' critical role in the national economy. This trend is particularly relevant for the youth of Malabon City, where leveraging top industry sectors can create substantial economic opportunities, create community opportunities, and drive community development.

By fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and providing the necessary support and resources, Malabon City can become a hub of innovation and economic activity driven by its young population. For instance, the Quezon City Youth Development Office (QCYDO) has fostered youth engagement and empowerment through various initiatives, mainly focusing on entrepreneurship. In 2023, the QCYDO's efforts have significantly impacted the youth community, serving as a model for other cities, including Malabon City.

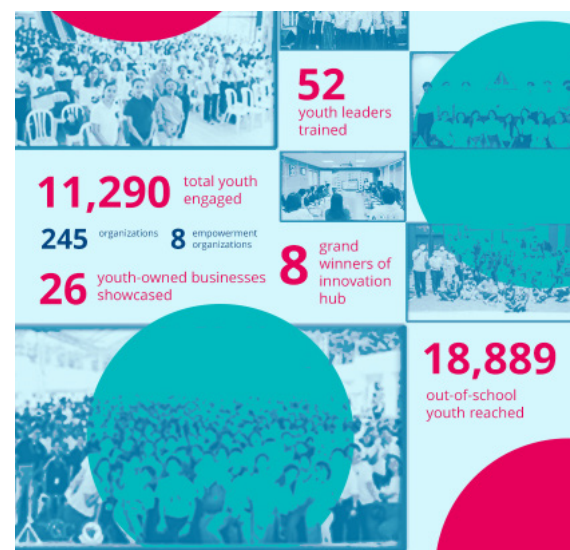


Figure 4. QCYDO Key Achievements in 2023.

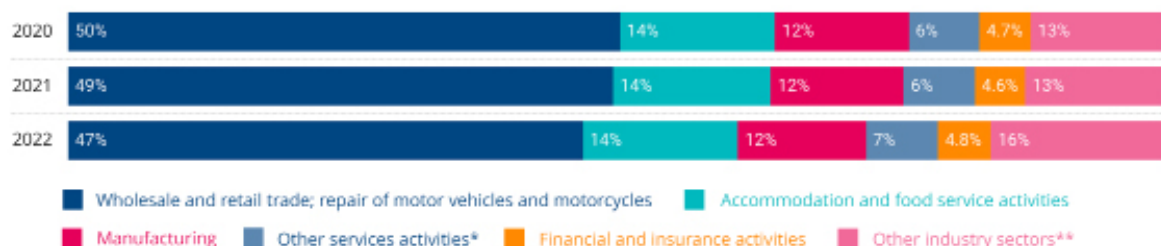




Figure 3. Distribution of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in the Philippines from 2020 to 2022 by Sector (in percentage).


The initiatives and programs implemented by the QCYDO shown in Figure 4 highlight the immense potential of youth entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and community development. By adopting and adapting these successful models, Malabon City can empower its youth, foster a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, and pave the way for sustainable economic empowerment and development. The QCYDO team could visit the Local Youth Development Office (LYDO) in Malabon City to provide motivation and demonstrate that Kabataang EntrePinoy can be implemented successfully in Malabon City.

Kabataang EntrePinoy will work closely with the Malabon City Youth Development Office, Office of the Sangguniang Bayan, and the Office of the City Mayor through Mayor Jeannie Sandoval. To ensure Kabataang EntrePinoy's success, we will collaborate with young entrepreneurs in Malabon City and nearby cities, local businesses, government agencies, the private sector, and the broader community.




Policy Recommendations

Implementing the "Kabataang EntrePinoy" policy in Malabon City aims to foster economic opportunities among the youth through entrepreneurship. The policy recommends specific actions to address youth unemployment and promote self-reliance among youth.

-  Launch an entrepreneurship program tailored for Malabon City youth, focusing on business management, financial literacy, and marketing skills. Costs include curriculum development, training facilities, and instructor honorarium.
-  Establish a youth business incubation center to provide resources such as mentorship, access to funding, and networking opportunities for young entrepreneurs.

-  Collaborate with local businesses and government agencies to create job opportunities and support youth-led enterprises.

Timeline

-  **Month 6:** Program development and launch, establishment of the incubation center.
-  **Year 1:** Implementation of training programs, mentorship, and networking events.
-  **Continuous:** Monitoring and evaluation, adjustments to the program based on feedback and outcomes.

Kabataang EntrePinoy will drive significant growth in youth-led businesses, creating jobs and fostering economic development in Malabon City. The program will increase youth participation in the local business community, fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem. Enhancing confidence and skills among young people will promote self-reliance and a sense of achievement. Additionally, the initiative aims to reduce youth unemployment rates by encouraging more young individuals to start their businesses or find employment through partnerships with local enterprises. Key stakeholders benefiting from this policy include young entrepreneurs, local businesses, government agencies, and the broader community.

Program development and implementation will incur initial costs of PHP 50,000, with ongoing operational expenses depending on the scale of activities. The Kabataang EntrePinoy policy aims to transform Malabon City's youth landscape by empowering young people to become successful entrepreneurs, creating jobs, and fostering a thriving local business community.

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Youth Participation in Governance in the Bangsamoro

Aira Hazna M. Ampatuan, LPT

Youth participation in governance is essential for fostering inclusive and sustainable development in any society, particularly in regions with complex socio-political landscapes such as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The youth in BARMM plays a significant role through the creation of youth-led councils and empowerment of the Sangguniang Kabataan. This policy brief examines the current challenges hindering youth involvement in governance within the Bangsamoro region.

The Problem

Youth participation in governance in the Bangsamoro region still needs to be improved. Youth are often excluded from key decision-making processes at the local and regional levels, leading to a need for more representation of youth perspectives in policy formulation and implementation.

Existing platforms for youth engagement in governance are often insufficient or inaccessible, limiting opportunities for meaningful participation.¹ The Bangsamoro Youth Transition Priority Agenda (BYTPA) advances that the involvement of youth must increase in the local development councils and in other special bodies or committees. Their participation should not be limited to voter's registration and the elections.

Many local government units (LGUs) in the country still lack the creation of local youth development councils (LYDCs). The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Memorandum Circular 2017-36 mandates all provincial governors and city and municipal mayors to create local youth development office (LYDO) in every province, city, and municipality.² Anchored to the Republic Act 10742, otherwise known as the Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015, the LYDO functions to provide technical assistance to the LYDC in the formulation of local youth development plan, facilitate the election of LYDC representatives, and serve as the secretariat to the LYDC.



In the context of BARMM, the Bangsamoro Government, through the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act No. 10, established the creation of the Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC). BYC serves as the primary policymaking and coordinating body of the Bangsamoro Government in all matters affecting the youth. Its mandates include ensuring compliance by all ministries, agencies, and offices that are mandated to implement programs, projects, and activities affecting the youth in the region. BYC has the power to accredit, register, and oversee youth organizations and youth-serving organizations within the Bangsamoro region, and/or facilitate in their establishment.³ Since 2021, the Commission has over 500 accredited youth organizations all over BARMM.

Through the BYC, opportunities on youth development and leadership skills became a reality through the support of various ministries, civil society organizations, and even local to international non-government organizations. Although, there is still a need for continued alignment of programs and services, expectation setting, and dynamic engagement between the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) and LYDCs; with the help of BYC, fostering stronger coordination and collaboration between these youth-led platforms can be possible and easier.⁴

The Current Youth Situationer

The National Youth Commission (NYC), through its National Youth Assessment Study (NYAS), surveyed in 2021 around 4,100 youth between the ages 15 and 30 years old all over the country to get their pulse on the importance of the SK. The results showed that 91.3% are currently registered voters and 67.64% believe that SK is important. Through the SK Reform Act of 2015, the SK comprises youth in the ages between 18 – 24, elected to deliver youth-focused services in the community. It is tasked to initiate programs for the development of young people and to establish adequate, effective, responsive, and enabling mechanisms and support systems that empower the youth and ensure their meaningful participation in governance and nation-building.⁵

SK officials have involved more young people in their programs and activities. The results of the NYAS 2021 reflected in the Philippine Youth Development Plan 2023-2028 found that young people's participation in decision-making is relatively high at home and school—78.7% at home, 69.8% in school, 60.6% in school organizations, 34.6% in community or in the barangay, 40% at work, and 57% in youth groups.⁶

In the context of BARMM, governance as a youth participation track is more than voter's registration and voting during elections. Young people's participation is also crucial in local development councils and other special bodies designated for their sector. The BYTPA envisions the creation of an enabling environment for youth participation in local and special bodies from barangay to regional levels.

