

Vision



The Filipino

*Public Consultations:
Discussions with the Filipino Youth*

This document is the product of research commissioned by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

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The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of NEDA or its officials. NEDA does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work.

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Introduction

The Philippines is in the middle of unprecedented economic growth. Earning investment grade status, it hopes to attract foreign capital investments at scale – enough to create sustained and aggressive growth that would improve the lives of all Filipinos over succeeding generations. But this development has been slow to reach the poor. In the midst of aggressive growth, the incidence of poverty remains stubbornly high. As the country progresses toward higher productivity, this is a suitable time to articulate its vision and goals for the future and a welcome opportunity to bridge its ideas of growth with realities faced by Filipinos every day.

Articulating a vision for the country is not solely the responsibility of government. In any truly democratic society, the vision should emanate from the country's people: its constituents. To this end, our research team—commissioned by the National Economic and Development Authority—embarked on a research that sought to systematically consult the public, consolidate individual visions, and understand where Filipinos want the country to be in the future. The horizon is 25 years: the year **2040**.

Vision 2040 is a statement of where Filipinos aspire to be in 25 years. It is a set of goals identified by the public, for themselves, their

children, their community, and the country. This vision, once articulated, shall eventually set the direction for government policy. Filipinos will say where the country should be in 25 years and the government shall create the conditions for realizing this vision through policy, programs, and regulation. Together, the government and its people can move forward to a common direction, in a strategic and harmonious manner, with shared goals and ambitions. It is the government's job to design programs, policies, and operating rules that will foster an environment where all Filipinos are afforded equal opportunity to pursue and realize their own vision for themselves. In this manner, people set the direction for the government.

As the Vision communicates the current status as well as the aspirations of Filipinos, it should be a basis for unity among the Filipino people. It must guide development planning across political administrations and function as a map for service provision across public and private institutions.

Filipinos say where they are headed, what they should achieve as individuals, and collectively what all should achieve as a country by 2040. The government's job is to design and run the system that will enable all citizens to work toward their common goals.

Framework

To gather information from the public about their goals and ambitions, we should first know what questions to ask them. For the purpose of this research, the guiding principle for our line of questioning was the notion of key “freedoms,” without which people live in a state of constraint or oppression. How do we achieve a state where all of these freedoms are afforded to all citizens?

The main freedoms are:

Economic freedom or freedom from want

People need to operate in a society where conditions allow them to have decent and productive work, to have opportunities to lead a life with a high standard of living, and opportunities for social mobility.

Freedom from fear

With fear, people cannot pursue opportunities. Freedom from fear includes peace, safety, and stability. Creating an environment that frees people from fear requires the rule of law, justice, social security, and security from disasters and conflict.

Freedom to pursue knowledge

The pursuit of knowledge is a fundamental human activity that fuels innovation and social progress. It includes everybody's right to an education, right to practice and preserve diverse cultures and religions, and freedoms of speech and expression.

The implication of a framework centered on freedoms is that individuals have the power to pursue their own ambitions and goals for themselves. The pursuit of goals is only realistic if there are no systemic barriers that would make the achievement of goals impossible. Realizing and protecting these freedoms require effective self-governance, or a strong democratic society governed by effective institutions.

Knowing Filipinos and serving them better

Government needs to understand people's visions for themselves, their family, and their country, given its responsibility to enable its citizens to pursue these goals and ambitions. How can this be done? What kinds of questions should we ask so that people's vision may be articulated?

For this study, we ask people two sets of broad questions about their aspirations and the constraints they face in their quest for achieving them. The first set asks people what they want their lives to be like in 25 years. They are asked to calculate how old they would be in the year 2040 and imagine what their ideal lives would be like by then. In coming up with this vision, people often have ready answers. When they do not, they are prompted to think of details such as: where they would be living, what they would be doing for work, and what kind of life they would be leading. Answers to these would give us a picture of the quality of life that people strive to achieve for themselves. Their responses would reflect the ambitions and goals of regular Filipinos. Interviewees are encouraged to be optimistic about their goals, to think about what they really want, as opposed to what they think is realistic. After discussing what they want for themselves, the discussion moves toward their children and family, then toward community and country. Aggregated responses to the first set of questions are the articulated vision that Filipinos have for themselves and for the country in year 2040.

The second set of questions asks them

about constraints. Given their own goals and ambitions for themselves, what are the most pressing constraints that would make it difficult for them to achieve these goals? These constraints are often related to economic hardships, barriers that they face in their community and their government, or limitations they see in their own preparedness for the future. Government's role in helping secure the various freedoms discussed above, and equal opportunities for individual progress and growth, is in addressing these constraints. The government is in charge of creating the enabling environment that will allow people to work toward their goals and vision in a real way, with a real chance of having efforts translated into better lives.

This endeavor is a large-scale public consultation consisting of two parts: a qualitative focus group discussion-based (FGD) research activity and a national sample survey of the Philippine population, where Filipinos are asked the two sets of questions described above.

For the qualitative research, 42 FGDs are conducted across the country, targeting young Filipinos, mostly from poor and marginalized sectors, as well as from the middle class. Results of these FGDs are consolidated and analyzed to formulate a preliminary idea of how Filipinos envision life in 2040. These are then used to formulate a questionnaire for a large national sample survey. While the FGDs tell us the details of the vision, and allow a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of both the

goals and attendant constraints, the survey tells us how these are distributed across the country and whether there are important subpopulation differences.

If government's role is to secure and protect an environment that provides equal opportunity for prosperity, the implication is that focus should be on those who are often devoid of opportunity: the poor and marginalized. We assume that the wealthiest of the country have many opportunities and operate in a society where they have ready access to all that they need. Thus, in selecting participants for the FGDs, emphasis was placed on representing the desires and experiences of the poor and the middle class who, together, make up the majority of the country. Views of the wealthy will be covered in the survey. Given the 25-year horizon of the vision project, priority was also placed on younger citizens.

As a concrete example that demonstrates the logic behind this line of questioning, let us take the vision and life constraints of one of the people we spoke with, a bright young man from Eastern Samar. Carlos (not his real name) is a tenth grader in a good public high school in a small city where the population is mostly poor. He is ambitious, optimistic, and a leader in his school, and he has a vision of what he wants to achieve for himself, his family, and his community. In 25 years Carlos will be 40 years old. By then, he would be an architect and engineer, designing and constructing houses and buildings. As a successful architect, he will have had a chance to travel the world, a chance to work with people outside the country, and create designs for other countries. He wants

to live in a large house that he designed, in the same town where he lives today, with a family of his own and his parents nearby. While his desire is to stay in his hometown, part of his life will have been spent abroad, seeing the world and experiencing other cultures, but ultimately coming back to the Philippines where his practice is located. This is his response to the first set of questions dealing with aspirations.

Carlos is the son of a fisherman and a stay-at-home mother who plants vegetables in their backyard to augment their income. His first main constraint to achieving his vision, regardless how hard he works, is his family and his own ability to support a college education. In the town where he lives, there is no industry, no manufacturing, and no services. The only form of regular employment available to anybody is a government job, which are not only few, but are also selectively given to those who are allied with the political family currently in power. The nearest large city where they could find productive employment is not too far away, but transportation costs are too high that they cannot afford to work there. If Carlos were to attend college in an architecture school in the nearest large city, even if tuition fees were negligible, the cost of his living expenses would be prohibitive given the small income of his family. According to Carlos, the main constraints in front of him are the difficulty of finding work that will pay a decent wage, the political environment in their city where dynasties control all the jobs, and the availability of support for higher education if he was qualified entry.

In Carlos' case, the constraints are environmental barriers that keep him from achieving his goals. No matter how hard he works, or how hard his father works as a fisherman, or how hard his mother tries to find work that will pay her a living wage, there is little chance of making enough money toward completing an architecture degree. For government, the challenge is to address these constraints, so that if Carlos and his family work hard, they can send him to architecture

school and, once he graduates, can be gainfully employed as an architect.

There are various approaches through which government can help – policies, institutional changes, direct subsidies, indirect support, or some mix of all of these in different forms. The exact manner is not prescribed, but the objective of government's work is clear: how must the world around Carlos change so that his hard work can truly turn into opportunities for personal achievement?

Structure of the report

The report first describes the methods of data collection utilized in the study, including how participants were selected, where the research team did interviews, and how the information collected was documented and analyzed. The chapter on *The Vision* on pages 18 to 20 presents the consolidated overall vision of the country as described by the respondents and an analysis of how goals and ambitions are tempered by states of poverty. This is followed by the discussion on the most pressing and prevalent constraints that afflict Filipinos' social environment. The next chapter, the *Vision for the Country: Prosperity and Justice for All*, presents the fundamental principles

upon which the Filipinos' visions and goals are anchored, including values that revolve around family, diversity, and equality. This chapter also includes detailed descriptions of facets of the goals of Filipinos, such as education, health, employment, housing, and governance. The last chapter, *Conclusions*, weaves together the discussions on the earlier chapters and highlights the emerging tasks for the government in building an enabling government for the Filipinos, in pursuit of the collective vision for the self and the country, which is the AmBisyon Natin 2040.

Method

The visioning process was led by a team of six researchers¹ who conducted 42 focus group discussions (FGDs) across the country. The team ensured that the processes – from sampling and participant recruitment, up to the conduct of FGDs and data analysis – adhered to the highest ethical standards and rigors of scientific social research.

FGD sampling

The visioning exercise adopted “maximum variation” as the sampling scheme in selecting the profile of FGDs. Groups were purposefully different from one another based on two key criteria: sector and area. Such diversity is maintained so that common response patterns across different sectors and areas are viewed as the respondents’ shared vision for themselves and the country.

Sectors

To determine the vision and voice of the socially marginalized, the following nine basic sectors² were used as criteria to diversify the profile of FGDs:

1. **Youth:** High school students, technical-vocational students, workers
2. **Fisherfolk:** Coastal and inland
3. **Formal workers:** Regular, contractual
4. **Farmers:** Rice, high-value crops, upland, lowland, organized, unorganized

5. **Urban poor:** From first-, third-, and fifth-class cities
6. **Children:** Students and out-of-school youth
7. **Disaster survivors:** Weather-related and man-made crisis
8. **Indigenous peoples (IPs):** Upland, coastal, high and low literacy
9. **Persons with disabilities (PWDs)**

Apart from the basic sectors, the following sectors were added to provide different dimensions related to migration and governance, which are two issues deemed relevant in the long term:

10. **Families with overseas Filipino workers:** Adults and children
11. **Local migrants:** Inter-island and inland
12. **Local government workers:** Barangay and city

¹ The team is composed of Dr. Clarissa David, Omar Dumdum (NEDA), Dr. Pamela Custodio (UP-Los Baños), Jenna Mae Atun (Ateneo de Manila University [AdMU]), Jaime Manuel Flores (AdMU), and Paul Andrew Lucena (NEDA).

² Republic Act 8425 (“Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act”) lists 14 basic sectors. Excluded in the sampling criteria are senior citizens, women, informal workers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and cooperatives. Senior citizens were excluded, as they have a low stake and motivation in attaining the long-term vision in the next 25 years. Also, sectors involving women, informal workers, NGOs, and cooperatives were dropped from the criteria as they are represented in other sectors.

