

2008 PHILIPPINES DEVELOPMENT FORUM

Evaluation by Participants

A. Highlights

Background

An informal survey was conducted among participants at the end of the 2008 Philippines Development Forum (PDF) held on 26-27 March 2008 in Angeles City, Pampanga. The survey form was structured similarly to those that were used in previous surveys, and was designed to probe attitudes quantitatively as well as qualitatively to ensure that participants were able to fully express their views on the event. The results of the survey should guide the organizers in further strengthening the content, process and format of future PDFs.

Out of the 300 participants to the PDF, 92 or 31% responded to the survey. It is important to emphasize that the results of the survey should be taken as indications of *some* of the participants' perceptions of the meeting, and not necessarily a representative view of *all* the participants.

Results of the Survey

There was a general consensus on the **PDF being an effective mechanism for policy dialogue among Government, development partners and other stakeholders.**

Respondents perceived the theme, *Accelerating Inclusive Growth and Deepening Fiscal Responsibility*, to be relevant and appropriate. However, there were relatively diverse responses on the relevance of break-out themes to the main theme. Some respondents suggested that PDF **focus most importantly on alleviating poverty and strengthening pro-poor programs**, as these continue to be the most pressing issues the country has been facing. Some participants also felt the need to cover cross-cutting issues such as governance, environment and gender equality to be discussed more substantively during the meeting.

There were varied ratings on whether the meeting format (three parallel break-out sessions) was effective in elevating issues beyond the working groups and allowing for an appropriate level of discussion and debate. Respondents generally felt **the need to narrow down the topics, limit presentations, and provide more time for productive discussions during the break-out sessions.** They also recommended better reporting and processing of working group outcomes and continuous monitoring of commitments.

Like the past PDFs, **participants continue to support the inclusion of representatives from other groups of stakeholders in the PDF**, as they are perceived to be critical to the PDF's objective of facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue on the country's development agenda. Participants suggested further expanding participation of private sector

partners, CSOs, NGOs and representatives from the grassroots level. The non-participation of representatives from the Legislative Branch was also underscored, as many of the important policy decisions are hinged on legislation.

Overall ratings were high on the use of the working group mechanism between PDFs. Respondents felt strongly about allowing working groups, with broader participation, to continue. There were common suggestions to strengthen and improve quality of discussions and reporting at the working group level to ensure more substantive policy dialogue at the main PDF. **The suggestion to have a separate working group on infrastructure was well received at the PDF and was reiterated by some of the respondents.**

While noting the availability of the PDF website for dissemination of reports from the working groups, 81% of the respondents supported **holding an interim PDF meeting between the main PDF events.**

In terms of the timing for the next PDF, 64% of those who responded indicated a preference to hold it **a year from the date of the last PDF, i.e., March 2009.**

Conclusions

In summary, the survey results indicate a **high level of recognition of the relevance of the PDF to the country's development process, and an overall satisfaction with the structure, substance and format of the PDF.**

Some common suggestions to further improve future meetings should be considered:

On Format/Process

- More streamlined break-out group sessions with relevant topics.
- Lesser and shorter presentations, more productive discussions during both plenary and break-out sessions.
- Expand participation but manage well, to not compromise quality of discussions.

On Working Groups

- More regular working group meetings between PDF events with improved processing of discussions and reporting of outcomes.
- Better tracking/monitoring of commitments and documentation of results.
- More interaction between and among working groups.

