

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM STATEMENT  
2011 PHILIPPINES DEVELOPMENT FORUM  
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*Theme: Implementing President Aquino's Social Contract to Achieve Inclusive Growth*

## INTRODUCTION

From the last PDF, in 2008, almost three years have lapsed, and with barely five years left, we are facing the final stretch to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. In the last three years much has been accomplished, but at the same time, much remains to be done. Notwithstanding progress in promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality and malaria, there is low probability for the Philippines to reach the MDGs on poverty and hunger, education, maternal health, HIV and environment.

We commend the new Government of the Philippines for its commitment to fighting poverty, translated from the "Social Contract with the Filipino People" into the new Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2010-2016. The document is coherent in its grouping of chapters and demonstrates the Government's commitment to convergence and cross-sectoral analysis and implementation of activities. As a diverse UN system we know this is not an easy thing to do, but commend and will support the Government's efforts in this regard.

At the last PDF the UN emphasized the need for greater attention to human rights and has since been pleased to assist with the introduction of a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to planning and programming. We welcome the introduction of HRBA in the new PDP in the formulation of strategies, programs and projects. The Philippines is very much a global pioneer in this undertaking. We are equally pleased that the PDP has considered current and emerging important concerns such as the MDGs and climate change. Achieving the MDGs by 2015 is one of the major targets of the PDP, and a new feature is mainstreaming of climate change concerns in national, sub-national and sectoral plans.

## PROGRESS TO DATE

Despite the impact of the global financial crisis that started in 2008 and natural calamities, like the destructive typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng in September and October 2009, the Philippines has managed to be one of the few economies in the region that registered positive performance; with a GDP of 7.1 in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2010. The labor market also significantly improved with a 2.8 percent increase in total employment (generating an estimated 985,000 new jobs) in 2010, lowering unemployment and underemployment rates to 7.3 percent (from 7.5 percent in 2009) and 18.7 percent (from 19.1 percent in 2009), respectively. Meanwhile, vulnerable employment (self-

employed plus unpaid family workers as proportion of total employed) has fallen to 41.7% (from 42.6% in 2009). Furthermore the Philippines has entered the ranks of the “lower middle-income Countries” implying a change of development strategies from development partners; moving away from assisting strategies to cooperation relationships.

There is marked improvement in terms of poverty incidence (from 8.7 percent in 2006 to 7.9 percent in 2009) and subsistence incidence (from 11.7 percent in 2006 to 10.8 percent in 2009). Nevertheless the magnitude of poor population increased by almost 970,000 Filipinos from 22.2 million in 2006 to 23.1 million in 2009. In addition the Philippines with an annual population growth rate of 2.04 percent, and an estimated total population of 140 million by 2040, continues to be the only country in the region without a comprehensive national reproductive health policy. The United Nations considers the enactment of a family health and population law and policy to be of high priority if the MDGs are to be achieved. Newspapers headlines highlighted that after the first 100 days of the new administration already 0.5 million children were born in that time - 0.5 million more children to feed, to educate, health and care to be provided for.

Moreover, the impact of the growing population on the labor market cannot be disregarded. Over the course of the last two decades, employment creation has barely kept pace with the increase in the working age population, and the labor productivity growth trends have been mixed. Unemployment is a problem but the issue for many is not the absence of work but rather the lack of decent and productive work that will help them lift themselves and their families out of poverty and remain out of poverty. Insufficient access to credit, education and training or market information, combined with the lack of social protection, rights at work and an effective social dialogue mechanism, contribute to the inability of such workers to improve their families' circumstances. This often leads to the next generation getting caught in the same or in an even worse situation.

The Philippines was rated as “high risk” and ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> out of 163 countries in the 2010 Food Security Risk Index. The food price shock in late 2007 and early 2008 created a significant negative impact on the well-being of the poor; including small farmers and fisher folks. There were serious possibilities that the domestic crisis was bound to occur even in the absence of global price shock due to the slowdown in real agricultural productivity.

Even if the Philippines has made tangible progress in reducing food poverty, this has not translated into significant reduction in under nutrition, particularly amongst younger children and women. Macro as well as micronutrient deficiencies among these vulnerable groups should be tackled with appropriate multi-sectoral strategies and programs. In this regard, we would like to particularly highlight the potential role of public-private partnerships.

Further agriculture is considered as the most climate-sensitive sector. In the Philippines, two of the sharpest drop in volume of production and gross value added in agriculture were experienced during two of the worst El Niño episodes recorded in history, in the 80's and 90's. Because of the effects of climate change- increased temperature, prolonged drought, sea-level raise, and change in rainfall patterns - risks in agricultural production and food security will intensify.

In addition the ongoing conflict in Mindanao particularly in ARMM, is persistently hindering efforts to bring down poverty levels in the region. The ARMM accounts for the lowest development levels of the country and highest poverty incidence for children, farmers, youth, urban population and senior citizens. Concern also persists for the indigenous peoples, whose communities are found in remote and upland areas, with very limited access to government's social services, especially on health, education and employment opportunities.

