

## CITIZEN REFORM AGENDA 2010

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# Agenda on Human Development

For Candidates and Political Parties of the Upcoming 2010 Elections

*Our greatest asset is our people, but many Filipinos are hungry, unemployed and homeless with no access to health services and education.*

*We must invest in our people.*

*We need to create more jobs here at home without compromising labor rights.*

*Quality health care and information on reproductive rights must be accessible to the poor.*

*The right to quality education must be upheld.*

*We need to reform our strategy of addressing homelessness.*

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**Citizen Reform Agenda 2010 or CReforms 2010** is a consultation process initiated by the Ateneo School of Government (ASoG) through its PODER program that aims to bring together the broadest possible representation of citizen organizations in the country to identify key reform agenda or issues that candidates and political parties must address come 2010 elections.

**PODER** is ASoG's transforming politics program that focuses on reforming and strengthening key democratic institutions such as the Constitution, elections and political parties. PODER provides spaces and produces action-oriented knowledge products that aim to facilitate the engagement of key political players in dialogues that facilitate their common understanding and consensus points on key institutional reform issues.

## Executive Summary

**H**uman development is central to any reform agenda this coming 2010 elections. This refers to the improvement of the life quality of the nation's citizens, which time and again proved dismal in the Philippines. With the persistence of poverty and of poor living conditions in the country, the Philippines needs a more effective policy agenda that would accelerate the development of Filipino people.

Four important sub-sectors are identified to contribute to a truly developed population: Employment, Education, Health and Housing. All of these four issue areas are intertwined and should be addressed in relation to each other in order to effectively improve human development.

Much should still be done to increase the momentum of human development in the country. Herein are key reform agenda and goals:

- (1) Development of a self-reliant economy through small to medium enterprises, with emphasis on a strengthened labor rights.
- (2) Installation of quality and accessible education through programs that lower school fees and expenses as well as through efforts to de-politicize the educational system, with curriculum revision to cater to job-skills mismatch.
- (3) Increased public access to health care services through effective devolution and through de-politicization of health service with emphasis on reproductive health and the improvement of the local medical industry.
- (4) Improvement of housing service structures and program implementation both administratively and financially with emphasis on respect for human rights.

## Background

To develop a nation, one must ultimately develop its people, for what is a nation but most intrinsically its citizens. A reform agenda thus, at its heart, requires a human development reform agenda that ensures that basic human needs are amply addressed by the government.

At present however, we see our people still below good living standards: one out of three Filipinos, an estimate of 32.9 million people, are poor while a third of the population, around 34 percent is part of the urban poor. An average Filipino lives on Php 41 a day (NSCB, March 2007).

The state of poverty allows us to see the big picture of human living condition in the country; however, it is characterized by a variety of interconnected aspects of a people's existence. Poverty alleviation can therefore only be achieved with a multi-faceted approach that at best can be summed up in addressing four key sectors which comprise the basic aspects of human development – employment, education, health, and housing. Thus, assessing all of these four would give us an in-depth picture of human development in the country. Simultaneously, targeting strategic actions in these key areas would lead to genuine development of the Filipino people.

### *The Real Situation of the Filipino People*

Employment, education, health, and housing needs are all intertwined to reveal a person's life quality. Does one have a good job with sufficient wages to finance all his daily needs? Does one have the right education, skills and training to get a good job? Is s/he healthy enough to do his daily tasks productively? Does one live in a clean and spacious house that allows one to live a healthy lifestyle?

The question we now raise is: Would an average Filipino answer yes to all of these questions?

### *The underpaid worker*

The labor sector, characterized by poor, insufficient and low-wage jobs, serves as a main hindrance to improved life quality which includes access to health services, formal education and proper housing conditions. As of 2005, more than 50 percent of the labor force earns wages around Php 5,000-8,000, which translates to Php33-53 per person per day (Malaluan, 2006). Moreover, the income of the top 10% of the income docile is equivalent to 19 times that of the poorest 10 percent (2006 FIES). Ibon Foundation research in 2006 also shows that 7 out of 10 peasants still do not own land while less than 1/3 of landowners own more than 80% of agricultural land.