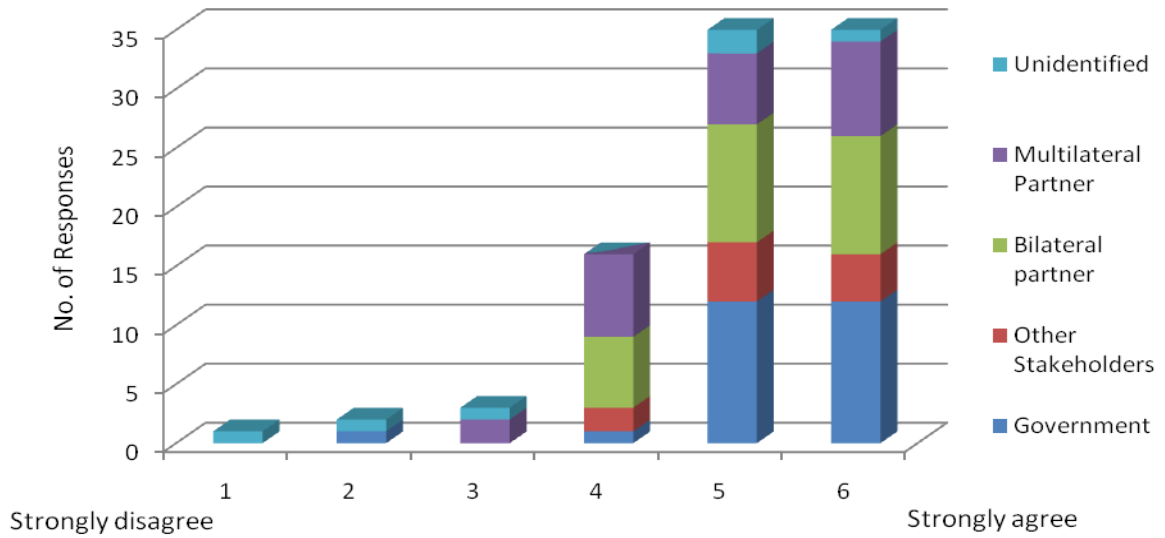
On Logistics

- Early dissemination of materials and use of electronic copies.
- More extensive media coverage focusing on the positive outcomes of the meeting.

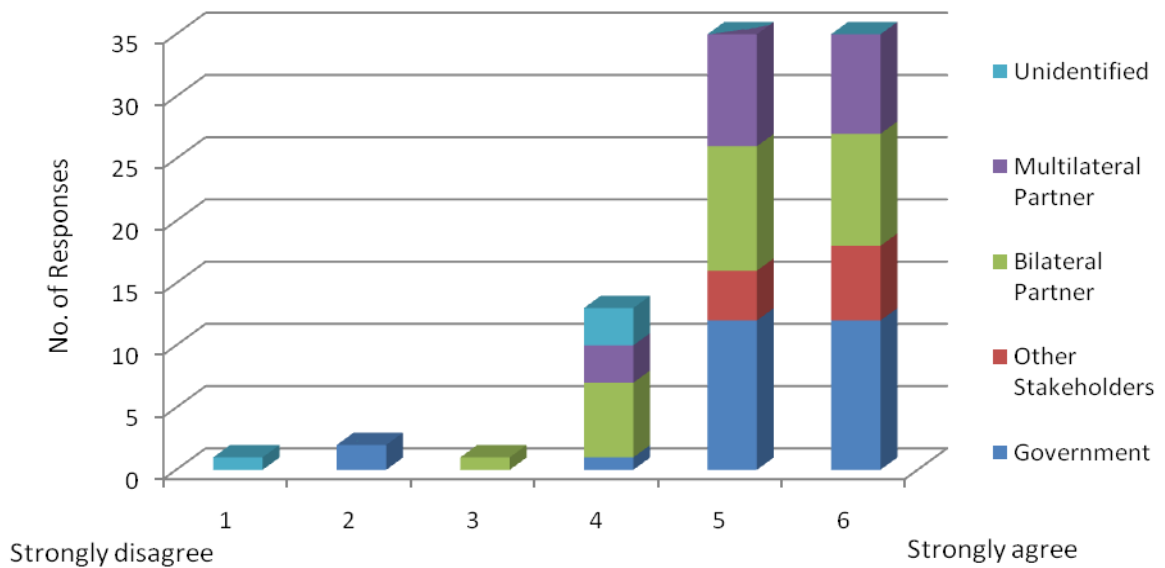
Actual comments from the respondents are provided in the following sections.

