

Citizens Reclaiming the Politics of Reform by Making Elections an Accountability Platform



Photos: All taken by G-Watchers as they conducted Making Elections an Accountability Platform (MEAP) sessions.

Acknowledgement: Thank you to G-Watch coordinators, allies, partners and volunteers who have taken part in the preparations and conduct of MEAP sessions. Thank you also to Accountability Research Center (ARC) (www.accountabilityresearch.org) for its continuing support and assistance to G-Watch's action research on strategic approaches to accountability.

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Introduction

Advancement in transparency, participation and accountability reforms in recent decades has been seriously threatened by the rise of right-wing and fascistic governments and perpetual crises mismanaged by corruption and abuse. There have been many actions taken by the state to constrain civic space and threaten basic civil rights. This has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic that dramatically challenged the way collective actions solve collective problems.

In the Philippines, for instance, from being the darling of open government reforms, the government has consistently faced allegations of human rights violations and abuse of power for over five years. Even amid the pandemic, the government continues to prioritize its security agenda that threatens civil liberties and weakens checks and balances.

Yet, even with this context, citizen action for accountability continues. Government Watch (G-Watch) has been able to sustain its monitoring of [social programs](#) and pandemic services, such as [social amelioration](#), [health](#) and [vaccination](#). The role of G-Watch [accountability frontliners](#) is crucial to this. However, there has been a shift to where response to monitoring findings is going to come from and what pathway to take to achieve substantive gains, especially given [reversal](#) and [rollback](#) in TPA reforms in government. In light of the constraints posted by [fascistic government policies](#) worsened by the pandemic, G-Watch citizen action for accountability has shifted its direction to being truth-telling and educational tools in mostly online advocacy arenas and entry points to making existing accountability mechanisms, like the Commission on Audit (COA) and the electoral exercise, viable alternatives for substantive gains to be achieved. Such is one way citizens continue to engage, own, protect and advance the politics of reform in contexts not favorable to participatory governance and democratic deepening.



The 2022 national and local elections will be a watershed moment for the Philippines. In the context of a pandemic that has left many Filipinos in distress, the upcoming referendum on the leadership of the Philippines has reignited and amplified calls for good governance, basic democratic values, and priorities for a nationally shared agenda that includes the marginalized and heeds the calls of the people. Non-government, civil society, and grassroots organizations, among others, have taken on various initiatives to ensure clean and fair elections so that this shared national agenda is put at the front and center of the electoral campaign.

Launched by Government Watch (G-Watch) halfway through 2021, Making the Elections an Accountability Platform (MEAP) is one such initiative. MEAP “aims to provide a safe and open platform for citizens, citizen groups and communities to collectively reflect on the situation of the country, reaffirm basic democratic values and processes and try to identify shared agenda in engaging the upcoming elections to get back on track on the agenda of democratic deepening in the Philippines.” It is also “an opportunity for visioning among ordinary citizens – a collective re-claiming of our dreams and aspirations for the country and its future.”¹

Against a challenging backdrop—the COVID-19 crisis, various human rights violations even in a pandemic, and corruption issues hounding public officials, among others—MEAP aims to come up with key accountability messages, which will hopefully capture citizens’ sentiments and galvanize broader citizen action leading to the elections.

As of September 2021, G-Watch local sites have conducted at least 20 citizenship education sessions, both online and offline and in the barangay and city levels, in various communities around the country, highlighting the 2022 elections as an accountability platform to protect and advance democracy. Sessions have been conducted in Quezon City, Metro Manila; San Miguel, Bohol; Dumaguete, Negros Oriental; Marawi, Lanao del Sur; Cebu City, Cebu; Naga City, Camarines Sur; Municipality of Sibagat, Agusan del Sur; Marikina City (through Kabataan San Roque); and with organizations including the Techie Senior Citizens and Retirees Philippines and Pake Ko, Brew (a platform for youth conversations on the elections).



