



Thinking Out Loud

Translating Our Work into Words

2021



foreword

by Dr. Selva Ramachandran

*Resident Representative,
UNDP Philippines*

What a year it has been!

In the last 12 months, we've witnessed the scale of the challenge that we are faced with as we continuously prepare, respond and recover on a magnitude that we have not dealt with before.

This pandemic has laid bare the full extent of human vulnerability for the first time in a generation, condensing the experience of an 80-year, slow onset climate crisis into an intense health

emergency. The path to recovery from this pandemic has not been an easy one. But in 2021, we saw glimpses of light at the end of a very dark tunnel. As we move forward, the new challenges will require integrated thinking and action that brings together our work across poverty and inequality, governance and rights, resilience and recovery. It will require creative operations, clear communications and outreach, and committed teams.

The coming years are critical, as the choices we make today could be the tipping points that transform people and planet. The job at hand is to turn the greatest reversal of human development into a historic leap forward, to get back to something much better than 'normal' – a sustainable, inclusive and resilient future, with the Sustainable Development Goals as a compass.

For the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the pandemic tested the strength of our commitment to deliver better, quicker, and more effective support to the Philippines in the face of compounded crises. We fully recognize the challenges that the current environment brings, and we are grateful to our staff because, despite these risks, UNDP in the Philippines remains fully operational even in extremely challenging contexts, continuing our critical support to partners when they need us most.

Aptly entitled 'Thinking Out Loud 2021,' this collection of blogs and articles produced in 2021 showcases the important work we have done in the past year, featuring the voices of our staff who continue to work tirelessly on the ground to reach those who are at the farthest in line with our mandate to leave no one behind. They face risks to their health and endure the concurrent anxiety that comes with every single moment they spend out in the field.



foreword

The articles featured in this collection reflect the insights and reflections of our valuable staff members, whose efforts serve as the backbone of our organization. The blogs offer partners and readers a peak into the realities of the efforts towards sustainable development amid a global crisis.

This collection is a testament to the belief that working for UNDP is more than just a job – it really is a vocation. Thus, we thank our staff members for bringing their best to the table every day.

It is our hope that these articles can inform, inspire, and instigate more people to support and join our programmes for people and for the planet.

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DISCLAIMER

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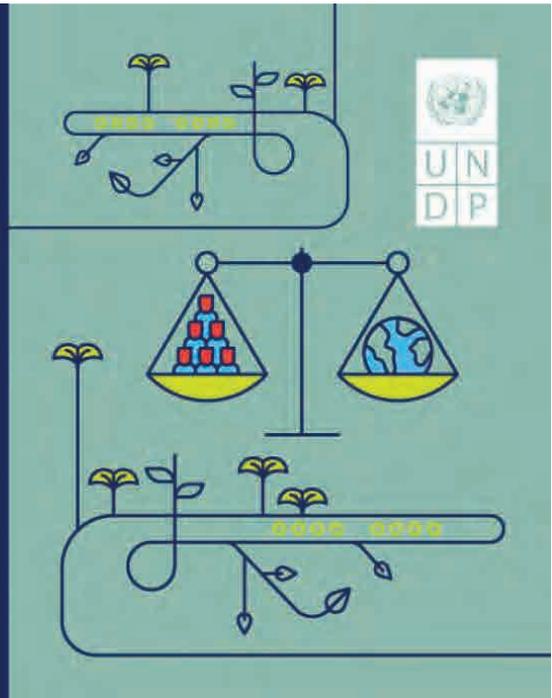
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We have a
**once-in-a-generation
opportunity for
humanity to choose
change**, for both
people and the
planet.

#HDR2020



Humanity at the precipice: Human development through a green lens

By Dr. Selva Ramachandran, UNDP
Philippines Resident Representative

COVID-19 has exposed deep flaws in our societies, taking root wherever it has landed and exacerbating inequalities. The virus is also a warning sign for many crises, and will not be the last, unless we ease our grip on nature.

Viruses jump from animal to human, and around the world, in a heartbeat. Increasing global emissions contribute to wildfires, typhoons and other extreme weather patterns. Typhoons Rolly and Ulysses clearly demonstrate the worsening climate crisis, greatly affecting the most vulnerable. Sadly, it is they who contribute least to the climate situation we find ourselves in.

These are evidence of the new geological age we live in – the Anthropocene, or the Age

of Humans – where humans have fundamentally changed the planetary systems required for life to survive on Earth.

The devastation caused by COVID-19 is the latest warning that humanity has reached a precipice. But, despite its titanic impact on human development, the pandemic can also be an opportunity to choose a different route, one where the power we wield over the planet is used to regenerate, not destroy.

The latest United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report shows we need nothing less than a societal transformation if the next frontier of human progress is to succeed. This starts by rejecting the idea that we must choose between people or planet. Human development at the expense of the planet is not development at all. It must and can be both.

This year's report introduces a new lens to the Human Development Index, which for the last 30 years has measured countries' health, education, and standard of

living. The new Planetary pressures—adjusted Human Development Index (PHDI) shows how the global development landscape changes when you consider the wellbeing of people alongside pressures on the planet.

The results are stark: no country is currently achieving very high human development without straining planetary systems.

In the case of the Philippines, the Human Development Index (HDI) reached 0.718 in 2019 from 0.593 in 1990, an astounding achievement—positioning it 107 out of 189 countries and territories.

However, if we account for the planetary pressure, the HDI value declines by 2.4% to 0.701. This loss in human development, although lower than the regional average for East Asia and Pacific, remains a significant loss that should be addressed as the country moves forward.

It is up to all of us to rethink our path. For starters, this means working with and not against nature. There is huge potential in actions that protect, sustainably manage, and restore ecosystems.

Several nature-based solutions already form part of the Philippines' national commitments in environment-related and development-related plans. Here, the nature-based solution with the most climate mitigation potential is reforestation, followed by ending forest conversion and improved agricultural management. Furthermore, pursuing renewable energy, sustainable transportation, green buildings, a circular economy, and sustainable agriculture offer opportunities to address the country's development needs, while reducing pressure on the environment.

In the end, however, the main barrier to our urgently needed transformation is inequality, of both power and opportunity. Inequalities are both a cause and a consequence of the strains we place on the planet. And the gross imbalances of power are the major obstacle to finding solutions.

Inequalities in income and human development are profound issues in the Philippines, with this nation unfortunately securing the greatest inequality-driven loss in HDI value – an average of 18.20% - compared to 16.9% across the region. Looking more deeply at inequalities, by looking at basic and enhanced human capabilities, the same trend emerges, further underscoring the urgent importance of addressing inequality in all its forms.

As we end a year that has defied all expectations, it must be understood that the COVID-19 pandemic is a warning sign for the future. It is time to consider what the story of this new frontier will be. We are the first generation of the Anthropocene, and the choices made today will decide the future for all those to come.



Creating a Green Recovery Pathway for the Philippines

By Dr. Selva Ramachandran, UNDP Philippines Resident Representative and Khalid Hassan, ILO Philippines Country Director

Almost a year has passed since COVID-19 hit, causing job losses and increasing poverty levels. Sadly, this has impacted people unevenly, particularly women, youth, the poor, and informal sector workers.

A recent UNDP survey showed many households (27%) earning below PHP 10,000 lost all income during lockdowns. Estimates from ILO further revealed that 10.9 million workers in the Philippines have had their livelihoods disrupted – equivalent to 25% of total employment in the country. Women and youth are particularly impacted, especially those studying, training, job-hunting, or working part-time.

As the pandemic continues, socio-economic recovery remains uncertain. The World

Economic Outlook (2020) projections showed a glimmer of hope for the Philippines, but slowly striding on the path to recovery in 2021 and beyond. Sustainable recovery requires building back better in new ways. To do so, we need to work collaboratively.

Expanding digitalization is one approach. The ILO's Future of Work in the Philippines Report recommended promoting competitive, innovative industries, and advancing productive employment, but noted that it must be accompanied by upskilling or reskilling workforces - particularly those in technology-supporting sectors, or those most impacted by COVID-19 or changes to traditional work - as well as investing in the digital and green economies.

Jump-starting a green recovery with more decent jobs, and healthy and resilient societies is crucial to building back better and greener. Although modest compared to some countries, the Philippines is considered well on its way towards effective recovery thanks to the significant actions taken by the government.

Notably, the government is at the cusp of submitting its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which aims for an ambitious target of 75% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. But to do so, investment in green technology and energy is essential, while enabling a green recovery strategy.

This approach – putting emphasis on recovery that benefits all and progresses towards a greener economy – is not just good for our health and the environment; It is good for economic growth. UNDP’s 2020 Human Development Report shows a US \$2-10 return for every \$1 invested in nature- and climate-aligned COVID-19 stimulus packages. For the Philippines, this means COVID-19 economic recovery projects should also contribute to overall improvement of the environment and natural resources while reviving affected livelihoods, jobs, and industries.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) sets a positive example. Recent reports cited that BSP has invested close to US \$200 million on green bonds in 2020 - bonds that invest in green, sustainable and renewable investments - making the Philippines the 3rd largest green bond issuer in ASEAN with over US\$ 2 billion.

Mobilizing similar smarter, better investment is crucial to recovery success, which requires incentives to attract domestic and foreign capital. For instance, the proposed amendments for Foreign Investment Act could incorporate incentives to redirect foreign investment to green recovery opportunities – like renewable energy and electric vehicle production and usage.

But, this can be accelerated with a “Whole-of-Government” approach. Fast-tracked government efforts to promote green jobs, prepare the human resources needed, and monitor and support these mechanisms are necessary. Together with the proposed Philippine Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production, they will set a momentum for greener recovery while propelling the country towards its climate targets.

Timely action by the government should be matched with investments by others, including the private sector. The government creates an enabling environment and provides the required leadership. However, businesses and enterprises, development partners, business and labor organizations, and civil society play crucial roles to align efforts with the national green recovery agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, ensuring a green recovery requires the need to introduce support to unlock the potential of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Philippines – those most impacted by COVID-19 - and increase their participation in green and inclusive recovery. MSMEs are the backbone of the Philippine economy. UNDP and ILO remain committed to supporting the enterprises, employers, workers, and the government to helping MSMEs bounce back.

We plan to do this through innovative financing, as well as providing business development and forecasting tools that will enable planning and transition to sustainable and more resilient economic opportunities. We welcome open and effective social dialogue on how we can best bring this to life.

While the pandemic has caused one of the greatest disruptions of all time, the recovery effort offers a unique opportunity to change the course of development in the Philippines towards a human-centered, greener future, and leave a legacy for the next generations of Filipinos and the world.





Accelerating COVID-19 response and recovery in BARMM through the humanitarian-development-peace nexus lens

By Dr. Selva Ramachandran, UNDP Philippines Resident Representative

With more than 130 million COVID-19 cases globally, the virus has spread everywhere, including different parts of Philippines. With cases rising in urban areas like Metro Manila, many had thought other regions with recorded low cases will be spared. A year later, we see how regions like BARMM - with fewer COVID-19 cases - are still equally affected by the indirect consequences, both to the economy and the efforts to contain the virus, including higher poverty and food insecurity, lower life expectancy, less education, and more child death.

For BARMM, lockdowns and quarantines have caused work stoppages, reduced working hours and unemployment, hitting those in the informal sector – predominantly women – the hardest. Reduction in income has led to difficulty in accessing food, education, and healthcare. Almost 40% of respondents in a UNDP survey have family members dropping out of school. 62% felt that access to hospitals became more difficult. In addition to socio-

economic conditions, the pandemic has affected the peace and transition process. Together with pressures to social, economic, and political dynamics in BARMM, the COVID-19 crisis is aggravating existing and emerging vulnerabilities in the region.

Fortunately, the BARMM government has responded swiftly, pivoting its resources and adopting a ‘Whole-of-Government’ approach, with fewer cases as a result. In a recent UNDP assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, this speedy support from the regional government to communities has created a sense of optimism and strengthened trust between the government and citizens. While time will tell if the government will maintain this favorable outlook, one thing is certain - COVID-19 is shaping up a new social contract in BARMM, as in many other parts of the world.

By supporting equal and inclusive services, we can jointly strengthen that trust - a fundamental element for mobilizing society-wide efforts to combat the virus and lay the foundations for a strong recovery. Our report indicated that the region has the potential to recover by 2022 with an average regional GDP growth rate of 7-8%.

Sadly, with this lingering crisis and limited capacity for local government to respond and recover, unless the necessary human and financial resources are brought together through effective partnerships, it is likely that the most vulnerable will be left behind or this trajectory will not be met.

To achieve this goal, these partnerships must happen.

Now more than ever, the COVID-19 crisis calls for an acceleration of the “Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus,” a common phrase in government, UN and aid sectors. Intended in government, UNaid sectors. Intended to bring together the efforts of many, it is a concept that aims to address people’s vulnerability before, during and after crises.

Naturally, a more coherent approach ensures that immediate needs are met at the same time, ensuring longer-term investments like infrastructure development.

By doing this, we can address urgent needs and underlying causes of conflict and vulnerability, like poverty, inequality, and limited basic services. It also has a better chance of reducing the impact of recurrent shocks and supporting the peace that is so essential for sustainable recovery and long-term development.

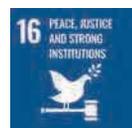
This would involve rethinking finance mechanisms from government, partners and the private sector, as well as new ways of working, the expertise needed, and leveraging the Filipino diaspora - and reflecting on how to develop and implement the roadmap for BARMM's recovery.

While government plays a major role in both the response and recovery, community engagement is key in the context of BARMM, whether to address the immediate health threat or to support and rebuild livelihoods. UNDP has developed tools to enhance citizens participation, including youth, women, informal workers, and marginalized groups. Effective use of such tools in the response and well into the recovery phase could help in the designing, implementation, and monitoring of programs. Experiences from other countries show that community engagement and effective communication are critical as the region charts its pathway out of the COVID-19 crisis.

Regardless of the efforts made, we know the coming months and years will be acutely challenging, especially in regions like BARMM. So, we must match the challenging situation with exceptional action. Jointly marshalling large public and private investments in high productivity sectors as well as health and social protection spaces is just one of the steps we must take.

While the pandemic has caused one of the greatest disruptions of all time, the recovery

effort offers a unique opportunity to change the course of development in BARMM towards a human-centered, greener future, and allow the region to address inequalities that were prevailing before the pandemic.





Healing Nature Through Ecosystem Restoration

By Secretary Roy Cimatu,
Department of Environment and Natural
Resources and Dr. Selva Ramachandran,
UNDP Philippines

The well-being of humanity depends on healthy ecosystems. Nature purifies the air we breathe, regulates our climate, cleans our water and provides us with food and medicine. However, decades of unrelenting economic growth at the expense of our natural resources have taken a toll on our oceans, forests, wetlands and rivers. Now, the state of our natural ecosystems threatens the very survival of mankind.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, landmark reports from 2018-2019 have presented us with a bleak outlook for 2020 and beyond. Continuing at its current rate, global warming is likely to reach 1.5C between 2030 and 2052. Even if we strive to end emissions today, global emissions to date will persist for centuries, driving further changes to our climate.

If that isn't worrying enough, around one million species are on the brink of extinction unless action is taken to reduce the drivers of biodiversity loss.

In addition, plastic waste pollution has emerged as a pressing environmental threat — scientists expect that by 2050, our oceans will contain more plastic than fish. Microplastics have entered our food chain, with many fish and marine mammals ingesting micro

plastics on an unprecedented scale.

The impacts of these threats vary across continents and communities. In the Philippines, global warming has caused frequent disasters that disproportionately affect vulnerable households. The ability of our natural ecosystems to protect at-risk communities is rapidly diminishing.

Over the years, the country has lost 10.9 million hectares of forest cover. That's 194,000 hectares of average loss each year. Fish stocks are drastically overfished in almost all areas except Eastern Luzon, Palawan, and the Southern Sulu Sea. Reef conditions, an indicator of fish productivity, have similarly declined. In 1997, just four percent were in excellent condition, down to less than one percent in 2012.

The country's rivers, coastal and marine areas have suffered from marine litter, especially uncollected plastic waste. The Philippines ranks as the third-largest contributor of marine plastics globally, which compromises fish productivity, tourism and human health.

Mangrove forests, which — together with seagrasses and coral reefs — provide protection against storm surges and rising seas. Unfortunately, they have suffered the same fate. Mangrove cover is down from around 500,000 hectares to almost half this amount.

Land degradation in the form of soil erosion and fertility decline has affected agricultural activities in the Philippines. The Global Assessment of Land Degradation and Improvement showed that there are an estimated 132,275km² of degraded lands, affecting about 33 million Filipinos.

The combined impact of these threats have yet to be fully realized in an economic sense. But, as is the case with many other countries, the Philippines may have already pushed resource usage beyond its limits, compromising long-term viability. Sadly, it's the small farmers, local fishermen, and

vulnerable coastal and upland communities that are the most at risk of losing their livelihoods – and lives – as a consequence.

All is not lost, however, and change is taking place.

Different parts of society have come together to contribute to the repair the country's ecosystems. A massive greening programme launched by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in 2011 aimed to plant 1.5 billion trees on 1.5 million hectares of degraded forest. Alongside this effort, NGOs have ramped up efforts alongside private sector organizations.

There are now 244 protected areas in the Philippines covering 7.8 million hectares. Marine protected areas are being incorporated into networks for more effective management. Strengthening wildlife protections have led to coordinated efforts among law enforcement agencies. Local communities and indigenous peoples are doing their part, with governments recognizing their effective contributions to conservation.

Innovative solutions to the plastics problem are beginning to pay off. Plastic users are finding new ways to reduce their footprint and there are growing efforts among the public to minimize plastics use. These are matched by government efforts to develop a National Action Plan on Marine Litter.

These efforts alone aren't just the right thing to do; they're also the economically smart thing to do. It is far more expensive to restore degraded forests, reef systems and wetlands, than to protect existing ecosystems. But to support this, we need to think better. Legislators should aim to make protection the priority over restoration. Moreover, communities must be incentivized to protect ecosystems through participation in the benefits derived from them. Such incentives can result in the added benefit of lifting communities out of poverty.

Innovative financial mechanisms are needed to encourage investment in conservation.

We need to understand nature programmes as cost centres rather than revenue opportunities. Treating well-managed ecosystems as assets would go a long way in advancing protection and improved management and the proper valuation of natural resources and their integration into national accounting systems will provide a full picture of their value to the economy.

Finally, we should look to encourage the application of technology and science-based approaches to restoration and environmental management. Continued investment in research can contribute to cost-effective solutions to our biggest challenges. Appropriate monitoring can provide better policies and approaches.

As we celebrate this year's World Environment Day, we call on everyone to support the global campaign for the healing of nature through the restoration of our ecosystems. We must do our part as responsible stewards of our planet before it's too late. It is, after all, the only planet we've got.





"Transformation, Inclusion, and Empowerment (TIE) for Lasting Peace"

By Dr. Selva Ramachandran, UNDP Philippines Resident Representative, and Dr. Chetan Kumar, UNDP Philippines Peace Team Lead

On International Peace Day in 2021, the Philippines has a lot to celebrate.

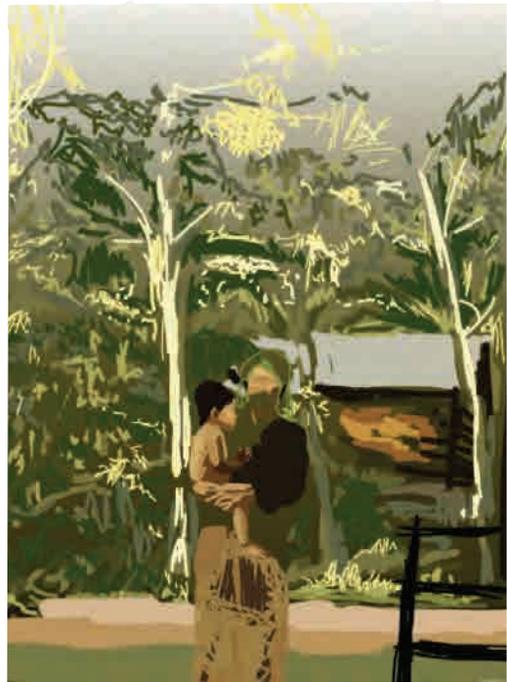
The Congress is close to passing the legislation that will extend the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) to 2025, giving it more time to fulfill its commitments under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed in 2014, which ended four decades of violent civil conflict in the country's far south. The BTA governs the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) created in 2019 under the peace agreement.

This is a tremendously important development for all Filipinos. Bringing its poorest region towards lasting peace and sustainable development will move the Philippines faster towards an upper middle-income status; allow BARMM's considerable resources to add to the national wealth in a more equitable manner; and reset many false narratives on the ability of people from different cultures to live in the same democratic space. The recognition of the cultural and collective identity of the Moro people will make Philippines a stronger nation and enable BARMM to develop

with new energy as historical grievances over marginalization are addressed.

The extra time afforded by the Congress will give the BTA the space to build the TIEs (Transformation, Inclusion, and Empowerment) that will bind its citizens and the entire nation to lasting peace and to unite in nation building and in charting a common path to prosperity.

Transformation is about building skills, capacities, attitudes, relationships, and behaviors that will allow future conflicts to be resolved peacefully. It is about LGUs in BARMM having the capacity to solve disputes before they lead to violence, and ensuring that electoral politics focuses on policies and substance rather than negative competition. It is about leaders collaborating for the common good. And it is about major armed groups decommissioning, guiding their members towards sustainable livelihoods, and then transforming to advance what BARMM Chief Minister Ahod Ibrahim refers to as "moral governance."