B. Responses to Questions

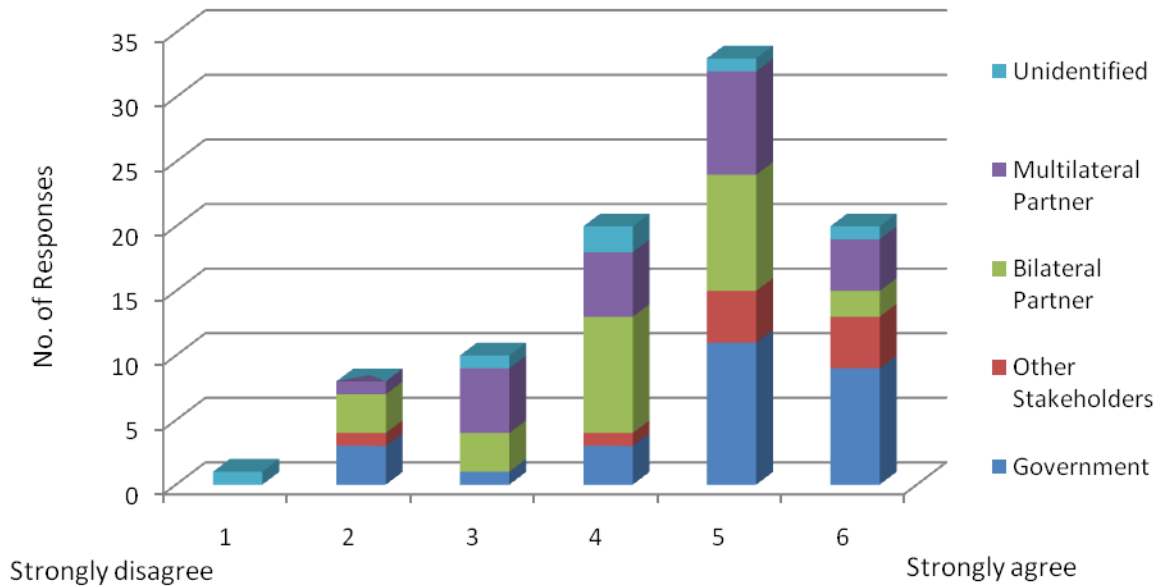
1. From my experience with the 2008 PDF and other PDF-related activities, I believe that the PDF is an effective mechanism for policy dialogue among the Government, development partners and other stakeholders.



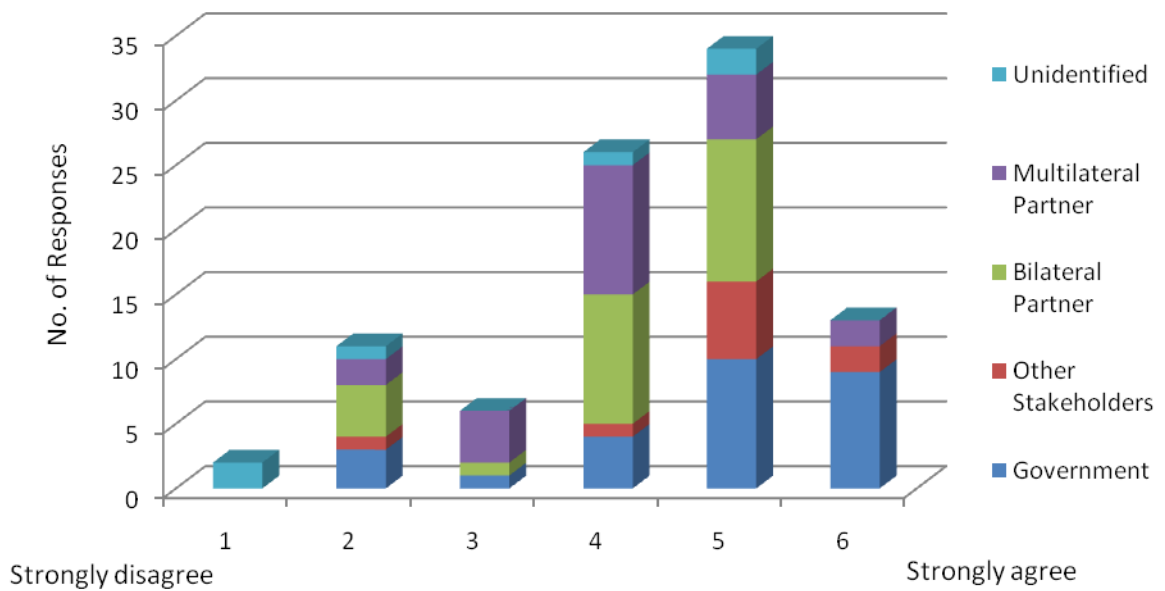
2. I believe that the overall theme of the 2008 PDF (*Accelerating Inclusive Growth and Deepening Fiscal Responsibility*) was relevant and appropriate.