Area

FGDs for the above sectors were dispersed across the three major island groupings, with more than half assigned in Mindanao and Visayas. The following municipalities and cities were identified as FGD sites, noting that participants may also originate from nearby towns and provinces:

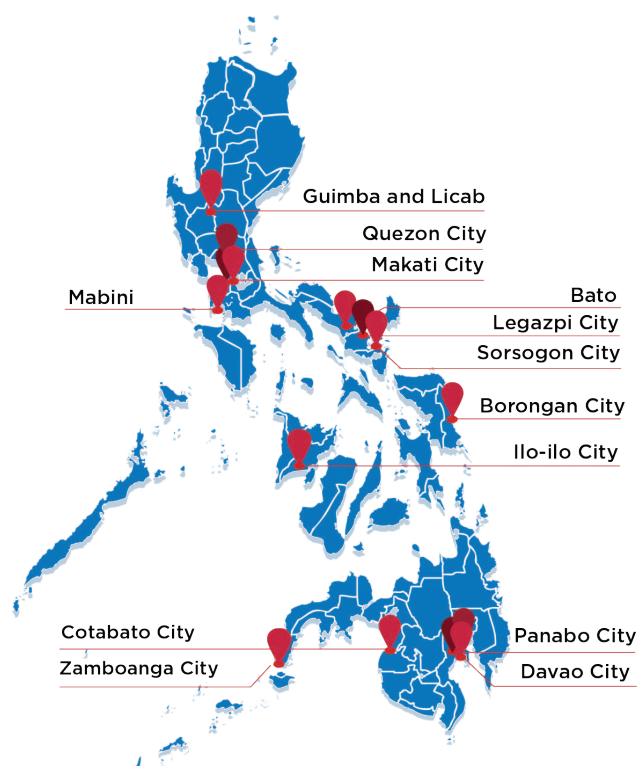
Luzon: Quezon City and Makati City (Metro Manila); Mabini (Batangas); Sta. Rosa, Cabuyao, and Los Baños (Laguna); Guimba and Licab (Nueva Ecija); Sorsogon City (Sorsogon); Legazpi City (Albay); Bato (Camarines Sur)

Visayas: Iloilo City (Iloilo); Borongan City (Eastern Samar)

Mindanao: Davao City (Davao del Sur); Panabo City (Davao del Norte); Zamboanga City (Zamboanga); Cotabato City (Maguindanao).

In addition, five FGDs with Filipino participants from the 3rd Asian Youth Forum were conducted at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) headquarters. These FGDs, which

Figure 1. Identified municipalities and cities as FGD sites



consisted of various participants nationwide, are categorized as **"mixed"** in terms of area, as shown in *Table 1*.

In 13 FGDs, it was possible for participants to be categorized under two sectors (*i.e., youth*

Table 1. Distribution of sectoral FGDs according to area

Primary Sectors	Luzon	Visayas	Mindanao	Mixed	TOTAL	As secondary sector
1. Youth	1	2	1	5	9	+5
2. Fisherfolk	2	3	1	-	6	-
3. Formal workers	3	1	1	-	5	+1
4. Farmers	2	-	2	-	4	+1
5. Urban poor	1	1	2	-	4	-
6. Children	1	1	1	-	3	-
7. Disaster survivors	1	-	1	-	2	+3
8. Indigenous peoples	-	-	2	-	2	+2
9. Persons with disabilities	-	1	-	-	1	-
10. Families with OFWs	1	-	1	-	2	-
11. Local migrants	1	-	1	-	2	-
12. Local government workers	1	1	-	-	2	-
TOTAL	14	10	13	5	42	

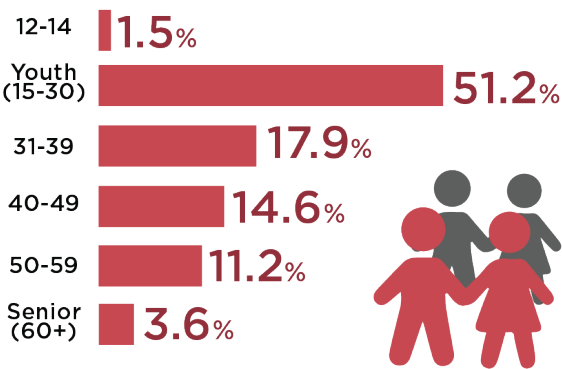
and children, farmers/fisherfolk and IPs, local migrants and formal workers, etc.). In these cases, a **"secondary sector"** was assigned for said FGDs, a tally of which is presented in the last column in Table 1. By adding FGDs with primary and secondary sectors, the final total shows that there are 14 FGDs representing the youth, six for formal workers, five each for farmers and disaster survivors, and four for IPs (Manobo, Matigsalog, Badjao, and Tiruray).

Participant recruitment

The research team recruited participants for FGDs in Metro Manila, Laguna, Batangas, and the Bicol region. For Nueva Ecija, Visayas, and Mindanao areas, the team engaged field coordinators for the recruitment.

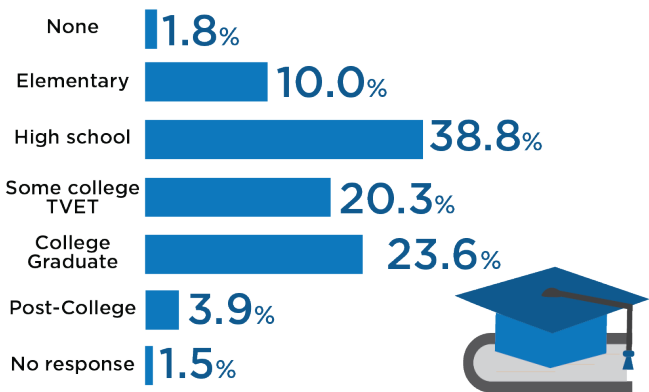
The general protocol was to recruit six to eight participants per FGD representing the assigned sector within the area. As much as possible, men and women should be equally represented, with bias for younger participants aged 40 years and below since they have a higher stake and motivation in attaining the long-term vision in

Figure 2. Distribution of participants' age



the next 25 years. No incentives were promised for participants upon recruitment. However, they were provided with refreshments during FGDs, reimbursed for their transportation expenses, and given non-monetary tokens after each FGD. Most importantly, the FGD process strictly adhered to the free, prior, and informed consent principle by explaining to them verbally and in writing what the research was all about, how their identities would be kept confidential, and having all participants agree by signing or thumb-marking a consent form to signify their voluntary participation. For participants who were minors, the research team secured written consent from parents or guardians prior to the FGDs.

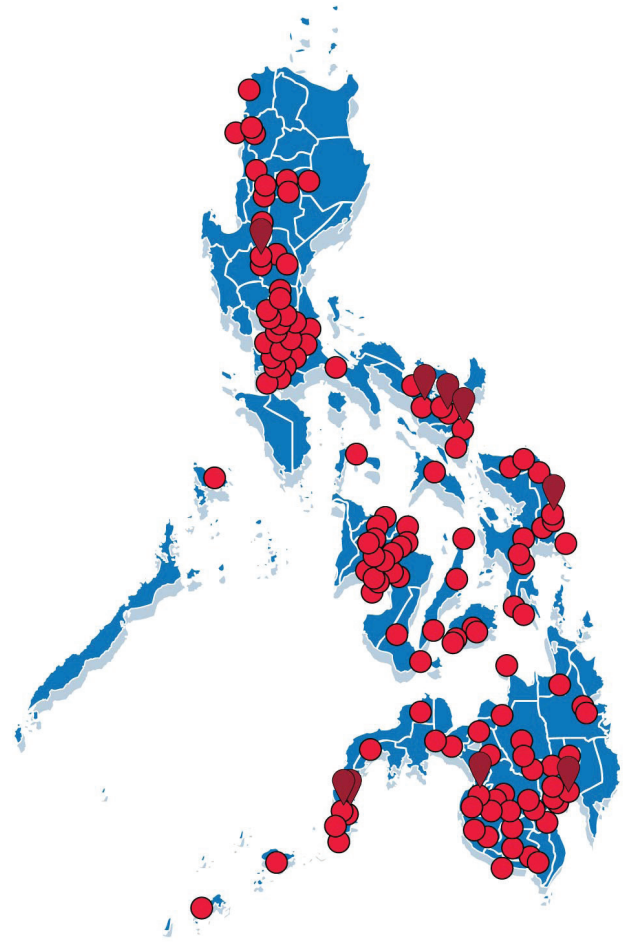
Figure 3. Distribution of participants' highest educational attainment



Overall, there were 330 participants for the 42 FGDs, or an average of more than seven participants per FGD. There were slightly more males (52%), with 70 percent of participants aged below 40 years old (median age of 29 years old). As to their highest educational attainment, more than a third (38.8%) either stopped or graduated in high school, while almost a quarter (23.6%) graduated with a college degree.

There were more participants who were married

Figure 4. Participants' area of residence



or living with a partner (48%, average age of 41 years old) than single (44%, average age of 22.8 years old). Generally, those married or living in have been under that status for 16 years, which started when they were 25 years old.

Figure 4 shows the participants' area of residence. Majority of participants consider themselves poor, with more than a third experiencing hunger in the three months before the FGDs. Figure 5 shows that, as expected, more **"poor"** participants experienced hunger than the **"non-poor"**.

Most **"poor"** participants were either married or living with a partner (57%) and reached only elementary or high school (59%). In contrast, most **"non-poor"** were single (52%) and reached post-high school (59%). Also, the **"poor"** have more children on average than the **"non-poor"** (3.2 vs. 1.8).

Conduct of FGDs

The 42 FGDs were conducted from June 5 to August 10, 2015. An FGD lasts an average of one-and-a-half hours, with the longest taking almost three hours.

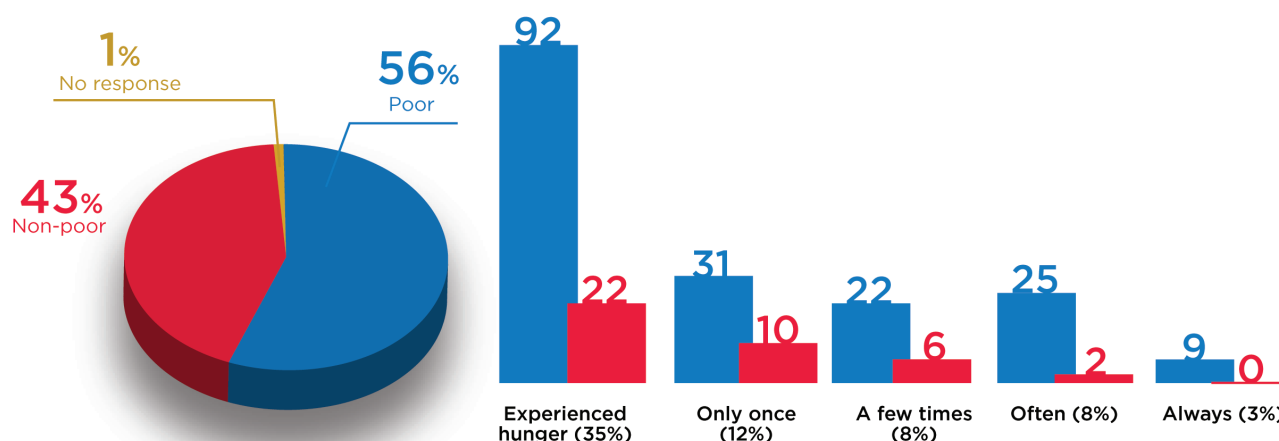
A member of the research team moderated each FGD, while other members took notes and audio-recorded the process. Before the FGD proper, the team explains the objectives, conducts one-on-one interviews with participants using a standard profile questionnaire, and secures their consent to voluntarily participate in the FGD. (*See previous section on Participant recruitment.*)

The Tagalog language was mainly used during the discussions. Other languages employed by the research team and field coordinators include Cebuano (FGDs in Davao, Panabo and Zamboanga City), Hiligaynon (Iloilo City) and Chavacano (Zamboanga City). A certified sign language translator assisted the three deaf participants during the FGD with persons with disabilities in Borongan City.

During the FGD proper, moderators were guided by three structured and open-ended questions to start the discussion:

1. What is your vision for your self and your family in the year 2040?

Figure 5. Participants' self-rated poverty and experience of hunger for the past 3 months



2. What is your current situation and what are the constraints that hamper your progress toward that vision?
3. How do you see your community and the country in the year 2040?

Moderators probed for responses related to health, education, jobs, housing, public infrastructure, financial inclusion, governance, and others especially relating to the sector and area represented by the FGD. The moderator did not prompt any issue, especially those

relating to policies and politics, with the probing of prompted issues done carefully to maintain neutrality.