At present, 2.835 million Filipinos (or 7.5% of the total labor force) remain unemployed (NSO, April 2009) while 7.1442 million Filipinos are considered underemployed (or 18.9% of total labor force). The lack of jobs here in the country leads more Filipinos to go abroad for better economic opportunities. According to IBON foundation, 3,300 workers leave the country daily for better jobs abroad.

Employment rate has indeed slightly improved for the second quarter of 2009. However Benjamin Diokno, former budget secretary, says that these figures are 'misleading' and that they

in fact conceal the deterioration of the Filipino labor force (Amojelar, The Manila Times, 2009). Diokno reiterated that decent relatively high-paying jobs were replaced by low-quality, part-time employment.

For instance, the National Statistics Office reported that 861,000 jobs were created by the government at the end of 2007 but the Social Watch Philippines revealed that the jobs created were low productivity, below-poverty-level wages, and provide insecure working conditions. In 2007, the government was able to generate jobs mostly in the service sectors: 142,000 in household help and services, 116,000 in transport, storage and communication, 111,000 workers in wholesale and retail trade (or what we called the ambulant vendors), and 103,000 construction workers. 2.4 million part-time jobs were also created while close to a million or 952,000 full-time jobs were lost. Forty-one percent of the labor force is part-time workers. Some 392,000 unpaid family workers were also created.

### *The uneducated future*

Education serves mainly to inculcate in the youth proper values and skills which would equip them in their future adult lives as Filipino citizens. However, one in ten Filipinos has never gone to school (6.8 million) (Education Network Quick Stats, 2003). One out of ten can't read and write (FLEMMS). One in six Filipinos is not functionally literate (9.6 million), 4.1 million Filipinos are complete illiterate. Moreover, one in three children do not attend school, amounting to 11.6 million out of school youth.

The country's basic education is also poorly maintained. ACT research shows that by 2002, the growth in enrollment slowed to .97 percent from 1.98 in 1995. According to Mr. Juan Miguel Luz of the National Institute for

Policy Studies, only 68.38 % of the total elementary school enrollees will be able to graduate; 42.50% will be able to finish high school 23.40% will get to enter college but only 14% will graduate. Important factors that prevent improved basic education performance include the poor nutrition among children and increasing learning and achievement gaps.

Subject mastery has been deteriorating and student achievement rates still remain below passing rate. Elementary School averages show 53.66 percent achievement in Math, 46.77 in Science, 54.05 in English, 58.12 in Hekasi (Social Sciences), and 60.68 in Filipino. In secondary school the rates are 47.82 percent in Math, 37.98 in Science, 47.73 percent in English, 40.51 percent in Filipino, and 47.62 percent in Araling Panlipunan (Social Sciences). Thus in 2007, the Philippines ranked 41st in Science and 42nd in Mathematics from among 45 countries by the Trends in International Math and Science Survey (Oliveros, Bulatlat Vol VII, No 27, August 12-18, 2007).

In addition to low wages, teachers are also poorly equipped with the required skills: some of them teach subjects that are not their area of expertise. The large student-teacher ratio also reveals the lack of teachers in the country. Public schools also witness overcrowding of classrooms, absence of faculty rooms, and poor health sanitation facilities. Insufficient teachers and school classroom facilities are further aggravated by increasing private to public migration given the increase in private school tuition fees. Forty-five percent of schools do not have electricity while forty percent have no potable water. There is still a shortage in auxiliary facilities such as science laboratories and computer rooms.

Quality of tertiary education also needs improvements. Passing rates in entrance exams are very low at 38 percent. Furthermore, some Higher Education Institutions do not follow accreditation standards. Less than half of them

have graduate programs. Asian Development Bank studies further stated that the education sector does not address job-skills mismatch in the country, failing to equip students with skills demanded by the labor market.