The citizenship education sessions are community based, where participants “collectively reflect, assess and envision the situation of the country and its future to prepare for the elections as part of a broader accountability ecosystem.”²

¹ <https://www.g-watch.org/think-piece/making-elections-accountability-platform-meap-explaining-idea>

² <https://www.facebook.com/pakekobrew/posts/155987076657954>

Sessions conducted dominantly had youth representation—recognizing their role in the upcoming elections—but were also attended by barangay officials, beneficiaries of the conditional cash transfer (4Ps) program, religious leaders, senior citizens, as well as members of the labor, transport, and LGBTQIA+ sectors. For MEAP, G-Watch also tapped the following organizations as partners: in Quezon City, the First Time Voters Network, and in Cebu City, One Guadalupe, BIDLISIW Foundation, Movement for Transformative Politics, Akbayan Youth Cebu City, and Liberal Youth Cebu City.

This narrative report details the key accountability messages obtained from the participants of the MEAP citizenship education sessions. The narrative is structured around eight (8) general questions asked of participants in the MEAP citizen education sessions, detailing the key messages from each locality per question.

The questions are:

1. Paano ka pumipili kung sino ang iyong iboboto sa eleksyon? (How do you choose who you will vote for during the elections?)
2. Anu-ano ang mga pinakakritikal at importanteng isyu o problema na kinakaharap ng bansa? Ng ating lokalidad? (What are the most critical and important issues faced by the country? Our locality?)
3. Paano kaya matataguyod na batay sa track record o plataporma ang batayan ng pagboto ng mga mamamayan? (How do we establish that voting should be based on a candidates' track record or platform?)
4. Anu-ano ang mga dapat gawin ng gobyerno para matugunan ang mga pinakakritikal at importanteng issue o problema na kinakaharap ng bansa na ating napag-usapan? (What should the government do to respond to the most critical or important problems of the country, as previously discussed?)
5. Paano mapapalakas ang pananagutan/ accountability sa pamamagitan ng eleksyon? (How do we strengthen accountability in governance through elections?)
6. Ano ang puwede nating gawin bilang mga grupo, lider at mamamayan para maisulong ang ating mga mungkahi o suhesyon, na tingin natin ay tutugon sa mga pinakakritikal at importanteng isyu o problemang kinakaharap ng bansa na ating napag-usapan? (What can we, as organizations, leaders, and citizens, suggest as platform or agenda to address the most critical or important problems of the country, as previously discussed?)
7. Anu-anong mensahe (slogan o panawagan) ang makakapukaw ng loob at kaisipan ng mga mamamayan para bumoto nang naaayon sa track record at plataporma ng mga kandidato patungkol sa mga kritikal na isyu at problema ng bansa o kumilos para isulong ang agenda ng mga mamamayan ngayong eleksyon? (What message, slogan, or call do you think is effective to convince citizens to vote according to track record or platform, or to galvanize them to act towards the citizens' agenda this elections?)
8. Paano maipapagpatuloy ang pakikipag-usap at pakikilahok? (How do we continue these conversations and engagements?)

*Paano ka pumipili kung sino ang iyong iboboto sa eleksyon?
(How do you choose who you will vote for during elections?)*

Across all localities that conducted MEAP citizenship sessions, participants responded that they consider the platforms and track records of candidates when voting for leaders.

But there are other factors that participants looked for when voting for leaders. In Quezon City, first among the considerations is love for country, expressed as “makabayan” or mapagmahal sa bayan.” Another factor were the good deeds performed by a candidate for citizens, expressed as “base sa mga mabuti nilang nagawa sa bayan na ikinabuti ng mga mamamayan.” Participants also listed positive traits that a candidate should have (“magaling makipagtalakayan” (good in discourse), “ability to lead,” “humility,” etc.), including accountability. Some also shared that they would choose candidates who is “maagap” (quick) or “mabilis rumispunde sa mga sakunang nangyayari” (responds quickly in time of disasters) and those who provide educational/financial assistance.

In San Miguel, Bohol, the qualifications for choosing a candidate are short but succinct. Voters must carefully examine a candidates’ personal background, advocacy, sincerity, characteristics, and platform, according to participants. This is similar to the considerations of participants from Dumaguete, Negros Oriental, Kabataan ng San Roque in Marikina City, Techie Senior Citizens and Retirees Philippines, and participants from Pake Ko, Brew, who also considered a candidate’s educational attainment and capability.