After discussing the third and final question, the moderators wrap up by asking participants whether they had additional points to discuss or any questions related to the research in general. FGDs conclude only after the participants said they did not have anything more to add or ask.

Data analysis

During the two-month duration of field work, the research team maintained a private blog hosted in Tumblr, where members wrote initial findings, thoughts, analyses, and project updates. It allowed the research team to document their reflections and observations while on fieldwork. The blog could be accessed

only by the research team, some NEDA officials, and sector specialists writing the background thematic papers of the long-term vision.

Profiles of FGD participants were encoded in a database maintained by the research team, while audio records of the FGDs were transcribed by another team of transcribers.

All 42 FGD transcripts were then uploaded to Dedoose, a web application for mixed-method research. The team used Dedoose in assigning descriptors for every FGD transcript, coding and excerpting of transcripts, and integrating qualitative and quantitative data.

The research team designed a code book for coding, excerpting, and memoing the transcripts. A total of 117 codes were developed, which were grounded from actual observations of FGD discussions. These codes were grouped into general categories as shown in Table 2. The team members and two trained research assistants³ independently examined all 42 transcripts and tagged phrases, sentences, and paragraphs according to their assigned codes.

The analysis of patterns was done by looking at the co-occurrence of codes, or the frequencies of possible code pairings within the transcript, as provided by Dedoose. For example, two codes that pair most often revealed how these concepts highly relate with each other. In contrast, two codes that were thought to be associated but were not paired by Dedoose may reveal a lack of relationship between the two.

Interpretations from the results of the code co-occurrence were heavily based on the research team's grounded insights and observations coming from the FGD participants. These guided the team in drafting the different chapters of this vision document.

Table 2. General codes in the FGD codebook



³Research assistants included Danica Dana Guevarra and Clarissa Escasinas of NEDA.

Vision for self: Tempered by poverty

The overall vision of Filipinos for themselves, their family, and for the country are presented in this section. It also describes the constraints that people face in realizing their goals in life over the next 25 years. The discussion below reflects the most common sentiments expressed, and to some extent, mask important details and nuances that will be presented in greater detail in the succeeding sections.

Most Filipinos have a clear idea of their goals and ambitions, and of the kind of life they are working towards for themselves and their children, when they have children. The most commonly identified goals relate to housing, employment or livelihood, education, health, having a comfortable life, and financial security. Desiring a full college education for all children is universal regardless of economic status, region, urban dwelling, or sector. A home of one's own, comfortable for a small family, is a goal that people aspire to along with a high

degree of mobility, either through well-run public transportation or by ownership of their own car. The life that people want is centered on creating an environment where the family's future is secure, they are together, and safe from threats to their well-being. Filipinos are fond of travel, and even the poorest citizens dream of traveling to other countries, or to see other parts of the Philippines.

There are sharp differences in aspirations across groups that belong to different economic classes. In particular, to fully capture these distinctions, the goals are presented in relation to the economic status of respondents: the very poor, the poor, and the middle income.

“Nangarap ka nga pero kung di mo naman kayang tuparin din na...Dahil wala ka namang pera, wala ka namang pagkukuhanan sa pangarap mo.”



Local migrant living in Manila

The very poor

Nakaka-kain tatlong beses sa isang araw.

Life for the very poor is characterized by one of the worst kinds of instability – that of not knowing if there will be enough food to eat for themselves and their children each day. Participants who fall under this category have a high incidence of hunger and self-reported poverty. They include vulnerable sectors such as indigenous people living in isolation, internally displaced people, and out-of-school youth. When asked what their vision of a comfortable life is for themselves and their families, many start off by saying that it is being able to eat three times a day. Beyond that, their desires are modest.

The very poor envision a future where nobody in their family goes hungry and they have a way of securing their children's education. They dream

of a college education for all their children, if not for themselves. What they need is a community where they can find a job that will pay a decent living wage, a secure job that allows them to plan a future beyond the immediate one.

Ability to access quality healthcare is important, so that if someone in the family falls ill, they do not have to die because there was no money for admission to a hospital, or, in extreme cases, not even enough money to transport a patient to the nearest hospital.

Lives are lived amidst instability and worry. Work, if available, is never stable and pays little. Income is unstable. Even peace and security is unstable. One female participant interviewed in Manila, working in a streetside eatery, described life in their Cotabato town as marred



Filipinos love to travel

Filipinos have dreams of traveling to other countries for leisure. It is the most commonly identified leisure activity people want for themselves and their families. We spoke with some young Filipinos whose dreams include taking their mothers to the trips abroad they always wanted, but were never able to afford. Seeing and experiencing other countries is mentioned more often than having a car or being able to buy whatever they want. Having the freedom (in terms of money and time) to travel is the mark of a successful and happy life.

Filipinos want to leave the country only as tourists. There is no desire to leave in order to work. To leave the Philippines for work is not something they would choose for themselves if opportunities for a decent living can be found here – where they can be near their families and be able to care for their own children.

by intermittent gunfire between the military and rebel groups. Her three young children go to school, but when conflict erupts, the schools close, and residents leave their homes to hide out for days in the forest, until the coast is clear. Even as they return, everybody knows the next firefight can come at any time. There is no predictability. In such a place, she recounts, there is no progress to be made. The only way to have a better life is to leave. She works at a Makati eatery in hopes of getting her children out of Cotabato.

The very poor are vulnerable. In a shanty town in Iloilo, fisherfolk work hard to recover from

an oil spill that affected their livelihood. They were poor prior the oil spill, but they became destitute after it happened, as their only source of income lost its value. Living above the water, with children running about, men and women sought support from their local governments to help them recover. Whatever support available was either insufficient or inaccessible because of onerous bureaucratic processes.

For the marginalized, to live a modest, comfortable life in a small home of their own, with secure health and education for their children, and enough food for everyone, is an aspiration that seems barely achievable.

The poor

Nabibili ang kailangan.

Somewhere between being very poor and middle class, are the poor. They live below the poverty line but are slightly more secure in their daily needs than the very poor. Their worries are not so much where the next meal will come from, but whether they can, beyond the basic food needs, afford to buy the things they need. Many of them are employed or have some livelihood but with unstable income. They include rice farmers whose incomes are subject to the seasons of planting and harvesting, tricycle drivers who take home very little money after putting in long hours, and even formally employed individuals whose work is on a contractual basis. The incidence of hunger is lower but present, and self-reported poverty is high.

For the poor, their vision of life in 2040 is simple – one without hardship. It is often said in the

interviews that they would just like a life where making enough money to buy what they need is not so difficult. Those needs include: enough allowance for their child to make it to school every day and buy enough school supplies, enough savings to make sure they have money when someone in the family gets sick, and enough funds so that they don't have to borrow from the local loan shark just to pay for the required documents to apply for a job.

Many of the poor people we spoke with live in urban areas, in informal settlements. The young participants are studying in public high schools in developed areas of the country. Foremost among their goals is a home of their own. Young couples are often living with their parents or renting rooms in other people's houses. Their most immediate objective is to save enough

money to purchase their own place. Children must be educated all the way through college, going to school with food in their stomach so they can perform well and work their way toward a life of financial independence.

Stability in work or through a business is desired in large part to provide the security of knowing that their children can finish college. The participants who are still in high school aspire to graduate college and land a good job with security afterwards. They want to have a small family living in their own home and helping their parents get the things they never had.

The poor are sometimes those that used to be middle income, but were driven to poverty by a shock to their income— in many cases, catastrophic health costs.

Arnel, a high school student in a public school recounts how his father fell ill and was confined in a private hospital for many weeks. By the end of his illness, the father owed the hospital more than Php 600,000 and was not allowed

to leave until he settled his bill. The family paid out with everything they had but could afford only one-third of the bill. They borrowed from friends, lined up at the offices of local government officials to ask for help, asked the PCSO (Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office) for assistance, and exhausted all means, but raised only a fraction of the remaining cost. The only reason they were eventually allowed to leave was a Philippine law protecting patients from being held by the hospital for not paying a bill, which Arnel discovered online. They discharged his father but were never able to pay for those expenses. Arnel wants to be an engineer, but does not think, given their current circumstances, that his parents can afford to send him to college.

The poor have ambitions that revolve around the need for a secure and stable financial future that assures homeownership, a college-educated family, and a life lived with the knowledge that when the years of retirement arrive they can sit back and enjoy the fruits of their work.

The middle income

Nabibili ang gusto.

One of the government's stated goals is to grow and strengthen the middle class. Among the participants of this study who belong to middle-income families are high school students enrolled in private schools and young people with college education or higher. They are fully employed and have, for many years, been in stable, relatively high-paying jobs. They have social security benefits, health insurance, bank accounts, and savings. Not all of them have cars but all of them are mobile through a

variety of means.

It is an optimistic and forward-looking group of people, having had the luxury to make enough money to live comfortably and still save for unplanned expenses and retirement. They are able to think beyond immediate and basic needs, toward a longer-term future, plan for security for themselves, and entertain a life of service and others.

Middle-income Filipinos describe the comfortable life they aspire to as one that includes living in a large home, with two cars, and enough money to buy the things they want. Many hope to start a business in their later years, with money they saved from having worked in a company. There is a desire for enough savings for a comfortable retirement, with strategies for investing their savings to acquire sources of passive income securing their retirement years.

People who currently have a comfortable, well-off life think of a future where they take advantage of opportunities to serve their communities, help others who are needy, and contribute to causes that they care for. Leisure time is a reality, and is hoped to be spent working on social causes such as community volunteering and environmental protection.

Among middle-income young people, there are many activists and leaders who pursue careers and advocacy work in development areas geared toward helping the poor. They are sometimes medical professionals, academics, government employees, and community volunteers who do active work in their locality, in hopes of providing sustained positive change. Most of the young affluent activists we spoke with serve in their communities, in provinces, where they intend to stay for the foreseeable future to help shepherd the population in their area toward prosperous lives.

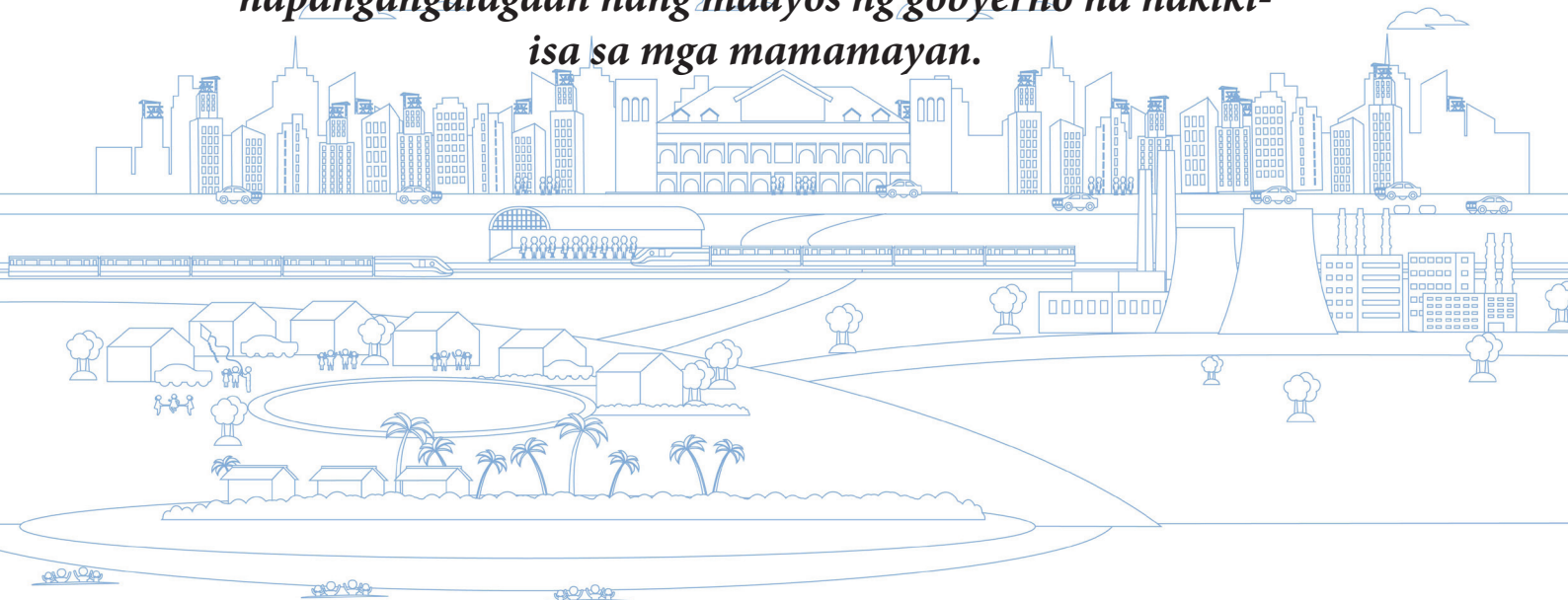
Walang mahirap.

