

**Policy Forum Series** DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

# Policy Forum Series on Decentralization, Constitutional Reform, and Governance Innovations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT - KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG  
POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, AND  
GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



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[www.kas.de/philippines](http://www.kas.de/philippines)  
[Info.Manila@kas.de](mailto:Info.Manila@kas.de)

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Edited by Prof. Alfredo Sureta Jr. and Prof. Eric Daniel de Torres

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# **Policy Forum Series on Decentralization, Constitutional Reform, and Governance Innovations during the COVID-19 Pandemic**



**KONRAD  
ADENAUER  
STIFTUNG**



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## M E S S A G E

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My most heartfelt commendations and appreciation to the **Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform** (CFCR) for the successful publication of this monograph compiling the proceedings undertaken as well as important knowledge and learning experiences imparted during the ten-part webinar series titled “**Policy Forum Series on Decentralization, Constitutional Reform, and Governance Innovations during the COVID-19 Pandemic.**”

Beset by limitations brought by the public health crisis, I congratulate the CFCR for its unflagging drive to push for inclusive and genuine development by providing wider platforms where experts and participants come together to establish a robust fortress of countryside growth.

In partnership with the **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung** (KAS), a German political foundation and a steady thousands of Filipinos to take part in relevant talks about decentralization, Constitutional Reform, and governance innovations at the height of a pandemic. From June until October in 2020, the webinar series served as a consequential channel to reach out and transmit skills down to the grassroots and usher clarity to issue met along the way.

Without a doubt, this fortifies a solidarity we continue to shape. As our nation works towards rebuilding, we need a steadfast synergy from all quarters—government agencies and private institutions alike—that will empower local governments and will direct them to the right direction especially in these difficult times. It becomes imperative to arm our LGUs with the necessary skills and mindsets to shore up their capacities in taking on diverse and extensive roles as we tread the “better normal” that looms ahead us.

It is then my hope that the knowledge compiled on the pages of this monograph inspire each and every of our countrymen to embark on this journey of transformation. May it stoke the light of engagement and collaboration towards our collective aspiration for this country—where the benefits of this reform will redound across all communities and where no one will be left behind.

Know that the **Department of the Interior and Local Government** will always rally behind every program that hastens the pace of our drive in the attainment of such dream and we will continue to endow the support and commitment needed by the CFCR in helping local governments realize their full potentials under the charted path of constitutional reform.

Once again, congratulations for coming up with this laudable piece of work.

*Mabuhay po tayong lahat!*

**HON. EDUARDO M AÑO**

*Secretary*

Department of the Interior  
and Local Government (DILG)



**M E S S A G E**

Communication is necessary as it presents an opportunity to educate and inform people about the crisis the whole world is facing today. At the same time, it can be utilized to disseminate information on the steps taken by decision-makers to ensure the welfare of the public. For a democracy to operate effectively, government must communicate, in a credible and timely manner, with its citizens. Strong communication established between local governments and its citizens creates a trust and this trust is seen to entice citizens to become involved in their communities.

At the height of the global pandemic, countries have taken variety of measures such as implementing community quarantines, travel and border restrictions, and health protocols to contain the spread of COVID-19. In the Philippines, local government units are tasked to implement these measures while ensuring that delivery of public goods and services remain unhampered. Local government units face the health crisis with varied resources available for their utilization. There are those who exemplary delivered their mandates while others have failed to, and this comes as a no surprise. Some local governments have to face a number of constraints including lack of resources, lack of skilled personnel and good management skills, and corruption issues, among others, that had an impact in the effectiveness of their public service delivery.

The health crisis exposed the weaknesses of the current system and affected the quality of response from different institutions. It invites us to look at how the performance of institutions vary at different level of government, locate areas where they have (or have not) successfully delivered, and gauge their ability of handling a crisis with magnitude comparable to COVID-19.

The policy forum series organized by the Department of the Interior and Local Government served as a platform to examine how different institutions, in particular national government agencies and local government units, responded to the health crisis. The series gave an additional medium for Filipinos to address their concerns, learn and understand the crisis and the responses needed, and work in cooperation with authorities in coping with the challenges of the pandemic. The series touched on questions surrounding the implementation of community quarantines as well as the distribution of social amelioration program. Furthermore, the series also looked into broader issues affected by the health crisis, in particular, the readiness and ability of the government to capacitate the education sector as it shifts to online platform, and the capacities of local government units and national agencies in responding to the effects of natural calamities during the pandemic.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is grateful to our partner, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, especially to Usec. Jonathan Malaya, Prof. Alfredo Sureta Jr., and Prof. Daniel de Torres for this endeavor. I also extend my appreciation to all our resource persons and representatives from different government agencies for bringing in and sharing their expertise in different thematic areas. Last but not least, I thank Ms. Allen Faith Cape, from the DILG, and Mr. Jerome Jogno, from KAS Philippines, for their support in this project.

We emphasize that the key to survive the crisis is early communication and leadership to guide people as the world traverses the challenges ahead.

**PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST**

*Country Director*

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Philippines Office

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**SESSION 1**  
**COVID-19 PANDEMIC  
RESPONSE LEADING TO A  
NEW NORMAL SOCIETY:  
ISSUES, CHALLENGES,  
AND PROSPECTS**

**20 JUNE 2020**

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## **SESSION 1**

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE LEADING TO A NEW NORMAL SOCIETY: ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS**

The first session of the policy forum series tackles the government response in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic. At the onset of the virus outbreak, the national government had put string of measures to mitigate and prevent the spread of the viral disease. One of which, is the placement of Community Quarantine Protocols varying from different levels depending on the containment. In particular, the National Capital Region was put into Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) while the other regions vary from Modified and General Community Quarantine measures. As such, the session begs the presentation from the Department of Health Officials from the person of Dr. Maria Rosario S. Vergeire, Undersecretary for Health Regulation Team; Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho, Director for Health Promotion and Communication; and Dr. Maria Soledad Antonio of the Bureau of Internal Health Cooperation. Presented also were some of the best practices of other countries in addressing their Covid-19 situation which includes Vietnam and New Zealand.

**OPENING REMARKS**

**HON. JONATHAN E. MALAYA**

*Undersecretary for Plans, Public Affairs  
and Communications*

Department of the Interior and Local Government



The DILG Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya welcomed the guest speakers and participants and extended gratitude to the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung to the partnership they have since 2018 in hosting several conferences on the state of decentralization in the Philippines as well as several youth summits that aim to shape the role of our youth in nation building in order to consult them on the issue of Constitutional Reform and other activities and promote its role of the youth in peace building that have been fruitful this past year.

The DILG Undersecretary explained that today we are facing the biggest threat to our nation since World War 2, a global pandemic caused by COVID-19 which has so far infected more than 8.3 million people and led to the death of almost half a million worldwide. The pandemic has caused traumatic effects on global economy that the government has been preparing for the return of so many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who have lost their jobs abroad and also from many medium and small scale industries.

COVID-19 underscores the urgency of the government and the state to reassess and rebuild for effective health care systems, health emerging response systems, and adaptable social and economic policies that included subsidizing billions of underprivileged in the Philippines under the Bayanihan We Heal as One Act. Undersecretary Malaya said that the Pandemic has shown to us the gaps in our government's system. In particular, the DILG saw the need to push tougher now for the reforms in our barangays and soon be creating a Technical Writing Group to reassess the response of barangays in so far as the COVID-19 is concerned and begin the professionalization of the barangays because we have seen already the gaps in our policies.



As a key department, the DILG is the frontline of the Philippines whole-of-nation campaign to defeat the COVID-19 and has tripled our efforts as a contribution to the whole of nation campaign against COVID-19. The DILG mobilized its entire resources and machinery to defeat this is not only the local government sector but also the interior sector. The entire Philippine National Police (PNP), entire Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), the entire Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) is at the frontlines to protect our people 24/7 from COVID-19. Among the priority trusts when President Duterte called on the nation to gather as one to fight this virus under the leadership of the IATF is the conduct of intensive communication activities to fully inform our people about the threat and institutionalized the barangay level response mechanism under the local governments. The DILG implemented numerous activities and tapped social media extensively with several online platforms including *Magtanong sa DILG* with Paolo Bediones, the Regional Pressers via Zoom including top officials of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA).

The DILG have carried out communication activities and materials to ensure that the public understands the government's effort in delivering aid and services to the Filipino people. With the nation facing a grave medical crisis, the *Kwentuhang Lokal*, the show with DILG in ABS-CBN became the prime platform in informing the public of the steps and practices taken by the National Government, its directives to all national agencies in Local Government Units, especially in the implementation of the Community Quarantine. The DILG together with the DSWD and the PNP just held an orientation on the implementation of the Second Tranche of the Social Amelioration Program where they explained the execution and distribution of the Second Tranche of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) and also to the waitlisted and left out families based on the Joint Memorandum Circular and DSWD's execution plan.

With the support of the Local Government Academy, we have also started a series of webinars for capacity building for Public Information Officers of the country's 1,800 LGUs with the objective of making them a key and strong part of the government's information delivery system specialized in the risk communications which involves ground level dissemination of proper information about COVID response. As a result, the DILG recommends through Memorandum Circular encouraging all LGUs to institutionalize the Public Information System in their respective LGUs.

The Undersecretary said that they have seen how the crisis brought uncertainties in various homes, businesses, communities and work place and they were caught by surprise with no established plans to deal with this kind of pandemic that no government, no country in this world has properly prepared for the crisis. That is why he was glad to organize this forum together with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Foundation led by Professor Dr. Stefan Jost, the panel of speakers, Dr. Vergeire, Dr. Bevely Lorainne Ho and the Dr. Maria Soledad Antonio which aims to benchmark and gather, analyze document and replicate best practices in the area of supervision and coordination of local governments in Asia and hopefully, produce a handbook in effective local government supervision in the framework of a decentralized governance.

He further explained that the response of the government has not been perfect but to be fair and honest no government response pandemic has been perfect, but what he said he can assure to our countrymen is that they are learning from each and every incident and they are improving a response as they go along. And likewise, they are listening to critics and respondents for feedbacks. The government is listening to feedbacks which is why every now and then you can see adjustments in how we address this pandemic.

Looking forward, the challenge now for the government is to adjust to this new normal, restart the economy and begin the recovery. Undersecretary Malaya ended his speech by thanking the COVID-19 frontliners.

**KEYNOTE MESSAGE****PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST***Country Director*

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines Office



Prof. Dr. Stefan Jost began by introducing the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. As explained, it is a German political foundation with a Christian-Democratic orientation. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation is working in more than 100 countries all over the world with national and regional programs, and the Philippines is one of the first countries where the Foundation started its work in Asia. More than 50 years and they are still working in the Philippines. The strengthening of democratic and political systems, institutions, rule of law, human rights, and inclusive economic system, social marketing, and internal security issues are some of the most important working areas. And in the context of their multiple corporations and partners in the Philippines in a couple of years especially in the responsibility of Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya, the DILG is one of the most important partners of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in the Philippines. In the Annual Plan 2020, together they have planned a number of different events, but suddenly they have to deal with this COVID crisis and the lockdown. He said, they are all conscious that the crisis is not yet over, but they are in another period which allows them to restart on some activities in online form and they can start today with this first online forum.

This forum is the opening of a whole 10-sessions in the next months, which they will discuss central aspects of decentralization, constitutional reform, and government innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Jost mentioned that even before the COVID crisis, it was very clear that the Philippines needs political and economic reforms. In the recently published results of the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2019 show very detailed and good insights in each areas that the Philippines ranked number 45 out of 63 countries that need to improve in their different systems. Given these results do not reflect the COVID crisis, and the multiple, probably still not known consequences

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in political, social and economic dimensions, the results of the 2019 which showed the performances depending on the specific area needs to be analysed now with new parameter in view of the many changes and challenges caused by the COVID. But beside the numerous details to discuss, he said that we should focus on the central and overall question of COVID-19 and put much more on national agenda than before. Questions like how is the performance of the institutions on the different levels in the Philippines should be answered? How are they working and functioning? Where are they failing? What is their capability in handling the crisis like COVID.

Dr. Jost said that he is convinced that the upcoming discussions will be very helpful to move forward in this central and strategic deliberation. As with every political system, we sometimes know the difficulty of the possibility to achieve the necessary reforms and changes, and improve the outcomes of the system under the so-called normal conditions. And now, the political system faces the challenge and the task to deal with this ongoing crisis, to shoulder the economic and financial burden, to define the necessary reforms, and – this is the most challenging – to implement them. In other words, the political system is undergoing intense stress-test, and it's not only the case in the Philippines. This is the challenges, our common challenge. "Konrad Adenauer Foundation can be helpful in this process, count on us."

Finally, Dr. Jost gave his heartfelt thanks to the DILG and the DOH, and all their teams as he looks forward for interesting discussions in the coming years.

**CONTINUING EFFORTS OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN  
ADDRESSING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**DR. MARIA ROSARIO S. VERGERIE**

*Undersecretary*

Department of Health



As for the continuing efforts of the Department of Health in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, the DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario S. Vergeire provided an overview of what DOH has been doing so far in this pandemic. She presented the framework and five (5) major strategies of the Department of Health in addressing COVID-19. She explained that the goal is to reduce related and non-related COVID-19 deaths, therefore the services for non-COVID patients should still be there. The first three (3) strategies under the prevention of cases is to increase resilience. This is for us to decrease the vulnerability of each individual to having this infection by promoting healthy lifestyle and that means preventing and managing stress and introducing different technologies in the country so we could better prepare our individuals for this infection.

The next would be stopping transmission. Transmission of COVID-19 is through droplet infection, and therefore we should be able to stop the transmission by wearing our mask every day when we go out and practice regular hand-washing. These are just simple but are very important measures to prevent the infection. The third strategy is to reduce contact. This is to be able to prevent further transmission by reducing the contact between and among people that is why we do physical distancing because we know the virus can spread via droplet infection and can reach a distance of about one (1) meter. We are now employing these physical distancing measures whereby at least one (1) meter should be the distance between two individuals or different individuals. Administrative policies would include, for example, Work from Home arrangements or flexible arrangements for work shall be practiced. Then, the fourth one and the fifth strategy would be under the management of contacts and doing this financial assurance to the Filipinos, that they would not suffer financial hardships during this time of pandemic because of healthcare.

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Dr. Vergeire encouraged the Filipinos to use one of these different platforms of technology that our citizens can avail so we can be able to manage healthcare services during this time of pandemic. The use of telemedicine is to minimize face-to-face interaction between the doctor and the patient and this would somehow prevent the further transmission of the disease. Under the fifth strategy which is to treat, she presented the different protocols for managing the virus. She reported that they have already enrolled and joined different trials for medicines and vaccines in the country. They also have the WHO solidarity trial where they are trying legal drugs that are being tested among patients who have given their informed consent. There is also a partnership with the Government of Japan. She further discussed that there is an assurance that our healthcare workers are protected by providing them with safe environment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). There are also different packages coming from PhilHealth to ensure that the people or our citizens have these benefits coming from PhilHealth once they have COVID-related symptoms.

In order for the National Action Plan to be implemented whereby the major strategies would be for detecting, isolating, and treating, Dr. Vergeire emphasized that they have the guiding principles: First, doing a whole-of-government, whole-of-system, whole-of-society approach in this fight against COVID-19 where there is no differentiation anymore between the private and the public sectors. They are all working together. The national government and local government has strengthened their partnership. The second principle is that science shall inform the decision-making in the institutional and individual level. The third is recognizing our limited resources. The response shall be guided by firm and transparency priority setting. We don't have much resources, so they have to prioritize, most especially the vulnerable. In the event of any conflict of rules, human dignity and safety, and the needs of the individual shall always prevail. The direction should be national government enabled. The national government (DOH), together with the other agencies, enables the environments so that the local governments can lead this response for COVID. It has to be people-centred so that we will be able to address all the specific needs of the citizens. She also highlighted the importance of the role of the local

governments as the primary responders to public health emergencies. They will be implementing this people-centered response from the primary to the tertiary care in an integrated and coordinated manner..

The Undersecretary for Health also explained the different structures for the pandemic response. For the national government there is the Inter-Agency Task Force through the different national government agencies and it is tasked to provide strategies, guidelines, standards, and to do impact monitoring for all of these strategies and policies that we are implementing for this pandemic response. Under the Inter-Agency Task Force, we have the national task force and the different task groups under it, wherein they are the ones enforcing all these strategies, ruling out plans, mobilizing responses and of course, doing monitoring for the operations, while the local government will be the ones to implement and to provide and deliver the services needed by the people in this pandemic response. So what are the must do's for the local government units? Being the primary responders, they are in-charge for the contact tracing. They are tasked to isolate and quarantine all those they have identified to be having COVID related symptoms, or those who have been positive for COVID-19 and also manage cases through their different health care facilities.

Furthermore, Dr. Vergeire reminded everyone about how they classify and report the cases. First, there is the confirmed cases. These are the aggregate of all those confirmed cases from the start since the DOH started reporting about COVID-19. Among the confirmed cases, there are those classified as fresh and late cases. The fresh cases are those who have been identified for the past 3 days from the day of reporting based on the results of their test. The late cases are those that have been identified based on the processing/release of test results, more than four (4) days from date of reporting. For the outcome of these cases, these shall be reported by the number of recoveries, meaning those who have recovered from the disease and have undergone already with the 14-day mandatory quarantine period, those who have died, and also our active cases. Active cases refer to those who have not been tagged as recovered nor died in the case reporting system. There is also a report for suspects and probable cases.

For contact tracing, it was tasked by the Inter-Agency Task Force to the DILG. There is a Steering Committee that has been formed for contact tracing in the different local government units that has a

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partnership with our health officers and our local PNP and local officials. They are supported by BHERTs and they have expanded membership including already the different officials in the local government in these contact tracing efforts. The functions of these BHERTs is not just to contact trace, but also to monitor the patients who are doing home isolation. The BHERTs are tasked to monitor people and those who were classified as probable or suspected cases of COVID-19 in their homes. They also should provide health education to the close contacts.

Dr. Vergeire said that they don't want to use the term "mass testing" because it might confuse people and they might think that DOH might test all the population of the Philippines - like more than a hundred million. The term expanded testing instead is used and that means only those who are at risk of COVID-19 infections will be tested. To further expand the capacity of testing in our country, first, there will be an optimization of the capacity for existing licensed laboratories. There are already a total of sixty two (62) licensed laboratories and each has its own rated capacities and shall be optimized these capacities by providing more logistics for them, additional machines, additional human resources, and directly extending their operational hours in order to reach our targets for testing. Second, they will be licensing more laboratories. They started with one (1) laboratory when we started off with this campaign, and that was the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM). From one laboratory with 300 per day output, there are now 62 licensed laboratories across the country, and that has really expanded the capacity of the country to do the testing. The third is to establish big testing centres that commits to produce 3,000 tests per day. And we have the different Philippine Red Cross laboratories, pop-up labs or the modular laboratories that we have established in strategic areas in the country.

For rapid anti-body testing, the Undersecretary gave guidance that they already provided protocols for these and have informed the public for the rapid anti-body test. First, the rapid anti-body test should not be used as a stand-alone test to rule out COVID-19. People must remember that the rapid anti-body test does not detect/ do not tell you if you have the virus or not. Also, the rapid anti-body test shall be coupled with the RTPCR test, because this test will confirm if the person

has COVID-19 or not. Because RTPCR test would show if the virus is in the body or not. The third reporting of confirmed and recovered cases shall be based on the RPCR testing and not from the anti-body testing. Lastly, only rapid anti-body test approved or registered by the FDA and locally validated by our RITM or the DOST might be used.

Dr. Vergeire also provided us with the glimpse of the case management. The first line of defense are our individuals and our households, reminding everyone to do at home the routinary disinfection of our common areas, commonly touched objects, hand hygiene to always wash our hands, practice cough etiquette, and physical distancing. The second line of defense are the primary care providers. They are our first contact for primary health care system. But she encouraged everyone that whenever possible, we may minimize the face-to-face contact by using our telemedicine. Our third line of defense, will be our facilities. They are our temporary treatment and monitoring facilities, our step down care, and our hospitals. All of these are tied together by the networks that are to be organized by the provinces and our cities where we link all these different levels of defense to our regional hospitals and subnational laboratories.

Finally, Dr. Vergeire shared that about few weeks ago, there has been evidence that there are individuals who are positive for COVID-19 but are already non-infectious on the 10th day of their illness. The World Health Organization (WHO) has published this report with the recommendations that a person once they reach the 10th day of illness and has already become asymptomatic after 3 days or more, they could already be discharged without the need for a test. This brings the DOH to amend the Department Memorandum 2020-0229, where the previous protocol stated the need for a test before we could discharge a patient from a hospital or from a quarantine facility and can be tagged as recovered. The DOH has shifted from a test-based approach to a symptoms-based approach, or on time-based approach. Therefore, a test is not needed anymore to be able to discharge a patient as they are now providing guidelines that this will depend on the symptoms of the patient and a clearance from the doctor. Patients can be tagged as recovered, after being discharged based on their symptoms. These has been the latest revision in the recoveries and discharges protocol. She hoped that all local governments will implement these and align with the protocol of DOH so that they could only channel the resources to other subgroups who are also need testing.

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## COMMUNICATING THE “NEW NORMAL” FOR THE FILIPINOS: HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES AND CONCERNS

**DR. BEVERLY LORRAINE HO**

*OIC Director IV*

Health Promotion and Communication Services  
Department of Health



Dr. Beverly Lorraine Ho shared how the DOH tries to communicate the new normal. Dr. Ho emphasized that the entire government approach to COVID response is national government-enabled, it is LGU-led and people-centered and these are the key principles that they abide with as they go through their day-to-day task.

First and foremost, she explained our perception and feelings towards the situation. What do actually people feel and think about the entire situation. A survey found that Filipinos actually prefer safety over the liberties, this is a PRC survey conducted around April which sort of says why alludes to why perhaps there was an increase of compliance in some of the interventions that has been done over the course of the pandemic. But with the later SWS survey, it also showed that around eighty seven (87) percent of Filipinos are generally worried about COVID-19. But what is the good about it is that due to the resilience of the Filipinos, we also have a positive outlook about the entire situation.

So what are the actual key messages as we transition to the new normal, Dr. Ho asked? Dr. Ho highlighted three messages. First, until there is a vaccine we need to adapt to a new lifestyle and a new mindset. One which requires heightened vigilance because the virus is everywhere around us and it requires us to let go of the familiar lifestyle, a cultural uniqueness maybe among us Filipinos wherein when we see each other we really are very physical, we hug, etc. Second, we increase awareness of our self and our surrounding and the last would be to try to always incorporate extra precautions wherever we are, the additional washing of hands, using hand sanitizers, not touching our face, etc. But she also noted that one key message is that we should not feel helpless because we already know what works. We know what the strategy should be. First it is to increase resilience. Make sure that we are not sickly. Next is to stop transmission by following interventions. Third is reduce our contact with other people. Practicing physical distancing, companies reducing personnel to come in

at a certain point in time, a need for a uni-directional hallways, etc.. So, the entire point is we know what will help protect us and we should not be helpless. And there are also instituted policies on the minimum Public health standards and these have been incorporated into guidelines of our other national government agencies. And then finally, if we want to restart our economy because we cannot be always in lockdown mode, we all need to do our part. In the government and all of the society, all households and all individuals. And this means doing all the measures that are incorporated here. These three key messages we feel that this must be empowering rather than frightening. As she said, “we can do it but for us to be able to do it, we have to collaborate. We can’t just expect the government to just do it. We can’t expect the LGUs to just do it. We can’t expect the private sector to just spend money to do it. But all of us have to make sure that all of our resources are aligned and nothing will fall into the cracks.”

She also shared what the medical anthropologist from Johns Hopkins from health security once said: People will change their behaviour if there are three conditions in place. (1.) People know what to do, (2.) why they do it (so the motivational part) (3) see other people doing it. The reason why she quote this she explained is that, a large part of the new normal can’t actually be legislated. While we say we will do contactless, cards, etc. but the basic principle of this new normal pending a vaccine is largely contingent upon how efficacious each person performs desired behaviour changes.

Dr. Ho proposed two theory of change or two frameworks wherein the communication team and the DOH is using. The enabling environment has to be present and we compliment it with the nationwide behavioural communication campaigns followed by community or LGU level campaigns which would trigger individual changes as well as societal changes towards impact of desired behaviour. We have to make sure that the services or the inputs have to be available. So if we talk about people being able to wear mask, then the mask have to be in the market. The enabling environment just says for example if we want people to wash their hands, then they have to have access to water, especially in certain low income communities. Also in order for people to change their behaviour, they need to know what to do and why and of course how to do it well. People have to be enabled to do it. The environment allows for it, the socio-economic environment and finally they also have to be trusting the messenger whoever is saying these messages to them. The DOH feels

RAPPORTEUR: MS. MICHELLE JADE NANTES

strongly about making sure that the services are there for people to continue trusting what they say. For example, it’s not enough that they say, if we have symptoms we have to contact the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team. The BHERT has to answer the phone, or has to be available when people started calling them. So it’s really a confluence of services. The services all have to be there because communication will fail if the services are actually not there because people will start not trusting the messenger.

Dr. Ho mentioned about what they are doing at the national level and on how we are enabling the community or LGU level campaigns. Information materials such as the four o’ clock presser habit, daily case bulletin, and the data drop for those who actually crunch the numbers that the DOH really says every day, and then the daily situationer. They also have the daily updated tracker, the contra COVID app, wherein people can ask questions and the various social media channels and the Healthy Pilinas Website- a site that is partnered-driven. They have partners from the medical public health community but as well from development partners. The contents of the Healthy Pilipinas website is really a labour of love of the different sectors plus a lot of Civil Society Organizations. This is basically a result of what the collective experiences of these several organizations and just DOH providing the platform for them to be able to do it and with the generous support of the USAID breakthrough action project.

Along with this, they launched the COVID Alis sa Pamilya WAIS Campaign. The main idea is how they actually implement this behaviour changes in your own family. They began from the basics of the new normal to really see the need to visualize what the new normal behavior means. Then they did a series of information campaign on the minimum health standards and with other fellow government agencies pushing this forward. The DTI and DOT developed a more detailed guidelines in food retail while DepEd is now working on the basic guidelines in schools. But then that’s what she said they do in the national level but a lot of the work for making sure the COVID-19, the transition to new normal really happens in the community and LGU level. And the community could be the barangay but it also could be in the work place, and it also could be in the schools even just an online community. What the DOH are just trying to do is get the materials out there and engage people who can potentially have ripple effects. People who will take those materials, transform them into something that more people will be able to understand, and more people would be able to absorb.



**GOOD PRACTICES FROM VIETNAM  
AND NEW ZEALAND****DR. MARIA SOLEDAD Q.****ANTONIO MD PHD MPH DPAFP CESE***Director IV*

Bureau of International Health Cooperation



Dr. Maria Soledad Q. Antonio discussed about the best practice of our neighbouring countries. Dr. Antonio talked about Vietnam and New Zealand. She explained that she chose these countries because they don't just flatten the curve, they go over the board of flattening the curve. They don't have any local transmission in any of their communities anymore. But they have fresh cases coming outside from the country but not local transmission.

Dr. Antonio explained that Vietnam is very near in the Philippines and it's really near the border of China. She mentioned that if "China sneezes, it will be Vietnam who will get the colds." But even though very near in the border, why did Vietnam succeed in the pandemic?

Vietnam is like the Philippines, middle income country. But Vietnam succeeded despite having just 8 per ten thousand physician to population ratio because first and foremost they responded early to the pandemic. The government has an early response that even before the WHO declares health emergency, Vietnam has already declared it. They immediately organize a steering committee probably within a week for COVID-19 response. This is because of their SARS experience in 2003. Learning their lessons from this disease and experience, they were able to immediately do something about COVID while the rest of the world is being silent. They are a small country with scarce resources, but were silently preparing for the pandemic. They immediately converted their military facilities into quarantine areas. They have already closed their schools and religious site and implemented a total lockdown. Their government acted very early and controlled the entry and exit points of their country very early.

**SESSION 1: COVID-19 Pandemic Response Leading to a  
New Normal Society: Issues, Challenges, and Prospects**

RAPPORTEUR: MS. MICHELLE JADE NANTES

For the contact tracing and targeted testing, as early as January, Vietnam already have initiatives on their RT PCR testing kits. After two months, they already licensed their testing and have mass production of this testing kit. Vietnam also increased their laboratories, they were so quick to augment their laboratories from three (3) laboratories to 112 laboratories.

They also have an app wherein you can see if you are within the vicinity of someone who is a COVID-19 positive. Vietnam is not doing a mass testing. They are only testing those with a travel history. They have a criteria for the testing. They also have guidelines for isolation and they do not allow home-based isolation. They also have a policy wherein they would lockdown certain communities if it needs to be. Vietnam has zero death for COVID. They are even taking good care of a patient who is a foreigner. They employ robotic nurse. It is the one that serves the food and medicine to the patients in order to have less doctor and patient contact. They have all the communication platforms for their campaigns as well and produce their own medical supplies and is not dependent on other countries like America.