With the support from the Ministry of Interior and Local Government (MILG), the BARMM's counterpart to DILG, LGUs have either appointed or designated local youth development officers in their respective localities, increased accreditation and registration of youth organizations to BYC, and have organized their SK Federation and LYDC as one indicator for youth development in the city and municipal levels. BYC, MILG, and NYC have consistently held council meetings and capacity-building trainings with the SK Federation Presidents, local youth development officers, and representatives from LYDCs since 2022.

In May 2024, BYC has established its Regional Youth Advisory Council (RYAC) through the election of its members during the 1st Regional Youth Assembly (RYA). The RYAC serves as an advisory and consultative council, ensuring the effective execution of the Commission's mandates and functions as a policy-making body and coordinating on matters affecting the Bangsamoro youth. The RYAC is headed by BYC's Chairperson, and its Executive Director shall act as the Secretariat. The council will comprise fourteen (14) members elected by RYA. Seven (7) members will come from the mainland provinces of Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, and Lanao del Sur; while the other seven are from the island provinces of

Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. Council members are selected from various sub-sectoral categories of the youth, including LGUs, women, traditional leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs), Bangsamoro communities outside BARMM, religious leaders, and youth organizations.⁷

Policy Recommendations

This policy brief shall ensure that the RYAC is an effective platform for advocating youth needs and concerns while fostering stakeholder collaboration and dialogue. I propose institutionalizing RYAC to enhance access and sectoral representation of Bangsamoro youth. An institutionalized RYAC shall amplify the Bangsamoro youth's voices and allow them to participate effectively in the government's decision-making processes.

Institutionalizing RYAC will also ensure continuous monitoring of BYC's formulation and issuance of youth-related policies, programs, standards, rules, and guidelines. It will also drive BYC to recommend and lobby relevant policy agenda centered on youth promotion and development.⁸ RYAC, together with BYC, will be responsible for promoting and advocating resolutions to other BARMM ministries and agencies and monitoring their implementation.⁹ An institutionalized RYAC will enhance sectoral representation, giving space to sub-sectors of the Bangsamoro youth population. I recommend establishing a formal mechanism to lobby and advocate the policy agenda directly with BARMM Ministries, LGUs, and international partners to support this enhanced representation.

Further, through the RYAC, this policy will be an effective mechanism for the stakeholders in the

Bangsamoro Government to identify policies at the regional and local level that will empower LGUs supportive of youth involvement in LYDCs and other committees. The policy will also identify spaces for young people at the regional and barangay levels and set up guidelines that will empower young people to participate in these spaces actively. Although the council has established functions, BYC still has to improve its monitoring of the RYAC engagement with the sub-sectors of the youth, including the meetings and consultations conducted, the lobbying of policy agenda, and their coordination with LGUs, especially on advocating more youth-led programs in the municipal, city, and provincial level. A joint memorandum circular or an executive order with the MILG could reinforce the effectiveness of RYAC members in having a direct seat in the decision-making process involving youth concerns.

The expected outcomes shall be the institutionalization of RYAC's regular engagements with LGUs and partner agencies to discuss youth-related concerns. It will lead to increased adoption of youth-led policies from the local and regional levels addressing employment, climate action, disaster preparedness, and peacebuilding; strengthened partnerships with stakeholders in implementing youth development programs; council members serving as advocates of respective sectors and fostering inclusive participation in governance; and lastly, timely and data-driven monitoring collaboration of RYAC operations with BYC on initiatives aligned with the Commission's mandates. An effective implementation of youth-led policies shall promote participatory governance and foster sustainable development for the Bangsamoro youth.

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Primary Care Workers as Effective Patient Navigators:

An Unmet Government Duty

Vincent Schubert R. Malbas, MD; John Lemuel M. Dalisay; Gloria Nenita V. Velasco, MD

Following the Mandanas-Garcia ruling of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, local governments play a key role in managing the devolution of health services to cities and municipalities, with some developing or adopting electronic referral systems that help patients navigate primary, secondary, and tertiary care. A well-implemented patient navigation and referral system is critical for utilizing resources efficiently and ensuring optimal care at the appropriate level. From a patient experience perspective, primary care workers can serve as effective patient navigators by enhancing patients' abilities to access healthcare. However, they remain limited by systemic barriers such as infrastructure and financial challenges.

In 2005, the World Health Assembly defined Universal Health Coverage as: “access to key promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative health interventions for all at an affordable cost, thereby achieving equity in access.” One of the two general objectives of Universal Health Care (UHC) in the Philippines, as interpreted in Republic Act 11223, is to “ensure that all Filipinos are guaranteed **equitable access** to quality and affordable health care goods and services.”

However, equitable access remains an elusive crux in the Philippine context. Despite the foundations built by the *whole-of-system, whole-of-government approach* of the UHC Act, many persistent frustrations continually hinder a patient’s healthcare experience, stemming from the health worker, the facility, and the local policy environment. Challenges continue impacting patient perceptions following interactions with their local health system.¹ The challenges identified include a breakdown of the patient navigation and referral system and a loss of distinction between levels of care (i.e., patients go to the hospital

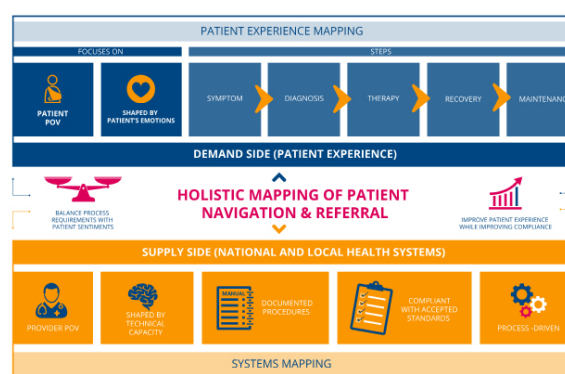


Figure 1. Mapping the Patient Experience in the Health Sector.

even if the primary level of care can and should address their illness). In addition, long waiting times, lack of information about available services, overcrowding, lack of amenities, understaffing, and privacy and confidentiality concerns taken lightly round up these challenges. Governments must constantly meet the dynamic needs of both the demand side (patient experience) and the supply side (national and local health systems), preferably without significant compromises on either side (Figure 1).

Patient Navigation

To ameliorate the patient's experience, the Department of Health (DOH) outlined in its Administrative Order No. 2020-0024 the creation of a health system in which the primary or the first contact level acts as the **navigator, coordinator, and initial and continuing point of contact** within the healthcare delivery system.² UHC Act envisions primary care as the first contact level, while a standardized referral system plays a vital role in the patient's wellness journey. This referral system is typically pyramidal (Figure 2). Providing as much care as possible at the first point of contact remains the key to integrating a local health system. From an individual's perspective, primary care shall have services for most health conditions, while referral mechanisms are in place that encourage continuity across levels of care.

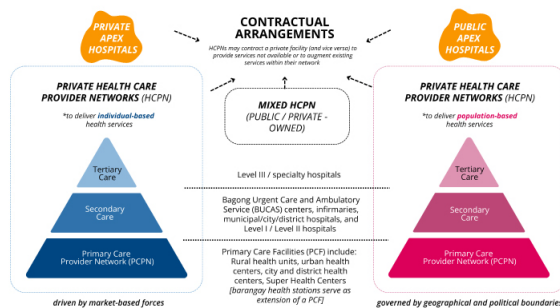


Figure 2. Referral System Embedded in the Model Health Care Provider Network (DOH 2020).³

From a systems perspective, establishing an **effective patient navigation and referral system falls under the purview of the local government unit (LGU)**. The Implementing Rules and Regulations of Executive Order No. 138, Series of 2021, or the Devolution Transition Plan to implement the Mandanas-Garcia ruling of the Supreme Court, outlined that “primary health care” and “access to secondary and tertiary health services” are among the services devolved to cities and municipalities. Meanwhile, LGU at the provincial level takes custody of hospitals and tertiary health services.⁴ All of these are by the Local Government Code of 1991.

Policy Recommendations

Enhancing patient navigation and referral systems

at the local level is essential for improving healthcare access. I propose the following policy recommendations to provide practical steps for city, municipal, and provincial LGUs to streamline coordination and ensure timely healthcare delivery.