Participants of Kabataan ng San Roque in Marikina City also listed transparency of a candidate as a distinct consideration for voting, as well as the “heart to serve citizens” and respect for human rights. Notably, for the Techie Senior Citizens and Retirees, they listed experience in the public and private sector, as well as management experience as very important considerations, and stated that “we should stop voting based on relationships.”

Youth participants from Pake Ko, Brew added that they also look for a candidate who is “data-driven and has issue-based approach,” and who is collaborative, or “marunong sumuot (can wear) ng various lenses...” with “consideration to inclusivity.”

Participants from Puerto Princesa, Palawan, considered not only love of country and positive traits similar to the above, but also specifically considered, for incumbent candidates, what they



have accomplished previously. Participants made it a point to emphasize that that they will not vote for candidates who buy votes.

In Marawi, Lanao del Sur, there are contrasting views expressed. There are participants who prefer to vote for relatives who may help them with their problems. This view is especially true for Marawi participants who are 4Ps beneficiaries, and from the religious sectors and senior citizens. Meanwhile, youth participants stressed it is important to vote based on track record and platforms. While some believed a candidate should not give money, it was also believed that one may vote for a “candidate who gives money but is worthy of the position.” The other common answer is a strong preference for candidates “who are religious.”



Participants from Cebu City had considerations similar to participants from San Miguel, Bohol and Dumaguete, Negros Oriental. They said a candidate must be a “maayo na tao” (good person) though others said that is not enough: “We need leadership skills, experience, we also need to look at good things and bad things.” In addition, participants also said: “We look into the campaign and the strategy and seek the advice and recommendation of our mentors or influential members.”

In Naga City, Camarines Sur, participants added that they prefer candidates who are not corrupt or has not been engaged in corruption issues. Just like the participants from Puerto Princesa, Palawan, they will also not vote those who buy votes. Moreover, they mentioned that the candidate must know what their job is as a public servant, as well as the needs of their constituents.

Anu-ano ang mga pinakakritikal at importanteng isyu o problema na kinakaharap ng bansa? Ng ating lokalidad? (What are the most critical and important issues faced by the country? Our locality?)

The pandemic, along with its consequences on the public health system, the economy, and social services, remains as the most critical issue of the country at this time, across all participants of the citizenship education sessions (except for the sessions in Quezon City and Marikina City, which did not list this as a critical concern). Corruption and disinformation (“fake news”) also emerged as issues deemed critical and important by many of the localities and organizations.

In Quezon City, participants listed the following as critical concerns overall: low wages, teenage pregnancy, education and online classes, pollution, financial needs, corruption, poverty, issues in the transport system (i.e., traffic and LRT/MRT), HIV/AIDS, and drug use.

San Miguel, Bohol listed the pandemic as the sole critical issue faced by the country.

Aside from the pandemic and its consequences, participants from Puerto Princesa, Palawan, listed job loss, the bad economy, dwindling tourism, the Philippines-China territorial dispute, and corruption as critical issues the Philippines faces. Locally, they pointed out the lack of access and farm-to-market roads as important issues.

Participants in Dumaguete echoed similar critical issues as Puerto Princesa, but included “greediness of power,” the war against drugs, and extrajudicial killings as national issues that needed important attention. Locally, the reclamation of 174 hectares of land in Dumaguete and the low vaccination turnout (due to “fake news” on its side effects) are important and critical issues for the participants.



National issues of critical importance for participants in Marawi included wrong information and “fake news,” as well as cases of “missing persons, peace and order, [and] students being shot dead without reasons.” They also included slow internet connectivity for students’ concerns and vote-buying as important national issues. Meanwhile, drugs, family feuds, poverty, corruption, nepotism and backer system, harassment, inequality, waste disposal mismanagement, and killing and murder constitute the important and critical issues in their locality.