Another is New Zealand. We cannot compare our country with New Zealand but we can learn something from them. New Zealand is a high income country and has a population of four point eight million. It has a total case of 1157 with only twenty two (22) deaths. At the moment they have no local transmission but it has been reported that they have a local transmission of 3 cases.

The local transmission happened because of a mistake in the system, and the government broadcast about this fault on their side, they were very transparent. Geographically, New Zealand is isolated and it is an advantage for them. It is surrounded with bodies of water. While the rest of the world is crumbling, New Zealand has the time to prepare because it is isolated. The primary reason why the New Zealand succeeded in containing COVID-19 is that people have trust on the government's leadership. It is the key why local transmission has been stopped immediately.

The leadership is science-led, and just like Vietnam, it is willing to go beyond the recommendation of the WHO. New Zealand did not only flattened the curve but has eliminated or eradicated the case. Finally, the government is very decisive and made decisions early. They have declared lockdown while other countries are still open. They closed their schools, no work, banned social gatherings, and have imposed travel restrictions.

Also, the New Zealand has advance communication campaign platforms and have communicated to the people information about COVID-19 effectively. Dr. Antonio explained that the New Zealand and Vietnam have taken action based on scientific evidences. The government invested on research and development as well and to these countries, infectious diseases are not underestimated. These countries were very proactive by implementing their public health measures that is why they are successful in containing COVID-19.

## SESSION 2

# EVALUATION RESPONSE ON SOCIAL AMELIORATION PROGRAM AND ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE

27 JUNE 2020

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC





## **SESSION 2**

### **EVALUATION RESPONSE ON SOCIAL AMELIORATION PROGRAM AND ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE**

The second session focuses on the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) main Covid-19 response which is the Social Amelioration Program (SAP). Touted as the biggest government subsidy program in the history, the implementation of SAP had its own share of challenges and issues prior and during its conduct as discussed by the Assistant Secretary Joyce Niwane of DSWD. Moreover, Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong also presented the city's response and best practices that they had effectively implemented on their localities. Finally, to encapsulate and to provide insight and assessment on the whole of nation approach of the government in addressing the pandemic, Dr. Lizan Perante-Calina, the Dean of Graduate School of Public and Development Management of the Development Academy of the Philippines, has attempted to evaluate the situation and the processes the government have done in so far as solving the health crisis.



**OPENING REMARKS**

**MARLO L. IRINGAN**

*Regional Director*

Department of the Interior and Local  
Government – Cordillera Administrative Region

The DILG Director, Marlo L. Iringan welcomed the guest speakers and the participants in the forum. In his welcome speech, he acknowledged that in the midst of pandemic, we normally fear but life must go on as he said. “We should not let this pandemic paralyze us into - we are not paralyzing into action. Look at us, we are here on a Saturday morning and I would like us to be called as “hopeful romantics” because we are here pursuing endeavours that would strengthen us as individuals, strengthen us as institutions, and strengthen us as a nation. Pursuing things that really matter to us.” He commended Baguio City for the initiatives done in COVID-19 response. Between then and now, a lot of things have happened in Baguio City, and a lot of things are introduced by the Mayor of Baguio City especially now that we have this pandemic. He highlighted the good performance of Baguio City since we are pursuing decentralization and this decentralization would mean delegating or transferring more power, authority, and resources to local government units.

He also commented that there are people who are wary of delegating or giving more power to the local government units because as we would like to dream that all local officials would be good public servants, we do not live in an ideal world. There are still people who take advantage of opportunity to pursue or promote their personal interest. We can have good governance in the country by suggesting to amend the local government code of 1991, citing Dr. Clarita Carlos of the University of the Philippines who said that amending the local government code is the easier path but it is still sort of instituting reform in our needs but the more better and permanent way of doing that is through a Constitutional Reform. In as much as we would decentralization, we would also like to strengthen the institutions that serve as guardians of our land like the Commission on Audit, Ombudsman, our courts and the Commission on Elections to name a few. In order to make sure that if ever there are people

who do not mean well for our LGUs they will have difficulty in doing so. Constitutional Reform, decentralization, and innovative governance - these are the things that we would like to look into the future and I'm presenting this good practice of Baguio City for decentralization that even amidst pandemic, even if there is no Social Amelioration Program (SAP) and even without the Bayanihan grant to provinces, cities, and municipalities, LGUs can thrive because our LGUs are already capable of providing the needs of their respective constituents.

The director believes that in the implementation of the SAP is a masters straw on the part of the national government. SAP is not only as a program but most importantly a lifeline for our people especially the poorest among the poor and the marginalized members of our society. The SAP did a lot of help for our poorest of the poor and the marginalized sector of the society. He ended his speech by hoping that a lot of good things will happen and come out based on this discussion so we could determine where we are and we look at ways and means on how we could improve and do things better in the very much near future.

RAPPORTEUR: MS. MICHELLE JADE NANTES

### **ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIAL AMELIORATION PROGRAM**

**HON. JOSELINE P. NIWANE**

*Assistant Secretary for Policy and Plans*

Department of Social Welfare and Development



Assistant Secretary Joseline P. Niwane of the Department of Social Welfare and Development discussed the challenges and initiatives of the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) Implementation. The Assistant Secretary explained that the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) became the primary means of National Government Agencies to mitigate the adverse socio-economic effects of COVID 19 pandemic. They tapped the Local Government Units in consideration of their familiarity profile and identities of constituents under their jurisdiction and the expertise in knowing their respective areas. They envisioned that there are realizations of the whole-of-government approach by the joint efforts of public and private agencies, communities and stakeholders. However, they acknowledged that in every program, there are always obstacles to overcome on the ground and SAP is no exception.

SAP consists of five steps that the DSWD needs to follow. These are the institution of project proposal by LGUs and signing by the field office of DSWD, fund transfers to LGUs, conduct of pay outs, liquidation and post validation. She explained that for the first phase, two challenges were determined. The identification of beneficiaries and the emergence of waitlisted which both led to the stringent of the chief validation of the executives. With the lack of registered Barangay inhabitants, migrants of the community-based monitoring system, the DSWD took the initiative to cascade the 2015 Listahanan as point of reference only for LGUs in identifying the eligible beneficiaries. In relation to this, with the indicative number of beneficiaries per Region, the emergence of the waitlisted families occurred. In response to this, the DSWD advocated for their inclusion. The DSWD pushed for a universal scheme however, with limited resources, and with the recommendation of the economic managers,

they have resorted to targeting system. Aside from the 18 Million as stated in the law approved by the IATF and the President himself, the additional 5 Million, accommodated the Second Tranche.

In the actual payout there are three main concerns that they have to address. They have to reach geographically isolated disadvantage areas and more conflict affected areas which brought a lot of other concerns to them, as they have to think of ways to reach to these people. The DSWD had to ask the assistance of Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police. Hindrances such as the exposure of SAP implementers to probable and suspected COVID19 cases pushed our workers to observe 14-day quarantine. Vulnerable workers had to stay or work from home and with the limited human resources further reduced the number of implementers of SAP in the distribution of aid. One thousand four hundred (1,400) plus of the DSWD staff are undergoing home quarantine and some of them are still in quarantine facilities while they have nineteen (19) staff who are infected with COVID. In the last two phases, the limited access of LGUs to internet connection caused delay in the encoding and uploading of the list of beneficiaries and with this, the DSWD field officers with the regional field officers had to serve and help provide technical assistance to some of the LGUs in uploading and encoding.

There are several initiatives that the DSWD implemented to expedite the distribution of SAP. They employed the RELIEF AGAD App to have an easier encoding of the information of the 18 million families. With this application, the SAP data and cash relief was faster to be received by the beneficiaries as they can select their preferred mode of payment.

Despite efforts to expedite the distribution, slow internet connection has slowed the distribution of this relief. There were duplications of data as well in which delays the processing since it cannot proceed to another stage of validation. Thus, the DSWD in this time was very dependent on the list which the LGUs submit to the central office. It is only once it reaches to the Central office where the DSWD could have a clean list of beneficiaries and distribute relief. Finally, the Assistant Secretary ended her discussion by thanking the Agencies that helped the DSWD in implementing the SAP distribution namely the DILG, AFP, PNP, LGUs, and other IATF members. She hopes for the continued support of the agencies for the upcoming Second tranche of SAP distribution.

RAPPORTEUR: MS. MICHELLE JADE NANTES

### **BAGUIO CITY'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

**HON. BENJAMIN B. MAGALONG**

*Mayor*

City of Baguio



Mayor Benjamin B. Magalong presentations delved on their practices in Baguio City. He presented the conceptual framework of their contract tracing in identifying, isolating, testing, and tracing. Baguio City has a rather huge contact tracing structure. It is composed of four hundred eighty five people, and eighty five of which have extensive experience and training on contact tracing while others are from barangays that served as support teams to the contact tracers and most of them are what we call the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team.

This was done as they employ a contact tracing e-system which they have been using in the Philippine National Police which they call the Crime Information Research and Analysis System. The Mayor used the Crime mapping system that they develop in the CIDG when he was still the National Police Cordillera Regional Director and which was adopted nationwide by the Philippine National Police in contact tracing for cases of COVID-19. He explained that the contact tracing is very similar to investigating a criminal offense and a serial criminal offense. All of these systems are quite indispensable so far as Baguio is concerned in the aspect of contact tracing. Using the system, they found out that within 24 hours the contract tracers are able to establish and identity almost 70 to 80 percent of all the contacts (first level contacts and second level contacts).

Another system that they used is analytical tool for link analysis. It establishes relationships, network analysis and partner. What is important in this system is that with all these big data that you are collecting which no human mind can actually process it has been our guide in decision making. It helps us in leading/leadership. Through this they were able to understand the story of transmission. Why was there a transmission? You need to establish the story, you need to establish the content. Our contact tracers have trainings to use the system.

They have also used a Huawei CT Scan analyser. During the first two weeks of ECQ, while most of us are confused on how to deal with COVID 19 cases with only few testing kits and testing center but with a population of 10.5 million, they have employed the Huawei CT Scan analyser. This technology detects potential positive cases in a matter of 7 to 9 minutes and so immediately they can conduct a contact tracing on the basis of this CT Scan Analyzer.

Another best practice is their isolation and quarantine facilities. Covid patients are admitted to separate hospitals exclusive for them in order to prevent the spread and transmission of the virus. They spent 1.7 million PHP in order to renovate the hospital for the COVID patients. They also have built a quarantine facility that is capable of accommodating 129 patients and is expandable to about 200.

They also have a triage system wherein it is composed of 11 sub-triages delineated based on the medical conditions of the Returning Baguio Residents (RBRs) and workers. Under the two-triage system, RBRs undergo initial triage at the checkpoints set up at the various entry points to the city and those with symptoms are escorted to the triages of hospitals of their choice while those without symptoms are directed to this central triage where RBRs are managed according to their requirements. Baguio residents in order to go back to Baguio has to register online and the LGU will schedule their return. This is to ensure that they will be comfortable and to prevent crowding. They want it orderly and want it comfortable for everyone coming back in the city of Baguio.

Since they are limiting the number of people in the central markets and they only have two days to go to the market, each barangay has a rolling stores. Through this they were able to manage the number of people going to the market. This initiative was spearheaded by the Baguio Philippine National Police.

They also have a community kitchen wherein they were able to save millions of money in coming up with this kitchen. From this kitchen, foods for the front liners are prepared by the LGU staff. They also have a donation collection system as they are receiving a lot of donations from different region of this country believing in good governance. They have a recording for these and these have been delivered to the different barangays. The Civil Society Organizations donations have a total donations of 21 million to augment the almost 100 million fund for relief operation.

RAPPORTEUR: MS. MICHELLE JADE NANTES

Every Sunday, Baguio City declared a lockdown. People and residents cannot go out from their homes. During the first three weeks of its implementation, they allowed the senior citizens and grandparents, followed by 21 years old and below in the next Sunday, to go out as there are only few people who are out on this days to prevent stress. They also have partnered with a group of psychiatrist and psychologist from the private sector and reported to be very successful. The suicide rate in Baguio has increased and as a response, the LGU launched a program to distress the citizens.

The Mayor also confessed the hurdles he faced during the SAP distribution. There has been challenges with corruption and slow processing system and was so far for him are the most challenging of all. To ensure transparency and prevent corruption, the LGU employed 3 to 5 credible community leaders from the private sector to join the screening committee and publish in social media reports of the distribution.

They were also able to develop a database and a system for the recipients of SAP since the DSWD, DTI, and DOLE have not yet provided the list of beneficiaries. There are almost 200 plus volunteers participated in making sure that they have a smooth process with regard to SAP implementation.

Baguio City also have a tourism and recovery and resiliency plan which was presented to the Department of Tourism Secretary, Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, which the DOT Secretary commended as they were able to come up with a realistic tourism and recovery resiliency plan. Base on their timeline, Baguio City will open for tourism on 1 September 2020.

They also have rental holidays for commercial business, industrial purposes of industrial establishment. Mayor Magalong said that they are waving taxes and rent especially to those who are required to close down during the community quarantine period. They also have a stimulus package called Baguio Rehabilitation Actions for A Vibrant Economy or BRAVE, where they initially put in 100 million PhP to pump up the economy which only micro and small enterprise will benefit from this.

Finally, Mayor Magalong presented the lessons learned in all their experiences. First he said that leadership is key to crisis management. There will be a lot of restrictions, especially in the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), testing kits, and relief goods, so good governance should be strictly observed.

The Mayor explained that Baguio City has a very smooth system because they apply Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration, and Communication. They need manage the cost for COVID response as the City is not only facing the calamity but should prepare for other else therefore could not consume all its budget.

Baguio is probably one of the most commonly hit during typhoon so they are making sure that they have money for this. He stressed the importance of having reserves. They also use of technology in their leadership and governance. There is a need to think outside the box. He also mentioned that all the best practices he presented are not all from him but are ideas he read from scientific articles; he just operationalized and implemented them.

He also said that preparedness and resiliency are the key to any type of disaster and we have to be strategic. We have to have foresight. Those are the marks of a good leader. While COVID-19 pandemic will give us a lot of challenges and at the same time a lot of opportunities, we are going to build back. We are going to make sure that we are going to build back better.

And while they have all these innovations and best practices, the Mayor said that there is no guarantee that there will be no infection in the city of Baguio. They are doing their best but COVID as their enemy is very difficult as it is unseen. We cannot hold or touch it. This is how challenging this pandemic is posing to us. Finally, he encouraged everyone to continue to learn from it and keep on supporting each other. As practiced in the city of Baguio, equipment, and test kits, etc... are being shared with their neighbours or other provinces as this is one way of working together. He believes that when we work together, then we work as one, then we heal as one.

## **WHOLE-OF-NATION APPROACH IN ADDRESSING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: AN ASSESSMENT**

**DR. LIZAN PERANTE-CALINA**

*Dean*

Graduate School of Public and Development



The last discussion for this session was given by Dean Lizan Perante-Calina who discussed about the Whole of Nation Approach and Policy Foresight. In her discussion, she laid down the premise that the whole of mechanism approach is in place as evidence by national policies, inspirations from local governments, inspirations from the academia, from the private sector and civil society organizations, and other Bayanihan efforts that they've been exercising together. But there are some questions that we need to answer. First, with the current situation wherein the pandemic has progressed, what are the governance gaps? In placed mechanisms? What if COVID-19 starts to become normal? How will COVID-19 change our future?

The whole of nation approach is a vertical and horizontal governance that has five handles wherein we considered important in the operationalization of the whole reform approach. First is the institutions. There is a need to look at the whole system, the political and administrative system. Traditionally we use efficiency, effectiveness and economy but right now we need to look at the areas of ethics: equity and accountability and that accountability is included in our whole of nation approach mechanism, and also the changing of mindset, behaviors and paradigms.

Another handle is communication. Communication refers on how we are going to put the right communication. In order to avoid the barriers in communication, such as misunderstanding on policies issued by local and national governments. Another handles are cooperation and competition. We need to cooperate. We need to be competitive as well because we are introducing innovations. In order for us to implement and operationalize the whole of nation approach we need to look into our values as she emphasized the importance of Bayanihan and Balikatan.

One of the remarkable initiatives that have been signed into law is the Bayanihan to Heal As One Act which is one of the remarkable initiatives that have been signed into law. It spells out the national special relations, the social amelioration program. While some of their projects are affected, we need to help the country mitigate the impact of COVID19. And also there is the IATF wherein we have the National Action Plan and along with that we have adopted a national government enabled local government unit-led and people-centered response to the COVID-19 health event. That is why many of our local or almost of our national government agencies are helping to do the necessary steps in order to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Perante stressed that we have to have a foresight and not just focus on the present. Governance issues include leadership and leadership is really base on context. For community engagement, we need to empower the people through knowledge and information. It is also important that we have discipline and instill this to people and that can be done by making people realize that they own the policies and reforms, it is for them.

Another is public trust. This is a big issue not only in the Philippines but also worldwide. We need to have Inter-Agency coordination since we are already having a silo-mentality. We also have to be mindful of the human rights abuses. She also explained the importance of having evidence-based in our strategies in COVID-19 response. We need to emphasize that we need factual evidence with the human dimension framework on treating and mitigating the impact of covid-19. It is a nexus of people, policy, and technology. First, on people. We really need to have knowledge sharing and empowerment at the grassroots level and the community level such as the LGU, the academe, the CSOs and the business sector.

As she explained, we have to strengthen the surveillance, contact tracing, infection prevention and control with the use of artificial intelligence AI and internet of things. We have to go digital because this will lessen covid-19 positive cases. When it comes to strengthening surveillance, we can do this with the use of AI and internet of things. She also shared that there are a lot of start-up companies that are willing to help the government. All we have to do is to tap them and have our local governments get the training for this.

Also, Dr. Perante-Calina posed a question on how will covid-19 change our future? She suggested of a scenario planning for this since it is impossible for us to return to the state of pre-COVID 19 normalcy. Instead, we must make the best of the crisis by looking ahead and attempting to reimagine our future and force ourselves to do things in a different, better way. To some extent, it is our choice whether we treat this moment as a catastrophe or as a chance.

Furthermore, she emphasized that we really have to study our future policies, and what will be our strategic foresight. This will lead to have a technocratic governance as we are also looking at the deliberative and participatory democracy wherein digital citizenship tools will be there to help us propose sound policy measures. She mentioned that we should not only look at the growing economy and the ever expanding Gross Domestic Product but also at other aspects such as the ecological aspect and also the social foundation. Our indicators in economic development should not only be the GDP and GNP but also the Gross National Happiness (GNH).

She also mentioned about their efforts on foresight responses that the Development of Academy of the Philippines would like to propose. One of that is the National Food Highway in support of SDG 2, Central Epidemic Command Center in support of SDG 3, I-Campus for higher education in support of SDG 4, National and local stockpile in support of SDG 11 and SDG 12. We have to be ready even without the pandemic. It's a big ambitious policy response but it will help us in the future.

Finally, she stressed that we really need to go back to the governance reform framework, we really need the whole nation approach and we need to put into consideration our Filipino values. Bayanihan is one way to really operationalize and promote the whole of nation approach.

# SESSION 3

## THE POLICY IMPLICATION OF THE MANDANAS V. OCHOA TO LOCAL GOVERNANCE

11 JULY 2020

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC





### **SESSION 3**

#### **THE POLICY IMPLICATION OF THE MANDANAS VS. OCHOA TO LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

The discussion in the third session talks about the policy implication of the Mandanas vs Ochoa ruling to governance especially in the local level. As a brief background of the Mandanas Supreme Court Ruling, it clarifies the share of the Local Government Units (LGUs) from the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) which does not exclude other national taxes such as customs duties. The exclusion of other national taxes like custom duties from determining the just share of the LGUs contradict the express constitutional provision in Section 6, Article X of the 1987 Constitution. In particular, Prof. Alfredo Sureta Jr., one of the resource speakers of the CORE Movement, discussed the proposal of strengthening Local Governance through surgical amendments to the 1987 Constitution. Moreover, one of the proposals also to amend the constitution is through the empowerment of the existing Regional Development Council (RDC) and bridge the gap in actualizing development at the regional level, as presented by Prof. Eric Daniel De Torres, also a speaker of the CORE Movement.

**OPENING REMARKS**

**HON. FRANCISCO R. CRUZ CESO III MMG**

*Assistant Secretary for Plans and Programs*

Department of the Interior and Local Government



Assistant Secretary Cruz highlighted the partnership between the DILG and KAS which has been ongoing for years now. He particularly cited the activities which was successfully conducted last year and the upcoming activities that the two parties will undertake especially in this time of pandemic. With the advent of digital communications through advanced applications and software, ASec Cruz lauded the initiatives of DILG and KAS on bringing this particular webinar series which tackles a very important matter in addressing issues and concerns of our national and local government. With the theme, *Decentralization, Constitutional Reform, and Governance Innovations*, he is hopeful that the participants will be enlightened by the lessons and insights that these particular series of webinar will bring forth.

**KEYNOTE MESSAGE****MS. TONETTE DE JESUS***Senior Program Manager*

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines Office



Ms. De Jesus focused her message on the roles of the National Government and the Local Government Units (LGUs) in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic. According to her, despite the programs and projects of the local governments in combating the ill effects of the pandemic especially to their constituents, these are not enough to properly address the glaring situation. For her, it is the mandate of the LGUs to immediately provide solutions to this health problem, but she also however recognized the challenges and inadequacy of resources that they are getting from the national coffers. In addition, she posited the question which was addressed to the speakers, if the national government would embark on increasing the budget of local governments down to the barangays, would they be capacitated enough especially that the country is suffering from the horrid pandemic. In the end, Ms. De Jesus thanked the organizers as well as the participants in having this webinar series made possible.

RAPPORTEUR: MR. LUIGI MONTALBO

**STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
THROUGH SURGICAL AMENDMENTS OF  
THE 1987 CONSTITUTION****PROF. ALFREDO S. SURETA, JR.***Constitutional Reform Resource Person*

Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform



Prof. Sureta discussed the first topic which is one of the most important highlights of the CORE campaign of the government which is to strengthen the governance of the local governments through surgical amendments to the 1987 Constitution. In this presentation, Prof. Sureta presented the historical background of Regional Development Council. Under the historical and social economic factors, spatial development in the country was heavily influenced by: 1.) trade arrangement established between the Philippines and the United States, 2.) the subsequent macroeconomic and trade policies adopted by the Philippines starting in 1947 after its formal separation of ties with the US. It was clearly observed that the growth in the national economy was not felt or well distributed in the country (regional imbalance persisted, favoring the National Capital Region). Prof. Sureta moved to discuss the background appertaining to Physical, Cultural, and Political Factors. He explained that during the phase of exchange control (1948-1961) which favored import- substituting industries, the regions that grew the fastest were Metro Manila (principally the cities of Manila, Quezon, Caloocan and Pasay) and Southern Tagalog (mainly Rizal province). In contrast, during the period of peso devaluation and decontrol in 1961-1966, the fastest growing regions were those producing top agricultural exports such as tobacco, sugar and wood. These include Mindanao, Cagayan and Western Visayas. This led to the third item under the historical background of RDC which is the search for better administration. Prof. Sureta mentioned that the Commission on Reorganization, created in 1968 per Republic Act No. 5434, undertook a thorough study of the revamp of the executive branch with focus on the improvement of existing regional delineation (Manasan et.al, 1993). One of the early efforts to introduce a spatial approach to development was the creation of field service areas. The following were the basis for such grouping: 1. contiguity and geographical features;

2. homogeneity of cultural and language groupings; 3. commonality of transportation and communications facilities; and 4. relative equal size of population and area. On the basis of these criteria, the Congress in 1956 approved the following eight regions with their respective regional centers.

Prof. Sureta provided a discussion on the organization of the Regional Development Council. The RDC is composed of the Local Government Units (LGU) of the region along with regional directors of line agencies represented in the NEDA board. Representatives of the private sector which includes the Non- Government Organizations (NGOs) based in the region are also involved. Executive Order (EO) no. 384 prescribes that there shall be at least one private sector representative from the labor sector. He emphasized that the presence of the Local Government Unit is important in determining the needs and monitoring the progress of projects in the region. The LGUs are represented by: all provincial governors and city mayors, mayors of municipalities designated as provincial capitals, presidents of the provincial leagues of mayors in the regions, mayors of municipalities designated as regional centers. These bodies work to fulfil the functions of the RDC.

In addition, he enumerated the functions of the RDC: 1. Coordinate the preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of short and long- term regional development plans and investment programs, regional physical framework plan and special development plans, including the formulation of policy recommendations; 2. Integrate approved development plans of provinces and cities, line agencies, state universities and colleges, government-owned and controlled corporations and special development authorities in the region into the regional development plan; 3. Review, prioritize, and endorse to the national government the annual and multi-year sectoral investment programs of the region for funding and implementation; investment programs of the region for funding and implementation; 4. Review and endorse to the national government the annual budgets of agency regional offices, state colleges and universities and special development authorities; 5. Promote and direct the inflow and allocation of private investments in the region to support regional development objectives, policies and strategies; 6. Review and endorse national plans, programs and projects proposed for implementation in the regions; 7. As required by the Investment Coordinating Committee (ICC), review and endorse projects of national government agencies that

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have impact on the region and projects of LGUs in the region requiring national government financial exposure which may come in the form of guarantees, national government budget appropriations or subsidies, among others; 8. Initiate and coordinate the development, funding and implementation of regional and special development projects such as those involving several agencies or LGUs; and 9. Coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of development projects undertaken by government agencies, local government units, state colleges and universities, government-owned and/or - controlled corporations and special development authorities in the region.

He also provided the challenges confronting the RDC which are : Insufficient Administrative Authority, Possible Overexpansion of RDC Membership, Limited Scope of the Regional Development Fund (RDF), Relatively Weak Subregional Coordination, Inadequate Participation from the Private Sector, and Creation of other Government Units, with Functions which can Overlap those of the RDC Technical Staff.

For Prof. Sureta, further development of RDC will not serve only as a recommendatory organization but would have a specific mandate on how regional plans and or identification of programs can be fully realized in accordance to the interests of their respective regions, implementation of their respective development plans, ensured funding for the operations and implementation of various programs and projects, and will serve as a bridge to harmonize national government priorities from that of the regional and local government programs and programs. He then discussed the proposed and/or additional functions of the RDC based on the amendment. These includes: Develop planning of the regional development plan (medium and long term), harmonizing the thrust of the national government and local government units within the regions. It is also tasked top identify priority programs and projects in accordance to the needs of the region as well as monitoring and evaluation of existing projects and programs that would later on use as a basis to further develop the delivery of services to the region. To provide subsidy to infrastructure development projects in the region such as: maintenance, repair and establishment of school buildings, farm to market roads, post-harvest facilities, maintenance and repair of roads

and bridges, interconnectivity of towns, municipalities and the like, inter-regional connectivity, provide policy formulation and recommendation based on the prevailing conditions of the local government units in the region to the national government, endorse the to the national government the annual budget of the region based on the prioritized programs and projects, and prepare budget on identified programs and projects in the region based on the allocation provided in the General Appropriations Act.

In ending his presentation, Prof. Sureta concluded that given the change of fiscal landscape in the Philippines as a result of the Mandanas vs Ochoa Decision, there is a need to revisit the Internal Revenue Allotment formula to ensure that scarce fiscal resources are fully utilized for the welfare of the people. He also gave full emphasis to the discussion that the current formula for the sharing of the internal revenue allotment limits the optimum utilization of fiscal resources since the fiscal transfer did not take into consideration the unique characteristics of the local government units and failed to take into account their capacities and differences. Therefore, the institutionalization of the Mandanas vs Ochoa ruling aims to address this policy gap as described above. Prof. Sureta further explained that by anchoring the sharing formula on variables such as geographic peculiarity, fiscal capacity, level of own source revenue, and level of poverty, it will lead to more effective use of resources. This will allow resources deficits of the local government units to gradually address development challenges that hamper progress.

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### **RDC VERSION 2.0: BRIDGING THE GAPS AND ACTUALIZING DEVELOPMENT AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL**

**PROF. ERIC DANIEL DE TORRES**

*Constitutional Reform Resource Person*

Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform  
Department of the Interior and Local Government



Prof. De Torres, on the other hand, presented the CORE proposal of empowering the regions through the strengthened regional development council. In his presentation, Prof. De Torres lamented to the inutility of the present set-up of the RDC which is only a recommendatory body and has no definite power to really implement major projects in the provinces. He further explained that there are fiscal transfers in practice. In practice, there are always vertical and horizontal gaps in local government spending. Vertical gaps refer to the deficit between expenses and revenue capacity while horizontal gaps refer to the inequality between developed and less developed regions or local government units. He adds, that since these fiscal gaps are persistent, to address these gaps, governments all over the world developed different mechanisms to solve it. But it is important to emphasize that around the world (except for a small group of rich and poor countries), the amount local government spends on public service are always not enough to support it. He thinks that it mainly reflects that vertical imbalances are always present.

