

How to Entice Young People to Run for Public Office?

ISSN 3082-3471 (Print)
ISSN 3082-3412 (Online)

ISSN 3082-3412 (Online)

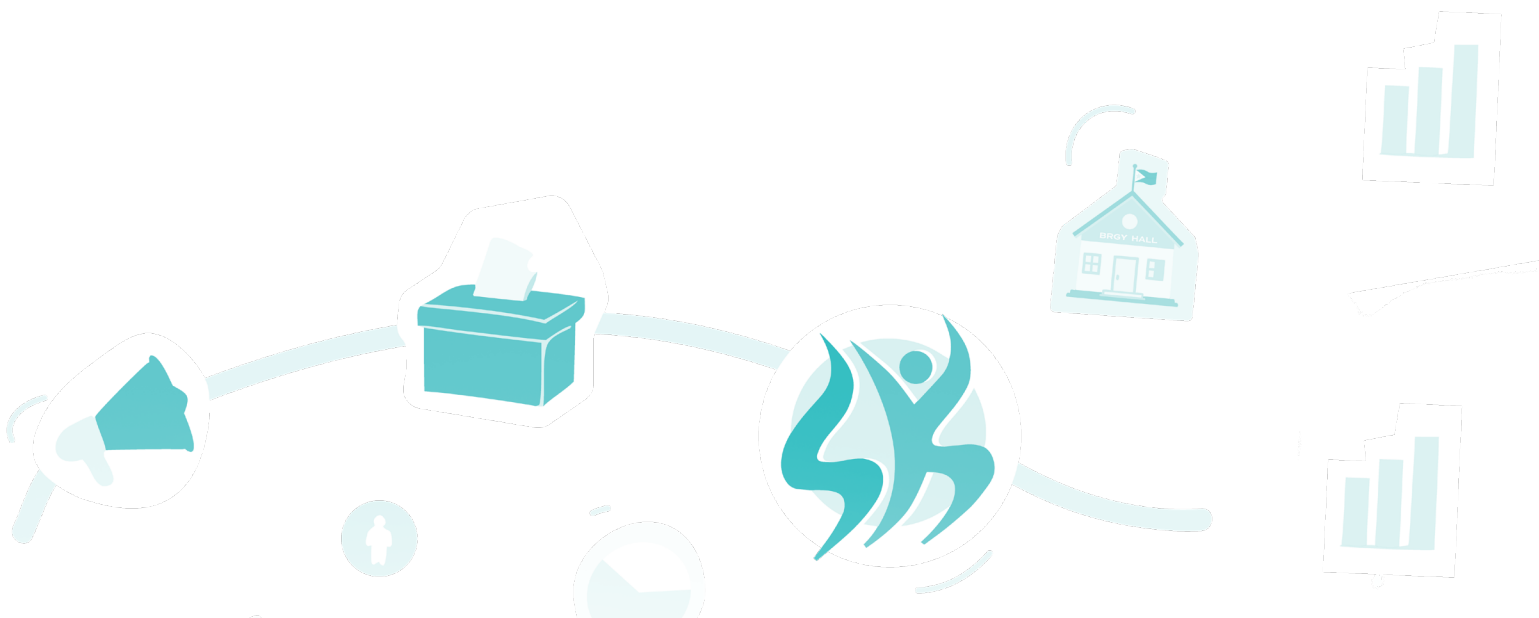


KASama Ka

How to Entice Young People to Run for Public Office?

Volume 2 | December 2025

ISSN 3082-3471 (Print) | ISSN 3082-3412 (Online)





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. 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 second edition, the publication addresses the question on how to entice young people to run for public service.

Managing Editor

Jerome Jogno

Editorial Board

Daniela Braun

Joshua Uel Abad

Marie Antoinette de Jesus

Sophiya Navarro

Layout and Design

Ralph Retamal

Published annually by

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. 2025

Unit 4, 22F, Tower 6789, 6789 Ayala Avenue

Salcedo Village, Barangay Bel-Air, Makati City

kas.de/philippines

info.manila@kas.de

© Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., 2025. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in certain cases of fair use and noncommercial use permitted by the Philippine copyright law.

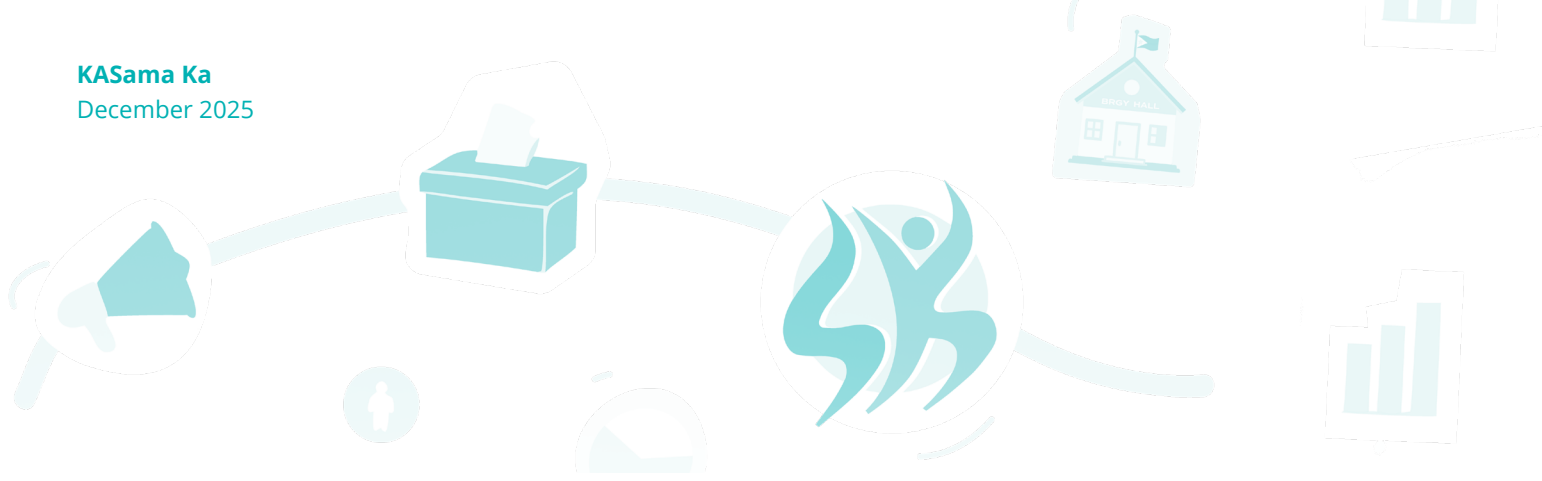
Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed by the contributors do not reflect nor imply the expression of any opinion on the part of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung or of the organizations with which the contributors may be affiliated with. The responsibility for facts, views, and opinions expressed in their respective article rests exclusively with the author, following that the author may be opinionated and subject to revision as well.

ISSN 3082-3471 (Print) | ISSN 3082-3412 (Online)

Contents

Foreword	6
<i>Daniela Braun</i>	
Introduction	8
<i>Jerome Jogno</i>	
From Learners to Leaders: Charting a Leadership Path for the Filipino Youth	11
<i>Atty. Karlo Krisanto B. Inocencio</i>	
Challenging Norms: Towards Strengthened Systems for Youth Leadership Development in Governance	15
<i>Hazel Ann Marie R. Duya</i>	
#SaliKami: Empowering Batangueño Youth in Local Governance	19
<i>Laica Bagnes</i>	
KAKAIBA: Katutubong Kabataan Inspirasyon sa Bayan	23
<i>Elizabeth Joy Serrano-Quijano</i>	
From Tradition to Transition: Empowering Indigenous Youth Leadership in Governance	27
<i>Kristian Noel I Yang Solas</i>	
SAS-STARTUPS AND SERVICE: Turning Young Entrepreneurs into Future Leaders	31
<i>Crezel B. Obrero</i>	
SIMBUYO: A Pathway to Transformative Youth Leadership	35
<i>Sherry Ann Murillo and Xzyrabelle M. Servento</i>	
Author Profiles	38



Foreword

The energy, passion, and vision of young Filipinos have long been among the country's most important resources. Yet too often, this potential remains confined to the margins of political life, recognized in speeches but left underutilized in practice.

This *KASama Ka Volume 2* collection of policy briefs, written by our **Adenauer Young Leaders**, arrives as both a challenge and an invitation: a challenge to reimagine how the youth can shape governance, and an invitation to build a political landscape where their leadership is not an exception but a norm. At KAS Philippines, we firmly believe that these young leaders are not only the future. They are already influential voices whose perspectives matter today.

In the following pages, the authors present concrete ideas centered on a vital question: **How can we encourage more young people to run for public office?** Their proposals are grounded in lived experience, informed by research, and driven by a shared commitment to making Philippine democracy more inclusive, more responsive, and more prepared for the future. Two central arguments anchor these briefs and shape a forward-looking vision for youth participation.

The first focuses on participation, particularly through the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK). For decades, the SK has served as one of the most visible institutional pathways for political youth leadership. Yet it only reaches a small portion of the youth and has also faced persistent challenges such as uneven implementation, limited resources, gaps in training, and questions about relevance. The policy briefs in this collection confront these issues openly. They propose reforms that would strengthen the SK's mandate, sharpen its accountability mechanisms, and expand its capacity to address the real concerns of young people in their communities. Their ambition is not to discard the SK, but to refine it so it becomes a meaningful platform through which the next generation can learn, practice, and demonstrate public leadership.

The second argument looks beyond existing structures and into the broader horizon of political participation. The authors make a compelling case for building a pipeline that brings young people into public life long before they consider filing a certificate of candidacy. This requires dismantling structural barriers that discourage participation, from economic constraints to access to networks and mentorship. It also requires investing in the confidence and capability of young citizens: equipping them with knowledge of political processes, nurturing their policy literacy, and giving them room to test and grow their leadership in safe yet rigorous environments. In these briefs, one finds clear strategies for cultivating a generation that not only understands governance but also feels empowered to shape it.

Taken together, these papers serve as a **grounded and forward-looking roadmap for strengthening youth participation in the country's political life**. They show that the question is no longer whether young Filipinos are ready to lead, but whether existing institutions and organizations are ready to welcome, support, and learn from them. The Adenauer Young Leaders argue convincingly that youth participation cannot remain symbolic; it is a rightful stake in shaping the future that belongs to them.

This collection is a testament to what becomes possible when young leaders are given space not only to imagine change but to design it. **A core mission of the Adenauer Young Leaders Program at KAS Philippines is to provide the next generation of Filipino leaders with opportunities, training, and mentorship—empowering them to become more effective and influential in their organizations and communities.** The program and this publication stand as a testament to the fact that the next generation is not merely waiting for their turn—they are already thinking, writing, leading, and organizing with the vision, creativity, and determination that our times urgently demand.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Adenauer Young Leaders for their invaluable contributions to this publication and for their unwavering commitment to driving positive change in the Philippines. I also wish to express my deepest appreciation to Tanya Hamada for her guidance and mentorship of the authors throughout the writing process. Finally, this publication—and indeed the Adenauer Young Leaders Program itself—would not have been possible without the tireless dedication and hard work of my colleague Jerome Jogno. Thank you very much for making this endeavor a reality.