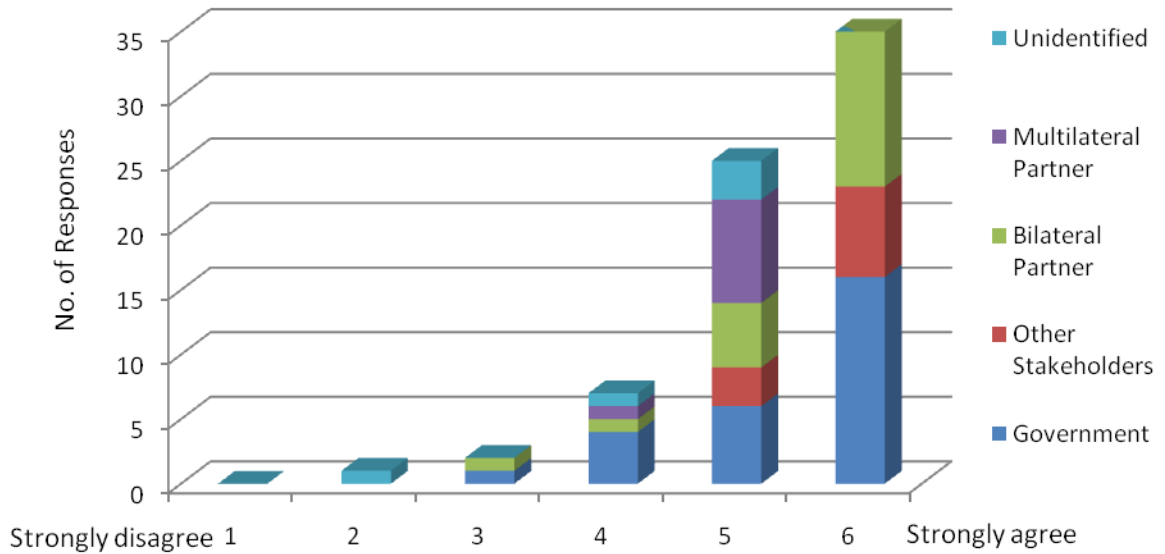
3. I believe that the break-out themes were the most relevant to the main theme, and were of highest priority for policy discussions.



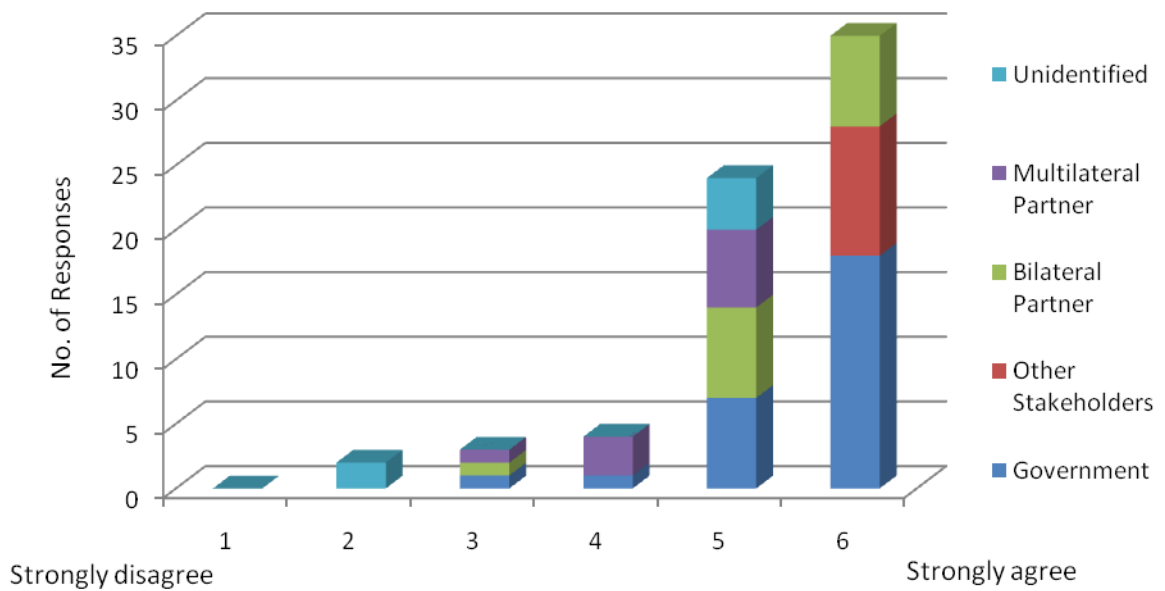
4. I believe that the meeting format (three parallel break-out sessions) helped elevate the discussions to the issues beyond the working group level discussion and was effective in allowing for an appropriate level of discussion and debate.



