

# CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS: PHILIPPINE CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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# Civil Society as a Unifying Framework

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- NGO and POs (people's organizations, or CBOs) in the Philippines
  - Enshrined in the Philippine Constitution
  - Over 30,000 registered NGOs and POs registered
  - An estimated 5,000 NGOs are genuine non-profit groups active at the grassroots level
  - Genuine NGOs work toward organizing autonomous and active community groups (POs)
  - Genuine NGOs in the post-Marcos era: engaged in critical collaboration with government

# Civil Society as a Unifying Framework

- Roles of civil society
  - As part of society
  - As a kind of society
  - As the public sphere
- With regard to the MDGs, the Philippine government's National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) emphasizes NGO roles in direct service delivery, policy advocacy, but especially its watchdog role of monitoring government performance

# The Philippines Today:

## Basic Information

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- Population: 85.5 M in 300,000 sq. km and 7,107 islands; estimated population by 2015: 102.8 M
- One of the most risk-prone countries in the world from natural calamities and man-made disasters
- Rate of growth: 2.11%
- 54% urban and 47% rural, with 2/3 of poverty found in rural areas
- Families below the national poverty line: 24.7%
- Share in income/consumption
  - Poorest quintile: 4.7%
  - Richest quintile: 53.3%

# The Philippines Today: Basic Information

- Unemployment: 12.1% (2004); underemployment: 16.9% (2004)
- External debt: 61.9% of GDP
- GNP growth: 5.2%; GDP growth: 4.9% (2004)
- Note: The Phil. economy is growing, despite adverse effects of international shocks
- Fiscal deficit: public sector debt 101% of GDP
- Social sector expenditures: 41.81% of total expenditure

# Current State of the MDG Goals and Targets for 2015

**Government Assessment of the Probability  
of Achieving Them**

# Current State of the MDG Goals and Targets for 2015

- NEDA estimates that as of 2003-04, the probability of achieving the goals or targets is:
  - *High* for extreme poverty, child health, safe drinking water, gender equality in education, HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis
  - *Medium* for maternal and reproductive health, food and nutrition, elementary education participation, environmental sustainability, population management, and slum-dwelling
  - *Low* for universal primary education or elementary cohort survival

# Current State of the MDG Goals and Targets for 2015

- President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's strong commitment to the MDGs is highlighted in her:
  - 10-point program for economic development and poverty reduction, which highlights her six pledges to poor Filipinos for implementation during her administration:
    - Create six million jobs
    - Provide clean water
    - Bring power to the entire country
    - Increase the number of classrooms
    - Lower the cost of medicines
    - Provide credit for micro-, small, and medium enterprises
  - Public statements on the MDGs

**Government Perspectives on  
Cross-Cutting Challenges  
Priorities for Action**

# Government Perspectives on Cross-Cutting Challenges

- Rectify wide regional disparities
- Increase resource allocations for MDG-related programs and projects
- Accelerate and implement strictly laws that are conducive to MDG success
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems
- Scale-up localization campaigns
- Develop a strong advocacy plan

# National Government Advocacy and Implementation Strategies toward the MDGs

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- Issuing regularly the Philippine Progress Report on the MDGs
- Promoting workshops at national, regional, and local levels on mainstreaming the MDGs
- Accounting for how much goes to MDG-related programs, activities and projects by linking the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) to the MDGs
- Identifying investments per goal and target through the Medium-Term Public Investment Program (MTPIP)

# National Government Advocacy and Implementation Strategies toward the MDGs

- Urging the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs), the business sector, and international multilateral and bilateral donors
- Launching the "10 to 10 Campaign: Engaging People and Communities: Advancing Governance Reforms towards the Realization of the MDGs"
- Briefing Congress to promote urgent and responsive legislation for achieving MDGs and ensure corresponding budget allocations

# Localizing the MDGs

**Mobilizing an Enabling Environment for LGUs through  
the Department of Interior and Local Government**

# Localizing the MDGs

- Framework: creation of an LGU local development plan that includes targets and increased budgets for MDG, among others
- Capacity building for newly elected and re-elected officials toward MDGs
- Documentation, dissemination, and replication of best practices among LGUs
- Enhancing supportive setting for local CSO and business sector participation

# Civil Society Perspectives

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- For many NGOs and POs, MDGs offer an opportunity to engage with and, when called for, confront the government on crucial issues.
- The MDG approach (8 goals, 14 targets) is too limited to address seriously the complexities of poverty. It focuses only on one of the five basic elements of the Philippines' poverty reduction strategy – *basic services*.
- Actual implementation remains a source of serious concern in traditional skeptical civil society circles.

# Civil Society Perspectives

- The Philippines' designation as middle-income country conceals significant obstacles to MDG achievement.
- The monitoring or watchdog CSO role faces daunting challenges.
- Civil society groups envision their role as primarily bringing about transformative social change for the benefit of poor and marginalized groups, and holding government and society at large accountable.

# Donor Roles in the Philippine Context

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- Trade liberalization and competitiveness of markets that are not carried out at the expense of the poor.
- Fulfill commitments to the 7% target or increasing foreign assistance to poor countries.
- New thinking on international debt reduction, debt swaps and more, to promote MDGs and the poverty reduction agenda
- Significantly expand funds allocated directly to CSOs.

Conclusion

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- In summary, Civil Society Organizations consider achieving the MDGs to be a worthy aim, but the process must be understood as a mechanism toward a transformative paradigm of global equity, solidarity and good governance.