May these policy briefs inspire policymakers, organizations, and communities to listen more closely to the voices of young Filipinos. And may they encourage more young people to step forward, confident that they have a place in shaping the future of the Philippines.

Daniela Braun
Country Director
KAS Philippines





Jerome Jogno

Can we truly describe young Filipinos as apathetic toward politics, or have their attitudes and behaviors been shaped by a political culture so deeply entrenched—marked by corruption, clientelism, and dynastic rule—that retreat from public life becomes a rational response?

This question surfaced during a class discussion at the Asian Center, University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman. When I was an MA student there, we discussed the perennial problems of Philippine politics: corruption, patronage, and political dynasty in one evening. Each of us offered our perspectives, yet the sobering takeaway remained the same—outside the classroom the cycle persisted, with no obvious end. Before we adjourned, a classmate proposed a direct solution: perhaps the most effective way to break these patterns is to become part of the solution by entering public service ourselves.

Years later, fast forward to the ideation of KASama Ka Volume 2. KAS Philippines Country Director Daniela Braun later proposed dedicating Volume 2 to the question of encouraging the youth to run for public office. The memory of that conversation returned immediately, and it became the guiding impulse for this collection.

Today's political landscape presents both opportunities and obstacles for young people. The Philippines has one of the youngest populations in the world; in the 2025 National and Local Elections, the Commission on Elections reported that more than half of voters are between 18 and 44 years old. Yet youth representation remains minimal beyond the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK). Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union show that only 17 of the 314 members of the current House of Representatives (20th Congress) are aged 15 to 30, down from 20 in the previous Congress.^{1,2} In the Senate, where the minimum age is 35, young people have no direct path at all. At best, they can rely on older champions to raise their issues.

KASama Ka Volume 2 responds to this democratic imbalance. Its purpose is to explore how young Filipinos can view public service not as a distant domain reserved for elites, but as an attainable, meaningful, and impactful career path.

Why Youth Participation Matters

In his 2021 address to the ECOSOC Youth Forum, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stressed the need for “meaningful opportunities for youth engagement in governance systems, democratic processes, peacebuilding, and peace negotiations... The world needs to move beyond platitudes about young people.”³

The case is clear in the Philippines. With less than 6% of lawmakers in the House of Representatives belonging to the youth age bracket, the concerns of millions of young Filipinos risk being sidelined. Professor Daniel Stockemer of the University of Ottawa and Associate Professor Aksel Sundström of University of Gothenburg argue that youth representation is critical for three reasons.⁴ First, young people have distinct policy preferences and values compared to older generations; underrepresentation risks skewing priorities toward the status quo. Second, longstanding biases cast the youth as “unfit to rule,” echoing Plato’s belief that true maturity comes only after 50 years. This prejudice, reinforced by structural age barriers, perpetuates the notion that young people lack the capacity to govern. Third, while youth organizations, student councils, and informal groups exist, they seldom wield enough influence to sustainably shape national policy.

Spaces for Youth Development

Despite the barriers, spaces for leadership training and participation are emerging. The SK offers a formal entry point, enabling young officials to design and implement programs for their peers. Yet its effectiveness depends heavily on proper training and capacity-building.

Other innovative initiatives demonstrate how youth potential can be cultivated beyond the SK. In Naga City, the City Youth Month Program allows young leaders to immerse themselves in local governance

by managing actual city operations for a month.⁵ The program’s success has inspired replications, such as the Upi Youth Governance Program in Maguindanao del Norte.⁶ These efforts show how experiential learning deepens understanding of governance and nurtures civic responsibility.

Youth-serving organizations have also created training programs that prepare young people to challenge existing systems and serve their communities. Such initiatives highlight that the youth are not merely passive reactors but can be active problem-solvers when given proper avenues for participation.

Enticing Young People to Run for Office

Low representation produces a feedback loop: issues that matter to the youth remain marginalized, which in turn discourages their participation. Improving representation is therefore both a symbolic and practical necessity.

The contributors in this volume highlight key gaps and propose directions forward. Hazel Duya underscores the lack of organized and evaluated initiatives, calling for a review of the SK, and the mandates of the National Youth Commission and the Local Youth Development Offices. Atty. Karlo Inocencio stresses that civic education and training are unevenly distributed, concentrated in urban centers, and lacking continuity—hence the need for a standardized SK training framework and a National Youth Leadership Development Pipeline. Kristian Solas and Elizabeth Joy Serrano-Quijano draw attention to Indigenous and marginalized youth, whose struggles with illiteracy, poverty, and social exclusion compound their political underrepresentation. Laica Bagnes cautions against treating SK leadership as a dead end, advocating instead for institutional support to sustain pathways to long-term political involvement.

Sherry Ann Murillo and Xzyrabelle Servento highlight how leadership flourishes even outside formal institutions, demonstrating how grassroots civic initiatives—like peer networks and civic watch groups—nurture justice-driven leadership. Crezel Obrero adds a cautionary note: if entrepreneurship

programs fail to integrate civic education, the country risks producing technically skilled youth who remain detached from public life.

The evidence is clear: Philippine democracy cannot afford to sideline its youth. Building a coherent, inclusive, and sustainable framework for youth leadership is no longer optional—it is urgent. The insights affirm that the path forward requires intentional investment in capacity-building, mentorship, and institutional reform.

Public service should not remain the preserve of elites or dynasties. To revitalize Philippine democracy, we must open political pathways to the next generation—providing them with the knowledge, networks, and institutional support to lead. If politics remains closed to the young, our democracy will age without renewal; if young leaders are welcomed and sustained, democracy gains the adaptability, legitimacy, and imagination it urgently needs.

1 Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Philippines: House of Representatives — Data on Youth," IPU Parline, accessed October 12, 2025, <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/PH/PH-LC01/data-on-youth/>.

2 Republic Act No. 10742, Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015, Approved January 15, 2016, Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2016/01/15/republic-act-no-10742/>.

3 António Guterres, "World Must Move beyond Platitudes about Young People, Secretary-General Tells Economic and Social Council Youth Forum," April 7, 2021, United Nations Press Release, <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sgsm20675.doc.htm>.

4 Daniel Stockemer and Askel Sundström, Youth without representation: The absence of young adults in parliaments, cabinets, and candidacies, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2022.

5 City Government of Naga, "City Youth Officials Program," City of Naga, Accessed June 20, 2025, <https://www2.naga.gov.ph/city-youth-officials/>.

6 Jayson Abad, "Through the Eyes of a Youth Leader: Leadership, Local Governance, and Public Service," UP sa Halalan, 2024, <https://halalan.up.edu.ph/through-the-eyes-of-a-youth-leader-leadership-local-governance-and-public-service>.





From Learners to Leaders:

Charting a Leadership Path for the Filipino Youth

Atty. Karlo Krisanto B. Inocencio

Executive Summary

Despite making up the majority of the Philippine electorate, the Filipino youth remain underrepresented in governance and disconnected from political processes due to limited civic education, uneven leadership training, and scarce opportunities for mentorship or exposure to public service. Existing mechanisms, such as the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) and its mandated training programs, reach only a small fraction of young Filipinos, leaving most without the skills or pathways needed to meaningfully participate in shaping policy and governance.

To address this, this policy brief calls for (1) institutionalizing comprehensive political education from senior high school through college, (2) strengthening and standardizing SK training nationwide, and (3) establishing a National Youth Leadership Development Pipeline through mentorship, internships, and a leadership academy. These measures will bridge the gap between youth potential and political participation, building a generation of capable, ethical, and engaged public leaders.

When Political Education Falls Short

Imagine a Philippines where students graduate not only with a basic knowledge of the Constitution and public institutions, but with firsthand experience in drafting bills, participating in youth parliaments, or interning in local and national government offices. Imagine young Filipinos receiving not just one-time leadership training, but continuous mentorship in policymaking, public service, and governance—connected to a clear leadership pipeline that nurtures their potential beyond the classroom. This future is within reach, but only if institutions tasked with shaping the nation's youth act decisively and in

coordination, to institutionalize political education and leadership development as a national priority.

But while this future is clear and compelling, the present reality tells a different story. Despite comprising a significant portion of the Philippine population and electorate, the Filipino youth remain underrepresented in governance and are often disengaged due to political apathy. While mechanisms like the SK and its mandatory leadership training¹ have been institutionalized under Republic Act 10742 (RA 10742), otherwise

known as the SK Reform Act of 2015, these efforts benefit only a limited group, specifically those already elected to youth office. This limited reach in political education prevents many young Filipinos from gaining the knowledge and skills needed to engage in politics, increasing their apathy toward governance and decision making.

Limited Access, Limited Reach, Limited Impact

Many Filipino youth, particularly those in underserved or rural areas, lack access to education that includes not only basic learning but also a strong foundation in political education and ongoing leadership development.² In Philippine senior high schools, the curriculum falls short of providing comprehensive civic education, which may result in students with limited understanding of political processes, governance, and their roles as active citizens.³ Although *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) and some strands of the K-12 curriculum touch on government structures, the lack of comprehensive civic education is a primary reason why many learners graduate without a functional understanding of political institutions, the law-making process, or civic engagement. These limitations create a significant gap between the country's youth potential and their actual participation in politics, more particularly in shaping public policy and governance.

Although RA 10742 mandates mandatory training for SK officials, including modules on budgeting, project development, and leadership, the reach of these programs is limited. A 2020 report⁴ from the Ateneo School of Government noted significant disparities in how SK trainings are implemented across local government units (LGUs), citing resource limitations, outdated modules, and a lack of post-training support or mentorship.

Relatedly, according to GMA Integrated News Research, 25.94 million millennials, born from 1981 to 1996, comprise 34.15% of the voting-age population. Additionally, 21.87 million Gen Z individuals, born between 1997 and 2007, represent 28.79% of the population eligible to vote. This practically means that millennials and Gen Z voters make up about 63% of the voting-age population and 68% of the registered voters in the

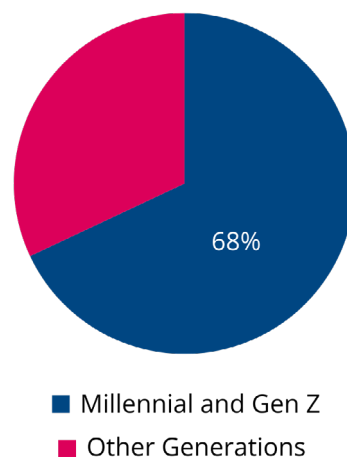


Figure 1. 2025 Registered Voters by Generation (GMA Integrated News).

2025 elections (Figure 1).⁵

However, only a small fraction of elected officials fall within this age group, roughly 7 percent in the national legislature (Figure 2),⁶ with many youth discouraged from entering politics mainly due to lack of encouragement, time or exposure.⁷

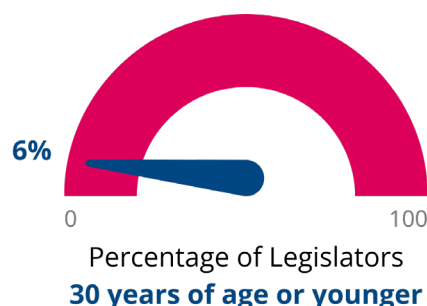


Figure 2. Who Holds the Power? (Inter-Parliamentary Union).