Participants from Cebu came up with an exhaustive list of critical and important national issues, which span from the COVID-19 pandemic, to issues such as teen violence and stress management. However, among their list, the issues that had various articulations are lack of

social assistance and economic problems, such as unemployment; poor governance, lack of accountability and corruption; lack of quality education and educational support systems; and human rights abuses and violations.

Participants from the Techie Seniors group likewise came up with a comprehensive list of issues, starting from issues brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most articulated were socio-economic issues: social assistance, poverty, and unemployment, and educational and youth development. Locally, the group raised concerns on the “inability of municipal officers to respond to the immediate needs of their constituents, especially during the pandemic.”

Participants from Pake Ko, Brew also came up with an exhaustive list similar to the issues discussed by the participants from Cebu and the Techie Seniors group. However, participants from Pake Ko, Brew, specifically mentioned rising cases of teenage pregnancy, widespread corruption and the prevalence of unqualified or incompetent officials in government, the lack of transparency and accountability in governance, lack of social services, and human rights abuses as critical national issues.



For the youth of San Roque, Marikina City, corruption, “fake news,” mental health, political patronage, teenage pregnancy, and maladministration emerged as critical issues.

In Naga City, Camarines Sur, they cited unemployment, corruption, and poverty as critical and important issues that they face. Moreover, they lamented the lack of support for the government in the promotion of local products, as well as support for the agriculture sector. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, and floods were also mentioned.

Paano kaya matataguyod na batay sa track record o plataporma ang batayan ng pagboto ng mga mamamayan? (How do we establish that voting should be based on a candidates' track record or platform?)

There are many ways to enhance voter education, and for the MEAP citizenship education sessions, the following emerged across the board as the best ways to encourage people to vote based on track record: initiating and/or joining awareness campaigns employing both traditional and social media; engaging in friendly debates; and personally attending voter education seminars available online or in their locality.

Quezon City participants especially highlighted maximizing the use of social media. Meanwhile, participants from San Miguel, Bohol highlighted the importance of attending “party rallies” in their barangay. In Puerto Princesa, emphasis is made on personal efforts to educate oneself, then others: one should join organizations that promote voter education, read up on candidates’ profiles and attend voter education seminars, then talk to others about it. Meanwhile, Dumaguete participants focused on organizing information drives, campaigns, rallies, and other similar activities to encourage others to vote based on track record and platforms. Participants from Naga City acknowledged that voters should “learn from the wrong decisions that they’ve made” and promote candidates with good track record.



Participants from Cebu especially highlighted mobilizing the youth in their participation towards projects and programs, and supporting sectors of society for democratic participation. Campaigns, information drives, and citizen engagement efforts should also be conducted beyond election season, according to the participants. Notably, the youth of San Roque, Marikina City raised the need to utilize and improve Freedom of Information (FOI) mechanisms to enhance transparency on track records, as well as the need for constant verification and fact-checking.

The Techie Seniors participants recognized that seniors are often the targets of “fake news,” and suggested that “they should have access to [facts] and [this] must be discussed in the family and groups that we belong with.” The group notably focused not only on the value of information drives or campaigns, but more so on the need for family conversations on voter education. This was also pointed out by participants from Pake Brew, which, among others, also suggested to “include [this] in the education curriculum discussion about government and governance.”

Anu-ano ang mga dapat gawin ng gobyerno para matugunan ang mga pinakakritikal at importanteng issue o problema na kinakaharap ng bansa na ating napag-usapan? (What should the government do to respond to the most critical or important problems of the country, as previously discussed?)

The first thing government should do to resolve the most critical problems of the country, according to most of the participants across the sites and organizations, is to listen to the people. Government should also engage citizens, stop tolerating corruption, and come up with concrete plans to address all the issues mentioned. In short, government officers must put public interest at the center of their functions, as mandated by laws and the Constitution.

All sites and organizations provided variations to the general responses above. In Quezon City, participants said that officials should especially listen to the opinions of those affected by an issue, and open their minds and widen their understanding. Corruption should be stopped. For specific local issues—such as teenage pregnancy, slow vaccination, and malnutrition—government officials should conduct awareness-raising campaigns and provide responsive services.