Beyond themselves, middle-income Filipinos have aspirations as part of a collective, as part of the nation. Whether rich or poor, they hope for a country where nobody is poor, nobody is destitute, and nobody is hungry. People should not have to die because they don't have money to buy medicine, see a doctor, or go to a hospital. Respondents envision a country where those in public service are watching out for the less fortunate, protecting their rights, and helping them out of poverty, instead of taking public funds and keeping it for themselves. They envision a progressive Philippines as a country where people are disciplined and the surroundings are clean; where all Filipinos who desire to work have the opportunity to find decent work for a fair wage. Families, they say, should be able to stay together if they want to—parents should not have to leave their children behind to the care of others just to make a decent living and provide their children a good education.

Taken together, these desires, expressed as a collective vision for Filipinos, can be summed as follows:

In 2040, all Filipinos will have a stable and high level of well-being, secure in the knowledge that they have enough for their daily needs and their wants, that they can plan and prepare for their own and their children's futures. Families are able to live together in a place of their own, and have the freedom to go where they desire, protected and enabled by an effective government that cares equally for all citizens.

Sa taong 2040 ang lahat ng mga Pilipino ay may maginhawang buhay, may katiyakan na sapat ang kita at ipon para sa pang-araw-araw na pangangailangan at para sa mga bagay na hinahangad, malayang tuparin ang mga mithi para sa sarili at sa pamilya. Ang mga pamilya ay magkakapiling sa sariling bahay, ngunit malayang magpunta sa mga nais marating, at napangangalagaan nang maayos ng gobyerno na nakikiisa sa mga mamamayan.



Constraints

There are many hurdles in the Filipinos' path toward achieving their own vision of life in the year 2040. No matter how modest the vision of the poorest of Filipinos, it can still seem out of reach for those who have no means to lift themselves out of poverty. Almost all the participants of this study mention the most urgent constraints as: the lack of jobs, poor healthcare, petty corruption, and government inefficiencies. Each constraint is experienced in varying degrees, depending on the participants' circumstances, but all have significant impact on the quality of their life.

Jobs

The problem of employment is multifaceted and goes beyond the existence of enough jobs, although that is one of the main concerns. While the participants call the problem “jobs,” in the aggregate at the national level it is called employment. While the government focuses on employment, officially defined as at least one hour of paid work per week, people define jobs as work that pays them a decent living wage or gainful employment. A job is interchangeable with livelihood – a job is a means toward income, the same as a small business. Ultimately, the widespread lament over the lack of jobs is an issue of economic well-being.

There are no jobs (walang trabaho). Whether employed or not, participants always mention the shortage of jobs as a critical barrier to the likelihood of achieving their goals. People are willing to work—the poor in particular would take any paid work they can get—but these are simply not available.

A good job is a stable one. Many of the employed people we spoke with remained deeply concerned about their future because their employment has no stability. Formally-employed workers were mostly under temporary contracts lasting between three to six months. Informal workers such as those in agricultural labor, construction labor, and even temporary employees in local government agencies are hired on a daily basis. If a family of four relies on one, even two, irregularly employed person's wages to pay for all their needs, planning, even in the short term, would be unrealistic. Those working under temporary formally-employed contracts are paid minimum wage, and those informally-employed often make even less.

As a separate issue from the amount of wages, stability is a critical constraint to a family's economic improvement.

A good job pays a living wage. Filipinos observe that without a college degree, a person will not be able to find work that pays a decent wage. This reality leads to a universal desire to send all children to college, even when parents are painfully aware that they probably cannot afford it.

It is too expensive to look for work. The barriers to formal employment are many and costly, for rewards that are not commensurate to the investment. All across the country the problems are the same – it costs too much money to apply for a job. A typical contractual job, say a construction laborer for a company with a building project in a city, requires a certified birth certificate, NBI clearance, police clearance, barangay clearance, and myriad other requirements, with each document having expiry dates and attendant costs in time and money.

The NBI clearance is the most frequently vilified requirement as it is the most expensive and takes the most time to obtain. A man we interviewed in an urban informal settlement in Manila made three trips to the NBI office to get his clearance in the process of applying for a job. Each trip costs ₱70 in transportation, and the clearance itself cost him ₱200, good only for 6 months, after which he has to pay again for renewal. To complete all the required documents to apply for work, one would spend between ₱500 to ₱1,000 which the poor do not have, and at least five days' worth of time. Often this is done for a job that, if they get, would pay minimum wage (₱400 a day) with a contract that lasts only six months. After the six months are up, they have to spend again to renew documents. In the settlement we visited, a local has made it a business to provide loans for



Coffee shop barista requires a college degree

The market for formal employment seems so favorable toward employers that jobs that normally require no more than a high school education now require a college degree. For two different coffee shop chains, baristas are required to have completed a four-year degree in fields such as hotel and restaurant management, hospitality, tourism, or business. In addition to the high minimum educational attainment, there is a preference for those with some years of experience. In many other countries, the same job requires only a high school degree.

the purpose of completing documentation for job applications. For the poor, these expenses are truly prohibitive and make employment unattainable.

Transportation costs are too high. In relation to the wages one receives for work, the cost of transportation is high.

Jobs-education mismatch. This is a documented problem of underemployment, where people with tertiary education are doing work that can be done by those with a secondary education. It is a problem of a shortage of decent-paying jobs that truly need higher education, as well as a shortage of employment opportunities across the board. Parents hope

that when their children are in the job market in 2040, they would have opportunities to practice the profession they were trained for.

Insufficient high-quality employment opportunities is a problem that the general public has been pointing out for more than a decade. Public opinion polls since the mid-2000s consistently identify “jobs” as one of the top three problems facing the country. In 2015, it remains the most frequently-named national problem when the public is consulted.



Cost of employment

For poor Filipinos, one of the most elusive solutions to their poverty is a stable job, which is near-impossible to obtain. Formal employment, even if the pay is not that high, is the only perceived way to have a stable job, and not only is it scarce; it requires money and time to complete all pre-employment requirements. This is money the poor often need to borrow.

Government inefficiencies

In a rice-farming town in Luzon, a group of farmers struggle to make ends meet, digging themselves deeper and deeper into debt with every crop laid down for the season. Each of them owns a small piece of land, with one to three hectares planted with rice and, during other parts of the year, vegetables. Thirty of them self-organized as a farmer's cooperative to have a legal entity through which they could, in theory, gain access to government loans and grants offered through the Departments of Agrarian Reform and Agriculture, and other livelihood and assistance programs run by the local government through their agriculture extension offices. The new cooperative seeks to navigate the maze of government bureaucratic processes with the able assistance of a local agricultural extension worker.

These farmers recounted their attempts to access government aid. Before they could move forward with any transaction, their cooperative must be officially registered and recognized. This meant spending a ₱100 registration fee, with a ₱5,000 "facilitation fee" demanded from them through petty corruption among rank-and-file officials in government field offices. Their legal status, ironically, made them vulnerable to extortion. The small hut they have been building, a 3x3 meter structure without any walls comprised of four cement posts, a cement floor, and a steel roof in the middle of a field, needed an inspection by the local Bureau of Fire Protection, which required the purchase of a fire extinguisher. They needed a mayor's business permit to operate, which also added

to the cost. All these added up to more than ₱5,000 (plus the "facilitation fee") for their small coop, money they did not have; money they had to borrow at interest in order to move forward.

That was only the beginning. As they tried to figure out if they qualified for some government loans, they were required new sets of paperwork. The cooperative's President recounted how they were all told to appear at the bank—a trip for which they had to hire a jeep that they could not afford. Once there, they were all told to produce tax identification numbers for all potential beneficiaries. This meant going to the BIR, which meant additional days and trips. They seemed ready to give up, but in desperation decided to move forward if they were able to raise enough money for the next step of the process.

The sentiments about government services are widely shared: *masyadong maraming kuskos balungos, mabusisi, puro proseso*. Since they are powerless in the transaction — government aid and services are hidden behind employees (compliance officers) who act as gatekeepers — ordinary citizens are left with few choices: try to comply to every requirement, resort to paying bribes and facilitation fees, or give up altogether.

Red tape and inefficiencies keep services away from the poor. Many of this country's programs are designed to address the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable populations, but red tape makes them inaccessible to those most in need. Government employees are unaware of the transaction costs they create when access to even the smallest programs are overregulated. Gaining access to a government benefit requires numerous documents to be

obtained in government offices—each step surrounded by inefficiency and bureaucratic red tape.

Quality of service in government offices.

Quality of service is not only about speed, it is also about the quality of interaction between the government employee and the citizen. Many people express frustration at the inability of many offices to provide the “right kind of service.” There is no desire to spare the money, time, and efforts of citizens who are trying to get access to grants and in some cases, basic service.

In the most egregious of cases, there are frontline government offices that refuse entry to the building for “improper attire.” Disallowing slippers and shorts in an NBI clearance center directly discriminates against the poor.

Employment seekers, borrowing money for the ride to the government office to get a required document for a minimum-wage job, are turned away from that office for not wearing the correct clothes. These are not trivial indignities. They cause actual harm and should be fixed to get people to trust and work with the government.

This lopsided power relationship between government offices/employees and the poor (often referred to as beneficiaries) is the complete opposite of “citizen-centered government.” Physically keeping citizens away from that which is rightfully theirs by paperwork that takes time and costs money they do not have, leaving them beholden to rank-and-file employees at local offices, fosters a general sense that government offices are not there to help them, but to act as barriers to service and benefits.

Small -scale corruption

All corruption is bad regardless of scale, but often only the big corruption stories are covered by the news—the complex scams that siphon off millions in government funds. Petty corruption, the ones on a personal level, remains undiscussed by national media and does not attract as much public attention. Yet it is precisely this kind of corruption, perpetrated by the rank-and-file in government, sometimes at the behest of local officials, that victimizes the poorest of our countrymen.

In every single group discussion conducted for this study, corruption was raised, without prompting, as one of the most pressing

constraints to progress as a country and as a people. The inefficiencies fuel the petty corruption. Dense government processes create opportunities for extracting “facilitation fees” from citizens. Government employees simply sit on an application until the person relents. The small-scale corruption, together with the red tape and overall inefficiency, makes the poor feel helpless and victimized by their own government. It is not as frequently discussed as large-scale corruption, but it may be equally damaging.

Poor healthcare

Women in the discussions often raise the problem of access to quality healthcare. They are concerned about their children's welfare and the impact an illness has on the income of the entire household. Catastrophic health events can drive a family into debt and poverty, sometimes permanently. People who do not have the means to enter a hospital will not even get to the point of having bills to pay—they will simply not receive medical attention because they cannot afford it. It is a critical barrier to prosperity for families who have no insurance. And even with private insurance, catastrophic illnesses could empty out a middle-income family's savings in a short time. As with the problem of employment, healthcare is a constraint of multiple facets.