All these demonstrate that opportunities for public sector exposure, mentorship, and higher-level leadership development remain scarce. Most leadership programs are extra-curricular, urban-based, and short-term, with little continuity or formal state support beyond the SK.

It is nevertheless important to emphasize that the youth still want to be involved in the local development process, although there is a generally low level of participation in the SK among young Filipinos, as they do not perceive SK as a meaningful venue for participation. This is revealed in a 2007 study commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund in partnership with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) – National Barangay Operations Office.⁸

Policy Recommendations

To bridge the gap between youth potential and political participation, this policy brief proposes the following policy actions:

1. Institutionalize Comprehensive Political Education in Schools

Curriculum developers should collaborate with the Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to revise and deepen civic education curricula from senior high school to college, focusing on political institutions and processes, citizen rights and responsibilities, participatory democracy and accountability mechanisms, and support for co-curricular programs like mock elections, youth councils, and school-based legislative simulations.

2. Strengthen and Expand the SK Training Program

The DILG, National Youth Commission (NYC), and LGUs should enhance existing SK modules with advanced, elective leadership

content, such as policy and legislative research, bill drafting sessions, parliamentary procedures, and good governance.

3. Establish a National Youth Leadership Development Pipeline

To sustain youth engagement beyond the SK, the national government—through the DILG, NYC, and LGUs—should provide continuing leadership training tracks for SK alumni who are interested in pursuing higher roles in public service. There is an urgent need to institutionalize a broader National Youth Leadership Development Pipeline, targeting the youth aged 18–30. This pipeline should include a national leadership academy or fellowship program, youth in public service internship programs in national and local government offices, and a mentorship network that pairs aspiring youth leaders with experienced public servants, legislators, and civil society leaders. Together, these initiatives will create a clear, accessible pathway for young Filipinos to grow into competent and ethical leaders in governance.

By going beyond mandatory training and addressing the gaps in political education and leadership development, the Philippines can empower more young Filipinos to participate meaningfully in democratic governance. With sustained investment and systemic reform, today's Filipino youth can become the ethical, competent, and engaged leaders of tomorrow.

1 Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015. SECTION 27. *Mandatory and Continuing Training Programs.* – For the purpose of emphasizing the role of the youth in nation-building and molding them to become better citizens with the values of patriotism, nationalism and honor as a Filipino, any Sangguniang Kabataan official, whether elected or appointed, or any member of the LYDC must undergo the mandatory training programs before he or she can assume office. During their incumbency, they must attend the continuing training programs to be undertaken by the Commission in coordination with the DILG. Deliberate failure to attend the said training programs shall constitute sufficient ground to disqualify said Sangguniang Kabataan official or LYDC member or subject them to disciplinary actions.

2 Niyang Bai, "Educational Challenges in the Philippines," *Philippine Institute for Development Studies*, August 5, 2023, <https://pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/educational-challenges-in-the-philippines>.

3 "Civic Education in the Philippines Must Be Improved—DLSU Professor," *Philippine Institute for Development Studies*, August 23, 2022, <https://www.pids.gov.ph/details/news/press-releases/civic-education-in-the-philippines-must-be-improved-dlsu-professor>.

4 Leon Flores III, Ronald U. Mendoza, Jurel Yap, and John Sid Omega Valencia, "Advancing Youth Governance in the Philippines: A

Narrative of the Sangguniang Kabataan and its Road to Reform," *SSRN*, February 15, 2021, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3779023>.

5 GMA Integrated News, "Millennials, Gen Z Make up 63% of Voting Population," *GMA News Online*, February 9, 2025, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/935726/millennials-gen-z-make-up-63-of-elekyon-2025-voters/story/>.

6 "Data on Youth Representation and Age of Parliamentarians," *IPU Parline*, <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/PH/PH-LC01/data-on-youth>.

7 Madalene Sta. Maria and Jose Maria Diestro, "The Youth Speak: Forms, Facilitators and Obstacles to Their Political Engagement," *SDRC 30th Anniversary Working Paper Series* no. 3, 2009, <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/pdf/sdrc/working-papers/WP-series-No-3-The-Youth-Speak.pdf>.

8 Faye Alma G. Balanon, Michelle Ong, Beatriz Torre, Marco Puzon, Juan Paolo Granada, and Arnie Trinidad, *The impact of youth participation in the local government process: The Sangguniang kabataan experience*, ResearchGate, Makati City, Philippines: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2007, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282866168_The_Impact_of_Youth_Participation_in_the_Local_Government_Process.



Challenging Norms:

Towards Strengthened Systems for Youth Leadership Development in Governance

Hazel Ann Marie R. Duya

Executive Summary

Despite existing mechanisms to encourage youth participation in governance, many Filipino youth remain uninterested in running for public office. While non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders have pioneered initiatives to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to participate in governance, efforts remain fragmented and unevenly implemented. A more comprehensive and coordinated approach to youth leadership development is required to motivate more young people to run for public office.

Youth Political Awareness and Participation

In general, the youth are perceived as disengaged and uninterested in political and civic affairs. When studying the youth, the ‘dominant traditional paradigm’ focuses on their apathy, indifference, and cynicism.¹ Some have noted their lack of involvement in government and societal development and their restrained views on issues and current problems.^{2,3} Despite high hopes for their potential and capability, these impressions challenge the notion that the youth can be social agents of change in society.

Globally, different countries have witnessed a significant decline in conventional and non-conventional political participation in recent years.⁴ Such phenomena are explained through age, family influence, socioeconomic status,

lifestyle, and challenges within formal political systems and institutions.⁵ This is also apparent in the Philippines, as some analyses reveal. For instance, a national survey by YouthLed in 2021 show that the majority of youth respondents are not interested or not open to participating in any civil or political action (Figure 3).

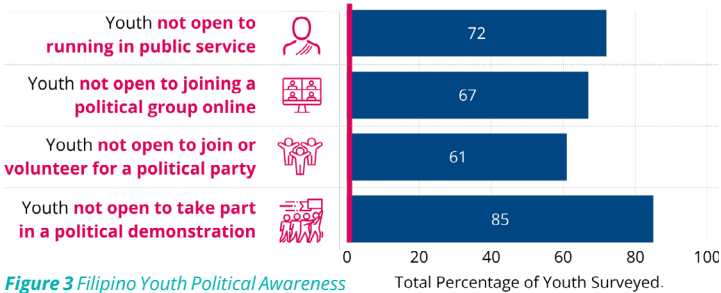


Figure 3 Filipino Youth Political Awareness and Participation (Natalie Christine Jorge and Karl Vendell 2021).

Notably, Figure 3 shows that 72% of the youth are not open to running in public service and 85% of youth are not open to taking part in any political demonstration or strike.⁶ Similarly, in her study, Bautista finds that young individuals show political cynicism towards the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK).⁷ They perceive SKs as irrelevant and self-interested.

The level of willingness of the youth to participate can depend on their demographic profile. Influences arising from an individual's gender, citizenship, race, ethnicity, location, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status can affect their access to representation. As seen in some countries, gender differences and norms can limit opportunities for women.⁸ In the same way, Sta. Maria and Diestro finds a difference in how young individuals in urban and rural areas in the Philippines perceive political participation.⁹ As such, to some extent, the Filipino youth's perception of youth leadership also affects their willingness to participate in decision-making.

Significantly, one of the determinants that can be attributed to the disengagement of the youth in political participation is the efficacy of programs and policies. Previous experience with the government changes their inclination to participate in activities.¹⁰ At the macro level, the structure of preexisting institutions, coupled with the resistance to change of those in power, may also discourage the youth from participating in governance and civic activities. Currently, political patronage is still prevalent, and the country's party system remains inoperative, leading to political families' control.¹¹ Moreover, access to financial and technical support has also been identified as a prerequisite to a sustained youth civic engagement.¹²

Given the myriad challenges and factors that influence the youth's perception of politics, initiatives to empower them are necessary. However, national and local initiatives on youth leadership development in governance are still unorganized and fragmented. Furthermore, there are no studies on the success or evaluation of the programs implemented.

Youth Political Landscape in the Philippines

The Philippines offers a wide array of opportunities for the youth, from institutionalized government programs to community-led initiatives.¹³ The conducive environment allows young people to lead, design, and implement programs, giving them agency in running their programs through the SK. After some amendments and revisions to the policies on youth participation in governance, the SK Reform Act was passed in 2015. The SK Reform Act of 2015 grants fiscal independence and includes an anti-dynasty provision that empowers SK officials to manage their programs independently and protects them from political interference.

The SK is an ideal example of how the political and civic participation of the youth can be amplified. It enables inclusive and participatory governance where young people can directly influence decisions at the local and national levels. It also challenges the traditional notion that only adults must be in charge of governance, emphasizing how decisions can be shared and co-produced between and among adults and youth.

Existing Political Leadership Initiatives

Despite existing challenges in youth participation in politics, several organizations and stakeholders already initiated different interventions to foster an enabling environment for alternative and young candidates. Among the organizations working to train youth leaders is Hiraya Initiatives for Change and Progress (Hiraya), which implemented Tara Takbo – Kabataan ng Bagong Politika. Tara Takbo, which means "Let's run", is a "youth leadership program designed to increase the number of candidates capable of running an alternative campaign for elections in localities around the Philippines."¹⁴

In 2023, Hiraya engaged 380 youth leaders across the country. Based on its assessment, more than half of the participants (58%) filed their certificates of candidacy (Figure 4). Among those

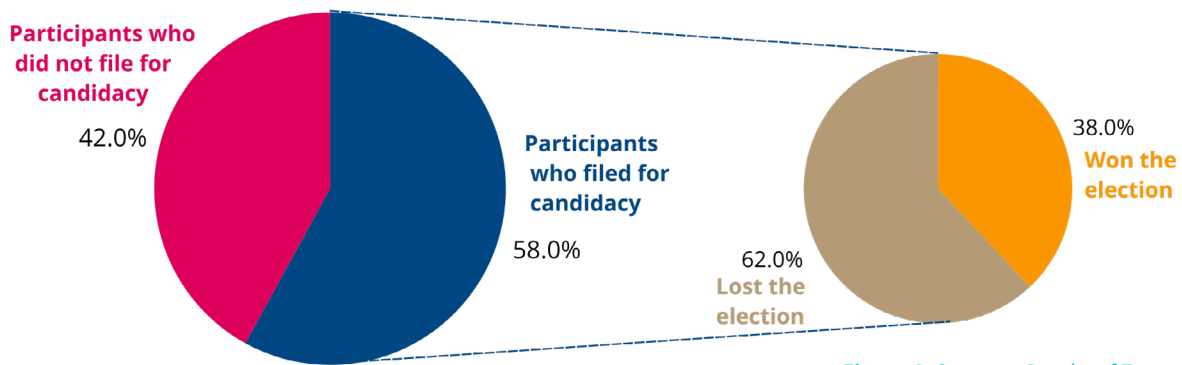


Figure 4. Outcome Results of Tara Takbo Training in 2023 (Hiraya).

who filed and ran for public office, 38% won. Tara Takbo participants highlight that receiving support from parents, peers, political parties, and the church encourage them to run for public office. They also emphasize the importance of providing opportunities for personal development to motivate them to consider a career in public service.