Participants from San Miguel, Bohol pushed for government to use evidence and data to respond to the country’s issues, and to provide the appropriate budgets for them. In Puerto Princesa, Palawan, participants highlighted the value of enacting laws and resolutions and unity among government officials. Participants from Dumaguete, Negros Oriental phrased “listening to the people” by stressing the need for public consultations and assemblies and increased government transparency. In the same vein, those from Naga City, Camarines Sur wanted the government to conduct consultations with the people belonging to various sectors as well as formulate and prioritize programs and policies based on their needs.



In Marawi, Lanao del Sur, participants exhaustively discussed how the problem of vote-buying is rooted in government culture—and therefore, government officials should denormalize this issue first. Emphasis was made on stopping a “culture” of vote-buying. Participants here also stated how the solutions may first be “demanded” by the community from the government to compel action, and how government should regularly “check on the status” of the people to determine whether government entitlements are properly received by beneficiaries, such as 4Ps. In the city level, participants pointed out the need for policy reforms, education and research, and upholding good governance practices.

Cebu City participants highlighted “decisive action on corruption” and government response, and that officials should be “be sensitive to the issues of the minorities and the marginalized sectors.” Like in other areas, those in Cebu City said consultations with the people are a must to resolve their most pressing issues. Additionally, government “should increase efficiency” and expand their personnel to accommodate more citizens who need to avail of services.

The youth of Marikina City also stressed that listening to citizens whose interests are affected (“pakikinig sa hinaing ng apektado”) is paramount. Listening for the participants also means being able to take constructive criticism and realigning plans and priorities whenever more urgent needs arise. For this group, there is a focus on getting to the root causes of problems to come up with responsive solutions.

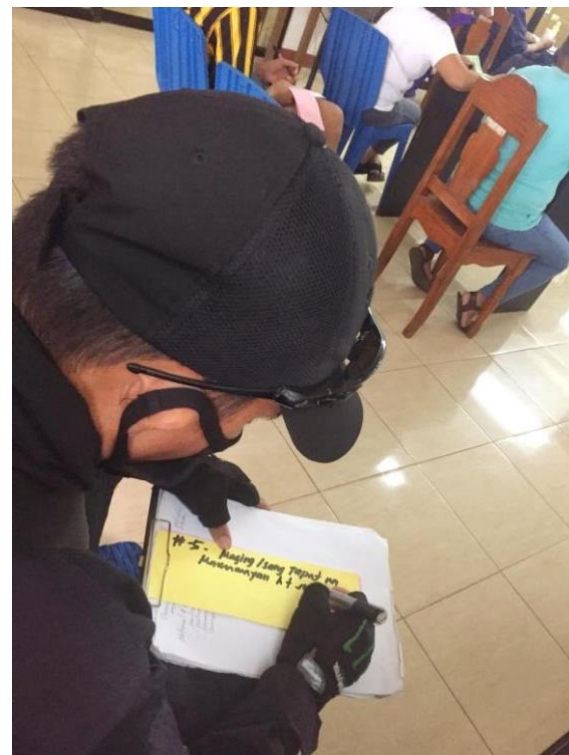
The participants of Pake Ko, Brew echoed the recommendations of the other areas for government to solve the critical problems of the country: stop corruption, consult with the people, prioritize urgent needs and draft concrete plans, be transparent, and use the budget wisely. Best practices of other countries should also be considered by the Philippine government.

Paano mapapalakas ang pananagutan/ accountability sa pamamagitan ng eleksyon? (How do we strengthen accountability in governance through elections?)

Participants from four sites that conducted MEAP citizenship education sessions similarly shared that elections functions as an accountability mechanism if citizens vote for competent leaders.

Quezon City participants added that the elections, as an accountability tool, must provide for the following: platforms for participation even for non-voters, youth participation in the *miting de avance*, access to accurate information about candidates (through social media and other audio-visual means), and widespread voter education and awareness campaigns.