Inclusion is about the voices and participation of the region's significant minorities, including indigenous persons, minority faiths, and settler communities, in governance. The peace agreement of 2014 and the Bangsamoro Organic Law passed in 2018 provide specific provisions for this inclusion. The BTA needs to pass an Indigenous Peoples' Code that fully addresses the concerns of the community, and the non-Moro indigenous persons' demand for the demarcation of their ancestral domain. The parties to the peace process also need to work together to implement the recommendations of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Committee to address many recurring grievances over exclusion and marginalization.

Empowerment is about giving women and youth—the largest segment of the region's population—a clear role in governance. Disaffected youth run the risk of being seduced by extremist elements due to a perceived inability to bring about positive change or to achieve justice through current institutions. A systematic Youth Volunteer Programme will provide youth an opportunity to build resilient communities and an alternative to extremism, and should be supported by development partners. Women, as entrepreneurs, mediators, and peacebuilders, can lead their families and communities towards greater peace and prosperity, and should receive systematic assistance as they play these roles.

The national government, through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, and the BARMM government have both taken significant steps to build these TIEs. Despite the impact of COVID-19, they have kept the peace process moving along. The transition extension now opens new vistas of possibility to build on these gains, including new partnerships with civil society. UNDP has been a proud partner in this journey and will continue to accompany the process.

As violence, misinformation, and hatred continue to abound in more unfortunate

locations around the world, the Philippines can proudly celebrate International Peace Day as it hosts one of the more successful nationally led peace processes in the world.





Building Forward Together: Ending Persistent Poverty

By Dr. Selva Ramachandran, UNDP
Philippines Resident Representative

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is annually commemorated on October 17 to raise awareness about the need to end global poverty in all its forms everywhere. This year's theme, "Building Forward Together: Ending Persistent Poverty, respecting all People and our Planet," offers an opportunity to recognize those who are at the forefront of fighting poverty against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of climate change.

In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community recommitted itself to the aspiration to "end poverty in all its forms, everywhere", as embodied in the first of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Before COVID-19, nearly 1 billion people worldwide have been lifted out of poverty. In the Philippines, 6 million Filipinos were lifted out of poverty between 2015 and 2018. Official estimates show that the proportion of people in poverty across the country stood at 16.6 percent in 2018. The government reported that improved welfare conditions led to an expanding middle class and that the country was well on track to meeting its SDG commitments. Until the pandemic hit.

COVID-19 is reversing decades of progress made in the fight against poverty in low- and middle-income countries around the world. In addition to the threat to public health, the economic and social disruption threatens the livelihoods and wellbeing of millions. In 2020 alone, 100 million people were pushed into poverty due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

On 8 October, UNDP launched the 2021 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). It paints a detailed picture of poverty around the world, complementing moneta-

ry measures by looking at how people experience deprivations in many of the aspects of life: quality of life, education, healthcare, and livelihood. The report showed that 1.3 billion people are still multi-dimensionally poor and are facing deprivation of a wide range of basic necessities in varying degrees. The MPI offers policy makers better options to respond to the call of SDG 1 to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

In the Philippines, the most recent publicly available survey data for its MPI estimation was in 2017—pre-pandemic. It showed that 5.8 percent of the population is multidimensionally poor while an additional 7.3 percent is classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty.

Various institutions have estimated that the pandemic has likely increased the ranks of the poor, potentially reversing the gains the Philippines made in 2018 – an obvious impact of COVID-19.

Together with the Zero Extreme Poverty Philippines 2030 coalition, UNDP commissioned a survey which covered more than 18,000 poor households in seven provinces and the capital. Through the COVID Pulse PH survey, we found that nearly three-fourths of those families had their incomes decreased when the pandemic struck. Those in locked-down Metro Manila could not go to work, while those in rural areas lost access to markets for their products. Most affected were those who depended on informal sources of livelihood. And the pandemic affected not only their livelihood but also their ability to access healthcare services and send their children to school.

The situation is fragile, and the poor are in a precarious position. The Philippine Human Development Report 2020/2021 reports that the recently-expanded middle class is now shrinking. COVID Pulse PH also inquired into the assets and capabilities the poor have: majority have basic business skills, those in urban areas can work online, and they overwhelmingly embody traits they would need for the new normal: resourcefulness, initiative, and learning independently.

Poverty is not merely income deprivation but a complex web of interconnected issues. The SDGs give us an inspiration: progress on one goal is necessary for progress on the others to happen. Poverty is multidimensional. No single actor in society can claim to have the sole solution for it. A systemic approach is required. Collective action is not an option, but is a must. We need to “build forward better together.”

Beyond looking at the numbers, we must do more to listen to those who suffer the most, address the indignities they face and tackle the power structures that prevent their inclusion in society. We must be reminded that our own survival is intrinsically connected to the well-being of our planet, this means ending poverty within planetary boundaries and placing human dignity at the heart of policy and action.





Photo by Jonathan Hodder

O SalikLakbay series: The wizards of Quiapo — a solutions mapping adventure

By Rex Lor, Head of Solutions Mapping
for UNDP Philippines Accelerator Lab

The SalikLakbay Series is a collection of stories about Inclusive Innovation in the Philippines and will feature the “diskarte” of innovators, ecosystem enablers, and policy makers. The goal of the series is to bring to light the different ways on how innovators address their challenges with a combination of creativity and resourcefulness, how ecosystem enablers provide an empowering environment for innovators to flourish, and how policy makers are

rethinking the future of inclusive governance in innovation in the Philippines. For context, this series is anchored on a broader global conversation on Inclusive Innovation.

In this blog, a brave set of UNDP Philippines staff explored a frugal shopper’s paradise and one of the oldest commercial centers in the Philippines — Quiapo, Manila. In their SalikLakbay urban adventure, they discovered that:

“When we look closely enough and allow ourselves to embrace the possibilities, we realize that innovation, like magic, is everywhere.”

The cupboard under the stairs



Meet Roland (not his real name), a local technician in Quiapo, Manila, who fixes gadgets for a living. His workshop is inconveniently located in a tiny cupboard under the stairs inside a decrepit old building along Raon Street. He is, as many locators in the building would claim, the go-to-person when it involves hard-to-fix technical problems. He is at the top of his game and the apex of an army of informal technicians in the area.

Like a wizard, he can do all sorts of magic with his modified soldering iron (which can pass as a wand), vintage oscilloscope, and decades-long experience of taking gadgets apart. With his unassuming voice and awkward smile, he'd tell you precisely the problem of your electronic gadget and unselfishly refer you to his peers. Perhaps, he has more challenging work to be done like taking apart whole motherboards, cannibalizing for parts and putting these together to form a new board.

Roland is one of many informal hackers in Quiapo who quietly works at the side streets behind large shops or in the grimy side

streets. They seem to live in a different world with a different set of rules in a place where culture, language, and religion diverge in a cacophony of interesting sights, sounds, and smells.

Journey through Diagon Alley

Quiapo, Manila, when you look closely enough, resembles that of Diagon Alley. Minus the cobblestoned streets and the visual magic of Harry Potter's world, it is a place where people from all walks of life converge together to replenish business supplies, scour for cheap finds, or simply shop for home use. Like the famous magical alley, Quiapo is a weird ironic mixture of almost everything you may want to buy: branded or fake electronic gadgets, machine-made or manually-made eyeglasses, brand new or used clothing, original or modified hardware equipment, top-of-the-line or Frankenstein computers, mirrorless or vintage film cameras, and the like. Quiapo was also the location for the SalikLakbay Solutions Mapping adventure of the United Nations Development Programme Philippines in 2019. We were there for twofold reasons: to immerse ourselves with the experiences of informal hackers in Quiapo, and to test run the prototype SalikLakbay Solutions Mapping Adventure, a core UNDP Accelerator Labs methodology.



SalikLakbay is a combination of two (2) Filipino words: Saliksik, to explore or research; and, Lakbay, to journey or go on an adventure.

The idea is for a group of curious individuals embarking on an epic journey of identi-

fying creative solutions to answer a pressing need in the communities. These solutions are referred to as “diskarte” — a Filipino way of creatively solving problems in response to practical problems within one’s social sphere.

After a quick orientation on the SalikLakbay Field Guide at the country office, the group began the urban adventure at Raon Street, the electronics capital of the Philippines. From there, the Lakbayers wormed their way through the bustling streets and found gems along the way.



Cleverly Odd Artifacts

Of the many artifacts we have discovered in our SalikLakbay, the Piso-gadgets were the ones that piqued our interest the most. Piso-gadgets are one-peso coin-operated vending machines made from hacked electronic gadget or appliance and encased in wooden boxes that resemble an eighties-era arcade game.

They were not only ubiquitous, but they also represent an underlying culture that is prevalent in the area. Francis Capistrano, the Head of Experimentation of the UNDP PH Accelerator Lab, described this phenomenon succinctly: “Piso-gadgets are expressions of a deep problem. And, the problem is still the liquidity of the people. We see a lot of these piso-gadgets because it’s the only thing they can afford: five minutes of Facebook. The

issue is deeply rooted in poverty!” He added: “This is like putting your WiFi in a sachet.”

1. Pisonet — Pisonets are standalone internet kiosks that operate by inserting Php1.00 coins in exchange for 5 minutes of internet use. We observed that most users access their Facebook accounts and watch YouTube videos. Pisonets are made by assembling old cannibalized computer parts, CRT / LCD monitor, a digital coin slot & timer.

2. Piso-PS4 / XBOX — Piso-PS4 / Xbox 3. — machines are game consoles wired to a digital coin slot & timer mechanism and encased in a wooden box. 32” LCD TVs are usually included in the package for the best arcade gaming experience. Users also watch preloaded movies and karaoke

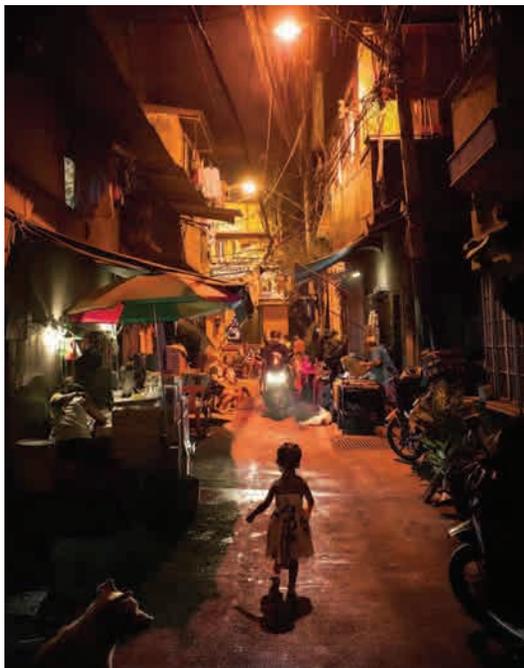
videos from hacked gaming consoles.

3. Pisotubig — This is a coin-operated water vending machine that integrates digital coin slot & timer with an analog water pump. This is a mainstay and is found littered all over the place. Users either purchase paper cups or come with their tumblers.

4. PisoWiFi — This WiFi hotspot vending machine allows one to connect to the internet for five minutes for as low as Php1.00 only. Filipino hackers managed to flash and reinstall a new firmware from old routers and designed a landing page for ease-of-use.

Aside from these four, word on the street points us to other applications of the piso-gadgets that include piso-aircon, piso-laundry and many more. The possibilities are endless.

SalikLakbay Reflections



After hours of immersive adventure, we finally reached our ultimate destination, Escolta Street, to regroup, refresh and reflect. After all, SalikLakbay is supposed to be both a collaborative journey to empathize with the grassroots communities and an inward journey of self-reflection, thus the need to

articulate personal reflections on the adventure. The following are the key insights that came out from the collective reflections:

Rootedness in empathy. We know and learn that innovation should be rooted in empathy. But an innovation that comes from “lived empathy” raises that to the next level. Acknowledging the innovativeness of grassroots innovators shifts the dynamics between traditional producers and consumers of innovation. Anil Gupta, the founder of the Honey Bee Network in India, explains this well: Rather than looking at inhabitants of poor regions collectively as a sink for aid and advice, we need to recognize their contributions formally as a source of inventions and innovations.

Resilient creativity. Former ALabPH Comms Consultant, AC Dimatatac, is not new to the Quiapo experience, she explained. She has visited the place countless times when she was honing her skills as a photography student. But she was always amazed at finding new things every time she visited. Describing her experience in a nutshell, “What struck me most is that Filipinos are very resourceful. I think it’s an innate ability to be creative and resilient by maximizing what we have and create something that everyone can use.”

Informal Ecosystem. Francis Capistrano first noticed the informal ecosystem in Quiapo when he asked technicians how they learned: “They would always say I’d learn on my own or someone taught me through apprenticeship. There also exists a form of hierarchy and a loose network of hackers where they know who’s good at what.” Francis also recounts that there is no notion of competition but more of cooperation — Or, as he says: “Coopetition.”

Collaborative Building. The idea of collaboration where one person builds on the improvements of another is something that Irina Velasco, the Head of Exploration of the UNDP PH Accelerator Lab, observed in Quiapo. She realized that “Not everyone

sells everything, and each shop tends to specialize in specific parts to not directly compete with each other. There is also a sharing of knowledge and information and they readily share when they discover something new.”

Sharing Economy. Yi Wu and Lin Liu, both UNDP Philippines interns, compared the ecosystem in Quiapo as having elements of an informal sharing economy. Lin finds the piso-gadget as a creative way to make money while allowing other people to play the expensive gadget. This ecosystem, however, has a dark side to it as Yi observes: “This ecosystem seems to make people be stuck by making them get used to it.” She added that “They should be exposed to the external community and be connected with other parts of Manila to learn new skill sets and help them grow in the process.”

Ready for more

ALabPH Intern Marky Torres finds the SalikLakbay to be too short and was hoping to have immersed himself longer to see more different aspects of grassroots innovation:

“For two hours, we only saw snippets of how these innovations were being used. I’d love to be able to immerse myself fully in the experience to understand deeply the context and culture behind each innovation.”



Our sentiments exactly, Marky, and we are indeed planning more SalikLakbay with our UNDP Philippines Accelerator Lab partners.

Special thanks to the following teams from the UNDP Philippines Country Office for supporting some of your teammates to join in the SalikLakbay: Accelerator Lab, Impact Advisory Team, Results & Quality Team, Institutions & Partnerships Team.





Aspiring to be ADEPT: Lessons from a COVID-19 digital cash transfers pilot

By Irina Velasco, Head of Exploration,
UNDP PH Accelerator Labs.

Amidst the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns, governments rushed to provide cash transfers to its vulnerable groups as part of their economic relief packages. With constraints on in-person interaction due to the risks of COVID-19, digital financial services (DFS) present as an alternative to deliver cash transfers safely, efficiently, and transparently. They also hold the potential to improve access to financial services especially for those who are not formally included in the financial system.

To this end, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Philippines, in collaboration with government and private sector partners, launched the Adaptable Digitally-Enabled Post-crisis Transformation

(ADEPT). This initiative aimed to pilot digital cash transfers through mobile wallets as part of Pasig City's supplemental social amelioration program (SAP) disbursement and extend digital financial literacy to beneficiaries. The pilot targeted two sets of cash transfer beneficiaries, which provided the opportunity to test its applicability for social protection in the context of disaster response, while supporting the city's vision toward good governance, digitalization, and financial inclusion. Together with IDInsight, project proponents and partners conducted a process evaluation of the pilot to better understand the implications of the different factors at play in realizing this ambition.

Below we share some reflections that surface considerations for government agencies and program implementers seeking to shift from manual to digital cash transfers for financial inclusion:

A balancing act: the need for...

expediency, while ensuring validation and long-term goals for inclusion

Delivering cash transfers from government to its citizens digitally involves screening for eligibility. This entails the collection of beneficiaries' personal data for the crucial Know Your Client (KYC) verification undertaken by mobile money operators (MMOs) for enrollment into mobile wallets. The program aimed to do full KYC for beneficiaries to allow them to use the full functionality of the mobile money wallets, such as cashing out through designated outlets, or accessing certain services such as investing money and obtaining loans. Once beneficiaries have been properly identified and set up to receive cash transfers, digital systems can enable government disbursements at the click of a button.

To ensure they can reach as many families as possible, the city government's set criteria require a database reliant on other databases to minimize duplication of household recipients. Attaining this however can be time and resource-intensive, especially in the absence of a national ID system or a real-time database of residents, which could inform a targeted approach more easily. For this project it entailed a process of sorting through hard copies of beneficiary lists and instituting basic management information protocols to sort and filter data accordingly. Yet as a process compliant with KYC requirements of the MMO, coupled with the city's criteria for supplemental SAP and requirements for government compliance, this introduced rigor in the validation process especially where neither a national ID system nor baseline information at the city level is available. This exercise can therefore provide the foundation from which more advanced innovations can be applied to ensure efficiency in data collection and integrity of data quality, the purpose of which may well extend to governments' planning, policy, fiscal and service delivery.

Meanwhile a common issue among beneficiaries was that some did not have the types of IDs that the MMO would typically accept. The program implementation team needed to find

ways to accommodate alternative forms of ID. This is especially the case given that the criteria for qualification is based on current residence during the pandemic, rather than permanent residence as typically reflected in official documents, especially for migrant workers. Marginalized groups are also less likely to have personal documentation in place. As a result, some beneficiaries reported receiving their transfers over a month after they were screened for eligibility.



Choose your ADEPT Olympian

Automation helps, but with(out) the right foundations...

Realizing the potential of fintech innovation in this case therefore requires robust knowledge management that can cut through ambiguities and refine verification, amid nuances that can come with various categories and conditions for beneficiary targeting. This has implications on access to platforms, prospects for interoperability, and the mechanisms needed to facilitate data collection and enrollment systems that are streamlined to ensure smooth data flows. For this project, program implementers from the Pasig City government and UNDP were collecting KYC data in person offline, and then would process the enrollment into the MMO platform by batch later in the process. To this end, DevLive+, an app originally developed for household and property data collection for climate resilient planning, was repurposed to secure consistent data format and accelerate the transfer of information.

This however did not eradicate the challenges that arise from beneficiary validation, given that the final checks are undertaken by the MMO. Only then it can

be revealed if the phone number was already registered to someone else, or if existing users had entered a different address, or did so with a different format.

Program team members would then have to contact the beneficiary and the MMO to resolve issues, which was time-consuming and could have been avoided if KYC datacollectors could immediately see errors as they collect beneficiary information. Government and program implementers would therefore need real-time access to the MMO platform to reduce registration issues. That registration issues relate to those whose mobile numbers have associated existing accounts (e.g. duplication, previously registered to another name, or beneficiaries sharing a number) surface how information discrepancies can undermine the speed of disbursement in line with due diligence. Because of challenges at this stage, three (3) in ten (10) people reported that they faced issues during the enrollment process.

Automation can therefore be reframed to support coordination mechanisms by integrating different data assets at the local level, which can also ease transfer of information between local and national government departments. Broader systems on national identity and information management must also be dynamic enough to respond to the realities of human mobility and changing circumstances. These must also be complemented with efforts to empower beneficiaries' sense of data ownership so they can update their information accordingly, as well as anticipatory capabilities for the implementing government body to mitigate Black Mirror type of scenarios. Together these can set the building blocks for real-time information which can support targeted interventions for social protection.

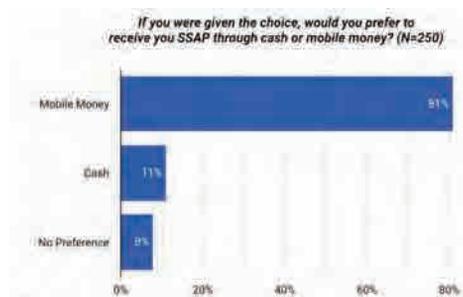


Fig. 1. Majority of survey respondents prefer to receive cash transfers digitally

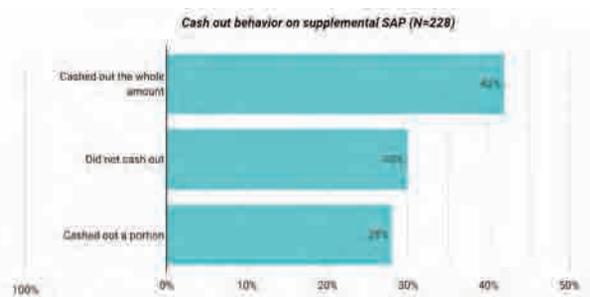


Fig. 2. Most beneficiaries converted all or a part of their digital cash transfers to physical cash

Source: *Delivering Cash Transfers Digitally Amidst COVID-19 in the Philippines* (UNDP, 2021)

Digitalization = contactless? The value of extending support in-person

To comply with the city government's process for validating beneficiary eligibility, registration had to be done in person. The project team employed both smaller community registrations and house-to-house enrollment (while observing social distancing protocols) to collect data for mobile wallet enrollment and extend digital financial literacy. Among the beneficiaries, only about a third had mobile money accounts prior to the program, while the rest had to open accounts.

Those who were enrolled at home had a higher likelihood of being enrolled in the company of household members, which extended digital financial literacy training to family members who can then help socialize new technology. This support at home provided reassurance in enabling beneficiaries to learn and use digital wallet, whether in lending the smartphones, assistance in navigating the technology, or explaining the practical application of using digital wallets.

Younger family members especially, stepped up to provide further technical support at home, which hints at the possibilities of using gamification to further engage and embolden families to reap the potential of digital inclusion. However, these would need to be balanced with continuous support both in terms of technical and financial literacy, to further harness beneficiaries' financial autonomy.