Prof. De Torres cited the case of Southeast Asia and the Philippines. The same can be said with the capacity of different levels of local government, which invariably are always unequal. In Vietnam, poor provinces only account for 9 percent of tax revenue. In Indonesia, before East Timor separated, its income was only 4 percent compared to Jakarta.

In the Philippines wherein only three regions, mainly Central Luzon, provinces of CALABARZON and the cities of the National Capital Region, account for 60% of tax revenue. With that, he went on and presented the practices and formulas to address the fiscal gaps. In the case of Swiss Federation, remoteness is a part of the formula. South Africa uses rural area as an element. Japan utilizes areas in cold climate while Malawi includes drought-stricken areas. Overall, he strongly suggests that geographic factors are stable indicators since they are immovable values. The size of population is also neutral as an indicator since they are free from moral hazard that is found in other indicators. In Indonesia the formula for internal revenue allocation is related positively to indicators of poor roads and low vehicle registration (for road infrastructure needs). In terms of accountability and autonomy, Prof. De Torres mentioned that comparative analysis of successful decentralization initiatives in other countries has shown that accountability is a critical part of the process. Accountability requires political leaders at all levels to be responsive and responsible to their citizens. Administrative accountability meanwhile requires a clear legal framework on who is responsible for the financial reports. He provided an example of hard policy accountability on the part of local government is creating hard budget caps on local government spending. It also can include the desired policy outcome, such as number of roads constructed or number of immunized children or lowering the level of child mortality. He also said that as observed by experts in the field, this is especially a tough challenge for decentralizing countries whether they are developed or developing.

Thus, for Prof. De Torres, the proposal of the national government spearheaded by the DILG, is crucial and timely especially that the country is in the verge of facing a terrible pandemic crisis. According to him, the proposed strengthening of RDC will result into the actual implementation of their [provinces] respective development plans, not relying on the go-signal from the national government through NEDA.

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The new RDC will also not only serve as a recommendatory organization but will have specific mandate on how regional developments and plans or identification of programs can be fully realized in accordance to the interests of their respective regions. This will also ensure sufficient funding for the operations and implementation of various programs and projects, and will serve as a bridge to harmonize national government priorities from that of the regional and local government plans and programs.

In conclusion, Prof. De Torres emphasized that given the changed fiscal landscape in the Philippines as a result of the Mandanas vs. Ochoa Decision, there is a need to revisit the Internal Revenue Allotment formula to ensure that scarce fiscal resources are fully utilized for the welfare of the people. The current formula for the sharing of the internal revenue allotment limited the optimal utilization of fiscal resources, since the fiscal transfer did not take into consideration the unique characteristics of the local government units and failed to take into account their capacities and differences. The proposed formula aims to address this policy gap. By anchoring the sharing formula on variables such as geographic peculiarity, fiscal capacity, level of own source revenue, and level of poverty, it will lead to more effective use of resources. This will allow resource deficits of the local government units to gradually address development challenges that hamper progress.

# SESSION 4

## THE FUTURE OF PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS - A POST -SONA ASSESSMENT

29 JULY 2020

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## **SESSION 4**

### **THE FUTURE OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: A POST SONA ASSESSMENT**

Prior to the session 4, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte delivered his 5th State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 27, 2020 at the Batasang Pambansa Complex in Quezon City. Hence, this session's emphasis in particular was all about the plans of the current administration in running the government as the country move forward despite the looming Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, issues in relation to the economic status of the country as a result of the pandemic had been the focal point of discussion after the long period of community lockdowns. The first presenter, Prof. Malou Tiquia, the school President of Universidad de Manila, critiqued the Presidents SONA by sharing some of his 'must heard' pronouncements while hoping that other issues must have been reported in the speech, especially the issue of government's response to Covid-19 going to the new normal. On the other hand, former economic spokesperson Sectary Gary B. Olivar, also one of the speakers of CORE Movement, discussed the economic impact caused by the pandemic and how the country may recover through constitutional reforms being pushed by the current administration.



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### **OPENING REMARKS**

**MS. PAMELA DYAN D. CARBONELL**

*Chief Project Officer*

Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform  
Department of the Interior and Local Government



Ms. Carbonell started her message by thanking the speakers and participants for taking the time to be present in this session. Ms. Carbonell said that last week we witnessed Pres. Duterte deliver his 5th SONA opening the 19th congress against the backdrop of the pandemic. She mentioned that he urged the passing of some 21 bills within 2 years of his term addressing the effects of COVID19. She also said that the DILG together with KAS have been able to discuss the health and governance aspect of the impact and effects of covid19 in our country. Ms. Carbonell manifested that the challenge for us today and further sessions is reviewing the covid19 experience to arrive at a systematic evaluation for the whole of government approach to work. She said that Metro Manila will be place again under the modified enhance community quarantine tomorrow. Many are and will still bear the brunt of the effects on livelihood, education, employment, and businesses, even after we find a cure or the vaccine. This calls for active participation and engagement of citizens and government at all levels and a diverse array of organizations and individuals involved in policy-making processes and policy implementation. She encouraged the participants to continue to be active, participate and be involved. To care about today, and pay attention to our future.

**KEYNOTE MESSAGE****PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST***Country Director*

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines Office



Prof. Dr. Jost said that a few days before this event and hours after the SONA of President Duterte, the decision to put Metro Manila and other provinces back to MECQ touched the nerve of the current situation and discussion. So, this afternoon, he said that we will treat aspects such as covid19 response of the government, the assessment of the President's SONA, its different dimensions and themes and ways forward despite the COVID19 Pandemic. Prof. Dr. Jost said that if he is not mistaken, the sound and tone of discussion is changing, the tone is sharper. He has his doubts if this will be very helpful. He said that we all face an increasing challenge for all in the Philippines. The commandment of the hour should be to stand together, to look for the best solution, to respect each other in this daily challenge. Therefore, he is convinced that the event from this afternoon can make an important contribution to objectify the discussion. Based on The SONA of Pres. Duterte, our experts in the upcoming panel, will analyze the speech on various aspects – what does it say, the keypoints and strategies, and what's missing in the SONA. These contributions will objectify or refocus the discussion and define the key challenges for the upcoming weeks and decisions to be taken. Prof. Dr. Jost ended his message by thanking the DILG, Usec. Malaya, Ms. Carbonell, the staff, experts and participants.

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**WHAT'S MISSING IN THE  
PRESIDENT'S 5TH SONA****PROF. MA. LOURDES TIQUIA***President*

Universidad de Manila



Prof. Tiquia started off by stating that she will go directly to the requested topic. She said that clearly, the SONA was long and the technical side of it was much improved. She noticed that the President was reading from the teleprompter and it was covering both from the start of this administration, what has been done, the successful legislation, etc. She proceeded with the next slide which is the timeline, the timeline that is remaining for this administration to be able to pursue whatever plans they have for the remaining two years. She said that practically 2020 was defined by the pandemic, we started our gating protocols as early as March and now NCR is going back to MECQ, starting tomorrow until the 18th.

On July, the President delivered his fifth State of the Nation Address and the opening of the 18th congress third regular session. All goes pursuant to the Constitution will be the timeline, the deadline for the executive branch to submit their proposed GAA. An important milestone that will happen in 2020 is the change of the speakership. She recalled that there was a gentleman's agreement, for a time sharing of the speaker. Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano, according to him, will honor the gentleman's agreement, and we will see the transfer of the said power to Marinduque Congressman, Lord Velasco, on October. And then in 2021, the President will deliver his last penultimate State of the Nation Address before the filing of the Certificate of Candidacy in October, by the time that will be really a political season altogether. She said that there will only have 14 months of governance and the five months in fiscal year 2020 is defined by three narratives: 1.) The budget process, which will of course, reflect the debate, the balancing between public health and the economy, and then you will have 2.) the nine months of fiscal year 2021, where it will also be defined by the vaccine, the economy and the GAA, and, of course, 3.) the 18 months preparation for 2022 to begin December 2021, and we'll run up to May 2022.

Prof. Tiquia said that technically, by the time you file your Certificate of Candidacy, it will already be political season. She said that there are still pieces of the puzzle that are missing. In governance, it's really like puzzle making, things have to fit correctly. If they don't, you spend more time looking for that missing piece. So she talked about the three things that she thought were not said in the State of the Nation Address. The first piece is political reform. She said if you read through the speech, there was no mention of any political reform. If we would go back as far as 2010 or the Aquino years, 2010 to 2016, there was a chance for political party reform, there was a chance for national subsidy for political parties. There was a chance for banning turncoatism. So many reform agenda that passed the committee but it lost and then from 2016 to the present, the only political reform that we have is the Bangsamoro Region in Muslim Mindanao. The second piece of the puzzle is one critical point there is, essentially lifting the foreign ownership restrictions in the constitution, and this I refer to as the 60/40 ownership. She said that based on the table from the slide, you will see where the foreign direct investments in selected ASEAN Countries from 2004 to 2013.

The Philippines is not really one of the destinations in so far as FDI is concerned. She would agree that there are FDIs that are being invested and introduced into the economy. But she said most of these FDIs are hot money, they invest, they earn, and they go out. So they bring out the income derived from such an investment. Prof. Tiquia then mentioned that we need a constitutional amendment here. It has been pushed since 2004 or for the past 16 years. She shared that the talks in both houses of Congress is that there are certain papers written by just introducing a default clause provided as defined by Congress but this never took off. And this is critical when you look at how the recovery is in relation to pandemic, if you want to introduce new money into the economy, and you want to have a catalyst to spark the growth to spark the recovery, you would need to open the economy. So there's new capital infusion, there is new economic movement, the Philippines can be one of the locator countries where certain industries in China are living. So this is an important piece in the puzzle and this remains unacted upon. The SONA was very silent on it.

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The next slide will show you one of the most important piece of the puzzle that has been pending or unacted upon, not really of interest to some, but there is a need for electoral reform. Why? because Smartmatic has been in control since 2010, Smartmatic was the sole determiner of the people's will. After the 2016 elections and the 2019 elections, there was thought of having a new system, there was a talk of a hybrid electoral system. But again, the problem there is we have a COMELEC that doesn't agree with it. Right now COMELEC is saying if we're going to do a hybrid, a hybrid system would mean we vote manually the same way we have a long ballot and you check or shade the names you want to vote then it's pushed through electronically as it goes to every local government level and canvassing happens at the national level, so there is a chance to open the ballot at the barangay levels. Thus, you are able to do a manual reading of what was transmitted. This was supposed to be a control measure to the whole process. But this has remained pending and as usual, those of you who have been active in elections campaigns, you will always know that any reform in Congress takes too long to accomplish and sometimes the reforms do not materialize because of lack of time. We are not very close to election day and there is not much thought about what kind of system we will have. Please take note that even campaigning will be different because of the health protocols, you cannot do rallies, you cannot do door to door, the traditional way of campaigning will have to be restarted because of the physical distancing protocol.

So, next, you will see now in the next slide that COVID19 is a very hard balancing act for government. And I have here one of the captains of industry. This is Mr. Ramon Ang of San Miguel who said we can make money again but life once we lose it, it's gone forever. So between life and money I choose life. When a captain of an industry says this, it tells you that the government will have to carefully walk that tightrope and ensure the balance between public health and as well as the economy. As we all know, those of you who had introduction to economics and political science, when you have a strong economy, that means the people are healthy, that they don't worry about their physical well-being, that's why they can thrive in the economy, but once public health is compromised, you cannot talk much of economic gain. Those of you who have monitoring the economic impact of the pandemic, before the talk was we're going to have a V shaped

recovery, a deep decline and a steep appeal. Today, the talk is a U shaped recovery. A U shaped recovery takes time, it's a longer time, the underbelly of the U, it's a longer time to go up and look at the indicators, here we are looking at worse, moderate, and best case scenario. This is a study done by the business world and you will see that in a best case scenario the growth is really minimal. So you have there the projected losses in sectoral gross value added in billions of pesos.

From the different industries: manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade other services, financial intermediation, transportation, agriculture, forestry and fishing, real estate, renting and business activities, electricity, gas and water, mining and construction. If you look at the impact of pandemic, I think agriculture and forestry can produce, but again the supply chain will have to be reviewed because during the height of COVID-19, we saw so much production coming from the northern part of the Philippines, but was unable to be brought down because of supply chain problems. This graphs talk about recession.

There is global recession. That's definite. CEOs of companies are talking not of earning, but just breaking even, just ending the year not on the black. But not exactly on the red but having both ends meet and hopefully you can track the short run next year as soon as we have the vaccine in place. So, when you hear a V shaped recovery, you will see their economy recovers but activity permanently lost. When you say it's a U shaped recovery, the recovery is slower because of the curve. The swoosh is really very hard because recovery is longer than V shape but faster than U shape but really the swoosh would mean having the confluence of several positive impacts to the economy for it to register that way and that is the Z, W and the L shape recovery. But what triggers this? the next slide will tell you there are five triggers of such behaviors.

The unemployment is an issue that is very crucial because that is not only domestic, but the reintegration of OFWs used to be "please come home. Be with your family. There will be a reintegration plan." Today, we are bringing home our OFWs. Take note that the drivers of economic growth are two: the BPOs and the OFWs and if the OFWs are coming home in mass and the economy is not able to provide jobs to them, or even just reintegration, it would be very hard for OFWs. And of course, without work, there is the hunger component felt much especially in the urban centers.

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That is why we have so many SILs, those who were trying to find work in the city, and realizing that with pandemic it is better for them to be in the provinces. So there's, again the behavior of people living and making do with the basic life in rural Philippines. And of course, the joblessness, once companies closed, once establishments closed, people really just don't have much job. So, you either become an entrepreneur or you wait until the economy opens.

The good news there is that there is much activity online. And there are so many entrepreneurs going online, because it lessens the intermediation, you go direct. The couriers are having a heyday, bringing stuff to suppliers and consumers. And then the other trigger is the opening of classes. Let me go back to the handling of pandemic, much has been said about the kind of management of the pandemic, but who is really prepared to handle such. I mean, the best economies, the biggest economies in this world are having a hard time. And you know, some of us are really just harping on the inabilities of some, when in fact, our recoveries are greater than deaths. Yes, cases are high because of testing.

If you recall, during the early days of February and March, the call was for mass testing. The call was for capacities are not there. We did the lockdown early on, and it was a hard lockdown. And that lockdown allowed capacities to be built. When we say you were 85% full, that means we have the extra elbow to absorb more because of the mass testing. Again, there are critics that are saying that there is data manipulation, There is no such thing as data manipulation because the cases evolves and even WHO and CDC would come up with different protocols. How do you now include asymptomatic cases into the total number of cases? Do you include wild cases into the total number of cases? Do you disaggregate that? for me, as far as I'm an observer in terms of risk management, I go by the number of deaths and the number of recoveries and the capacities that are able to handle the sudden increase in our cases. The last two or three days is a perfect example of how our leaders listen and acted, if you will recall, we have a 15-day cycle of readjusting the gating protocols. And in those gating protocols, we had the last one in July 31. But by August 1, the association of doctors and allied professions made a public call for the President for a timeout for the healthcare workers, the frontliners

and a time out for us to re-study and recalibrate the protocol in order to respond to what is evolving as we respond to the cases. That for me was an example of leadership in action and in listening. Because certainly, the President could have decided that, like some elected leaders are saying, No, we should stick the GCQ. But he listened. He conferred with his cabinet. The Secretary of Health who has been ridiculed as to resign, he's still holding on and in fact stood by what the healthcare workers were asking. And because of that NCR or the Mega Manila will be again under MECQ from August 4 to 18. That for me is telling because it shows the kind of quick reaction and the caring of leaders when confronted with a request from the healthcare workers.

So the questions right now are after hearing the SONA. The questions that would form in your mind would be, Are we riding the tide? Or merely waiting for vaccines? The answer is No. Because from the past five months, we've seen eating protocols, we've seen enough re-tooling of transportation, of establishments, even the call for e-governance has been made. So this this digital transformation of the landscape is very important. Do we have a recovery plan? That one is what I've been asking for. Okay, there is a public health issue. We will wait for the vaccine. There is the economy side. There are talks of granting capital support through taxes. There is the lowering of the corporate tax. I guess the reason why the President did not present an overall holistic recovery plan is because they evolve us we go month by month. Why? Because it's very hard to do horizon planning. It's very hard to do future development planning. Why? Because you are in the here and now. We are surviving. And that is I guess the reason why the recovery plan was not together. But there are department plans. There are industry plans, and the gating protocol reflects that. Why is government shooting itself and is not talking in one voice? It's a basic question that I asked.

Prior to the SONA, you have several mouthpieces talking. after the SONA, government in terms of crisis has to speak in one voice, it has to be calming, it has to be caring, it has to alleviate the anxiety in the minds of people watching or people listening to a national presser. So, at the end, you will see in the next slide and this slide is telling and I will end with this line – “How do you win in the National Capital Region?” these red spots are the number of cases of COVID-19 in the area.

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And then we ask, is the country composed of NCR alone? is the country composed of Mega Manila? campaigners would know that if a national candidate runs and you get Region 3, Region 4A, and NCR, you can make it. You just need bits and pieces because Luzon comprises 56% of the total registered voters. So my question here, is federalism too late? Because this map will tell you so much money was put into NCR so much services, so much government work has been done for NCR and NCR is not the Philippines and NCR controls all the investment. What the pandemic did is show to us if there is a pandemic in NCR, the whole country collapses and that is one problem that federalism could have adequately answered. If It was made to be the real corner stone of this administration.

This pandemic showed us that if supply chain is based in Metro Manila, it will collapse. The rest of the country are moving, the rest of the country are fighting. The rest of the country are producing. But there is a too much emphasis in the National Capital Region. When Secretary Cimatú went to Cebu, Secretary Cimatú didn't do much, he only enforce discipline. And because of that, Cebu is able to rise and win against COVID-19. So we can see here the unitary, all the decision comes from Metro Manila, all the expenses are from Metro Manila. This we really have to study and really have to be serious about it, because NCR or Mega Manila is not the Philippines.

## ECONOMIC DIRECTION UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

### SEC. GARY V. OLIVAR

*Director, Center for Strategy, Enterprise,  
and Intelligence (CENSEI)*



In this webinar this afternoon, I've been asked to talk about, well, in my case, I've titled My presentation, the new normal economy, and the continuing case for constitutional reforms. I probably spend a little more time on the new normal economy, just to share where I think we're headed. And then talk about the continuing relevance of the constitutional reforms we've been pushing to whatever the scenario might look like for a new normal. And then if I have time to spend a little bit of time talking about my usual assignment which is the the need to lift the economic restrictions in our Constitution. What is happened with this pandemic, you know, globally, we saw a perfect storm in the global economy, really comprising three different shocks, although related, a collapse in demand, supply shocks, because a lot of productive capacity was shutting down.

The first one, collapse in demand, because a lot of people weren't working and therefore you had a drop in effective demand in purchasing power. And then thirdly, no liquidity in financial institutions, so as a result, today, even large scale government interventions that might have been considered irresponsible before, they're now acceptable pretty much everywhere in the world. We have seen a contraction in our GDP in the Philippines, and this comes from ABS-CBN. We still have contraction in the first quarter of the year by 0.2% in our GDP. Not as bad as what we experienced over 10 years ago during the global financial crisis of minus 3%, but we're certainly headed in that direction. Fully projections for GDP are all downward contraction. And national government sees our economy shrinking by 3.4%. IMF by a little more by 3.6%. Asian Development Bank by 3.8%. Open Shanghai bank by 3.9%. Obviously, nobody is looking to see economic growth for the full year. In a situation like this, not surprisingly, we are also seeing record unemployment and underemployment. You can see the sudden uptick of the unemployment and underemployment rates on the graph starting in the first quarter of the year, just really going into the second quarter reflecting the effect of the pandemic.

RAPPORTEUR: MS. FATIMA DIANNE ALIH

As far back as April, our unemployment was only at a record high of 17.7%. In addition, lower house, the Congressmen, projected up to a million repatriated OFWs by the year end due to economic contraction in the whole world, which is projected to hit almost 5% by year and according to the IMF, and of course, in the middle is the additional effect of a continuing slump in oil prices, which is affected the fortunes of the host economist for OFWs in the Middle East. And now let's see a breakdown the slowness of growth or the contraction in growth in a GDP if the usual five sectors IRA unlike before where exports and imports should be netted out, and we see the demand side, household consumption, which is their first driver, grew only 0.2% in the first quarter of the year, versus 5.7% in the preceding quarter, which is the last quarter of 2019. We saw an actual contraction in capital formation, but private capital formation by huge 18.8% in the first quarter, terminal trades shrank on both import and export sides by 3%. And by larger 9% on the Import side, what ended up having to take up the slack and compensate for all this slowness was government spending, which had provided a cushion with 7.1% growth, still slower, quarter and quarter. Related to this, we've seen a sharp drop in foreign direct investments you will see to the left of the graph. January-April in the red, the third line colored red, okay, refers to January to April of this year. January and February alone, we saw a foreign direct investment of under \$2 billion which is smaller by 32% compared to the previous year, same period of last year, Banko Central thinks that slowed down in foreign direct investment inflows reflects continued weakness in global and domestic demand, which has prompted investors to hold off on putting out new investments, while we have to deal with the uncertainties of the pandemic.

We are seeing continued slow growth in remittances as a result of the earlier noted slowness in foreign direct investment slowed down before an investment, for the full year the Banko Central expects a drop by 5% in our cash remittances, luckily, growth and remittances doesn't seem to track the trends in GDP or our economy. This is a fairly familiar trend, as you know by now it's the so called resilience of OFW remittances who basically persists to their best in sending home money, no matter what the economy looks like back home. And if the economy gets worse,

they just work harder and try to send more money. So there is resilience in that but you know, it's not something that we can fully hang our hat on. Despite falling remittances and slowing foreign investment, the Peso continued to appreciate by 2.4%. It was the best performing currency in Asia. One reason is a severe drop in imports, which went down by 41% in May wherein imports falling faster than exports. And in our import dependent economy, this kind of relationship, this kind of drop in imports, it portends a decline in potential output, potential output meaning the output that is supportable by imports and other imports, and therefore continue the weak consumption and investment.

Prof. Tiquia was talking earlier about the different projected shapes of the recovery in the next couple of years. Let me go with the projection of ING, the investment bank based in Singapore. According to the economist, Nicholas Mapa, with the continued rise in cases and the less than substantial fiscal impact response, it's less than substantial because obviously, we still have to be prudent. Plus, of course, we obviously have a lot of submission to sources by our own standards. But there are other countries in the region that have even better fiscal pictures. But nonetheless, because of this, we now expect a protracted downturn and the economy not returning to its momentum before the virus in the near term.

Therefore, we say a scenario of a crooked or bumpy L shape. This means that the rebound whenever it happens, translates to a new growth trajectory of only 3.7% over the next two years, this is almost only half of the 6% growth we had expected before the pandemic. One of the guidelines for safe reporting of the economy is decided by our former PSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo, from The New York Times piece. Four things to look for: 1.) Ability of hospitals to treat patients without assuming a crisis level of care, unfortunately, in the latest letter to the President, from our medical healthcare professionals, this is a major problem that they're encountering; 2.) Ability to promptly test everyone with symptoms. This issue was also raised by the medical professionals to the President; 3.) Ability to effectively monitor confirmed cases and contacts even through cell phones. Contact tracing and testing, to use the words of the medical professionals, they call it a miserable failure. That's probably overstated, but it gives you an idea of how concerned they are; and 4.) Visible, sustained reduction of infection for at least 14 days.

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This is called the flattening of the curve. We're obviously not there yet. Therefore, the question, Are we there yet? I think the answer is pretty clear. No, we're not. And that's why we're seeing the reintroduction of a hard lockdown in Metro Manila over the next two weeks.

What do I see is my fearless prediction; For the entire economy permanently lower economic capacity, simply because economic capacity and growth will be constrained by public health issues. For example, the workplace, which for me is the most vulnerable setting in terms of viral load exposure, which is really the metric ought to be watching for both public policy and personal purposes. Now, whenever we go out, we want to be sensitive about viral load exposure risk. The Israelis have come up with a model which basically is four days work plus 10 years locked down. Under this model, you get the best 30% capacity in the economy, if you really want to go somewhere in terms of reducing or minimizing or optimizing if you will, the risk of infection. Second example in public transportation, if you enforce social distancing, of at least one meter, effectively reduces passenger capacity to 30% the most. At this kind of capacity levels 30% of best economic 50%, we have to live with permanently higher unemployment, lower productivity and greater business uncertainty and financial instability. So that's a macro picture. Going down to the micro level, something we will call animal spirits, are basically talking about not only the appetite for entrepreneurs to take risks, but also you know, the appetite of consumers to spend anything that involves decisions about risk and rewards, this should be dampened because of the uncertainties. On the consumption side, household consumption will remain weighed down by social distancing measures and anxiousness about the second wave. The supply side, a entrepreneurial spirit will also be weighed down by this uncertainties.

Nobody knows when a new vaccine will become available. We keep hearing about September this year. We keep hearing about it a lot. But historically, let's remember that the vaccine for Mumps, was developed the fastest, and it took four years. Granted, the Mumps vaccine was developed a long time ago. And obviously, technology has taken a lot of advances instead. My own projection is no earlier than September then next year. This is no way to go ahead with businesses. So this leaves planning horizons and investment calculations open ended. This is no way to go ahead with businesses or any opportunities.

I think Prof. Malou mentioned it and I first heard about this really well by from my former boss, former president Arroyo when she addressed the online hearing of the House committee that was drafting the new economic recovery bill, she caught the attention of her former colleagues to the potential of pushing ahead accelerating the fourth industrial revolution. It is very obvious, we will have to find new ways to work. Because it is the workplace that is most vulnerable to prolong viral loads. New Business and business models would have to be innovated and distance learning, to restaurant take outs, to work at home. Even now, we are already seeing say the prices of the stock going up as this kind of potential is absorbed by the market. Next thing I see government borrowing and spending will remain critical. We already saw earlier how historically and currently government's spending is only acting to fill up or demand drops or slowdowns in the other sectors of GDP.

Now in this environment, government is the only reliable borrower. This is good because fiscal spending is also the only demand driver that continues to grow. This is partly because government faces a different and unique risk return profile. In other words, on the return side, the returns from fiscal spending are social and often non-financial. Therefore, they are not necessarily bound by the use of commercial calculations. The risk ultimately cover that is in theory, that the government's power to tax and print money. There's a lot of pending legislation, and the speakers already said he will deal with this together with the budget for the end of the year, but the rest of the year before even considering the constitutional reforms that will continue to push.

Talking about Bayanihan Two following Bayanihan One which is income relief, we are talking about arise which is economic recovery, we're talking about CREATE which is a new name for fiscal reform and tax reforms. And of course, the favorite legislation of the Banko Central, guide and fist, which has to do with deforming and redirecting our financial institutions. What is the policy challenge? I will take a page here from former NEDA director Romulo Neri, the basic challenge is to optimally reallocate diminishing resources, which constitutes forced or unplanned household savings. In other words, people saving because they don't want to consume or they don't have the opportunities to go out and also government revenues and private financial resources. We are taking them into the following uses:

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1.) Income transfers, to sustain essential household and consumption. And that is what we see in Bayanihan one and two; 2.) Investments and projects to be employ and remobilize displaced workers. This is gonna form a large part of the arise bill. And I mentioned because this brings our continuing push for constitutional reforms; 3.) Creating new economic values in the production of socially desirable goods and service as I guess, you know, the fourth industrial revolution is an example of this; 4.) Increasing countryside productivity and incomes. Again, this brings up the whole issue of federalism or federalism type reforms. So that's a policy challenge from a macro point of view.

Now, go to our next topic, why are we still pushing constitutional reforms in the middle of the pandemic? This is a question that's been raised often for political reasons, by our friends in the opposition. Let's go first to our pillar number one of our Constitution which is decentralization, a it has to do with empowering the countryside. It has to do really with federalism reforms, and devolving power downwards, away from the center, away from Manila. The first reform we are pushing and it has been additionally supported by the League of Municipalities, who is Mayor Chavit Singson. We are pushing this because we want to provide sufficient resources to our local governments, who are the frontliners in economic relief and recovery programs. You will recall that when the medical professional called the attention of the President, one of the biggest complaints had to do with the ability of local governments to deliver on the implementation of national policies, nearly one solution for that involves transferring new resources to them. That's what Mandanas will do. Secondly, we continue to push pillar number one reform, which is revising and updating the IRA allocation formula in order to give the smaller and poorer LGUs their fair share or a larger share of allocable fiscal revenues. These are the folks who are less able to implement National Health mandates, or absorb locally stranded individuals, they will need resource support. Thirdly, we are pushing Regional Development councils as a pillar one reform, because we need to improve coordination between the national and local government on public health and economic initiatives. RDCs will serve as an intermediate and reaching new level of governance. Doctors and nurses complained about the implementation capabilities of our local governments.