Those who attended the city-level MEAP session in Quezon City were also asked these two questions: (1) “Gaano ka-importante ang impormasyon para maging mas maayos at magaling ang pagpili ng mga Pilipino ng tamang iboboto sa eleksyon?” (How is information important in ensuring that Filipinos can vote wisely this election?), and (2) “Anu-ano ang mga balakid sa paggamit ng tama at totoong impormasyon sa pagpili ng kandidato ngayong eleksyon?” (What are the challenges in using correct information in choosing a candidate this election?) The participants agreed that correct and truthful information is very important in choosing who to vote for as these would guide and give them clarity on who are the most qualified candidates. The prevalence of fake news and disinformation, however, poses a threat to this.





For San Miguel, Bohol participants, the answer was concise but simple: vote for the “proper” and “deserving” candidate: “Ang pagpili ng maayos at karapat-dapat na itatalaga sa mga pwesto sa pamahalaan o gobyerno.” This was almost the same response of participants from Puerto Princesa, Palawan: “Pagboto ng tama at ayon sa konsensya” (voting right and in accordance with one’s conscience) along with encouraging others to register to vote, and discouraging voting for candidates who did not keep their campaign promises. Participants from Dumaguete, meanwhile, focused how elections are a critical time for fact-checking and awareness campaigns.

Participants in Marawi, among others, also echoed Puerto Princesa participants on how elections may be a direct tool to exact accountability: “People should not vote the candidate who [show] bad reputation in their current office, to make them pay for what they do.” Similarly, participants from Naga City sees the election as an opportunity to replace corrupt and bad performing government officials.

Holding elected officials responsible for their promises via people’s covenants is one way to strengthen elections as an accountability tool, for participants in Cebu City: “There should be a covenant between the people and the politicians to make sure that all of it shall be implemented. In that way we can always ask [them] to comply with all the responsibilities they promised and signed. We should be able to speak in the SONA [State of the Nation Address] and ask the President directly.” Participants here also spoke of accountability post-elections: “We should make them face the people regularly most especially when they are elected, so that they are reminded of their responsibilities and to ensure that there is genuine interaction and representation.”

The response of Cebu City participants also surfaced in the responses of participants in Pake Ko, Brew, which also saw elections as an accountability tool by way of holding candidates to account for their promises: “People that can keep their word is something we need in our country.”

Ano ang pwede nating gawin bilang mga grupo, lider at mamamayan para maisulong ang ating mga mungkahi o suhasyon, na tingin natin ay tutugon sa mga pinaka-kritikal at importanteng isyu o problema na kinakaharap ng bansa na ating napag-usapan? (What can we, as organizations, leaders, and citizens, suggest as platform or agenda to address the most critical or important problems of the country, as previously discussed?)

In general, the MEAP participants did not suggest platforms or agenda to address the critical issues they have raised previously. There was only one area, in Cebu City, where participants suggested using “public health awareness as a basis for agenda building.” What they

recommended instead were ways by which they may be more aware and participative in the process of governance.

Across all the sites, the suggestions spanned from improving one’s own participation and knowledge of the candidates and better governance. There is a repeated theme that one should be an active citizen first, then engage with others and “make one’s voice heard” via social media and other campaigns, immerse oneself in the communities to know their needs and concerns, and participate in discussions with government. Organizing and moving collectively is also a recurring response, as well as lobbying for policies and administrative reforms, with some participants (in Marawi, Lanao del Sur) taking their cue from the “sustainable awareness campaign” by G-Watch. Supporting the youth and starting their education on good governance early is also a repeated suggestion. With the upcoming 2022 election in mind, participants from Naga City also stressed the importance of being an active citizen and voting for the right candidate.

Anu-anong mensahe (slogan o panawagan) ang makakapukaw ng loob at kaisipan ng mga mamamayan para bumoto nang naayon sa track record at plataporma ng mga kandidato patungkol sa mga kritikal na isyu at problema ng bansa o kumilos para isulong ang agenda ng mga mamamayan ngayong eleksyon? (What message, slogan, or call do you think is effective to convince citizens to vote according to track record or platform, or to galvanize them to act towards the citizens’ agenda this elections?)

Slogans which the different areas came up with were either exhortations to vote wisely, or calls for specific principles to be upheld by candidates.