Earlier into the pandemic, regulations for financial transfers were relaxed enabling the first batch of beneficiaries to be enrolled with partial KYC requirements for disbursement. While they were technically allowed to cash out within 90 days even without doing full KYC, beneficiaries reported incidents where official money-in-money-out (MIMOS) agents would not allow them to do so, limiting their options to access their money. This has also led some to access their cash through informal means, which admittedly led to mixed results regarding transaction fees. On the one hand, it raises the need to better streamline the cascading of information from MMO providers to their designated MIMOs. However, it also surfaces another signal on how social networks are leveraged as an accessible force to support transitions for technological adoption by filling in unanticipated gaps at the local level.



*The local ecosystem at play: 12-hour piso wi-fi machine & community-based nudge for financial literacy (Translation: *WARNING* debt can cause the following illnesses — amnesia, loss of sight, hearing, and memory. Be careful.)*

Digital disbursements may increase efficiency and reduce transaction costs, but it is far more effective

when a whole-of-society approach is taken

A digital approach can reduce the need to deploy personnel to distribute physical cash, which also reduces the safety and security risks of carrying physical cash. However, unlike cash distribution which ends when money is given to beneficiaries, using DFS requires on-going support. For this purpose, Pasig City set up a hotline for beneficiaries to call for any issues they encounter. The hotline received requests to resolve various issues, such as having difficulty with a cash-out agent and following up on their cash transfer, as well as technical troubleshooting such as forgetting their MPIN and mobile app issues. Even if these issues could be addressed by the customer service of the MMO, many beneficiaries preferred speaking to a Pasig City representative instead. Despite having an automated notification system from the MMO, only seven (7) in ten (10) beneficiaries reported receiving an SMS message when the cash transfer hit their accounts. Others found out through word of mouth that disbursements were made, while some beneficiaries expressed uncertainty regarding delays in processing disbursements. These highlight the need for consistent and open communications to maintain trust. In addition to the automated notifications from the MMO, program implementers should plan for supplementary notifications.

For the community implementation, the team worked with a community-based group who supported the city government in identifying and mobilizing beneficiaries. They also played an intermediary role between beneficiaries in the lead up to the disbursement and were included in the capacity building for KYC data collection. Future iterations of such an initiative can benefit from identifying strategic local partners right at the onset and involving them in the implementation co-design to ensure that these are responsive to the realities of beneficiaries' context. Apart from contributing to the development of processes, services, and incentives tailored

to beneficiary needs, they may also serve as local champions for mindset shift to inform strategic communications in facilitating social preparation and navigating local dynamics. As the city government deepens its commitment to promote participatory governance, the pilot demonstrates how local community groups can be emboldened to support agile implementation of governance innovations on the ground. Groups can help leverage their local network and presence to sustain an inclusive ecosystem for social impact.

Working towards speedy disbursement to the intended beneficiaries, while setting up the ecosystem to facilitate financial inclusion, requires a whole-of-government and society approach. While data innovations may strengthen national identification and real-time information may accelerate the validation process, financial inclusion can only be sustained through the creation of an enabling environment supported by incentives, regulation and an ecosystem of actors to expand its application and use case. The recently-launched policy note on Delivering Cash Transfers Digitally Amidst COVID-19 in the Philippines presents preliminary insights on these, as the Accelerator Lab Philippines sets out to apply rapid ethnography and ecosystem experiments to further interrogate how digitalization can facilitate financial inclusion. Stay tuned and in the meantime, stay adept!



ADEPT moves behind the scenes: Atty. Bernice Mendoza & the joint UNDP-Pasig LGU core group, Ivy Custodio & UNDP PH Institutions & Partnerships Team, Alka Aneja & UNDP PH Procurement/Ops as well as Senior Management Team, Vianca Conmigo & Brgy. Team Leads as well as Manggahan community partners (Photo credit: Samantha Turingan)

With thanks to Aya Silva (IDInsight), esteemed Pasig City partners and UNDP PH colleagues for their contributions.



03 The Roadmap to #DigitalBangsamoro

By Mitzi Anne Mendoza, Localizing e-Government for Accelerated Provision of Services (LeAPS) Project Manager, UNDP Philippines

Technology has been the highlight of the new normal in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost everything was deemed as better if it were 'digital' that even karma was jokingly seen as such. But as yin is inseparable from yang, I would even go as far as saying that hope has also turned digital.

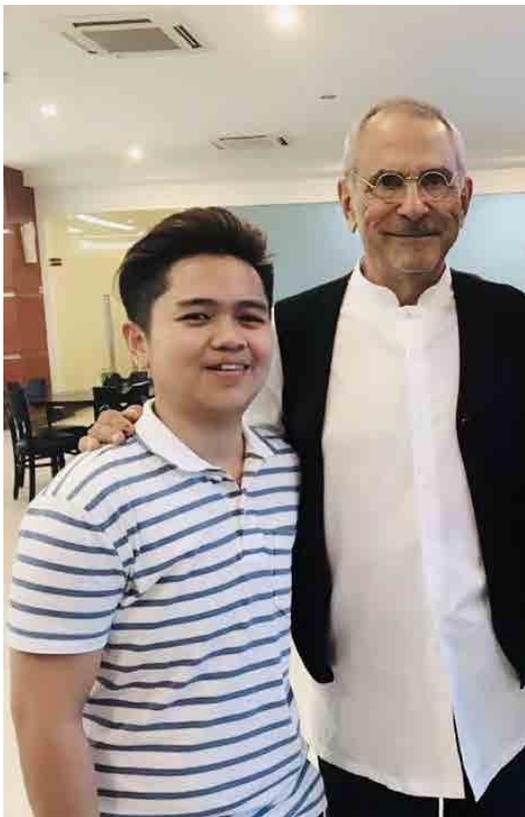
The whole world has been forcibly thrust by the COVID-19 pandemic into lockdowns that now contactless transactions are the norm. Everyone is forced to negotiate through digital messaging and meetings have become like seances where everyone would be staring into shiny glass screens, often saying 'can you see me?', or 'can't hear you,

you're breaking up', or 'next slide please.' The global pandemic has kept the world away from its social self because everything was considered safe from the obstinate virus if there were zero contact with another human being. It was right in the middle of this new surreal world that I packed my bags and moved to Cotabato City to lead the lean team of UNDP's Localizing e-Government for Accelerated Provision of Services (LeAPS) Project.

Simply put, LeAPS is the digitalization of the basic services and providing support to the BARMM government using ICT solutions. But nothing is simple in BARMM. For one, BARMM used to be ARMM. And adding the letter B to ARMM is actually the culmination of decades of negotiations between the Philippine government and groups that rejected the validity of ARMM, triggering the bloodiest armed conflicts in the archipelago. This is over and above the rido (family feuds), community disputes and political bickering commonplace in the

region. Thus, the phrase ‘fragile state’ is the mantlepiece of Muslim Mindanao.

When the BOL or Bangsamoro Organic Law was passed, the ‘new’ BARMM was granted three years to transition to governance that is responsive and efficient. This also meant uniting the 13 ethno-linguistic groups that make up Muslim Mindanao which includes the Iranun, Jama Mapun, Palawani, Molbog, Kalagan, Kalibugan, Maguindanao, Maranao, Sama, Sangil, Tausug, Badjao, and Yakan. As for me, it was not only Bisaya that I could not comprehend or speak; I did not even know that there were more than two Muslim local dialects.



Dili, Timor-Leste, 2019. With Jose Manuel Ramos-Horta, President of East Timor from 20 May 2007 to 20 May 2012. Previously Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2002 to 2006 and Prime Minister from 2006 to 2007. A co-recipient of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize for working "towards a just and peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor".

Yet, digitalization was like my second skin,

and proudly so! For 17 years, my career was about developing ways to utilize technology and creating the best social opportunities. In 2000, I developed the first e-commerce site for the pre-need industry in the Philippines. In 2006 I looked at greener pastures and for 13 years I found myself managing projects on digitalization and innovations in different countries within the Asia-Pacific region. The most memorable of these posts would be in Timor-Leste because I arrived just before the unrest and factional fighting forced some of the population to flee their homes, including myself and my colleagues from various UN offices. Suffice to say, I knew I was wearing the right shoes when I landed at, what others warned me as, the volatile Bangsamoro region.

At the heart of this gargantuan task of digitalization is BARMM’s Ministry of Interior and Local Government (MILG), headed by Atty Naguib Sinarimbo. Through masks, face shields and the constant smell of disinfecting alcohol, Minister Naguib enthusiastically welcomed the lean team of UNDP-LeAPS and so did the whole MILG team who immediately formed the Technical Working Group (TWG) of the LeAPS project.

Minister Naguib was not only supportive of LeAPS but saw digitalization as, in his favorite term, the ‘pole vault’ that BARMM needed to leapfrog into the fourth industrial revolution. The MILG has long perceived that ICT solutions would not only provide faster access to public services in BARMM but would also blue-pencil the red tape that has haunted Muslim Mindanao for ages.

It was the A2i (Access to Information) program of Bangladesh that provided the perfect inspiration for BARMM’s digital dream. In 2010, as a chief executive secretary of what was then ARMM, Minister Naguib hied off to Bangladesh at the insistence of the former Resident Repre-

sentative of UNDP Philippines. Minister Naguib's mission was then to find ways to improve the delivery of education in Muslim Mindanao. In the ramshackle houses in the slums of Bangladesh, Minister Naguib and the team from ARMM was shocked to how modern technology was used continuously bust the then Millennium Development Goals (MDG) indicators set by the United Nations. This was despite the fact that Bangladesh then ranked high as one of the poorest nations in the world.

Eventually, I learned that Minister Naguib held on to this vision until he became the Minister of BARMM's MILG where he found the right opportunity to pursue the vision.

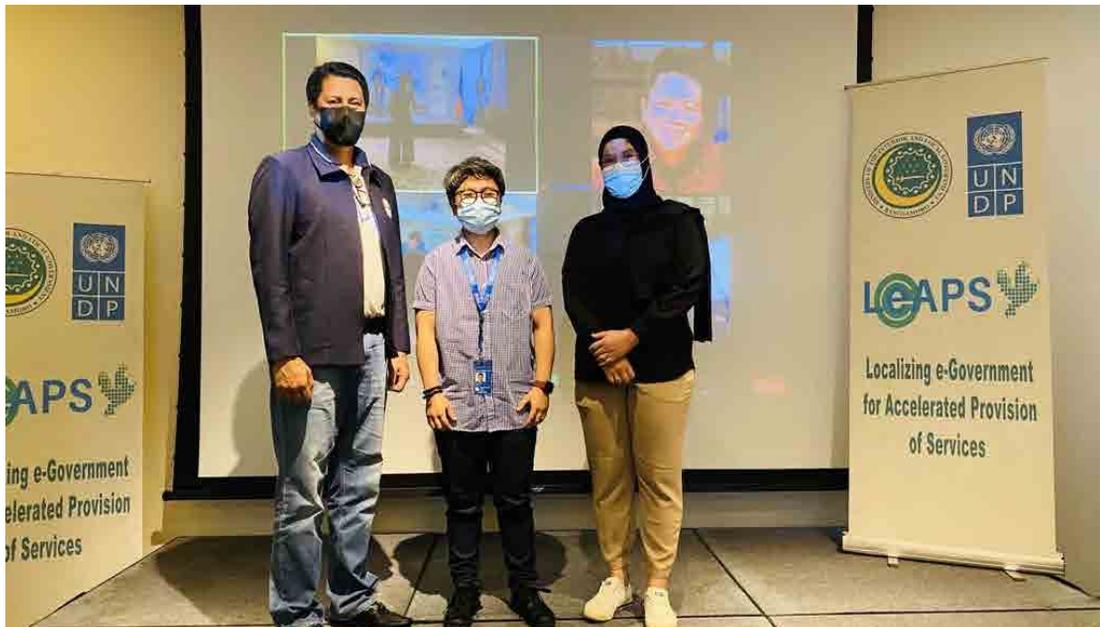
In 2020, with most cities under General Community Quarantine, the LeAPS team travelled to Butig and Piagapo in Lanao del Sur to call on their municipal mayors who expressed eagerness to be chosen as pilot sites. This eased the initial feeling of trepidation knowing that both sites, Butig specially, were notorious for being the playing field of the ISIS-inspired Maute brothers. And though Butig was almost a dead spot for all mobile carriers, Butig Mayor Dimnatang B. L. Pansar was committed to dispense resources to find ways

to solve the issue .

By November 2020, employees from the two municipalities travelled to Davao City to participate in several trainings to prepare them for digitalization. Though new to the concept of blended trainings--- of main facilitators instructing them through Zoom with guidance from assistant facilitators onsite---the participants were able to design prototypes of services that may be part of the LeAPS and how to use DevLIVE+ to enhance their plans for the municipality. The Piagapo group even brought with them their office's new desktop units and existing laptops for the trainings. That kind of participation from the group that travelled for six arduous hours to reach Davao still impresses me until now.

Butig analyzed the processes involved in acquiring a birth certificate. In tears, one of them recounted seeing an elderly Muslim leaving his muddied slippers outside of the municipal hall while transacting business. Why? Because bapa (muslim term for elder male) thought of the municipal hall as a revered space.

Piagapo traced the application for business



Vice Mayors of Butig and Piagapo--the pilot sites of LeAPS in Lanao del Sur

permits and realized that there were requirements that could be hastened if the offices were near each other, similar to the concept of a one-stop shop found in other cities.

Rapport between the LeAPS team and the participants was easy and fun. Sixty percent (60%) of the participants in all these trainings were women who, at one point in their lives, knew how taxing it would be for a new mother to register for a birth certificate while a newborn is wailing to be fed. Though the Muslim culture is still predominantly patriarchal, the number of female participants shows that more and more Muslim women are entering the realm of civil society.

January 2021 greeted the world with the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccines. Dr. Anthony Fauci, American physician-scientist and immunologist and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) of USA, has declared that the cavalry is finally coming with the release of the vaccines in the US and other first world countries. But this yet to reach the shores of Mindanao, and while BARMM waits,

LeAPS pins a better future through the improved delivery of basic services towards the #DigitalBangsamoro roadmap from 2021 and beyond.



With Mayor Dimnatang Pansar of Butig, with the LeAPS PMO and, the MILG TWG, and Butig staff during our courtesy call last Nov 2020



Aisa Pansar, Vice Mayor of the Municipality of Butig and Sorhayda Said, MLGOO review one of Butig's services during one of the trainings sponsored by UNDP-LeAPS and BARMM MILG





The Ganasi Station of the Joint Peace and Security Teams located in North Upi, Maguindanao brings hope that a lasting peace in this part of the Bangsamoro Region is finally within reach.

What a Peace Station Means to Moro Communities

By Remelizza Joy Sacra,
Communications/UNDP Philippines

On top of a corn field mound, metal bunkbeds were prepped; white crisp blankets were unwrapped; and the blue vinyl covering the floor were dusted. Electric and water lines have finally crept their way through the steep hills. Good omen that the peacekeeping station would be ready for turnover.

Except for the plate marker.

We almost forgot to install the plate marker that will symbolize the peace-building partnership between the Bangsamoro and the Philippine Government. As I check out the entrance of the station to ensure the placement and visibility of the marker, I heard not too far a man's voice.



Dream come true: Dante Boyantwo is an MILF member and part of the construction team of the Ganasi Station.

“Sa wakas. Ang tagal naming pinang-arap ‘to, Sir. Ang dami nang namatay ng mga ninuno namin dahil dito. Sa awa ng Panginoon, mayroon na,” a man on his mid-thirties said.

(At long last. We have been dreaming and wishing for this. A lot of people...

died because of this [conflict]. With God’s mercy, it (peace) is finally here.)

The man’s voice was hopeful but, at the same time, sad. He was talking to the construction engineer. Tears flanked his eyes as he smiled down to the plate marker. He is Dante Boyantwo, 36 years old and a member of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) from Ganasi in North Upi, Maguindanao.

For more than four decades, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) – formerly the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) – has been in the middle of armed struggle, as the region’s residents fought for the right to self-determination. The problem of violence was complicated by land conflicts, violent extremism, and inter-ethnic tensions.

In 2014, the Philippine Government finally signed a peace agreement with the MILF, ending decades of conflict and struggle that claimed more than 150,000 lives from both ends.

Dante’s parents are part of that number.

“Namatay ang mga magulang ko nang dahil sa giyera. Maraming ninuno ko ang namatay. Itong kapayapaan ‘yung hinahangad nila. Hindi man nila naranasan, kahit ‘yung anak ko na lang ang makaranas,” said Dante.

(My parents and ancestors died because of war. They only wanted peace. Even though they passed on already, at least, my son can experience a peaceful life.)

The conflict not only took away Dante’s parents but also robbed him of his early life. But on that day, Dante witnessed a lifetime dream coming true.



The peacekeepers: Fifty percent (50%) of the composition of one JPST unit are former MILF combatants.

The formation of the Joint Peace and Security Teams (JPST) is part of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). Each JPST unit is a 30-man composite team from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine National Police, and the MILF – half of which are former combatants. The joint peacekeeping team ensures the safety and security within the areas mutually agreed by the Philippine Government and the MILF. They also provide peace and security assistance during the decommissioning of MILF combatants and other normalization-related activities.



In support to the normalization process, the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) implemented the Support to Peacebuilding and Normalization (SPAN) Project while Japan has generously provided support through the UNDP-Japan Assistance to Normalization partnership. Both initiatives aim to provide assistance in the deploy-

ment of the JPST and the establishment of peacekeeping stations in the Bangsamoro Region, which will serve as their base of operations. To date, four barracks and two stations have already turned over to the JPST, and which currently house 216 of the total 246 deployed JPST members.

Prior to the turnover, several units of JPST were stationed in the Old Provincial Capitol Site Barangay Simuay in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao. Within the dilapidated walls of abandoned buildings, makeshift quarters and bunkbeds were installed. The narrow empty hallways served as prayer rooms. Their mess halls were open areas with improvised sink and dirty kitchen with limited access to water.



Makeshift quarters: In the Old Provincial Capitol Site which served as their temporary barracks, the JPST members re-used plywoods, old tarpaulins, and cartons to set-up a temporary station.



Part of the SPAN Project is to provide logistical and operational support to the peace keeping teams. Hence, the newly constructed station in Barangay Ganasi, North Upi, Maguindanao will provide a more decent quarters for 30 peace-keepers who were stationed beforehand in the Old Provincial Capitol Site.



No more makeshift plywood beds for PMSG Bayao as he became part of the JPST unit who transferred to the newly constructed Ganasi Station.

The presence of a joint peacekeeping team in Dante's community is a milestone for the town of North Upi, as far as he can remember. According to locals, Ganasi used to be a notorious 'backdoor' route for kidnapers and other lawless elements. To this day, the long road snaking up the hilly valley of Ganasi has remained unpaved and turns muddy and slippery during the rainy season.

The community relies solely on corn farming. Most of the lands are owned by the wealthy but Dante's family was lucky to own a small piece of land that yields corn worth P45,000 every year. Certainly not enough to support his family. In times of bad harvest, Dante earns nothing but he has to make up P5,000 for the costs incurred.



So, Dante engaged in carpentry and other side jobs. That is why he was employed as a laborer and 'security' during the construction of the Ganasi Station.

For Dante, it was his personal gesture of peace and camaraderie to be part of the construction team who built the peace-keeping station. His relatively 'humble' contribution to the Bangsamoro, as he compared it to the lives his parents lost in fighting for peace and right to self-determination of Moro communities.



No motorcycle, no problem: Growing up in a farming community, a young boy was riding at the back of a carabao going down the main road from the hill near the Ganasi station.



The corn field was their classroom: Two young girls were sitting on unlevelled grassy area to attend their online class on a hot afternoon. This is one of the very few spots in Ganasi where mobile internet connection is relatively good.

More than just a structure, the JPST station in Ganasi is a towering symbol of peace which brings him a sense of security that there will be no more gunshots and clanking of rifles in the middle of the night. That

his son, together with other children, can play barefoot and ride their carabaos without worry of possible encounters any time of the day. That even in a pandemic and under limited mobility, young students can safely study in the middle of the corn field – the only spot blessed with internet signal for their combined modular-online class (talk about digital divide but that’s another story).

So, back to the plate marker, did we successfully install it?

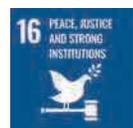
Yes, Dante did.



It was a symbolic moment to see Dante Boyantwo (left), who was once part of the armed struggle, installed the peacekeeping station's plate marker in the Ganasi, North Upi, Maguindanao.

Post-script:

As I go back to my duty station, I have kept with me the story of Dante and the frame of those two young and determined students studying in the middle of the corn field on a hot afternoon. It dawned to me that our work should be measured beyond numbers. At the end of the day, it should boil down on the impact that we create to a life or to many. These narratives, after all, will always remind us why we do what we do.





The Philippines experienced a boom in commuters using bicycles since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Photo Credit: Department of Public Works and Highways Regional Office XI

Making Sustainable Mobility Sustainable

by Miko Nacino, EnP, Promotion of Low Carbon Urban Transport Systems in the Philippines (LCT) Project

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we move. Starting with lockdowns and an initial halt on public transport, the Philippine government through its many instrumentalities adopted other measures to adapt to the situation. These include promotion of alternative modes of transport, dedicating lanes for PUVs and bikes and light mobility vehicles, consolidating transport industries, subsidizing

operations through service contracting.