The only way we can see to improve this, because we certainly can't deploy it within local governments, you can't have the national government come in to take the role, is to govern them better, to empower them better by setting up an intermediary level of governance between the LGUs and the national government. At the least for now, we are launching this by empowering the existing Regional Development Council.

Why are we still pushing pillar number two? basically electoral reforms which was also discussed earlier by Prof. Malou. We want to improve the quality and credibility of governance initiatives, especially those that require a high level of public sacrifice, as for example, in a lockdown by closing the democratic deficit caused by the last frequent power and the absence of principles based party politics. There is a lot of cynicism, a lot of lack of trust out there among the public and it stands in the way it gets in the way of implementing good policy, especially in a crisis. We need to take away the source of that distrust and cynicism.

Why are we still pushing pillar number three? Prof. Malou talked about that extensively earlier. This is foreign direct investment. These are specific reasons why we are still pushing it; 1.) To support the President's Balik Probinsya program by attracting more investors in order to create the jobs that will hold people that are being asked to leave Metro Manila; 2.) To create more jobs to accommodate OFWs who are now coming back in droves to the Philippines; and 3.) To support the recovery of our weak national economy, especially in industries who need more capital and modern technology. Now, we are having a problem in attracting foreign investors. Prof. Malou mentioned the China situation right now. In fact, many Western companies are leaving China because of the virus and its trade war with the US. Unfortunately, not a single one of them has moved to the Philippines. They're moving to Thailand, Vietnam, other ASEAN countries. Indonesia alone will welcome a couple of dozen American companies who are bringing nearly \$40 billion of investment and creating over 100,000 new jobs. Why aren't they coming here? We've been America's longtime ally in Asia, are there many reasons? But one thing for sure, it was we are letting them know, we are telling them right at the start, that they are not welcome here. And this is written in no less than our Constitution. We are the most restrictive in foreign direct investment within ASEAN. In Department of Finance chart, we are the most distinctive number one in the world.

RAPPORTEUR: MS. FATIMA DIANNE ALIH

Among the 10 ASEAN countries, Singapore is most open, number 45 only in the world. Therefore, you see a huge development gap between the Philippines and Singapore. We have the lowest point direct investment percent of GDP 1.6%, the lowest in ASEAN, where the average is 89%. Because of this, because of this drawbacks, we are also the bottom dweller in infrastructure, which is capital and technology intensive. This is a comparison as of 2015 of the ASEAN big six, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Vietnam, you will see the bottom curve at Singapore at number four, the laggard is the Philippines which is 106. We are also the laggard in every category of infrastructure.

The third item in President's original ten-point agenda involves "increasing competitiveness and relaxing constitutional restrictions on foreign ownership. Ideally, in the new Constitution that we participated in writing, we basically overhaul the entire thing. We took out all the restrictions on foreign investment, and we redirected some of the language towards more important policy directions. In the approach we are taking now to fiscal economic restitution reforms. We are willing to compromise and stop short at an actual wholesale renovation of the Constitution. The new language we would like to put in a one by one here, for example, in Section two, Article 12 of the 1987 Constitution, which deals with natural resources, we propose to take out the 60/40 limit and refocus the language instead on the importance of sustainable development, especially conserving and protecting the environment. That is, after all, what should be the main issue and we're talking about natural resources. Education is no longer 100% Filipino unless otherwise provided by law. We put that in because clearly we need technology especially for online learning. And the last reform, 100% Filipino ownership in mass media, we did not have the internet in 1987. Now with the internet, what is more important is to monitor and control what kind of information is coming to our country regardless of who owns the media outlet. With that, Sec. Gary ended his presentation.

# SESSION 5

## EDUCATION UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

15 AUGUST 2020

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## **SESSION 5**

### **EDUCATION UNDER THE NEW NORMAL**

The fifth session of the policy forum series tackles the topic of education under the new normal. Apparently, the education sector is one of the most affected aspect in our society which has to adjust and blend with the presence of the pandemic. Due to the limitations and danger of conducting regular classes in a classroom set-up, the government has decided to implement a blended learning approach which is a combination of digital, modular, and physical measures in teaching. In her presentation, Undersecretary Annalyn Sevilla of Department of Education (DepEd), explained the methods and processes by which the department plans to continue to hold classes in the basic education amidst the pandemic. On the other hand, Dr. Perfecto Agabin, one of the commissioners in the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), presented the ways and means by which the higher education in universities and colleges adapt to the new normal. Both officials have assured that despite the Covid-19 risk, their offices are well prepared and will strictly implement measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Finally, the last speaker in the person Atty. Althea Acas, a keen regulatory reform advocate, discussed various reforms in crafting of regulations as well as its advantages and disadvantages.

**OPENING REMARKS****MS. TONETTE DE JESUS***Senior Program Manager*

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines Office



Ms. Tonette thanked the Department, Usec. Malaya, the guest speakers and all the attendees. She then reiterated that the session will be highlighting Education under the New Normal. She stated the current situation that the country is experiencing, on how young people's COVID-19 infection are much lower than the old people though there aren't confirmatory studies about this. In a new normal set-up where we adapt learning from home or distance learning, she emphasized how fortunate those students and schools that have access to internet, have electronic devices and can shift their curriculum virtually by using online platforms. But there are lots of students and schools who doesn't have the privilege to access the internet and can't shift to online learning. Most of them are from poor far-flung areas of the Philippines, where they rely on printed modules distributed by their teachers. Aside from learning, those less fortunate may also be unable to access essential services they usually receive from their schools like free meals. Some of the students will be deprived to have their safe haven especially to those came from abusive families. With that being said, Ms. Tonette stated 5 questions she hoped to be discussed by the guest speakers. These were the questions: 1.) How can educators regularly assess their students learning levels and gaps? And adjust their strategies and approaches accordingly? 2.) How do we handle student testing and evaluation with in the environment of distance learning? And with students, especially low-income students having also to deal with the financial hardships in COVID-19 health concerns of their families? 3.) How do we ensure that the already existing inequality gap in our educational system isn't further exasperated? Especially with private schools already starting their school year and public schools, at least those in basic education were postponing their learning at the time they are dim more prepared?

Once the threat of COVID-19 has diminished considerably in our country and we are all hoping and praying this will be soon. With our educational system be ready to transition back to this temporary and hybrid system of teaching and learning? What are the requirements that should be in place for students can go back to physical schools? And 5.) and most importantly, how do can go back to physical schools? And 5.) and most importantly, how do we ensure that no one is left behind? Especially students with inaccessible and difficult living conditions as well as students with disabilities or with special needs.

She added that a holistic approach is needed between national and local government, schools, educators, students and parents to ensure that no human potential is wasted. Especially when it comes to education with most of us believe is the great equalizer in life. She ended her speech by thanking everyone and wishing them a good day.

**RIISING THROUGH THE CHALLENGE  
OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:  
BASIC EDUCATION UNDER  
NEW NORMAL**

**HON. ANNALYN M. SEVILLA**

*Undersecretary for Finance*

Department of Education



Usec. Anna greeted everyone then acknowledge the presence of her former colleagues, Ms Tonette of KAS and Prof. Eric of CFCR. She also acknowledged the presence of her co-speaker, Comm. Perfecto Alibin and Atty. Althea Acas. She also thanked Usec. Malaya for inviting her and be part of the webinar.

She started her discussion by mentioning the topic assigned to her which is Rising through the Challenge of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Basic Education under New Normal. Since we are in a new normal setup, we are virtually having a seminar in a Zoom meeting room. She also mentioned that it's an honor for them to update everyone and that she will discuss the DepEd's effort regarding the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BELCP). She stated that the presentation flow that she will be discussing are the brief background of the BELCP and the interim readiness report that they've presented in the Senate and in the House of Representatives. She was glad to present the report to everyone because she knows that the report is applicable to everyone. She will also discuss the Special Education Fund (SEF) as she is the Undersecretary for Finance and it is part of her scope. And lastly, in ways forward we will know how can we collaborate.

She then proceeds in discussing the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BELCP). The COVID-19 Pandemic undoubtedly brought challenging times, not just for DepEd but for everyone. To address this public health emergency situation, as said by Prof. Eric, the battle cry of Sec. Briones has always been Education must continue, so DepEd will continue to sustain the deliver education services in whatever form it will take.

She mentioned that the DepEd's response in the development of this BELCP, while they've been adamant in saying that the opening of class will be on 24 August 2020, due to requirements of the law and their recommendation to the office of the President,

they are aware of the clamor of the stakeholders. As soon as they received the instruction and approval of the President, they had emergency press conference and announced that the new date of the start of the school year 2020-2021 will be on 5 October 2020. She reiterated that this was from the approval and instruction of the President, with the recommendation of the DepEd Secretary. She said that the BELCP is also a product of their consultations to the stakeholders, including the private sectors. The consolidation of the inputs was guided by their 5 principles. 1) Protection of health, safety and well-being of the learners, teachers, personnel, parents and community. This is to prevent the further transmission of the COVID-19 virus. 2) Ensure learning continuity, this is the balancing act thru K-12 curriculum adjustments, alignment of learning materials, deploying various learning modalities, the provision of training to school teachers and learners and the orientation to the parents and guardians. 3) Facilitating the safe return of the teaching and non-teaching personnel to their workplaces. But she reiterated that there will be no physical or face-to-face learning this fiscal year but hopefully when the public health situation becomes better, we will have the face-to-face by 2021. 4) Being sensitive to the equity considerations and concerns and endeavor to address them the best way they can. 5) Lastly, the link and bridge of the BELCP in order to pivot to quality and to ensure that the framework for the Sulong EduKalidad and Education futures will happen.

She then proceeds to discuss the interim readiness report of the department in line with the “education must continue” campaign. She said that there are 9 components which are: 1) Enrollment; 2) Curriculum adjustments; 3) Finalization of learning delivery modalities; 4) Preparation and distribution of the Learning Resources; 5) Assessment; 6) Teacher Training because not all are ready to shift in to online setup or the blended learning; 7) Resource Mobilization; 8) Health Standards, protection and the welfare of the teaching and non-teaching position is very important; 9) Regional Contextualization and that’s why that the local government unit is very important in this endeavor. She then discussed the 9 components briefly.

First is the enrollment. As of 14 August 2020, there are 23,289,539 enrollees both from private and public, state and local universities and colleges and this was 83.80% of the last school year’s enrollees. DepEd

is grateful with the numbers because it shows how parents and learners value education. As to curriculum, DepEd streamlined the curriculum in to Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) where they compressed the K-12 curricula from 14,171 learning competencies to 5,689 MELCs. DepEd made sure that this will address the congestions and the overlaps in the competencies. The BELCP features a menu of learning delivery modalities. We have the Blended learning, Distance learning and Homeschooling. These modalities ensure that we provide learning opportunities to our students without requiring them to come to school thru blended distance learning. Lessons will be delivered to the students thru the following methods: 1) Existing textbooks; 2) Self Learning Modules (SLM) printed or digital modules; 3) Activity Sheets; 4) SLM-based videos or radio-based instructions 5) MELCs mapped or aligned supplemental learning materials. DepEd also had a dry-run of radio/tv instruction broadcasting. IBC13 is now being used by the Department entirely for basic education.

Next is the Assessment. DepEd assures everyone that they are working on the assessment and considering short-term, medium-term and long-term effects and following these following principles: 1) It should be holistic and authentic in capturing the MELCs. 2) It should be integral for understanding student learning and development. 3) A variety of assessment strategies will be necessary and their curriculum instruction group is working on this by having formative assessment priority and inform their teaching personnel and promote growth and mastery for the learners. 4) The assessment and feedback should be a shared responsibility among teachers, learners and their families. 5) Assessment and grading will have positive impact on learning.

Next is the Teachers’ training, which are provided by NEAP (National Educators Academy of the Philippines), ICTS (Information Communications and Technology Services), DRRMS (Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service) because they have provided psychosocial first aids to the learners and prioritize the mental health check and stability of the officials and teachers. Regional and Divisions will also have online trainings. She added that “we keep on saying that our mandate is to provide education but we need other government agencies like DICT and NTC to help us to have a stable internet connection.

Next is the resource mobilization. She mentioned that when COVID-19 pandemic came, they had to first, recalibrate the department's budget, modify most of their programs, activities and projects (PAPs). They made use of their available for school maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE). They made the use of MOOE flexible and lenient so that they can be able to respond to COVID-19 and other needs of BELCP. The use of Special Education Fund (SEF) is very important in mobilization of resources. Usec. Sevilla mentioned that the 1% of the Real Property Tax is reserved for the SEF. She said that this is the right time to recalibrate and review the use of SEF. DepEd enhanced the partnerships with Development partners to access the Official Development Assistance (ODA) and they also strengthen the Brigada Eskwela and maximized the private sector contributions. And lastly, the request for supplemental budget but it was not granted by the congress but Usec. Sevilla said that hopefully the Congress will help them to prepare for 2021.

She then discussed the health standard which is very important. The DepEd-required Health Standards provide the following measures for COVID-19 mitigation in schools and offices. She said that General health and safety protocols should increase physical and mental resilience, reduce transmission, contact and duration of the infection. On the other hand, testing protocols includes early detection, referral process, testing and quarantine, contact tracing, and support protocols for COVID-19 positive learners, teachers and personnel. Last is the support mechanism for the DepEd Required Health Standards. She also mentioned that government employees are under Philhealth insurance. National Government Agencies are not allowed to give hospitalization or medical treatment to other employees. But they have partnered with DOH who is the one in-charge of giving health services. She reiterated that they have support mechanism for their employees, they have protocols but the budget for it is not with DepEd. They have to coordinate with DOH, Local government units and of course the Philhealth. The welfare and protection of personnel is very important but we need the government especially the national and local government.

She then discussed the Regional Conceptualization. The BELCP is a framework made at the Central Office but when it goes down to the region, it has to be contextualized. Since the Central office only provided the framework, the minimum options and the resource support are given to the regional offices and the regional directors were given the prerogative to decide on the learning delivery modalities that will be appropriate on their location and for the context of their local condition and should be consistent to public situation of the ground. She added that upon the recommendation of the division offices and after the consultation with their stakeholders, they are now ready to do their own regionalized or division BELCP. Each division office has their own BELCP, it can be online, blended or any other form and self-learning materials are vital and needs to be distributed. Usec. Sevilla also mentioned that they have conducted various regional/division dry runs and simulations in selected schools nationwide to demonstrate and evaluate learning delivery materials under different conditions from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. She also added that there are different means like radio-based, tv-based and online based self-learning materials.

She also discussed the harnessing the potential of Special Education Fund (SEF) as a complementary resource to finance the BELCP. She thanked the Secretary of the DILG, Sec. Año for encouraging all the local chief executives to immediately convene their respective school boards and they were able to determine and allocate supplemental budget needs especially on the SEF. She mentioned that the localized implementation of the BELCP was supported by the DILG by a Memorandum Circular no.2020-096 "Support to Oplan Balik Eskwela (OBE) 2020" which encourages the LGUs to consider providing and donating learning resources to public schools, teachers and students in order to ensure quality education despite the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. Sec. Año reiterated that said learning resources will be compliant to the minimum specification of the ICTS of DepEd. She said that the SEF was created under RA no. 5447 and provided under RA no. 7160. SEF was implemented by a Joint Circular no. 1, s. 2017 by DBM, DILG and DepEd. And it is allowed or authorized the use of the SEF for budgetary items such as: 1) Operation and maintenance of public schools, 2) Construction and repair of school buildings, 3) Facilities and equipment, 4) Educational research

5) Purchase of books and periodicals 6) Sports development, and 7) Funding for the early childhood care and development (ECCD) program. But there were amendments on the JC no.1, s. 2017, where the DBM, DILG and the DepEd agreed to include Health and Sanitation to cover the PPE, the medical devices even vitamins and food, sanitation related items and installation of health areas and facilities. They also include the support to distance and blended learning, the support to conduct trainings/webinars, the distribution of self-learning materials and information dissemination. They also proposed some expenditures pertaining to the National Feeding Program, the Dental care Program and Scouting activities as items eligible for SEF financing. And of course, the passage of the law on “Masustansiyang Pagkain Para sa Batang Pilipino Act” or the school-based feeding program, she added. She showed the SEF and expenditures report of DepEd and DOF-BLGF, she mentioned that they are currently collaborating with DOF-BLGF for the accuracy of data.

She stated that DepEd is seeking support to the Local Government units, government agencies, local organizations and private sector in delivering quality education to our learners while ensuring health and safety together with the teachers and all education personnel thru the strengthening of the local school boards in order to localize the LCP. She added that they hope to build a lasting partnership with local chief executives thru different associations and leagues in the LGUs. They appreciate opportunities like this where they can disseminate accurate information that will guide the stakeholders. In this unprecedented time, DepEd has always proven resilience and love of service, she added. Children learn in times like this as they see how the government and adult respond, react, show compassion and empathy to those who needed the most. We need to become an effective communicator by thinking critically and creatively and by being a good collaborator. She finished her discussion by expressing their heartfelt gratitude to the organizers and participants.

### **INNOVATIONS AND CHANGING MINDSETS: HOW INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION ADAPT TO THE NEW NORMAL**

**HON. PERFECTO A. ALIBIN, ED.D**

*Commissioner*

Commission on Higher Education



Comm. Alibin started his discussion by acknowledging the presence of the other speakers and participants and greeting them a pleasant morning. He proceeded by showing a brief scenario on the pandemic and its effect in our lives. He stated that this COVID-19 was unprecedented and greatly affected all the institutions, industries and disciplines around the world. He stated that during the lockdown, everyone learned the meaning of different Quarantine status and by these, some transactions were put on hold except for essential services but it has to be lifted to jumpstart the economy. Filipinos are now adapting to the new normal where everyone is consciously changing their mindsets and practices as a response. The labor force is now implementing protocols in their work places, some started to adapt the work-from-home setup. On the other hand, the food industry shifted from dine-in to food deliveries.

For the education sector, Pres. Duterte said that the safety of the students is the priority. Because of this, the DepEd, TESDA and CHED have exerted their efforts to ensure that the students while they are confine in their homes will still continue education and learn. Education is system that shouldn't be seized, he added. In the light of Commission on Higher Education, they have set the continuity of learning despite the academic bottlenecks. He said that the commission emphasized that this pandemic should not be seen as a hindrance in providing inclusive quality education instead it should be embraced and conquered to serve as an inspiration in coming up with new and better model of higher education. He stated that the first challenge was to deal with the 2nd semester because lockdown happened in the middle of the 2nd semester, the grading system was seized. Academic and administrative policies were placed and formulated in order to protect the teachers, staff and employees as precautionary measure against COVID-19. Offline classes were abruptly set up to catch up on the syllabus or syllabi of the faculty which were originally crafted for face-to-face classes.



He added that the assessment methods were replaced because summary system of grading were abandoned, the school calendar were changed, policies have been consistent with IATF guidelines. The CHED has been proactive in response to provide guidance and leadership to HEIs and students in finishing the second semester, the HEIs decided to change the system of grading so that all students particularly the graduating should not be disadvantaged.

He then articulated the 7 advisories that the CHED issued as guidelines for the HEIs in the Philippines. First is about the guidelines for the prevention, control and mitigation of the spread of COVID-19 virus. An information campaign and promote and prevention control guidelines based on the data released by the World Health Organization for advisory. Second, we have to mobilize the necessary resources to undertake critical, urgent and appropriate responses and measures to curtail and eliminate the COVID-19 threat, create procedures for student, faculty, staff and administrators showing COVID-19 symptoms, perform environmental disinfection for the school buildings based on the directives from the DOH. Third focuses on reminding HEIs to exercise academic freedom based on their respective situation, as long as they coordinate with CHED and DOH, exercise flexibility in determining the extent of adjustments that will be made in their approved academic calendar, facilitate alternative activities to enable students to complete the required academic hours and also to deploy available distance learning, E-learning for instance and other alternative modes of delivery in view of residential learning if they have the resources to those. He added that the higher education institutions have to exercise discretion to postpone graduation ceremonies and up to this time, they are still rescheduling graduation ceremonies, either via virtual methodology and modality. Fourth, HEIs must develop contingency plans incase their localities will be declared under quarantine. Fifth is there are e-forms distributed by the regional offices and these e-forms will provide information and data on the status, students status and actions undertaken to support their government efforts to manage COVID-19 situation. Sixth, HEIs must continue to exercise their judgement in the deployment of available flexible learning systems and other alternative modes of learning. The exercise of discretion by the HEIs and other faculty must be reasonable, transparent, and outcome-based. During the continuing ECQ, HEIs are authorized to determine how to meet the requirements

for the completion of a subject or degree program. He added that HEIs may undertake alternative assessments and remediations, and consider the student assessments and computation of grades to be based on current student records and school academic policies. The Learning delivery mode during the extended ECQ would only depend on the available resources of the HEIs and students, students who lack connectivity during the ECQ period shall be allowed to complete their curricular requirements after the ECQ. In-person graduation ceremonies were discouraged. Last advisory is that HEIs under quarantine status were advised to suspend face-to-face or in-person classes until further direction from the IATF. The issuance by the proper government authority is needed. Summer classes, mid-term and mid-year intersessions were only be conducted for graduating students who need to complete their academic requirements. Students and Graduate students whose subjects were scheduled in the summer under their PSG (policies, standards and guidelines) of their degree programs should attend summer classes if capable for full online learning. The internship programs were suspended because foreign and local travels were suspended and have not been lifted. He mentioned that the opening of classes for AY 2020-2021 shall be based on the HEIs delivery mode subject to compliance with minimum health standards and the situation on the ground. The board of regents of SUCs have set their enrollment dates but due to the recent announcement from Malacañang they can adjust their school calendar. Preparation of the HEIs facilities to comply with minimum health standards such as mandatory wearing of mask, washing and sanitation practices, safe physical distancing, configuration of classrooms spaces, provision of markers in public places, provision of gathering among others are to be taken into consideration. Comm. Alibin added that the consultation with local health officials and LGUs to determine the health situation in their locality, availability of public transportation and other support services necessary for the operation of HEIs. In coordination with local health officials and the local government unit, implementation of any of the following flexible enrollment procedures should be taken into consideration.

On student welfare and concerns, HEIs were advised to establish a clear communication plan to their students and HEI personnel, especially among grantees of scholarship programs to ensure that urgent and significant concerns are addressed. On the other hand,

social media platforms were optimized already. HEIs are encouraged communication and non-face-to-face means such as through online and social media platforms, phones, electronic gadgets, mails, and other courier services among others. HEIs shall inform students and HEI personnel on the enrollment process and specific education delivery mode that will be implemented for SY. 2020-2021. Comm. Alibin said that HEIs may revise their academic policies such as the policy on maximum residents and ensure that student's academic standing or status in the program is not disadvantage. HEIs shall work with local government units to facilitate contacts with their students in areas where public transportation is not fully operational, and to assist in bringing educational materials and information to their students. He added that CHED through its programs and projects, address the prerequisite requirements for a successful new normal transition of HEIs in the first semester of AY 2020-2021. Comm. Alibin showed a matrix with the requirements of new normal for HEIs and how CHED addressed this through its approved projects and programs, and how these are translated on the ground as the HEIs worked to adapt to the new normal during the first semester. The CHED projects and programs, HEI's practices and requirements are the following: 1) Connectivity where there is an improvement of connectivity in cooperation with DICT. He added that for the SUC budget, there was a realignment to prioritize the flexible learning systems. Budgets are allocated to upgrade the bandwidth of the SUCs. For SUCs to implement flexible learning, CHED is now conducting massive trainings for faculty using online platforms, module learning pockets, production content, setting improvement and technical side of the computer and skills training for the faculty and non-teaching staff. The Commission launched the PhilCHED Connect where thousands of texts, audios, videos and other digital files used for teaching, learning and research purposes have been populated.

Negotiations with major telecommunications networks for zero-rated access of connectivity is ongoing. So that there will be free access even if students, teachers have no data and should be given data load on their smartphones. And these students have to be supported by HEIs, particularly the HEIs from the public sector. On the other hand, setting up an efficient and responsive online learning management system, there's a massive training to capacitate teachers in online learning platforms,

all SUCs have adopted an online learning management system except for the campuses with low connectivity. Alignment of budgets have been prioritized to improve their connectivity in preparation for the online learning requirements during this first semester of higher education bandwidth, for both downloads and uploads. Comm. Alibin added that the commission granted the SUCs research and production of COVID-related projects and innovations for health and safety of faculty, students and staff of any community. CHED is partnering with DICT to assure connectivity of all the SUCs. It is imperative that the carrying capacity of the existing ICT infrastructure of the SUCs must accommodate the entire student and faculty populations need. In line with the BAYANIHAN 2, Chair Popoy De Vera planned to allocate some funds for the SUCs needing a smart campuses or higher connectivity, or maybe just to reach out students who cannot be reached by their own limited way of connectivity to their campuses. HEIs must ensure that they have the capacity to carry on in an efficient and effective flexible learning system where most of the faculty are capable to teach their students in modalities beyond the traditional ones, to equip the faculty of the required knowledge and competencies to deliver learning other than inside the classroom.

CHED has categorized the HEIs in terms of flexible learning. First is the Full Online. Second is the Blended learning/Flexible learning where it is a combination of online and offline. Third is the full offline. The commission is still adapting the rolling opening of classes. HEIs using full online can open anytime as early as June 2020. Those HEIs with blended learning can open in August-September 2020. There will be no face-to-face or physical classes until there is an issuance from CHED. Health protocols must be strictly enforced, including testing of students, use of facemask and PPEs. In view with the spirit of Bayanihan, the Commission and all the HEIs are one with the nation as we continue to follow the following initiatives. First, we continue training all HEIs, their faculty and staff. We will continue to tap developed universities who are really good in this modality already. Faculties should also reconsider the way they teach or facilitate learning this time. He said that the commission and the SUCs have been collaborating with other agencies and LGUs and provided facilities for 40 quarantine and isolation units all over the country. The CHED is positive that the partnerships will continue as

our HEIs definitely need especially the LGUs' help in the future for the following activities: 1) distribution of modules and retrieval of students outputs, 2) information dissemination stipend for internet connection of students, 3) improvements provision of internet connection in barangays or in areas with no or limited connection, 4) establishment of barangay internet and center for Learning Hub and other IT infrastructure internet. Comm. Alibin said that there will come a time when this new normal will just be called normal. CHED will continue to serve as the state's arm to promote quality, inclusive higher education as it works with all HEIs in guiding, teaching and developing its Filipino students' competencies alone, or in partnership and collaboration with other agencies. The commission commits that they are with the Filipino people and the whole nation in working as one, in learning as one and rising as one. He ended his speech by saying on behalf of CHED, we support each other's work together, we will all work as one, together we will all learn as one, together we will all rise as one.

## **REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE NEW NORMAL**

**ATTY. ALTHEA ACAS**

*Regulatory Reform Advocate*



Atty. Acas started her discussion by thanking the organizers for giving her this opportunity to share her advocacy in regulatory reform. She also acknowledged the presence of the other speakers. She said that since we all know that these are unprecedented times, one of her favorite saying is never let a disaster go unused. She said that we are not in an actual 100% disaster, but we are on the brink of it. And that's worldwide. So, what do we do? Do we hide in the bunk and just cover ourselves and then just wait for it to go away? Or do we take action on it. We want to take action. In her presentation, she said that it will show how we can address regular regulatory reform in the time of COVID. She said that the regulatory Impact Assessment has now been implemented in the PH government like DOLE and the Ombudsman. She said she would like her presentation to be adapted by the audience. She wants everyone to learn how to be able to relate information. Because when you make regulatory and administrative issuances, you are trying to tell somebody that this is what you should do in order to be compliant. And if you want somebody to be able to comply properly, you want them to understand what they are looking at and reading. She added that the purpose of regulation is to put order in the society. So, how do you go about making sure that people are actually following these regulations? You have to make it very clear; you have to make it simple; you have to make it cheap. And you have to make the people understand what the point of the regulation is. She said that in a public policy analysis, it must be proportionate where the cost should always be way less than the benefits and that does not mean by peso-to-peso analysis. She added that people say that you cannot put a value to life. She then discussed the accountability. Why are we putting regulations in place? She said that you have modular learning, online, distance learning and then face-to-face. So why do educators insist on having these different types of methods of learning? It is because there's a justification that education must continue in accordance to the requirements of the students that they are teaching, teachers, and the capacity of the government to educate and it

must be consistent and coherent. So, there must be a standard, when you say this is what we should do, then that is what should be done. She added, when crafting and casting a regulatory policy, it is very important that the rules be really thought out well, and that you put yourself in the shoes of the people who will be following these rules and who will be using these rules. Next is transparency, since majority of us has the access to the internet. You have to tell them where they can find it and must be user-friendly. She said that she's very glad that DepEd and CHED put out infographics because not everyone like to read long text. Lastly is targeting, the regulation should focus on the problem and minimizing side-effects.