5. I believe that the inclusion of representatives from other groups of stakeholders (Congress, academe, NGOs, local government, and business sector) continues to be critical to the PDF's objective of facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue on the country's development agenda.



6. I believe that the use of working groups between the main PDF events allow the dialogue to continue with broader participation throughout the year, and should be continued.



C. Compilation of Comments

Comments/suggestions for further improvements in the PDF working group themes, structure and process

On PDF WG themes:

- More discussions among WGs to discuss cross-cutting concerns like gender equality, environment and governance.
- The theme should always be relevant to the achievement of pro-poor programs.
- Need for more focus on the most urgent issue facing the country. While we have attained great strides in fiscal stability and growth, we should have given more attention on poverty, which is the most urgent development problem facing the country today.
- Focus on increasing productive employment and revenue generation should get more priority than reallocating current level of resources for basic needs.
- Much of the plans of action that were put forward were heavily hinged on legislation, an area where development partners cannot contribute much. We would like to see more plans of action that can run parallel to the legislative process.
- Find a way to allow WGs to bring up important cross-cutting themes.
- I suggest that focus be given to having a clear long-term vision for each of the identified priority areas and to ensure that all actions taken support the achievement of this vision. Inter-WG collaboration may also be enhanced.
- No benchmarks, most motherhood statements and therefore hard to track progress against commitments and commitments were vague. Suggest more specific milestones to enable actions.
- Explore possibility of delinking break-out session themes with WG themes. We tend to be locked in or delimited by pre-existing agendas and agreements as stale, broad statements.
- Move from an economic forum to a real development forum.
- Use concept of sustainable development as promoted by OECD, Paris Declaration to make the PDF a more holistic process (balance the economic, social and ecological issues).
- Narrow down the themes to have deeper discussion and identify results and timeframe.
- Too many topics to be covered in break-out groups. Perhaps consider slightly more than 3 WGs – 5 vs. 3 currently.
- Focus is ok, few but critical.

On PDF structure and process:

- Individual WGs should be given their own sessions or break-out discussions – lumping the issues and joining WGs expand the issues covered but with limited time.
- Hold interim PDFs mid-point between PDF events to give air time to individual WGs.
- More substantive WG meeting prior to the PDF proper.
- Follow up meetings after the PDF session is suggested.
- The GOP should make an effort to consolidate and unify what should be done on certain issues first before exposing such issues and challenges to PDF. Reducing corruption at all levels, especially at higher levels, is very important.
- A mid-year mini-PDF to report on progress would help ensure that all WGs are actually pursuing agreed upon objectives.