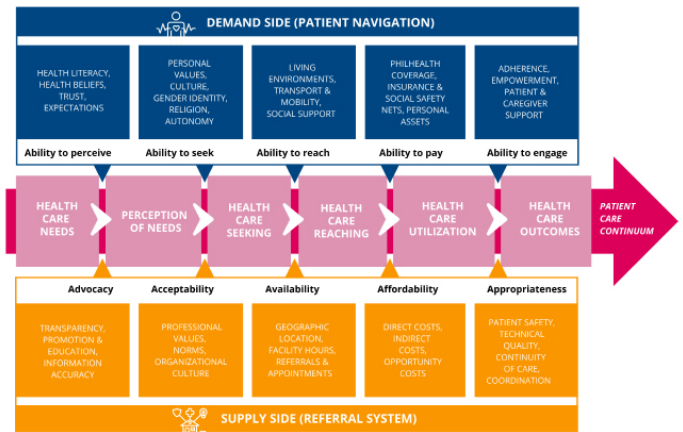


Figure 3. Personal abilities versus system enablers to health care access in the Philippines.


☒ **Train personnel in primary care facility to act as effective patient navigators.** Primary care workers may be doctors, nurses, midwives, or any health or non-health staff, and they can become effective patient navigators. A patient navigator's actions can directly address the personal abilities shaping the patient's experience (Figure 3).⁵

☒ **Train barangay workers as barangay level patient navigator.** Barangay workers, especially barangay health workers (BHW) and nutrition scholars, are empowered by the UHC Act to become ‘community health education and promotion officers’ and can act as effective barangay-level patient navigators. By completing their training on the BHW Reference Manual,⁶ they would be equipped with the basic knowledge and skills in patient navigation, knowing the most common illnesses and conditions that need referral, and performing first aid before referring the patient to the facility.

☒ **Earmark local budget for patient navigation & referral operations.** Under the UHC Act, Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) 2021-0001, issued by the Department of Health, Department of Budget and Management, Department of

Finance, Department of the Interior and Local Government, and PhilHealth guides the use of the LGU's Special Health Fund. The JMC empowers the LGU to **dedicate a portion of their Special Health Fund** specifically for information technology and equipment for health facilities, as well as for training and capacity-building activities to ensure efficient and effective delivery of health services.⁷ These allocations shall be determined and approved by their respective provincial/ city local health boards and are consistent with Section 20.2 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the UHC Act.

For this purpose, **formally establishing a Patient Navigation and Referral Unit (PNRU) at the province or city level** will strengthen the referral link between primary care facilities and LGU-owned hospitals within the territory. The Unit shall also function to ensure seamless coordination with DOH-retained apex hospitals and national specialty centers organized under the DOH National Patient Navigation & Referral System in DOH Administrative Order No. 2022-0210,⁸ previously known as the One Hospital Command System during the COVID-19 pandemic.

 **Champion health digitalization efforts at the local government level, to catch up with other provinces and other countries.** The UHC

Act mandates the implementation of an integrated health information system (IHIS) to ensure the accessibility of electronic medical records (EMR)/ electronic health records (EHR) across the referral system. Recognizing the importance of IHIS at the local level, DOH issued Department Circular 2023-0213, which emphasizes the **right of LGUs and healthcare facilities to select their preferred IHIS/EMR/ EHR provider or develop their own** based on their specific needs and requirements. The national government further intends to assist local health systems by seeking consultations and establishing regulations to harmonize health data standards.⁹

Likewise, the UHC Act calls for a whole-of-society approach to addressing existing health sector gaps. The LGU must, therefore, **encourage collaborations with external partners, including the academe and private sector**, to become active co-participants in health sector development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

If the reader is interested in exploring this topic further, the South Cotabato Province-wide Health System Referral Manual is a useful Philippine model for implementing a patient navigation and referral system integrated into a province-wide health system. The manual was published in 2024 by the University of the Philippines Press (ISBN 978-621-8112-10-0). Please contact the author for further details on securing a copy.

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Dr. Apple Grace Bonhoc, Rod Charlie Delos Reyes, and Jhon Marvin Surio

Current Realities

social, health, educational, and employment services. However, the law does not explicitly address the needs of children with language problems, as speech therapy and daycare services for children with disabilities are the only services related to speech and language impairment.

Early detection is critical for optimal outcomes in children with communication disorders. Despite the availability of information, delayed diagnosis persists due to limited awareness and weak implementation of relevant policies, such as the Republic Act 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. Without systematic services and educational programs, many children remain untreated, impacting their mental health, social well-being, and academic performance.⁴

This policy brief proposes a behavioural approach using a firm nudge to address the gap in the parents' and caregivers' health-seeking behaviour geared toward early diagnosis. Increasing awareness and education on the importance of early detection and intervention can significantly improve health outcomes for children with communication disorders.

The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons stipulates that non-disabled and disabled Filipinos have the same rights and privileges and seeks to equalize opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to participate in development activities by providing



Policy Recommendations

We propose using personalized prompts (behavioural nudges) to encourage parents to proactively monitor their children’s communication milestones. The objectives are to:

- ☑ Increase early detection of communication disorders;
- ☑ Improve parental awareness and health-seeking behaviour; and
- ☑ Strengthen the implementation of child development policies.

The personalized prompt system will be developed and widely adopted to attain higher rates of early diagnosis and intervention for communication disorders, leading to improved developmental, social, and academic outcomes for affected Filipino children. Furthermore, the policy anticipates enhanced public awareness and reduced stigma surrounding communication disorders, fostering a more supportive environment for children with these conditions.

First, implementing a prompt system during routine pediatric visits is a crucial strategy. Healthcare providers can deliver personalized prompts to parents, emphasizing the importance of monitoring

their children’s speech and language development. These can be verbal prompts during consultations, printed materials with developmental milestones to watch, or digital notifications through mobile applications and SMS services. By providing timely and relevant information, these prompts can motivate parents to seek further assessment and intervention.

Additionally, partnering with schools and daycare centers to integrate reminder systems into their communication with parents can further support early detection efforts. Educators and childcare providers can send regular updates and alerts about communication milestones, encouraging parents to stay vigilant and take action if they notice any concerns. Schools can include these prompts in newsletters, parent-teacher meetings, and digital platforms. These settings naturally involve frequent interactions between caregivers and parents, making them ideal for reinforcing health messages consistently and effectively.

In these mechanisms, the Department of Health, Department of Education, and Department of Social Welfare and Development will play crucial roles in further developing and implementing strategies. These agencies have networks that can effectively deliver subtle reminders to caregivers and others involved in developing children with, or at risk of, communication disorders.

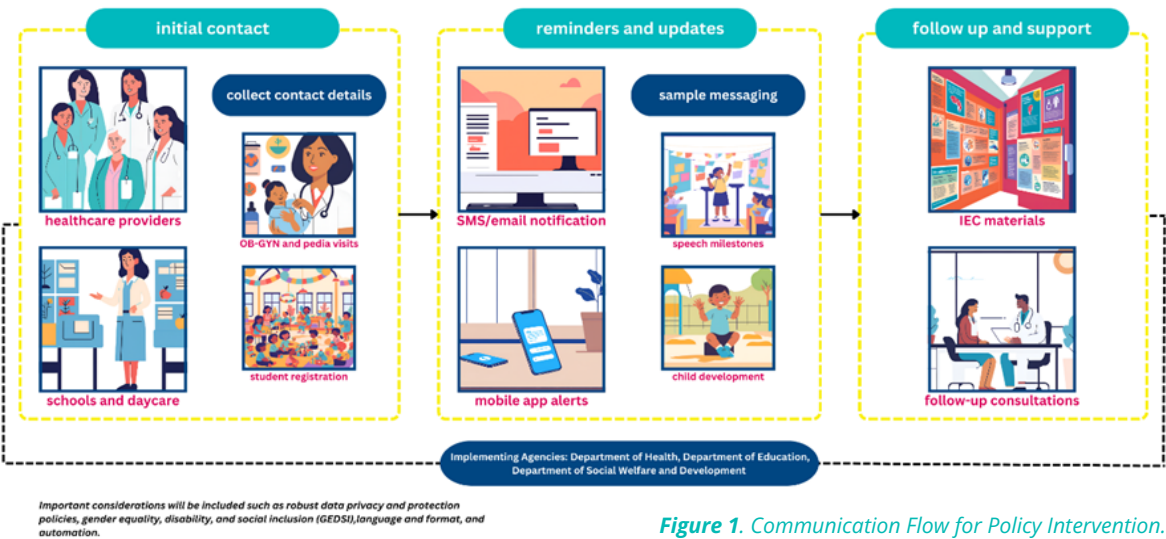


Figure 1. Communication Flow for Policy Intervention.