She said that most things are simple but not easy. She may not be in the government but she has been consulted various government agencies, bureaus and the DND. So, she knows how difficult it is to craft policy in the government, sometimes it will take months, it can even take years. And she is amazed how fast and how responsive the government in creating all of these rules. If you will think about it, we have only had months to prepare. But the government was very responsive and was able to put out several implementing rules and regulations, even put out a law the We Heal as One Act.

She said that before she starts on the meat of the presentation, she wants everyone to understand the central purpose of regulatory impact assessment. So, what is the real word impact of government action, costs and benefits? People don't realize that the government is a market-mover. The government actually can create a market for Products and Procedures and it can actually break a market for Products and Procedures if it does not formulate its regulation using the tenets of regulatory impact assessment. We also want to integrate multiple policy objectives relating to distance learning, in areas where there are infrastructure problems, I believe that DepEd has stated that they will use modular education. By multiple policy objectives, the students must be educated, the digital divide should be narrowed by using modular education to address such by improving transparency and consultation. She said that the government accountability should be improved. She said that the governmental accountability has vastly improved. She added that it is not just because of how the government runs right now but also the environment and social media, it's very easy to take our government to task.

She also mentioned that in formulating our regulations and administrative issuances, everyone should keep in mind the issue of equality vs equity. She showed an image where in the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports, they are being treated equally. So, everyone is given a module for learning. In the second image, more support is given to other people. Like, for example, for students who are given modules, they are printed already, sometimes it's free, sometimes it's not. I'm sure the modules are free, she added. And in the third image, one should remove the barrier. So how do we remove barriers in module learning? You have to make sure that the parents are equipped to guide their children in using the module learning packet. She added that she teaches taxation and she makes sure that it's very simple for my students. Taxation is actually scary for a lot of law students but it shouldn't be. All law, all regulation is just about the 5W and H. Basically everything that you need to learn follows this format and that's how regulation should also be drafted, she added. So, what is 5W and H? Who, What, Why, Where, When? and How? "Sino ang susunod? Ano yung kailangang sundin? Bakit niya kailangan sundin? Kailan niya kailangan sundin? Saan niya kailangan sundin? At paano niya dapat sundin?" She said that is basically what all our regulations should contain, including our education-related regulatory issuances. She even said that when crafting regulation and when we teach ourselves, self-teaching is very important. Teachers and educators have the responsibility to teach us, we also have the responsibility on how to learn properly. She said that in regulatory reform and in her regulatory advocacy, she always preaches that when making administrative issuances, process management vs project management. The difference is that in project, there is an end point and end goal. The goal of "process management" is to manage existing business processes as efficiently and effectively as possible, it would be managing a process associated with the current way the government operates. On the other hand, project management, a regulatory impact assessment is a project. She added that in regulatory impact assessment, you look at the process of how you make regulations, and then you have an output, which is your checklist and your procedure. She said that in making laws and regulations, are we addressing a process? Or are we addressing a project? which will help you formulate and craft regulation. By knowing these and by sharing these things to your bosses and decision makers, it will greatly help in easing the regulatory environment of the Philippines,

especially in education. In regulatory reform, she always gives the so called “flexible checklist approach”. She said that when you make the law, or you make the regulation that actually sets the checklist that will need to be implemented by the front liners. She said what should be the basic framework of the checklist? It should be the 5W1H period. Checklist promotes objectivity, prevents memory lapses, improves organization and increases productivity. One thing also is templates. With template, there will be no argument on how title and section to be worded, how the formatting of numbers, annexes etc. She also said that do not reinvent the wheel, but you can improve it. Plain language is also one of the most important things in regulation because it might cause a barrier. She added that if you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.

She then proceeds to the meat and bones of her discussion which is the access to database. She said that if agency can access to common database, it can make the process faster. She said that in her experience, there’s a lot of redundant notarization requirements. So, she suggested to those government agencies she had worked with, to put a statement that all information that you’ve submitted is correct. Next is the Docu Sign. It is when you sign the document and there’s a barcode or serial number. Docu Sign is quite admissible, it is appropriate for general business use. She added that the e-signature is legal in the Philippines but we don’t have the public key infrastructure. She ended her discussion by saying that she hopes that everyone found something useful in her presentation, even if not in regulatory reform, in how we approach and how we evaluate things in general. It’s a way of thinking.

## SESSION 6

# DISASTER RESPONSE

29 AUGUST 2020

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## **SESSION 6**

### **DISASTER RESPONSE**

The sixth session of the policy forum series was just right on cue especially that the country is still facing the Covid-19 pandemic. As the title suggest, this particular session concerns the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management (NDRMM) plan of the country and the agencies involved in its implementation. More so, the presentation from the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) shared by Ms. Rachele Anne Miranda, gave explanations to the government's track and ways forward on how it will address future natural or man-made disasters using the improved DRRM Plans the agency is crafting. She also made mentioned of the National Task Force against Covid-19 (NTF) manning the whole of the government approach in combating the pandemic situation. In addition, Governor Hermilando "Dodo" Mandanas" of Batangas gladly shared the provincial government's approach in responding to disasters in their province. In particular, Gov. Mandanas cited the "Batangas Taal Experience" which happened just recently before the Covid-19 pandemic.

**OPENING REMARKS****HON. JONATHAN E. MALAYA***Undersecretary for Plans, Public Affairs  
and Communications*

Department of the Interior and Local Government



The DILG Undersecretary Jonathan Malaya welcomed the guest speakers and participants and extended gratitude to the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung to the partnership they have since 2018 in hosting several conferences on the state of decentralization in the Philippines.

The DILG Undersecretary explained that today we are facing the biggest threat to our nation, a global pandemic caused by COVID-19, the DILG has been in the frontline of the Philippines' synergized whole-of-nation campaign to defeat the COVID-19 threat. The goal is to protect our people from this disease, help in their treatment and mitigate the impact on their lives to cut off the spread of this dreaded virus.

He said that with the succeeding typhoons and earthquakes entering the country recently, our frontliners in the local government units not only doubled but tripled or even exceeded its efforts to ensure preparedness actions to safeguard their communities and people from typhoons and other hazards, ensure public safety, well-being willingly and patriotically dedicated ourselves to this fight, exposing ourselves to the threat from the disease and disasters.

Amid the continuing threat and impacts of this pandemic and the recent earthquake-hit area of Cataingan, Masbate, Undersecretary Malaya further stressed to strengthen the capacity of the national government and the LGUs to build a disaster resilient community and institutionalize vital measures for reducing disaster risks and enhance disaster emergency responses and preparedness at all levels. He is glad to have this forum which aims to benchmark plans, responses and replicate best practices in the area of supervision and coordination of local government in Asia and address issues and challenges amid disaster response and impacts of this pandemic.

**KEYNOTE MESSAGE****PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST***Country Director*

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines Office



Prof. Dr. Stefan Jost began by welcoming participants, experts, speakers on behalf of the Konrad Adenauer foundation. It is a new discussion of policy forum series on decentralization, constitutional reform and governance innovations during the COVID-19 Pandemic organized by the DILG and Konrad Adenauer foundation and this session's issue is disaster risk reduction and management in the Philippines.

He said that in the past few months we actually learn to medically help how quickly the framework conditions of governance building can change. All over the world we have seen how quickly government reach the limits of traditional politics, a well-known recipes no longer work. Our old certainties no longer apply and the entire society is faced with traumatic challenges. And that the number of countries from which one would hardly have expected than before where irresponsible populism can lead. No government in the world can foresee everything. But it is also time to take responsibility. This should also include not trying all the tricks or reason for power politics to change the narrative of the emergence of the COVID crisis. It is not about indictment but it is about the truth because only the truth can in the future can help learn from past mistakes.

He also said that COVID pandemic has also brought new and great expectations to the government. In the future there will be a much closer look and whether the governments do their homework especially when it comes to the preventive crisis policy. And the DILG has therefore said to focus to the topic of today's debate and Jonathan Malaya pointed out several key points. Because it is very important despite all the current challenges posed by the pandemic not to forget that there are a number of other causes of the crisis and the Philippines unfortunately can tell something about it. This topic has central focus that goes far beyond the COVID crisis.

Dr. Jost emphasized that there are well known guest in disasters, earthquake, typhoons, floods but there are also global challenges such as climate change which can bring with the different crisis in different levels with which individual countries should have to deal. He said that we have to remain realistic. There will be no absolute certainty. But the better the prevention of policy, the better the effects of such disaster can be kept in the limits, it is possible that the government has to do hence the excellent initiative of DILG with Usec. Jonathan Malaya to conduct this debate openly will all concern the country to come up with possible solutions.

Finally, Dr. Jost gave his heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the DILG, Usec. Jonathan Malaya and his staff for this excellent initiative. To the expert and resource persons this session, from the office of Konrad Adenauer foundation Manila last and to all participants, looking forward to interesting discussion.



## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION MANAGEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES: WHERE ARE WE AND HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

**MS. RICHELLE ANNE MIRANDA**  
*Deputy Spokesperson and Training Officer*  
Office of Civil Defense



As for the Disaster Risk Reduction Management of the Philippines, Ms. Rachelle Miranda of the Office of the Civil Defense discussed the issues of that Philippines, where we are now and how do we move forward in the new normal.

She gave a brief overview, a nutshell of the disaster and risk reduction and management in the Philippines. The current framework and mechanisms and gave highlights on how we move forward amidst covid 19 pandemic. How do we embrace the new normal disaster and risk reduction and management. She encouraged our LGUs to collaborate in localizing disaster reduction and management and in summary the concepts to put into place on how to move together as a multi-sectoral approach in DRRM.

The Philippines is very much exposed to several disasters brought about by our geographical location, our vulnerability and pre-existing hazards where the Philippines is actually exposed into. She showed the past major disasters to refresh the memory of the participants on what happened. The first one is in 2006, in Ginsogon Leyte landslide, the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruption, the Luzon earthquake. In terms of DRMM tropical storm Ondoy, one of the most devastating disasters, not just in the country but in the world, typhoon Yolanda in 2013 and Zamboanga siege.

All of these in that context is disaster. Ms. Miranda defined the meaning of disaster which is a serious disruption in the functioning of the society with losses and damages. These are not just brought upon by natural hazards but also by human-induced hazards. But one thing that is common in all of these events is that there is a lack of capacity among the community, among the general public in dealing with the impacts of the disasters.

She gave a narrative that even before the disasters, the Philippines have already enacted a disaster mechanism through the presidential decree 1566. The creation of national disaster coordinating council then is more on emphasized on the top down centralized approach. The national government enactment policies to be cascaded at the bottom. In DRRM, hazards are peculiar in every community. Each barangay and village has peculiar risk and hazard present in their community, hence requires a different approach. Before considering disaster as physical hazards. She further emphasized that we are very much exposed to tropical cyclones most of the time of the year, we most likely expect disasters but right now it is not. Because we understood already the risk present in our community. Disasters are now reflections of our vulnerability due to the lack of coping mechanism not only in the governance aspect but also on the appreciation of the general community as the frontlines in their households in their community. That before we mostly focus on response, we coordinate disasters while it is already happening. She emphasized that on understanding risk, putting premium on science and technology, through an integrated approach of understanding and moving forward through DRRM. She encouraged everyone that from being reactive in the past, we have to move forward to being proactive.

Ms. Miranda gave the framework of the enactment of RA 10121 otherwise known as Philippines National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 that allows to strengthen the DRMMM mechanism in the country. In 2011 to 2018 we adopted this safer, adaptive and resilient Filipino communities towards sustainable development. There are four equally mutually reinforcing thematic areas in DRRM namely prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, rehabilitation and recovery. That we must understand the risk factors, our hazards, exposures and vulnerabilities, and capacities and be able to mainstream our DRRM and climate change adaptation and planning and implementation. But the deal with moving towards the mission, as we move along, moving forward to our mission, in the ways forward, and a big chunk of the sphere will now be dedicated to prevention and mitigation. She further said that as a professional, she is really passionate about DRRM and personally believed that half of the battle is won if the prevention and mitigation is prioritized although she recognized that it is expensive but prevention and mitigation saves lives. Because less is needed to repair, less is needed to respond and

She explained that our systems are interconnected. The covid 19 pandemic shows the interconnectedness with our foods, storage delivery, communication, energy, fuel, water sanitation infrastructure, transportation, public safety and ecosystem services and a lot more of systems and body just linked to the healthcare and public health care system which affects the main system of our pandemic response and vice versa. In the UNDRRM report in 2019 and the global assessment report in disaster and risk and management in 2019. In order to move forward, the systematic response should focus on the system lens. Capacities and enhanced capacities must be put not only to the primary effects of disasters but down to the roots of how we live and address its impacts.

Ms. Miranda gave her narration of what happened on the pandemic response in the Philippines. With the creation of the Interagency Taskforce on Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, there is a separate structure to manage pandemics and infectious diseases hence the current systems, existing mechanisms of NDRRMC are now adopted later on due to the lessons learned derived from the pandemic response. Hence, we have adopted the response action plan as embodied in the task group and National Action Plan and strategic level. Furthermore she gave her narrative on how the systems in DRMM framework and the pandemic response are integrated. The objective in recognizing the systems through the creation of task group and response, recovery and resource management, logistics, food security, repatriation and strategic communication. So translating this mechanisms to strategies in order to achieve an end state where COVID-19 is contained and managed, and informed citizenry are developed and having a recovered economy.

She further explained that we also recognize the need to integrate the digitizing our records, data base and paper less mechanisms and that includes early warning systems. That we need to incorporate epidemic/disease outbreaks as part of disaster risk. There's a minor mention of public health because there is a separate plan for public health emergency. This is when the challenge arises because as we understand that embracing the new normal is looking into the systems lens, we are living into the systems of systems. Planning mechanisms not just in the LGU but also with our stakeholders. And then we can use covid-19 as a benchmark for planning.

In NDRRM framework, it aims to have a more coherent planning, prepositioning and stockpiling aspect, organizing responders, training, drills and exercises. the game changer for all the people who have migrated online is communication which pivotal in the efficient desired behaviour changes in the community. In infodemic, the massive information in social media and broadcast media that actually needs to put the noise, but she said that we have to set aside the noise in order to have a straight-line of what is the desired behaviour. And risk and crisis communication is being a game changer as well. So it has to be integrated in their plans. Set forth strategies what are our innovations. The NDRRM has also used blended learning, a capacity building just like the conduct of webinars, PPEs, and other medical supplies and equipment in the prepositioning which are responsive to the COVID needs and stockpiling, strengthen isolation and treatment capacities, evacuation centers and existing infrastructures responsive to the current pandemic. And institutionalize contact tracing system and some would say institutionalizing a separate virology department, a certain agency for pandemic and outbreaks.

The next part of her discussion is focused in disaster response. There is a disaster in a disaster wherein organizations with different mandate, vertical structures, policies and protocols, communication means and feedback means can result in unprecedented problems. Even with the current disaster response mechanism, there is a chaos in a disaster brought about by unclear accountability and authority, lack of mechanism for resource management, having no clear objectives in a tactical level, not promoting of safety of responders and clearly no reporting of proper recommendation.

Ms. Miranda also shared her study she conducted and published with the Ateneo de Manila University funded by Coastal Seas Project in the Philippines wherein she assessed incident command system as a DRRM tool which aims to put order in disasters, order systems in chaos. There are equally important elements of response portrayed by the roles of the Responsible Official (RO) at the Strategic Level, and the emergency operations center (EOC) and response cluster at the operations level. The reliability and effectiveness of ICS is independent and interoperable to the functions and support of the RO, and EOC and RC.

She elaborated the things to be expected in the new normal. Aside from revising our current response plans and Contingency Plan and other guidelines and protocols. According to her, there is a need to institutionalize minimum health standards in all response operation protocols and emphasized that disaster response is managing the consequences in dealing the impact.

On the last part of her presentation, she briefly run through some of the initiatives of the Office of Civil Defense towards the New Normal. The NDRRMC, not just continue its regular operations for disasters but anticipated the appropriate preparedness measures while COVID19 response continues. The NDRRMC issued memorandum no. 57, 2020, which is about the updates on the plans during the new normal set up. Then they also issued Memorandum No. 54 for the rainy season preparedness measures amidst COVID19. And then as a ways forward, NDRRMC will be cascading the directives on the establishment and management of COVID-19 sensitive evacuation centre.

And then the interim guidelines on the conduct of Nationwide Simultaneous Earthquake Drill (NSED) during a public health emergency due to COVID19. They are also updating the DRRM training courses in the new normal. According to Ms. Miranda, they will be launching it in the coming years.

And through these, they have also disseminated and cascaded DRRM activities. And to help them practice the desired behavior change they have posted self-paced courses in their website and other activities that will engage the community to prepare for other hazards while the COVID19 continues to persist.

To localize the DRMM Measures, she explained to the participants that there is a need to acknowledge that the LGUs is at the frontline for resilience. And that there is a need to understand that there is also a need to have a more strengthened disaster risk governance through the embodiment of our Local Chief executives. There is a need to have a risk informed and evidence based decision making putting premium to science and evidences in the decision-making, having a people-centred DRRM programs and activities.

Ms. Miranda ended her presentation by summarizing the new normal governance framework. There must be a sense of ownership in all stakeholders. And with that there must be a sense of co-ownership and

multistakeholder engagement, shared vision and responsibility, transparency and accountability, dialogue through feedback. There is a need to hear the take of the people because most often than not, the answers are coming from our people. The Co-creation aspect and transformed governance by institutionalizing DRR-CCA with an integration of sustainable development, and most importantly an empowered disciplined citizenry towards resilience.

The LGU must review and enhance the LDRRM plans, development of public service continuity plan, COVID19 sensitive workplace and the disaster response, COVID19 data as reference for decision making, active implementation of pre-emptive evacuation, implementation of minimum health standards in Camp Management. And for rehabilitation and recovery program for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises.

She said that the Local Government Unit is the frontline for resilience. In summary, COVID19 as a health hazard should always be included in the conduct of Risk Management. No matter how exposed we are to natural hazards we need to acknowledge that COVID19 is a persisting risk in the coming risk. DRRM in the new normal should always take into consideration the prevention and mitigation of the hazard COVID19 and Governance in DRRM is a partnership between the government, the private sector, the academe and most importantly the Filipino people.

They are the ones enforcing new policies and strategies to have a more resilient and adoptive systems of systems. There is a need to have a more responsive strategies in COVID19 DRRM. And lastly, DRRM starts in the hands of the people. There must be a desire co-ownership from the Filipinos and that we can begin by having a sense of co-ownership in the programs led by the national government.

As her closing statement, she acknowledged that we are faced with several challenges in managing COVID19 while also we are dealing with the other threats in the Philippines but she reminded everyone that it should not stop us from adapting, adjusting, and transforming and to become better in managing disasters and preventing and preparing for it. She encouraged all the listeners and viewers to participate and to have a sense of co-ownership as we build capacities and move forward towards the new normal.

**SESSION 7**

# **DYNAMICS OF PHILIPPINE POLITICS**

**5 SEPTEMBER 2020**

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## **SESSION 7**

### **ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL REFORM**

The seventh session of the policy forum series discussed the topic pertaining to political and electoral reforms being pushed in the Philippines. The campaign for reforms in the political and electoral system in the country have gone through long and winding roads. This particular advocacy is one of the packages of reform being pushed by the Constitutional Reform Movement on their list of amendments to the 1987 Constitution. Hence, in order to best understand the rationale behind this reform, the present dynamic of Philippine politics must be thoroughly explained for everybody's reference. The first speaker, Dr. Dennis Coronacion of University of Santo Tomas, discussed the prevailing situation in terms of how the politics play along with its role in the Philippine society. He also discussed a brief course of history in terms of the evolution of Philippine Politics over the years. On the other hand, Professor Ramon Casiple, one of the resource speakers of the CORE Movement, presented the reform proposal of the CORE movement as a vital solution to the inefficient and disadvantageous political and electoral system in the country.

**OPENING REMARKS****MS. PAMELA DYAN D. CARBONELL***Chief Project Officer*Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform  
Department of the Interior and Local Government

Ms. Carbonell opened her message by thanking Konrad Adenauer (KAS) Stiftung Foundation headed by Ms. Tonette De Jesus for continuously bringing permission, open discussion and innovation. She also thanked the resource speakers and all the participants of this forum. She gave an overview on the topics that will be discussed on health and governance, economic and many other topics, on the impact and effects of COVID19 Pandemic.

She said that “The challenge for us to continuously review the experience and arrive at systematic evaluation for the whole government approach”. Policies have to be developed increasingly as described volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous times. Many bear the effects on livelihood, education, employment, businesses even after we find the vaccine. This calls for active participation and engagement of the government in all levels. She also encouraged all the participants to continue to be active and involved in the policy making and policy implementation.

**KEYNOTE MESSAGE**

MS. TONETTE DE JESUS

*Senior Program Manager*

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines Office



Ms. Tonette De Jesus began by thanking the DILG and the speakers for the time and effort in organizing this session. She said that within the context of the pandemic weaknesses and gaps in Philippine politics, especially the pressing need for political and electoral reform was brought to the harsh light of the politics in the Philippines is all at once interesting, lively, unexpected and frustrating.

She is not only talking about the politics that we have always had. She said that we have a very centralized government, wherein legislative branch, especially the lower house is very much a strong echo to the demands of the executive branch. Due to a mix of the power of the purse and the need to deliver funding and projects to districts. That we cannot ignore the upsides to centrality. There are also significant downsides like the lack of autonomy or good checks and balances. Moreover, while much of the work accomplished by the local government up to a certain point is decentralized, local government units are also very much reliant on the national government for funding and support, leading to expected bureaucratic release.

Our political parties are mostly based on personalities and popularity, and not common ideologies, leading to the prevalence of political butterflies, flitting from party to party, depending on the results of the elections. This creates an uncertain environment, wherein loyalties depend on personal relationships, whether rocky or stable, rather than on shared beliefs and vision for the country.

Bucking the Philippine Constitution, political dynasties are alive, well and thriving in the Philippines, both in the national and local governments. Which makes it more difficult for newer, fresher faces with good reform agenda to enter the scene, let alone be politically competitive, and an unrelated note on political dynasties. The Philippines seems to be the only country in the world with such a unique partylist system in place where dynasties, ironically enough, are allowed to flourish under the appearance of fighting under representation.

RAPPORTEUR: MS. IZZA MARI LAURIO

Ms. De Jesus said that she thinks that there are opportunities to be found during this pandemic to push for political and electoral reforms. Everyone, no matter what the economic class or political belief, has been affected and continue to be affected by COVID-19, although in different degrees. With the experience of the performance of our national and local leaders during this pandemic, there are citizens who are tapping themselves in the back for their good choices during the last elections while others are seriously questioning their voting decisions. She further said that when we used to say vote wisely for yourself, for your family, for your future, for your children's future, it sometimes rings empty due to its overuse and triteness. But now, I think everyone knows what this truly means. Many have come to realize how crucial their votes are through their very survival.

She ended her message by encouraging everyone to go beyond the typical patron client relationships that we have with our leaders, just in time for the next elections. Elections are not always the key, it must be coupled with strong positive interventions inside and outside of the public sector. She emphasized that one of the most impactful and pervasive instruments in our arsenal as citizens.

**DYNAMICS OF PHILIPPINE POLITICS****DR. DENNIS C. CORONACION***Chairperson*Department of Political Science  
University of Santo Tomas

As for the discussion on the Dynamics of Philippine Politics, Dr. Coronacion began his discussion by giving the definition of dynamics and explaining on how politics unfolds in the Philippines setting. He proceeded his discussion on state constitution and laws in the society. This is in among scholars of politics, especially in third world countries. This is the commonly used framework to explain the capacity and capability of status to institutions, that just in delivering basic services performing its basic functions, but also easy to institute reforms in doing other things, which is the state is expected to do.

The discussion jumped to another feature of Philippine politics, which is patron client politics. The commonly used term when describing Philippine politics, is political dynasties. This is a phenomenon which is widely discussed specially nowadays, since a president recently mentioned in his messages about oligarchies.

He encouraged everyone to try to set parameters and understand nature of the term political dynamics in the academic world, especially in the discipline of political science, and other related fields. When a person use the term political dynamics, it usually refers to the political processes, right, that result in either transformation or maintenance of status quo. These are actually interactions from different political actors, which either belong in the government, or are not part of the government, but nevertheless make an impact in bringing about change, or if not maintaining the status quo.

People participate in politics, not just to undertake reforms, or to introduce reforms, but as well, to maintain what is already existing. According to him this sections are the conservatives of our society that we would rather maintain, or if not restore status quo.

When we talk about political dynamics, we look at the interplay of forces that bring about change or preserving the status quo. The focus is not so much in the formal structure of the government, but the behaviors of the actors and the outcomes of their interactions. When you probably

RAPPORTEUR: MS. IZZA MARI LAURIO

listen to public oriented programs, the resource persons will talk about Philippine politics, they would concentrate on or they would focus on provisions of the Constitution or the discussions of the significant or pertinent laws.

He said that the dynamics is focused differently. It is not just the legal aspect or the formal aspect of governance, but rather it includes or focuses more on the behaviors of the actors. He gave a good example of political dynamics. Instead of discussing the powers and functions of the executive branch, he gave more insights on how the executive uses the state resources to cultivate ties with Congress. His example is the executive legislative dynamics. When the President assumes office, he or she would want to see his or her agenda, the legislative agenda. There are still some consideration so that the executive and the legislative branch will be interconnected.

He discussed the three domains of the dominant features of political dynamics in this country. The theme of most studies about Philippine politics. Their common theme is that they found out that our country has weak status institutions and strong societal or social forces. A second feature of Philippine political dynamics is the presence of paper on client politics. And then the third one is the presence of political dynasties. These are the features of Philippines politics.

He started with the rich state or strong society. This is a framework used in political science and other social sciences, in terms of explaining the limitations of the capacity of third world countries in terms of governing their societies. This framework is from a German scholar named Max Weber who tried to explain to us that the state is actually an organization coordinated by executive authority, that has to do with violence. The common definition that the professors give is that it is a community including the elements. Max Weber's definition did not disregard this definition but also recognizes that the state is a territorial entity. However, instead of looking at it as a community, state should be viewed as an organization. It's an apparatus. An organization is made up of personnel, it is made up of offices with functions and powers, and they have a goal. Their goal is to dominate society, or to govern society.



The state is not the only organization that is existing in a given territory, there are also other societal organizations, or social forces. These are movements and voluntary associations with their own agenda, whether it be political in nature or not, the content with each other, any other in the state. This is called wholeness of the society or those included in the society. These are numerous organizations, which may range from, they thrive outside the state organization, and they are not part of the state organization. Sometimes their functions duplicate or replicate the functions of the state, basic functions like protection, health services. There are private organizations, even societal organizations that do the same thing that render the same services. It may range from kinship network, families, clans, even church, schools and other social organizations. Since there are two actors that can be found in a given territorial unit, the state and the societal actors, it would help by giving more insights.

He gave an example by looking at the patterns of state society relations in western countries. It can be seen that it is very dominant not in the sense that they are authoritarian. It still varies because there are society which has a very strong state which is synonymous to having an authoritarian state and at the same time others have dominant state organizations that still have democratic practices and behaviors. It is important to look at the relations of two major organizations in a territorial unit. Their relations may vary from conflict, competition, and cooperation. There is also accommodation meaning to resolve the stalemate between the two entities, they decide to meet halfway or compromise and anything in between. These are the different forms of relations between state and societal organizations that were noted by scholars particularly by Joel Migdal and Patricio Abenalles?

He characterized the Philippine state and the society as a weak state according to the observation of the Filipino scholars and scholars about Philippine politic. That we attribute the existence of our weak state by the blame of the people in the colonial legacy. Our colonial past had largely contributed to the weakness or infirmities of the post-colonial Philippines state. And these colonial legacy has perpetuated a weak party system as well as the oligarchy and the weak, inefficient bureaucracy. Earlier before the program, we heard in the materials, video materials of DILG,

that these are some of the things that needs to be reformed in our political system, our weak party system, dominance of oligarchies or oligarchy families, and weak bureaucracy. With Constitutional Reform we set our goal for political and economic development. He said that we can do a reform on a large-scale basis.

The state institutions lack the capacity to provide basic services, implement policies and institute reforms. The lack of capacity may be due to a lot of things. It can be done by the lack of budget to hire more personnel to increase the manpower of government offices. It is the most common problem and in fact, that kind of problem is also acknowledged by most scholars, when in various studies, it is observed that the state has a very limited capacity to penetrate various parts of her countries, particularly the remote areas also known as the periphery.