Lack of access. In provinces, there are few tertiary hospitals which are located in city centers. People living outside the city have to travel several hours to get to a hospital and the cost is often prohibitive because they have to rent a tricycle or jeep to take the patient there. When the nearest hospital is a private facility, a patient would be turned away, even in emergency cases if the family cannot pay an initial deposit in the thousands (sample given was ₱10,000).

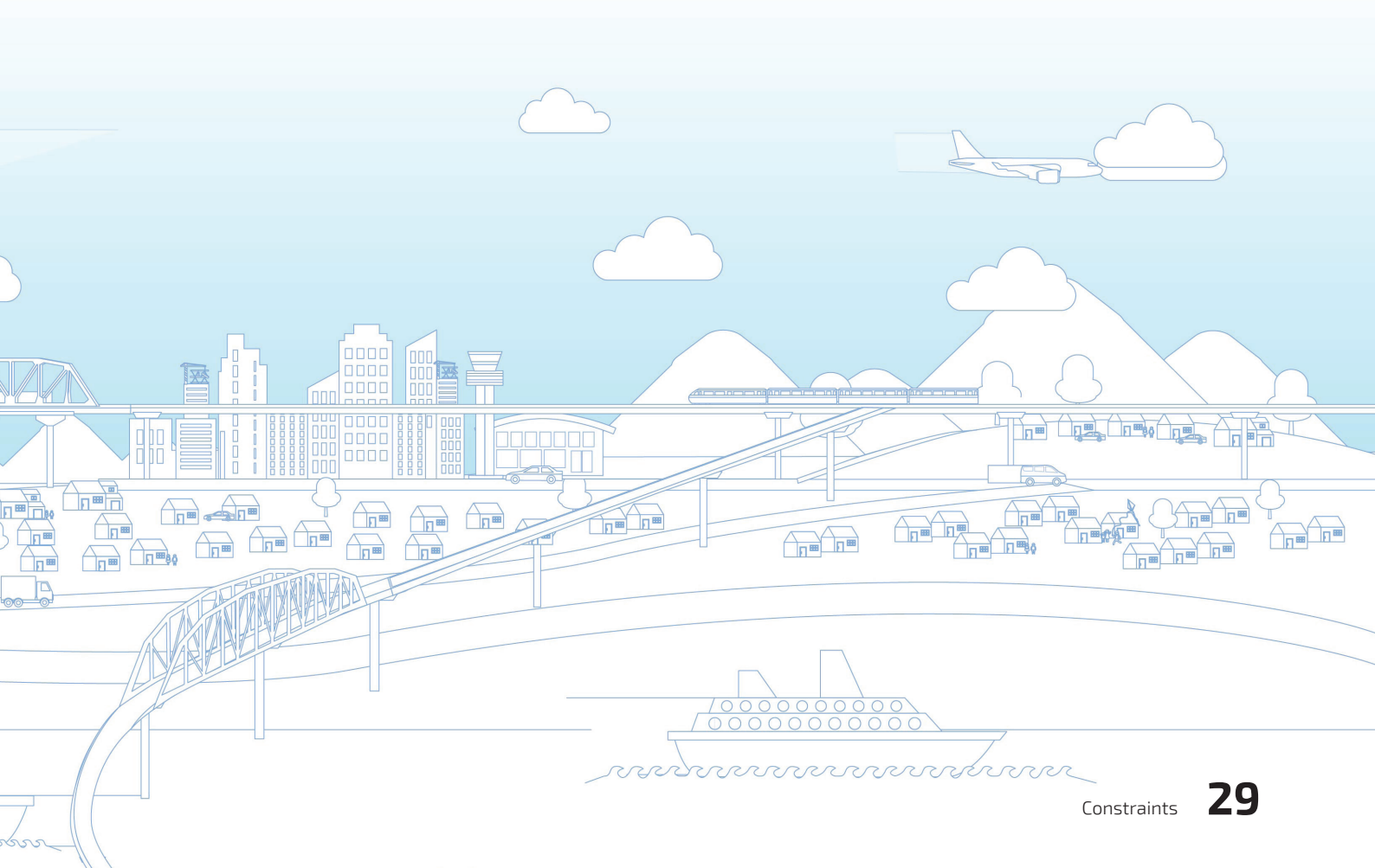
No support for prevention/maintenance. This was a sentiment expressed by those in their late 30s and 40s, or are caring for their parents.

A public healthcare facility only provides free consultation with a medical doctor. It does not help them purchase maintenance medication for common conditions such as high cholesterol or hypertension. These are completely out-of-pocket costs that many cannot afford but might, in the long run, be life-saving for the patient and cost-saving for the healthcare system.

The dire conditions of health care in large areas of the country, particularly among the poor, enable patronage in local politics. Most citizens have no real health insurance as PhilHealth covers only a small portion of hospitalization. As soon as one member of the family falls ill, the household's income is quickly drained and after getting as much help as they can from extended family and friends, they turn to politicians.

Public facilities have no supplies. Whether a full hospital or a small health center, public facilities are often in chronic shortage of medicine and other supplies. Some even lack medical professionals. People, knowing that they would not be able to afford medication, would decide to forego entirely the trip to the health center or hospital. Referring to a nearby public healthcare facility, one of the participants said that in their area, "*Hindi ka sakit mamamatay, sa pila ka mamamatay.*"

Each Filipino lives with an aspiration they seek to achieve and a set of constraints that could make it impossible for them to reach their goals. Whether rich or poor, all Filipinos want to be part of the growth process of the country, part of a nation that improves its status through participation and work. A pro-active government can harness this eagerness for productive work through initiatives that will build an environment that enables the pursuit of these aspirations free from the constraints and limitations created by inefficiencies, uncertainty, and instability. All Carloses, no matter how poor, must be able to finish an education if they want to, find gainful employment, and live a life with opportunities equal to those available to the wealthy. A country where all citizens have the opportunity to pursue their aspirations in a real way is one that will experience sustained growth over the long term.



Vision for the Country: Prosperity and Justice for All

At the end of all interviews, we asked participants to think about their vision for the country— what kind of country should the Philippines be in 25 years? To make the vision concrete, they were asked to name a country that they would most like the Philippines to emulate, and then point out what it is about that country that is admirable. A mix of countries was named, mostly places where the Filipinos work. The list includes progressive and modern societies such as Japan, Canada, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States. The things in these countries they value include:

1. Universal or affordable high quality healthcare and education;
2. Asian values with western development;
3. Urbanized, modern, and technologically advanced yet with progressive agriculture; and
4. Widely available welfare.

The things that Filipinos value in these developed countries are features that protect everybody's well-being equally, regardless of capability to pay, a willingness to provide welfare to those who need it, and an interest in protecting local values and cultures even as the country modernizes in other ways.

The participants said that: in 2040, everybody should be at least "middle class." Nobody should be poor. Nobody should be destitute. People visualize the typical family with a comfortable life as having the following features:

- Family of four, living together and seeing the extended family regularly;
- Mobile in both daily transportation and traveling;
- Living in their own modest home with simple amenities;
- Dual income, women should also have the opportunity to pursue a career;
- Freedom from debt;
- Savings for retirement and rainy days;
- Children's education paid up and secured until college or beyond; and
- Long life expectancy without fear of losing their savings to a health crisis.

For the affluent and the poor, value is placed on creating a society where all Filipinos can lead a life of options and opportunity that are equally available regardless of economic class.



Filipinos want their country to be economically progressive so that everybody can be gainfully employed, able to pay for their children's education, able to buy their own home, and able to secure decent healthcare. This can be accomplished only if the country is managed by a government that works, defined as one that is free of corruption and provides service to all its citizens equally. This includes protecting the rights of all people equally and providing security from threats (e.g., conflict, crime, violence).

If the country can provide a life for all families that is rife with equally-available economic opportunity, allowing a comfortable middle-class quality of life with a high level of well-being, it would have achieved the vision of its people. For the country, the vision is:

The Philippines shall be a country where all citizens enjoy equal prosperity, enabled by a fair and just society governed with order and unity. A nation where families live together, thriving in vibrant, culturally diverse, and resilient communities.

This vision statement for the country summarizes the state that Filipinos want their lives to be in by 2040. It is an abstract statement that represents detailed and nuanced ambitions, goals, and constraints of Filipino citizens. For each part of this statement, there are more expansive descriptions, as explained in the following chapters.



Prosperity for all

Walang naghihikahos, walang naghihirap, maginhawa ang buhay ng lahat.

Nakakakain tatlong beses sa isang araw, nabibili ang kailangan, nabibili ang gusto.

There are two fundamental values that underpin many of the desires of Filipinos for their country. The first is universality. The basic things such as education, healthcare, and livelihood should be available to everyone. Second is equality. Opportunities to improve one's state in life must be equally available. Everybody must be viewed equally in the eyes of the law—regardless of culture, gender, or social class, people must be protected by the law in equal measure, and if in defiance of it, pursued by the law also in equal measure. The values of universality and equality are expressed by the poor and affluent alike. In English, the vision for prosperity means: nobody is destitute, nobody is poor, everybody lives a comfortable life, able to eat three times a day, able to buy what they need, and able to buy what they want. As specific goals for the country, pursuit of this vision means a pursuit of zero hunger, zero absolute poverty, and a high quality of life for all Filipinos. Even the wealthier Filipinos interviewed for this study—those driving cars to work and who have retirement funds—hope for a country without poverty and suffering. The constraint looming large over this vision is an acute lack of sufficient employment or livelihood. In their words, ***walang maayos na trabaho***.

Job security

Life is unstable when income is unstable.

The defining feature of a good job is stability. Most Filipino families rely on income sources that are unstable, usually in the informal sector as laborers in agriculture or construction. A large portion of the formally-employed also have to deal with job insecurity because of contractualization — being put on short-term contracts lasting 3-6 months at a time. In most cases the unpredictable incomes, especially when small, means no savings, no planning for the future, and no improving one's quality of life.

When parents rely on irregular employment or income sources, it threatens the well-being of their children. Their education, health, and nutrition may be adversely affected during times when the family has little income. Mothers of poor families in NCR recount how their small children had to be pulled out of school because there was not enough money to buy food for them that day.

Maria, a mother of three children living in Quezon City, is paid ₱250 per day doing laundry for an old woman in their village. She is only able to work once or twice a week. Her husband drives for a trucking business for slightly more, but is only able to generate income when there is work for him. When the truck broke down, the family did not have any money for two

weeks. Living in the city, this meant that the family would go through a day without eating anything except the food they are able to ask for from the neighbors.

Farmers also have highly unstable incomes across the year, but theirs is different because at least there is a level of predictability. In the months for planting there is no money, only debt, and in the months of harvest there is money and food for the short term.

A living wage

People generally do not seek more money for the same work, instead they hope that in the future there would be better-quality and higher-paying jobs. These better-quality jobs are professional ones, requiring high levels of education. Since many Filipinos are underemployed, this is a reaction to the often low-quality employment which college graduates are limited to.

Parents and children hope that in the future, they can be in jobs that allow them to apply what they learned in college. Engineering graduates can work as engineers, education graduates can work as teachers, and business graduates can be entrepreneurs. In many parts of the country where employment opportunities are limited, education graduates might be working as grocery store cashiers. College graduates of four-year full degree courses are working in coffee shops because this is the best and most stable kind of employment available to them in the current market.

Good jobs in the country

Families affected by overseas work are spread across the country, some in clusters, like the town of Mabini in Batangas where women leave to work in domestic jobs in Italy, and others that

are isolated cases in communities where most people are so poor they do not have access to enough capital to seek a recruitment agency. Since overseas work is such a common feature of Philippine life, we asked participants if working abroad is something they aspire to.

For most, work abroad is referred to as a **"sacrifice"** that a parent must make for a child, or a child for a parent. Working in another country is a choice people make because they see no opportunity for decent-paying jobs in the Philippines, even if the job is supposedly a "higher quality" one. A nurse in a regular hospital makes less than a domestic helper in Italy. As a nurse, it would be a struggle to send three children to public school, but as a domestic helper overseas, it would be possible to send all three to good private schools. These are the economic choices Filipinos face, and the decision to work abroad is always considered a sacrifice because it means leaving family behind. It means leaving children behind to be raised by husbands, grandparents, siblings, and in some cases, even neighbors.