### *Unhealthy people, unhealthy nation*

The dire situation of the health sector in the country is evident in the basic health conditions of Filipinos: in terms of food intake, 16.2% of Filipino Families or 2.9 families, approximately 14.5 Million Filipinos, experienced involuntary hunger according to SWS last January 2007. Around 9.3 million Filipinos do not even meet the 100% dietary energy requirement (FNRI, 2005). One-third of class E & one-tenth of class D eat can not afford to eat of vegetables, fish or meat. Instead they settle with eating salt, soy sauce, bagoong with their rice, meat lard, coffee, instant noodles or kaning baboy. Twelve (12) Filipinos die of dirty water daily (USAID, 2006). More than 90% of all sewage in the Philippines is untreated (World Bank, 2006 in Cebu News Daily). Twenty-two percent of Filipino households do not have proper sanitary toilets.

In terms of maternal and child health, some improvements have been made although much is still to be developed. Ten (10) Filipino women die daily from childbirth-related complications because they do not have access to emergency obstetric care. We have among the highest maternal mortality rate (estimated at 162 per 100,000 live births) in Asia and the world (FIES, 2006). Among 0-5 years old, 34 out of 1000 die (NDHS, 2008), 27% are underweight and 30% do not grow up to their fullest potential height (FNRI, 2005). Only 62 percent of births in the past five years have been delivered by a health professional and 37 percent do not get at least three pre and post natal check-ups (FHSISM, 2007).

Health service still has a long way to go before it can be equipped in catering to the entire population. Only one physician and hospital bed is available for every 1000 Filipinos (Worldbank, 2002/2007). There was also a decline in medical practitioners in the country which include doctors, nurses, dentists and midwives (NSCB, 2005).

Moreover, two-thirds of cancer fatalities in the country lack medical attention (NSO, 2005). Only 13% of diarrhea cases are attended to. Only 19% of preschoolers, 2% of school children and 21% of pregnant women are given curative dental treatment. Seventeen percent of Filipino children are not fully given immunity shots and only fifty percent have access to drugs and medication (FHSIS, 2007).

### *The homeless Filipino*

The Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan prepared by the National Economic and Development Authority states that a successful housing strategy in the country proves necessary to the economic development of the Philippines: “Jumpstarting the housing construction sector can spur economic growth and alleviate poverty by taking advantage of its multiplier effect. Housing has a high multiplier effect of 16.6 times, meaning that every PhP10 billion worth of housing units, it can contribute a total of PhP166 billion of economic activity for the country.”

However, the country still witnesses thousands of squatters especially in the urban area, and even in the rural provinces of the country. With our exponentially growing population of 97,976,603 (CIA World Factbook 2009), population density simultaneously increases and housing programs cannot keep up with the housing demand of the Filipinos. The estimated total demand for housing by 2010 is 3,756,072 (Senate Economic Planning Office) shelters which translate to thousands of Filipinos who would fit themselves in small shanties. This also

means that 588,853 or more than half a million Filipinos will be living as informal settlers while 8,298 will be homeless in 2010.

The decreasing availability of proper houses is due to a number of factors which include not only population growth but also the affordability of houses which is the biggest non-food expense of a family (FIES 2003). Private producers cannot compete with government prices while government programs still produce unaffordable houses for the poor. Moreover, urbanization rate is at 52 percent which further increases population density in a number of areas around the country.

The question of substandard houses should also be addressed. An estimated 186,334 houses will be built with low quality materials and technology by next year. NEDA also reported in their MTPDP that centralized housing programs do not meet the needs of beneficiaries at the local level, resulting to a hundred thousand unoccupied dwellings.