With the advent of these new initiatives, the government is spending more for sustainable mobility than ever in recent history. Aside from budget insertions in the Bayanihan Recover as One Act in 2020, sustainable mobility has found its way through the annual fiscal budget of the Philippine government, with discussions on the inclusion of the budget for programs such as bike lane infrastructure, bike sharing program, and PUV modernization. Data from the following agencies show the extent of the budget for sustainable mobility for Fiscal Year 2021:

Agency	Budget for Sustainable Mobility for under FY 2021 General Appropriations Act (Republic Act 11518)	Budget for sustainable mobility under Bayanihan Recover as One Act (Republic Act 11494)
Department of Transportation (DOTr)	P 591.8 Million - PUV Modernization Program P 3 Billion - Service Contracting for PUVs P 26 Million - Davao High Priority Bus System* P 1 Billion - EDSA Greenways Project* P 511 Million - Cebu BRT Project*	P 5.58 Billion - Service Contracting for PUVs P 1.113 Billion - Development of sidewalks and protected bike lanes P 202 Million - Bike Share System
Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA)	P 875 Million - Promotion of People Mobility, under the Traffic Management Program**	

* Foreign Assisted Project. Figure reflects GOP counterpart funding ** Promotion of People Mobility through road sharing projects and activities as well as the use of non-motorized modes of transportation. Appropriation is lodged under the Traffic Management Program of the MMDA. Exchange Rate: USD \$1 : PHP P48 Source: Republic Act No. 11518 (2021 General Appropriations Act), Republic Act No. 11494

However, the crusade towards shifting to sustainable mobility is only starting. The bigger challenge lies ahead - how do we ensure that sustainable mobility will be sustained in the long run? In other words, how do we make sure that the gains of sustainable mobility won't be written off as just a transport fad by history books.

Recently, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) provided some interesting statistics relating to cycling. Data from the Customs Bureau indicated that bicycle imports in 2020 have surged 112 percent to 2.1 million units in 2020. While this is encouraging, new vehicles continue to flow into the Philippine streets in the same time period, despite the economic limitations posed by the lockdown and the pandemic. LTO Data on Number of Registered Motor Vehicles as of 2020 was at 11.8 million vehicles, of which 2.3 million are new vehicle registrations. Moreover, Metro Manila is not yet at full capacity when it comes to public transport. As we're already experiencing a return of heavy traffic amidst the lockdowns, the scenario remains grim.

Institutionally speaking, allotment of budgets for government programs and policy pronouncements provide signals to the general public, as well as key stakeholders, of the direction the government is taking. However, securing a budget does not necessarily lead to sustained efforts on the ground. Consider the likely possibility that only a fraction of the population did make a shift towards sustainable mobility - if the greater majority would still think of travelling like the old normal (i.e. Private cars, avoid public transport when able), the policy needle would just end up right where it was in the long run.

For sustainable mobility to be sustained, it is imperative to start investing in behavioral change activities that will cause more commuters of all types to shift towards sustainable mobility. There is a growing interest in active mobility, as a recent survey by SWS reveals that there is strong support for public and alternative forms of transportation. Infrastructure and information cascades alone will not be able to get more people to

bike, much less to take public transport. With this, three prescriptions come to mind:

Government Policies. First, the government needs to send a clear signal that sustainable mobility will be the way forward. While pronouncements on the same can resonate, policies in the form of laws should be put in place as they have a stronger impact, and are more difficult to reverse. Among the policies that can be taken into consideration are the following: (1) policies in the form of standards, regulations, and laws promoting low carbon modes of transport; (2) regular budget appropriations to expand and improve mobility initiatives; (3) policies establishing and promoting commuters rights and welfare; and (4) policies prioritizing development and promotion of industries supporting sustainable mobility.

Think of these policies as commitment devices by the government to promote and uphold sustainable mobility. These "commitments" should also have equivalent counterpart actions at the local government level for it to be grounded with the realities in the community. Likewise, continuous monitoring and enforcement of these policies must be an imperative for the government to realize the gains from sustainable mobility.

Boost for Champions. Another is to leverage on the ongoing momentum, by continuing to support the needs advocated by early adopters. Early adopters, as well as those who have opted to use these modes before and during the lockdown, in this case, could mean promoters of sustainable mobility policies. It is important to note that beyond the hardline advocates and enthusiasts, there are those that are interested to participate. With this, the government should provide the necessary support for those who have taken interest to shift by making it easy for them to adopt alternative modes of transport by addressing the friction points shying away from it and building confidence on the road through other support programs. Understand the context, their decisions, and address the concerns

associated with making a change. London's Healthy Streets Approach provides a good example of how to do it.

Normalize Efforts as a Sustained Phenomena. Finally, governments can formulate and implement programs that harness social proof and social pressure to encourage the rest of the public to adopt sustainable mobility practices. Social proof, done by making the growing shift towards sustainable mobility observable to the wider audience, can get people to let go of negative notions about it. Normalizing sustainable mobility will get more people to adopt it. Social pressure, on the other hand, focuses on making sustainable mobility the norm not the exception. With this it is important to look into the cultural environment and social dynamics that led to preference against sustainable mobility. There's also a need to tie interventions to specific periods where individuals can be easier to decide to shift, such as first-time vehicle buyers, or those recently moving into new homes.



A fleet of electric jeepneys operating in General Santos City, Southern Philippines. Photo Credit: Public Transport Alliance of GenSan (PTAG)

At present, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is working on a joint initiative with the Philippines' Department of Transportation (DOTr) through the Promotion of Low Carbon Urban Transport Systems in the Philippines (LCT) Project. Under the leadership of DOTr Secretary Arthur P. Tugade, the LCT project works with various national and local government, private sector, and civil

society stakeholders to create an enabling environment for low carbon modes of transportation in the Philippines through policy development, institutional capacity building, and facilitating private sector participation. The Project utilizes both "green" and "behavioral" lenses to ensure sustainability in its efforts towards improving public transport and shifting towards active mobility.

On a concluding note, it is important to highlight that the traditional measures utilized to make a change, such as incentives, laws, and information cascades have limited effects, especially if done without consideration on the behavioral lens to the problem. Learnings from applied behavioral science studies can be looked into, but keep in mind to undertake rigorous testing on the ground in order to design policies that suit the context and environment where one makes decisions.

The promise of sustainability in mobility is already felt in some areas of the country. It is necessary to ensure that the gains out of these endeavors will last longer - beyond COVID-19 pandemic, to say the least.

Miko Nacino, EnP is the Policy Support Component Lead of the Promotion of Low Carbon Urban Transport Systems in the Philippines (LCT) Project, a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme, the Department of Transportation, and the Global Environment Facility. Miko is also the founder of the Behavioral Insights Network - Philippines (BIN-PH), a growing network of professionals from various disciplines with an interest in leveraging learnings in applied behavioral sciences in various sectors, such as government, business, and development.

For more information about the LCT Project, visit www.lowcarbontransport.ph

For more information about BIN-PH, visit www.binsightsph.com





06 Bringing the Environment back into our Understanding of Inclusive Innovation

By Robyn Klingler-Vidra and Rex Lor

The SalikLakbay Series is a collection of blogs and stories about Inclusive Innovation in the Philippines. The objective of the series is to bring to light the different ways in which innovators address their challenges with a combination of creativity and resourcefulness, how ecosystem enablers provide an empowering environment for innovators to flourish, and how policy makers are rethinking the future of inclusive governance in innovation in the Philippines. In this blog, the authors explore the importance of the environmental lens in the inclusive innovation discourse, because:

We need to continue to causally connect the relationship between green (or blue, when speaking of the oceans) efforts and their distributional consequences. It is not either or.

Inclusive innovation: Inclusion in social terms

Inclusive innovation has been understood in social terms since the term was coined by economist Mark Dutz in his 2007 report.

Inclusive innovation has to do with the pursuit of innovation that has social aims at its heart. Inclusion is said to have different meanings, but all within the social realm. For instance, in the 2017 OECD paper on inclusive innovation policy, there are three ways of conceiving of inclusion:

1. In demographic terms, it refers to the need to ameliorate the exclusion or under-representation of individuals according to demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and/or disability status;
2. Inclusion is also conceived in spatial terms with efforts made to increase the innovation activities of regions. Often, it is rural areas and socio-economically disadvantaged places that are targeted by such approaches;
3. Industrial dimensions are also considered with the aim of applying research and development as well as innovation mind-sets into more traditional sectors.

Inclusion is also thought of in terms of dichotomies around whether the aim is to direct innovation from a consumption standpoint or in terms of the production of innovation.

While there is a rich and advancing understanding of inclusive innovation in these various social dimensions, engagement

with the environment has been neglected. Inclusive innovation seems to be advancing as an approach that is distinct from “greening the recovery” or climate change. However, the focus on social is not consistent with how the antecedent to inclusive innovation emerged.

The Appropriate Technologies Movement and the Environment

The Appropriate Technologies Movement, which is the lexicon and ideological predecessor to inclusive innovation which began in the 1950s, made the case for innovation that was context relevant, socially beneficial, and not environmentally damaging. The appropriate technologies movement, along with the work of Schumacher on *Small is Beautiful* (1973), argued that local inputs - particularly abundant labour - should be employed in innovation activities. Rather than emerging economies inheriting technological innovations that flow from the US and Europe, and thus were primarily designed for rich-world consumers, innovation should solve local challenges, leverage local resources, and benefit the environment. Small scale but contextually impactful and environmentally considered, innovation was the thrust of the movement.

The premise was one of understanding the reality that society and the environment are inextricably intertwined, and so innovation that is aimed at benefiting the local populations’ need to keep environmental consideration at its heart if it is to deliver on societal aims. In practice - in the Philippines and elsewhere - there are already nature-based innovative solutions evolving. The present-day challenge is to adequately acknowledge these efforts as inclusive innovation, so that they obtain the recognition and support they deserve.

This is because environmental degeneration has societal implications and, in particular, affects society’s most vulnerable. In a United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) report published in 2014, the Philippines is most vulnerable to the impact of climate change

owing to its proximity to the Pacific Ocean’s typhoon belt, its level of

development, and environmental degradation. This has exposed the most vulnerable to flooding or droughts, public health risks, threats to biodiversity and food security, loss of livelihoods and human life, among others. Furthermore, innovations around green technology and nature-based solutions stand to offer a wellspring of new green jobs. Retraining and reskilling for the post-COVID-19 context will involve competencies around developing and disseminating to both green technologies and nature-based solutions.

Our call is to explicitly re-establish this link between nature-based innovation and inclusion by going back to this well-established relationship in the Appropriate Technologies Movement. And, concomitantly, to underscore the role of COVID-19 as offering an opportunity to rethink our understanding of inclusion, so that it is about innovating for the benefit of wider society and the environment.

Greening Inclusive Innovation in the Philippines

Innovations developed by socially-oriented entrepreneurs often combine the twin aims



Bamboo straws a product made by Bambuhay as a solution to curb the use of plastic straws. Photo courtesy of @bambuhayph on Instagram.

of alleviating the problems facing the most excluded and underserved members of society by focusing on environmental sustainability.

In the Philippines, the explosion of green, sustainable, and nature-based solutions has offered both green jobs and opportunities for social enterprises to flourish. Bambuhay, Rags2Riches and Wala Usik (Zero Waste) are social enterprises in the Philippines that have created alternative green jobs that provide enhanced wellbeing that reflects one's relationship with both the environment and one's livelihood.

Bambuhay, a UNDP Philippines #TawidCovid Innovation Challenge winner, is seeking to address the twin problems of plastic waste and low incomes in the farming community by supporting the farming and development of bamboo-based products, which is a biodegradable and reusable alternative to plastic. Rags2Riches is a fashion and design house that partners with local artisans and women's groups in order to create eco-ethical fashion and accessories out of upcycled overstock cloth and indigenous habi, or weaves. Wala Usik Tianggeseeks to create an alternative zero-waste business model for small community stores in order to prevent the use of single-use plastics.

Building Better for a Greener Future

On March 26th 2021, the United Nations Development Programme in the Philippines ran a "Building Better for a Greener Future" webinar that offered a tangible link between inclusive innovation and green recovery. Speakers from the Central Bank and the Department of Finance, in particular, emphasize their commitment to advancing policies that encourage (sustainable) finance for small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro SMEs (MSMEs) in order to boost their investment in green futures. Some of the policy developments that were presented and discussed in the webinar includes the:

1. Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act (CREATE), which was passed into law on March 26th, modernizes the tax

incentive system to provide tax discounts to activities aligned with the Philippines Development Agenda;

2. Philippine Sustainable Finance Roadmap, a Green Task Force or the Sustainable Finance Inter-Agency Council; and

3. The National Integrated Climate Change Database and Information Exchange System (NICCDIES) – primary enabling platform of the CCC in consolidating and monitoring data and information on climate change and climate action.

In the webinar, the presenters and panelists alluded that COVID-19, despite all the suffering and disruption that it has wrought, also serves as a critical juncture – a chance to adjust systems – as it has raised public consciousness of the need for adjustments, particularly with respect to the socio-economy and the environment. COVID-19 provides an important chance to rethink who is conceived of, and supported, as an innovator, and how to promote innovation based upon the social purpose of the activities. It stands as a chance to ask what we mean by inclusive innovation that has "social purpose" at its heart.



In the webinar, Mercedita Sombilla, the Undersecretary of the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Regional Development Group, explained that a core aim is to achieve a "better, greener and smarter recovery from COVID-19." As inclusive innovation becomes a more widely used lexicon, and more understood aim, in the Philippines, inclusion can refer to demographic, territorial and industrial participation in innovation, but also, the extent to which innovation is improving, or worsening, livelihoods on account of its

environmental impact. In this sense, NEDA's Philippines action plan for sustainable production and consumption is already well-aligned with our call for a greener understanding of inclusive innovation.

Yemesrach Workie, a Senior Policy Analyst at the UNDP Philippines, similarly made the case for this greener notion of inclusive innovation. In her presentation, she noted that “the social co-benefits of carefully designed green policies can include significant improvements to health outcomes, reductions in the costs of energy, and increases in food security, as well as more, safer, and better paid employment opportunities,” making the case for converging the aims of green and sustainable efforts with that of inclusive innovation.

There are challenges in integrating the environment into our understanding of inclusive innovation in the post-COVID-19 context. As of now, there tends to either be an emphasis on green, sustainability, and climate or on social distribution. We need to continue to causally connect the relationship between green (or blue, when speaking of the oceans) efforts and their distributional consequences. It is not an either--or situation.



In Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, mangrove forests provide ecotourism services and alternative livelihood to locals. Photo courtesy of Small Grants Programme Philippines

Green Technologies and Nature-Based Solutions in the Philippines

The advancement of green technologies and nature-based solutions can have a profound impact on local communities, in alleviating societal challenges stemming from climate change and environmental degradation. The following are examples in the Philippines:

- **Community-based Resilience Solution.**

In the Typhoon Haiyan-ravaged province of Leyte, a community supported by Wetlands International realized the need to restore mangroves as a resilient intervention that will mitigate storm surges in future typhoons. This nature-based solution has restored the natural protection in coastal villages from storm surges, promoted eco-tourism, restored biodiversity, and more importantly, raised the level of resilience in the coastal villages across Leyte.

- **Innovative Green EV Technology.**

Edmund Araga, President of the Electronic Vehicle Association of the Philippines (EVAP), reported in the March 26 webinar that the Philippine national government has been proactive in providing an enabling environment for these green technologies to flourish. The Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the UNDP Philippines, supported by the Global Environment Facility, has also been pushing this agenda forward through the Promotion of Low Carbon Urban Transport Systems in the Philippines and aims to create an enabling environment for the commercialization of low carbon urban transport systems, such as mass public electronic transport vehicles like e-trikes and e-jeepneys. The Department of Energy has already completed the distribution of 3,000 e-trikes and e-trikes have been essential in ensuring accelerated public service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Proactive Mapping of Nature-based Solutions.** The Grassroots Innovation for Inclusive Development Program of the

Department of Science & Technology (DOST-GRIND) has been capturing grassroots innovations in Mindanao communities with the support of the UNDP Philippines through the SalikLakbay Solutions Mapping adventure. DOST-GRIND have focused their search on nature-based solutions, indigenous agricultural tech, crafts and ethnobotanicals with the objective of providing support and funding so these can be linked to the market. By mapping the innovators and their innovation, DOST hopes to identify the science behind the innovations, improve upon it, and scale it up in other communities.

We have seen how COVID-19 extenuates inequality; the exposure to climate change has a similarly distributional nature. Let's re-invigorate the need for "inclusion" to take environmental concerns at heart when thinking about distribution, representation, and exclusion. Inclusive innovation – as the Appropriate Technologies Movement did in the 1960s and 1970s – needs to be inclusive of more than societal distribution. Social challenges necessarily include nature-based solutions and the environment. So, too, should our efforts for inclusive innovation.





O EMPOWERing during the pandemic: Learnings from the implementation of the EMPOWER PH initiative

By Jules Falzado, Project Coordinator for EMPOWER PH

It has been a year since the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Philippines launched an initiative that explored the opportunity of enhancing the local manufacturing of the personal protective equipment (PPE) and other various medical consumables and devices needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to the SOS of medical front liners, who at the onset had to resort to wearing trash bags due to the shortage in the global supply of PPE, UNDP started mapping the opportunity to tap and capacitate the local garments manufacturing sector to address the supply gaps in addressing national and sub-national demand for such products. This has given birth to EMPOWER PH (which stands for Enhanced Manufacturing of Protective Wear and Equipment for COVID-19 Response in the Philip-

pines), a digital matchmaking platform that links garments manufacturers with prospective suppliers of raw materials and more importantly, individual and institutional buyers of such products.

As UNDP completes the handover of the platform to its institutional home – the Department of Trade and Industry’s Competitiveness Bureau (DTI-CB) – it is worth looking back at the experience of implementing an initiative amid an ongoing pandemic and contemplate on the learnings that the project team has acquired in the process of creating a novel solution from scratch. Not only does this exercise record the institutional memory of the initiative, but it also provides valuable perspectives that can be considered in rolling out similar solutions in the future.

Strategic institutional partnership paved the way for more public partnerships to materialize and for long-term sustainability.

Formalizing the partnership with the DTI Competitiveness and Innovation Group (CIG), under the leadership of Undersecretary Rafaelita Aldaba, was a critical strategic undertaking that facilitated access and linkage to other agencies involved in the broader national PPE supply development response, such as the Department of Health (DOH), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS) and the Philippine Accreditation Bureau (PAB). The formation of a technical working group involving these offices provided the project team with strategic guidance and insight in framing the architecture and workflow of the platform that aligns with laws, regulations, standards and guidelines.

The foresight to identify the institutional home of EMPOWER PH at the start further supported its sustainability. UNDP's full handover of the platform became possible because of DTI-CIG's provision of resources and establishment of a team within the agency instituted long-term management and stewardship of the initiative. Moreover, this unlocked potential integration of EMPOWER PH withing the agency's overall COVID-19 response offerings, particularly in potentially linking small and medium enterprises in the public procurement domain. Ongoing efforts to include the EMPOWER PH in the 2022 budget request of the DTI also presents a promising future for its continuity and expansion to include other COVID-19 related products, such as RT-PCR testing services and vaccines (when they start to become commercially available).

Extensive research and stakeholder consultation provided a robust foundation for the solution.

EMPOWER PH could be considered a novel solution at the time of its inception. The Philippines was not originally a global manufacturer of PPE and supply has been primarily import-driven. The abrupt exponential increase in demand for such products started conversations on optimal technical design and construction, as well as alternative raw materials that can achieve similar protective

functions while enabling faster and accessible sourcing.

The decision to conduct a robust research on the local supply chain situation in the Philippines and to examine literature from various global and local medical authorities was crucial in establishing the platform's push to ensure quality protective products. Consultations with government agencies further confirmed definitions that needed to be carefully adopted and adapted to avoid conflict with existing regulations.

I believe that EMPOWER PH's Resource Center – a repository of all non-medical use PPE and community mask manufacturing definitions, best practices, technical design packs and digital patterns – has been one of its greatest and most EMPOWER-ing contributions. It has democratized information such that neighborhood sewing groups that seek to find alternative sources of income may simply access these sources for free to learn about techniques of producing such products and undergo its vetting process to ensure product quality.

Adopting design thinking principles and structured user feedback gathering enabled quick identification of areas for improvement.

Creating a novel and complex online solution at a time when physical meetings are restricted (if not discouraged) entailed numerous challenges to the project team. Relying primarily on technology gadgets, internet and same-day delivery service providers to connect with various internal and external partners, building a platform from scratch during an ongoing pandemic required more creative and practical approaches to implementation.

Perhaps one of the most helpful strategies undertaken by the team was to use design thinking in the development process. Creating the prototype and testing it with a controlled number of participants, backed up by a dedicated stakeholder support resource, enabled a phased

roll-out of the different functions in the platform, identifying technical glitches that need to be addressed and verifying effectiveness of conceptualized workflows before introducing the solution to the broader public. For instance, it was through the guided test-run of the vetting process that the project team confirmed that the remote vetting option for community face covering (CFC), where manufacturers can submit their video recording of the different required quality tests, proved to be more challenging to mount among manufacturers that do not have the tools, technology and skills to correctly perform the steps.

EMPOWER PH, despite achieving its current substantial form, is still subject to continuous improvement in its architecture design and data infrastructure. This would not have been possible if the team did not institute design thinking and structured feedback gathering during its set-up phase. The openness to recognize the pitfalls and shortcomings of the initial design enabled the project team to address them upfront. At the end of the day, the platform's engagement is only as good as the seamless experience that it can offer its target users. And this will only be possible through a feedback- and user-oriented approach to development.

A digital solution requires a diverse set of skills and capabilities to execute the ideas and to sustain its management in the long run.

The experience of building the EMPOWER PH platform from bottom up also revealed best practices in designing and implementing such initiatives. With limited institutional experience of co-developing a novel digital solution with government partners, the initiative provided project management learnings that can be applied to other similar projects in the future. While it looked like a straightforward undertaking, constructing a completely new local manufacturing and supply chain digital solution would require a village to make the complex development process happen.