While the majority of the youth in 2021 are not interested to run for public office, Tara Takbo offers a counter- narrative that the youth are not disengaged in political affairs, rather, they are not provided with adequate support. Moreover, it solidifies the need for more structured interventions, which can foster a more sustainable and enabling environment for youth leadership and participation.

Policy Recommendations

Circumstances, influences, and other factors could determine the willingness of a young individual to participate in formal and informal political processes. Thus, along with a multitude of initiatives and practices to bolster youth participation in governance, it is also critical to consider the existing constraints in fulfilling this goal.

Hiraya recognizes that it needs partners to institutionalize their action and to provide much-needed opportunities for the youth continuously. Earlier scoping of initiatives finds that national and local endeavors in youth leadership development are unorganized and fragmented. There is also no comprehensive evaluation made of the implemented programs.

As political and civic participation of the youth does not happen overnight, this policy brief proposes the following recommendations to forward the youth agenda in contemporary times:

- 1. The National Youth Commission, in partnership with government and non-government stakeholders, should start a comprehensive review of the Youth in Nation-Building Act.**

The review shall include an assessment of the roles of the Commission and the Local Youth Development Offices (LYDOs) in the implementation of their mandates. It should also evaluate previous interventions to identify effective practices and adapt them to current realities. The results of the assessment will help the Commission and other stakeholders to arrive at a more holistic and coordinated approach to capacitating and training young people to take part in community and nation-building.

- 2. The National Youth Commission, in partnership with the Department of Education, should facilitate the development of civic education modules for the youth.**

Stimulating youth participation in governance must start in schools, youth centers, and local learning hubs. Schools and other institutions offer a space essential for continuous investment in youth opportunities and raising learners' awareness about government processes and people's participation

3. The National Youth Commission must strengthen systems for youth leadership in governance, which must be implemented and institutionalized at the local and national levels.

As the office tasked to promote and foster sustainable programs and policies for youth development, the National Youth Commission must oversee and spearhead efforts to systematize and institutionalize youth leadership support in the country. At the local level, the Commission must also re-emphasize the LYDOS' and SK's role in ensuring that proposed and implemented programs and policies must consider the youth's needs, concerns, and aspirations. Furthermore, effective monitoring and evaluation must also be in place to ensure that initiatives such as capacity development workshops of stakeholders involved in youth development in the country are regularly implemented and the youth are consulted in the policies and programs developed for them.

Encouraging young people to be involved in political processes and run for public office is an ongoing undertaking that needs improvement and development in every aspect. As countries' populations are becoming dominated by the youth, more programs that cater to their needs must be created. Additionally, initiatives to ensure their participation in decision-making should be established. In the Philippines, the National Youth Commission can be an instrument to further bolster and institutionalize programs on youth empowerment and development.

With adequate support, sustainable programs, and effective measures to strengthen systems and foster an enabling environment for youth leadership, the youth will be participative in shaping the future of the nation. Ultimately, the main goal is not just to involve and engage the youth, but also to empower them to be leaders of today and tomorrow.

- 1 Rys Farthing, "The Politics of Youthful Antipolitics: Representing the 'Issue' of Youth Participation in Politics," *Journal of Youth Studies* 13, no. 2 (February 2010): 181–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676260903233696>.
- 2 Wilhelmina Cabo, "Youth and Political Participation in the Philippines: Voices and Themes from a Democracy Project," *Journal of Politics and Governance* 8, no. 1 (2018): 259–71.
- 3 Madelene Sta. Maria and Jose Maria Diestro, Jr., "The Youth Speak: Forms, Facilitators and Obstacles to Their Political Participation," *Philippine Journal of Psychology* 42, no. 2 (2009): 291–313.
- 4 Henry Milner, *"The Internet Generation: Engaged Citizens or Political Dropouts,"* Medford: Tufts University Press, 2010, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/15694>.
- 5 Aimee Dresia R. Bautista, "Exploring Political Socialization and Political Participation: The Filipino Youth and the Sangguniang Kabataan in Caloocan City's First Legislative District," *Child & Youth Services* 42, no. 3 (December 11, 2020): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935x.2020.1859364>.
- 6 Natalie Christine Jorge and Karl Vendell Satinitigan, *The State of Filipino Youth: The 2021 National Youthled Survey*.
- 7 Bautista, "Exploring Political Socialization and Political Participation," 224–49.
- 8 Suna Gökçe-Kızılkaya and Özge Onursal-Besğül, "Youth Participation in Local Politics: City Councils and Youth Assemblies in Turkey," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 17, no. 1 (October 18, 2016): 97–112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2016.1244239>.
- 9 Sta. Maria and Diestro, "The Youth Speak," 291–313.
- 10 Xenia Chrysoschoou and Martyn Barrett, "Civic and Political Engagement in Youth," *Zeitschrift Für Psychologie* 225, no. 4 (December 2017): 291–301, <https://doi.org/10.1027/2151-2604/a000315>.
- 11 David G. Timberman, "Philippine Politics Under Duterte: A Midterm Assessment," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2019/01/philippine-politics-under-duterte-a-midterm-assessment?lang=en>.
- 12 Hiraya, "Strengthening Democracy Through Communities of Collective Action: A Case Study of Tara Takbo and Balangay."
- 13 Clarissa C David, "ICTs in Political Engagement among Youth in the Philippines," *International Communication Gazette* 75, no. 3 (February 14, 2013): 322–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048512472948>.
- 14 "Programs," Hirayang Kabataan, <https://www.hirayangkabataan.org/programs>.



#SaliKami:

Empowering Batangueño Youth in Local Governance

Laica Bagnes

Executive Summary

Batangas is home to over 850,000 youth and yet, gaps in the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) participation in the province remain. In 2018, four barangays had no SK councils; by 2023, this number grew to five barangays.¹ Some SK candidates also ran unopposed, revealing weak engagement and declining interest in leadership.² Without reinforced structures for development, the Batangueño youth are losing the chance to lead. Institutionalizing “Sali Kami! Batangueño Youth in Local Governance” (Sali Kami) under the Provincial Youth Development Office (PYDO) provides a pathway to strengthen youth leadership and ensure continuity in governance.

Fragile Youth Representation in the Batangas SK?

While the SK is designed to provide youth representation in local governance, youth participation in Batangas remains fragile. The absence of SK councils in some barangays means that the communities go without a formal youth voice, losing access to development funds and opportunities for representation.³ In several municipalities, some candidates ran unopposed, reflecting limited competition and declining interest in youth leadership.⁴

For the Batangueño youth, the barriers are both structural and personal. They lack confidence, training or political machinery to step forward as leaders.⁵ Without intervention, Batangas risks repeating a cycle where youth leadership remains

shallow, representation is weak, and the potential of the SK as a training ground for future leaders goes unfulfilled.

When the Youth Are Trained, They Lead: The SK Experience in Batangas

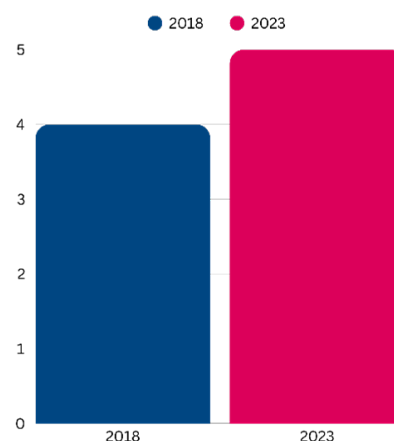


Figure 5. Barangays without SK councils in Batangas.

The gaps in participation are visible. In 2018, four barangays had no SK councils. By 2023, this number grew to five (Figure 5).⁶ These missed opportunities translate into communities without youth-led projects, without formal youth representation, and without leaders to carry forward the concerns of young people. In the municipality of San Jose, nearly 40% of SK chairperson candidates ran unopposed in the 2023 SK elections.⁷

The PYDO is not without resources or responsibility. With their 2025 budget, they organized youth assemblies, training on volunteerism, anti-drug initiatives, and SK capacity-building. Under the SK Reform Act (RA 10742), it is also mandated to provide continuing SK training, assist in the drafting of the Provincial Youth Development Plan, and provide support to the SK councils. Yet despite these efforts, youth participation remains fragile and uneven.

The challenge is not just about starting strong but also sustaining leadership. Since 2018, only a limited number of SK alumni in Batangas have advanced to higher elected office.⁸ Leaders like Councilor Paul Joshua Alcaraz—a non-dynastic public servant who began his journey as the SK Chairperson of Alitagtag—demonstrate the SK’s potential as a genuine launchpad for young leaders.⁹ Yet such examples remain the exception rather than the norm, as many youth leaders disengage after a single term, leaving behind little continuity.

Programs like “Sali Kami,” a leadership training program that aims to help young people in the province of Batangas feel ready to run for SK, show what is possible when training and support are provided. In 2023, 111 youths participated in the initiative, and 67 went on to win SK seats (Figure 6).

111 youth were trained during Sali Kami 2023



67 won the 2023 SK Elections

Figure 6. Impact of Sali Kami in 2023 (Youth for Youth, Inc.).

In barangays like San Juan (Mabini) and San Pablo (Bauan)—which previously had no SK councils—Sali Kami completers now serve as elected SK officials.¹⁰

The story of SK Chairperson Arabella Palaca of Bauan (Figure 7)—who initially hesitated to run due to limited leadership experience and exposure to local governance—illustrates the transformative effect of structured preparation. She credits the “Sali Kami” program for helping her build confidence and integrity as a leader. These outcomes prove that when the youth are equipped with skills, networks, and encouragement, they gain not only capability but also the willingness to lead.

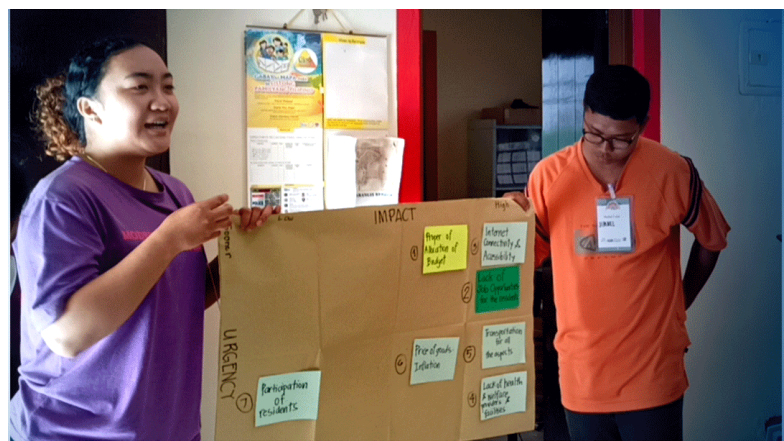


Figure 7. Arabella Palaca and Jimuel Maranan presenting their group output during the Sali Kami training in Barangay San Pablo, Bauan, Batangas. Photo taken last March 2023.

Policy Recommendations

To address the challenges and build on proven interventions, this policy brief proposes concrete steps the province can take:

1. Institutionalize youth leadership training under PYDO by formally adopting Sali Kami as a continuing program for aspiring and incumbent SK officials. Anchoring it within the Provincial Youth Development Plan will ensure sustainability.
2. Dedicate resources by creating a specific budget line for leadership development under PYDO’s allocation. This can be strengthened through co-funding arrangements with municipalities and non-governmental organizations, like Youth for Youth (Y4Y).