He emphasized that the government's presence cannot be felt in rural areas and places far from urban centers. That there are no government doctor's in these places. In judiciary, when our local judges will be assigned in a conflict area like in Muslim Mindanao, they would rather stay in urban areas rather than the places where they are assigned out of fear for their personal security and personal lives. No one wants to go on duty or be assigned to far places.

The consequence for this is that the people cannot avail the services from our government. In such cases, the scholars also acknowledge that if state organizations are not present, it is operated by non-state organizations. Since there's a vacuum made by the absence of state organizations in certain remote areas, private organizations like rebel groups or landowners play a role. Institutions lack the capacity to provide basic services, implement policies and institute reforms. The capacity to deliver among LGUs or national government, trainings, it would always focus on capacity building. He emphasized that training is very important. There are remote areas in the countries that have rarely felt the presence of the state. He cited an example which is the limited capacity of our state organizations during disasters wherein our state malfunction. Over the years, we strengthen the capacity of our DRRM units. But nevertheless, there was this incident in Yolanda disaster wherein we saw how limited the capacity of our state was in terms of particularly distributing relief goods.

Aside from difficulty in distributing from the national going to the locals, there is a logistical challenge. There was also a problem when it came to this relief goods reaping the intended reaching the intended recipients that it was subject to politics. The state organization has limited capacity. Aside from implementation, there is also a problem in policymaking. In policymaking, the state institutions show that they lack autonomy because they are influenced by private interests. The social forces domination and control of the state institutions, decision making is called state capture.

There are certain political families or even business interests that have penetrated our legislative department. Our lawmakers, once they are in power they do not focus in common good but they focus on their interests or interest of their organizations. This has been the dominant pattern and there are exceptions wherein the legislators who truly are representing the interests of the people.

He also gave an example of the state institutions lacking autonomy in terms of policymaking. When he conducted his study about Muslim Mindanao, the administration of President Ramos was really fighting hard for the passage of the autonomous bill, the bill for autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao and he noticed that one of the biggest stumbling blocks are a group of Christian Congressmen and bosses from Mindanao. There are dynamics in our legislative that is the reason why our bills cannot be passed, especially our reform oriented bills. This is the best example in the inability to end up or to pass a law prohibiting the existence and proliferation of political dynasties.

One of the features of the political dynamics is patron client politics. It is the framework by a foreign scholar named Karl Landay back in 1965 but he was able to discern that there was this kind of pattern prevailing in Philippine politics. This is an enduring framework that up until now is being used by scholars to explain that national parties are made up of networks of local factions. Unlike in western liberal democracies, parties are not organized along ideological lines.

Liberal democracies parties are organized along ideological lines or structured based on class interests. Our partylist does not promote class interests although we would hear of Philippine political parties which states their ideology in their names but in reality they do not practice it. There is a disjuncture between what they proclaim they are and what

they actually do. What existed based on the explanation of Landay was a network of mutual aid relationships between the pair of individuals that he called dyadic ties. The core foundation of patron client politics is the one who is rich and powerful and the one who is below it, the one who needs a patron. This is largely responsible for explaining issues earlier such as political butterflies as to why a year before the election, or after the election, our political leaders find it very easy to transfer from one party to another. The only reason that motivates them to transfer to behave that way is to protect their own self-interest.

Dr. Coronacion said that this is a burning issue today. That it is the stumbling block of anti-political dynasty law because they cannot define the coverage. They generally refer to traditional political families or the practices by these political families of monopolizing political power in public offices from generation to generation and treating the public elective office almost of their personal property. This behavior is simplified by the dependency of members of certain political families to dominate either local politics or national politics and perpetuate power within themselves. He also discussed the other feature of political dynasties is which is all about self-vested interest. Based on studies, all 80 provinces have political families.

He said that if we limit the political dynasty it will prohibit the freedom of the citizens to choose the best leaders because sometimes they produce the best leaders in the country and there also dynasties which are progressive wherein they produced reform oriented leaders. Chance must be given to those who have potential and are willing to serve must have an equal opportunity. In a recent study it showed that all 80 provinces have political families in at least 74% of the members of the House of Representatives come from political families. These are data coming from studies about our Congress, our provinces, or LGUs.

He concluded his discussion by giving the political situation in our country. The Philippine political landscape is still dominated by or characterized by witnessing institutions, patron client relations and political dynasties. There is an urgent need for genuine political reforms. He encouraged everyone not to be complacent with our political situation.

**ADVOCATING POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL  
REFORMS THROUGH THE YEARS****PROF. RAMON C. CASIPLE***Executive Director*

Institute for Political and Electoral Reform



The Executive Director of the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform, Prof. Ramon Casiple started his discussion by saying that this topic has been a subject matter for almost since 1996. The advocacy for Political Reform started ever since we have a new constitution. The reason for that is when Marcos was ousted, the return of democracy requires that a new system be established based on the 1987 constitution. That kind of requirement requires political and electoral reforms through the years. So it started off with a 1987. It is still going on major reforms have been proposed, have been advocated for. But there's still a lot of this reform that has not been put in place. And it's still a continuing requirement in this present period.

The advocacy for political reforms can be grouped into the following subject matters. The number one should not be political party reform, because what Marcos did was to destroy the political parties during his time. But until now, this is still a big problem. There is a new system, it's how the party-list groups, which need to be put in place. There are still big problems with this. We have already established synchronous elections. However, according to Prof. Casiple, there are a lot of problems. In barangay elections, we now have a new system of overseas absentee voting, where Filipinos abroad can vote.

There are also reforms under Fair Elections Act and other similar laws. And these have been put in place by the new election code. In the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, it's about transform into the BARMM. And then the new system of elections, which is called the automated election system.

Professor Casiple said that there are specific major reforms that need to be done. The major reform bill that does not gain any ground, the political party reform bill, that is the Marcos dictatorship, basically weaken all the political parties. And when new political parties or old political

RAPPORTEUR: MS. IZZA MARI LAURIO

parties came back, they were not sufficiently strong enough to maintain their former position as the parties in power or to contend for power under the system was put in place, which required after the new parties. And this complicated the previous elections. And then the election code reforms, which was put in place by 1991 which includes the automated election system. However, he added that we still have to do something about the sectoral representation as never implemented. Although it's still in the Constitution. And there are actually laws. But this have not prospered to the point where they became a significant part of our political system. We have, of course, established ARMM, but the Cordillera side was arranged as required by the Constitution and was never put in place insecurely meet your proposal at this time. And then, of course, the practice today, after several years of practice. And it is being discussed today that constitutional reforms should again be attended to. The main question at this time is the continuation of the electoral reforms that need to be put in place to political parties.

Professor Casiple emphasized that this type of question on the election code amendments is still a major question. We have an automated detection system. But there are amendments that need to be done. The political party reform bill has to be put in place. There are a lot of amendments because of the new laws on election and automated election, party-list law, overseas absentee voting and other such type of laws, needs to be revisited and attended to. Furthermore, he added that the necessary reforms should be put in place so that the election system can be improved for the upcoming 2022 elections.

The prospects of constitutional reform, has always been post as long ago as immediately after the approval of 1987 constitution. But up till now, nothing has been approved. And it is a major question. Considering that the practice or the past more than 20 years already says that we have to revisit the Constitution and that is one major initiative today. But I don't think there is still time, do it before the next elections. It is a topic I think that it's largely now left to the next administration to do. But certainly it is a major requirement. We have to revisit again the 1987 constitution.

As of now the present requirement is to conduct the next general election. There are various bills, including a new bill for the 2022 elections. The present situation is that we're still in the midst of political and electoral reform. And it is to get ready for the next election. The present situation is one where the political parties and political actors need to undertake these bills, which is within the context, the next 2022 elections, and try to achieve the required reforms before the elections. And as of now constitutional reform, it's already out of question, and centering the loss of the time. And the present requirement now is to ensure that the 2022 elections will happen if there are reforms within the context of that election.

He emphasized that it is the only time to undertake these reforms. We should try them as much as possible to put in place is particularly reforms, those that basically address what the professor said, that we need to put in place. These particular reforms, so that the next election can pave the way for strengthening the current democratic system in the Philippines.

Professor Casiple ended his talk by encouraging everyone to think and ask ourselves if we have the time, and we have the wheel to undertake these reforms, these are not only for this time, this have been advocated every time during the past years versus the risk into seven persecution. But I don't think the situation has changed much. We have undertook many reforms like the automated reduction law. But it is a question now, whether the reforms have adequately resulted in a more democratic system and a more open system that can basically achieve the objectives of a disabled constitution.

## SESSION 8

# COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE

19 SEPTEMBER 2020

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## **SESSION 8**

### **PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

With the advent of modern technology, digital communication is the name of the game over the past years. It is deemed to be a vital tool towards effective communication; hence everyone is lured to learn and practice its usage. A great example of this digital communication is through internet via social media. The eight session of the policy forum series discusses the role of public communication as a vital means for effective governance. One of the main issues in today's public communication was presented by Secretary Martin Andanar of Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) who talks about the challenges in giving the right information during the Covid-19 pandemic. The role of the print media through the years was also discussed by Ms. Cynthia Balana of CBCOMM Public Relation Services. Finally, as the public communication strategy is evolving, Mr. Ron Poblete of Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform (CFCR) delivered a presentation making use of Information Technology and other digital venues or platforms as an effective tool for advocacy campaign.

**OPENING REMARKS****MS. PAMELA DYAN D. CARBONELL***Chief Project Officer*Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform  
Department of the Interior and Local Government

On behalf of the Administrator of the Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform, Undersecretary Jonathan E. Malaya, Chief Project Officer Pamela Dyan D. Carbonell provided the Opening Remarks. She thanked all the participants, resource persons, and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for being with them for the past sessions of the Policy Forum Series which has discussed various topics that has an impact and effect on the ongoing pandemic in the Philippines. The challenges for the public is to keep on and continuously review the COVID-19 experience to arrive at a systematic evaluation for the whole-of-government approach to work. Policies have to be developed and increasingly, as some would describe now, as opposed to normal times. For session eight (8), there will be a discussion on public communications tools. The topic is significant because many are and will still bear the brunt of the effects on livelihood, education, employment businesses, even after we find the vaccine or the cure. Therefore, this calls for active participation and engagement of citizens and governments of all levels towards recovery, and a diverse array of organizations and individuals involved in policymaking and processes and policy implementation.

**KEYNOTE MESSAGE****PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST***Country Director*

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines



Public Relations is defined as the conscious effort to motivate and influence people, primarily through communications to think well of an organization. The context of a government office, one expert asserts that public relations is essentially in every government office to enable people to understand what the government is doing for them. The public must not only understand but must be able to develop confidence in government's ability to ensure that the government's functions are being effectively delivered. Population have become inherent to good public administration, whether for program implementation, public support, democratic accountability, public policy development or agency power. The success relies on high levels of constant communication utilizing continually evolving technologies and social media. As a result of evidence based studies, there are four main reasons why it's crucial for government organizations to adopt new social media tools in their public relations and external communications. First, social media now dominate everyday life for many people. Second, public administration is itself largely defined in terms of communications for the purpose of educating and informing citizens. Third, communication enables government to fulfill its mission and to be accountable to citizens. Lastly, as communication technologies continue to evolve and change, there is a need for public managers to understand their potential for two-way communication. For democracy, to operate effectively, government must communicate with its citizens. The information provided must be credible and timely while leaders need to communicate with the public, apprising them of the changing roles between citizens and the administration and what to expect from change.

In the local government setting, experience and research show that strong communication through public relations between local government and its citizens creates a trust and this trust is seen to entice citizens to become involved in their communities. Over time, citizens will come

RAPPORTEUR: MR. ARTHUR FRANZ TENORIO

to realize that their concerns matter for local governments, citizens have a right to know the policies and effect and activities of the government. Local governments publish essential data on number of issues such as community development, community health, education, recreation and crime, among others. The engagement of citizens keeps them informed on the project that affected their lives. This engagement also helps inform voters about their choices at the polls. Local governments utilize technology, which capacitate the government communicate in different ways means print, television, radio, online media, social media, text alerts, etc. Social media in fact has been considered as the new outlet for local governments which can offer them great benefits. These benefits range from improving the effectiveness of public service delivery, generating information and data and to build trust based relationships that help restore confidence in local government. Social media outlets like Facebook and help get out important news like school closures, rotary tools, emergency power outages, float floods, fires and other vital information. Social media is a great way for local government. To resolve the truth when necessary, timely, genuine messages through social media can dispel rumors, resolve inaccuracies, and provide a venue for local governments to post rebuttals about important issues. Local governments can also effectively use social media to respond quickly in the event of a crisis, or emergency. Communication is vitally important during times of emergencies. And having a channel like social media to get the truth out to the community helps to keep rumors at bay and helps prevent unnecessary panics. When the local community uses social successfully to handle a crisis, the public will remember and seek out that same media outlet when they need information. Again, this is part of the process of creating trust between local governments and its citizens. It is important to have strong communications in local government. Because we live in a representative democracy, where citizens have the freedom to make their voices heard. Our government structure is designed where we elect people to speak for our wishes in local government. There is no question that technology makes it easier for local governments to get messages directly to their citizens.



Local governments also have to remember that communication is a two way street. And they must also listen to their constituents and create channels that to gain feedback from them. input from citizens is part of the diversity that helps local government councils make good decisions. Advances in technology have opened up new channels for communication in local government, staff and elected officials still have some work to do in many cases to utilize them. This is the best way to actively engage with citizens. When they succeed, it shows respect for constituents and helps to earn their trust. In other words, an intensive communication between government and citizens is essential for democracy at all times. But all the more so in times of crisis, and the government, our city and citizens are more dependent on each other.

### **CHALLENGES AND ISSUES IN GIVING THE RIGHT INFORMATION AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**HON. JOSE RUPERTO MARTIN M. ANDANAR**

*Secretary*

Presidential Communications Operations Office



As technology in our way of life has evolved as time passes by so has the means available for individuals and groups to take advantage of the situation for their personal and collective gains against the common good, such as the creation and proliferation of false information on and against certain issues, individuals groups as well as the government. False information spreads like wildfire, or present times like a virus over social media and different online platforms as there is no strong regulations and laws against it. With this, it is a bond responsibility of those who have been given the position to impose regulations and to stop its proliferation, especially as the Philippines is one of the most active countries on social media. The Presidential Communications Operations Office, therefore, have been at the forefront of dismissing this information and misinformation, especially within social media to mitigate and avoid unnecessary, divisive and damaging consequences that false information creates in our society. Its mandate is not solely in support and the amplification of the data administration's policies, programs and actions, but also to support engage and inform the citizenry for the promotion of a more constructive and truthful discussion for our collective progress. With the current situation, right now, brought about by the covid 19 pandemic limitations to ensure minimized viral transmission have been set in place by the government and our health officials that have halted and affected our traditional operations of informing the public and delivering truthful information.

These challenges and issues have indeed impacted on us, not just on our operations, but also amongst us who tirelessly work for the PCOO's continued operations. Although there remains to have active COVID-19 cases in the PCOO, the Office's political will and determination to fulfill its responsibilities to the Filipino people remained firm as it continues to deliver timely and truthful information the everyone deserves. With these



in consideration, it continues to adapt in order for us to communicate and relay the needed information for the public's consumption. Such ways are through leveraging heavily on its existing technology and programs, while minimizing physical interaction, and engagement. It continues to utilize the strong foundations of our communications platforms such as on social media, television and radio, to promote truthful information and dismiss false information. It also continues to innovate in order to carry on delivering our mandate to the Filipino people. Through our adaptation, and innovation to continue to dismiss false information. Under the threat of COVID-19, it has continued the operation of its vital mechanisms, such are the Dismiss This Information campaign, Youth For Truth programs, Laging Handa operations, and the Leading Forward virtual conferences, among others. The Dismiss This Information campaign was launched primarily to combat fake news, and the spread of false and misleading information. This campaign encourages a culture of responsibility and discernment among the public and support of the existing laws against this information. As a matter of fact, in 2017, the Philippines was the first among ASEAN nations to organize a roundtable discussion on fake news, and PCOO's counterparts travelled to the Philippines for that specific purpose. The campaign is truly vital. Given the current situation of COVID-19 pandemic where wrong information could literally lead to harm as people become more active on social media, given that community quarantine measures have been set in place for months to mitigate the transmission, the amount and quantity of misinformation also increases. This is where this campaign acts in to counter misinformation, or disinformation and social media, and enlighten all Filipinos have the truth rather than the false.

As the PCOO further its campaign for truth, the PCOO acknowledges the vital role plays in our endeavor to avert fake news. It further recognizes the unique yet special characteristics of the youth that could be utilized and maximized in order to better secure the future of information and ultimately our nation. Hence, the Youth For Truth Program. The prime objective of the program is to shed light upon pressing issues in the country, particularly on the fake and misleading information that are relevant to the youth and to the nation's future. This is done by ensuring that most if not every Filipino youth, have access to workshops on media literacy and good governance among others. PCOO also undertakes and engages the youth through the Youth For Truth podcasts, web series,

hashtag Youth on ECQ, and Youth For Truth online dialogues, among others, to connect with educate and inspire young Filipinos, especially during the pandemic. On the other hand, through the Laging Handa operations and programs, PCOO is maximizing the use of television and radio broadcasting, print and digital media and on the ground communication among others, to arm the public with necessary information to help protect them from the dreaded COVID-19 disease and update them the government's responses, efforts and developments related to the pandemic. The Laging Handa operations and program does not only assure the public that the government is on top of the situation and to disseminate and reiterate precautionary measures but also to dispel false information and advocate for preparedness and vigilance while harnessing solidarity through participatory governance of every Filipino. Laging Handa's important mechanisms include the COVID-19 website COVID radio, public briefing, network briefing, virtual pressors and virtual town hall meetings.

The COVID19.gov.ph serves as a one stop portal of all official information and resources about COVID-19 in the Philippines. It has a collection of information and issuances coming from various relevant government agencies, including daily updates and COVID-19 cases, news reports and official issuances. The website also feature features FAQs, prize watch corner, dismiss this information page and links to video materials. COVID radio provides round the clock information about COVID-19. It features various programs that tackle the development and the country's fight against the pandemic, including the daily network briefing and the weekly cabinet report. The Laging Handa public briefing an example of a whole of nation approach against COVID-19 allows the public to ask questions and seek clarification directly from the government regarding COVID-19 situation and measures.

Andanar also highlights that the Laging Handa public briefing is an epitome of public and private broadcast cooperation since it also simultaneously broadcast in hundreds of Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) members stations, which made the Laging Handa public briefing a success. The network briefing, on the other hand, bridges the local government units and the local media with the national government through live interviews. This allows effective and efficient coordination

as well as information dissemination and sharing. The PCOO has also solved problems by bridging the national and the local, thereby giving them the right network to solve local problems and to get the help of national government offices. Virtual pressers and town hall meetings provide the public updates and needed information from government officials through virtual means in compliance with the health protocols being promulgated by the administration and our health officials. These are all vital towards the objectives, the Laging Handa, and to support and amplify the Duterte administration in battling fake news, and more importantly, COVID-19. All the essential mechanisms have effectively and conveniently reached millions of Filipinos who remain remotely situated around the nation due to the pandemic when other traditional news and information operations have been halted as an impact of COVID-19. The task of the PCOO is keeping the public informed and aware of truthful information has proven to be very crucial, especially in times of a pandemic. Hence, it has been exerting all our efforts and in intensifying our role in this endeavor, in order to truly heal and recover as one nation against COVID-19 and fake news or infodemic.

## PRINT MEDIA THROUGH THE YEARS

**MS. CYNTHIA D. BALANA**

*President*

CBCOMM Public Relations Services



When we say print media, it refers to a collective term for media printed on paper, usually lightweight, except if you have plenty of shipping advertisements, portable and disposable publication. It includes newspapers, be it broadsheets or tabloids. It also includes community newspapers, magazines, and other print publications that cater a much smaller audience beyond the mainstream.

Many may ask, how come big newspapers in the Philippines such as the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) has a circulation of only less than 300,000 on peak days. Does it mean that it has reached fewer people compared to the millions of instant likes, views and shares in social media? According to Balana, the answer is both yes and no. It all depends on the quality of content and the brand. The pass-on readership in the case of a newspaper of general circulation is quite high. It could reach millions of readers. A newspaper at home alone is read by at least five (5) members of the family, and by visitors who come to their house. A newspaper placed on the table of a public library and newspaper racks of fast-food chains like Starbucks, McDonald's and Jollibee, or even in business offices are most of the time read by staff and visitors throughout the day. Unlike digital ads, the print does not disappear after seeing only one time. Of course, if the quality of content is not good or interesting, you cannot expect the pass-on-readership to reach that high.

A newspaper is a business paper. It has been told repeatedly by the management of the Philippine Daily Inquirer Employees Union that while journalism's commitment is to the truth, editorial independence is sometimes sacrificed because revenue or profit. Those who work in the editorial department, especially editors and field reporters, are constantly reminded during staff meetings that a newspaper has to earn through advertisements to sustain its operation, for employees to get paychecks and to bring a smile on owners' and their investors' faces.

Thus, it is uncommon scenario for companies or clients to pull out their ads every time the editorial department hits them, and for owners to temper editorial policy to prevent the collapse of the newspaper and prevent more libel suits.

During the Marcos regime, there were only 3 major broadsheets, namely the Manila Bulletin, the defunct Philippine Daily Express, and Times Journal which were pro-administration for obvious reasons. We still have the Manila Bulletin today. Perhaps the Marcos era was the only time in the history of the print media here that newspaper owners toed the line of the administration and became regular fixtures in Malacañang dinner.

That was media performing as a propaganda arm of the government, a step back from media's role as society's watchdog. This is usually true when a media organization is owned or controlled by the government, or its owners are friends with the government.

Before the 1986 People Power Revolution, the alternative press like the newspaper like Malaya, We Forum, and Mr. and Ms. Magazine, whose owners later formed the Philippine Daily Inquirer had begun printing articles critical of the Marcos regime. The protest was triggered by the assassination of then-Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino and other post-Martial Law abuses. Some media personalities during this period had perished, some gone missing without a trace, and still, others had been imprisoned. Still, the People Power in EDSA happened, which was a collaboration of the reformists in the military, the Catholic Church, and the opposition media. And the rest is history.

The EDSA revolution and the late President Corazon Aquino brought press freedom back. Those who enjoyed it in the media did not want to lose it anymore. It was the golden years for press freedom. Since then, mainstream media would always brace themselves against a perceived attack on press freedom.

Against this backdrop, the print media, or the mainstream media, are often viewed as "anti-administration" or "anti-government" simply because they value press freedom in post-EDSA time, and sees every administration as a threat to it. That is why those who cannot seek revenge against the print media go to social media to express their anger.

But the outcome of the outpouring is not always satisfying because whatever you say, it is better when your rejoinder is published, not posted which can immediately go to the Archives the next day never to be seen again.

The challenge of digitization prompted newspaper owners to venture on the online version of their print, thus the birth of the first online newspaper which is now known as inquirer.net.

Two years before Balana retired in 2017 as a senior reporter during an editorial meeting by the Advertising Department which reported that 65% of advertisers already moved to online media because the ad rates there were much cheaper, thereby affecting print revenues. Many in the print media followed suit to survive that's why they now have an online version of their newspapers.

No administration or President of the country has brought the Inquirer to its knees despite the avalanche of libel suits coming its way for hard-hitting articles. It comes with the territory, as they say. However, the current pandemic has brought not just the Inquirer but most print media to their knees in terms of revenue loss. And the consequences to journalists and their families are catastrophic.

Despite this grim scenario, it must be stressed that while print may be declining, it's not dying out. Digital forms of media have taken over, making the print media redundant. Balana believes that the print industry is here to stay. It is still capable of making a rebound, although not with the same impact as before.

## MAKING USE OF I.T. AND OTHER DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

**MR. RON POBLETE**

*Multimedia Management Officer*

Center for Federalism and Constitutional Reform



Mr. Ron Poblete divided his presentation into six parts, namely: the (1) characteristics, (2) potential and pitfalls, (3) platforms, (4) essentials for good content, (5) responsibilities, and the (6) expectations when talking about Information Technology (IT). He started by describing IT, specifically social media, as the great equalizer. It became evident in 2016 when President Rodrigo Duterte ran for Presidency without funds. At first he was hesitant because he lacks the resources, and he questions the people that are backing him up for the campaign. However, due to the demand in social media, he was convinced to eventually join the Presidential race to which he eventually won. His strong social media presence is a significant contributor for him to win. His interview video circulated online about what happened in Yolanda created an impression that he can be a national leader. His imagery resonated in social media. Social media is, indeed, the great equalizer because anyone can become an influencer. One does not have to be a celebrity as long as you have good content that will resonate to the audience. It definitely made our democracy even more vibrant, because of the fact that the control is with the people as far as getting their message across.

Accessibility has also made social media the great equalizer. As long as people have social media account, internet or data connection, and mobile phone and/or laptop, they can set-up right away. Social media is also relatively cheap for self-promotion purposes as proven by the increase of businesses with social media presence during the pandemic which is helpful for those who have lost their jobs. They were able to find ways and through social media, people were able to sell and discover new talents, new that has provided them huge part of their earning to keep them in this time of difficulty during this pandemic. Furthermore, social media is highly effective. Even our traditional media media, like the broadsheets, have migrated to social media as well, because they know that they cannot

depend on the actual physical paper that they distribute, they have to go on social media to have presence in because we understand that if you're on social media, you will be more effective. That's why it's highly effective to use social media, especially in campaigns. Moreover, data is gold. Every player and platform, once it has become part of the network, it also becomes part of the economy of that particular medium.

Poblete then proceeds in elaborating the importance of engagement. The Like button, while very simple in the eyes of the public, has a very significant role as far as social media is growth is concerned. When its engineers developed the Like button for Facebook, they weren't really thinking that it can be the start of a very lucrative endeavour. The Like button was initially seen to send positivity in the world as its sole purpose. Given that there is a huge number of people who are constantly engaging on social media, you can just imagine the possibilities how content can be distributed knowing that there can be many people as your audience.

The engineers, the ones who develop all these social media platforms, has thought about the psychological aspect of creating all these different features of their platforms. The main objective is to gain more eyes to do to watch whatever it is that they see on their screen. It's very important as well, for the platform to know that you are actually watching by using all these Like buttons and other interactive features. That's why you also heard about terms like clickbait because that's a tactic that people use. People can engage them more using titles, for example, that are not necessarily accurate. When it comes to engagement, the more time you spend, the more money they make. Poblete reiterates that to the developers and the owners of these platforms, people are mere walking dollars because every time you use social media, that means more money is coming in to the companies who have these platforms. People have to understand that it is part of this kind of business model. Moreover, as people can no longer monitor the heavy usage of the internet, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been developed by companies to decipher data. Algorithm has become better and better in analysing data more than those who have created them. Whether we like it or not, it will be part of the people's daily lives. Companies has also learned to use persuasion science for their benefit. Social media engineers has come up with ways to get its users to get instant gratification whenever they engage in social media.

In terms of social media platforms, the top five (5) platforms heavily used for content creation in the Philippines are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. Those who are involved in campaigns must know the different characteristics of these platforms, because some platforms are designed for particular campaigns. However, Facebook is the most used platform in the Philippines. Most government agencies has their own Facebook because most Filipinos are in Facebook, and therefore the government should have presence there. Social media has also become a very powerful as well. As a matter of fact, the US Congress has already called the high-ranking officials of the top five (5) platforms with regard to their responsibilities because of the proliferation of fake news, and their huge role in the elections, which also happen in the Philippines and the rest of the world. Social media, especially Facebook has been a variable powerful, you know, entity in these discussions on political in the political realm.

Another platform, Twitter, is used for short messages. This appeal to influencers because they can just comment on their day-to-day activities and people will latch on immediately because it's so easy to absorb. That's why Twitter is also effective, not as popular as Facebook, but for a certain segment in society that likes short-form messages, and this is being used by influencers in an audience that is looking for easy-to-digest content. This is perfect for updates and short commentaries, especially for government that only aims to provide reminders, such as to follow health protocols. Twitter would be the way to go if you want to reach thousands immediately.

1.08 billion Instagram users use this platform because it attracts a younger audience. The audience that use Instagram are more visceral experience, focusing on aesthetics on pictures and videos. This was acquired by Facebook because it expands their audience base. So when you use Facebook, you also have to understand that there is a complimentary application which is Instagram and you can do both while doing a campaign.

YouTube is the biggest content provider in all social media because the diversity alone in its specific purpose to attract viewership that have time to really view. The difference between YouTube and Facebook

is that in the latter, videos should be short because its audience only browse, which means that they have a very limited time in checking the content on the timeline. Attention span per item would only last to about two (2) to three (3) or at most five (5) minutes. In contrast, anyone can upload a much longer video on YouTube because its audiences allocate more time to view more lengthy content. That's why when YouTube monetize, they based it on the advertisements, and the length of the video that people actually watch.