Robust technical knowledge of the industry and policy ecosystem where the solution will operate would be a pre-requisite to any future undertaking as this would provide the core foundations of entire solution. User experience and user interface due diligence proved to be a highly necessary step in improving overall user interest and engagement sustainability. Constant coordination with design and data counterparts from the partner agency further facilitated to alignment with government regulations and guidelines. Dedicating a centralized contact support facilitated quick response to user challenges and gathering of formal and informal feedback on the experience, thereby immediately triggering user-oriented improvements.

It had not been a perfect implementation process, but the experience of committing



mistakes and recognizing the necessary solutions straightforwardly enabled the team to improve sooner and to incorporate such experience in making subsequent decisions. Solutions that require long-term sustainability and scalability need to undergo the proof-of-concept testing before scaling up.

And if there is an important lesson that I would take from this experience, it is the importance of figuring out the “who” of every initiative and bringing the right talent into the team before making any significant strategic or directional decision.

As we handed over EMPOWER PH to the DTI-CB and continue the technical assistance for its extension and expansion efforts, I am excited to see the initiative seeing its full potential in providing Filipinos with a viable digital solution for its various COVID-19 needs. It had been truly a challenging, exciting, humbling and rewarding experience for me as Project Coordinator who oversaw its conceptualization, prototype development and expansion. At the same time, I look forward to applying the learnings from

EMPOWER PH and realizing new engagement techniques in expanding the initiative more broadly in the country and bringing in more BARMM-based sewing groups through UNDP’s EMPOWER BARMM!

As Project Coordinator for the EMPOWER PH initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Philippines and the Department of Trade and Industry – Competitiveness Bureau (DTI-CB). EMPOWER PH is an online platform that matches prospective buyers of personal protective equipment (PPE) and community masks with local manufacturers, and provides local garments manufacturers with resources and product vetting support to ensure compliance with standards, guidelines and best practices.

08 Enabling the Enablers: How to inspire youth to get involved in Climate Action

By Alyssa Carreon, Climate Action Programme Team member, UNDP Philippines

In a world where everyone is connected, what does it take to create an enabling environment that inspires young individuals to get involved in climate action? What can stir the youth of today to move and support the work #ForNature and #ForTheFutureWeWant in the midst of a global crisis?

Last 5 June 2021, the UNDP conducted a forum entitled “Youth for Climate Action” in celebration of the World Environment Day to rally the #GenerationRestoration—the generation whose futures are at stake if we do not address the climate emergency with urgency and haste. This activity came about in response to the youth consultation workshops conducted in the first quarter of the year, where the youth respondents showed significant interest in—and worry about—environmental and climate-related issues that we are facing globally.



To inspire the over 700 registered participants about what they can do to contribute towards climate action, we invited six young individuals

individuals who are thriving in their chosen environment-related fields to grace the activity as key speakers. The discussion happened in a breeze as they shared their respective experiences on how and why they are pursuing their passion for the environment with much gusto.

Gab Mejia shared that his childhood immersion through nature trips with his father paved way for his growing local appreciation of the Philippines.

According to him, witnessing the changes from when he was 13 years old – where he had opportunities to see in real life the beauty of Sierra Madre and Cordillera mountains, different reefs, and wetlands – until now that he’s turned 24, drew him to dedicate his career in contributing to conservation and environmental solutions. He actively takes part in amplifying the urgency of the impacts brought about by climate change by telling stories about conservation and the people behind it through his photography of the country’s biodiversity.



Gab Mejia is a Filipino conservation photographer and environmental storyteller. He is a National Geographic Explorer covering stories on nature, wildlife, the climate crisis, and indigenous people. He is a contributor to National Geographic Your Shot and has published stories in National Geographic, CNN, Nikon, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In their search for sense of belongingness and purpose in the planet when they were a teenager, Dave Albao realized their answers to introspective questions always led them back to the nature.

Nature is the sole reason that pushed them to work for sustainability and protection of both material and non-material values of the environment, such as its natural resources, cultural and spiritual benefits.

The initiatives of the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation, Inc., an NGO based on Danjugan Island, involves design thinking approach and experiential learning to start conversations in finding solutions for conservation. Also, together with friends, Dave founded “Wala Usik” which translates to “nothing wasted” or zero-waste. Wala Usik is the first zero-waste store in Negros Island.



Dave Albao is the Executive Director of the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation, the nonprofit taking care of Danjugan Island, a wildlife sanctuary with environmental education and ecotourism programs, located in Negros Occidental, the Philippines.

When he was young, Erick Avelino never imagined himself working for the environment sector, but his engagement with the Biodiversity Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) provided him firsthand experience to see and appreciate life below water. This opportunity served as his wake-up call to be a conservation advocate.

He encourages the youth to take part in community-based biodiversity-friendly enterprises (BDFE) as he believes on the youth’s capacity to bring new ideas on the table that are beneficial towards BDFE sustainability.



Erick Avelino is working for the Coastal and Marine Division (CMD) and serves as the focal for the implementation of the Biodiversity Friendly Enterprises (BDFE) under the Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Management Program (CMEMP).

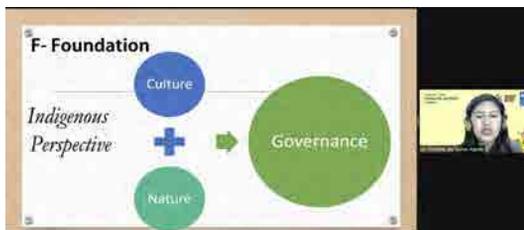
Being part of a generation that perceives purchasing of a private car as a life milestone, Miko Nacino’s exposure during his stay in Japan, where even people from higher social class use public transportation, changed his mindset. On top of this, being part of the group that advocates for better mobility means emboldened him to be a public policy generalist who works for development projects, such as the DOTr-UNDP Low Carbon Urban Transport Project, that aims to changing the country’s transportation system for the better.



Miko Nacino, EnP is the Policy Support Component Lead of the Promotion of Low Carbon Urban Transport Systems in the Philippines (LCT) Project, a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme, the Department of Transportation, and the Global Environment Facility. Miko is also the founder of the Behavioral Insights Network - Philippines (BIN-PH), a growing network of professionals from various disciplines with an interest in leveraging learnings in applied behavioral sciences in various sectors, such as government, business, and development.

“Conservation is naturally embedded in our way of life as Indigenous Peoples because culture and nature are inseparable,” shared Christine Joy Guina-Agudo, a member of the Talaandig Tribe in Bukidnon.

As a Chieftain’s daughter, she ensures their tribe’s traditional knowledge and practices are sustained by younger generations. Their Tribe developed a systemic approach by involving the Kulahi Tribal Youth Organization in their rituals and upon learning about the youth’s interest in arts. This approach gave birth to several initiatives including the Kulahi Pangantucan Performing Arts which is comprised of Talaandig youth members. It showcases their songs and dance, traditional knowledge system and practices, and serves as the tribe’s information and education campaign.



Christine Joy Guina-Agudo is a proud Talaandig. She finished the 2-year ladderized program of the University of Southeastern Philippines Pamulaan Center for IP Education with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Peace Education. Subsequently, she pursued a Bachelor's degree in Secondary Education at Central Mindanao University. Aside from being a daughter of the Tribal Chieftain of the Talaandig community of Pangantucan, Bukidnon, she is also an active youth leader who co-founded the Portulin Tribal Talaandig Association (PTTA) in Pangantucan, Bukidnon.

Awareness, collective action, and hope – these are Prince Ventura’s initial thoughts when asked about what he thinks of youth and climate action. His response roots back to his experience as a youngster who was part of a youth for environment school organization with activities like tree planting, coastal clean-ups, and engagement with the youth

and local government. The “An Inconvenient Truth” documentary regarding global warming also opened his eyes about sustainability and conscious use of resources. Prince translated his combined conservation advocacy and passion into action by founding Wear Forward, a social enterprise that leads circular fashion and collaborative consumption.

Cliché as it may sound, the beginning is always the hardest. The speakers’ responses on what inspired them to get involved in environment conservation exhibited varying scenarios of creating an enabling environment to engage the youth.

It could start from an individual, a community with shared values and culture, at work, a foreign land, a film, or even the nature itself. It showcases how a single exposure could spark a life-changing endeavor for the youth and the planet.



Prince Jimdel Ventura is a Climate Reality Leader and a 2021 Climate Ambassador of the Global Youth Climate Network who focuses on addressing the environmental and socio-economic impacts of fashion. He is also a Youth 4 Sustainable Cities Ambassador who engages the youth with the Sustainable Development Goals to create innovative solutions toward sustainable urban development. Moreover, Prince is the Founder and CEO of fashion tech startup Wear Forward and the Spokesperson of Fashion Revolution Philippines.

These endless possibilities willingly explored by the youth for them to take part in the work towards climate action provides

a hopeful sight. In the natural order of things, sustaining this enabling environment follows. The speakers were once inspired to start their journeys toward conservation, and they are now passing it on to aspiring young individuals through making their initiatives available in different platforms and by engagements like the Youth Forum.

As we end the celebration of the Philippine Environment Month, may these young champions for the environment inspire us to enable the enablers by taking part in sustaining an environment for the youth to grow their well-grounded passion towards advocating for climate action.





09 Recovery through Resilient Livelihoods: The Fisherfolks of Bacacay

By Charlene Balaan,
Communications Associate

When 64-year-old fisher Julian Bata and his wife woke up in the wee hours of the morning on November 1, 2020, they were drawn into sharp consciousness by the violent howling of the wind against their nipa roof, coupled with the reverberating cracks of thunder—sounds that are all too familiar to the members of their coastal community in Isla Manaet, Brgy. Pili Iraya, Bacacay.

Just a few weeks prior, they also had been at

the receiving end of the wrath of Typhoon Just a few weeks prior, they also had been at the receiving end of the wrath of Typhoon Quinta and its intense winds and rainfall. Many of the damaged houses in the community still had not been fixed yet. Suffice to say, the sight of an overcast sky, raging winds, and the volatile sea was not unusual for the coastal villages and their fisherfolks.

Isla Manaet is located off the coast of one of the most disaster-prone regions in the Philippines, Albay, which hosts an active volcano, Mount Mayon, and is located along the country's eastern seaboard. The region is constantly faced with multiple hazards year after year because of its geographic properties and location.

Chief among these hazards are the typhoons, which cause storm surges and extreme flooding. Aside from being a regular stopover of tropical cyclones, the province has mountainous areas that are prone to landslides and surface run-off.

The local government authorities had already warned Tatay Julian and the communities in Bacacay about the coming typhoon named Rolly. Their barangay representatives urged the families to secure their belongings, pack up, and evacuate to the designated areas for their safety—a regular practice, given the frequency of typhoons trudging this region.

Before evacuating his small family, Tatay Julian had hurriedly checked on his fishing boat, which he securely tied down and hid under a heavy canvas next to their kubo, located around 200 meters from the shore. Fishing—his main source of livelihood—had been halted because of the inclement weather. Nevertheless, Tatay Julian had to make sure that his boat is safe and intact, so that he can go to sea again once the typhoon has passed.

“Sanay na kami sa bagyo. Itinali ko yung banka para mabalikan, tapos nag-evacuate na kami dahil 200 meters lang kami mula sa dalampasigan,” noted Tatay Julian, reminiscing how they faced the situation as calmly as they normally would. (We are used to the typhoons. I tied down the boat and then we evacuated because we are located only 200 meters from the shore)

Vita Basaysay, the Social Concerns Officer of Brgy. Pili Iraya, also noted: “Sanay na sila na tuwing masama ang panahon ay naaabala ang kanilang hanapbuhay. Sanay na rin sila—pag may bagyo na dadaan, itatago na nila ang kanilang mga bangka.” (They’re used to their livelihoods being affected whenever there is bad weather. When there is a typhoon that passes, they know to hide and protect their boats)

The same is true for the family of Judy Besin, another citizen of Isla Manaet, and her

husband, a fisherfolk who resorted to raising hogs as an alternative source of income amid the pandemic. The yield from fishing had not been good because of the typhoons and they needed to find other means to feed their 3 very young children. They could only afford to buy one pig and they had been looking forward to selling it for around Php12,000 once it’s old enough.

“Wala na po kaming hanap-buhay maliban sa pangngisda at pagbababoy. Sa isla po mahirap. Malayo ka sa sentro. Nung tumama si Rolly, lumikas po kami. Nakatira po kami sa tabingdagat. Noong bumalik po kami, lahat po ng pag-aari naming ay nasira na, pero naka-survive po yung nag-iisa naming baboy!” exclaimed Judy.

(We don’t have other means of livelihood aside from fishing and hog-raising. Life in the island is very hard. We are so far from the city center. When Rolly hit, we were evacuated. Our family lives next to the shore. When we came back, everything we owned was destroyed, but our sole pig survived!)



Judy Besin of Isla Manaet

It was soon after their community was evacuated that they realized that Typhoon Rolly was no ordinary typhoon; It would be known as the strongest tropical cyclone to hit the Philippines in 2020, leaving at least 20 people dead in its wake, displacing 89,000 citizens in Albay, and affecting almost two million people across 26 provinces in the island of Luzon. The Bicol Region bore the brunt of the typhoon’s violent winds and torrential rains, blowing

away roofs, toppling structures and causing severe flooding and landslides.

In the few days it took to sweep across Luzon, Typhoon Rolly claimed lives and destroyed the livelihood of thousands. And unbeknownst to the people of Bicol then, they would only have a few days of respite from the destruction of Rolly before another typhoon hits the region—Typhoon Ulysses.

In just over a period of one month from October 11 to November 11, 2020, eight successive typhoons entered the Philippines' area of responsibility. The most destructive of these were typhoons Quinta and Rolly, which directly impacted Albay.

It was the longest month for the people of Bacacay. And while they are used to calamities and natural disasters, the damages and the losses that they must endure and recover from every time a new typhoon passes do not lessen or hurt less. In the face of a pandemic that has disrupted their lives, the succession of typhoons upended the livelihoods of Isla Manaet's fisherfolks and left them without income for an extended period. Houses and fishing boats were destroyed, and Isla Manaet was left disconnected and without electricity for months.

In January 2021, two months after Rolly and Ulysses, The Provincial Government of Albay, through the APSEMO, asked UNDP assistance in damage and loss assessment and early recovery efforts for the vulnerable families affected by Rolly.

Among the key target beneficiaries for the livelihood recovery initiative were women and micro entrepreneurs, farmers, weavers, and fisherfolks like Tatay Julian. Through UNDP's involvement, the provincial government recognized the importance of rebuilding livelihoods and building seeds of sustainable economic development vis-à-vis the relief operations.

While early recovery response provides an immediate stopgap measure to aid those impacted by the typhoons, it was necessary

to capacitate the communities for long-term resilience as well. As the adage goes, 'give a man fish and he feeds for a day; teach a man how to fish and he eats for a lifetime.' In the case of our Rebuilding Livelihoods initiative, give fisherfolks capital so they can start investing in alternative types of livelihood for when the seas are too rough for fishing!

The UNDP livelihood assistance, which began in March 2021, reached out to 460 beneficiaries from the seven selected municipalities through the support of the Bicol Consortium for Development initiative (BCDI). Under the initiative, 60 fisherfolks from three barangays in Bacacay namely, Bgy. Busdac, San Pablo, and Pili Iraya, were provided support so that they can recover and rebuild their livelihoods.



Fisherfolks from three barangays in Bacacay namely, Bgy. Busdac, San Pablo, and Pili Iraya, who received new fishing gears.

A total of 41 fisherfolks who decided to continue fishing received fish nets and a big fish basin to support their fish catch and selling operations, while 19 fisherfolks who opted to venture into alternative livelihood received cash assistance to cover the working capital needed for their chosen alternative livelihood. All of them received seedlings as well for backyard planting.

For the fisherfolks who opted to receive the cash assistance, they went through a series of trainings conducted by BCDI to develop their business plans and learn more about entrepreneurship and financial management. Among them, many have chosen to

focus on hog-raising given the high demand.

As for those who opted for the fishing gears, Daniel Belga, Field Officer of BCDI, mentioned that they would rather have new equipment than have money that they could easily lose. He said, “ang pera ay madaling maubos kapag di inalagaan. Para sa iba, mas importante and materiales para sa pangangis-da dahil araw-araw nila ito magagamit.”

(You can easily lose money if you don't spend it wisely. For others, new fishing gears are more important for their everyday use)



Daniel Belga, BCDI Field Officer, at the distribution of livelihood assistance to the fisherfolks of Bacacay.

Tatay Julian, who has been fishing for 40 years, chose the livelihood cash assistance over the fishing equipment because he wants to start a new business. He knows that more typhoons will pass through their small island and his family will need an alternative source of income for days when fishing is not possible. He would like to use the money to buy a non-motorized sewing machine so that his seamstress wife can sew school uniforms for nearby communities.

He specially highlighted that, “Kailangan mayroong alternatibong hanapbuhay. Ang asawa ko naman ay nananahi. Yung una naming makina ay nasira na dahil sa katagalan. Mayroon kaming natanggap na makina pero kailangan ng kuyente. Pag may bagyo, inaabot ng kalahating taon na wala kaming kuyente. Etong huling bagyo noong

October, March na nung bumalik.”

(We need an alternative livelihood. My wife is a seamstress, but our first sewing machine broke because of old age. We received a motorized sewing machine, but it needs electricity to work. When we are battered by a typhoon, it sometimes takes six months for electricity to be reconnected. When we were hit by the typhoons in October, we didn't have electricity until March.)

Judy and her family chose the cash assistance as well to try to make their hog-raising business more sustainable. She exclaims, “Malaking tulong po! Kasi nagsimula kami sa pagbababoy—yung bagong bangka namin ay nabili naming mula sa binenta naming baboy.”

(This will help us immensely! We started as hog-raisers—we bought our new fishing boat using the earnings from the pig we sold.)

There is still much to learn for these fishing communities, but they have also begun showing interest in learning how to conduct their businesses online despite the difficulties in connectivity in the area. The pandemic has slowed down the demand and has limited physical mobility. For them, going digital is the next frontier.

Social Concerns Officer Vita keeps an eye on these fishers to provide much-needed guidance in their new livelihood ventures. She says, “Lagi ko silang pinaaalalahanan na alagaan nilang mabuti yung binigay sa kanilang puhunan. Palaguin nila. Magtulongan sila. Pag-gumanda ang business niyo, hindi lang kayo ang uunlad kundi ang buong komunindad.”

(I always remind them to take good care of the capital given to them and grow it. They need to help each other. Once your business thrives, the community also thrives.)



While the pandemic is still permeating in all aspects of society, the fisherfolks of Bacacay are hopeful that they will be able to grow the livelihood support into a sustainable income stream that will make them less economically vulnerable come typhoon season. And that the next time Tatay Julian and the other fisherfolks in the coastal communities are woken up from slumber by the rumble of an incoming typhoon, they would not have to worry about where they will get their next meal or how they will be able to afford rebuilding their homes.





*The most powerful typhoon that hit the Philippines in 2020, Super Typhoon Goni has brought strong winds and massive inundation in the Bicol region that destroyed infrastructures and displaced communities
Photo Credit: Camille Soriano, UNDP*

The Numbers Are Breathing: The Case of Recovery and Long-Term Resilience in Bicol

**By Renz Homer Cerillo, Project Officer,
Recovery and Resilience-building,
Climate Action Programme Team**

New research by the World Bank estimates that climate change will push 132 million people into extreme poverty. This means more farmers will lose their livelihood due to drought, water scarcity, and flooding. Fisher-folks would go home with a smaller catch as a result of unpredictable weather and depleting fish stocks. More families than ever will be swept to informality due to hospitalization from COVID-19, on top of diseases and health risks aggravated by the deteriorating environment. It is hard to conceive what 132 million means, but for the global south, it presents a hard, bleak reality. Disasters do not discrimi-

nate but they ripple strongest among the poor.

As a proverbial example, the Philippines has all the ingredients for disasters to brew: geographical location, weakened social services, and aging infrastructures. Within the background of chronic poverty and global warming, we have the recipe for a perfect storm. Between October 11th and November 11th, 2020, alone, eight consecutive typhoons entered the archipelago's area of responsibility, bringing the Bicol Region down to its knees.

In the aftermath of Super Typhoon Goni – one of the freakish weather events ever recorded in the Philippines – many Bicolanos incurred grave losses to their livelihood, particularly smallholder farmers, fisherfolks, small business owners, and informal workers. With limited support provided, the effects on women and persons with disabilities (PWDs) were particularly debilitating.

Just when they were recuperating from the devastation of Typhoon Molave, which alone displaced 100,000 individuals in October, they had to brave another catastrophe, whether they were ready for it or not.

Working in the frontlines, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has responded to the call of the national government, the Provincial Government of Albay and the affected local government units (LGU) to support the immediate needs of highly impacted communities in Bicol. The Super Typhoon Rolly/Goni Resilience Livelihood Restoration and Recovery Project for Albay is a project which recognizes the short-term needs of target stakeholders but also accounts for their future circumstances. Strengthening local institutions and the capacities and economic resilience of communities, in the long run, is therefore fundamental for us to cushion the blow of worsening disasters and attain sustainable development for all. Aiming for “safer, adaptive, and resilient communities through sustainable and resilient local economies and environment,” the Project hopes that history will and should not repeat itself.

But how does long-term economic resilience look like in practice? Thrown like some special ribbon, “resilience” has found its place in the vernacular of the development sector. Amidst the ruins left by Molave and Goni, how can our equals from Bicol see it in the flesh? Is it possible to breathe life to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? How can Bicolanos live productive and meaningful lives once again? This Project has shown us a glimpse into these questions.