- The WGs between annual PDFs produce much high-quality work which was not processed well at the PDF itself.
- With such a large group of participants, break-out WGs should more than 3, body is too large to have a meaningful and engaging discussions in the break-out groups.
- Understandably there is a need to limit the issues/recommendations of each break-out sessions for prioritization and better targeting. However, in doing so, there is a danger of excluding other equally important recommendations. It is strongly suggested that a mechanism/system be put in place so that these outputs are processed or considered.
- Break-out sessions should be organized to be more participatory, limiting presentations.
- Might be interesting to have two break-out sessions per theme to keep groups smaller and allow different approaches to emerge.
- There should be discussions between and among WGs as there are issues that can be better handled with inputs from other WGs.
- In the beginning of each meeting, there should be a presentation on the progress of various interventions based on the framework objectives of the PDF – basically reporting on how PDF have been effective. This report will then be the basis of proposed interventions for the rest of the meeting.
- Instead of three breakout sessions mixing subjects not related , better to present in plenary the main conclusions of each WG which has been met during the year.
- Clustering different WGs is a challenge in itself. More work needs to be put into how better outcomes might be achieved from break-out sessions.
- Keeping groups streamlined is key more productive discussions.
- Instill mechanisms to support joint WG initiatives.
- Clearer process design for overall PDF.
- Monitoring of post-agreements and follow-up of new agreements needed.
- Provide more time, make clear and transparent basis of stat data, analysis and conclusion.
- More consultation on issues/concerns to be included in regular monthly meetings or as often as necessary.
- To initiate the issuance of a newsletter so that all partners and stakeholders will have an idea of what is going on in the development community, including status/implementation of development assistance.
- There should be an agenda item to at least refer to WG reports.
- Better exchange of ideas.
- More legislators of the appropriations, social services, agriculture should participate.
- On process, continue engagement of private sector and civil society participants in PDF. More succinct panel presentations to allow time for more dialogue.
- More civil society participation to ensure they are included in inclusive growth.
- I believe that the PDF should be an opportunity for doing more linkage work/coordination between WG as the work involved would more often than not, involve or require the cooperation from other WG/ Government agencies not normally part of the WG concerned.
- Not enough representation from legislative branch and LGUs, especially from the leagues of governors and mayors.
- Allow DILG to present at main plenary sessions with other oversight agencies

- There should be clear guidelines on participation and point of order. The Social Watch statement on corruption is ok. However, the fact that the statement was authored by the FSGO made it out of order and partisan, and therefore should have been unauthorized. It is acceptable only as Social Watch statement. The mere inclusion of FSGO should have had the Co-chair raised the point of order.
- Establish WG on infrastructure.
- Idea of having an Infrastructure WG is a good one.
- I support the creation of a sub-WG for the justice sector as part of the WG on governance.
- WG suggestion on rice prices is a good one.
- On process, hope that this would be more consultative WGs to consider conducting less selective consultations and involve the grassroots and other sectors to a more participative approach to the country's development. At the break-out session level, suggestions and recommendations of the participants should be considered. The "token" consultations that happened in session B was unacceptable.
- There is a need to ensure better integration of outputs/recommendations of the WGs and break-out sessions.
- To keep to time so that sufficient discussions are made.
- Dialogue between and among GAs, NG, donors and CSOs.
- WGs should meet more often. The judiciary – SC – should be invited in the PDF since the rule of law is the bedrock of development
- Improve CSO representation in WGs and clarify process for selecting CSO to be invited to the PDF.
- Structure of the break-out sessions should be clearly defined to solicit more participation/contribution from the group participants.
- Avoid using break-out groups for presentations, they should be exclusively for working. Organize break-out groups in a way that favors participation of all. Group on inclusive growth was just about MDGs. Missed the point about how growth can be inclusive (much better explained in ADB paper)
- Should be structured to attract representation from bilateral partner capitals (HQ).
- Maintain current process.

Comments/suggestions for further improvements in the format and/or logistical arrangements for the PDF

On format:

- Less frequent, more WG results.
- Break-out groups should be smaller to facilitate discussions.
- To create a small group to monitor/oversee whether the recommendations of various groups are being carried out. The findings should be reported in the following PDF.
- Include assessments/status of prior years agreements/initiatives.
- We should have more time for WG dialogue so presentations must be concise and substantive.
- Only one day with plenary format all the time, in depth discussions during the year.
- More guidance and involvement from WB and DOF in development of break-out session program.
- Clear guidance on expectations in relation to reports needed for plenary sessions.

- High-level VIPs took a lot of time at the opening – this needs to be addressed next time because we lost over half a day.
- Donor interventions can be more collegial and less prescriptive.
- Not limiting thematic groups to one or two WGs. If themes are cross-cutting all WGs should contribute to them.
- PDF should be broadened to bring in ASEAN Secretariat and a few selected ASEAN members who are becoming important trade partners of the Philippines into the process (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam). PDF should also bring India to the process.
- Perhaps smaller more specialized break-out groups are needed even though it would make the final plenary more difficult.
- More time allocation for WG discussions is critical.
- Should get more inputs from other Government agencies outside of PDF, and NEDA to solicit other more pressing concerns facing the country to which we are asking donors to assist.
- Not sure the combination of WGs in the break-out sessions work as well as it might have. But it was creative, try something new next time.
- Each group to focus on specific objectives for the year, next year to start with updates against these objectives/not separate objectives. Where Government decided on a different course of action that is Govt prerogative but should be clearly noted.