Justine lives in an informal urban settlement in Manila. She describes the system devised by people in their community: When someone on their street gets overseas work, they leave their children to a neighbor, who is paid to take care of them. Some families take charge of many children. The type of overseas work available to them are unskilled jobs, usually with short contracts (up to two years), in countries such as Taiwan, after which they have to return home and restart the recruitment process to get another position. They can return to their families and leave again if the opportunity arises, confident in knowing that they have a system in place for their children to continue life safely and under the care of the community.



Tapos syempre, di maiwasan sa mga ano ngayon na mangarap talaga nun kasi, pero kung isipin nga yung maayos na pamilya. Pag nag-abroad kasi eh, di mo alam na magkawatak-watak yung pamilya mo. Kaya mahirap pag masyado malayo ang pamilya. Kaya para sa'kin, kung may maayos naman na trabaho dito, dito na lang kasi kasama yung pamilya mo. Maalagaan mo nang maayos, makikita mo. E kaysa dun sa malayo, wala kang kasiguraduhan dun.



The life of an overseas worker is not something people want for themselves.

Filipinos have a strong desire for travel and mobility, and among the young and privileged, they would like to have opportunities to study or work abroad. Among those who are young and do not have children, particularly middle-income earners with much optimism in their own futures, living and working abroad is an aspiration rather than a sacrifice. Even for them, however, for whom a life in another country would be an adventure, it should be a temporary one. They foresee returning to the Philippines eventually to settle down.

The all-too-common sacrifice that Filipinos make by working abroad weighs heavily on their own lives and the life of the community. They hope for a country in the future that is able to provide enough good jobs or livelihood opportunities for their children. In 25 years, people who leave the country for work should only be those who truly operated on choice, and do not consider it a sacrifice.

Career growth, savings, and retirement

Among wealthier Filipinos, the desires run along more ambitious paths. People in stable,

well-paying jobs, are concerned about career growth, savings, and retirement in 2040. Working for a company or owning a business provides the affluent the luxury of considering the far future and the trajectory of their lives. For them, work is not simply a means to put food on the table and educate their children, it is a source of self-realization and fulfillment.

The job market must provide careers, not just jobs. Those who would be working in high productivity industries or trades would be considering opportunities for career growth, for trajectories, and long-term horizons for themselves in a company or for their businesses. Those we interviewed who are already in these types of jobs are thinking about their retirement in 2040, about whether they can save enough money to retire comfortably into a life of service to the community and traveling the world.

For retirement and savings, the means that people consider are: buying and renting out condominium units, opening their own business, and finding other means of earning passive income. Most people, after working until retirement age throughout a good career, still foresee a need to earn income because there are no real retirement plans and packages available to them to support a comfortable life.

Personal savings are important not just for retirement but also as insurance in case someone in the family is sick and is unable to work, or if a disaster occurs, and for any unplanned costs that might arise. Savings rates are admittedly low even for the middle income. There are no retirement fund mechanisms that force companies to contribute to the retirement of long-serving employees.

Entrepreneurship

While not as often mentioned as employment opportunities, opening and building a business is a relatively common desire for the future. It is a means toward a better future and a way to build a life with more control over one's own time. For the middle class and the young, owning a business is the only way to generate enough income to be considered **"rich"**. They say things like, *"Diyan ka lang aasenso, hindi ka yayaman sa pagiging empleyado."*

Among those who are considering business as a way to retire and still generate income,

part of the impetus for starting is to generate employment for the community. People who plan to work abroad aim to eventually save enough money to start a business in the Philippines so they can come back home and have enough income for a decent life.

For the poor, owning a business is having a *sari-sari* store or similar small business that will give the unemployed family member a way to bring in some income. A business is something to fall back on because there are no jobs available for them.

The constraint for building or growing a business is capital. This is true regardless of size. Farmers, who are essentially operating their own business, rely on high-interest loans in their community (30% is the typical rate). They do not have access to lower-interest formal loans from banks. There are livelihood programs initiated by government agencies, but these often are not connected to a market (*see box story*). For the poor who want to start



Tilapia Processing Livelihood Program

In a fishing village in Bicol, people farm tilapia for a living. Their market is small since the live fish are difficult to transport to the big cities. A government-initiated livelihood program was conducted with the fisherfolk, teaching them how to process, preserve, bottle, and can their products to extend the shelf life and increase the value of the final products. People were positive, adaptive, and eager to use what they learned.

After a few months of processing, it became clear that there was no market for the bottled and canned fish. They continued to do it, in small scale but could not move their product. Eventually, many of the fisherfolk stopped altogether and returned to selling live fish to the limited local market. Their incomes did not increase because there is no clear path toward higher productivity in the local tilapia growing industry.

a small business, the only way to have capital is to save their own money (which they cannot do), borrow from their social network (usually also poor), or borrow from the local loan shark.

Among those who have the means to build larger businesses, the constraint identified

is the difficulty of formally starting one. It should be easier to start a business and the government should help people instead of making the process burdensome.

Health

Walang namamatay sa sakit dahil sa kawalan ng pera.

In any given group discussion, it is usually the mothers who raise the issue of support for healthcare as a major constraint to the improvement of their lives. Anna, a janitor in a private school in Manila, has been employed full time with a relatively good income (₱16,000 a month) for many years. Her job is secure, she receives full benefits including Philhealth, and she has three children in public school under the full-time care of her husband, who does not

work. She describes how health costs make their family's life unstable. If one child gets sick, she has to pay for medicine, transportation to see the doctor, and consultation fees of the doctor. With three children living in a cramped informal settlement house, having a sick child is a regular occurrence. When they don't have money, they borrow from family or neighbors. This means, she says, that when the neighbor's child is sick and needs to borrow money from her, she has

Community and family are social protection

Women with children often talk about the problem of getting hit by unprogrammed expenses related to healthcare. A child or an elderly parent getting sick incurs costs, forcing them to borrow money from their families, parents, neighbors, and local politicians. In this way, the Filipinos' only social protection are their family and community. Among the poor, they consider those times when family members seek financial assistance from them as unexpected expenses as well. If a friend helped you out with money, you must be prepared to help in return.

We heard numerous stories of families burdened with massive debt as a result of a hospitalization—either accidents or serious illness. In the absence of good public hospitals in provinces, the poor bring their family members to private hospitals when they need an operation or a diagnostic procedure that requires specialized equipment. They end up owing tens or hundreds of thousands, their loved ones held hostage in the hospital until they are able to pay their bill. A barangay captain we spoke with in Batangas said he spent the day trying to help a constituent ask for money from a congressman to get someone out of the hospital. Without a working social protection mechanism for health, families will remain vulnerable to income shocks that may propel them into years of poverty.



to be ready to return the favor. Community and family are the social protection that step in since insurance is absent. The regular rotation of viral infections and bacterial infections, flu, colds, or dengue that hits these households makes saving practically impossible.

Healthcare expenses are the unplanned, unbudgeted shocks to a family's income, no matter how stable it might seem. A catastrophic illness such as cancer can wipe out savings even for a wealthy family.

Earlier in this paper, we described the most urgent concern in healthcare as that of physical

accessibility and of basic provision of services in public healthcare facilities. While access to good quality care is certainly a necessary condition, it is by no means sufficient to ensuring that health does not threaten any gains in poverty reduction the country might realize. Protecting everyone from the threat that a health-related shock to their income would keep a family in poverty, or drive them into poverty, would require good primary care for all Filipinos, a focus on prevention and maintenance, and protection from the costs of catastrophic illnesses.

Education

Lahat ng anak ay nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral

Filipinos who have children have a singular goal of educating all their children until college. Life, work, and ambition, all revolve around finishing education. When we spoke with parents, the first thing almost everybody said when asked what their vision was for themselves in the next 25 years was ***"Nakapagtapos ng pag-aaral ang lahat ng anak ko."***

No matter how poor the parents are, they aspire to send their children to college. College is a means toward a better and independent life, a life without hardship, a way to get a decent job with stable income. The dream of sending children to college varies by economic class but only by the type of college they would attend: state schools, private schools, or, among the very wealthy, schools abroad.

Education will provide opportunities for a stable job. The job will give them money to start a business and perhaps eventually, build a house. The very poor still dream of sending their children to college, but they admit it is

difficult to put them even through high school. The journey to send children through school is often referred to as *"gapang"* (crawl).

Basic education is free of tuition across the country, and elementary schools are widely available to all. The poor are not generally concerned about being able to send their children to elementary school. However, when the children reach high school, they become apprehensive about their ability to cover costs. Public high schools are scarcer than elementary schools, being located in more developed municipalities. While tuition is still free, the cost of transportation, supplies, allowance, and other requirements can grow prohibitive.

Prosperity for all is the most important part of the Vision as it speaks to goals of eliminating hunger and poverty, and providing equal opportunities to attain a high-quality standard of living for all Filipinos. It is constrained by the lack of the right kinds of income opportunities, stable jobs that pay a living wage, support for

good quality education, and protection from health-related shocks to income.

Prosperity cannot be achieved without protecting stability and predictability in individual people's lives. Careers, jobs, business opportunities are all means toward an end — that of a comfortable and secure life. Education and health are both sources of security and stability.

The Philippines is subjected to many sources of instability such as natural disasters and conflict, which affect the stability of the country as well as individuals. There are sources of

instability that are smaller in the scheme of the national agenda, but have large impacts on the lives of ordinary citizens. Transportation costs, in terms of money and time, is one example. When the cost of getting to and from work or school is volatile and unpredictable, sometimes costing 20 minutes, sometimes one hour, it can make life unstable. Illnesses are another source of instability. The frequency, timing, and costs incurred when someone in the family gets sick and when a family has no health insurance are unpredictable. For businesses, unpredictability of communication and internet connectivity and speed can mean significant loss of income.



Availability of Inexpensive College

Proximity to a state college or university can be a powerful motivation for high school students. Setting aside, for the moment, the large issue of poor quality in state institutions, the availability of a fully-subsidized college nearby gives high school students in the area a good chance that they can attend. In a small city in Eastern Samar, high school children of farmers and fisherfolk who self-identify as being among the poor, have ambitions of college. They intend to go to the Eastern Samar State University (ESSU), where many of their peers go even if they are also poor, or, if the family can afford it, one of the better colleges in nearby Cebu. Tuition in ESSU is ₱25 per unit, almost fully state-supported. These 10th graders want to be architects, engineers, and successful business owners, traveling the world and building their parents a large home. They are energetic, ambitious, and optimistic about their chances of getting to college because they see that others around them are able to go to college even if they are children of fisherfolk. In contrast, a group of high school students in Laguna, only a few blocks away from a University of the Philippines campus, are not so optimistic, although they are not short on ambition. Also a group of aspiring engineers, the students are concerned that even if they want to go to college, their parents will not be able to afford it.

Just and fair society

*Pantay-pantay ang pagtingin ng sistema ng hustisya.
Pagkakaroon ng hustisyang panlipunan.*

Related to the need for stability is the need to maintain a just and fair society. The justice system, and the government that it is part of, must treat all Filipinos equally under the law. It should protect all citizens regardless of cultural identity and social class. This is only possible if it is part of a larger institution that works efficiently in all aspects of law enforcement.

Filipinos see their justice system as one that protects only the rich and cares little for the poor. Justice is for those who can afford to buy it, and law enforcement officers do their job mostly to extract money from people, whether rich or poor. There is widespread belief that the law is applied unequally, and that the system is controlled by the powerful.

Even with the cynicism felt toward the justice system, there is a clear preference for stronger enforcement of laws, for creation of a disciplined society through a working justice and law enforcement system. These seem uniquely felt in urban areas where the environment can be chaotic, dirty, and unpleasant. Many of the problems of society, according to Filipinos, can be fixed if people can be taught discipline.