Reviving the Local Economy

*The Project’s Post-Disaster Needs Assessment surfaced that rehabilitating the livelihood of marginalized stakeholders and local sectors is a strong entry point to regenerate the local economy, for which UNDP has mobilized funds. With the Bicol Consortium for Development Initiative (BCDI) as the delivery partner, the Project is supporting the hardest hit households to



The most powerful typhoon that hit the Philippines in 2020, Super Typhoon Goni has brought strong winds and massive inundation in the Bicol region that damaged infrastructure and displaced communities Photo Credit: Camille Soriano, UNDP

rehabilitate their livelihoods. The support covered 460 families including severely affected rice and vegetable farmers, fishers, weavers, micro-entrepreneurs such as vendors and food processors, and several PWDs.

These are families whose homes were swept away, properties left to rubble, and dreams crushed by the sight of the wreckage. But through a combination of product or in-kind and financial assistance, communities were provided with the resources they need to be back on their feet.

*For sectors such as farming and fishing, in-kind support was more ideal to replace or augment lost and damaged equipment, tools, and inputs such as seeds and agricultural supplies for farmers, and nets and kits for fisherfolks. This intervention does not immediately translate into high returns, but it can significantly support self-sustenance, helping provide warm meals on families’ tables. The extra produce grown, and fish caught can also be sold in the market, providing income for households.

On the flipside, providing direct cash assistance to enlisted households gives them a sense of autonomy and determination as to how they can spend the

money to grow their enterprises. This fosters accountability and promotes the effective use of financing within their means.



UNDP and BCDI handing over in-kind assistance to affected fisherfolks in Bicol Photo Credit: Charlene Erica Balaan, UNDP

At the end of the day, the support must be channeled directly to individuals and households to reduce the need for decisions, cut bureaucracy, and expedite recovery. SDG 1 aims to end poverty in all its forms and bring health services, education, and water and sanitation to the world's 10% currently living in absolute destitution. Within the Project's boundaries, this development goal manifests in the provision of either cash assistance or farming and fishing supplies, signaling a profound effect on families and communities, and empowering them to go about their business as usual and put them back on track. This helps build resilience at the levels of the individuals and the communities that they are part of. In disaster-stricken communities such as Albay, time is a luxury, and we cannot afford to delay the flow of resources. Delaying support prolongs risks and that is not a game we should play.

De-risking the Future

The future will always bear uncertainties. But this Project has proven ways to mitigate them and safeguard our beneficiaries in a lasting way. First is through the *creation of multiple income streams within the same sectors. Due to the susceptibility of the provinces of Albay and Catanduanes to major typhoons and other disasters, their strong dependence on the agricultural and fisheries section is at great risk. Diversifying possible sources of

income within these industries does not only result in better economic outcomes but also protects communities from financial fluxes today and in the future. Therefore, putting their eggs in different baskets protects them from uncertainties.

*For farmers, varying their crops, enhancing management, and providing crop insurance could disperse risks against both slow and fast-onset climate events. Planting different crops such as quick-growing cash crops and vegetables can serve short and medium food demands, while high-value crops and fruits can support longer-term needs. Another key advantage is that this practice protects

soil health, supports local biodiversity, and safeguards the overall environmental integrity of the communities. Expanding environmental assets such as fruit-bearing trees and the application of multi-cropping does not only make good sense but is also key to ecological resilience. With the effects of climate change more profound than ever and are only expected to worsen, SDG 13 advocates that an arsenal of solutions – big and small – can make a difference.

For fishing communities, capacitating them in various fish preservation and food processing techniques does not only reduce waste but also increases their catch's market value, hence, additional income.

The Project has also pointed to *alternative livelihoods and skills expansion to support the partner communities in developing resilience. There are identified opportunities for members of the community to explore alternative skills in appliance repairing and construction. And for households with family members that have graduated from tertiary education, the project recommends that some form of financial support be provided. It has been identified that qualified graduates, due to financial barriers, could not comply with pre-employment requirements. This is a low-hanging fruit that the project recognizes and should be picked to help catalyze change among these families.

Partnering for Development and Resilience

In typhoon-torn Bicol, the Project forged links between BCDI and the Socio-Economic Development Program Multi-Purpose Cooperative (SEDP MPC) for the delivery of financial literacy and business training among qualifying beneficiaries. This would enhance the entrepreneurial skills of the recipient micro-entrepreneurs, allowing them to streamline and grow their business and make the most out of the handed capital. Meanwhile, BCDI has engaged with the Department of Agriculture (DA) to request rice seeds and other agricultural inputs, and to DA PhilRice, East West Seeds, and local agricultural offices for resource and training on vegetable production and rice farming for the farmers.

The Project has also looked into engaging the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority in profiling who among the 460 beneficiaries are keen to develop new skills or currently learning new ones to improve their employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, the Project has also surfaced an opportunity to engage the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office to partner with BCDI and SEDP for women's groups to be employed in ecosystem services, with even further cooperation with the local tourism office for eco-tourism projects such as community nurseries.

The Albay Provincial Agricultural Office and DA are also opening their doors for several women farmers residing in Barangay Matalipni in the Municipality of Malinao to engage in organic farming. With conventional farming as the standard practice in these localities, engaging these women in organic farming can provide better economic outcomes, without compromising the ecological integrity of their lands.

Complex problems cannot be addressed by individuals or households alone. Strong cooperation between and among institutions is critical to advance

long-term, inclusive, and resilient growth – and this is the spirit of SDG 17. It requires harnessing the resources and mandates of national and regional governments, and the frontline position and reach of LGUs and civil society groups. Now, more than ever, do we need cooperation to ensure that Bicol, among other disaster-afflicted communities, can build back better and march on towards the SDGs.



Albay Public Safety and Emergency Management Office Chief Cedric Daep discussing Albay's evolution of disaster risk reduction strategies with UNDP Resident Representative Selva Ramachandran, agreeing to strengthen resiliency building initiatives in the province in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Goni. Photo Credit: Napoleon Manegdeg, UNDP



UNDP Resident Representative Selva Ramachandran with Albay Governor Francis Bichara on 21 November 2020 after discussing areas of cooperation to rehabilitate economic livelihood in the province Photo Credit: Napoleon Manegdeg, UNDP

This Project demonstrates that despite COVID-19 getting in the way, and the compounded challenges of poverty and

climate change, immediate recovery can also lay the groundwork for the communities' sustainable development. In short: recovery from disasters can and should advance long-term resilience. By informing efforts by the worsening threats of climate change and social injustice both from the foreseeable future and the long-term horizon, we have better chances to withstand what is to come. This new brand of resilience requires addressing the nuanced needs of marginalized stakeholders, taking them with us every step of the way, and empowering individuals to reach their aspirations.

It is unthinkable that despite humanity's recent economic gains, knowledge, and innovations, 132 million of us are on the brink of living a life devoid of dignity, security, and stability. And we should drill into our consciousness that this number is not just any number. Each digit represents a life. Leaving no one behind is a key principle that the United Nations stands for and is the moral compass that guides our work. But faced with a pandemic, a warming planet, and crippling social inequities, would it be absurd to envision a family that is safe and sound against the forces of nature, whose stable income provides warm meals on the table, and where a sense of purpose and belonging is within reach? When we think about it, SDGs 1, 13, and 17 are just arbitrary numbers – socially constructed by us who promised a better world for all. But these figures mean something else and behind them are people whose dreams remain alive.

*Note: The recommendations listed in this blog are informed by the Recommendation Report entitled “Livelihood Activities, Strategies, and Interventions in Building Long-Term Resilience” developed by the UNDP RR PIP's Disaster and Early Recovery Specialist





1 Oh The Things We Could Do If We Only Work Together

By Johanna Erroba,
Youth Engagement Analyst

Redundancy — major pet peeve! Silos? I can relate.

Warning: I'm experiencing a The-Greatest-Showman withdrawal. Take the hint.

I once dreamt of one big community festival experience for the youth. This would be led by friends I've met through the course of my now two-year volunteer journey with UNDP in the Philippines. Youth-led and youth-serving organizations would come together to create a holistic learning experience for young Filipinos. My peg really was the Philippine Startup Week, a startup community event that sprung in 2019. Think of my vision as slightly similar but targeting a different demographic — Filipino youth. The itch came from my frustration over the countless invitations I get, from July leading up to the International Youth Day (IYD) in August, for partnerships, speakerships, and other requests. Don't get me wrong, I love to contribute but I also quickly realized on my first IYD with UNDP in the Philippines in 2019 that so many people and organizations are doing almost the same things. This is specifically true for IYD celebrations from dialogues to webinars to advocacy campaigns.

Redundancy is such a pet peeve to the point where I can say I almost hate it.

Really, when we dig deeper, what becomes clear is that this problem is not just that of the present day. It happens anywhere and everywhere and it's systemic (oooooh big word lol). I realized it's because people prefer to keep in silos a.k.a. their own boxes, cubby holes, whatchamacallit. I do not think that most of this is intentional. There are many nuances such as limitations in capacity, donor or funding guidelines, access to opportunities, and size and depth of networks, to name a few.

Even so, I think we owe the people we support our best efforts to explore what's out there, fill the gaps, and work more harmoniously.

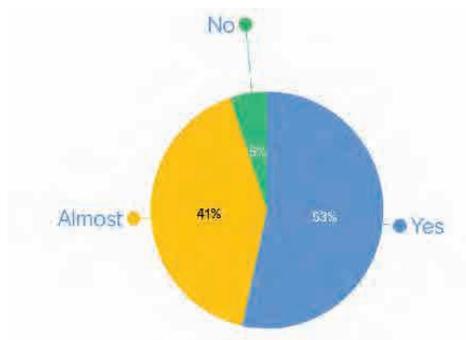
I may be looking at this too simplistically but to me, it is as simple as sitting down, gathering in one call, or looping everyone in one email thread to say "Okay, we're doing this. Anyone doing similar things? Keen on working together?"

I may be wrong. Maybe people prefer to stay in their perfect plans. I do me, you do you. Or it could be that people just haven't seen enough of what is up for grabs. In another piece I wrote almost two years ago, I wrote about how limited I felt because I was from, there weren't a lot of opportunities. My wings were clipped, and I could have had more tools to become more resilient as an adult. Don't get me wrong, my parents nurtured me well. My environment was just not as conducive. This I realized when I moved to Metro Manila three years ago and after seeing so many opportunities available for the youth here in the capital. The world is not as small as we think. But it is volatile and it seems like suffering is far from over.

In one of our consultations last August, my fellow youth described the world now as "chaotic," "challenging," and "unsustainable." They are most worried about the climate emergency, conflict and disasters,

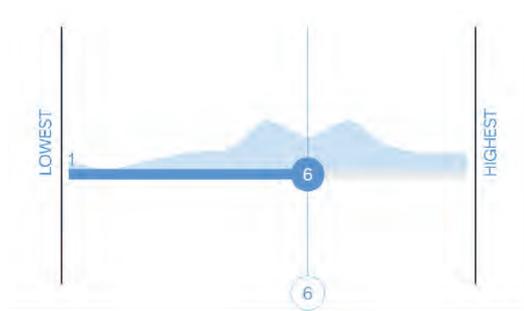
access to primary healthcare, and COVID-19 recovery, asking questions like

“Can I still have a bright future?”
“Would there still be millions of Filipinos in pain?”



Are you in the path you want to take in preparation for the World We Want?

They were also divided when asked about how satisfied they are in their path to the world they want and whether they are in that path.



From 1–10, how satisfied are you with YOUR journey to the world you want?

These results were just part and parcel of the series of conversations we had with our fellow youth in August. In celebration of IYD, our team at UNDP, made up of young Filipinos, led the World We Want Philippines. We asked our fellow youth about their hopes and worries, how they think they can help leave no one behind, and who their biggest supporters are in achieving the future they have envisioned. We tested this one-of-a-kind celebration with our Community Partners, 16 supportive groups who led their own sessions

throughout the week-long World We Want event. A dream come true for me, really. In hindsight, it was refreshing to finally have friends from different organizations come together to offer young people a holistic learning experience from hearing them out through the consultations to facilitating reflection sessions to help them become the best versions of themselves. The participants they interacted with were “engaged and insightful,” and “participative and responsive” with one of our community partners observing that we “validated some assumptions that we made about ‘youth leaders.’”

Now what do we do with all that enthusiasm and eagerness to affect change?

Our consultations revealed that the biggest supporters in achieving the World We Want, according to young Filipinos, are the government, educators, academe, and their fellow youth. My fellow young Filipinos expect for supporters to listen, have compassion, promote equality, implement intelligently, and have concrete actions to help achieve a better future. All very generic, even basic, terms that some key decision makers overlook. I write this as an anecdote, of course, but reading the sentiments of young people and interacting with them during those five days echoed my thoughts — that many things must change TODAY.

I have always and still believe that for change to happen, I need to start with myself. But to scale that change, I need to work with others.

When I see an opportunity, I ask myself “Am I the right person to help or will it be better to work with others?” It is always humbling every time I arrive to the conclusion that I do not certain expertise or skills. It takes a certain level of braveness to admit that we cannot do it alone.

The challenge, for us “supporters” is if we could be this brave and honest.

The best changemakers I've seen so far are those who opened their arms to new ideas, worked with their communities, and found linkages with others in the most organic way. The Move as One Coalition for example, was an offshoot of smaller civic groups, who lobbied for “a safer, more humane, and more inclusive public transportation system in the Philippines.[1]” They were formed during the COVID-19 crisis and is now able to influence decision-makers through evidence-based recommendations. The Child Rights Network, the “largest alliance of organizations and agencies pushing for children’s rights legislation in the Philippines[2],” has always lobbied for better solutions for children and has helped enact laws that we now know such as the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act and the Early Childhood Care and Development Act.

See? The things we could do if we only worked together!

This is a cry of frustration but also me evoking a sense of wonder. When our subconscious tells us that we do not have time to sit and chat with a fellow changemaker, policymaker, neighbour, or leader; when our ego is too big; when we have become too comfortable in our own boxes; we are denying ourselves and the next generation the right to thrive. Here’s another great idea.

A world worth living is a world worth designing...together.

The World We Want Philippines is a week-long event in celebration of International Youth Day that took off from the previous success of youth dialogues through Youth Co:Lab.

Co-created in 2017 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Citi Foundation, Youth Co:Lab aims to establish a common agenda for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to empower and invest in youth, so that they can accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through leadership, social innovation and entrepreneurship.

This blog was originally posted on medium:

<https://medium.com/@johannaeroba/oh-the-things-we-could-do-if-we-only-work-together-617f11dcacb5>



An Experiment on Satellite Remote Sensing of Plastic Waste in Pasig River

By Rex Lor, Head of Solutions Mapping, Accelerator Lab Philippines

It's the typhoon season again. Plastics, which had lain dormant during calmer weather, have now come back to haunt us.

According to a report, Metro Manila's largest pumping station has been damaged by an estimated 2 tons of trash being collected daily. Majority of these are plastic waste washed into Pasig river by torrential rainfall.

The huge solid waste problem in the Philippines is highlighted by a research conducted by Jambeck et al. in 2015 where the Philippines was ranked as one of the top contributors of marine litter in Asia, throwing 2.7 million tons of plastic into the sea every year. Pasig River, dubbed as one of world's top plastic polluters, accounts for 21% of the



MMDA Officials inspect solid waste collected from a pumping station in Metro Manila. (Source: www.inquirer.net)

organic waste flow to Manila Bay, 70% of which come from households. The river is a major waterway that flows from Laguna Lake in the east to Manila Bay in the west, via five independent city administrations in the central part of Metro Manila (Pasig, Mandaluyong, Taguig, Makati, Manila).

Considering the amount of rubbish that ends up in the pumping stations, it should come as no surprise that they are damaged during the monsoon season. The stations bear the burden of the enormous amounts of solid waste that are dumped in their path.

Further complicating this problem is the increase of single-use plastics and disposable personal protective equipment (PPE) generating an estimated 52,000 metric tons of medical waste amid the pandemic.

With the complex problem of solid waste and plastic pollution in Metro Manila layered with the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic, robust data is needed to better understand waste flow through cross-boundary tributaries that ultimately lead to Manila Bay. However, traditional field work is challenging at this time, with quarantine restrictions and risks to COVID-19 exposure inhibiting physical movement. This complex challenge led us to ask an important question: Can existing satellite imagery data provide us with a safe, efficient and accurate method of generating insights on plastic waste production in Metro Manila?

This desire came into fruition with the Japan SDGs Innovation Challenge where we were given the opportunity to conduct this type of experiment. Supported by the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan, the UNDP PH Accelerated Lab (ALabPH) engaged the Japan Manned Space Systems Corporation (JAMSS) to build a remote sensing model to detect plastic litter in the Metro Manila river system using available satellite image data. The project was also assisted by the Japan Innovation Network (JIN).

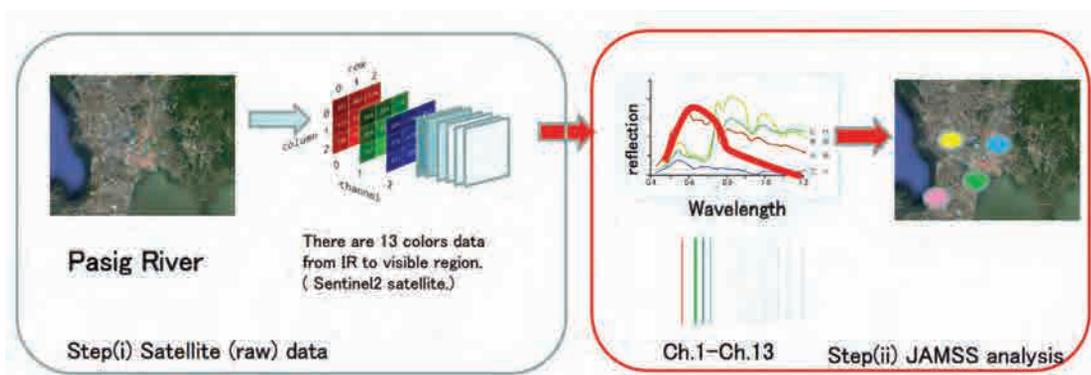
To test the spectral image sensing model developed by JAMSS, we identified 10 areas in the Metro Manila River system. The areas



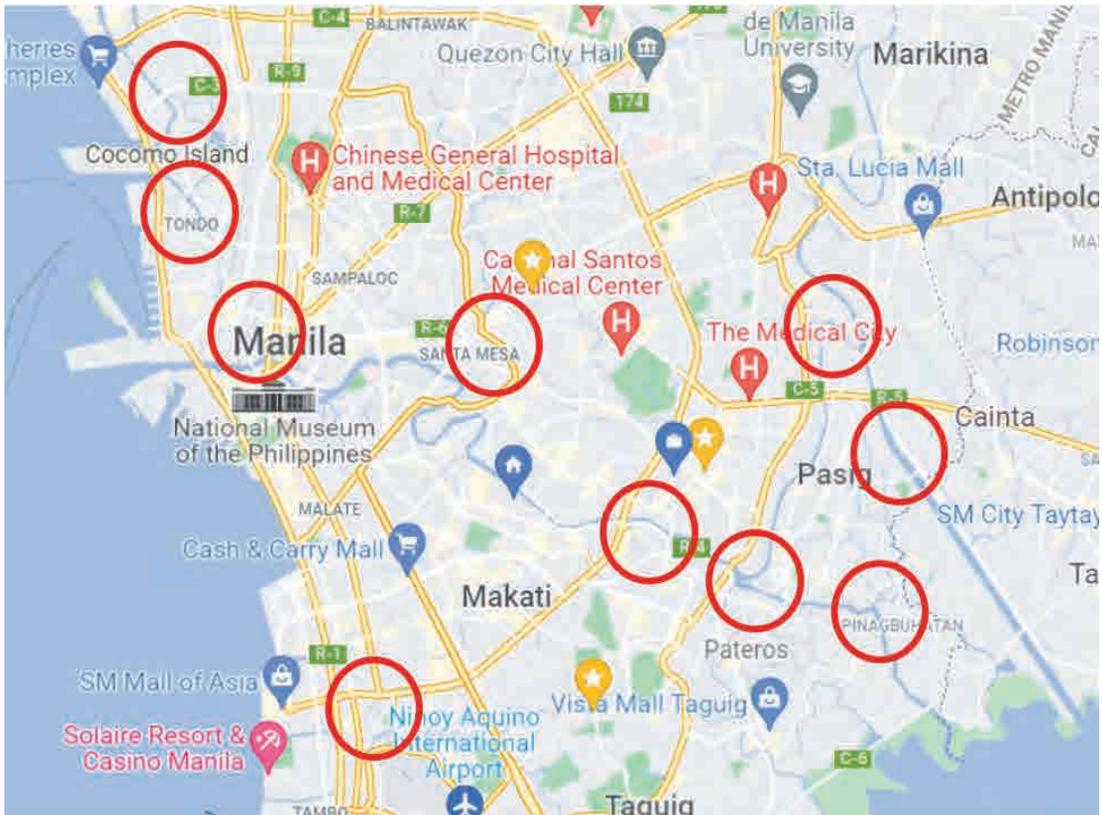
include: 1) Estero de Binondo, Manila; 2) Sevilla Bridge, San Juan; 3) Estero de Galina, Pasay; 4) Estero de Maypajo, Navotas; 5) Estero de Vitas, Manila; 6) Ilugin River intersecting Parian Creek, Pasig; 7) Marikina-Pasig River intersection, Pasig; 8) Maybunga Floodway, Pasig; 9) Pasig River near Guadalupe Bridge, Makati; 10) Marikina River, Marikina-Pasig.

As we were working closely with the Pasig City Environment and Natural Resources Office (Pasig CENRO), 5 of the 10 areas focused within the boundary of the city. The area around Pasig City is also an interesting location as it is a confluence of different canals and rivers .

making it a natural catch basin. This also allows us to view the state of the canal and river system around Pasig city from the vantage point 800 kilometers above



JAMSS used the spectral unmixing method that solves the spectral response as an inverse problem and can estimate the abundance of the target substance from the spectrum.