These agencies can provide the necessary infrastructure, funding, and policy support to integrate and maintain reminder systems in various settings. Furthermore, their involvement can help standardize practices, ensure wider reach, and promote long-term commitment to early detection and intervention efforts for communication disorders among children.

Ensuring data privacy is crucial to the success of this policy intervention. Any data collected through reminder systems, whether via healthcare providers, schools, or digital platforms, must be securely stored and handled in compliance with

data protection regulations. Administrators should implement robust safeguards to protect sensitive information, guaranteeing that it is only accessible to authorized personnel and used solely to improve child health outcomes.

Hence, this personalized reminder system helps create a supportive and proactive environment for parents, ensuring that communication disorders are detected and addressed early. This approach leverages the power of behavioural nudges to promote health-seeking behaviours and improve outcomes for children with communication disorders.

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Composting for Climate:

Exploring the Potential of Composting for Food Waste Reduction and Climate Change Mitigation in Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro

Leonardo Jaminola III

The volume of biodegradable waste, particularly food scraps, has continuously been increasing in the Philippines, posing various challenges. Strengthening local composting programs can be a cost-effective and efficient strategy to mitigate methane emissions from the waste sector while promoting sustainable waste management practices.

Each day, food is discarded across the Philippines — from last night's leftovers, saved for breakfast but untouched, to vegetable peels from a freshly prepared sinigang. Imagine this piling up across homes, markets, restaurants, and farms nationwide. Much of this food waste ends up in landfills or open dumpsites, posing severe challenges to solid waste management and significantly contributing to climate change.

In 2020, the country generated nearly 17 million metric tons of waste. Around 52% of this waste is biodegradable (Figure 1). It includes food scraps, like leftover rice, meat bones, fruit peels, and vegetable trimmings, which comprise 86% of all biodegradable waste. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, in 2021, the Philippines has the second-highest household food waste generation in Southeast Asia, following Indonesia.¹

A substantial portion of waste collected in the Philippines, including biodegradable waste, remains in open dumpsites.² This situation persists despite the provisions outlined in Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management

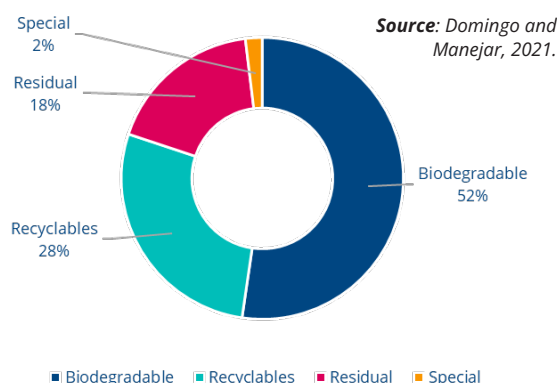


Figure 1. Composition of Waste in the Philippines.

Act of 2000, prohibiting using open dumpsites as final disposal sites.³ One primary reason for the continued use of open dumpsites is the lack of proper waste facilities in many localities. As of 2018, only 21.78% of local government units (LGUs) have access to sanitary landfills. The same case applies to materials recovery facilities (MRFs), as there are only 10,340 MRFs in the country servicing 13,612 barangays (Figure 2).⁴ Only around 30% of barangays have access to MRFs. Under the law, MRFs are vital in waste management as they receive, sort, compost, and recycle waste.⁵

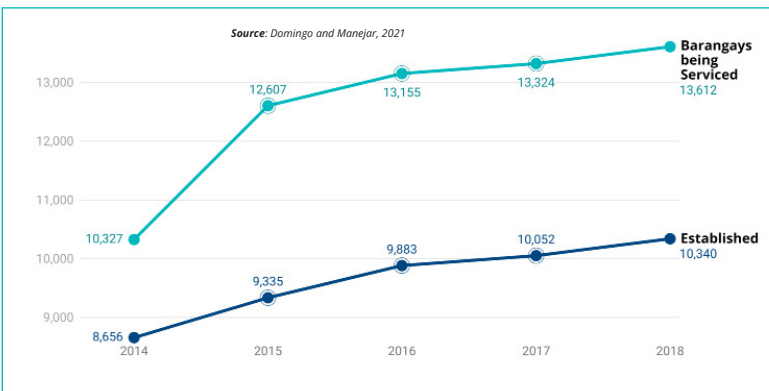


Figure 2. Materials Recovery Facilities in the Philippines (2014-2018).

Food waste not only results in the loss of valuable resources used in growing, transporting, and storing food; it also intensifies climate change, contributing to stronger typhoons, prolonged droughts, and other extreme weather patterns. Food waste decomposed in dumpsites and landfills releases methane, a greenhouse gas (GHG) 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide over 20 years.

Significant reductions in methane emissions lead to rapid and impactful decreases in overall GHG emissions. Currently, the waste sector is the third-largest source of anthropogenic methane emissions, behind agriculture and energy. There is a growing emphasis on sustainable organic waste management, especially food waste. Strategies like diverting organic waste from dumpsites and landfills, segregating at source, and composting unavoidable organic waste can be instrumental in climate change mitigation.^{6 7}

The Case of Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro

The town of Pinamalayan in Oriental Mindoro generates around 2.23 tons of solid waste each day.⁸ Nearly half of this waste – approximately 1.16 tons – consists of biodegradable materials, primarily generated by households. To put this into perspective, the amount is roughly equivalent to 21 sacks of rice (Figure 3).

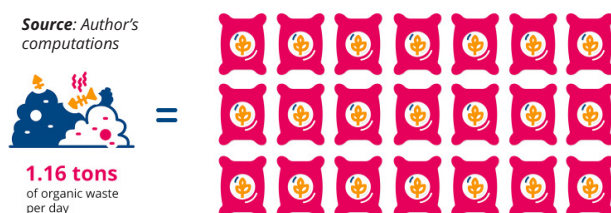


Figure 3. Estimated Biodegradable Waste Generation in Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro.

While the town has a central composting facility for biodegradable waste from the public market and other public areas, not all barangays have access to such facilities. Recent data indicates that less than half of the barangays have MRFs, and it is likely that even fewer have composting facilities. Additionally, 30% of barangays in the municipality need to implement basic solid waste management regulations. Therefore, the LGU excludes these barangays from its waste collection system. Residents often burn or dispose of waste in these areas in open dumpsites.

The continuous increase in the volume of waste generated in the town strains the landfill's limited capacity. In 2021, Phase 1 of the landfill ceased operation as it had reached its maximum capacity. The local government is currently utilizing Phase 2 of the landfill, initially projected to last five years. However, after just two years of operation, it is nearly full. As a result, the municipal government plans to expand into Phase 3.⁹

Policy Recommendations

Pinamalayan's solid waste management system focuses on waste disposal instead of managing and reducing waste. The town urgently needs to adopt more sustainable waste management practices, focusing on effectively handling organic waste. Strengthening its composting program can achieve this.

Composting is the decomposition process of organic matter, like food waste and leaves, using microorganisms under set conditions. This process produces compost, improving soil quality and providing vital nutrients. Composting is regarded as a sustainable approach to organic waste management as it diverts waste away from landfills, reduces methane emissions, and produces valuable products. Increasing compost globally has the potential to cut emissions by more than 2 billion tonnes by 2050.^{10 11}

Local authorities should push for policies on organic waste composting to enhance the town's composting program. In particular, the local government can pass ordinances requiring barangays to strengthen segregation at source, set

up MRFs with composting facilities, and undertake composting as mandated under Republic Act 9003. The municipal government should complement the policy with staffing support and budgetary allocations to ensure prioritization.

Effective implementation of segregation at source and the availability of composting facilities at the barangay level can significantly reduce the volume of organic waste from households that ends up in landfills. Waste segregation at the household level ensures that compostable materials can be separately collected from other types of waste, allowing for efficient collection and transportation to local composting facilities. These facilities can then process the organic waste into compost. This practice decreases landfill usage, promotes sustainable waste management practices, reduces greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, and supports local agriculture by producing nutrient-rich compost.

