



## How are Reforms Sustained?

*In the “National Conference on the State of the Reform Agenda” convened by Political Democrac and Reforms-Ateneo School of Government (PODER-ASoG) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in November last year, reform-oriented leaders and experts in government and civil society presented a number of perspectives on how reforms happened.*

Four main perspectives emerged, namely: Personality-focused Perspective, Institutional Reform Perspective, Power Dynamics Perspective and Popular Empowerment Perspective. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive and it is highly probable that the suitable environment for reform is the combination of two or more.

### Personality-focused Perspective

The first view is the personality-focused perspective. It proposes that reforms happen depending on the personality of the wielding power. Reform is based on the people placed in power. A leader geared towards reforms shall fulfill the reform agenda.

This perspective contends that even with good laws and mechanisms, those who hold power can easily challenge the system, subvert the laws and render the mechanisms inutile if they are not ethical and committed to common good.

### Institutional Reform Perspective

The second view is that for reforms to happen and be sustained, institutions must be built to prevent abuse of power and to guarantee effective governance. Institutions provide the framework how political leaders should act and perform their duties. These institutions provide for accountability mechanisms that ensure powers are not abused.

From an Institutional Reform Perspective, reforms happen when the right institutions

guarantee that the government works. The past decades of bad governance damaged institutions. Continuing reforms on these institutions must be sustained to revitalize their functions and bring them back to the role they play in ensuring transparency, accountability and effectiveness in governance regardless of who is in power.

### Power Dynamics Perspective

The third view is the state-civil society dynamics. For reforms to happen, the allies of reform at the top must ensure that the State works in favor of reform, while organized forces below ensure that citizens and communities support the reform. These like-minded forces at the top and below should coordinate and collaborate to support common reforms and join forces to take on those who will challenge or be hurdles to reform.

Sustaining the collaboration and coordination is key to sustaining reforms. Making it regular and tightening it to achieve common direction and take on shared battles with common understanding of approach is crucial.

### Popular Empowerment Perspective

The fourth perspective gives premium on the participation of the people in governance. The people-centered perspective suggests that it is the people who sustain reforms. The people are the key in providing impetus for change. There is a need to engage the people and involve them in reform efforts. It is

important to empower them through social protection and good service delivery. The key is to communicate and manage expectations and bring in as much people participation in politics and governance.

### Interplaying of Perspectives

Given the extent of efforts needed, the length of time and the multi-layered challenges involved in making reforms happen and be sustained to the extent that it brings about lasting changes in the lives of the common, all these perspectives and the approaches they offer are useful.

The country remains personality-oriented and the presidency remains the single-most important post in the country where power is concentrated. Families remain the most effective machinery to win elections and the masses still look at politicians and celebrities alike. Who will be the candidates for the 2016 elections and the people behind him/ her remains the most important question.

While we will have to yield to this reality in 2016, we can't stop there. Such approach of sustaining reforms is unreliable, unstable and unaccountable. There should already be some progress made in transforming the ways of pursuing and sustaining reforms by building institutions.

The checks and controls in government must be strong enough to withstand attack from whoever will try to subvert it once they are in power. Building a constituency among the bureaucrats, training them to think and act congruent to the reforms introduced, linking

them up with civil society and cultivating government-civil society relationship, strengthening particularly the accountability institutions, turning citizen engagement a way of life for government officials and citizens alike are ways to institutionalize reforms that cannot easily be subverted by political figures with particularistic interests, what Sec. Butch Abad calls “irreversibility of reforms.”

We strengthen the institutions by strengthening the stakeholders’ stake and

commitment to the reforms and facilitating the engagement of these stakeholders. From among these forces, patterns and regularity in interactions could develop, shared goals and ways of thinking and looking at things could happen more easily, demands for accountability on what has been achieved could come more regularly and ensuring power is in the hands of those who will sustain the reforms and fighting those who will thwart the reforms could come instinctively as a collective with power strong enough to win

elections. This will sustain reforms, as this might just be how the institutionalization of the politics of reform would look like.

This issue of Pop 2013 presents the highlights and synthesis of the result of the “National Conference on the State of the Reform Agenda” convened by PODER-ASoG and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in November 2013 on how to gauge and sustain reforms.