Discipline is following the rules, whether big or small—not throwing pieces of garbage on the street, crossing the road at the proper crossings, following traffic rules, and falling in line at the bus stop.

Governed with order and unity

When Filipinos talk about their government, they lament the lack of unity. Officials in government are not perceived as standing united with their constituents. They are perceived instead as watching out for themselves and their own interests, not the interests of the country. Government is thought to be run by those who are protecting themselves and their supporters. As a result, the poor and powerless are left behind to fend for themselves. The vision is for a government that looks out for all, one that is run with order and that maintains an orderly and disciplined society. A government that cares about the poor.

Positive politics

Corruption, both big and small, is mentioned without prompting in every discussion. They hear about large-scale corruption in the news, about cheating in government programs supposedly pursued for the benefit of the poor. Poor Filipinos feel personally slighted, that the assistance supposedly intended for them, instead ends up in the pockets of government officials. Smaller-scale corruption in their local government creates even greater enmity. Local municipal offices are entities that are feared rather than trusted, an instrument that the powerful use to extort rather than to help. People who work there are looking out only for themselves and not for the citizens. Petty corruption among the rank-and-file government

employees, who extract small amounts from people who have very little, erodes public trust in government.

These observations and experiences with government fuel the view that the culture of politics in the country is negative—meaning it is often about politicians attacking each other, protecting only their own at the expense of the truly needy, and having little compassion or empathy. Participants speak of deeply-entrenched political dynasties in their areas, sometimes two families struggling to take power away from each other during elections, with citizens forced to align themselves with one or the other side, and losing support from the municipality if their candidate loses.

Patronage politics runs deep in rural areas and poor cities of the country. In a typical small rural town, the only stable employment available is a local government job. Aside from

the tenured positions, there are many employed on allowance or on a contractual basis to do administrative or program-related tasks. According to residents of these communities, one is only able to secure a position if you are a supporter of the winning candidate. If your candidate loses then you fall out of favor. There was a story of a set of school scholarships that was discontinued and re-assigned to other students when a new mayor was elected. These forms of extreme patronage happen in small towns, where residents know each other and keep track of which families support which politicians, especially in areas where the community relies heavily on local governments for income either through direct employment or through programs.

Patronage relationships are cultivated and perpetuated easily in areas where incomes are low, jobs are scarce, and economic opportunities barely exist.

“ May mga anak akong tapos, ha. Hindi makapasok-pasok. Bakit? Yung mga matataas na taong nakaupo doon, yung pamangkin, yung apo. Yun daw na naka-reserve doon. Kaya ikaw, wala ka naman kakilala doon sa itaas. Wala ka. Kaya ang ano ko lang, yung talagang dapat maging fair ang pag-ano ng...magtanggap ng yung mga tao ba na nakapag-aral. Hindi yung kilala lang talaga. ”

Citizen-centered government

An inefficient government is not a citizen-centered government, and inefficiency oppresses the poorest Filipinos. Take the case of fisherfolk victims of an oil spill who were poor to begin with. Their incomes took a catastrophic hit when their main source of livelihood disappeared. A government

assistance program was set up and potential beneficiaries were asked to fill out forms and paperwork to receive remuneration. In the end, each family was asked to pay a processing fee of ₱300, money they did not have, to be part of the program. An unemployed high school graduate from Davao City complains about the time and money needed to complete all the requirements when applying for a job, sometimes needing more than one trip to a government office to

get one of the requirements. Each trip is an expense, and government employees will not think twice about making citizens do multiple trips to complete an application process.

Thick bureaucratic processes and red tape oppress the poorest among us. There is a sense that government employees lack an appreciation for people's time and money, that the default response is to make citizens spend more time to get what they need. There is no culture of service.

Even within government, its own system and data, institutions cannot streamline its hiring process. A new full-time government employee has to produce all the same requirements and more (NBI clearance, police clearance, birth certificate, etc). All of the requirements are issued by other government offices, yet they would have employees take days off work to line up in various places to get all necessary documents. New employees are told it will take three to six months for them to get paid. In any private company, making employees wait three months for a first paycheck would be illegal, yet it is accepted as a fact for government service. Working for three months without pay means shelling out your own money to get to work every day. With this kind of inefficiency, the most deeply affected are those that have little money to begin with. Groups of employees in some offices would pool together money to lend to the new person who still has not received their salary.

Process inefficiencies in government leads to slow service delivery, creates barriers to service especially against the poor, and disempowers citizens. Moreover, it creates opportunities for petty corruption. Well-run local governments can fix this. People can feel they have access to services and their government is working to address their needs as there are pockets of

good practice in the country. In places we visited where things are run well, citizens praise their local leaders, acknowledge that government helps them and the poor, and have greater trust in the system. There are examples of good governance and efficient service delivery in parts of government, and where these happen, public satisfaction is apparent.

Lack of transparency, sometimes in the form of simple feedback mechanisms, makes transactions with government opaque and untrustworthy. In a large transitory settlement site in Zamboanga City, where thousands of people were internally displaced by a siege that happened two years prior, the anger is clearly apparent. They live in squalid conditions, neglected by their local government, without decent water and sanitation services, and far away from the city center and the open sea—the only sources of livelihood available to them. Entire communities are told they can no longer return to their land or to the water as these are no-return zones to be kept free of any settlements for security purposes. They are surveyed, counted, visited by politicians and promised assistance. They are initially told that the government is building houses for them, and that they should wait.

Two years on and there is no word about how many have been built, what their waiting time is, and even whether they will continue to be rationed water over the next few months. Meanwhile, the transitory site only grows larger as more shelters are built and more families move in. Lumber gets trucked in, and it makes people there feel even more hopeless. It means the government is nowhere near ready to put them in permanent homes. It means they may be there for many more years.

The mothers we spoke with cried in anger. Can they just be told how long the wait will be? If

it is two years, then they can be prepared, and they can plan to live in these conditions for the long haul. Not knowing, and not hearing anything from the people running the site and the relocation eats away at them. There is no planning, there is no looking to the future. There can be no vision if they don't even know if they will have a decent roof over their heads in the next year.

There are no feedback mechanisms, no communication channels between agencies and target beneficiaries, and no updates. Accountability mechanisms embedded in the system are designed so that government employees are accountable only to the government and not to citizens.

Attention to the regions

In Mindanao, the issues of governance are those of federalism, greater autonomy, and passing the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) as a first step to achieving lasting peace in the region. A similar sentiment is expressed by Visayans. There is discontent over the lack of attention the rest of the country gets compared to Luzon, especially Metro Manila. Large swaths of the Philippines are supportive of greater autonomy, and even full-blown federalism as they understand it, to protect the development in their region without having to wait for attention from the national government.



Unang-una kasi itong Mindanao, kaya nga sinabihan kita na nagpapa-salamat kami na andun kayo sa Maynila, nagpunta kayo dito para obserbahan ang pamumuhay ng taga-Mindanao. So kami ,parang huli kami sa lahat ng teknolohiya na pangkaraniwang ginagamit ng mamamayan sa Pilipinas. Pangalawa, yung mga tao sa Maynila, sa central office, parang ayaw magpunta dito kasi may giyera. So gusto namin na mabago yung paningin na ganoon para maibigay sa amin ang dapat namin makuha sa parte ng gobyerno. So yun ang gusto namin mangyari, na kahit papaano ay mapansin ng gobyerno dito. Yan ang matagal na naming hinahangad. Yung mga opportunities doon sa central government, mapunta dito sa mga liblib na pook, para kami, may karapatan din mabuhay nang marangal. Yun ang ano namin, na mapansin kami dito sa liblib na pook ng Mindanao.



Cotabato Urban Poor

Whether accurate or not, many in Mindanao believe that the region generates much economic value in the form of natural resources and local economic activity, yet it is lost to the national government that pulls in all the money and does not leave enough for their area. Federalism as a governance arrangement is supported as a mechanism to allow local governments to spend locally-generated funds in local development projects. While distrust of the national government seems stronger in Luzon, where the bitterness over large- and small-scale corruption runs deep; in Mindanao and Visayas, there is less distrust but a general sense that the national government cares less for their welfare compared to the welfare of those in Luzon.

Class Divides on Economic Protectionism

Among wealthier Filipinos—those who are formally employed or who own their own businesses—opening up the country to foreign investments and trade is considered necessary to development and generally a positive thing. By contrast, the poor are wary of importation and foreign investments. Many of the poor are farmers who are protecting their incomes from the onslaught of cheaper food imported from neighboring countries. They are more inclined toward supporting local industry for greater local productivity and subsidizing citizens who are producing goods for the area. The experience of poor Filipinos in engaging with the developed world is vastly different from the experience of middle income and wealthy ones. Wealthier citizens see opportunities for larger industries, better jobs, and more mobility internationally because this is within their realm of experience. The poor's engagement with the world is through loss of income to imported agricultural goods and taking overseas employment for unskilled work in countries where their countrymen experience neglect and abuse.



Families stay together

Hindi kailangang mangibang-bansa at mawalay sa pamilya upang makapagtrabaho ng maayos.

Kapiling ng mga magulang ang kanilang mga anak.

The desire for families to stay together is a product of having one or two generations of Filipinos whose children grew up without one of their parents, because they needed to work abroad. Many of the participants of this consultation lived lives directly affected by the country's export of labor. While families clearly benefited from overseas employment—solid houses were built in the countryside and children were sent to private schools with no worries about their food—they are sad about the time spent apart. People hope that the next generation of children can grow up with their parents, living in the same house, and getting the guidance they need to live stable and productive lives.

Reliance on work that forces families to live apart is the singular reason why Filipinos are talking about the importance of families staying together. This is an economic issue and not a cultural or social one. Addressing the issues of availability of decent, stable, and economically productive work for anybody who wants to work, as discussed in detail above, is the way to achieve this vision of a Philippines where parents do not leave children behind to be raised by grandparents and neighbors. If there are sufficient jobs with wages that will support a comfortable life, where all children can get a good education and everybody's health is protected, overseas work can be a real choice instead of an economic imperative.

“ Alam mo, that's one thing also na na-envision ko din for the Philippines, na wala ng pamilyang maghihiwa-hiwalay para magtrabaho yung nanay o tatay. Worst nanay eh, sa ibang bansa, na kumbaga yung mga taga-ibang bansa yung nagtatrabaho dito. So lahat ng pamilya, siguro mas maraming mas maga-guide na mga bata. Mas maraming matuturuan ng tamang asal. Hindi sa pamamagitan ng mga materyal na bagay lang na pinapadala ng magulang to make-up for the lost time. So yun siguro, nagma-match lahat eh. Yung sa start ng...sa family, sa home dun nagsisimula yung values. E sino ba yung pinakatututok sa values, kundi magulang. Sino yung magtitiyagang magturo, magdisiplina sa bata kundi mga parents. ”

Middle-income formal worker Luzon

Vibrant, culturally diverse, and resilient communities

Protektado ang karapatan ng lahat ng uri ng tao.

Kayang bumangon mula sa kalamidad.

*Napangangalagaan ang iba't ibang
kultura sa Pilipinas.*

From the experiences of Filipinos consulted for this research, there are three main sources of instability in communities. These are armed conflicts, natural calamities, and poor management of densely populated urban areas. Lives in entire communities are destabilized, or never stabilized, when they are vulnerable to armed encounters, to victimization of marginalized indigenous communities without the benefit of protection from the law, to natural disasters that can wipe out entire communities economically, and to ballooning transaction and mobility costs in large cities.

The emphasis on **"communities"** reflects the value that Filipinos place on the country's cultural diversity—each village, town, or city is its own community with its own challenges and goals. Development is envisioned in different ways in different areas, and protection of this endemic diversity in cultures should be a guiding force for the administration of justice and law.

Communities without conflict

Unintentionally, all participants in the FGD of urban poor residents in Cotabato City were comprised of people who fled either Maguindanao or North Cotabato because of conflict. Some of them moved to the city as children, others as adults with their children in tow. Having lived with the instability brought about by the constant threat of armed conflict erupting in their villages, their vision for the country is

one that is centered on lasting peace, which in turn, is expected to bring about development.