The experience of many localities has illustrated that composting is a viable and scalable approach to organic waste management. For example, the MRF in Dampalit in Malabon City manages 500



Dampalit, Malabon

kilograms of organic waste weekly. The MRF uses around 220 kilograms for composting while the remaining goes into the biodigester.¹² Meanwhile, SWaCH, a waste pickers cooperative in Pune, India, set up a composting initiative and now handles 7,000 kilograms of organic waste daily from various locations. Lastly, in São Paulo, the Sao Paulo Composta Cultiva campaign has set up five composting plants to manage organic waste collected from markets and street fairs.¹³

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Improving the Free Trade Agreement Process

Jeremiah Louis Racela

As legislators tried to address concerns raised by stakeholders against the RCEP Agreement, Filipinos had to wait for 17 months¹ before they could benefit from the treaty. To facilitate the timely approval of future agreements (e.g., Philippine-European Union FTA)² and prevent losses from delayed implementation, the President should strengthen collaboration with the legislative branch and streamline the processes for negotiating trade agreements.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement entered into force on 1 January 2022.³ While Former President Rodrigo Duterte already ratified the Agreement in September 2021, the country could not implement the treaty as it failed to secure the Senate's concurrence in the 18th Congress.⁴ Legislators were apprehensive of passing the measure due to the concerns raised by farmers' groups and civil society organizations (i.e., inadequate consultation and adverse sectoral effects) during the public hearings. The Agreement eventually secured legislative approval in the 19th Congress after the introduction of support provisions in the Senate's adopted resolution.⁵

Core Problem and Economic Impact

While some issues raised during the Senate hearings were valid, these concerns came at a less ideal time since the finalization of the Agreement's text had already occurred.⁶ At that point, the country was no longer in a position to propose amendments to the RCEP text that would directly address the concerns raised. As a consequence, Filipino traders had to wait for 17 months before they could benefit from the lower tariffs and

improved trade procedures under the Agreement.

The country's delayed implementation of RCEP may have cost the Philippines potential job generation from multinational companies that have located elsewhere due to the uncertainty regarding Philippine participation in the mega trade deal.

⌚ Weaker export performance against ASEAN neighbors. Philippine exports in 2022 recorded the slowest performance in ASEAN, growing by only 5.8%—a stark comparison to the double-digit performance of most ASEAN countries (ASEAN grew by 14%).⁷ While elevated inflation levels could have caused the trade slowdown, these higher prices were also experienced across the region. The main difference, however, could be the late implementation of the RCEP Agreement—the world's largest free trade agreement (FTA).

⌚ Decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). A Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) study estimated that the delayed or non-participation in the RCEP Agreement would lead to a 0.26% decline in real GDP.⁸ The

magnitude may seem insignificant initially, but that figure is equivalent to roughly PhP63.1 billion—an amount that otherwise could have already funded more than 2.6 million household beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps).⁹

Policy Recommendations¹⁰

1. Establish a legislative notification mechanism for Free Trade Agreement negotiations.

FTAs can either be executive agreements or treaties. The difference is that the latter requires legislative concurrence after executive ratification.¹¹ Executive Order No. 459, Series of 1997, assigns the responsibility of determining the nature of the measure to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).¹² This process usually takes place after signing the Agreement.

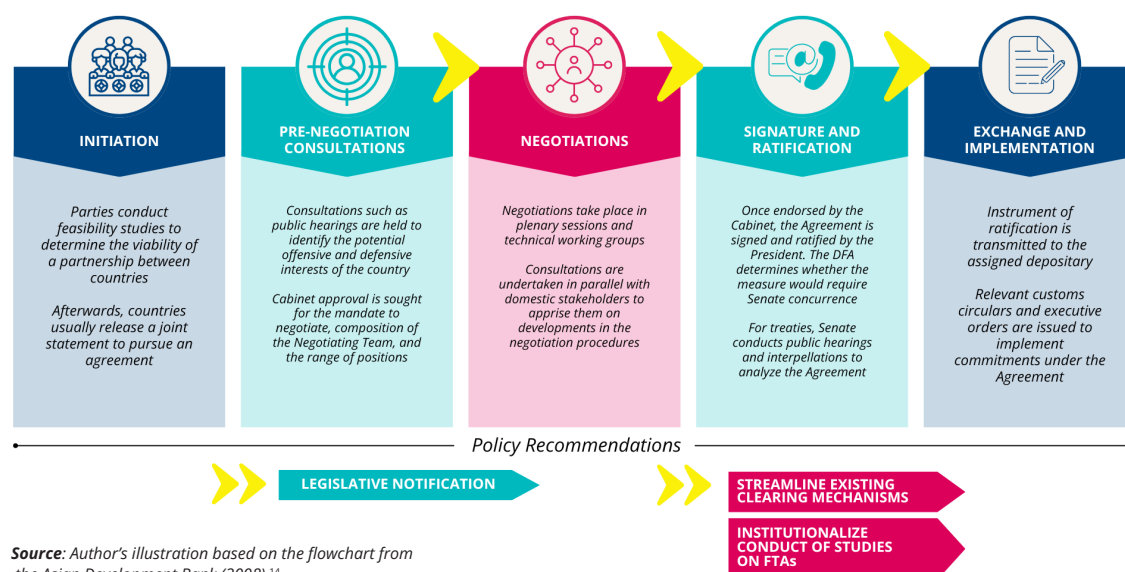
The legislative branch's late entry into the FTA process limits its capacity to effectively provide the checks and balances on the ratification of treaties as provided under the Constitution. Memorandum Circular No. 89, Series of 1988, similarly acknowledges this responsibility by providing that officials must consult with the Senate to determine the nature of international agreements.¹³

In practice, the treaty must first be transmitted for Senate concurrence before it could act (i.e., conduct public hearings) on trade agreements. A legislative notification mechanism would enable the Senate to be more proactive in the treaty-making process. Since the Senate could start discussions on a treaty earlier, they would no longer have to confine discussions to determining whether to approve a treaty. Instead, they could include necessary or supporting legislation in their discussions to maximize the effects of a treaty under negotiation. Likewise, it provides legislators and stakeholders another avenue to underscore sensitivities for negotiators to consider.

During the negotiations for the Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, the late Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago, serving as the Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Relations, requested notification of any pending negotiations and sought the Senate's privilege to name its representative as an adviser to the negotiating panel.¹⁵ While the then-President graciously granted this request, it appears that succeeding negotiations did not institutionalize this practice.

Apart from previous experience, this recommendation anchors on the success of the Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council, which saw the enactment of at least 21 priority bills in the 19th Congress.¹⁶

Figure 1. Philippine Treaty Making Process.



Source: Author's illustration based on the flowchart from the Asian Development Bank (2008).¹⁴

This success highlights the efficiency of a more robust collaboration between both branches of government—something we wish to replicate in the FTA process.

2. Streamline existing clearing mechanisms for trade agreements. No specific law officially outlines the entire clearing mechanism for FTA negotiations. The current practice, however, is that FTA negotiations undergo the approval process through the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board Cabinet Committee on Tariff and Related Matters (CTRM). Currently, the CTRM recommends approval of the mandate to negotiate, the composition of the Philippine delegation, and the parameters for negotiation of trade agreements (i.e., minimum and maximum positions). However, the CTRM's technical committee membership does not include agencies with the mandate or expertise on all topics included in FTAs (such as Intellectual Property, Competition, Government Procurement, and Dispute Settlement). Consequently, various bodies outside the CTRM process, such as Ad hoc Interagency Committees and the Philippine Council for Regional Cooperation, must tackle relevant concerns, making the technical level clearing appear disjointed. We could address this dilemma by officially outlining the clearing mechanism to integrate these existing bodies into one process or by expanding the membership of the CTRM technical committee.

3. Institutionalize the conduct of studies (impact and evaluation) on trade agreements. A recurring concern during public hearings and interpellations is whether the government

conducted a scientific study analyzing the potential effects of trade agreements. Since officials do not outline the clearing mechanism for FTAs, conducting such studies does not serve as a prerequisite per se for enacting these treaties. Instead, it has only been a practice by the DTI (and ASEAN) to commission studies with think tanks (such as PIDS and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia), which they would later cite as basis in the Department's request to negotiate and sign the Agreement.