3. Expand partnerships with youth organizations. A Memorandum of Agreement between PYDO and Y4Y which designed and piloted Sali Kami, will allow the program to maximize tested modules and networks. Collaboration with Samahan ng Aktibong Kabataan Tungo sa Magandang Oportunidad (SAKTO) organizations and other Youth Organization Registration Program (YORP)-accredited groups can further broaden reach.
4. Targeted support for barangays with historically low participation or no SK councils to ensure no community is left without youth representation.
5. Establish mechanisms to track and support the SK alumni. A provincial alumni database, combined with mentorship opportunities

and recognition programs, can encourage continuity in leadership and ensure that young leaders remain engaged even after their SK term ends.



Batangas has a dynamic youth population whose energy and potential are vital to the province's future. Yet gaps in SK participation show that many voices remain unheard and many opportunities remain missed. By institutionalizing Sali Kami under PYDO, dedicating resources, and focusing on underserved barangays, Batangas can create a strong pipeline of youth leaders. With the right structures in place, young Batangueños will not only say “Sali Kami”—they will become the capable, confident leaders who shape the future of the province.

¹ Laica Bagnes, Interview with the Provincial Youth Development Office of Batangas, Personal, September 2025.

² Local Youth Development Officer of San Jose, unpublished data, August 2025.

³ Provincial Youth Development Office of Batangas, interview, September 2025.

⁴ Local Youth Development Officer of San Jose, unpublished data, August 2025.

⁵ Youth for Youth, Sali Kami internal reports, 2023.

⁶ Provincial Youth Development Office of Batangas, interview, September 2025.

⁷ Local Youth Development Officer of San Jose, unpublished data, August 2025.

⁸ Provincial Youth Development Office of Batangas, interview, September 2025.

⁹ Laica Bagnes, Interview with Hon. Paul Joshua Alcaraz, Personal, July 2025.

¹⁰ Youth for Youth, Sali Kami internal reports, 2023.



KAKAIBA:

Katutubong Kabataan Inspirasyon sa Bayan

Elizabeth Joy Serrano-Quijano

Executive Summary

This policy aims to empower the Indigenous youth, particularly the Blaan youth in Davao del Sur, by inspiring them to pursue political leadership and actively participate in governance through institutionalized literacy programs. This initiative focuses on enhancing leadership skills, fostering self-determination, and promoting culturally sensitive and contextually relevant policy influence to address systemic barriers that the Indigenous youth face, including a lack of access to reading materials, relevant and timely information, and a high rate of functional illiteracy. KAKAIBA empowers Blaan youth to enter public office through culturally sensitive training and engagement, strengthening literacy, self-governance, and Indigenous representation.

Barriers and Opportunities for Indigenous Youth Participation in Governance

Numerous studies highlight the barriers that the Indigenous youth face in engaging with formal governance structures, including limited political knowledge, leadership skills, systemic marginalization, and lack of Indigenous participation in policymaking. Globally, 19% of the Indigenous Peoples live in extreme poverty. Addressing their needs is pivotal in achieving global poverty reduction goals. Inclusion of the Indigenous Peoples through their indigenous knowledge systems and practices is a must for sustainable development efforts particularly in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) numbers 10 (reduced inequalities) and 11 (sustainable cities and communities).



Figure 8. The Blaan learners of Asbang Elementary School celebrating Indigenous Peoples Month in Matanao, Davao del Sur.

The empowerment and representation of the Indigenous Peoples is tremendously relevant in

the Philippines, where 9% of the population belong to the Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) and their rights are constitutionally recognized. The IPs identified by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) comprise 9.84 million or 9.1% of the country's population, while the Blaan comprise 3.8% of the IPs in the Philippines (Figure 9).¹ Majority of the Blaan people live in the provinces of South Cotabato, Sarangani, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, and Sultan Kudarat.

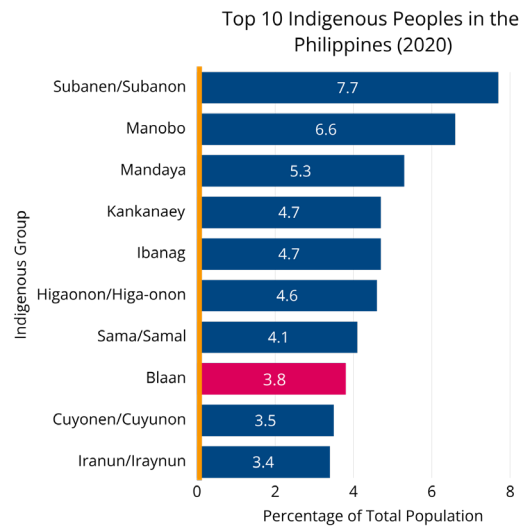


Figure 9. The Blaan among top 10 indigenous group in the Philippines (Philippine Statistics Authority 2020).

The Indigenous Peoples are considered as stewards of the country's natural resources contributing to sustainable development. Despite the Indigenous Peoples' contributions, they face exclusion in governance, coupled with lack of representation, particularly from the women and youth sectors. While highly developed countries are already setting their eyes on artificial intelligence and space exploration, the realities of cultural communities in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao, are stuck in battling systemic and basic development issues, such as literacy.

From IPRA to Practice: Persistent Gaps in Indigenous Representation

In a recent report of the Philippine Statistics Authority on the list of top 10 provinces with high functional illiteracy rates, Davao Occidental ranked second.² Despite the enactment of the landmark Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997, the gaps, particularly in tracking and understanding the socio-economic realities of the IPs remain, as

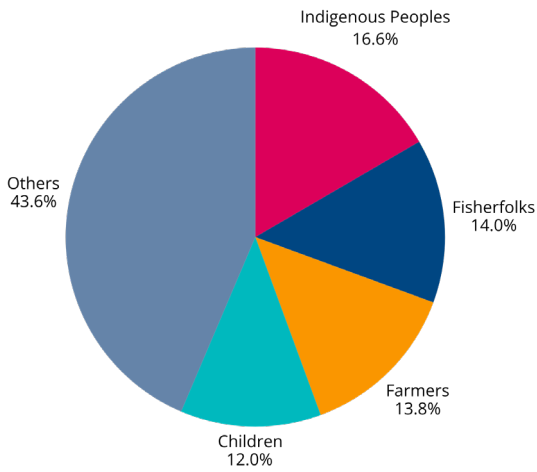


Figure 10. Poverty incidence among the basic sector (Philippine Statistics Authority 2023).

they are among the country's most impoverished and marginalized groups, with limited research exploring the intersection of poverty and ethnicity or the inequalities within ethnic communities (Figure 10).³ If these gaps remain unaddressed, illiteracy stays as one of the factors in the lack of political participation of the Indigenous youth.

The Indigenous youth have an important role in shaping the future of the cultural communities in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao, where 61% of the Indigenous Peoples are found. Despite the implementation at the local level of the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMR) since 2015,⁴ persisting concerns such as non-acceptance by local politicians, highly politicized and corrupt selection process, and lack of support from local government officials, hinder substantive representation and the ability of the IPMRs to address the issues of their communities. There are more than 4,000 IPMRs in the country, yet the Indigenous youth and women are not fully represented based on the dialogue during the first Philippine Higher Education Conference on Indigenous Peoples Education in 2024. The NCIP Administrative Order No. 001, series of 2009, Section 4 highlights one of the implementing guidelines in the selection of the IPMRs, which states that gender equity and sectoral representation, where the IP women and youth shall enjoy equal rights and opportunities in the selection process.⁵ Yet, only 22% of the IPMRs are composed of women and none from the youth sector. The participation of the Indigenous youth in governance is a crucial aspect of inclusive political representation.

Despite NCIP initiatives like leadership training and youth councils, no IP youth ran in the May 2025 Matanao elections, showing weak impact at the grassroots. Based on interviews and focus group discussions, many Blaan youth view politics as reserved for the influential and wealthy. Studies, however, stress that their participation is key to self-determination and culturally grounded policies that reflect their cultural and socio-political realities.



Figure 11. Colonsabac Cultural Community Library.

Moreover, research also suggests that engagement of the Indigenous youth in governance contributes to policy advocacy on land rights, environmental protection, and cultural preservation. Indigenous youth leaders actively engage in grassroots movements and community-based governance structures, bridging traditional leadership systems with contemporary political processes. Also, digital platforms have become an essential tool for the Indigenous youth to amplify their voices, advocate for their rights, and mobilize support for legislative reforms. However, scholars underscore that meaningful participation requires institutional reforms that will pave the way for the Indigenous youth leaders to engage in governance. Strengthening Indigenous youth leadership through literacy and education, mentorship, and

policy support remains a practical strategy for sustainable and inclusive governance and political empowerment in the country.

Policy Recommendations

The implementation of KAKAIBA in Matanao, Davao del Sur will equip the Blaan youth to aim for seats in government and run for public office, thereby fostering sectoral representation among the Indigenous youth at the municipal and provincial levels. This policy brief recommends specific actions to address leadership gaps and inequality within the ICCs.

1. Strengthening Indigenous Youth Leadership Through Culture and Community

The Local Youth Development Office and the Sangguniang Kabataan may organize culturally sensitive capacity-building programs and leadership modules in collaboration with local elders and community leaders. These initiatives should ensure that traditional knowledge, indigenous languages, and customs are preserved and passed down to the youth. Establishing safe and inclusive spaces, such as cultural community libraries, will allow the Blaan youth to feel heard, valued, and empowered while developing their leadership skills. This approach can be adopted and institutionalized across the 21 barangays in Matanao with IPMRs.

2. Community Engagement and Mentorship for the Indigenous Youth

Community engagement and networking activities may be developed by inviting successful Indigenous leaders from various fields, including professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, and scientists. These activities will provide the Blaan youth with opportunities to connect with role models, gain inspiration, and build sustainable mentoring relationships that foster collaboration and leadership growth.

3. Strengthening Cultural Identity Through Digital and Community-Based Initiatives

The Sangguniang Kabataan of Matanao may

promote and spearhead cultural identity and empowerment through social media campaigns that highlight indigenous stories, traditions, and art on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, podcasts, and Facebook. Featuring indigenous languages, dance, music, and crafts in engaging formats—such as short documentaries, tutorials, and hashtag challenges—can help the youth reclaim their identity while connecting with a global audience. Complementing these digital efforts, monthly storytelling circles led by elders will ensure that traditions, history, and values are passed down in their own language. Community-based initiatives, such as teaching traditional weaving, farming or music alongside modern skills like digital storytelling, will further allow the Indigenous

youth to embrace their heritage while preparing for the future.

4. **Mentorship and Practical Training for the Indigenous Youth in Governance**

Mentorship programs that provide the Indigenous youth with hands-on political experience may be launched. These programs can include learning directly from local leaders, engaging in policy discussions, participating in community decision-making, and observing Sangguniang Bayan sessions. Complementary initiatives such as youth councils, fora, mock assemblies, and grassroots advocacy projects will further empower them to develop leadership skills while addressing real issues that affect their communities.