In terms of gender equality, the Philippines' 2009 Gender Development Index (GDI) was 99.6 percent of its HDI value and it ranks 59<sup>th</sup> out of 108 on the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). However, there are still persistent gender inequalities in women's economic empowerment, governance and women's human rights including reproductive rights. Many of the findings in the 2006 CEDAW Concluding Comments have yet to be addressed such as protecting reproductive health and rights of women; paying special attention to the needs of rural women, indigenous women and Muslim women living in the autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao, to ensure that they have access to health care, social security, education, clean water and sanitation services, fertile land, income-generation opportunities and participation in decision-making processes; ensuring women's access to justice through the provision of legal aid and take steps to prosecute the perpetrators of violence against them; and removing discriminatory provisions from the Code of Muslim Personal Laws like marriage of girls under the age of 18, polygamy and arranged marriages. Furthermore, gender disparities in education continue to exist with higher dropout rates and lower achievement rates among boys.

### **The UN in the Philippines**

We are on the verge of launching our 3<sup>rd</sup> UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework) for the period 2012 to 2018, under the theme "Supporting inclusive, sustainable and resilient development". As per the desire of the Government of the Philippines to see the UN system converge and "deliver as one" and being coherent with the Paris Declaration Principles, we are aligning for the first time with the national planning cycle of the Philippines Government and synchronizing the delivery of our support with the implementation of the country's PDP. This will improve synergies between our respective UN development programs and allow us to work towards shared outcomes in our common goal of attaining the MDGs. We will also strategically focus on national priorities where we can add value as part of national ownership to development efforts and complementing the PDP efforts in attaining the MDGs through the Government of the Philippine's Inclusive Growth motto.

The UN will provide support to national priorities by, a) focusing on capacity building, b) promoting national ownership of development initiatives and, c) backing policies, plans and mechanisms conducive to achievement of the MDGs.

This will be done putting emphasis on equity, institutions, localization and geographic convergence as UNDAF strategies.

Equity is the current emphasis of MDG attainment as a way to tackle local and sectoral disparities in assets, growth and capacities of stakeholders, pairing with the Government of the Philippines in the pursuit of an inclusive growth framework.

Localized MDG reports have and continue to be developed, and citizen's monitoring of the MDGs is also being enhanced in line with the administration's focus on inclusion of and consultation with NGO's, CSOs and Private Sector.

For institutions - key stakeholders at any given level -, will benefit from UN knowhow in Good Governance and Institution Building approach, consistent with the new status of the Philippines as a lower middle income country. The UN with its HRBA approach will share its experience with duty bearers and claim holders at the national, local, provincial and central levels.

For Localization and Geographic Convergence, the UN with the intention of creating the greatest impact in its fight against poverty will converge in those geographical areas where poverty is most prevalent such as disaster prone and climate change affected areas, the ancestral domains of indigenous people, selected provinces in Mindanao, particularly the ARMM, and urban areas of Metro Manila, Metro Cebu and Metro Davao, where more than one third of the total population of the Philippines resides. This again supports the Government of the Philippine's goal of inclusive growth, leaving no particular areas and sectors of the country behind.

The UNDAF, with its three (3) objectives, and six (6) cross-cutting principles of Human Rights, Gender, Equality, Environment Sustainability, Culture and Development and Capacity development has developed four (4) outcomes for support:

1. **Universal access to quality services, with focus on the MDGs;** a healthy and well-educated population is vital in catapulting the country's economy to reach sustainable growth levels. Increasing duty bearers' and CSO's capacities to make available quality health and education services to all segments of the population, and providing those marginalized and most vulnerable access to these services will give citizens equal opportunities to fully participate in an expanding economy that is inclusive and conducive to increasing productivity especially by ensuring greater social protection for all.
2. **Decent and productive employment for sustained, greener growth;** poverty in the Philippines is not associated with the unemployment, but with the quality of the employment. Hinged on a framework of employment-led environmentally sound growth strategy. The outcome seeks to improve the quality of growth, the responsiveness of quality employment to growth and ultimately, increase the number of people, with special attention to women and youth, who are productively, securely and sustainably employed. And looking at Green Growth as a sustainable economic development model; improving the way we use resources, our production and consumption.

3. **Democratic Governance.** The UN is extending and deepening its support to justice and human rights, public administration, and political development. Although localization/inter-LGU collaboration and gender will be mainstreamed as a principle and strategy in the UNDAF, efforts will be focused on support for improving the quality of local institutions in the administration of public services, the effective implementation of the Magna Carta of Women and the indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA).
  
4. **Resilience to disasters and climate change;** to ensure community and livelihood resiliency to disasters and climate change by supporting the incorporation of disaster risk reduction and management, climate change adaptation, green jobs and environment and natural resource conservation measures in community, sectoral and national plans.

The United Nations Country Team congratulates the Government for a successful PDF and welcomes the adoption of Inclusive Growth and HRBA in the PDP as central strategies for tackling poverty and attaining the MDGs in the Philippines.