Quezon City participants, for example, suggested slogans such as “Kunin ang isang Libo at Huwag Iboto” (Take the Money But Don’t Vote for Them), “Dapat Tama” (Be Right), “Boto Mo, Kinabukasan Mo” (Your Vote, Your Future) or “Makinig, makialam at makiisa para sa pag-unlad ng bansa” (Listen, participate, and unite for a successful nation)—all of which emphasized the power of citizens to influence the elections. Participants from San Miguel, Bohol came up with a

similar slogan: “Tayo’y Magkaisa! Pumili ng Tama at Kaunlaran ay Matatamasa ng Sama-sama” (Let’s Unite! Choose Wisely and Attain Progress Together). The same may be said of the slogans from participants of Puerto Princesa, Palawan: “Bumoto ng tama at nang hindi mag-sisi sa huli” (Vote right and you will not regret it), and from the youth of Marikina City: “Bumoto ng tama” (Vote right). The slogans from Marikina youth also emphasized that votes affect future generations, in that they suggested “*AngBotoMoAyKinabukasanKo*” (“Your vote is my future”) and “*#TindigNgKabataanOrasNatinTo*” (“This is the stand of the youth, this is our time”), highlighting citizen action and being proactive in drafting and implementing solutions to the country’s challenges.

Participants from Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, and Marawi, Lanao del Sur focused on upholding principles such as integrity and intelligence, service, justice, change, and commitment in their slogans. Dumaguete participants were concerned about the characteristics of the leaders they want to elect, and thus drafted slogans that reflected this, such as “Walk the talk,” “Integrity and intelligence over popularity,” and “*Serbisyong tapat, laging ugat ng lideratong sapat*” (Servant leadership is the root of competent leadership). In Naga City, participants also came up with slogans that remind to candidates to fulfill their campaign promises like: “Pangako mo, utubon mo” (Your promise, hold on to it), “*Ang boto ko saimo, pangatamanan mo*” (My vote for you, take care of it), and “*Ika binoto, dai ka maglinoko*” (I voted for you, make up for it).



In Marawi, meanwhile, slogans were in the local language. Participants from one barangay there suggested “*#Maginontulan_Tano*” because they demand *untol* (justice) from both leaders and citizens alike; another suggested “*#Shalimbtad_Tano*” because they demand *shalimbtad* (change) to the community as a whole, and the leaders who should have been the first to exemplify the change; and “*#Mala_I_Paninindug*” because they demand upcoming leaders to have strong *paninindug* (commitment) in their platforms, and for voters to commit to properly voting and choosing a leader.

Participants from Cebu, while not coming up with specific slogans, suggested that messages should be consulted further with citizens and should focus on health and economic issues during the pandemic, to resonate with people.

Paano maipapagpatuloy ang pakikipagusap at pakikilahok? (How do we continue these conversations and engagements?)

Moving forward, the recommendations of participants of the citizenship education sessions, particularly that of the youth in Quezon City and those on Pake Ko, Brew, highlighted continued engagement (“online kamustahan”), communication, participation, strengthening networks, and practicing community care to sustain these conversations.

Final Words

G-Watch’s Making Elections an Accountability Platform (MEAP) aims to enable the accountability function of the electoral exercise, crucial to averting further democratic rollback and reclaiming the politics of reform. This performs a vital role of providing an alternative, albeit longer, pathway for G-Watch’s citizen accountability efforts to achieve substantive gains. Specifically, G-Watch, through MEAP, facilitates collective reflection and analyses to make citizens more receptive to evidence, including G-Watch monitoring findings, in their decision-making processes during elections.

There is a strong conviction among the participants of MEAP sessions to consider platform and performance of candidates in determining who to vote. However, aside from the problem of money politics and patronage, the challenge of accessing useful and accurate information has been raised as a critical issue. There is a clear uptake for the need for more participatory reforms and evidence-based decision-making, especially in confronting the pandemic, improving the delivery of basic services and addressing corruption. Accountability messages crafted in the MEAP sessions call for people’s sense of responsibility and warn about consequences of not voting based on platform and performance. Participants recognize the need for further organizing and collective citizen action to make elections an accountability platform and advance reforms beyond elections.