As such, institutionalizing the conduct of these studies into the FTA process would promote consistency in the approach, regardless of the Department's leadership. As a starting point, Section 1603(g) of the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act mandates the Tariff Commission to (1) review trade agreements for negotiation and (2) trade agreements entered into by the Philippines.¹⁷ Their expertise, however, may be limited to analysis on merchandise trade, emphasizing the need to involve other agencies (e.g., PIDS, NEDA). Doing so would ensure that such studies are comprehensive, noting that the costs and benefits of FTAs encompass multiple sectors. A thorough review of this nature would help dispel conflicting narratives on the projected effects of FTAs.

Ensuring the timely implementation of FTAs is key to maximizing their benefits on export performance and economic growth. To illustrate the potential effects, PIDS also estimated¹⁸ that RCEP could have grown Philippine exports by as much as 10.5% while raising GDP by 2% or approximately PhP485.8 billion.¹⁹ With these recommendations, we hope that future trade agreements can fully realize their potential for the benefit of the Filipino people.

1 For the Philippines, the RCEP Agreement took effect on 2 June 2023 as provided under Section 8 of Executive Order No. 25 Series of 2023 Implementing the Philippine Schedule of Tariff Commitments under the RCEP and Modifying the Rates of Import Duty on Certain Imported Articles for the Purpose.

2 In March 2024, the European Union and the Philippines announced the resumption of negotiations for a free trade agreement. European Commission, "EU Launches New Initiative to Support Digital Transformation," *European Commission*, February 15, 2024, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_1504.

3 In accordance with Article 20.6 of the Agreement, RCEP entered into force on 1 January 2022 following the deposit of the instruments of ratification, acceptance, and approval of at least six ASEAN Member

States (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and at least three signatory States other than ASEAN (Australia, China, Japan, and New Zealand).

4 Section 21, Article VII of the 1987 Constitution states that no treaty or international agreement shall be valid and effective unless concurred in by at least two-thirds of all Members of the Senate.

5 Senate Adopted Resolution No. 42 established the Senate Special Oversight Committee on the RCEP Agreement and outlined measures for its effective implementation.

6 The RCEP Agreement was virtually signed by ministers on 15 November 2020. ASEAN, "ASEAN Hits Historic Milestone with Signing of RCEP," *ASEAN*, November 15, 2020, <https://asean.org/asean-hits-historic-milestone-with-signing-of-rcep/>.

- 7 Author's computations based on basic data from the International Trade Centre.
- 8 "Economists and International Organizations Highlight Gains of RCEP," *BusinessChannel.ph*, December 28, 2021, <https://businesschannel.ph/2021/12/28/economists-and-international-organizations-highlight-gains-of-rcep/>.
- 9 Author's computation based on the following figures: 2023 PhP24.3 trillion GDP and the FY2024 4Ps GAA allocation of PhP106.3 billion for 4.4 million households.
- 10 Recommendations based on author's preliminary research and data gathering, subject to confirmation.
- 11 Arnel D. Mateo, "Treaty-making in the Philippines," *Mateo & Gimenez Law Offices*, April 29, 2014, <https://attymateo.wordpress.com/2014/04/29/treaty-making-in-the-philippines/>.
- 12 Executive Order No. 459, s. 1997 Providing for the Guidelines in the Negotiation of International Agreements and its Ratification.
- 13 Memorandum Circular No. 89, s. 1988 Providing for the Procedure for the Determination of International Agreements as Executive Agreements.
- 14 Asian Development Bank, *How to Design, Negotiate, and Implement a Free Trade Agreement in Asia*, 2008, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27974/fta.pdf>.
- 15 Transcripts of the October 8, 2008, Senate Plenary session discussion on the Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement.
- 16 Based on the enacted LEDAC Common Legislative Agenda as of 27 September 2024. National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), "Accomplishments: Enacted CLA," *NEDA LEDAC*, <https://ledac.neda.gov.ph/accomplishment/enacted-cla/>.
- 17 Republic Act No. 10863 Customs Modernization and Tariff Act.
- 18 Francis Mark Quimba, Mark Anthony Barral, and Abigail Andrada, "Who Benefits from RCEP? Application of Trade Policy Tools," *Philippine Institute for Development Studies*, December 22, 2021, <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publication/discussion-papers/who-benefits-from-rcep-application-of-trade-policy-tools>.
- 19 Author's computation based on the following figures: 2023 PhP24.3 trillion GDP.

Empowering Tomorrow's Tourism Leaders:

Enhancing the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management Curriculum of Cebu Normal University for Future Sustainable Tourism Planners and Managers

Clareziel D. Ladrangan

This policy brief proposes a comprehensive enhancement of the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management curriculum at Cebu Normal University, focusing on preparing graduates for sustainable tourism planning and management roles. The research introduces the T.O.U.R. Framework to guide curriculum development based on empirical survey data indicating significant student interest in tourism planning careers and curriculum expansion. The proposed framework aims to align the Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management program with contemporary industry demands, emphasizing cultivating competent leaders equipped to address the complex challenges of the evolving tourism landscape while promoting sustainable practices.

The state of the BS Tourism Management Program at CNU

Cebu Normal University (CNU) stands as one of the oldest educational institutions in Cebu. In 1902, officials established it as a provincial normal school and a branch of the Philippine Normal School. In 1924, it gained independence as an institution, became a chartered college in 1976, and achieved university status in 1998.

The Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) is one of the many degree programs offered at the university. The CNU Board of Regents approved its offering through Resolution No. 14, Series of 2009. The program offers two specialized tracks: Travel and Hospitality Services Management (THSM) and Sustainable Tourism Management (STM). As of the academic year 2023-2024, the program has 420 enrolled students and ten faculty members handling the major courses (Figure 1).

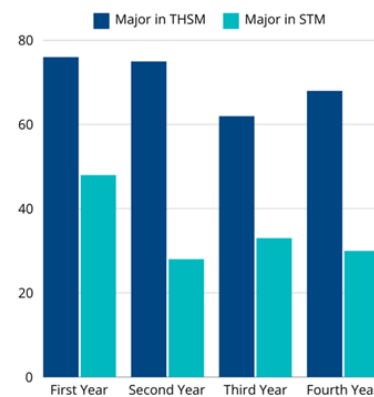


Figure 1. CNU BSTM Student Population as of A.Y. 2023-2024.

CNU's BSTM aims to produce graduates with the competencies to execute operational tasks and management functions in travel and tour services, research, Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibits (MICE) activities, and other emerging tourism industries. The program aims to develop capable, independent, skilled, and socially conscious professionals ready to fulfill the demands of the highly competitive global tourism sector.

Current Tourism Landscape

In the Philippines, the tourism industry plays a massive role in our national economy. According to Philippine Statistics Authority data, the industry reaches deeply into our economy, generating an 8.6% share of the national gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023 (Figure 2), thus supporting more jobs and opportunities for our country.¹ The substantial contribution of the tourism industry to the economy and its support for job creation shows that Philippine tourism is a massive engine of national growth and development.

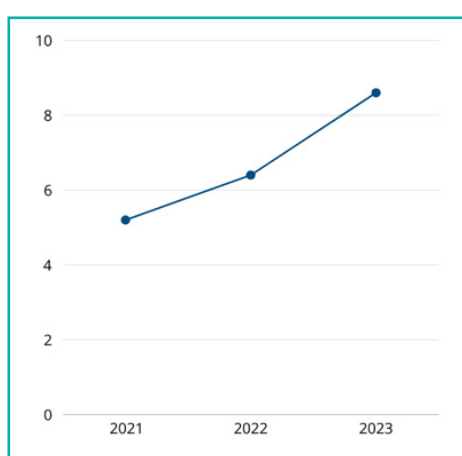


Figure 2. Percent share of tourism industry to Philippine GDP (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024).

The economic significance of tourism is also well enunciated by the Republic Act 9593, or the Tourism Act of 2009, which states, “Tourism is an indispensable element of the national economy and an industry of national interest and importance.”²

The global tourism industry continues to evolve, presenting both opportunities and challenges. However, regardless of the scale and setting, the industry comprises various stakeholders with varying levels of power over and interests in developing the tourism sector.³ The dynamic tourism industry demands future leaders with the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary for effective tourism planning and management.