On logistics:

- It would be inclusive to schedule the PDF in the 3 geographical divisions of the country – not inclusive to conduct in Luzon often
- DOF should contract out the logistics and administrative arrangements to a professional events organizer.
- Arrangements should be decentralized. Focal persons for each PDF WG participants should be assigned for follow-ups, confirmations, etc.
- How about putting all papers in CD-ROM?
- It would be good to reduce the printed material by providing CDs or other e-copies of papers and other documents to participants.
- Excellent but be environmentally friendly – proceed to USB
- All documents should be available week before PDF on website.
- Make sure that speakers are audible, had problem understanding (acoustically)
- The organizers may consider arranging with one hotel or venue and just ask participants to pay to the hotel directly.
- Reduce time spent on lining up especially during lunch time, dinner.
- More detailed info on logistical arrangements for WGs on preparation for and conduct of workshop.
- Not so close to holiday, holy week.
- It is becoming too large.
- The conference venue and logistics are excellent. However, the communications/ media is not. There should be a prior press briefing on the flow of the conference and the major aspects for communication. Human interest storylines should have been prepared to highlight the Forum's impact in the lives of the people in the Philippines.
- Venue for meetings and hotel accommodation should be the same.

- Televised on national television.
- Invite more private sector organizations (BPAP, MAP, MBC, SEIPI, FINEX, ECOP, PMA, etc.)
- Televised.
- How about a field trip to show and see the real face of poverty? In Clark, there is a community about a kilometer or two away from the venue.
- Admin. arrangements is excellent.
- Everything fine, perhaps, better food (lacking in quantity in the convention). Fellowship night was very good.
- Session room too cold.

Comments/suggestions on the need to hold interim PDF meetings (half-day, Manila-based) between the main PDF events

Yes – 81%; No – 19%

Comments:

- After 9-12 months
- These are particularly important in setting common priorities and timely actions on needed interventions – no need to wait for one year for things to start.
- Quarterly
- PDF is not end in itself – preparations prior to and follow-up after are equally valuable.
- Still a value in meeting.
- This will lessen the discussions to the main points.
- For better coordination and harmonization of reports.
- What is the strategic plan beyond 2010?
- Media coverage and communication is very important and the media coordination in this PDF has not been good. The media coverage should have ensured the results and agreements are widely disseminated. What was covered was the negative side activities and not the positive results that will lead to future action.
- Helps to follow up on commitments.
- One half-day at midpoint would be useful.
- Meetings in mid-year help sub groups to move forward during the year and lessen the burden on the annual event – perhaps WGs could present progress at mid-year event.
- For social sector, MDG WG and sub-WGs on health, education and social culture, as important stakeholders from legislative branch and LGUs are missing, we should meet more in between PDF and bring those partners to the process.
- In the past, there was often limited materials on the site – for it to be useful, the WGs must ensure that information gets posted on a timely basis.
- Gives incentive to WGs to produce.
- Creation of a tracking system and reporting of PDF recommendation.
- Keep bureaucratic procedures at a minimum level.
- Perhaps quarterly or mid-year.
- Monthly tech groups, quarterly WGs and one interim PDF meeting would allow better tracking of progress.

- But PDF could at least go to 18 months.
- Good venue for actual WG reports.

Comments/suggestions on the timing of the next PDF

Around one year from now (March 2009) – 64%

Around 18 months from now (Sept 2009) – 29%

Two years from now – 7%

Others –

- Depends on whether we will have PDF in 2010. If we will have PDF in 2010, March 09 is fine, if not, Sept 09 may be better.
- Depends on whether we are getting results, otherwise, we will be parroting the same problems and recommendations again in the next meeting with hardly any results from previously identified problems.
- 2 years from now but longer or more days to cover more topics of concern.
- How about requiring infra agencies to masterplan of at least 20 years.