The program of KAKAIBA in Matanao, Davao del Sur envisions empowered Blaan youth who are grounded in culture and capable of leading in governance. By combining cultural preservation, mentorship, and practical training, it nurtures the Indigenous youth leaders who embrace their heritage while promoting representation, equality, and sustainable development in their communities.

1 "Ethnicity in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing)," Philippine Statistics Authority, July 3, 2023, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/ethnicity-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>.

2 H. Marcos C. Mordeno, "8 Mindanao Provinces among 10 with Highest Rates of Functional Illiteracy," *MindaNews*, May 2, 2025, <https://mindanews.com/top-stories/2025/05/8-mindanao-provinces-among-10-with-highest-rates-of-functional-illiteracy>.

3 "Poverty Statistics," Philippine Statistics Authority, Accessed September 28, 2025, <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/poverty>.

4 "NCIP Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 2021," National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, October 5, 2021, <https://ncip.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NCIP-AO-1-S.-2021-as-amended-by-CEB-Reso-No.-2023-09-07-063.pdf>.

5 "NCIP Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 2009," National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, <https://ncip.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ncip-ao-no-1-s-2009-ipmr.pdf>.

A photograph of two young men in a professional setting. The man on the left, wearing glasses and a dark shirt, is looking towards the man on the right. The man on the right, wearing a light-colored sweater over a collared shirt and a lanyard, is looking down with his hand near his chin in a thoughtful pose. The background is blurred, showing other people and an indoor environment.

From Tradition to Transition:

Empowering Indigenous Youth Leadership in Governance

Kristian Noel I Yang Solas

Executive Summary

The Indigenous youth in the Philippines continue to face systemic barriers to political participation, including marginalization, bureaucratic hurdles, and cultural traditions that prioritize elder leadership. These challenges limit their representation in governance and weaken their ability to influence policies that directly impact their communities. The *Advancing Civic Transformation for Tribal Youth (ACT-TribU)* initiative seeks to close this gap by equipping the Indigenous youth with leadership skills, governance training, and hands-on policy-making experience to strengthen their role in shaping inclusive and responsive governance.

Indigenous Youth Participation in Governance

The Philippines is home to over 9.84 million Indigenous Peoples (IPs) across 110 ethnolinguistic groups. Yet systemic marginalization, bureaucratic barriers, and traditions that prioritize elder leadership often discourage the youth from stepping into political roles.¹ However, their participation is vital as the youth bring perspectives that bridge tradition with modern challenges, strengthening intergenerational leadership by honoring the wisdom of elders while addressing the aspirations of younger generations. Without their voices, policies risk becoming shortsighted, failing to reflect the realities of a growing youth population who will soon inherit the responsibility of sustaining their communities. Ensuring Indigenous youth representation is therefore not just a matter of inclusion, but a key step toward

advancing education and health, democratic participation, cultural preservation, and ancestral land rights, as well as securing resilient, inclusive, and sustainable community development.

Political Structure in Cultural Communities

The Indigenous Peoples Right Act (IPRA) of 1997 recognizes, protects, and promotes the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) and IPs.² The act mandates the creation of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to oversee its implementation. Additionally, the Indigenous Peoples are given the right to maintain and develop their Indigenous political structures. The act also guarantees through the State that ICCs and IPs are granted mandatory representation in policymaking bodies and other local legislative councils.³

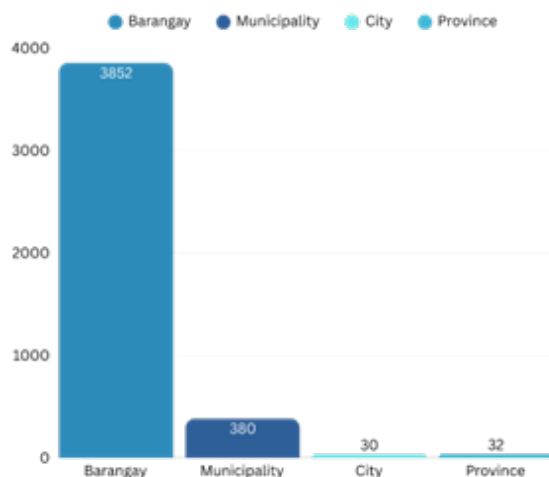


Figure 12. Number of IPMRs in every local government unit (Open Government Partnership 2019).

In 2019, there were 4,294 Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) in the country, distributed as follows: 30 in cities, 32 in provinces, 380 in municipalities, and 3,852 in barangays (Figure 12).⁴ However, Indigenous groups are concerned that the selection of IPMRs has become politicized. While tribal leaders aim to represent their communities and receive endorsements from them, these choices are often ignored, and local councils do not recognize many IPMRs. Furthermore, challenges such as bureaucracy, limited resources, inadequate training, and weak capacity among appointees hinder the IPMRs' ability to represent their communities in governance effectively.⁵ These challenges hinder the effective representation of Indigenous communities in local governance.

The case of the Municipality of Polomolok, South Cotabato



Figure 13. Map of Polomolok, South Cotabato (Google Maps 2025).

The Municipality of Polomolok, South Cotabato (Figure 13) is a culturally vibrant community situated at the foot of Mt. Matutum.⁶ Its name, taken from the Blaan term "Flomlok" meaning "hunting grounds," highlights its indigenous heritage and rich natural resources.⁷ Despite this strong cultural identity, Indigenous youth participation in governance remains limited. For instance, while 13 barangays have elected an IPMR to the Sangguniang Barangay, no Indigenous youth have yet been chosen. This is notable since the minimum age qualification for an IPMR is 18. Such a trend reflects how IPMR positions continue to be dominated by elders, emphasizing the deeply rooted cultural tradition of valuing and prioritizing elder leadership in Indigenous governance. Beyond IPMRs, the Indigenous youth may participate through the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), established under Republic Act No. 10742 to empower the youth in local governance and promote transparent, accountable leadership. However, underrepresentation persists, even in areas with large Indigenous populations.⁸

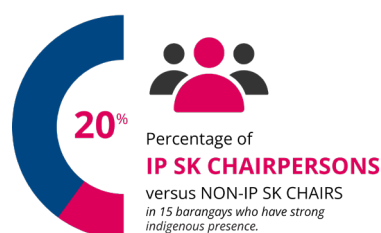


Figure 14. Cultural background of Sangguniang Kabataan Chairpersons in 15 barangays who have strong indigenous presence.

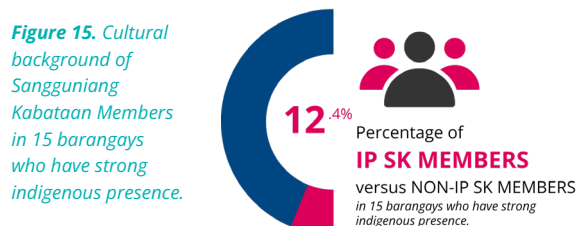


Figure 15. Cultural background of Sangguniang Kabataan Members in 15 barangays who have strong indigenous presence.

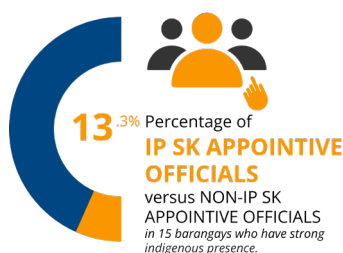


Figure 16. Cultural background of Sangguniang Kabataan appointive officials in 15 barangays who have strong indigenous presence.

In Polomolok, where 15 of 23 barangays have strong IP presence, only 13 IPMRs, 3 SK Chairpersons (Figure 14), 13 of 105 elected SK members (Figure 15), and 4 of 30 appointive SK officials (Figure 16) are Indigenous youth, all from the Blaan community of 15 IP barangays. At first glance, these numbers may seem proportionate to national demographics since Indigenous Peoples are a minority in the Philippines. Yet in a municipality with a substantial Indigenous population, they reveal an underrepresentation that weakens the voice of Indigenous youth in decision-making. Without stronger mechanisms to ensure their involvement, important concerns such as access to education and health, democratic participation, cultural preservation, and ancestral land rights risk being overlooked. This shows the need for policies that promote genuinely inclusive governance.

Policy Recommendations

The challenge stems from the limited readiness of the Indigenous youth to assume leadership roles. While there are promising examples of youth leadership in Polomolok, similar opportunities must also reach Indigenous communities to enable their young people to lead and represent their own constituencies. This policy brief recommends implementing the ACT-TribU initiative. The initiative will be implemented through a phased (Figure 17) and participatory approach to ensure sustainability and relevance for the Indigenous youth leaders.

- **Community consultations**

Conduct structured dialogues, field group discussions, and interviews with the Indigenous youth, elders, and leaders, to be organized by the SK Federation and facilitated by IPMRs, Local Youth Development Council (LYDC), and volunteers. Insights from these consultations should guide the design of culturally grounded leadership and governance programs.

- **Pilot Implementation**

Launch a pilot program in a selected community through the SK Federation and LYDC, with support from the LGU and IPMRs. Activities should include leadership training, governance workshops, mentorship, and advocacy on health, education, economic empowerment, digitalization, and good governance. Refinement will be based on pilot results.

- **Policy Formulation and Institutionalization**

Translate pilot outcomes into policy proposals to integrate ACT-TribU into local governance structures. This should be pursued through collaboration with the LYDC, SK Federation, Indigenous councils, NCIP, lawmakers, and relevant government agencies to ensure institutional adoption.

- **Sustainability**

Ensure long-term continuity of the program by embedding it as a regular leadership initiative supported by the IPMRs and SK Federation. Furthermore, this leadership program can be localized at the barangay level to ensure representation in the grassroots youth council. Sustainability should be reinforced through monitoring and evaluation, active stakeholder engagement, and secured funding streams.

This policy recommendation aims to empower the Indigenous youth to overcome systemic marginalization by strengthening their representation in policymaking bodies, equipping them with skills to navigate bureaucratic processes, and encouraging leadership and volunteerism. While Indigenous Peoples make up a minority segment of the national population, their meaningful participation is essential for a healthy and inclusive democracy. Without their voices,



Figure 17. Phases of ACT-TribU Policy Framework.

policymaking risks overlooking critical issues such as cultural preservation, education, land rights, and equitable access to services. ACT-TribU therefore envisions a smooth transition of Indigenous leadership through mentorship and cultivation of critical thinking, ensuring that the next generation of leaders are prepared, confident, and capable of addressing their communities' needs.

- 1 "Towards Inclusion for Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines," United Nations Office for Project Services, <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/stories/towards-inclusion-for-indigenous-peoples-in-the-philippines>.
- 2 "The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997," National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, <https://ncip.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IPRA-LAW.pdf>.
- 3 "NCIP Administrative Order No. 1, Series of 2021," National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, <https://ncip.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NCIP-AO-1-S.-2021-as-amended-by-CEB-Reso-No.-2023-09-07-063.pdf>.
- 4 "Indigenous Representation in Local Legislative Councils (PH0065)," Open Government Partnership, November 30, 2019, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/philippines/commitments/PH0065/>.
- 5 Jasmin Fajilagmago, Julito Garcia, Marmelo V. Abante, and Florinda Vigonte, "Barriers and Strategies Faced by the Indigenous People Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) in Translating Policy Recommendations into Actionable Programs and Advocacy for the Mindoro Community," SSRN, January 6, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5015294>.
- 6 "Polomolok, South Cotabato," Google Maps, Accessed December 7, 2025, https://www.google.com/maps/place/Polomolok,+South+Cotabato/@6.2503451,125.0411432,28430m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m6!3m5!1s0x32f79aeb8f80a6bd:0x5744ea7819bab10b!8m2!3d6.2214549!4d125.0630767!16zL20vMDZyZDFn?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MTIwMi4wKXMDSoASAFQAw%3D%3D.
- 7 Municipality of Polomolok, "Our History," *Municipality of Polomolok Official Website*, Accessed September 3, 2025, <https://polomolok.gov.ph/history>.
- 8 Supreme Court of the Philippines, *An Act Establishing Reforms in the Sangguniang Kabataan, Creating Enabling Mechanisms for Meaningful Youth Participation in Nation-Building, and for Other Purposes*, E-Library, accessed June 30, 2025, <https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/2/66304>.