## Parameters in Identifying Reforms and Gauging their Significance

Reform can be defined as the improvement of what is wrong, corrupt and unsatisfactory. It is turning something into a better state. Plain and simple as it is, identifying a reform from what is not can be a challenge, let alone gauging the significance of these reforms. With a status quo that demands a tangible experience of progress first before recognizing that a reform has actually taken place, reform measures tend to be sidetracked at the initial stage eventually losing their momentum. It is thus essential to establish shared standards of identifying reforms and gauging their significance. It is a privilege to witness an administration that calls for reform in a country that badly needs it and seeking a handle with which to recognize, track and gauge these reforms is a collective responsibility.

What are the parameters for identifying reforms and gauging their significance? The National Conference on the State of the Reform Agenda held last November 2013 posed this question to the reform advocates in the government, academe and non-government organizations invited to the event. This article is a compilation of some of the most critical responses to the question.

First, a reform is such when it stands for the exercise of good governance. As elaborated by Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Florencio Abad, the reforms pursued by the administration are consistent with the vision of delivering good governance where citizens claim a deep stake in national development. For Secretary Abad, a mechanism, policy or political decision can be a reform whenever it enables sustained economic growth and social development. Hence, the Disbursement Acceleration Program (DAP), though met with

controversies, is to be identified as a reform since it ‘decisively addressed bottlenecks and leakages that hampered the timely implementation of priority programs and projects’.

Second, a reform is such if it contributes to inclusive development in any of the following functions: economy, society and democracy. As explained by Prof. Ronald Mendoza of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), majority of the countrymen are not yet included in the economic boom. He said, when the country experienced credit upgrade, the people at the bottom of the pyramid found no reason to celebrate with the big corporations, while in terms of investments, there is much in Luzon and barely in any other part of the country.

This implies a non-inclusiveness of growth. Since the economy cannot generate as much jobs yet as necessary to create a more inclusive society, the people are succumbing to the vicious cycle of patronage and dependency. To combat this inevitability, the government responded through expanding the coverage of the social protection system which will enable more citizens to provide for themselves instead of depending on politicians for their needs. This is a reform because it enables the underprivileged to gain a fighting chance at life thus promoting inclusivity. As a result, the poor, which comprises majority of the citizens, are empowered hence, are more likely to believe, buy in and support the reform processes of the government.

The support and success of one reform leads to the flourishing of another. When the economic aspect of society is enriched, other aspects are also harnessed leading to more inclusivity, growth and development for the country.

Furthermore, Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) Executive Director Sixto Macasaet sees inclusive development as the core of the development agenda of the reform constituency. Inclusive development, according to Mr. Macasaet, can be achieved through empowerment and democratization, poverty reduction, holistic development, stewardship and environmental justice, hence, these should be the basis as well for identifying reforms.

Lastly, a reform is such depending on the quality of policy design and policy execution. For Prof. Mendoza, the assessment of policy design and execution involves asking particular questions. Are the targets sufficiently ambitious? Does the policy meet the challenge at hand? Are adequate resources supporting the policy design? Is there a defined multi-year agenda? Is there a policy coherence with other reforms? Is it evidence-based? Is it sequenced properly? Is there adequate support from local and national stakeholders? Have coalitions been built to support its financing and roll-out, including at the LGU level?

These parameters in identifying reforms, in one way or another, reflect the kind of change the reform-oriented leaders and representatives of the reform constituency seek to find and judge as worthy of support and appreciation from the Filipino people. These are manifestations of what are necessary and valuable for the public who is hungry for genuine development but tired of the traditional ways politics is played and repeated in history. The parameters for identification rear a corresponding set of parameters in gauging the significance of these reforms.

The significance of reforms may be measured based on the area of governance it seeks to improve and its impact or value in the ultimate goal of societal transformation. Genuine reforms thrive in a political environment where the people are empowered and are able to claim true ownership of their government beyond the current administration. Reforms can enable societal transformation when they are deeply instilled in the systems, operations including the practices in public institutions. Among

the reforms deemed very significant by the current administration is the reform in the budget and social protection.

For Sec. Abad, the reform in the budget process is very significant since it has repeatedly been the battleground of vested patronage interests. Being a constant arena of struggle, the national budget process is consistently being reformed by the current administration with the conviction that a justly reformed national budget is pivotal in setting the direction and pace of government and development at the right track. The Bottom-up-Budgeting (BUB) is another significant reform since it enabled the public to really claim and own the process of budgeting. It has also served as a means by which public sentiments materialized and their outrage transformed into an affirmative expression. Meanwhile, the significance of the reforms in social protection cannot be undervalued as it is referred to by Prof. Mendoza as the 'ticket to the eradication of poverty.' According to Prof. Mendoza, as the leaders and the public work towards a more inclusive economy, the root causes of poverty are also being addressed.