In support of the country’s tourism development, the Local Government Code of 1991⁴ and the Tourism Act of 2009 encourage local government units to create and provide a permanent tourism officer position based on the financial capability

and service requirements and tourism being a significant industry of the municipality, city, or province. Unfortunately, there are criticisms against tourism officers in the Philippines as they need more competencies for tourism administration. Maguigad (2013) provides that the decentralized structure of destination management organizations gave local government units the autonomy to appoint officers based on ambiguous bases.⁵

The study of Joreen Rocamora in 2022 further emphasizes the ongoing concern about the competencies of our country’s tourism officers.⁶ The study identified the training needs for tourism officers, especially for capability building and assisting the government in managing tourism destinations.

Tourism and Education

Education is crucial in achieving sustainability across various sectors and levels, including individual, community, and global scales. It is an effective avenue to raise awareness about sustainability issues, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and social inequalities. It helps individuals and communities understand the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic systems. Sustainable tourism education is essential for creating a more responsible and resilient tourism sector that contributes positively to environmental conservation, cultural heritage preservation, and community well-being.

Policy Recommendations

I conducted a survey to assess the potential improvements for the CNU BSTM program. A significant majority (89.1%) of current CNU tourism students and alumni expressed interest in pursuing careers as tourism planners/officers in local and provincial government units (Figure 3). The data indicates a preference for curriculum expansion, including entrepreneurship and new enterprise development in tourism, cultural heritage management, and land travel management, which respondents identified as the most desired additions. Respondents also proposed courses in environmental management, leadership and

sustainability, sustainability and ethics, and tourism governance. The responses suggest a trend towards integrating sustainable practices and contemporary management principles into the tourism curriculum.

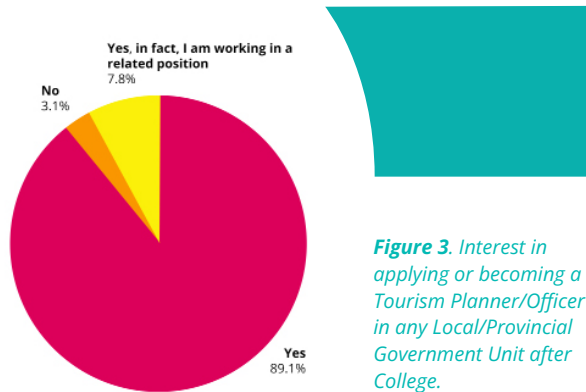


Figure 3. Interest in applying or becoming a Tourism Planner/Officer in any Local/Provincial Government Unit after College.

To prepare the students of the CNU BSTM program, I propose enhancing the BSTM curriculum to address the evolving needs of the tourism industry. The sector requires skilled professionals who can navigate complex challenges, drive innovation, and promote sustainable practices, necessitating a program that produces competent leaders with these abilities. Emerging trends such as digitalization, sustainability, and experiential tourism call for a curriculum that reflects the changing landscape, preparing students for these new dynamics. Additionally, as tourist destinations compete for attention, the program must strengthen students' strategic planning and practical management skills, enabling them to become leaders capable of identifying and harnessing a destination's unique niche. To achieve these goals, I introduce the T.O.U.R. Framework, which highlights the actionable items:

- 1) **Tailored Curriculum Modernization.** The CNU BSTM program must update elective courses and include contemporary topics to improve the skills of its students. Topics such as cultural

heritage management, climate education and tourism, museology, entrepreneurship and new enterprise development in tourism, land travel management, land resource and area development, environmental science, and marine resource management, among others, should be considered as part of the revised curriculum.

- 2) **Opportunities for Specialized Tracks.** The CNU BSTM program should offer specialized tracks such as destination management and tourism governance to cater to diverse career aspirations beyond the lucrative private industry professions.

- 3) **Unique Experiential Learning.** The CNU BSTM program should emphasize student learning by experience. The program must facilitate domestic and international internships, field trips, and industry projects to provide hands-on experience and training and foster industry-relevant competencies that will contribute to student's learning and experience. It must also encourage student involvement in real-world tourism initiatives, community engagement projects, and sustainability initiatives.

- 4) **Robust Stakeholder Engagement.** The CNU BSTM program must strengthen partnerships with tourism stakeholders, industry associations, and government bodies to co-create curriculum modules, provide guest lectures, and offer industry certifications. The program must also establish an advisory board of industry professionals to guide curriculum relevance, industry trends, and skills requirements.

"The future of our tourism industry is shaped by the knowledge and passion we instill in today's young learners."

1 Philippine Statistics Authority, "Tourism Posted Highest Growth in 2023, Contributing 8.6 Percent to the Economy," *Philippine Tourism Satellite Account*, June 18, 2024, <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/tourism/node/1684059873>.

2 Republic Act No. 9593, *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2009/05/12/republic-act-no-9593-s-2009/>.

3 Hiroaki Saito and Lisa Ruhanen, "Power in Tourism Stakeholder Collaborations: Power Types and Power Holders," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 31 (June 2017): 189–196, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2017.01.001>.

4 Republic Act No. 7160, *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1991/10/10/republic-act-no-7160/>.

5 Virgilio Maguigad, "Tourism Planning in Archipelagic Philippines: A Case Review," *Tourism Management Perspectives* 7 (July 2013): 25–33, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2013.03.003>.

6 Joreen Rocamora, "The Philippines Tourism Officers' Competencies Based on Tourism Act of 2009 and Local Government Code of 1991," *Perspectives on Asian Tourism*, 2022, 137–49, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-4497-0_7.

#LacsonLane: Transport Made Easier and Safer

Enhancing Active Mobility Networks in Lacson Street, Bacolod City

Leyden C. Sta. Isabel

With the growing cycling culture in the Philippines, with 36% of households using bicycles by 2023, this policy brief emphasizes the need for active mobility networks, particularly in Bacolod City's Lacson Street, to promote low-emission, safe, and space-efficient transport. The brief outlines key considerations for integrating active mobility into urban planning, addressing climate change, regulation enforcement, infrastructure design, and community engagement to foster a cycling culture.

In 2022, a Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey found that the country's biking population comprised around 4.5 million people aged 18 to 44.¹ In 2023, the cycling culture has firmly established itself among Filipinos, with about 36% of Filipino households incorporating bicycles into their daily lives.² These points indicate a significant shift towards cycling among the youth in the Philippines, driven by factors such as environmental consciousness, cost-effectiveness, and the development of cycling infrastructure.

The promotion of active mobility networks, which means interconnected routes designed for walking, cycling, or other self-powered modes of transportation, particularly the institutionalization of sustainable modes of transportation such as bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles, is a crucial step toward achieving low-emission, safe, and space-efficient transport. This policy brief outlines the key considerations and recommendations for promoting such networks in Bacolod City, specifically in Lacson Street.

Lacson Street, a principal artery in Bacolod City, is recognized as the most bustling thoroughfare in the metropolis. This prominent avenue hosts a

multitude of renowned establishments and serves as the city's central business district. The Capitol Grounds and Lagoon, significant landmarks in Bacolod City, are situated along this street. Lacson Street has evolved beyond a mere transportation route, emerging as a thriving business hub for burgeoning local enterprises and established national corporations.



Several news reports provide insights into the overall traffic situation in Lacson Street, Bacolod City. Among these are instances of non-operational traffic lights along Lizares-Lacson Streets in Barangay Taculing, Bacolod City, which could

potentially increase the risk of traffic incidents.³ In 2023, the Bacolod Traffic Authority Office (BTAO) started a campaign against illegal parking, which included towing vehicles on Lacson Street.⁴ Illegally parked cars pose risks to cyclists and other road users.

Current Situation

The core problem is the need for more integration of active mobility considerations into the urban planning and infrastructure development processes of the local government unit of Bacolod City. This insufficiency encompasses issues related to climate change, regulation enforcement, data collection, infrastructure design and facility provision, and community engagement, all crucial for promoting the use of bicycles and other non-motorized vehicles. Addressing this core problem would require a comprehensive and coordinated approach to urban planning and policy-making that prioritizes active mobility and environmental consciousness among Bacolodnons, particularly its youth and cycling community.

Even without published data from Bacolod, the experiences of other cities can provide valuable lessons. For instance, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority's Metro Manila Accident Reporting and Analysis System (MMARAS) Report for 2020 offers essential insights into the challenges and potential solutions for promoting active mobility.⁵

Figure 1. Injuries and Damages per Vehicle Type in Metro Manila, 2020.

The MMARAS Report highlighted the need for more bicycle-friendly infrastructure in the Philippines. The report recorded 3,026 incidents involving bicycles, e-bikes, and pedicabs, which accounted for 2.4% of the total number of incidents for the entire year.