### **An Agenda for Human Development: Reformulate, Strengthen and Integrate Key Policies**

In the coming 2010 elections, we have with us an opportunity to increase the momentum in the development policies for the four sectors identified, and ultimately on human development. The following are the key reform agenda on employment, education, health and housing:

#### **Employment/Labor Reforms**

Labor sector reform should aim for the *development of a self-reliant economy that respects labor rights*. The continuing problem of unemployment and underemployment should be addressed using strategic key actions that generate quality jobs with high productivity

and favorable working conditions. The government should develop small-to medium enterprises that allow more people access to economic opportunities. Agricultural development also proves necessary in furthering the country's self-reliance and economic development.

Enhanced labor rights on the other hand advances democratic deepening with free and fair treatment of all members of the labor force. The government must monitor and guarantee compliance to labor rights law and international agreements. Thus, the specially-abled labor force should constantly be protected and given equal opportunity and fair treatment. Rights of Overseas Filipino Workers should also be upheld.

Specific strategies and agenda should also be formulated to allow the government to effectively respond to the financial crisis, particularly strategies that discourage mass lay-offs and labor rights violations during such economic crises.

## **Education Reforms**

The *installation of quality and accessible education* is central to a holistic human development reform agenda. This can be achieved by addressing key issues that hound the education sector of the country: the low budget allotted for education, the poorly regulated tuition fee increases that commercialize access to quality education, the politicization of the educational system, the persistence of a curriculum that further training-job mismatch, the unresolved issue on out-of-school youths and the short education cycle.

Specific agenda on improving quality of and access to education include the increase in the budget allotted for education to cater to the pressing needs of the different academic institutions. The lack in school facilities, equipment and quality instructional materials

and the low salary allotted for public school teachers should amply be addressed.

To ensure accessible education, the financial accessibility is a major factor. A moratorium in tuition fee increase is an imperative given the current crisis in order to prevent private to public school migration, and to discourage increase in school drop out rates. Programs to minimize the number of out-of-school youth must also be implemented. Installing a de-politicized education sector that upholds democratic rights in the schools also guarantees fair and equal treatment in academic institutions.

Educational systems should also be reformed to enhance the performance of educational institutions. A new curriculum that is both nationalistic and relevant to the times should be formulated to address the mismatch between the skills schools inculcate the students and the jobs that are available in the country.

The public basic education cycle should also be lengthened with the addition of two more years to allow sufficient psychological development of the students, with additional costs shouldered by the government. The passing rates should also be increased to ensure that students are fully equipped for the higher academic levels and better regulation of teacher quality should be implemented.

## **Health reforms**

*Public access to health care services* also proves urgent as a reform agenda for poverty alleviation and human development and should serve as the focus of health reforms.

Access to health services should be addressed firstly by the devolution of health services. This includes de-politicization of the health system thus allowing non-discrimination in service delivery, as well as Local Government

Unit's capability-building in providing health services. Maintenance of publicly-owned health centers should also be promoted to ensure financial access to citizens in the lower income bracket. Reproductive health legislation is also necessary in allowing women access to safe options and services regarding family planning and reproductive health. Preventive health care services should also be given priority for a proactive strategy against diseases and epidemics.

The local medical industry should also be developed, opening more local opportunities for health care professionals such as doctors and nurses to prevent them from migrating to other countries.

### **Housing Reforms**

Reform agenda in improving housing problems in the country should focus on *the improvement of housing service structures and program implementation with emphasis on respect for human rights*. A holistic, rational and integrated plan is indispensable in addressing the housing needs which does not only look at the availability of land and residential facilities but also at the accessibility of the relocation sites (in terms of education, health, economic services) and the quality of housing facilities (sanitation, infrastructure), among others.

The budget of the Urban Development and Housing Agency should also be increased. Roles and functions of concerned government agencies should be set clearly to address ineffective and inefficient implementation of housing programs. Coordination and cooperation among different agencies horizontally- and vertically-connected should also be improved for better program implementation.

Housing programs should also follow standards set by national and international rules and regulations such as the standards set by the

UNESCR. Violence should not be tolerated during demolition projects and support services provided for housing program beneficiaries.