A lot has been done to make a genuine and lasting change in Philippine economy, politics and governance. Though a lot of issues and problems are surfacing and reforms have been constantly challenged, Prof. Mendoza says, nevertheless, that the government is right on track as it tries to be responsive to the current problems and the possible needs of the country in the future.

The table below presents the highlights of the result of the National Conference on the State of the Reform Agenda held last November 2013 on some of the critical questions raised on assessing reforms.

What parameters should be used in determining whether the reforms that are accounted for can be considered as reforms and whether these reforms are essential? Are there existing frameworks that can be mobilized in doing an assessment of the reforms this administration has achieved?

PARAMETER	DEFINITION	WHAT DOES IT SAY	CITATION
Whenever a mechanism/ policy/political decision stands for the exercise of good governance	Such is a reform since it is a requisite of sustained economic growth and social development	DAP is also a reform. DAP and other reforms allowed us to surface and decisively address bottlenecks and leakages that hampered the timely implementation of priority programs and projects	Sec. Butch Abad (in a speech delivered by Usec. Richard Moya)

PARAMETER	DEFINITION	WHAT DOES IT SAY	CITATION
<p>3 legs of an inclusive country:</p> <p>1) Economy function</p> <p>2) Society function</p> <p>3) Democracy function</p>	<p>-It is a means to measure improvement that requires a dichotomy between the external and internal view. All improvements in macro and micro must be lined to economic activity</p> <p>-It is a means to measure improvement that requires a dichotomy between the external and internal view. All improvements in macro and micro must be lined to economic activity</p> <p>-For a more inclusive society, there is a need for robust social protection. The key ingredient is social protection is eliminating dependency and patronage politics. Once the citizens are vulnerable, they can be abused by politicians. The citizens will seek for patrons. If they do this, then we will not have a merit based society.</p> <p>- The powerful communication is that it is now the taxpayer that sends a child to school. It is not the patrons. This clarifies the true role of the government and our role for each other as citizens. This clarifies our commitment to each other.</p>	<p>-The 60% of Philippines' GDP come from these three areas. This reflects a highly concentrated type of growth. Therefore, vast majority of countrymen are not yet included in the economic boom. There is barely any investment in any other part of the country. Thus there is non-inclusiveness of the growth. This is where the rubber hits the road. We still have a work to do.</p> <p>-A more inclusive economy and an inclusive society is that which were we mutually support each other.</p>	<p>Dr. Ronald Mendoza</p>
<p>Quality of policy design and policy execution</p>	<p>Are the targets sufficiently ambitious? Does the policy meet the challenge at hand? Are adequate resources supporting the policy? Is there a defined multi-year agenda? Is there a policy coherence with other reforms? Is it evidence-based? Is it sequenced properly? Is there adequate support from local and national stakeholders? Have coalitions been built to support its financing and roll-out, including at the LGU level?</p>		<p>Dr. Ronald Mendoza</p>

PARAMETER	DEFINITION	WHAT DOES IT SAY	CITATION
<p>Development Agenda of the Reform Constituency:</p> <p>1) Lead to empowerment and full participation</p> <p>2) They address the total well being of individuals and communities</p> <p>3) Promote equitable distribution and access to sources</p> <p>4) Ensure sustainable use of resources and the environment</p>	<p>What inclusive development for us is basically those what will push for address people empowerment and democratization, poverty reduction, holistic development, stewardship and environmental justice. These are basis for assessing the reforms that have been done by the Aquino Administration.</p>		Mr. Sixto Macasaet,
Transparency; Accountability; Participation	For Anti-Corruption, a reform can be considered one if it contributes to the advancement of these (democratic) properties		Anti-Corruption Panel Presentation
Inclusivity; Access of marginalized sectors to health, education and social services; Availability / Appropriateness of all human development interventions by the government	For Human Development, a reform can be considered one if it contributes to the advancement of these (democratic) properties		Human Development Panel Presentation
Forest and Watershed Management ; Climate Change and Renewable Energy	For Environment, a reform can be considered one if it enables empowerment in these general areas of environment protection and conservation		Environment Panel Presentation

Using a democratization lens, inclusive development paradigm or other relevant and useful framework, how significant are the reforms being pursued and so far achieved by the current

administration? How critical are these reforms in advancing democratization or achieving inclusive development?