SAS-STARTUPS AND SERVICE:

Turning Young Entrepreneurs into Future Leaders

Crezel B. Obrero

Executive Summary

While having strong academic preparation, many students in entrepreneurship programs remain disengaged from governance processes, with platforms like the Sangguniang Kabataan underutilized due to limited awareness, political disillusionment, and structural barriers. To address this, values-based civic leadership can be integrated into existing BS Entrepreneurship courses, supported by policy dialogues, co-developed teaching modules, and pilot testing in higher education institutions. This approach aims to produce graduates who are both innovative entrepreneurs and responsible citizens capable of contributing to good governance and inclusive development.

Disconnect Between Entrepreneurship and Governance

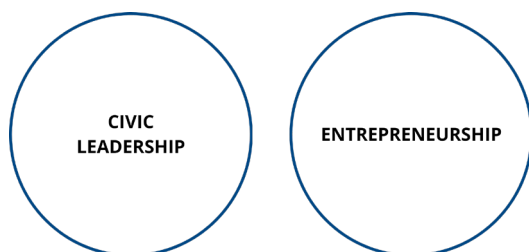


Figure 18. Disconnect between Entrepreneurship and Governance (Author's Visualization).

The next generation of Filipino entrepreneurs will play a key role in molding the economy and shaping governance of the country. Governance affects entrepreneurs, too. Enterprises depend on policies related to taxation, regulation, access to capital,

and local development programs. In Camarines Sur, there are 16 higher education institutions (HEI) currently offering Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship programs. These programs aim to equip students with strong entrepreneurial knowledge and competencies. However, while these institutions effectively prepare graduates for enterprise management, many young people are still ill-equipped to associate their entrepreneurial goals with the governance systems that influence them.

The disconnect (Figure 18) is not a question of institutional weakness but of opportunity. Platforms such as the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), designed to foster youth leadership, are usually underutilized. It is not about the lack of relevance, but rather limited awareness and

youth participation. The absence of structured approaches for the youth to understand how entrepreneurship links with civic education may result in educational institutions producing innovative graduates, but less engaged citizens in governance.

Youth Engagement in Practice: Gaps and Realities

The gap between entrepreneurship and governance is observed in student academic life. During a class discussion in April 2025 on the role of government in entrepreneurship, students shared their limited civic engagement. Some students mentioned that family influence often guided their voting decisions more than their own choices. Others emphasized that heavy academic workloads left them little time for political activities. These insights reveal a common reality. Students understand governance in theory, but often find it hard to relate this to their personal and professional goals.

That classroom experience brings to mind broad concerns about the SK, the country's official platform for youth leadership. Many young Filipinos acknowledge the very important and vital role of the SK in youth representation in governance. However, it has faced ongoing challenges, including claims of corruption, inefficiency, and electoral misconduct such as vote-buying and patronage politics.¹ High partisanship among youth leaders also undermines election integrity and reduces public trust.² Meanwhile, factors like lack of awareness and time constraints limit meaningful participation, making it hard for the SK to effectively tackle youth issues.³

The 2023 Barangay and SK Elections highlighted a contradiction. Reports indicated that around 27,500 candidates could win a position with just one vote.⁴ This manifests how accessible leadership roles are, yet many young people are hesitant to take the opportunity and lead. Despite consistently high voter registration among the youth, many still feel politically powerless. Disconnection from the political process and growing skepticism about whether their actions can lead to real change, have resulted in low levels of ongoing civic participation.⁵

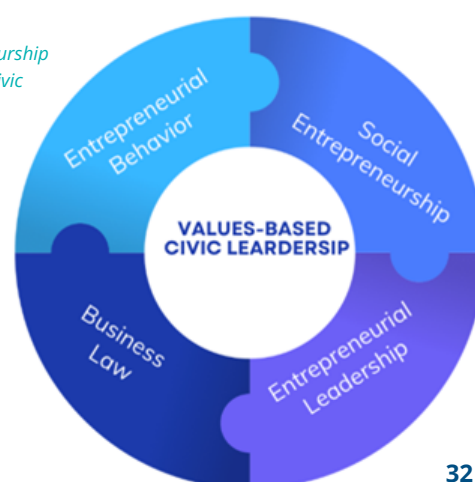
Scholars stress that political reform alone cannot solve these challenges. Raul Aquino argues that improving civic education and raising awareness about corruption are key to empowering the youth against unethical practices and promoting good governance.⁶ Likewise, Castillo et al. suggest that communication and advocacy focused on youth issues are essential for increasing participation and improving the SK's overall effectiveness.⁷

For entrepreneurship students, these lessons are particularly important. Governance directly affects the environment in which businesses operate. However, without structured opportunities to engage in civic leadership, students risk becoming competent entrepreneurs who are disconnected from the civic aspects of their careers. By including civic education in entrepreneurship programs, HEIs can develop innovative business leaders and responsible citizens who are ready to contribute to governance and inclusive national growth. In this way, HEIs can play an imperative role in developing future leaders who are both entrepreneurial and civically engaged. This ensures that education links economic innovation and responsible governance.

Policy Recommendations

The BS Entrepreneurship curriculum already offers clear entry points for integrating Values-Based Civic Leadership. Under the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 18, s. 2017, courses such as Entrepreneurial Behavior, Social Entrepreneurship, Business Law and Taxation, and Entrepreneurial Leadership in Organizations can be leveraged to embed civic values, ethical decision-making, and governance awareness. This approach strengthens civic learning without requiring major curriculum revisions.

Figure 19. Entrepreneurship Courses Supporting Civic Leadership (Author's Visualization).



To implement this approach, this policy brief suggests the following steps:



1. Policy Dialogue

HEIs offering BS Entrepreneurship programs in Camarines Sur, such as the Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges, may initiate policy dialogues with relevant entrepreneurship associations, industry partners, and government agencies. The goal is to identify specific ways to incorporate civic leadership into the entrepreneurship curricula. It aims to build consensus, gain institutional support, and align efforts based on the emphasis on leadership and social responsibility outlined in CHED Memorandum Order No. 18, s. 2017.

2. Curriculum and Module Development

The entrepreneurship faculty of HEIs in Camarines Sur can co-develop teaching modules together with relevant academic networks and youth-focused agencies like the National Youth Commission (NYC). These modules should emphasize the relationship between governance, ethics, and entrepreneurship, and can be added to existing BS Entrepreneurship courses such as Entrepreneurial Behavior, Social Entrepreneurship, Business Law and Taxation, and Entrepreneurial Leadership in Organizations. The module development needs an estimated budget of PHP 100,000, which can be sourced from the research development fund of the initiating HEI. The said HEI can also partner with academic networks and youth-focused agencies in maximizing resources for this effort.

3. Pilot Testing and Evaluation

An HEI in Camarines Sur may act as the pilot for one academic semester. The evaluation phase should examine outcomes using

pre- and post-program surveys to monitor changes in civic knowledge, political efficacy, and involvement in governance-related activities among students. This evaluation can also be submitted as research to the HEI to tap into the institution's research development fund. During the pilot, the HEI may integrate beyond the classroom tasks through student-led projects such as community consultations and entrepreneurship fairs tied to policy dialogue. Mentorship programs with entrepreneur-councilors who represent the link between business and governance can also be an effective approach. These hands-on activities can make civic learning relevant and practical in strengthening its connection to entrepreneurship and community development.

Faculty and administrators may initially see civic education as outside the scope of entrepreneurship and may hesitate to adopt the modules. Addressing this can be accomplished by securing support from the Commission on Higher Education and a national association for entrepreneurship educators, identifying faculty champions, aligning this initiative with the HEIs' development plans, and working with youth organizations to share resources and expertise.

Integrating values-based civic leadership into the BS Entrepreneurship curriculum can produce young leaders who are both innovative entrepreneurs and active citizens. This approach is practical and sustainable, as it builds on existing courses within the current higher education framework.

Adopting this initiative will strengthen students' understanding of governance, enhance ethical leadership skills, and foster meaningful participation in platforms like the SK. In the long term, it supports national priorities such as Ambisyon Natin 2040 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by promoting values-driven institutions and inclusive governance.

- 1 Leon Flores III, Ronald U. Mendoza, Jurel Yap, and John Sid Omega Valencia, "Advancing Youth Governance in the Philippines: A Narrative of the Sangguniang Kabataan and its Road to Reform," *SSRN*, February 15, 2021, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3779023>.
- 2 Ma. Sarah Fatima P. Valencia, "Partisanship and Performance of Youth Leaders in the Philippines," *HO CHI MINH CITY OPEN UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF SCIENCE - SOCIAL SCIENCES* 13 (1):129-43. <https://doi.org/10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.13.1.2490.2023>.
- 3 Mae Akira Izes Castillo, Dylan Carlo Cruz, Josuah Lorenzo Lapaz, Karylle Grace Marcha, John Vincent Padillo, Frinzylle Jewel Vegiga, and Mc Rollyn D. Vallespin, "Assessing Demographics, Perceptions, and Participation: A Study on Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Effectiveness and Improvement Suggestions," *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review* 7, no. 5 (May 8, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/v7-i5-22>.
- 4 Kathleen de Villa, "Just 1 Vote Will Do It for 27500 Candidates," *Inquirer.Net*, September 23, 2023, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1835678/just-1-vote-will-do-it-for-27500-candidates>.
- 5 Anthony Lawrence Borja, Ador R. Torneo, and Ian Jayson Hecita, "Challenges to Democratization from the Perspective of Political Inaction: Insights into Political Disempowerment and Citizenship in the Philippines," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 44, no. 1 (March 22, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034241239060>.
- 6 Raul A. Aquino, "Philippine Youth from Academic and Police Sectors Views, Knowledge and Understanding of Philippine Corruption," *European Union Digital Library*, June 4, 2021, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4108/eai.7-6-2021.2308580>.
- 7 Castillo et al., *Assessing Demographics, Perceptions, and Participation*.





SIMBUYO:

A Pathway to Transformative Youth Leadership

Sherry Ann Murillo and Xzyrabelle M. Servento

Executive Summary

The Philippines faces persistent challenges in youth political engagement and community protection against gender-based violence and child abuse. Studies show that trained youth volunteers and peer support groups can strengthen detection, referral, and civic participation. SIMBUYO ng Pagbabago proposes institutionalizing these mechanisms to build youth capacity, enhance protection systems, and foster credible, justice-driven leadership.