TikTok is an entertainment portal that has a youthful approach on creative content, as reflected by the dominance of singing and dancing in its content. These five (5) platforms should definitely be considered when it comes to creating social media content for a campaign.

Poblete proceeds in discussing the five (5) essential factors to consider in generating good content, namely: (a) relatability, (b) evokes emotion, (c) creativity, (d) simple sensibilities, and (e) authenticity.

Relatability connotes that while you have an agenda, the content creator and the viewers should have a common ground, particularly to something they enjoy, which is the most important thing to establish attention. A content should also evoke emotion by understanding what is accepted by having an idea of the general sentiment for a particular subject matter. Creativity pertains to the ability of the content creator to come up with something that will stand out. Simple sensibilities means choosing content that will make sense to the people. Authenticity means being natural, which makes it the hardest to attain since naturally people are self-conscious in front of the camera.

People have been so much focused on engagement and results that they often forget their moral responsibility in social media. First and foremost, social media is there in order to inform people. Second, it should be used to educate. Third, it is there to entertain. Fourth, it should empower. Lastly, it has to make the lives of the people better. It is the most important particularly when doing campaign. We should not merely focus on popularity or fame in social media.

While the people are empowered in social media, there should be limitations as well. In this period of instant gratification, it must be noted that campaigns always take time. While there are instances that content becomes viral right away, expectations must also be managed as campaign usually take some time. Mistakes are also inevitable, but improvements made on it leads to growth. Those involve in the campaign should also note that not all content will go viral because there is no exact science for it. Sometimes it takes timing, getting the right people, or even just random. Persistence to try again and again is therefore important. Be not afraid of failure. The moment one has become hesitant, the campaign or company will go down. Lastly, most people tend to forget the importance of discernment. In social media, understanding people is paramount. Some approaches and policies do not work because those in a campaign failed to understand what certain groups of people are feeling at the moment, or what they go through everyday. Discernment follows a level of empathy that will help in coming up with a content that will definitely connect with the target audience.

## SESSION 9

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3 OCTOBER 2020

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## **SESSION 9**

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Due to the imposition of community quarantine measures or lockdowns in most parts of the country, the economy has suffered tremendously due to lack of economic activity. However, after a couple of months of strict implementation of lockdown, the government has decided to ease up so that the economy may gradually recover. The session nine of the policy forum series focuses on the topics pertaining to economic reforms and recovery plans being implemented in light of covid-19 pandemic. The first speaker is Undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon of National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) who presented the economic recovery plan of the government. It aims to bounce back the losses incurred during the long community lockdown. Ms. Ana Mae Lamentillo, the Chairperson of the Build, Build, Build Program, on the other hand, presented the vital installations and projects that were completed and are still on-going under Department of Works and Highways (DPWH). Finally, Assistant Secretary Goddess Hope Libiran of Department of Transportation (DOTr), gave updates on the public transport infrastructure programs of the government seen to help fast track the economic recovery efforts of the national government.

**UPDATES ON THE GOVERNMENT  
RECOVERY EFFORTS AGAINST  
COVID-19****HON. ROSEMARIE G. EDILLON***Undersecretary for Policy and Planning*

National Economic and Development Authority



The Philippines has the longest, broadest coverage and the most restrictive lockdown. For the past ten months, Filipinos are only freely mobile for two and a half months. The rest of the time they really had to exercise restraint. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon enumerates the recovery efforts of the government with regard to the pandemic.

According to the Department of Health (DOH), there have now been more than 232,000 contact tracers that makes up 26,000 teams. However, Edillon does not considered as a roadmap. In comparison, Thailand has over a million village volunteers mobilized as contact tracers that was able to trace more than 216,000 confirmed cases. With more than 300,000 cases, the Philippines has to augment its efforts towards contact tracing. One reason for this challenge was due to the late commencement of the tracing. It has failed to trace the first few cases in the country. Furthermore, the Philippines is only targeting a close contact ratio of 1:5, compared to the 1:37 ratio perceived as ideal by Contact Tracing Czar and Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong.

With respect to testing, the Philippines was doing less than 200 test a day in April. But there has been a drastic improvement in the country's testing capacity. As of October 1, there has been 36,831 individuals tested, 8.4 percent of which are positive, which has gone down from 10.2 percent. The WHO standard should be less than five percent. Therefore, it still needs to be enhanced given also that Philippines has testing backlog of 1,099. Turnover of results must also be improved.

In terms of the Temporary Treatment and Monitoring Facilities (TTMF), the Philippines is doing well, particularly on the number of beds. Of the 166,000 TTMF beds across the country, only 37 percent is occupied. However, according to the DOH, we need to find to encourage



and incentivize people who are traced contact and patients with mild symptoms to stay in TTMFs. TTMF must be further utilized so as not to burden the hospitals.

With respect to bed capacity, the total number of beds for COVID-19 patients is actually higher than the occupancy rate. While there are cases in some hospitals that the bed capacity has already been breached, the total occupancy rate of the Philippines is only 44 percent. Therefore, it is an allocation concern. Furthermore, the government is starting to realize that another limiting restraint is the human resources for health. The DOH is planning to address this through rotation.

When the restrictions were eased around June and July, the number of cases ballooned, and with it the number of deaths related to COVID-19. But if the cases are disaggregated by area, one could derive some observations. The number of cases in the National Capital Region (NCR) is going down, and while the cases in the rest of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao is low, it is actually alarmingly increasing. On a more localized level, the government is monitoring community transmissions where it is no longer possible to trace where an individual got the infection. The presence of community transmission in an area means that the situation is worsening. Three-fourths of the reported cases are due to community transmission. For the past 14 days, 16 community transmissions are reported in workplaces and malls, while 13 are reported in government offices. It should be a point, especially in national and local government offices, to make sure that its employees are not the spreaders. Overcrowding must be avoided at all times, and good ventilation is also a must. A number of government transactions and processes must be done online.

In terms of the economy, the Philippines has consistently recorded a quarterly real GDP growth of no less than six (6) percent since the first quarter of 2016. However, due to the quarantine restrictions brought by the pandemic, the first quarter of 2020, it became minus seven percent, and minus 16.5 percent in the second quarter. The unemployment has also rose from 4.5 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019, to 5.3 percent in the first quarter of 2020. Unfortunately, when the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was imposed in the second quarter, an unemployment rate skyrocketed to 17.7 percent or 10 million people.

Moreover, underemployment was recorded at 18.9 percent. In July, when the restrictions were eased, unemployment and underemployment reduced to ten (10) percent and 17.3 percent, respectively. Between January and April, 8.8 million jobs were lost. Between April and July, when restrictions were eased around June, then there were 7.7 million employed in July, which means 1.2 million people are still not employed.

It could be understood that the government gave top priority to health to save more lives in the first three months of the pandemic. Indeed, mobility restrictions, travel ban, crowd restriction were necessary to make time to increase the capacity of the health system. However, it has caused a heavy burden to the economy, particularly in terms of unemployment and underemployment. Currently, the Philippines is now on the stage where the health system is capacitated which has led to the reopening of the economy. Travel ban, mobility and crowd restrictions were eased. The challenge to the government is to retain restrictions, but making sure that people can still have social and economic activities while still able to avert the spread of COVID-19 transmission.

Edillon reminds everyone in introducing the general context of the new normal. People shall still observe physical distancing, strict sanitation protocols, wearing of mask and face shield, preference of outdoor over indoor activities, and few targeted sporadic lockdowns. She then proceeds with discussing the functions of the Task Group on Recovery of the National Task Force (NTF) Against COVID-19. The Task Group is mandated to facilitate the restarting of social and economic activities while engaging all of society in preventing the spread and mitigating the ill effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task Group has three (3) Sub-Task Groups: (1) Economic Recovery, (2) Social Recovery, and (3) Governance.

According to Edillon, there should be focus on the prevention aspect through Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign and minimum health standards, so as to protect the susceptible, and reduce the transmission. The government should also focus on detection in order to isolate the infectious and that are probably infectious. For those who are infected, the government wants to treat them well. And for those who have recovered, they should be reintegrated. Supplies of masks, face shields, hand soap, alcohol and disinfectants must be secured.

Businesses should COVID-proof their establishments by putting put glass dividers, hiring cleaners, and observing safety and hygiene protocols. In terms of detection, the government needs health checkers, contact tracers, and contact tracing encoders. There is also a demand for health-checking apps, contact tracing app, and the tools and gadgets that will be needed. It shows that the Filipinos could restart their social and economic activities while still focusing on Prevent, Detect, Isolate, Treat, and Reintegrate (PDITR) strategies.

Edillon proceeds introducing RECHARGE PH. Its framework focuses in balancing the interest of the health sector and the need to resume the social and economic activities. In terms of strategies, it first aims to contribute in the Prevent, Detect, Isolate (PDI) strategies by ensuring the compliance to minimum health standards, and active involvement to PDI protocols. Second is the contribution to Recovery (R) strategies in order to reduce economic losses and address psychosocial concerns. Moreover, to ensure business and service continuity there are five (5) factors to focus on: (1) health system improvement, (2) food security, (3) learning continuity, (4) digital transformation, and (5) ecological integrity. Good governance also compliments strategies that are inclusive, people-centered, responsive, clean and technology-enabled.

In terms of economic recovery, the first set of strategies is about boosting of businesses and being involved in PDI protocols as well, which involves health checking of customers. For R strategies, the government has enacted Bayanihan 2, and extended Government Funding Institutions (GFIs), which includes low to no interest business loans, and the Labor market facilitation being prepared by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). To ensure business and service continuity, the government is about development of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) policies, implement strategic stockpiling initiatives with strong linkages to domestic manufacturers, assistance to the agriculture sector and support the food value chain, skills retraining and re-tooling program, and enhance the Build, Build, Build program, including digital infrastructure. Also included in the strategies are active IEC campaign, business engagement, clear guidelines on the minimum health standards, enforcement protocol, Ease On Doing Business, and digital B2G consumer protection. Edillon reminds everyone that the efforts belong to the whole-of-government, and whole-of-society approach.

Edillon then proceeds in discussing the contributions of some government Departments under the Sub-Task Group on Social Recovery chaired by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), managed to converse with manufacturers to repurpose their businesses in order to produce PPEs. Back in March 2020, the Philippines has no domestic capacity to produce PPEs aside from the lone manufacturer of N88 surgical masks which has a limited production capacity of six (6) million per month. DOLE has also issued six (6) labor advisories, three (3) Joint Memoranda and Clarificatory Advisory on the Guidelines on workplace prevention control of COVID-19 and retooling trainings, and is expected to issue more as the government eases the restrictions. The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) has set-up free WiFi connections to 5,230 sites which includes government offices, public schools, public health facilities, and other public places. DICT has also continuously providing digital workforce trainings. DSWD also focuses on business and service continuity, and training on Do-It-Yourself (DIY) masks and other PPEs, proper nutrition and food preparation, and flexible opportunities for all.

The agencies under the said Sub-Task Group has achieved major accomplishments. It has conducted a number of seminars and capacity-building on health and nutrition personnel, secured Memoranda of Agreement with five (5) municipalities for dietary supplementary program, to which the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Emerging Infectious Disease has pledged to allocate more funding. It has also resumed the immunization program for children, human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, provision of maintenance medicine for hypertension, diabetes, family planning, among others.

Edillon then proceed in presenting structure and accomplishments of the Sub-Task Group on Governance. With three (3) units on Civic Society Organization (CSO) partnership, Public Service Continuity, and E-Governance, it is the largest Sub-Task Group.

The Sub-Task Unit on CSO partnerships has issued a Memorandum Circular on CSO mobilization which has intensified information dissemination, and has designated 171 volunteerism focal persons. It only proves that the government cannot do all efforts alone. The CSOs should be empowered by engaging them to PDI, and R strategies.

They can contribute in the efforts to restart social and economic activities. The Sub-Task Unit on Public Service Continuity has already finalized its Plan Guidebook. Furthermore, it has already assessed 65 out of the 66 DOH retained hospitals using the self-assessment tool on integrated hospital management, including health emergency management, to monitor COVID and non-COVID facilities. The Sub-Task Unit, through the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) also aims to proceed with the pre-registration of the PhilSys digital ID system. The PSA has also started conducting census as part of continuity. The Sub-Task Unit on E-Governance has issued a Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) for the automation of business permits and licenses to lessen crowding in government offices. This needs accelerating the establishment of additional digital infrastructure. There are already 319 LGUs that utilizes the Electronic Business Permits and Licensing System (eBPLS) launched by the DICT. The said Department is also currently testing the Luzon ByPass Infrastructure facilities which could be fully operational by the middle of November. It has also launched its Policy on Shared Passive Telecommunications Tower Infrastructure, commonly referred as “Common Towers” to meet the growing connectivity demands particularly during the pandemic. The Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB) would also introduce certain amendments to their policies to enable transactions to be done online.

To end her presentation, Edillon pointed out that the government has already done significant achievements in striking a balance in five areas of RECHARGE PH, namely: (1) health system improvement, (2) food security, (3) learning continuity, (4) digital transformation and (5) ecological integrity. These strategies all aim towards the recovery of the Philippines.

**THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY WILL  
SURVIVE COVID-19: BUILD, BUILD, BUILD  
AS A SOCIO-ECONOMIC SOLUTION**

**HON. ANNA MAE YU LAMENTILLO**

*Chairperson*

Build, Build, Build, Department of Public Works



Chairperson Lamentillo started her presentation by establishing that the Philippines has created a strong economy prior the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Department of Finance (DOF) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the National Government has attained the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in 2019. In terms of revenue, the Philippines has collected the highest revenue in 23 years amounting to 16.1 percent of the GDP. Moreover, the country reached the BBB+ credit rating which is also the highest in history. On the aspect of foreign exchange reserves, the Philippines has recorded a record-high of USD 89 Billion, which is roughly equivalent to eight (8) months of imports. Even during the global health crisis and stringent quarantine protocols, the government has also managed the inflation at 2.2 percent, which is within the target range of two (2) to four (4) percent, as of April 2020. Furthermore, during the same month, the Philippines ranked sixth (6th) in The Economist’s list of 66 emerging economies. The DOF, as cited by Lamentillo, reported that the Philippine government has offered USD 2.35 Billion double tranche 10-year and 25-year global bonds also on April 2020. However, the country’s 2019 and projected 2020 debt-to-GDP ratio remains to be median compared to its ASEAN and East Asian neighbors.

Lamentillo then proceeds in enumerating the four (4) pillars of the Philippine economic strategy against COVID-19, namely: (a) the emergency support for vulnerable groups and individuals, (b) marshalling resources to fight COVID-19, (c) fiscal and monetary actions to finance emergency initiatives and keep the economy afloat, and (d) an economic recovery program focused on getting businesses back on their feet to sustain and create jobs. However, she only limits her presentation to the last pillar which includes the PH Progress: The Philippine Program for Recovery with Equity and Solidarity. The program has three (3) stages, the (a) Emergency Stage which covered March to May 2020;

(b) Recovery Stage which includes June to December 2020; and lastly (c) the Resiliency Stage which is projected to happen 2021 onwards. The administration has placed a number of priority measures to meet the projected 2021 GDP growth of 7.1 to 8.1 percent. The priority measures includes (a) restarting and accelerating the Build, Build, Build program, (b) mass hiring of contract tracers to lower the peak of COVID and provide jobs, (c) attract foreign investors to relocate from other countries, (d) stimulate consumer spending by reviving manufacturing of products that have a strong, inelastic demand, and (e) support the whole value chain of the products. Her presentation particularly focused on the Build, Build, Build program, which is participated by six (6) National Government Agencies (NGAs), namely the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of Transportation (DOTr), Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), and the DOF. Lamentillo reported that under the Build, Build, Build program, 14,670 kilometers of road, 4,507 bridges, 6,022 flood mitigation structures, 129,479 classrooms, and 114 evacuation centers completed.

Despite the pandemic, the administration has managed to finish a number of infrastructure projects on time, some of them are segments of the Luzon Spine Expressway Network. The said network aims to expand the high-standard highway networks in Luzon from 385 kilometers to 1,040 kilometers, cutting the travel time from La Union to Bicol from 16 hours to eight (8) hours and 15 minutes. Some of its completed segments are:

(1) **Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway (TPLEX)**

An 89.21-kilometer expressway from Tarlac City to Rosario, La Union which reduces travel time from 3.5 hours to one (1) hour. Moreover, motorists from Metro Manila will only travel for three (3) hours going to Baguio instead of the current six (6) hours.

(2) **Central Luzon Link Expressway (CLLEX)**

A 30-kilometer expressway from Tarlac City to Cabanatuan City which reduces travel time from 70 minutes to 20 minutes.

(3) **North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) Harborlink Segment 10**

A 5.58-kilometer expressway connecting McArthur Highway and C3 that will reduce the travel time between Valenzuela City and Caloocan City from one (1) hour to five (5) minutes. In addition, commute from Quezon City to Manila City will only take 15-20 minutes from the current two (2) hours.

(4) **Metro Manila Skyway Stage 3**

A 17.54-kilometer expressway connecting Balintawak, Quezon City to Buendia, Makati City which will reduce travel time from two (2) hours to 20 minutes. Travel time from NLEX to the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) will also be reduced to 30 minutes from the current 2.5 to three (3) hours.

(5) **NLEX-SLEX Connector Road**

Eight (8)-kilometer expressway from C3 Road, Caloocan to the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), Manila which will connect to the common alignment of Skyway Stage 3. Travel time from SLEX and NLEX will be reduced from two (2) hours to 20 minutes. It effectively creates a loop over Metro Manila as it also connects the NLEX Harborlink Interchange and the Skyway Stage 3.

(6) **Plaridel Bypass Road**

It aims to reduce travel time between NLEX-Balagtas and Maharlika Highway to 30 minutes from the current two (2) hours.

(7) **NAIA-X Phase 2**

A 14.85- kilometer, four (4)-lane elevated expressway from the end point of NAIA Expressway Phase I to PAGCOR Entertainment City which aims to reduce travel time between Skyway and NAIA Terminal One (1) from 24 minutes to eight (8) minutes.

**(8) Cavite-Laguna Expressway**

A 45.29-kilometer expressway connecting the Manila-Cavite Expressway (CAVITEX) in Kawit, Cavite and SLEX Mamplasan Interchange in Biñan, Laguna that aims to reduce travel time from CAVITEX and SLEX from 1.5 hours to 45 minutes.

**(9) Southeast Metro Manila Expressway**

A 34.024-kilometer combination of elevated and at-grade expressway from Skyway/FTI, Taguig City to Batasan Complex, Quezon City that is expected to reduce travel time from Bicutan to Batasan from 1.9 hour to 26 minutes.

**(10) SLEX TR4**

A 56.87-kilometer expressway extension from Santo Tomas, Batangas to Tayabas and Lucena, Quezon Province which will reduce travel time from Santo Tomas and Lucena from four (4) hours to one (1) hour.

**(11) Bonifacio Global City (BGC)-Ortigas Center****Link Bridge Project**

A bridge that will reduce travel time between BGC, Taguig City and Ortigas Center, Pasig City from one (1) hour to 12 minutes. It shall also include pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

**(12) Estrella-Pantaleon Bridge**

A new pre-stressed concrete rigid frame bridge (v-shape piers) with corrugated steel webs with 4-lane concrete deck slab of approximately 506.46 linear meters to connect Makati and Mandaluyong Cities. Similar to the BGC-Ortigas Center Link Bridge Project, it will also have pedestrian infrastructure. It will replace an already existing bridge connecting Estrella Street and Barangka Drive.

The master plans of these projects does not only aim to decongest Metro Manila. It also aims to reduce the travel time between the cities to 20-30 minutes. The DPWH is also responsible for the construction of quarantine facilities at the Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine International Convention Center, ASEAN Convention Center.

Due to a scheduled on-site inspection of the Tagaytay by-pass, Chairperson Lamentillo accepted a number of questions from the participants after her presentation.

Question: Mr. Grueso asked if the Build, Build, Build project also includes railway infrastructure for the Visayas. Chairperson Lamentillo: she responded that rail projects are under the DOTr, and she referred the question to Asec. Goddess Hope Libiran. Another participant, Ms. Bilinda Capayan, inquired on the financing of the Build, Build, Build project. Lamentillo answered that there are different modalities as for the financing of the project. She cites the case of TPLEX which is funded by Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement where the private concessionaire pays for the civil works construction, and the government is responsible for the right of way acquisition. In comparison, the BGC-Ortigas Center Link Bridge is being funded through the General Appropriations Act. Other projects are funded through Official Development Assistance (ODA) of foreign governments. One of the participants also has a query on whether the government is still on track in completing infrastructure projects under the Build, Build, Build? Lamentillo answered that the government is doing its best to meet that deadlines given that construction has been postponed for three (3) months due to quarantine restrictions. On a more positive note, it has also opened a new opportunity to hire more workers which is estimated to generate one (1) million jobs which is very important for those who are unemployed and repatriated because of the pandemic. Lallo, Cagayan Vice Mayor Maria Olivia Pascual, who is also a participant, raised that the projects presented were mostly from the National Capital Region (NCR) and Central Luzon. It is therefore asked whether there are project for Northern Luzon and Mindanao under the Build, Build, Build program. Lamentillo explained that she only presented the projects focusing in Metro Manila area as she thought that the forum caters the NCR audience. She clarified that there are infrastructure projects under Build, Build, Build that caters all regions and provinces of the country,

citing a number of examples such as the Mindanao Road Development Network, Marawi Rehabilitation Network, Cagayan de Oro Coastal Road, Davao Coastal Expressway, and Davao-Samal Road, among others.

The Build, Build, Build Chairperson ended her presentation by emphasizing that their projects does not only aims to shorten travel time through the establishment of networks of roads and bridges. The infrastructure also aims to improve employment across the country during and even after the construction period. The infrastructures, when completed, would be beneficial across all sectors of the Philippine economy. Roads will open up the economy for trade by improving access to farms, markets and schools.

### **UPDATES ON THE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT**

**HON. GODDESS HOPE LIBIRAN**  
*Assistant Secretary for Communications  
and Commute Affairs*



Despite the current health risk, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) has executed strategic and innovative ways to help keep the economy thriving through relentless pursuit of building infrastructure projects. According to DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade, the Philippines is delayed by three (3) decades in terms of transportation infrastructure. DOTr is now fast-tracking the projects while securing the safety of its people.

In the aviation sector, the DOTr has continued with the construction and rehabilitation of various airport projects to jumpstart the said sector. The Department has accelerated the phase of the development of 114 airport development projects it has laid out. Once finished, it will add up to the 121 airport projects that has already been completed. One of the ongoing airport projects includes the construction of the Clark International Airport Terminal 2 which is already at 99.91 percent completion rate and is expected to be finished by January 2021. Another ongoing project is the Bicol International Airport. It was delayed for 11 years. It was only in the current administration that the airport was actually constructed. At 68.7 percent completion rate, it is expected to be finished by December 2020. Also included in the ongoing projects is the NAIA Terminal 2 Rehabilitation Project, and Bulacan International Airport.

In the Railway sector, the DOTr has relentlessly pushing for the expansion of the Philippines' Operational Railway length. As of 2016, the only operational railways in the country is only 77 kilometers. The Department aims to extend it by 1,200 kilometers by the end of Duterte's term. Currently, there are six (6) railway projects that are already ongoing. It includes big-ticket projects such as the first-of-its-kind Metro Manila Subway, Common Station, Metro Rail Transit (MRT) – 7, Light Rail Transit (LRT) – 1 Extension, LRT-2 Extension, and the Philippine National Railways (PNR) Clark Phase 1. There are also seven (7) railway

PNR Calamba, PNR Bicol, Subic-Clark Railway, Mindanao Railway, LRT-2 West Extension, and the MRT-4.

Under the Road Transport sector, the DOTr is actively promoting the Public Utility Modernization program which aims to consolidate franchises and rationalize routes in order for modern Public Utility Vehicles (PUVs) on regular fleet-managed schedules to establish stringent health protocols. These measures provide drivers with faster turnaround time, and safer and more convenient commuting for passengers. Moreover, as we navigate to the new normal, modernization will play an important role in the recovery process as it offers more advantages, such as allowing contactless and cashless transactions and contact tracing. Modern PUVs also offer less carbon footprint which is significantly essential in our overall health now that we need to further strengthen our immunity amidst the threat of COVID-19. In Metro Manila, dedicated median lanes were also provided to bus units in one of the major thoroughfares which is the EDSA Busway. It resulted to the unimpeded travel from Monumento to Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX), which has reduced travel time from three (3) to 3.5 hours to 40-50 minutes. Furthermore, to ensure the health and safety of the riding public through minimal human intervention, DOTr has implemented the No Beep Card, No Ride policy at the EDSA Busway. The Department will also develop pedestrian facilities in key rail stations to encourage walking as an active transport through the EDSA Greenways project. It is an elevated walkway that will connect stations. DOTr is also advocating for active transport such as walking, biking, and use of other non-motorized transport to maintain the lowered levels of air pollution gained from the months of quarantine and to encourage physical fitness that boosts immunity against COVID-19. To encourage biking, the Department, in collaboration with other concerned agencies such as the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Department of Health (DOH), and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), expediently established protected bike lanes to connect major roads, residential areas, and high-volume commuter areas to major medical facilities. In Manila and Quezon City, hospitals are made more accessible for the frontline medical workers.

To boost Maritime connectivity and mobility nationwide, the DOTr has already completed a total of 369 port projects, with 108 ongoing projects in various stages of construction, and 76 port projects for implementation. Just last year, the Department has inaugurated the largest port passenger terminal building in the country, the Cagayan de Oro Port. An additional 14 port projects were virtually inaugurated this year amidst the pandemic. The ports are vital links to spur new local growth areas for tourism, trade and logistics. The Philippines is an archipelago, which makes it necessary to develop our ports.

As more people are starting to go back to their workplaces and quarantine restrictions are being eased in different parts of our country, we have implemented strict sanitation and health protocols as part of our new normal. This includes the mandatory use of facemasks, face shield, and stringent enforcement of social distancing in all public transport modes and terminals. There is a need to limit human intervention to limit the spread of COVID-19. Frontline agencies in all transport sectors are undergoing digital transformation. As the DOTr Secretary noted, one cannot claim the transportation sector under new normal if there is no digital transformation. The sector is now shifting to technology-based processing of documentary requirements such as permits and licenses, hiring of personnel, and reservation of tickets as exchanging coins and bills raises the possibility of transmitting the virus. The Land Transportation Office (LTO) has also shifted to the use of modern robots in the production of license plates, while public transportations use of contactless and cashless transactions through Radio-frequency identification (RFID) and other Automated Fare Collection System. In August, the DOTr Secretary has signed Memorandum Circular 2020-20 requiring all toll operators to implement cashless transaction in all Toll Expressways not later than November 2. These strategic and data-driven innovations are being instituted not only for safe and convenient transactions, but also to provide efficiency, ease-in-doing business, and to reduce opportunities for corrupt practices. If human intervention is limited, involvement to corruption lessens. Projects and initiatives such as one-stop shop, molecular labs, and crew change hubs were also established to help the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)

and seafarers, and to strengthen the commitment of the Philippines to the International Maritime Community. The DOTr has also opened a Molecular Laboratory in the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) which is capable of conducting 2,000 tests daily.

In order to achieve progress or withstand any challenge, there is a need to initiative, innovate and invest. Change should be initiated and perform fast and efficient courses of action, Innovate ways to adapt to different circumstances, and invest on essential matters. It will eventually result to a comfortable and convenient life for the Filipino people. That is what the government is doing, and that is where the Philippines is heading.

## SESSION 10

# CHALLENGES ON ENDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

17 OCTOBER 2020

POLICY FORUM SERIES ON DECENTRALIZATION, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM,  
AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC





## **SESSION 10**

### **CHALLENGES OF ENDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

The last session of the policy forum series dwell with possibly the one of the most contentious issue or topics in the Philippines currently. With the recent passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) of 2020, it has created apparent divisiveness between those who are in favor and against. To make things clear and to avoid confusion which may lead to further contentions, it is but right to dig up the nitty gritty details of the said law, its implementing rules and regulations (IRR), to come up with a more objective view on the said legislation. Rightfully so, Dr. Rommel Banlaoi, the Director of Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, discussed the underlying principles and implementation procedure of the ATA, as well as the reforms being done in the security sector. At the same time, LTGen Antonio Parlade Jr., commander of the Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM), presented the military's perspective on the essence and tactical procedure of the ATA in terms of securing the country from perceived state enemies.

**OPENING REMARKS****HON. JONATHAN E. MALAYA***Undersecretary for Plans, Public Affairs  
and Communications*

Department of the Interior and Local Government



Usec. Jonathan Malaya has started his speech with pleasantries. He greeted all the partners of the DILG in the academe, government agencies, local government units, and private entities, as well as, of course, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and its Country Director Prof. Dr. Stefan Jost. He also acknowledged the speakers for this session from the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research Director Rommel Banlaoi, and AFP Southern Luzon Command Chief Lt. Gen. Antonio Parlade Jr.