Conflict comes in different forms, some as rebel wars in Mindanao, others as urban crimes in informal settlements, and others still as episodes of confrontation between indigenous communities and the military or local police. These are all destabilizing forces not just from a national perspective; they affect communities and make life unlivable in many places in the country, driving families to cities where they have no social capital and no economic opportunities.

Local conflicts are not just local, they have effects that are national in scope. Take the Zamboanga Siege of 2013 which displaced thousands of families from their homes, the vast majority of whom are still living in the poorest possible conditions. Some of these families lived comfortable middle-class lives, with OFW family members that enabled them to build houses and send their children to school. An episode of protracted conflict, aggravated by insufficient local leadership and largely insensitive and directionless mismanagement of recovery programs, hurls these families into abject poverty for years. The middle class become very poor, the poor become very poor, and in scale, there are enough of them to keep the stubbornly high poverty rates of the country, stubbornly high.

Conflict is aggravated by mistreatment or neglect of indigenous communities. While Filipinos place much value on protecting the cultural diversity of the country and supporting various indigenous cultures to preserve the identity of the nation as one comprised of different groups, there seems to be a mismatch between what the people value and the actions of local government institutions.

Communities resilient against disasters

Just as entire communities can be driven to poverty by conflict, natural disasters can have the same effect. Each year, we hear about billions of pesos lost to typhoons, floods, landslides, droughts, earthquakes, or volcanic eruptions. There are also hazards that result from environmental degradation and pollution, such as massive fishkill from oil spills or pollutants, or flash floods from denuded mountains, or health epidemics from droughts. Each year, thousands of families' incomes are affected either by losing crops or property to natural hazards, or by taking a hit from the rise in prices of food and other commodities when agricultural production in an area is compromised.

There are small-scale disasters like flooding

in an area that subsides quickly but can still wipe out entire crops of rice in a region, and there are large-scale disasters that turn into humanitarian crises such as Yolanda (typhoon Haiyan). Disasters happening regularly each year is the **"new normal"**. Resilience against disasters means preparing and equipping communities for mitigation of impacts, and helping them recover and rebuild when impacts are large. Without built-in resiliencies, entire communities across the country can fall into poverty with one event, and take years to recover.

Sarah lives in Bicol province where she and all her neighbors are used to bad typhoons and threats of volcanic eruptions. Everyone in this discussion has had their house seriously damaged, in many cases completely wiped out, by a typhoon. When asked, what they did the last time they lost their home, they answered:

“ Gumawa kami ng maliit na kubo-kubo... Para may masilungan muna yung mga ano, yung damit, yung mga anak ko. Dun tiisin muna para pag ano, may oras na materyales na, gagawan ng ano, ng malaki. ... Kasi nga pag bumabagyo, nadudurog yung bahay namin dito. Kaya pinapasiguro namin. Kahit paisa-isang haligi, tinatayo namin. Pag nagka-extra-extrang 100, ibinili ko na muna ng semento. I-stock yung semento. Sa susunod kumita ka naman, bumili ka ng isa. O ganun kami dito. Kaya makikita mo, kahit kami mahirap ang bahay namin, may semento. ”

Disaster Survivor, Bicol

When they are hit, families receive some food from the government and a minimal amount of cash as assistance. They say the last time they were given money, it was barely enough to pay for a bag of nails. Sometimes construction supplies would arrive and are distributed to families. All these efforts are never enough when entire homes are wiped out. In the rural areas, they say, the government keeps sending them food for assistance when disaster strikes, when what they really need is a way to rebuild

their homes. They need a roof over their heads that won't be blown off when the next typhoon arrives.

We spoke with people who were victims of different kinds of disasters, including typhoons, oil spills, and conflict. Many received some form of small assistance from the government, usually more from international NGOs. Across these conversations, there seems to be one pattern: government assistance is fragmented, uncoordinated, and usually tied up

in bureaucratic red tape.

In times of massive emergency relief for example, government aid workers require people to sign documents, provide IDs to prove that they are residents of a community, or go through tedious listing and inventory, which ultimately slow down distribution. Ironically, the more controls government adds to the process, the longer it takes, and the longer it takes, the higher the likelihood that **"outsiders"** who are not victims end up on the list, because there is more time for people to move into temporary evacuation centers.

The one other pervasive observation is how falling victim to disasters erodes personal dignity. Nobody wants to line up for handouts. Nobody wants to be in a position to wait for the next truck to arrive to receive a bag of rice. Nobody wants to wait for assistance while helpless because there is no opportunity to make money. What they want and need is the fastest way to get back to their lives, when they had work and could buy their own food and send their children to school. Unfortunately, many recovery efforts by government seem concerned only about meeting food needs, not the needs that will really put people back on their feet.

Livable cities

Life in and around Metro Manila, a large urban center, is perceived as having its own challenges. It is polluted, littered with garbage, pervaded by crime and security problems, and offers no opportunity for decent affordable housing for the poor. The high cost and low quality of transportation options limit people's mobility and capacity to earn or save. Manila is characterized by slums and blighted areas where life is oppressive and expensive.

Of the many places visited for this research, people living outside of Manila express no particular desire to move there for its developed and urbanized areas. The reason to move there is for the jobs, and not the lifestyle. Setting aside economic opportunities, most people think that life in Manila is hard and unpleasant.

There are increasing numbers of people who are born and raised in Manila, who have no "home province." They would like to stay in the city but hope for more positive living conditions where surroundings are spacious and clean. The grime and pollution of the city is believed to be harmful to the health of children and the elderly. Life in the provinces and in the barrios, is lighter and easier. For those who have memories of living in the barrio, they would like to return there and start a business to sustain a living, but many do not have the capital to do this.

Urban areas are clearly different from rural ones, but the megacity of Manila is of its own scale, with problems that are different from the other cities like Davao. The smaller cities have more space, but are able to absorb less labor compared to Manila. Generally, people like to stay where they grew up, near their community and their family, and to serve their locality if they can. This means that even the potential college students interviewed prefer to attend universities near their hometown, or in the nearest city if their own province does not have its own school.

People are not keen on living in Manila, but acknowledge that it is necessary to find a good job. The unique challenges of governing and ushering the improvement of city life in Manila are urgent concerns for the country if it hopes to provide an enabling environment for the majority of its highly productive citizens.

Conclusions

Through widespread public consultations conducted in a rigorous scientific manner, Filipinos shared their aspirations, dreams, and goals. By describing their current lives and experiences, they are able to identify specific barriers and constraints that stand in their way in achieving their goals. There is striking similarity in individual Filipinos' aspirations for themselves and their country, across region, gender, and even social class.

Vision for self

“In 2040, all Filipinos will enjoy a stable and comfortable lifestyle, secure in the knowledge that we have enough for our daily needs and unexpected expenses, that we can plan and prepare for our own and our children’s futures. Our families live together in a place of our own, we have the freedom to go where we desire, protected and enabled by a clean, efficient, and fair government.”



The objects of aspirations are the same, only the scale varies. A poor family wants stable decent work, basic needs of food and shelter met, a house, all children educated through college, an affordable way to be mobile, to travel, have savings for rainy days, and good health. Middle-class families want the same things, with the house just bigger, the colleges more expensive, mobility through owned vehicles, higher-quality jobs, and formal retirement and investment accounts. What differentiates levels of aspirations is the experience of grinding poverty. They wish that life was not so hard, *"sana di ganito kahirap ang buhay."*

Those who have very little now, will not dream big because they know these are unattainable given the current state of their lives.

Commonality in the objects of aspirations is driven by shared fundamental values of the Filipino people. Life is centered on family and there is a strong desire to be mobile and to travel. All the other things they want is in the service of family: of securing the future of children, of giving back to parents, and of spending time together. Parents have ambitions for themselves because they want to give their children a good education and a bright future. Children have ambitions for themselves because they want to serve their parents and give them what they did not have growing up. The ultimate sacrifice is to leave the family: to spend time away from family and have parents give up the chance to raise their children.

By extension, community is also valued highly. More affluent Filipinos have a strong sense of responsibility that they should serve communities. Even the poor, whenever they have any time to offer, readily help neighbors and friends. Citizens are interested in protecting the well-being of all Filipinos, and they are supportive of welfare assistance for those who need it.

What are the things needed by the people in achieving their aspirations? These are also widely shared and include stable good-quality jobs, affordable and accessible healthcare, a government that protects and serves all people equally without corruption, and one that is citizen-centered and does not unnecessarily burden clients.

In light of all the constraints discussed in the consultations, this pattern emerges: people cannot improve their lives and well-being without stability and predictability. They must be protected from shocks that might emanate from health care costs, conflict, disasters, and a generally unpredictable daily life. The government must own and fulfill its role in providing social protection for all citizens to keep them from sliding into poverty when they are hit by disasters or catastrophic illnesses. The government must ease access to all available mechanisms toward achieving stability in a typical Filipino family's life.



Some of the difficulties in access are present because of process inefficiencies of government, or of insufficient regulation, or of failure to secure some areas of the country from conflict.

Filipinos want to work, they want to be productive so they can secure their own lives and the lives of their children. The key is to get barriers out of their way by creating an environment where their eagerness to be productive is enabled and harnessed. It should not be so hard to apply for a job, it should not be expensive to get to a hospital, and it should not be burdensome to start a business or to transact with government. Productivity cannot be achieved without stability, and thus, it is important to build efficient systems that will achieve stability and protect people's time and work.

The life of the Filipino is burdened with instability. The job of government is to provide stability. In both small scale and large, instability threatens individuals' and the country's efforts to stem poverty.

Achieving stability for people is a fundamental goal of programmatic efforts to bring prosperity to all. This requires intervention on many fronts, not only for the families through their incomes, but also the environment they operate in. In order to build a stable and predictable life for people, government must build stability into infrastructure (public transportation, roads, connectivity), social protection (health insurance and education support), and protection against hazards (natural disasters, conflict).

For the country, Filipinos want a nation without poverty, without hunger, and with equal protection and service from government. The vision for the country among its citizens is:

Vision for country

“By 2040, the Philippines shall be a prosperous, predominantly middle-class society where no one is poor. Our peoples will enjoy long and healthy lives, are smart and innovative, and will live in a high-trust society.”



Equality of opportunity to work toward prosperity is a central national goal for Filipinos. We want the poor out of poverty; we want a country where nobody is destitute and hungry. What this research reveals is the imperative to look at the human side of poverty reduction.

The experience of poverty is not only about having food in the stomach and money to send children to school. It is about living a dignified life. The duty is on all of us to respect that those living in poverty are not **"beneficiaries"** waiting around for charity. They are people who want a chance to work for a living wage and build a simple yet secure life for themselves and their children through work.

Nobody, no matter how poor, wants to live on charity. People want opportunities to support themselves. They want to work, they are looking for work, but access to work is restricted because it is expensive and scarce. Programs like conditional cash transfers provide poor families the freedom to pursue opportunities that would otherwise be outside their realities.

Easing access to all means of working toward a better life requires prioritizing efficiencies over designing new programs, working with what is

available and making it easier for the poor to use them.

Protecting the dignity of the poor is about designing and delivering support in a way that recognizes the constraints within which they have to operate. The poor are not beneficiaries, they are citizens and clients. What seem like small-time problems like petty corruption and transaction inefficiencies are in fact insurmountable barriers for those who have little money. Poverty reduction efforts should prioritize ways to ease access to the various available instruments of government that will allow the poor to work toward their goals.

The vision for this country is to have no family living in poverty. The good news is that citizens do not expect government to provide everything, but they need government to make it easier for them to participate in improving the state of the country by making it easier for them to be productive. Needs revolve around simplifying, streamlining, and increasing access. All Filipinos want to participate in the national growth process. The government's job is to identify and fix the things that stand in the way of citizens' productivity.



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