Challenges in Youth Political Participation and Protection

The Philippines has a dynamic youth population, but many young people remain disillusioned with politics. They see political spaces as exclusive, corrupt, and disconnected from their values. This disengagement is compounded by weak community-level mechanisms to address urgent issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) and child abuse.

The Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), the country's primary youth leadership platform, often reinforces this disconnect. A national study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Department of the Interior and Local Government, and University of the Philippines finds SK performance to be "generally weak," with activities skewed toward low-impact projects: sports (32%), infrastructure (19%), clean-up drives (19%), and



entertainment (10%).¹ Only 20% of programs address health, education, livelihood, or child protection. Such patterns diminish the credibility of youth governance and exclude serious issues from the agenda.

Studies affirm that corruption and political exclusion further alienate the youth. However, research has also shown that community-rooted youth volunteers, when properly trained, can dramatically increase GBV detection, survivor support, and child protection. A new leadership model is needed—one that is feminist,² inclusive, and built on trust and credibility at the grassroots level and where the SK can make a meaningful contribution.

Research Evidence on Youth Leadership and Protection

In the Philippines, one in three children experience physical violence and one in five experience sexual violence, with many cases going unreported due to fear and social stigma.³ Research indicates that community-based youth volunteers and peer support groups can significantly improve the detection and reporting of gender-based violence and child abuse.⁴ Trained youth-led groups also play a vital role in providing referrals and establishing themselves as trusted frontline protectors. Evidence further shows that civic participation strengthens youth voice, leadership, and policy influence,⁵ while programs such as UNICEF's UPSHIFT demonstrate that, when properly supported, young people can sustain meaningful impact and credible leadership. Though its focus is on innovation, UPSHIFT is an initiative that empowers adolescents as proactive agents of change through building their leadership skills to help them design and implement community-based solutions.

These findings underscore an opportunity to transform the political landscape through molding a new generation of leaders grounded in justice, empathy, and courage—who know the realities of injustice and choose to stand against it.

Policy Recommendations

SIMBUYO ng Pagbabago (Passion for Change) is proposed as a youth development policy and strategy designed to cultivate a new generation of leaders grounded in social justice and community protection. This initiative is centered on The Good Samarites—a youth-led community watch group and school-based peer support group trained to be champions of GBV prevention and child protection while cultivating civic awareness and leadership skills.

By empowering the youth to become frontline protectors and first responders, SIMBUYO redefines their role from passive recipients of protection to active agents of change. This approach directly addresses the systemic issues that alienate young

people from politics and creates a clear pathway to public service.

- 1. Institutionalize Youth-led Community Watch Groups and Peer Support Groups**
Instead of being seen as “token” leaders from superficial programs, the youth involved in The Good Samarites earn a powerful grassroots credibility. Their communities recognize them as trusted protectors and advocates which builds a strong foundation for future political campaigns.
- 2. Support Purpose-driven Youth Platform**
SIMBUYO offers a concrete and purposeful reason for the youth to run for public office. Their campaign platform isn't just about promises; it's a continuation of their proven work in community protection, social justice, and child rights advocacy. This resonates with voters and inspires genuine civic engagement.
- 3. Invest in Capacity Building and Mentorship Pipelines**
The program provides formal training on ethical leadership, policy advocacy, and rights-based governance. It also establishes mentorship pipelines that connect young leaders with experienced advocates and policymakers. These skills and networks are crucial for successful political campaigns and effective governance.
- 4. Champion Justice-driven and Community-rooted Leadership**
By nurturing a generation of leaders who prioritize justice, empathy, and courage, SIMBUYO can fundamentally transform Philippine politics. These are leaders who understand community realities from the ground up, ensuring that future policies are survivor-centered and rooted in real-world needs.

~~~~~  
Policymakers and government bodies are urged to institutionalize SIMBUYO ng Pagbabago and invest in the youth who can protect, lead, and transform.



They can be an empowered generation of young people who choose courage over silence and justice over fear. By adopting and sustaining SIMBUYO ng Pagbabago, community protection mechanisms are not only strengthened, but also a new generation of leaders are inspired and equipped to enter public office with integrity and vision, ultimately building a more just, inclusive, and resilient Philippines.

- 1 Faye Alma G. Balanon, Michelle Ong, Beatriz Torre, Marco Puzon, Juan Paolo Granada, and Arnie Trinidad, *The impact of youth participation in the local government process: The Sangguniang kabataan experience*, ResearchGate, Makati City, Philippines: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2007, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282866168\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Youth\\_Participation\\_in\\_the\\_Local\\_Government\\_Process](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282866168_The_Impact_of_Youth_Participation_in_the_Local_Government_Process).
- 2 Feminist leadership is a transformative process of dismantling discriminatory power structures and shifting toward inclusive, rights-based, gender-responsive, and collective governance to achieve a feminist vision of social justice.
- 3 Rep, *National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children in the Philippines*, United Nations Children's Fund, October 2016, <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/reports/national-baseline-study-violence-against-children-philippines>.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 "A Guide to Action: What Works on Adolescent and Young People Engagement," United Nations Children's Fund, 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/media/1581/file/A%20guide%20to%20action%20what%20works%20on%20adolescent%20and%20young%20people%20engagement.pdf>.



## Author Profiles



### Atty. Karlo Krisanto B. Inocencio

#### Affiliation

Supervising Legislative Staff Officer II, House of Representatives

Atty. Karlo Krisanto B. Inocencio, or Atty. Karlo, is a dedicated public servant and educator committed to promoting democratic values and upholding the rule of law within and beyond the legislative landscape. His work at the House of Representatives supports legislative development and policy analysis, helping shape effective governance. Alongside his responsibilities in the legislative arena, Atty. Karlo is a law professor at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, where he inspires aspiring legal professionals and imparts his knowledge across various fields of law.

Atty. Karlo earned his Juris Doctor degree from San Sebastian College-Recoletos College of Law.



### Hazel Ann Marie R. Duya

#### Affiliation

Youth Development Officer III, Quezon City Youth Development Office

Hazel Ann Marie Duya, or Hazel, worked with non-government organizations promoting genuine public service and empowering communities in the Philippines, before joining her current organization. As a youth leader, Hazel actively engages with various organizations that advocate for women's empowerment, good governance, and youth empowerment. Eager to learn more and share her passion with the world, she aspires to have further significant and meaningful roles in nation-building.

Hazel received her Bachelor's degree in International Studies from Miriam College and pursued a postgraduate degree in Development Policy from De La Salle University Manila.



### **Laica Bagnes**

#### **Affiliation**

Director of Operations and Management, Youth for Youth, Inc.

Laica Bagnes, or Laica, is a 26-year-old development worker from Batangas Province with five years of experience in the development sector. Her first job was with an international non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing children's rights and promoting gender equality in the Philippines. This experience ignited her strong interest in working with communities to create a better Philippines. As a result, she decided to continue in the development sector and co-founded her non-profit organization, Youth for Youth Inc.

Laica earned her Bachelor's degree in Communication from Kolehiyo ng Lungsod ng Lipa.



### **Elizabeth Joy Serrano-Quijano**

#### **Affiliation**

Assistant Professor II, Southern Philippines Agri-business and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology

Elizabeth Joy Serrano-Quijano, or Joy, is a Blaan-Ibaloy writer from Matanao, Davao del Sur. She is the author of the first short story collection written by an indigenous woman, *Dili Pwede Mogawas ug Ubang mga Sugilanon* (Ateneo de Davao University Publication, 2022), and won the Best Book Award for short fiction in Binisaya by the National Book Development Board of the Philippines. Joy received the Women of the Future Southeast Asia 2022 in Arts and Culture award and is a Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) alumna.

Joy is a PhD candidate in research and development administration at the University of Southeastern Philippines.





### Kristian Noel I Yang Solas

#### **Affiliation**

Sangguniang Kabataan Chairperson, Barangay Rubber, Municipality of Polomolok, South Cotabato

Kristian Noel Solas, or Shan, is a member of the Blaan community. He is committed to empowering Indigenous Peoples through increased governance and active community participation. Shan strongly advocates for youth engagement, encouraging young people to take on civic responsibilities and cultivate a sense of volunteerism. As a volunteer and facilitator, Shan actively contributes to numerous initiatives that drive community development. He views his work as a meaningful commitment that transcends politics, anchored in a deep vision and purpose.

Shan is pursuing his Master's degree in Biology at Mindanao State University - General Santos City.



### Crezel B. Obrero

#### **Affiliation**

Program Chairperson, Master of Business Administration program, Camarines Sur Polytechnic College

Crezel B. Obrero, or Crez, is a dedicated advocate for the growth and development of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Her unwavering commitment to supporting MSMEs is evident through her active involvement in MSME research projects in the Bicol region and as a trainer for social entrepreneurship at Bayan Academy. She actively collaborates with micro-enterprises in the Bicol region, empowering them with essential skills while contributing to their growth through research and training.

Crez earned her Master's degree in Entrepreneurship from Bicol University and a doctorate in Business Administration from the Ateneo de Naga University.



### Sherry Ann Murillo

#### Affiliation

Enterprise Services Specialist, Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority

Sherry Ann Murillo, or SheAn, comes from a family of public servants. She is an experienced community leader and an active youth coordinator in their church. SheAn held numerous significant roles within the Rotary organization, including as the Charter President of the Rotaract Club of Mariveles Freeport. She was the Chairperson of Sangguniang Kabataan of Barangay Mt. View and the Secretary of the Sangguniang Kabataan Municipal Federation of Mariveles, Bataan from 2007 to 2010. She is an Angat Bayi and YSEALI alumna.

SheAn received her Bachelor's degree in Social Science (Area Studies) from the University of the Philippines Manila.



### Xzyrabelle M. Servento

#### Affiliation

Project Development Officer III, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) – Regional Office VI

Xzyrabelle M. Servento, or Xzy, has a deep passion for social justice and a commitment to empowering vulnerable communities. She has spent nearly eight years helping shape the landscape of social welfare and protection. From her role at the DSWD and Inter-Agency Councils to leading community and youth organizations, Xzy championed initiatives that fight human trafficking, protect children, and elevate women's voices. By forging strategic partnerships and mobilizing local communities, Xzy has assisted in building grassroots movements, such as the Community Watch Group and Peer Support Group, empowering youth and community members to create sustainable solutions. Her mission is to inspire lasting change through collaboration, advocacy and leadership.

Xzy earned her Master's degree in Social Work from Central Philippine University.

## About KAS

**Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)** is a political foundation closely associated with Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU). As cofounder 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 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 collaborate with governmental institutions, political parties, civil society organizations, experts, and key stakeholders to build 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.

|                       |                                                                                               |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Website:              | <a href="https://kas.de/philippines">kas.de/philippines</a>                                   |
| Facebook:             | <a href="https://facebook.com/kasphilippines/">facebook.com/kasphilippines/</a>               |
| LinkedIn:             | <a href="https://linkedin.com/company/kasphilippines">linkedin.com/company/kasphilippines</a> |
| Instagram:            | <a href="https://instagram.com/kasphilippines/">instagram.com/kasphilippines/</a>             |
| X (formerly Twitter): | <a href="https://x.com/kasphilippines">x.com/kasphilippines</a>                               |