Estero de Maypajo Intersects Navotas River Water
 14.642398424010148, 120.9616657451292
 Maypajo Maypajo Navotas

2021-04-02



Navotas River- GoogleMAPS



Plastic



Plastic/ 1σ
 (Signal-to-Noise)

401, 402, 403: Positive
 404, 405: Slightly Positive

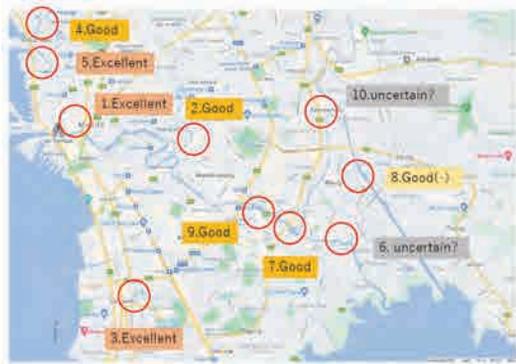
Key Findings and Lessons Learned

As the first phase focuses more on the development of the image sensing model, here are some of the lessons we learned from the implementation of the project:

A majority of the ten initial areas yielded

mostly positive results based on the JAMSS report and the spectral image sensing model was able to identify and locate plastics. It is worth noting that specific areas in Pasig City yielded 'uncertain' results during the satellite remote sensing activity and the ensuing validation activities conducted by the joint

Pasig City and UNDP PH drone team. Further inquiry into the matter with the Pasig CENRO indicated that the regular river and estuary clean up conducted by the city has yielded positive results as the satellite remote sensing was no longer able to detect plastic waste.



- The remote sensing model is as good as the available resolution of the satellite images. Because we are constrained with the available satellite image resolution, coverage of canals and estuaries is inadequate and can only get the desired accuracy up to 5-10 square meters. In addition, most canals and estuaries are covered by either foliage (e.g. trees, bushes, and river hyacinth) or roofs of illegal settlers.
- Which brings us to the direction of the second phase to focus more on the larger river systems in Metro Manila that have at least 5 square meters. In other words, we need to scale out the coverage to cover other river systems such as, but not limited to, Pasig River, Tullahan River, Marikina River, San Juan River, Paranaque River, Manggahan Floodway, Tunasan River, Taguig River, among others.
- To cover smaller canals and estuaries, the planned Phase 2 includes conducting an experiment on using citizen science to augment information provided by the satellite remote sensing project. This will also provide baseline information on marine plastic pollution in Metro Manila and raise awareness on the ill effects of marine plastic pollution by engaging the citizen researchers.

As phase 2 looks to scale up and scale out the solution, there is a need to engage and involve more key stakeholders, especially from national government agencies, research institutions, and Metro Manila cities. Proper guidance and direction can be gained especially from the government partners as they may have conducted similar research using satellite remote sensing technology.

Moving Forward

The first phase of the satellite remote sensing experiment provided us with essential lessons that will guide us in the phase 2 strategy of scaling out, scaling up, and scaling deep. By scaling out, we plan to focus on larger river systems in Metro Manila including Manila Bay. By scaling up, we plan to explore other methodologies to layer the spectral information image sensing model already developed by JAMSS. By scaling deep, we plan to reach out to key government agencies and research institutions to learn from their experiences and enhance the experiment.

We hope that by pursuing this project, we would be able to provide a way to monitor our rivers over time to better inform inter-city regulation, policy harmonisation, and align implementation of monitoring and clean-up drives.

The use of earth observation satellites for remote sensing bears significant potential to become a great tool to guide development policymaking. In which other ways do you think we can best use this cutting-edge innovation? We will be happy to hear from you! E-mail us at acceleratorlab.ph@gmail.com!





Photo by the author in Pinagbuhatan, Pasig sometime in between ECQs

Local Convergence for Zero Poverty: Experimentation on Collective Action with ZEP PH 2030

By Francis Capistrano,
Head of Experimentation

To commemorate International Day to End Poverty, this is the story of UNDP PH Accelerator Lab's two-year collaboration thus far with the Zero Extreme Poverty Philippines 2030 (ZEP 2030) to transform local convergences as vehicles for poverty reduction through multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID19) pandemic has eroded the Philippines' recent gains in poverty reduction. From 2015 to 2018, about five million individuals (about a million families) have been lifted above the income poverty threshold. The pandemic is likely to have dragged them back to being

poor. This is what we face with less than a decade left to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The current milieu requires society to rethink how poverty should be tackled.

That is a big question, and big questions tend to lead to grand, sweeping statements. We in the Philippines will certainly hear more proposed panaceas in the run-up to the national elections in May 2022: ayuda (aid), trabaho (jobs), kabuhayan (livelihood), and other solutions. These have been promised in the past. What assures us that these will work this time? To paraphrase one of my favorite economics professors, "your bleeding heart is not enough to make your solution work."

Poverty is multidimensional: a complex problem that must be approached systemically. To state the painfully obvious, no single solution will be enough. Solving it requires concerted action from all sectors from society; not just nationally but more so

at the local level. Even from—perhaps especially from—sectors that have been at loggerheads.

Is it even reasonable to imagine them sitting together to plot the end of poverty?

To the Zero Extreme Poverty Philippines 2030 (ZEP2030) coalition, this is not only reasonable but also necessary. This coalition of 140 civil society organizations (CSOs) have adopted the target of emancipating 1 million extremely poor families from poverty through collective action. ZEP2030 and UNDP Philippines, through its Accelerator Lab (ALab), have been collaborating to design and test a portfolio of approaches to localized, targeted, and convergent poverty action.

ZEP’s Pivot to Local Convergence

Before the pandemic, ZEP2030 had decided to go “all-in local” as it attempted to accelerate its progress. This is to be done through local convergences: envisaged to be vehicles for poverty reduction in their localities by facilitating tighter collaboration among development actors: not only among national and local non-government organizations (NGOs)

but also with local government units (LGUs), business, and other sectors.

Early convergence work, such as in Antipolo City and Cebu province, showed promise in bringing new energy to the movement. But what made these convergences tick? Each had unique characteristics (see below) that were shaped not only by their strengths and weaknesses but also by their unique starting points and their opportunities for scale.

Maximizing the potential of these local convergences requires celebrating their diversity.

Rather than impose an ideal process or standards for doing local convergence, ZEP2030 instead thought that it could empower variations in the practice. Instead of “manualizing” procedures and practices, the movement thought of offering lean guidance backed by an arsenal of tools and options that each local convergence could draw from and appropriate for their context.

ZEP2030 and ALab further imagined how this toolkit might look like before the

<p>Antipolo Model: LGU leads with NGOs co-leading. Convergence occurs after family profiling & visioning</p>	<p>Strength: concerned LGU units on board thru Mayor, existing multi-stakeholder alliance</p> <p>Challenge: may be hard to replicate province wide as it is highly sector-based (i.e., PIP)</p> <p>Similar to: Puerto Princesa (health)</p>	<p>Cebu Model: Convergence happens when stakeholders at province level converge & agree to work together</p>	<p>Strength: quick convening of stakeholders simultaneous to city/municipal-level action</p> <p>Challenge: requires resource & capacity for local convenor; prioritization of cities & municipalities</p> <p>Similar to: Bohol. Note both are encountering resource issues as they launch & move forward</p>
<p>Sumilao Model: NGO/CSO is the lead convenor. Convergence occurs after family profiling & visioning</p>	<p>Strength: NGO has resources, committed leadership, and capacity & collaboration w/ LGU</p> <p>Challenge: convergence building with other CSOs/ thematic areas has not yet been seen</p> <p>Similar to: Rapu-Rapu</p>	<p>Sarangani Model: Multiple clusters as entry point but the convergence needs to be revitalized by revisiting roles</p>	<p>Strength: strong presence of NGOs & CSO formations, with existing provincial network</p> <p>Challenge: inter-NGO and political dynamics</p> <p>Note: the original province-based convergence</p>
<p>Arteche Model: The LCE is the driver of ZEP movement in the locality, whether or not NGOs are strong</p>	<p>Strength: LGU leadership critical; capacity and resources leveraged</p> <p>Challenge: bringing in more CSOs and building convergence among them</p> <p>Similar to: Dinagat Island</p>	<p>Davao Model: Attempt at regional convergence which led to possible province- & city-level convergences</p>	<p>Strength: potential for creating multiple province-level convergences at once</p> <p>Challenge: formation might have been too big and fragmented as an entry point</p> <p>Note: need to follow through on new Davao ZEPs</p>
<p>Quezon City Model: Simultaneous action in multiple barangays through multiple CSO actors working together</p>	<p>Strength: with established CSO relations with the barangay-level LGUs; agreement to work together; abundance of CSOs</p> <p>Challenge: scale of the LGU, mapping CSO presence and sustaining the coalition</p> <p>Note: has not yet begun engaging LGU</p>	<h2>Emerging Models of ZEP Area Convergence</h2>	

Different models, rather, starting points for ZEP local convergence crafted in 2019.

lockdowns struck in 2020. With the ZEP Cebu convergence, they held the first ZEP Talyer: a dialogue format that made use of a mishmash of tools to understand complex issues (system mapping), find grassroots solutions (our homegrown Saliklakbay), and concretize ideas (prototyping). Ongoing work on data innovation was also presented, hoping that it could serve as a discussion piece on how to create a common agenda for action for the local convergence.



Two paper prototypes of engagement strategies devised by ZEP Cebu convergence members (informed by the system mapping posted at the back)

These tools were used not only to better understand the situation in Cebu but also to gain insight for the rest of the movement. The discussions in Cebu focused on how local governance was both central to addressing local poverty and the cause of problems (like poor services and corruption) that, in turn, lead to poverty. For the movement-at-large, the Cebu experience validated the “all-in local” hypothesis: that engaging local government is inevitable. But it also emphasized that the underlying assumptions—the cohesion of local movements, inter-sector dynamics, and the face of poverty itself—will be different across localities.

Local Convergence under the Pandemic

Coming from the Cebu pilot, ZEP2030 was poised to initiate new province- and city-level convergences. Unfortunately, plans were thwarted by the imposition of lockdowns in March 2020.

Physically but not spiritually curtailed by the pandemic, ZEP2030 immediately sought ways to assess the condition of the poor communities and families that they seek to serve. ZEP2030 and UNDP ALab, in collaboration with startup AI4Gov, launched COVID Pulse PH. This innovative survey is deployed through a messenger chatbot that is socialized through the community networks of ZEP2030 as well as of the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement.

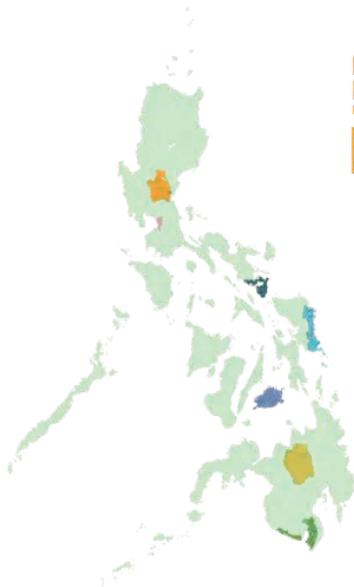
Three waves of the survey have been implemented since May 2020. Wave 1 and wave 2 focused on Metro Manila and Metro Cebu, which were the epicenters of the pandemic. Wave 3 expanded the coverage to six provinces—Bohol, Eastern Samar, Bukidnon, Sarangani, Nueva Ecija, and Sorsogon—to investigate the pandemic’s ripple effects across the country.

All three waves confirmed the movement’s worst fears: COVID19 affected the poorest the most.

A more extensive piece is forthcoming on the results of COVID Pulse PH, particularly on how recovery can be designed considering the assets and aspirations of the poor. Pending that, one key insight from the survey must be highlighted. While the pandemic’s socioeconomic impacts burdened everyone, how they were affected differed across localities. Those in the locked-down metropolises were prevented from going to work, while those in the rural areas lost access to markets for their products and services.

The varied impacts of the pandemic only point to how crucial local responses will be in shaping a better normal for the poor. Are ZEP’s local convergences up to the task?

Parallel to the rollout of COVID Pulse PH Wave 3 in March this year, ZEP2030 conducted new Talyer sessions to revisit the movement’s direction and plot the way forward in the face of uncertainty. Facilitated by ALab, the sessions provided both national and local convenors of ZEP the



NUEVA ECIJA

72%
Decreased Income

7 out of 10
(68.7%)

Reported income worsened this March 2021 compared to last year

METRO MANILA

69%
Decreased Income

5 out of 10
(54.8%)

Reported income worsened this March 2021 compared to last year

BOHOL

78%
Decreased Income

6 out of 10
(65.3%)

Reported income worsened this March 2021 compared to last year

EASTERN SAMAR

76%
Decreased Income

7 out of 10
(68.7%)

Reported income worsened this March 2021 compared to last year

SARANGANI

80%
Decreased Income

7 out of 10
(68.7%)

Reported income worsened this March 2021 compared to last year

BUKIDNON

73%
Decreased Income

5 out of 10
(51.8%)

Reported income worsened this March 2021 compared to last year

SORSOGON

77%
Decreased Income

6 out of 10
(57.2%)

Reported income worsened this March 2021 compared to last year

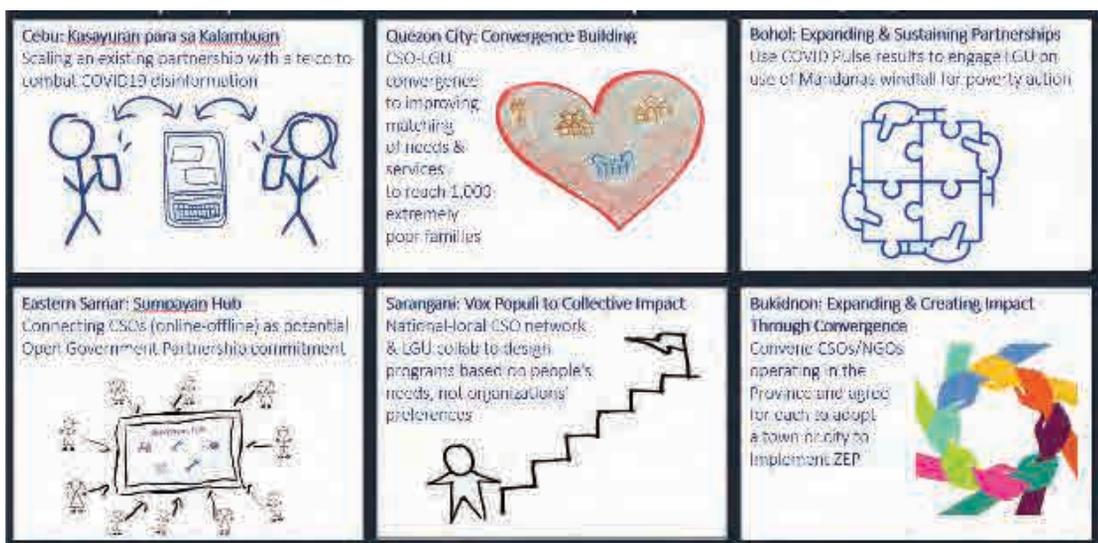
View more data insights on the COVID Pulse PH data dashboard

opportunity to identify key issues faced by the movement and their possible future scenarios (to be discussed in a succeeding piece).

“Sprint teams” were also assembled around five initial local convergences of varying levels of maturity: Cebu, Bohol, Eastern Samar, Sarangani, and Quezon City. Each of them was tasked to conceive creative solutions to address the identified pain points of the local convenor—whether it was in

combatting disinformation, or reimagining community organizing under the new normal—and to implement these creative solutions within the year.

These local convergences, plus Bukidnon, also crafted their respective sprint plans for convening local stakeholders to introduce ZEP2030 to them, engage LGUs on their recovery strategy, and in the process discuss and act upon the results of COVID



Creative solutions produced by the local convergence sprint teams

Pulse PH in their localities. Key local convenors are members of local development councils of their LGUs and have brought ZEP2030's goals into the agenda.

These local movements are still shellshocked by the pandemic and yet they continue to wage on for the 1 million extremely poor households that they aim to emancipate.

Citizens' Voices and Aspirations for a Better Normal

Ending poverty under the "new normal" has become more challenging. First, the situation remains highly volatile: deadlier variants of the virus have emerged, and there have been signs that COVID19 could be a permanent pandemic. Second, society has been forced to adapt to a way of life that is dependent on technology: a necessity that not everyone can access.

A third issue, relevant to the Philippines at least, is the increased localization of socio-economic recovery from the pandemic. Pandemic management become very localized, with the government adopting granular lockdowns as the main containment policy. Moreover, due to a landmark Supreme Court decision on revenue sharing—the ruling on the Mandanas-Garcia case—LGUs will gain a windfall of about PHP264 billion (US\$5.2 billion) in 2022.

How might this windfall be leveraged as a war chest for eradicating poverty?

As we speak, LGUs are preparing their Devolution Transition Plans: not only on how they intend to use their Mandanas-Garcia windfall but also how they plan to absorb devolved functions from the national government. After the new local officials are elected in May next year, the local development planning processes will once again kick in. Socioeconomic recovery from COVID19 will likely figure into these plans. The big question is how to that these development plans lead to a better normal for the poor.

Each locality will have their own priorities and

investment goals. What matters is that citizens' voices and aspirations are reflected these plans; and that different sectors in society converge their actions around these. ZEP's local convergences commit to at the least try new ways and engage unusual partners to #EndPoverty.



From some of the many Zoom meetings ZEP2030 had to hold to keep the momentum going through the pandemic.

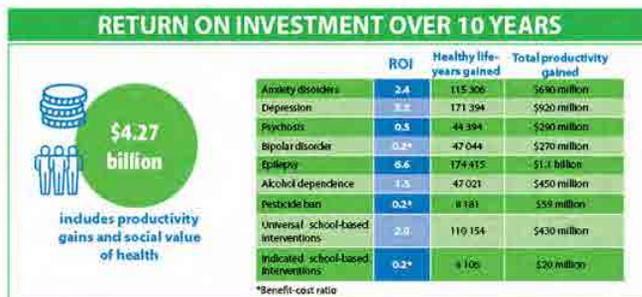
This blog was originally uploaded in the author's blog:

<https://kapticapistrano.wordpress.com/2021/10/18/local-convergence-for-zero-poverty/>



The Philippines

The case for investment in mental health



Figures expressed in US\$

14 The economic case for investing in mental health

By Daniel C. Grafton, Katrine Kae Vicedo, and Mashida Rashi

October is World Mental Health Month. During this second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the occasion is marked amid growing recognition of the huge burden mental health conditions place on our collective wellbeing and on the economies of countries.

A third of the global disease burden and a tenth of all deaths can be attributed to mental health conditions. Yet it rarely shows up among development priorities – and even more rarely outside health sector discussions.

This month, the Philippines was the first ever country to launch a joint UN investment case on mental health, a collaboration between the Philippines Department of Health, UNDP and WHO under the coordination of the UN Inter-agency Task Force on NCDs (UNIATF).

More than a thousand participants joined the launch event, a clear sign of the growing prominence of mental health in policy discussions in the Philippines. Key sectors of government, UN agencies and civil society called for increased action, citing the main findings of the investment case that investing in evidence-based, cost-effective, WHO-recommended mental health interventions could:

- save more than 26,000 lives and return 3 million healthy life years to Filipinos over 20 years, and
- yield returns over 20 years as high as US \$15 for every \$1 invested now.

The report outlines not only the health but also the economic rationale for investing in evidence-based, WHO-recommended interventions that are in line with community-based, integrated approaches. The case provides robust evidence that increased investments in mental health not only advance the right to health but also make economic sense.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the importance of our mental health into stark relief. As the UN Secretary General, António Guterres said in his address on World Mental Health Day, “there can be no health without mental health”.

In May 2020, the United Nations described the COVID-19 pandemic of having the ‘seeds of a major mental health crisis’. The pandemic has indeed had a major effect on people’s mental health, increasing both the prevalence of mental health conditions and disrupting services for those with mental, neurological and substance (MNS) use conditions. Among 130 countries surveyed by WHO in late 2020, 93% reported disruptions in one or more of their mental health services.

Demand for investment cases for mental health from UN and their partners have seen a sharp uptick as governments realize their value. Mental health investment cases are now underway in seven countries and many others have been requested. For its part, UNDP, together with WHO and key stakeholders, will continue to assist countries develop investment cases for mental health.[1] In its new Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, UNDP has explicitly committed to working with partners to scale health system strengthening, including around equitable access to mental health care services.

But in this context of escalating demand there is a critical shortfall of available technical assistance, as well as a general underinvestment in mental health including through ODA. Estimates of ODA allocated to mental health range between 0.3-1% of ODA for health, of which most has been directed toward emergency and conflict settings.

To fill this gap, the UNDP, UNICEF and WHO have established the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for NCDs and Mental Health. Governments will be able to receive support to mobilize domestic funding and integrate mental health into their efforts to achieve universal health coverage.

World Mental Health Month is about raising awareness. We as individuals must advocate for equitable access to quality mental health care, fight stigma and discrimination in our communities, and hold our Governments accountable for investing much more in mental health interventions. Mental health is not only a fundamental human right; investing in it also makes eminent good sense for the economy.

[1] And in other areas, including tobacco control, road traffic safety, air pollution, nutrition and neglected tropical diseases.

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Katrine Kae Vicedo, Programme Analyst, UNDP Country Office in the Philippines*

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Photo from the city government of Vigan, Ilocos Sur. The City Core Team of DevLIVE+ conducting community validation in one barangay to present and inform the stakeholders of the current data.