Democratic Exercise in producing reform / Democratic Lens	SPECIFIC REFORM ANALYZED	SIGNIFICANCE	ROLE IN ADVANCING DEVELOPMENT GOALS	CITATION
The reforms being pursued are consistent with the vision of what needs to be done: to plant the seeds for empowerment, where the relationship between the governor and the governed is rooted in trust; where the dividends of good governance are delivered; and where citizens claim a deep stake and ownership in statecraft and national development	All primarily in budget	Reform in the budget process is very significant since it has through the years been the playground of vested patronage interests, more so in the nine years of the previous regime, when we witnessed the many ways of pillaging the budget	Since the national budget process continues to be the arena of struggle, it is central to setting the pace and quality of governance and of development	Sec. Butch Abad (in a speech delivered by Usec. Richard Moya)
Irreversibility of reform framework	All reforms in general	How do we continue deeply installing reforms in the systems, processes and even practices of public institutions? How do we ensure that reforms lead to tangible benefits to the people? How do we strengthen our constituencies for reform? How do we combine these elements to reach that point where major reversals become politically and economically costly?	As President Aquino's victory in 2010 has been due to our people's will and desire for societal transformation, so will the irreversibility of our reforms beyond 2016 depend on how we are able to deepen our people's stake in statecraft and national development, and empower them to truly take ownership of their government	Sec. Butch Abad (in a speech delivered by Usec. Richard Moya)
Introducing reforms in the budget through: 1) Spending within our means 2) Spend on priorities 3) Spend on measurable results	Budget: Use of DAP	Initiate expansion and improvement of economy without subjecting the people from bigger taxes (except via Sin Tax)	1) Declining budget deficit 2) Social Protection (health and education) received budget not by raising tax 3) Next year the government will have a performance-informed budget	Sec. Butch Abad (in a speech delivered by Usec. Richard Moya)
Inclusive Development: Engaging municipalities, NGOs and POs	Budget: Bottom-up Budgeting	BUB has become a means by which the government is able to turn public outrage into a positive expression	By giving priority to social protection and social justice, budgeting is really being owned by the people	Sec. Butch Abad (in a speech delivered by Usec. Richard Moya)
Inclusive Development: Social Protection	Social Protection: 4Ps	It is our ticket to total eradication of poverty	What we are working at is an economy that is more inclusive – where citizens mutually support each other. We are attacking the root causes of poverty. We are blessed to have been doing these reforms now. We are in the right track. We need to be responsive to possible needs in the future. The population will explode in 25 years and the programs that are set now will be the answer to the problems in the future.	Dr. Ronald Mendoza

# Critical Agenda in the remaining period of the Aquino Administration

As established in the earlier articles, the Aquino administration pushed for significant reforms in the first half of its term. However, there are more areas in Philippine governance that needs to be addressed to protect, expand and sustain the reforms so far achieved. Here are some of the critical time-bound reform measures that must be accomplished in the next three years of this administration, according to some reform advocates.

## STRENGTHEN CAMPAIGN FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

The President established during the first half of his administration that good governance has transformed from sheer idea to an actual practice. The Aquino Administration has been promoting transparency and accountability measures in the system to combat the deeply-embedded culture of corruption and abuse of power. Reform advocates see this as significant for development but must serve only as a foundation for bigger actions that will advance institutional changes in governance, both at the national and local level, in the next three years.

For Akbayan Rep. Ibarra Gutierrez, the government must take advantage of the exposure of loopholes of the past administration by establishing mechanisms that will minimize the level of abuse that the next President may commit. Some non-government organizations concerned in local governance propose to institutionalize good governance

practices by issuing legislations at the national and local level, continue joint-capacity building among CSOs, LGUs, and national government agencies, and leverage technology in monitoring project implementation at the local level.

Since people empowerment is one of the most desired outputs of good governance, the administration must seek to ensure the formation of civil society organizations at the local level. According to Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO) Executive Director Sixto Macasaet, this is necessary to strengthen citizens' demand for reforms. In addition, Department of Budget and Management Secretary Florencio Abad believes that the government must work to expand the number of municipalities that participate in bottom-up budgeting to increase people's participation in governance. Also, the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill must be passed and properly implemented.

## EXPAND EFFORTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

For Akbayan Chairperson Risa Hontiveros, before the term of the current administration ends, it must be able to deliver an orderly assignment of the lands, ancestral domain titling, the security of laborers, fisherfolk settlements and urban poor welfare.