Source: MMARAS Report for 2020.

The Land Transportation Office (LTO) - Bacolod City District Office registered 114,947 motor vehicles in 2019, 10.51 percent higher than the 104,017 vehicles registered in 2018. The registration breakdown is 102,496 private vehicles, 11,617 for-hire vehicles, and 834 government vehicles.⁶

Policy Recommendations

The local government of Bacolod City is strongly encouraged to proactively adopt and execute a program promoting active mobility transport, specifically targeting Lacson Street. This program, structured into three distinct phases—planning, implementation, and capacity building—is designed to foster a more active and sustainable transport environment in the city, with Lacson Street as the focal point of this initiative.

During the planning phase, the local government of Bacolod City should conduct stakeholder consultation, re-evaluate transport infrastructure roadmaps, procure bicycle and non-motorized vehicle counting technology, and review existing policies. The Bacolod City government must conduct a stakeholder consultation to initiate engagement with residents, including commuters, drivers, cyclists, and other stakeholders who frequently travel along Lacson Street. Through the consultation, the government will gain insights into the existing transport conditions, ascertain the number of accidents, determine the prevalence of bike usage, and gauge interest in active transportation. The local government is also

Vehicle Type	Fatal Injury	Non-Fatal Injury	Damage to Property	Total No. of Vehicles	Percentage (%)
Bike/E-Bike/Pedicab	36	2,067	923	3,026	2
Motorcycle	253	12,925	12,030	25,208	20
Tricycle	13	697	1,232	1,942	2
Car	89	6,318	52,371	58,778	47
PUJ	14	477	2,071	2,562	2
Taxi/FX	7	528	2,503	3,038	2
Bus	14	357	2,862	3,233	3
Van	36	1,582	12,346	13,964	11
Truck	80	976	9,494	10,550	8
Train	1	5	7	13	0
Unknown	8	318	2,370	2,696	2
Grand Total	551	26	98	125	100

encouraged to conduct a comprehensive review of the existing transport infrastructure in Bacolod City to identify areas for improvement and better accommodate active mobility. It must also invest in technology to count bicycles and other NMVs for data-driven planning and policy decisions. Lastly, the local government should examine existing policies and regulations, particularly Lacson Street's road-use policy, and consider how these policies can be enhanced or modified to promote active mobility further and ensure the safety of non-motorized vehicle users.

During the implementation phase, the local government must establish bike-sharing communities, advance innovative and green facilities, establish bicycle lands and end-of-trip facilities, and re-evaluate separators. The Bacolod City government should foster bike-sharing communities to promote cycling and other forms of active mobility, encouraging a culture of shared resources and community engagement. It should also consider advancing smart and greenway facilities, including creating bicycle lanes along Lacson Street and establishing end-of-trip facilities such as secured bike parking, shower areas, and lockers. Ensuring these factors are present, cycling will be more attractive as a mode of transportation, promote active mobility, and contribute to a healthier and more sustainable city.

The local government of Bacolod City can also focus on integrating driver education with traffic enforcement and establish a feedback mechanism to gather input on the effectiveness of active transportation as part of its capacity-building phase. The local government must enhance transport programs by integrating driver education and traffic enforcement. It will include emphasizing the rights of pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users, fostering a culture of respect and safety. It must also set up a feedback mechanism where communities and other stakeholders can assess the effectiveness and acceptance of active transportation in Bacolod City and guide future program enhancements.

THE FUTURE OF #LACSONLANE

Promoting active mobility networks in Bacolod City, particularly on Lacson Street, requires a multi-faceted approach that includes policy changes, infrastructure development, and community engagement. By prioritizing these actions, Bacolod City can become a leader in sustainable urban mobility, providing its residents with a safe, efficient, and environmentally friendly transportation system.

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Author Profiles



Mark Anthony Angeles is the Founder and President of NoyPreneur and NoyPreneur Cares. He bridges entrepreneurship with social responsibility, spearheading projects that empower communities and individuals. A dynamic young leader advocating entrepreneurship and leadership development, Mark received accolades, including the Kindness and Leadership 50 Leading Lights Asia Pacific 2023. He received the 2024 Gawad Tsanselor Para sa Natatanging Magaaral from the University of the Philippines Diliman and the Foundation for Liberty and Prosperity Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Management, Economics, and Business Law Fellowship in 2023.



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John Lemuel Dalisay is a Project Evaluation Officer at the Integrated Provincial Health Office of South Cotabato, where he also leads the South Cotabato Information and Communication Technology Technical Working Group. A humble trailblazer, he has pioneered digital innovations in Region XII, using technology to enhance public health reporting in South Cotabato and empower decision-makers with data-driven insights for public health. He is passionate about sharing these tools across the country and transforming how data is used to achieve Universal Health Care.



Gloria Nenita V. Velasco, MD, is the former OIC-Director IV of the Knowledge Management and Information Technology Service at the Department of Health Philippines. She is also a Fulbright Scholar, pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Health Policy and Health Systems Research at Temple University's College of Public Health. Her research interests include organizational and policy innovation, primary care services, and digital health. She aims to apply her knowledge and expertise to create a greater positive impact by making reliable health information more accessible to Filipinos, their healthcare providers, and policymakers.



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Rod Charlie Delos Reyes is the Executive Director of Open Arms Organizations, a non-profit dedicated to orchestrating impactful activities in collaboration with marginalized communities. He is known for his dynamic and multifaceted approach to fostering inclusivity within society. His fervent dedication is evident as he actively leads movements that advocate for disability awareness, mental health support, and the acceptance of non-binary individuals. He was also the 2023 JCI Batangas Balisong Local Organization President.



Jhon Marvin Surio is Information Office III (Senior Knowledge Management Specialist) at the National Economic and Development Authority. For almost five years, he has provided technical expertise on various government programs and projects related to agriculture and fisheries research, monitoring and evaluating projects at the subnational level, socioeconomic planning, and economic and financial literacy advocacy. Driven by innovation and collaboration, he explores behavioral economics to improve public policies in the Philippines.



Leonardo Jaminola III is the Project Monitoring and Grants Administration Officer at the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives Asia Pacific. They work on projects implementing several Zero Waste models and solid waste management in different localities. They have published several studies on environmental diplomacy and political dynasties. They are an environmental advocate contributing to a diverse portfolio of development projects with a combined funding of more than 1.6 million US dollars.



Jeremiah Louis Racela is a Legislative Staff Officer at the Senate Economic Planning Office (SEPO). He leads the desk on trade, investments, and foreign relations and provides technical assistance to Philippine senators on policy issues within his purview. Before the posting at SEPO, he participated as part of the trade division in the midterm updating of the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 under the National Economic and Development Authority.



Clareziel D. Ladrangan is the Program Chairperson of the Tourism Management Department at the Cebu Normal University. She advocates for sustainable tourism, Baybayin script revival, gender equality, and youth empowerment. Through her many experiences, she founded YSEALI Central Visayas Bohol Hub - Project BayBay, a capacity-building initiative empowering emerging leaders in Bohol. In 2022, she received recognition as Central Visayas' Most Outstanding Volunteer for the Individual Youth Category by the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency and National Economic Development Authority.



Leyden C. Sta. Isabel is Chief of Staff at the Infrastructure Development Office of the National Economic and Development Authority. She is a licensed Mechanical Engineer from Bacolod City, Negros Occidental. She served as the Student Regent of the Technological University of the Philippines in 2014. In her free time, she continues to serve her community through civic engagement and volunteerism. As an advocate of law, she devotes herself to championing the call for Filipinos, especially the youth, to stand together with arms raised for justice.

About KAS

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation closely associated with Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU). As co-founder of the CDU and the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967) united Christian-social, conservative and liberal traditions. His name is synonymous with the democratic reconstruction of Germany, the firm alignment of foreign policy with the trans-Atlantic community of values, the vision of a unified Europe, and an orientation towards the social market economy. His intellectual heritage continues to serve both as our aim and as our obligation today.

KAS has been active in the Philippines for 60 years, since 1964. Our pillars of work in the country are promoting democracy and good governance, inclusive economic development, foreign relations, security and innovation, and youth empowerment.

We cooperate with governmental institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, experts, and key stakeholders, building strong partnerships. Together with our partners, we contribute to the creation of an international order that enables every country to develop in freedom and under its own responsibility.

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