24th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written Statement by the Development Academy of the Philippines - Graduate School of Public and Development Management

Agenda 5: Principle of Effective Governance for Delivery of Equitable and Sustainable Development for All

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have served as benchmarks for every nation aiming for sustainability. Despite such promising outcomes, world nations struggle to achieve these goals; Igini (2024) reported that only 16 per cent of the SDG targets will be achieved by the year 2030. Major concerns in regards to multiple SDGs — namely, SDG 2 (No Hunger), 14 (Life Below Water), 15 (Life on Land), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) — hamper countries from reaching these goals (SDSN South East Asia, 2024).

In 2023, progress towards the SDGs had stagnated or even regressed, largely due to the compounding effects of recent global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts, and natural disasters (United Nations, 2023). The report identified rising inequality and food and energy insecurity as interconnected key areas of concern, exacerbated by economic instability, climate change, and geopolitical tensions. Alarmingly, only 15 per cent of SDG targets were on track, nearly half showed little to no progress, and over one-third had regressed (United Nations, 2023).

In pursuit of these SDGs, effective governance emerges as a fundamental mechanism for translating global aspirations into delivering tangible, equitable outcomes; it requires critical dimensions, including transparency, inclusivity, and resilience. This framework serves as a practical imperative for leaders and policymakers (Glass, 2019). Moreover, effective governance encapsulates the ideal environment upon which all parties enact their functions, forming an optimized setting attuned for collective action across all sectors, accountability in implementation, and trade-offs focusing on equity, justice, and fairness in the name of sustainability (Bowen *et al.*, 2017). In essence, effective governance is a culmination of enabling factors that maximize the capacity of the machinery.

Previously, the 2019 SDG Summit presented an optimistic outlook, reporting the SDGs were largely on track, with several positive trends emerging. Child mortality rates declined, access to electricity in developing countries increased, and the proportion of the urban population living in slums decreased (United Nations, 2019). The active participation of member states in advancing

the 2030 Agenda led to significantly favorable outcomes. The most notable achievement was the reduction in poverty worldwide, declining from 36 per cent in 1990 to 8.6 per cent in 2018.

This stark contrast between 2019's optimism and 2023's alarming stagnation underscores the urgent need for transformative, science-driven solutions to regain momentum towards achieving the SDGs. Without immediate, coordinated action, the 2030 Agenda risks falling further behind, jeopardizing global sustainability and development efforts.

Currently, ASEAN nations are in pursuit of sustainable development. Indonesia notably ranked first out of 74 countries worldwide based on the 2023 survey of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). One of the country's primary objectives was to localize SDGs by providing tailor-fit implementation through the country's educational institutions (Subandi, 2020). Malaysia further proved how localization helps nations achieve these goals by assessing each of their provinces' performances and comparing the data to other provinces, helping officials identify which province needs observation or support in the relevant aspects.

In the Philippine context, the nation has an SDG ranking rate of 92 over 166, performing well compared to neighboring ASEAN countries (Sustainable Development Report: Philippines, 2024). Maintaining and improving such a ranking remains a challenge for the nation, however; the Philippine Government addresses this by launching an initiative of localizing the SDGs by the year 2030 through the Regional Development Plans and Comprehensive Development Plans at the regional and local levels, respectively. For this purpose, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the country's national government agencies, issued the Joint Memorandum Circular 1, series of 2018, on November 26, 2018, providing guidelines on the localization of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), which contains the implementation strategies required to achieve the SDGs through the vertical linkages of the government bodies, from national, regional, and local perspectives.

Several public institutions in the Philippines have led this aspiration to pursuit of localization of SDGs. A great example are the initiatives of the Development Academy of the Philippines' Graduate School of Public and Development Management (DAP-GSPDM) through the funding of research studies. These studies, with funding allocated by the national government through the General Appropriations Act (GAA), were conducted in partnership with the Office of the Senate Committee on SDGs, Innovation, and Futures Thinking. By leveraging this collaboration, researchers explored policy and governance innovations, ensuring that academic insights directly

contribute to national and local development strategies, a unique opportunity to aid the enhancement of the nation's public management and local governance. Consequently, the DAP-GSPDM serves as an agent of dissemination as it traverses the nation to aid local governments through the initiative of the Academy's SDG Caravan. The SDG Caravan is part of the DAP-GSPDM's effort to circumnavigate the Philippines, conveying the insights of its research programs and diffusing relevant findings to localities across all regions of the country. The SDG Caravan not only serves as an avenue of communicating relevant research findings but also as a channel for propagating widespread awareness of the SDGs and utilizing research findings, furthering the application of actionable insights relevant to target regions and local government units (LGUs).

Findings from various studies underscore the need for integrating food and nutrition security frameworks into municipal development plans. Bathan *et al.* (2021) examined food security in Los Baños and highlighted how informal settlements and exposure to natural hazards influence local food systems. Hence, incorporating a more comprehensive urban planning approach in order to address these vulnerabilities is imperative. Additionally, sustainable consumption and production remain a significant governance challenge emphasizing the necessity of multilevel collaboration between national and local authorities. Corporate engagement with SDGs is still limited, requiring greater efforts to align business practices with sustainability targets (Taguibao *et al.*, 2021).

Effective governance also demands data-driven decision-making. Data analytics can enhance public sector efficiency through the establishment of a national data governance framework to ensure that policy implementation is guided by accurate and real-time information, establishing data as an asset and creating key performance indicators for data management. Developing such a system will require significant resources, but it is essential for meeting the evolving demands of the society. Accurate, timely, and intelligent data is important in effective policy making, efficient use of public resources, and promoting trust and integrity in the government. The Philippines must create and strengthen clear and effective data-driven public sector frameworks to help cities, municipalities, and provinces identify, evaluate, and assess the necessary elements for collecting, analyzing, and using data to make informed decisions (Batapa-Sigue, 2021).

Connecting the linkages within the government institutions through national and local levels must be consistent in their coordination, integration, and monitoring to localize each SDG by 2030. Hence, public academic institutions like DAP and its Graduate School are critical in continuously aiding the government in promoting and advocating for the localization of SDGs in local governance.

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