Sustaining Digital Platforms in the Local Government Units: The DevLIVE+ Experience

By Mark Marcos, DRR Specialist, Institutions and Partnerships

Undeniably, there have been an increasing demand for and appreciation of data among local government units (LGUs) for planning and decision-making to strengthen local development, and prepare for and respond to disasters. Advancement and availability of information technology, coupled with the new normal brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, have steered local chief executives to invest in digital solutions to facilitate ease in data collection and provide the necessary information for

immediate responses. Setting up a platform in response to such demand may be a far easier task than sustaining these digital innovations and managing data to come up with an integrated and a more efficient response.

UNDP has a history of innovation and has been pioneering the use of existing and emerging technologies in a pragmatic and structured manner in addressing some of the challenges. UNDP's new Digital Strategy explores the effective and efficient use of technology and innovation to deliver better results and services with our local and community partners. By providing access to digital platforms and building the capacities to manage, use and sustain the technology, UNDP will continue to be an effective ally of the local government in their digital transformation.

The Development through Local Indicators and Vulnerability Exposure Database or DevLIVE+ of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was developed primarily as a tool for LGUs to collect and manage their local data in response to the lack of up-to-date information for development planning and disaster risk reduction. DevLIVE+ is a platform that consolidates the socio-economic information of almost all the households, characteristics and location of buildings, and basic profile of agricultural productions in an area, where these information are easily generated and visualized by the local data managers. Most of the 30 city and municipal government units used their DevLIVE+ to update their comprehensive development, land use and contingency plans. To date, majority of the pilot-LGUs were able to use the platform in producing list of beneficiaries for their social amelioration program and relief operations in this time of the pandemic.

Throughout its three years of continuous

implementation, there are evident key factors that have sustained the application of DevLIVE+ in LGU operations. Prior to UNDP's introduction of the DevLIVE+ to the concerned LGUs, beyond mere data appreciation, the local chief executives, including their department heads, already have the vision of employing local data and information to aid in fulfilling their responsibilities as head of the community and improve the wellbeing of their constituents. This vision facilitated all out support from the top management to successfully implement the project down from field coordination, data collection, data visualization and management, to community validation.

The DevLIVE+ was designed based on the specific needs and capacities of the concerned local government units. The data collection platform used an open-sourced program called Open Data Kit (ODK) which is easily deployable in remote and offline areas, while its data are interactively visualized and managed



As part of the training exercise, the enumerator participants interview respondent in pilot barangay to put theories into field work before they are being deployed to actual data collection in San Fernando City, La Union.

through the desktop application. With digital platforms flourishing and datasets using DevLIVE+ as their core database.

As they say, data has become the new fuel of today's generation. While it has been always a challenge for local government units to generate timely and real-time information, it should also be embedded as part of the work to look beyond data generation, and be motivated on how data use can be sustained for an in-depth analysis to meet the needs of the community and carry out more responsive actions. constantly evolving, understanding the intended users' capacities and data requirements have become the basic criteria in developing any digital solutions.

Investing in a highly qualified and committed group comprised of a Team Leader, Survey Coordinators, Data Validators, GPS Operators and Enumerators is an important component for the success of the project. While a series of training activities is provided by UNDP to improve the skills and capacities of locally outsourced team, the passion and dedication of each of the members to be part of the solution in addressing recurring challenges became their motivation to gather accurate and reliable field information. Moving from validators to Data Managers after data collection, they take on a bigger role of generating and processing the required information for the local government.

Translating vision to action propels the sustainability of the DevLIVE+. As is the case of the city government of Vigan, Mayor Juan Carlo Medina and his department heads proactively used their data to develop programs for their youth and elderlies, in developing their Yellow Access Card for their constituents to receive assistance, in improving their COVID-19 vaccination programs, in updating their CLUP, and in identifying hog raisers who may be susceptible to the effect of the African Swine Flu, among others. The city government is now moving toward their digital transformation, which includes integration of their available





Photo from the city government of Vigan, Ilocos Sur. The City Core Team of DevLIVE+ conducting community validation in one barangay to present and inform the stakeholders of the current data.

16 Redeeming Kindness through Digital Service Design

By Marilyn Castino, Programme Analyst

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our daily routines and made some of us shift our gears, may it be on the personal or professional aspect of our lives. Governments across the globe had to rethink their strategies to cope up with the demands of the people especially during the height of the pandemic. To adapt and recover from the pandemic, many governments realized the importance of going digital. In the southern part of the Philippines, the recently established Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) Government, through the Ministry of the Interior and Local

Government (MILG), going digital has been an aspiration even before COVID-19 came into our lives.

The MILG recognizes the challenge of improving public service delivery in BARMM and to respond to substantial gaps, it forged a partnership with UNDP Philippines for the implementation of the Localizing e-Governance for Accelerated Provision of Services (LeAPS) Project. The LeAPS Project intends to harness the transformative power of data, digitalization, and people-centered governance to substantially improve the delivery of local public services for the Bangsamoro people.

As one of the enabling mechanisms to achieve a people-centered governance, the Digital Service Design Lab (DSDL) was launched as a component of the LeAPS

Project, inspired by the UNDP Bangladesh – supported Access to Information (a2i) program. The DSDL aims to transform how local government units (LGUs) and ministries in BARMM deliver services and information to people with the help of digital channels. Through the DSDL the ambition is to bring humanity to the digital process and dignity to the service experience so that public services offered in BARMM are simple, efficient, seamless, desirable, and accessible especially for the marginalized and vulnerable sectors of the communities.



Malyn at the DSDL Training of Trainers

One of the unique features that DSDL offers is it allows BARMM civil servants to understand the processes involve in availing and provision of public service by putting themselves in the shoes of both the Service Receiver and Service Provider through an empathy journey. The empathy journey becomes an avenue to understand the needs, pain points and opportunities to help in the design and provision of services that are more meaningful and relevant. Using empathy as the foundation for service design, processes are then simplified and made into prototypes. Eventually these prototypes are translated into service blueprints which would become the basis for designing public e-services. These public e-services would be made available for the Bangsamoro people by accessing the #DigitalBangsamoro Portal or by visiting the Digital Centres located in the municipal halls in BARMM by 2022.

To date, the following service blueprints had been converted to prototype e-services when the Municipalities of Butig and Piagapo of

of Lanao del Sur had their first taste of the DSDL – (1) Application for Certificate of Live Birth; (2) Application for Business Permit. Meanwhile, the MILG had chosen the following services for simplification and digitization – (1) Issuance of Sanggunian Member/Barangay Eligibility Certification; (2) Application for Travel Authority. Before the year ends, five more LGUs and five BARMM ministries would have completed the DSDL, producing an additional ten simplified services, ready for digitization.

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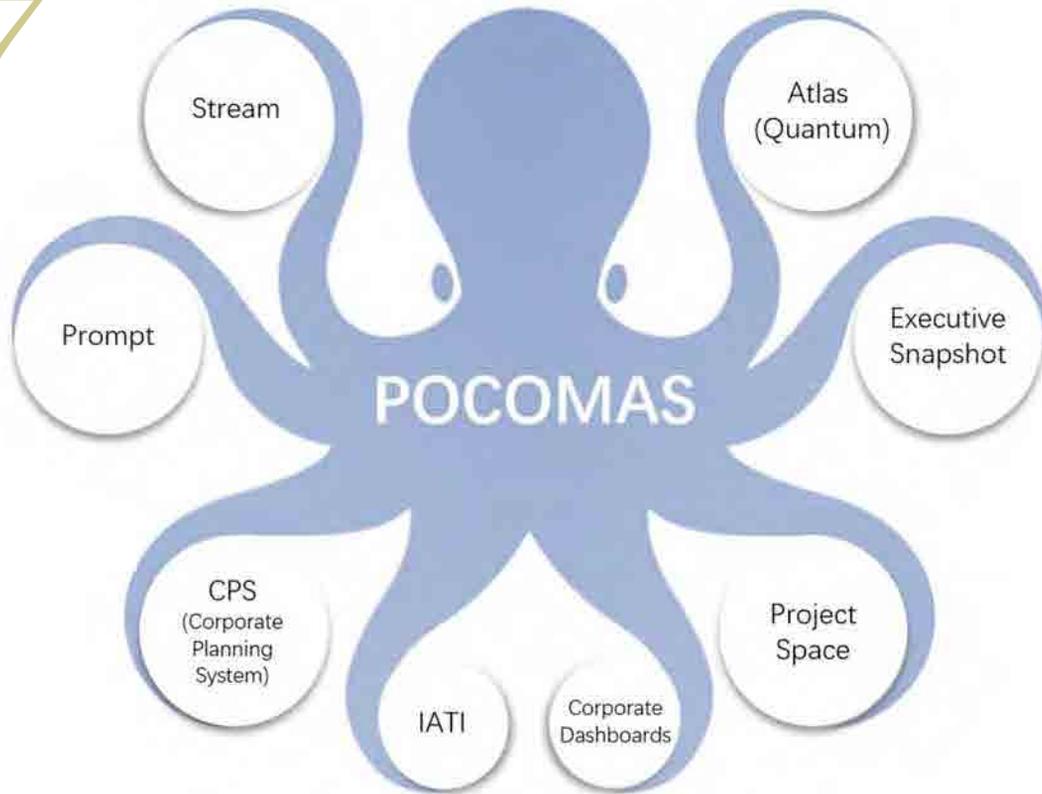
In parallel to re-designing public services in BARMM, a pool of service designers is also being capacitated and later, would be tapped for the eventual expansion of DSDL to accommodate more LGUs and BARMM ministries. The pool of service designers is also commendable for truly embracing this challenging, but exciting task and for appreciating what DSDL may contribute to improving local governance in BARMM.

Centres are activated, loaded with public e-services which are designed by kindhearted Bangsamoro public service designers for the Bangsamoro people.

Being able to participate in the DSDL runs and as a newbie public service designer, it is inspiring for me to note that the LGUs and BARMM ministries which have already completed DSDL, strongly affirms the importance of not only simplifying the steps to avail services, but it is equally important to consider the feelings, thoughts, and actions of all stakeholders involved in public service delivery. Indeed, kindness could and must be integrated into service delivery.

Some may think that MILG's journey towards #DigitalBangsamoro is nothing fancy. Even some would say that digitalization is the new norm, so this initiative may be considered a business-as-usual. But for these government institutions in BARMM, embarking on digital governance is an innovative and courageous leap that they are taking on for the citizens, and for the future generations. It is still a long way to go but I am looking forward to when the #DigitalBangsamoro Portal is up and running and the Digital





“Everyone can do POCOMAS”

by Dr. Selva Ramachandran, UNDP Philippines Resident Representative, and Sylvain St. Pierre, UNDP Chief Technology Officer, with Enrico Gaveglia, UNDP Maldives Resident Representative

The Philippines Country Office (CO) did not always feel at ease with the corporate tools available to meaningfully monitor its ambitious country programme, specifically as projects were being delivered locally on vast and geographically dispersed areas across several thematic streams of UNDP’s work. For instance, reporting platforms, often centred around financial indicators, were not sourced, presented or visualized in a unified manner, and sometimes lacked the ability to customize queries to meet emerging and changing CO-level analytical needs.

More importantly, portfolio and project infor-

mation kept in planning or design documents are still mostly in paper files or in a disparate set of digital folders, making them not only inaccessible, especially from remote work locations, but this also meant they could not be used as data streams for content analytics.

In response, the Philippines CO first developed, and UNDP Information and Technology Management (ITM) later invested in, a SharePoint-based Portfolio Country Office Management Solution (POCOMAS), which has now been rolled out in 34 COs across all five regions since July 2020.

POCOMAS, a space created by the CO leadership to bring programme and operations together, provides the opportunity for office staff to participate and better navigate the Programme and Project Management (PPM) modules of UNDP’s Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP). At the same time, it

offers a comprehensive proposal of taxonomy¹ with a central repository of documents to support local programme execution and clear references to more regular dialogue across CO teams.

A series of Application Programming Interface (API)-enabled dashboards in POCOMAS further simplifies the process of ingesting data and more critically, automates the visualization of CO-level results and better presents financial indicators obtained from multiple platforms.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of Country Offices

The Philippines CO initially developed POCOMAS in 2019 as a response to symptomatic and recurring issues of poor compliance with corporate requirements. CO Key Performance Indicators for both programme and operations were consistently marked as red (watch level) in corporate dashboards due to poor access to document management, as well as lack of sufficient customizable programme content and financial analytics.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the CO faced one of the longest community lockdowns globally. The pandemic helped accelerate the development of POCOMAS, which iteratively evolved to provide an invaluable “driving console” of office affairs offering staff and management access to each other on an online solution that helped facilitate collaboration, programme management and oversight. Likewise, POCOMAS has been effective in supporting senior management and programme managers by providing easy access to complete and up-to-date project documentation, allowing for more informed decision-making and risk management.

The solution has also increased awareness of country programme and portfolio level results that are consolidated from projects. It has enriched existing financial analytics by merging and centralizing data sets sourced from several platforms. This has exposed data-driven insights oriented towards delivery and resource mobilization discussions.

The Mind Map beyond POCOMAS Taxonomy

The solution allows project managers and programme staff with oversight roles to easily compare available portfolio and project information against UNDP POPP guidelines and standard document templates.

The CO has derived the complete taxonomy for portfolio information management storage based on the POPP PPM visual guide for Standard Development Projects, which specifies key corporate requirements and documents involved in project design, implementation, and closure.

By placing a folder of content behind each step of the visual guide, POCOMAS has connected the ongoing International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) effort to a real-time experience of CO portfolio management with an “always up to date” Project Document Center. What used to take days or weeks to compile is now readily available and easily searchable.

Additionally, the POCOMAS Project Document Center in SharePoint Online serves as the central repository of information such as project documents, which has also accelerated document collation for audits and evaluations.

A data stream created from the Programme quality side

Historically, UNDP has been evolving analytical capacity around the financial data stream sourced from ATLAS. However, it has proven more challenging to gain insights into the analogue space of our programme without digital footprints for project results, normally proposed in the form of project progress reports. POCOMAS uses PowerApps to digitize work plans and project progress reports, allowing the birth of an uncharted data stream now easier to consolidate and interrogate with the data visualization tools.

The space of digital colonization of our processes remains infinite, yet POCOMAS cracks an analogue space so far unexplored and allows for the collision of data sets and analytics for CO leadership to hold country programme performance to account. The dashboards and visualizations developed easily flag CPD outputs that are lagging in terms of results, project location data has been super-imposed with poverty and vulnerability data for easier data triangulation and targeting of interventions and evidence of results in the form of communications materials and media coverage are likewise collated for all projects on a quarterly basis. This is just some of the data made readily available through the solution to inform CO analysis and planning.

Ultimately, by being a tool that supports results-based monitoring, POCOMAS opens the possibility of a Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) as you go.

ITM's "scale-up" investment in POCOMAS means COs can leverage the solution

The best ideas and solutions often originate from the field; from colleagues experimenting and innovating in response to day-to-day challenges. As such, ITM has established a mechanism for identifying local IT innovations that could help other parts of UNDP. In the case of the Philippines, CO initiated POCOMAS, which establishes good oversight and ensure compliance across a complex programme portfolio in COs, and the fact that POCOMAS is built on UNDP's core IT platforms, SharePoint-based project document center and a programme portfolio review console using Power BI dashboards, the case for scale-up and globalization of POCOMAS was compelling.

Thus, ITM received approval from UNDP's Digital Governance Group to invest \$65,000 from the ICT Reserve toward rolling out the solution more broadly. POCOMAS has now been introduced in 34 offices and integrated into their daily work. Some of the applications involve the use of POCOMAS PowerBI dash-

boards to inform management team meeting discussions. Several COs have taken advantage of the high-level of customization and learning POCOMAS offers and expanded the use of the solution beyond programme and project management to also support operations, HR, and donor reporting.

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ITM's support also allowed for POCOMAS to be further developed, making it more user-friendly, including through the automation of dashboards through access to Application Programming Interface (APIs). This removed the need for manual intervention for dashboards using ATLAS and PROMPT data. ITM also helped link POCOMAS to other corporate websites and platforms, to give a more integrated and seamless experience.

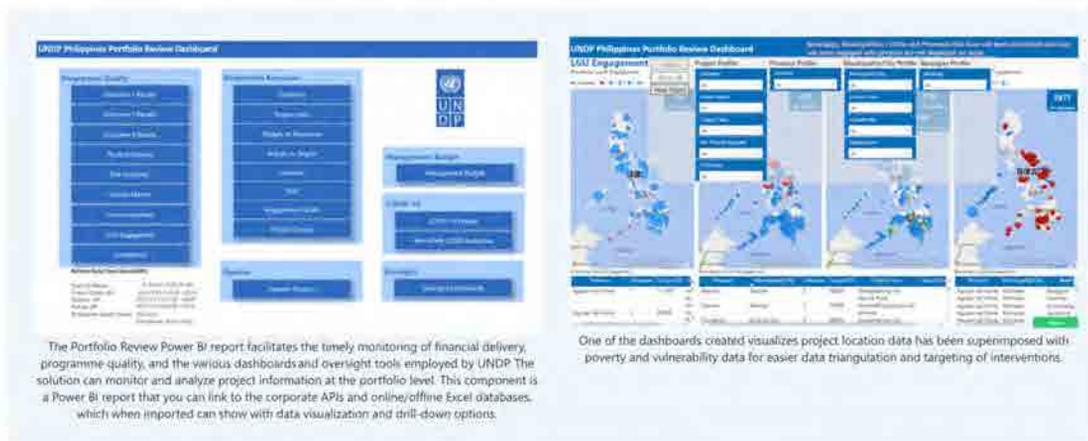
With Quantum, our new management system that will fully replace ATLAS in July 2022, POCOMAS will be even more relevant, given the APIs will be reconnected to the new Quantum Data Warehouse. For example, the strengthened Quantum-SharePoint integration will result in documents already uploaded in POCOMAS that will not need to be uploaded separately in Quantum.

The ambition is to convert POCOMAS into a standard tool that is a natural complement to Quantum and granting all COs with POCOMAS access by default.

POCOMAS is democratizing digital solutions for cross pollination of innovative ideas

A POCOMAS Marketplace has been launched to host solutions and applications developed by other COs so they can easily be integrated into other POCOMAS SharePoint sites. By democratizing digital

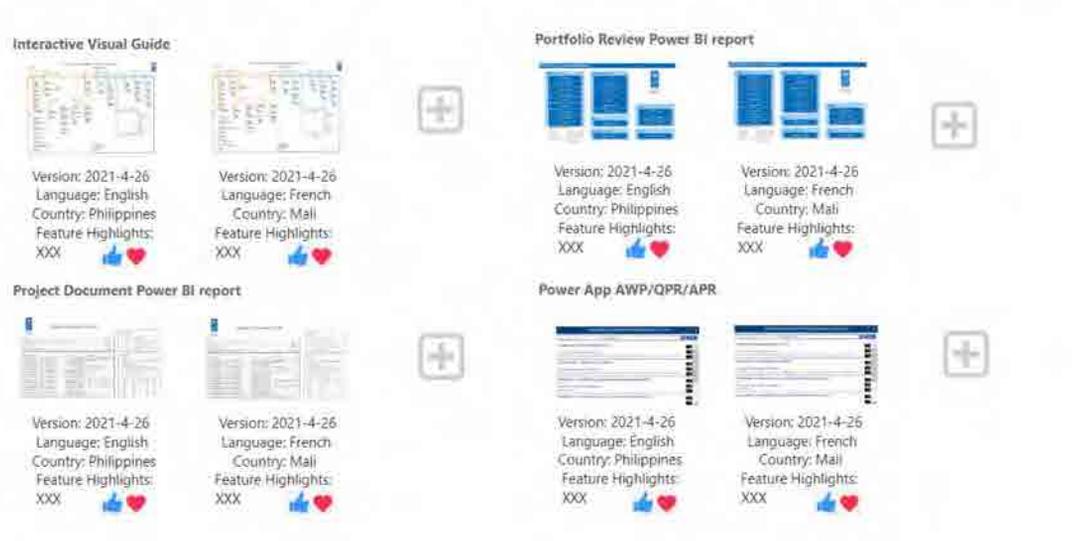
solutions, we see a lot of CO-developed innovations arise and other COs are given easy access to them for replication.



UNDP Portfolio CO Management Solution Marketplace

Welcome: The market place is designed to share CO innovations and continuous enhancement XXX

You can view, download and have conversations with XXX



There is much to learn about rolling out native digital solutions from a bottom-up perspective

Several factors have and will contribute to the successful roll out of POCOMAS in other COs. The main is leadership support for a improved cohesion between Programme and Operations. Senior management’s vision and the creation of a “space” for experimentation in the CO, in parallel with promoting the use of POCOMAS as a tool where CO leadership,

middle management and staff can regularly meet to discuss performance, are all key. The expansion of POCOMAS to multiple COs has brought other benefits too. It has allowed the team to stress test the solution with a wide user base. The feedback loop of learnings received from other CO ‘believers’ of POCOMAS inspired further enhancements and encouraged more COs to join.

The natural placement of POCOMAS in UNDP’s digital ecosystem is as part of

portfolio management discussions currently led by BPPS. The Philippines CO and others can use the tool to accelerate the shift to programme sensemaking or applying it more classically in a Country Programme open viewpoint.

Regional Centers may aggregate POCOMAS insights into regional portfolio reviews. In the mid-term, work is underway to ensure that POCOMAS is aligned to UNDP's digital transformation goals, especially to our new ERP – Quantum.

COs exploration of POCOMAS as a possible solution to build partner capacities in monitoring and support project and programme management systems within partner government agencies is doable and indeed, everybody can do a “POCOMAS” to drive COs to a better version of self.



UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crises, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

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