In his speech, Usec. Malaya explained that one of the most solid accomplishments of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte towards governance is the significant increase in the public's confidence in the ability of the government to protect their lives and welfare. This renewed public trust assures the public that government will exercise all legal means to ensure that the country will not succumb to the threat of terrorism, and our people will continue to enjoy their freedom. He explained that it is important to flesh out the challenges of ending violent extremism and devise comprehensive and effective solutions rooted in the President's desire to leave behind a legacy of a much-improved culture of unity and peace.

According to him, political will is also needed in rooting out the terrorist problems as this require a concerted effort by the local and national government agencies in creating the environment to totally eradicate the communist rebellion. However, it is an extra-mile challenge since they have no other way but to come to terms with the government and work with it for peace and development. The DILG, he said, believes that existing body of laws in the country had enough safeguards to combat any possible abuse and the department has been more proactive about disciplining and keeping the police and LGUs accountable.

This is the reason why he would also like to highlight the importance of constitutional reform needed to bring about change in our country, instead of violence and armed struggle. Usec Malaya in vernacular said:

*“Dapat nating bigyan ng ngipin ang batas laban sa korapsyon nang maitaguyod ang mabuting pamamahala o good governance sa LGUs at makahabol ang mga rehiyon at mamamayang napag-iwangan sa kaunlaran.”*

Part of this, which is for him, is the administration’s institutionalization of the whole-of-nation approach in attaining inclusive and sustainable peace—the creation of a campaign to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (ELCAC) which aims to achieving inclusive and sustainable peace by recognizing that insurgencies, internal disturbances and tensions, armed conflicts and threats are not only military and security concerns, but are symptomatic of broader social, economic, and historical problems such as poverty, historical injustice, social inequity, and lack of inclusivity.

Finally, Undescretary Malaya said that aside from the pandemic we are battling now, we as Filipinos should also fight any possible abuse and tensions to move peace and order and end terrorism in the country.

### KEYNOTE MESSAGE

**PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST**

*Country Director*

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Philippines Office



Dr. Jost has opened up his speech with pleasantries. He greeted all the participants as well as the attending resource speakers and other dignitaries.

Dr. Jost said that the focus of this session lies on the challenges of ending violent extremism. He said that signs of underlying frustrations and inequities are fueling the rise of violent extremism in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Experts indicated that it is not impossible for the Islamic State to establish a base somewhere in the Southeast Asian region, and this can be also in the Philippines. Some areas of the Philippines unfortunately, as a complete ingredient to make them vulnerable to violent extremism, as mentioned by Undersecretary Malaya, has a high incidence of poverty, lack of opportunities to work, corruption, and lack of access to state’s basic services, in addition to the discrimination and marginalization as a product of historical circumstances.

In fact, according to him, in a study conducted by the Institute of for Autonomy and Governance in 2017, poverty is seen as the greatest cause for attraction toward violent extremism. Respondents of the study point as to how the lack of opportunity to work after countless attempts to apply for a job, how having no source of income and how failure to provide the needs of their families pushed them to join extremist groups for economic reasons. Another area of concern that is worth it to look at the current political environment, perceptions of justice, human rights violation, social political exclusion, widespread corruption and fear of physical security or mistreatment can also push people to the camp to violent, extremist experiences of people, especially the youth are also a cause of concern for us, as these can entice them towards violent extremism, their feeling of alienation, discrimination and experiences in armed conflict and fewer desires to join extremist groups. Furthermore, there are few other drivers of violent extremism and these complex and multifaceted problem requires the stakeholders to come up with a complex solution.

He also said that improving the current economic and political environment are crucial to improve the situation areas susceptible to violent extremism, we have to make sure that people have adequate access to appropriate basic services from the state that is to quality education and health among others. It is a difficult task he said given how development in the Philippines have been centered in select few. But the future is welcoming especially in the case of funds and more autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao. It is a hope that providing opportunities for people to improve their life. That is through providing quality education, and opportunities to work after shunning them away from joining extremist groups, educating people, especially the youth about the negative effects of joining extremist groups are also vital. Also, he explained that let us not forget that those who had been part of extremist groups have stood a chance in life to improve themselves and it is our duty to secure the integration back into the into the society. It is also paramount for us to ensure that people from different areas, especially those who are located in far flung areas are informed and capacitated so they can leave their lives peacefully. Allow me to end by highlighting the key role of communities aside from the government as the forefront of developing solutions to extremism.

Dr. Jost believes that it is possible that through a process of collective reflection and leadership, we can come up with many solutions to violent extremism that are rooted in traditional institutions and practices fundamental to well-functioning communities. He thinks it has become clear what challenge and threat is not how complex the interrelationships are. These complex interrelationships require in depth analysis and debate so that government, politics and society can jointly develop appropriate answers and solution concepts.

### **SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND THE PHILIPPINE ANTI-TERRORISM LAW OF 2020**

**DR. ROMMEL C. BANLAOI**

*Chairperson*

Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence  
and Terrorism Research



Dr. Banlaoi opened up his presentation by saying that there has now an approved implementing rules and regulations of the anti-terrorism law. He is very optimistic that the Philippines can end violent extremism with the advent of a new and improved law. However, being a scholar, he is just trying to be more realistic, but not necessarily pessimistic, since the topic pertains to the challenges on ending violent extremism. But what we can do based on the existing policies and resources of the national government, in cooperation with all these stakeholders, he thinks there is a great chance that we can counter and prevent violent extremism in the Philippines, but ending it is really a very difficult challenge.

In this presentation, Dr. Banlaoi presented the principle of security sector reform and the importance of security sector reform in counterterrorism and in the continuing advocacy of the Philippine government of preventing and countering violent extremism. He also discussed some efforts of the Philippines in implementing security sector reform and the imperatives of security sector reform in the implementation of the Philippine Anti-Terrorism law of 2020. If you will look at the academic discussions about the principle of security sector reform, he said that it is a very good principle because it involves all agencies of the national government as well as the private sector and civil society involved in providing the security of the people. So when you talk about security sector is not only referring to the Armed Forces of the Philippines or the Philippine National Police, but includes a wide array of participants and stakeholders from law enforcement, intelligence, defense, and other security providers not only from the government but also from private sector and even civil society as well.

There are a lot of players within the security system from the security sector. The army, police and intelligence, the justice sector, which includes the penal correctional system, and even non-statutory counterparts like the Congress, can be part of the security sector. By looking deeper into the definition of the security sector, it is really very broad that it compasses

a lot of stakeholders from the government sectors. Therefore the question is, what is a security sector reform? According to Dr. Banlaoi, in the academic literature, you will see one of the main ideas of security sector reform is the strengthening of the democratic control of the security sector, meaning that if you want to reform the security sector, you have to strengthen the democratic control of the security sector, meaning you have to pursue democratic governance of the security sector, and therefore, it is an essential part of the security sector reform to promote democracy. Democratization process, he said, is an essential component of security sector reform. The democracy promotion is in fact very vital in pursuing security sector reform. However, in his observation, he finds this kind of perspective as Western oriented and observe this definition of security sector reform as bias against non-democratic political system. This definition of security sector reform, privileges, the importance of democratization, so he would try to redefine the concept of security sector to make it more accommodating of the perspectives of non-democratic regimes.

For Dr. Banlaoi, security sector reform is a comprehensive process that aims to strengthen responsible and accountable governance of the security sector, whether you are democratic regime or not democratic regime, as long as you are responsible and accountable in the exercise of your duty in providing security services to the people, then reform can be conducted and the two essential ideas of security sector reform are responsible governance and accountable governance. Responsible governance, according to him, is the lawful use of coercive authorities in promoting and maintaining peace, order security, meaning, it is the use of the rule of law over the legitimate use of force. And when you say accountability or accountable governments, meaning the security sectors are culpable for wrongdoings or abuse and unlawful use of authorities. So if you can explain them responsible and accountable governance of the security sector, you are in the right direction of security sector reform. Furthermore, the importance of reforms in the security sector in counterterrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism is; first, it is essential for terrorism prevention, and as well as countering and preventing violent extremism. Second, it is important in the local use of force in counterterrorism measures, and it is very necessary to prevent prohibit and penalize abuse in counterterrorism operation.

Dr. Banlaoi further mentioned the several efforts made by the Philippine government in pursuing security sector reform. There have been efforts by the Armed forces to develop security reform index in the country. In his case, he wrote local study about challenges of security sector transformation in the Philippines, where he enumerated many challenges of pursuing security sector reforms. In the literature, security reforms in the Philippines and the efforts of the Philippine government to implement and pursue these reforms, and even the National Library of the Philippines has this compilation of a reader about the transformation of the security sector reader that anybody can freely access. For example, he emphasizes that even the Philippine National Police is involved in a very serious security sector reform through its PNP patrol plan 2013 roadmap, wherein he was a former member of the advisory board of the criminal investigation and detection group, and participated in the formulation of this roadmap. This roadmap, according to him, is very good idea and barely needed, because it emphasizes the need for community support for effective police transformation. Moreover, even the Armed Forces of the Philippines is involved in security sector reform also, through its AFP Vision 2028 to develop a world class armed forces and even the army transformation roadmap 2028 has many elements of security sector reform that he said is already discussed earlier. He cited examples such as the Philippine Air Force flight plan 2028, as well as the Philippine Navy Sail Plan 2020, which is in background that this year is the deadline to strategize the roadmap, and is in fact, containing many principles of security sector reform. So you can only implement existing plans and policies and documents of the security sector, then security sector reform is really the way ahead in in the Philippines.

Now, what are the imperatives of security sector reform in implementing the Philippine Anti-Terrorism law of 2020. Dr. Banloi considers the law as a great opportunity for the Philippine government in cooperation with other stakeholders to really emphasize two aspects of counterterrorism, which is prevention and provision of acts of terrorism, compared to the Human Security Act of 2007. This anti-terrorism law of 2020 privileges the importance of prevention and prohibition of the acts of terrorism, not only penalizing acts of terrorism. And more importantly, this law has a strong application of the rule of law against terrorism. Not only that it is part of the country's international commitment to

pursue legal measures against terrorism, this law also expresses the domestic responses of the Philippine government to protect the Filipino people from acts of terrorism. However, addressing the legal aspects of terrorist threats without a very strong counter legal measure is problematic.

The anti-terrorism law of the 2020 is part of the response of the Philippine government to strengthen our counter legal measures against terrorism. According to the law, as also stipulated in its implementing rules and regulations, acts prohibited under anti-terrorism law does not include joining of advocacies, protests, dissent and stoppage of work, industrial or mass actions and other similar exercises of civil and political rights are not acts of terrorism. Activism is not a terrorism according to this law. In fact, the anti-terrorism law of 2020 even protects and promotes activism, as long as this type of activism is promoting peace, promoting nonviolence and promoting the civilized way of expressing. Anti-terrorism law of 2020 has a lot of prohibitions, highlighting the need to protect human rights. Particularly civil and political rights of the Filipino people. However, some cause-oriented groups, human rights organizations, and other related organizations deemed this law as unconstitutional because of the provisions on preventive custody and even wiretapping. They consider this loss from the human rights abuses. They also consider this law as part of the weaponization of the law against political opposition's even it will lead to the creation of a national security state in the Philippines. And it even justifies the rise of legal authority of authoritarianism in the Philippines, and even emergence of state terrorism.

While we respect all these views from the oppositions to the particulars of this law, but their main issue is not definitely the threat of terrorism, but they fear of authoritarianism, when, but if you look closely to the prohibitions of the anti-terrorism law, they are in fact, a lot of safeguards in order in order to prevent this fear to happen. His rebuttal, according to him, is to remind them of our history. The police and the military in the wider security sector play a vital role in the restoration of Philippine democracy in 1986. So were it not for their support to the will of the Filipino people, there will not have been a restoration of democracy in the Philippines in 1986, in the police and the military, played a vital role in the restoration of our democracy in 1986.

Now, in order to really remote this fear and this insight is against anti-terrorism law 2020. For him, it is very important that the intelligence communities and in the sector in the Philippines to pursue serious intelligence reforms. Because fear of the new anti-terrorism law is based on the negative perception on Philippine intelligence authorities. To overcome this negative perception, it is imperative to reform the intelligence sector to make it more responsible and accountable. Second, we also have to sustain the process of security sector reform in the Philippines because we cannot have responsible and accountable security sector without the sustained efforts to pursue security sector reform. Fear of the new anti-terrorism law also comes from the track record of the Philippine security sector of committing lapses in protecting human rights during counter insurgency and anti-terrorism operations. In part, he considers the anti-terrorism law as a tool where the Philippine government in tandem with the Filipino people can fight terrorism through justice.

Fighting terrorism does that only mean putting terrorists to jail, defeating terrorism or ending up violent extremism needs to address the underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, but without necessarily using these underlying conditions to further justify acts of terrorism. The provision that states that the improved law shall address the conditions conducive to the spread of the terrorism, which includes, in order to end violent extremism, and even to fight terrorism in the Philippines, you have to address the following: ethnic, national and religious discrimination, socio-economic, disgruntlement, political exclusion, the humanization of victims of terrorism, and this is very crucial the lack of good governance at the national level. But more so at the level because the local government authorities are in fact, at the frontline of delivery of social services to the people and most importantly, for low and underserved resolve conflicts by reading the hearts and minds of the people to prevent them from engaging in violent extremism. Now, to restore incentive and faith on law enforcement authorities, it is imperative to conduct continuing Human Rights Education for law enforcement. Hence that is why I am encouraging our security officials that it is important to include human rights education and should be one of the major priorities in the implementation of this law. Dr. Banlaoi emphasized that it is really needed to really pursue continuing human rights education so that our

law enforcement authorities feel the integrity to their sense as it even internalizes the value of human rights protections when they pursue counterterrorism operations. Then we also have to intensify Human Rights Education of the Intelligence and Security sectors mandated to combat terrorism, particularly the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, the National Bureau of Investigation, the National Security Council, the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. We really have to inculcate the value of effective, responsible and accountable governance of the security sector.

In addition, Dr. Banlaoi further stated that the Anti-Terrorism Council has four major tasks in the implementation of the law, not only preventing and countering violent extremism but also Preventing and Combating Terrorism Program, International Affairs and Capacity Building Program, and Legal Affairs Program. If the anti-terrorism council can implement the four main programs, it can even provide conditions for the successful in pursuance of transitional justice in Mindanao. And that is why the government really needs the support of the private sector in the civil society in implementing this problem, because these problems are so large for the Philippine government to implement by itself.

In ending his presentation, Dr. Banlaoi stresses the following points. The anti-terrorism act of 2020 set a magic pill against terrorism. It is not a magic pill per se. It is not a panacea against terrorism but we need the anti-terrorism law of 2020 in order to send our counter legal measures to prevent, prohibit, and penalize acts of terrorism in order to maintain public order and safety to promote political instability and uphold our national security against continuing threats of terrorism in the Philippines. Anti-terrorism law alone cannot end terrorism and cannot end violent extremism in the Philippines. Counterterrorism is a comprehensive and holistic approaches combining whole of government and society approach and therefore because of these big responsibilities, fighting terrorism really needs a political will. For him, despite some oppositions against the law, its passage and eventful implementation reflects part of the strong political will of the state to fight terrorism through lawful ways. The security sector reform is a top down idea, but it needs bottom up implementation. Therefore, he would like to privilege the importance of community-based approach in counterterrorism and facing the challenges of ending violent extremism.

## **RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY TERRORISM: THE AFP ROLE UNDER THE ANTI-TERRORISM LAW**

**LTGEN. ANTONIO PARLADE JR.**

*Commander*

Southern Luzon Command

Armed Forces of the Philippines



LTGen Parlade has started his presentation by contrasting his discussion from that of Dr. Banlaoi. He said it is a little bit of the same since the topic is the Anti-Terrorism Law 2020; however, the main points he focused upon is in the perspective of the Armed Forces relative to the implementation of the said law. It has been defined in the law that for a terrorism to happen it should have the elements of the act and the purpose, in which, he says that it is clearly stated in the law itself. Specifically, acts intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to any person engages, intended to cause extensive damage or destruction to government or public facility, and acts intended or will cause extensive interference with damage or destruction to our critical infrastructure. The IRR is clear and many of these definitions are there. Moreover, another definition of acts of terrorism include manufacturing, processing, supplying, or using of weapons and explosives, and releasing of dangerous substances. The next element is the purpose itself. By nature in context, the purpose of terrorism are to intimidate the general public or a segment thereof and to create an atmosphere or spread the message of fear, to provoke or influence by intimidation the government or any international organization, seriously destabilize or destroy the fundamental political, economic and social structures of the country, to create public emergency or seriously undermine public safety. Gen. Parlade, in his reiteration, the definition of terrorism is very clear and should not be misconstrued.

Gen. Parlade proceeded to emphasize, directed in particular to those who oppose the law, that joining advocacy protests, dissents, stoppage of work, and national mass action, are not included in the acts of terrorism as mentioned above. He even mentioned that in Southern Luzon Command (SOLCOM) where he is the commander, a freedom park was built as venue intended for protest or mass action. He also debunked the notion that the Anti-Terror Law of 2020 will curtail the people's civil liberties.

Subsequently, he explained the punishable acts and its corresponding penalties which is (1) Perpetrators of terrorism is sentenced to life imprisonment without the benefit of parole, (2) Threat to commit terrorism is sentenced to twelve (12) years of imprisonment, and (3) Planning, Training, Preparing, and Facilitating terrorism is sentenced to life imprisonment and without the benefit of parole. The other punishable acts include: Conspiracy to commit terrorism, Proposal to commit terrorism, inciting to commit terrorism, and recruitment to a terrorist organization, among others.

Gen. Parlade also made mentioned of few points with regards to the provision for penalty against erring public officials in violation of the law. He said, if found guilty, a public official or employee shall be charged with administrative offense of grave misconduct and/or disloyalty to the Republic of the Philippines and the Filipino people. The penalties according to him are dismissal from the service with accessory penalties of cancellation of civil service eligibility, forfeiture of retirement benefits, and perpetual absolute disqualification from running for any elective office. With regards to the provision of detention without judicial warrant of arrest, Gen. Parlade explained that it can be duly authorized by writing to the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) which is 14 days and extendible to 10 calendar days. A written notice to the judge, ATC, and CHR should also be made. Erring law enforcers who may fail to do so is sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment. And lastly, military personnel may also conduct the arrest.

In terms of the right of the person under custody, Gen. Parlade has mentioned that a person must be informed of the nature and the cause of his arrest, has the right to remain silent, and the right to have a counsel. In case of no counsel, a lawyer from Integrated Bar of the Philippines or Public Attorney's Office may provide the assistance. The person under custody is likewise allowed to communicate freely with his/her legal counsel, as well as his/her members of the family and to confer and visit them at any time without restriction. He or she is also free to avail of the service of a physician of choice.

So what are the safeguards of the law to prevent abuses? Gen. Parlade is quick to explained the salient provisions of the law with regards to these, are as follows: (1) Deposit of surveillance tapes, recording, notes, are within 48 hours after expiration of the period. Also a joint affidavit of law enforcement agent/personnel must be made; (2) Available judicial remedies which may be immediately filed such as the petition for Habeas Corpus, Writ of Habeas Data, and Writ of Amparo; (3) Criminal charges which may sentenced erring law enforcers to 10 years of imprisonment; (4) Administrative charges or dismissal from government service. (5) Civil Indemnity which the amount can be determined by the court; and (6) Joint Congressional Oversight Committee which shall have the authority to summon law enforcement or military officers and members of the ATC to answer questions and submit reports of the acts they have done to implement the ATA which includes the annual report to both Houses of Congress.

In the end, Gen. Parlade underscored the need of such law now because it will undeniably strengthen the peace and security in the Philippines. It will also serve as a strong deterrence against possible terror act in the future. Likewise, it will prove to be a good counter measure against possible influx of foreign terrorist in the country. Lastly, to avoid being gray listed by the Financial Action Task Force with strategic impact to country's financial and economic structure if non-compliant.



# SESSION 1: COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE LEADING TO A NEW NORMAL SOCIETY: ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS

**Good Practices | 1. Government- Early response**

31 December 2019 → 24 January 2020 → 30 January 2020

Other reports a level 1 country

WHO declares Public Health Emergency of International Concern

2. WHO first reports of cases in Italy

3. WHO first reports of cases in the Philippines

4. Level higher than actual epidemic situation

# SESSION 2: EVALUATION RESPONSE ON SOCIAL AMELIORATION PROGRAM AND ENHANCED COMMUNITY QUARANTINE

**Contact Tracing E-System**

A. Data Collection tool

B. GIS Platform

C. Link Analysis

**WELCOME REMARKS**

MS. PAMELA DYAN CARBONELL

**TOPIC: WHOLE OF NATION APPROACH IN ADDRESSING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A RAPID ASSESSMENT**

DR. LIZAN PESANTE-CALINA

**WHOLE OF NATION APPROACH IN ADDRESSING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A RAPID ASSESSMENT**

Dr. Lizan E. Pesante-Calina  
Sector in Prevention and Fight  
Center for Health and Media  
Research - Analysis

**INSIGHTS FROM ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS, CSOs BUSINESS SECTOR**

UP COVID-19 Pandemic Response Webinar

**BAGUIO CITY'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED**

HON. BERNADETA B. MALABON

For more information, please visit and follow our Facebook page:

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You can also visit our website: [www.idfp.gov.ph](http://www.idfp.gov.ph) [www.cope.gov.ph](http://www.cope.gov.ph)

# SESSION 3: THE POLICY IMPLICATION OF THE MANDANAS VS. OCHOA TO LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Region	2019 IRA	5% Allocation
Region I	40,424,811,111	2,021,244,056
Region II	72,722,322,868	3,636,111,144
Region III	78,767,782,322	3,938,389,111
Region IV	73,737,377,877	3,686,868,889
Region V	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region VI	72,262,112,144	3,613,105,568
Region VII	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region VIII	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region IX	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region X	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XI	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XII	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XIII	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XIV	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XV	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XVI	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XVII	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XVIII	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XIX	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111
Region XX	72,732,276,122	3,636,611,111

# SESSION 4: THE FUTURE OF THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: A POST SONA ASSESSMENT

**WHAT'S MISSING IN THE PRESIDENT'S 5th SONA?**

Ma. Lourdes N. Tiquia, MPA, MA, APR  
03 August 2020  
Center for Federation and Constitutional Reform



# SESSION 5: EDUCATION UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

### LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Number of Training Conducted by DHEs in Region 3

Development of Learning Materials	Development of Learning Modules	Development of Learning Materials (LMS)	Assessment Instruments
20	20	22	27

### RISING THROUGH THE CHALLENGE OF THE COVID BASIC EDUCATION UNDER NEW NORMAL



### LOCAL DRY RUNS / SIMULATIONS

Regions/Divisions conducted dry run / simulations to what extent (percentage) to disseminate and evaluate various learning delivery modalities under different scenarios

### CURRICULUM

#### K to 12 Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs)

Learning Competencies	MELCs
14,171	5,689

### REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE NEW NORMAL



### REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE NEW NORMAL



### WHAT SHOULD BE THE EXTENT OF THE EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR?





### REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE NEW NORMAL



### RISING THROUGH THE CHALLENGE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: BASIC EDUCATION UNDER NEW NORMAL



# SESSION 6: DISASTER RESPONSE

### RESPONSE OPERATIONS



### Policy Forum on Decentralization, Constitutional Reforms, and Governance Innovations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Session 6: Disaster Response



### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT: THE TAXI EXPERIENCE



### MOVING FORWARD: Disaster Risk Reduction and Management In the New Normal

Presented by: Rosalinda Arce L. Wernick, LPT, WDR Office of Civil Defense, August 28, 2020



### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT: THE TAXI EXPERIENCE



### Taal Volcano Eruption 2020

Provincial Government of Batangas









# SESSION 7: ELECTORAL AND POLITICAL REFORM

**DYNAMICS OF PHILIPPINE POLITICS**

- Political dynasties = Political processes that result in transfer of power from one generation to another
- The focus is not so much on the formal structure of the government but on the behavior of its actors and the nature of their interactions
- Example: Instead of discussing the powers and functions of the various branches, it would give us more insight if the discussion is on how the respective uses the same resources to influence one another.

**The unfinished reforms**

- Political party reform bill
- Sectional representation
- Cordillera Autonomous bill
- Election code reforms
- Pliblocke and constitutional reform bill

**POLITICAL DYNASTIES**

- Political dynasties generally refer to traditional political families or the practice by these political families of monopolizing political power and public offices from generation to generation and ensuring the public offices almost as their personal property (Tabuena 2013).
- Recent studies show that 40-80 percent have political families and at least 75% of the members of the House of Representatives come from political families.

**Prospect of constitutional reform**

- Constitutional reform is still a possibility, albeit on a partial or specific basis.
- However, constitutional reform agenda can be held on a more comprehensive manner after the 2022 election through constitutional amendments or constitutional amendments process.
- It is a hope for the formal administration.
- Constitutional reform is an urgent agenda in the context of the changing times and the experience that we had in the past.
- The most urgent requirement is to strengthen the current democratic institutions, including the legislative, executive, and judicial systems as well as the political party system.

**ADVOCATING POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL REFORM THROUGH THE YEARS**

PROF. RANCHO CASILE  
PRESIDENTIAL ATTORNEY GENERAL  
PHILIPPINE COMMISSION ON GOVERNANCE REFORMS

**OPENING MESSAGE**

PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST  
DIRECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

**PRINT MEDIA THROUGH THE YEARS**

MR. CYNTHIA BALANA  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

**THE GREAT EQUALIZER**

- ANYONE CAN BECOME AN INFLUENCER
- EASY TO SET UP
- RELATIVELY CHEAP TO USE FOR SELF PROMOTION
- HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
- YOUR DATA IS GOLD

**MANAGING EXPECTATIONS**

- IT WILL TAKE TIME
- YOU WILL MAKE MISTAKES
- NOT ALL WILL GO VIRAL
- SUCCESS IS NOT GUARANTEED
- DISCERNMENT IS KEY

**PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

SESSION 8  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2020 | 8:00AM-12:00PM

Register at: [tiny.cc/dlgras8w](https://tiny.cc/dlgras8w)

**MR. RON POBLETE**  
PRESIDENTIAL ATTORNEY GENERAL  
PHILIPPINE COMMISSION ON GOVERNANCE REFORMS

**MAKING USE OF IT AND OTHER DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN**

# SESSION 8: PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE

**SUPPORT, ENGAGE, AND INFORM THE CITIZENRY**

**THE GREAT EQUALIZER**

- ANYONE CAN BECOME AN INFLUENCER
- EASY TO SET UP
- RELATIVELY CHEAP TO USE FOR SELF PROMOTION
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**OPENING MESSAGE**

PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST  
DIRECTOR GENERAL  
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**MAKING USE OF IT AND OTHER DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN**



# SESSION 9: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**PLARIDEL BYPASS ROAD**  
TRAVEL TIME BETWEEN NLEX MARICOR INTERCHANGE AND MARICOR INTERCHANGE HIGHWAY WILL BE REDUCED TO 30 MINUTES.

**89 B USD**  
(AS OF MARCH 2020)  
THIS IS THE AMOUNT RECEIVED SO FAR. THIS CAN COVER CLOSE TO 3 MONTHS OF REVENUE.

**PUV MODERNIZATION PROGRAM**

**UPDATES ON THE GOVERNMENT RECOVERY EFFORTS AGAINST COVID-19**  
HOW ROSARIO R. BOLLON

**DOT: IS LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR ENHANCED MOBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY.**

**BICOL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**  
66.7% OVERALL COMPLETE AS OF SEPTEMBER 2020.  
PROJECT IS ALREADY PHASED OUT.  
"Most Access Gateway"  
Started construction after 11 months.  
TARGET COMPLETION IN OCTOBER 2021  
Can accommodate 1 MILLION PASSENGERS ANNUALLY.

# SESSION 10: CHALLENGES OF ENDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

**CHALLENGES OF ENDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE PHILIPPIN SECURITY SECTOR RESPONSE & THE PHILIPPINE ANTI-TERRORISM LAW OF 2020**  
ROMMEL C. BARLAQUI, PhD

**TO RESTORE AND STRENGTHEN FAITH IN LAW ENFORCEMENT: APPROVED BY 10 MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND SENATE TO REPEAL THE PHILIPPINE ANTI-TERRORISM LAW OF 2020**

**END LOCAL COMMUNIST ARMED CONFLICT (ELCAC)**  
Administration's institutionalization of the whole-of-nation approach in achieving inclusive and sustainable peace.

**PENALTIES FOR ACTS OF TERRORISM**

**OPENING MESSAGE**  
PROF. DR. SYRINA JOY

**Policy Forum on Decentralization, Constitutional Reform, and Governance Innovations during the COVID-19 Pandemic**  
Session 10: Challenges of Ending Violent Extremism