The administration must continue to work toward making economic development inclusive. Secretary Abad identifies the promotion of entrepreneurship to enable the people to participate in higher value chain of production and processes. He also thinks putting in investments in certain key industries is a worthwhile endeavor for the administration.

NGOs advancing human development push for the substantive participation of civil society in the critical processes of the financial management cycle. For them, the next three years of the Aquino

administration must see the use of tools to ensure evidence based evaluation or assessment for monitoring purposes.

## LAUNCH CONCRETE MEASURES TO INSTITUTE POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL REFORM

To enable political and electoral reform, the role of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) must be sufficiently emphasized. For Ms. Hontiveros, Comelec must serve as advocate and must be responsible for the passage of campaign finance reform accountability standards between the state and all parties and candidates. Comelec should regulate the fund raising and spending of candidates to level the playing field and strengthen the fighting chance of candidates. For NGOs pushing for political and electoral reform, citizens must actively participate in the selection of the next Comelec Chairman and two Commissioners.

An important counterpart of sustaining the reform momentum towards the next half of President Aquino's term is the effort to establish a kind of political capital and machinery that will prevent the backsliding to the old ways of patronage politics after 2016. For Institute for Political and Electoral Reform (IPER) Executive Director Ramon Casiple, from a power politics perspective, people have to be organized to acquire the necessary power to enable reforms to last. To achieve this, strong political parties is to be called for. The remaining three years must be utilized to bring about a party that will propose to sustain the reforms of President Aquino and assure that there is a candidate who will be a banner of reform.

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Poolitkang Pinoy 2013 (PoP 2013) is a monthly election fact sheet published by the Ateneo School of Government (ASoG) with support from Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES).

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# Factors Sustaining Reforms

What factors are most critical to ensure that the reform efforts of an administration are sustained to such extent that these reforms will have a lasting impact on the lives of the people?

(Based on the "National Conference on the State of the Reform Agenda" convened by PODER-ASoG and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in November, 2013)

CRITICAL FACTOR	DEFINITION	CITATION
Continued engagement of the government with the reform constituency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The President has given instructions to engage the reform constituency on how to take advantage of the events taking place in Philippine politics today to introduce more transparency and accountability with the hope of keeping all citizens interested in the budget process.</li> <li>We have to strengthen citizen's demand for reform as key to institutionalization. The citizens demand has to be sustained and to effective. On our side, CSO, PO, Cooperatives and NGO, have to strengthen at the national and regional levels, to be able to engage equitable and sustainable development.</li> <li>Constant constructive engagement and continuous dialogue between advocates outside and allies within the government. In tough times, the civil society must not be less engaging and more oppositional such as what happened in the previous administration.</li> </ul>	<p>Sec. Butch Abad (in a speech delivered by Usec. Richard Moya)</p> <p>Mr. Sixto Macasaet, p.36</p> <p>Usec. Chito Gascon,</p>
Strong non-party political movement	Those are breeding ground later on by activists who are really experienced on political work. In this country there is more future working on those right now than simply working in a political party. You name a political concern, there are political advocates who are trying to influence political decisions in our country. The advocates represent political objections to issues. That is necessary to achieve a strong issue-based and platform-based politics and defeat patronage which breeds weak institutions.	Sec. Butch Abad (in a speech delivered by Usec. Richard Moya)
Strengthen the reform agenda in terms of programs that reduce poverty and inequality	There is still poverty despite reforms, despite years of economic growth. Thus there is a need to strengthen the reform agenda in terms of programs in reducing poverty and inequality. This includes agrarian reform and ancestral reform titling and sustainable development, in-city and near-city housing and job generation. There should also be national employment guarantee for rural and urban. The focus should be on addressing the need of the poor to have access to resources.	Mr. Sixto Macasaet
Strong political parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political party is the basic unit of politics. Have a party that will propose to sustain the reform of Pres. Aquino. Assure that there is candidate who will be a banner of reform. If at present there is no one who can replace the President from among those belonging to the parties, then the reform constituency should find a replacement or somehow who can champion the reform causes. Try to develop that person to be a viable presidential candidate in the future.</li> <li>We need to build on the gains of the movement and translate it by engaging in politics. People from the movement must be involved in the party. So if you want to sustain reforms, grapple with the issue of mainstreaming from protest to politics. We need to move away from our single issues, our comfort zones and build the coalitions around. All of us must make that journey. Let us transition from our comfort zones, from protest perspectives to politics and governance, regardless of who wins in 2016.</li> </ul>	<p>Mr. Ramon Casiple</p> <p>Usec. Chito Gascon</p>