



FSGO

FORMER SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

A DO-ABLE BLUEPRINT FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE REFORM: *What a Good President and His/Her Cabinet Can Do Within the First Year of Office*

INTRODUCTION

Bad governance has put the Philippines on a steep downward spiral, most especially over the past decade. The elections in 2010 allow us to look forward to a chance for change: a nation committed to the common good. A country governed by ethical leaders who are responsive to an empowered people through transparent and accountable processes. A society that pursues economic development with equity, environmental sustainability and social justice.

But these visions have been viewed as mere rhetoric, promises and slogans. Although we have many good laws and policies there is no real master plan at the national or agency level. Instead of adding to the multiplicity of formulated visions, we choose to zero in on very specific reforms guided by the priorities for investing in human capital and in strengthening our institutions. We note that due to the politicized, personalistic and self-serving nature of Philippine politics, there is hardly any serious turn-over, much less a culture of learning, from one's predecessors. It is in this spirit that this Do-able Blueprint is offered.

The Former Senior Government Officials (FSGO) – having individually acquired a high degree of substantive and practical competence in at least one sector, department or sphere important to the life of our people and having, at one time or another, operated at a zone where policy meets politics – collectively offers this blueprint. The document outlines some of the most critical and immediate reforms that can be undertaken by a new responsive government. The reform areas focus only on what the executive branch, on its own, can undertake within a one-year period. In a very real sense, the Do-able Blueprint offers self-imposed directions and constraints that a President and his/her Cabinet publicly adhere to and can be measured against. The choice of specific reforms take an open bias for issues that provide the base for other reforms, have a direct impact on the poor and are aimed at strengthening basic democratic institutions.

The Do-able Blueprint is by no means the final word on the matter and is obviously specific to many of the current practices that produce negative governance results. It is just the beginning of a process that will hopefully lead to greater detail and additional reform areas. It is also a checklist that can be adopted by or adapted by political leaders and organizations as well as assist in the process of choosing the next leaders. It can serve as a covenant between candidates and the electorate in order to exact accountability in the future. It must be emphasized that these reforms cannot be pursued under the political authority of an illegitimate or corrupt administration. Reforms of the right type, scale and scope can only truly happen in a political regime with a legitimate democratic mandate that has the capacity for and commitment to good governance.

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I. ACTIONS TO REDUCE THE BURDEN OF POVERTY AND DEVELOP OUR HUMAN RESOURCES

Health

- ◆ Universal PhilHealth coverage for all Filipinos. A valid NSO birth certificate shall entitle individuals, not otherwise covered by health insurance, to PhilHealth coverage/membership.
 - Immediately enroll all the 7 most depressed regions: ARMM, Zamboanga Peninsula (Region 9), Samar-Leyte (Region 8), Bicol (Region 5), MIMAROPA (Region 4-B), SOCSARGEN (Region 12), Agusan-Surigao (CARAGA)
 - Use part of the PhilHealth reserves to upgrade government hospitals and other health facilities in these 7 regions so that these can be accredited by PhilHealth
- ◆ Establish community pharmacies/Botika sa Barangay in all barangays, making available the 50 most essential medicines in generic form at all times.
- ◆ Place one midwife in every barangay as the frontline health service provider with special emphasis on maternal/child care and family planning information. Should midwives not be available, train one Barangay Health Worker in midwifery for one year.
- ◆ Department of Health hospitals:
 - Should be run like corporations, with a Board of Trustees that has real powers, composed of members from the community that is being served, based on existing models of public corporate hospitals, e.g., La Union Provincial Hospital, National Kidney and Transplant Institute.
 - Chiefs of Hospitals should have a fixed term and clear-cut qualifications, i.e., Master's Degree in Hospital Administration or Public Health and CSC Executive Eligibility
- ◆ Create an express lane for donations of medical equipment especially from overseas Filipinos.
- ◆ Issue an Executive Order compelling state universities and colleges to create a mechanism compelling all their graduating medical practitioners to serve the country, specifically in rural areas, for a minimum of one year.

Basic Education

- ◆ Issue an Executive Order declaring a categorical national policy on the medium of instruction consistent with DepEd DO 74 "Institutionalizing Mother Tongue-Based Multi-Lingual Education" pursuant to the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda. This is based on historically established research evidence that the native/local/mother/ child's language is the best medium of learning especially in Grades 1-3 for children to achieve mastery of literacy skills before introducing Filipino in Grade 2 and English in Grade 3. Mobilize resources for mother tongue instruction.

- ◆ Declare a policy that provides two additional years in school – Grade 7 and 5th year High School – to align Philippine education with internationally accepted standards and make high school graduates employable without the need for a college degree.
 - In the interim, the private sector may support this policy by agreeing on a hiring policy that requires twelve years of education.
- ◆ The Department of Education (DepEd) should be clearly designated as the lead agency and the DepEd Secretary as the coordinator and head of the chain of command for all education concerns.
 - The National Coordinating Council for Education (NCCE) should be immediately convened with the DepEd Secretary appointed as its head
 - The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) should operate as attached agencies of the DepEd – for purposes of coordination and not in terms of administrative oversight – and should, as per the laws creating them, remain as sub-cabinet positions
- ◆ Rationalize elementary and high school achievement testing by investing in a body independent of the DepEd that will regularly evaluate student learning based on well-defined parameters and transparent methodologies in order to attain consistent compliance with basic standards across the country.
- ◆ Address the perennial textbook problem.
 - Ensure textbook approvals within one year
 - Vetting should be done by subject matter for all grades
 - Ensure that new textbooks will be error-free
 - Printing, based on allotted budget, should cover all students in a grade level rather than the current practice that results in students in each grade level using different textbooks
- ◆ Designate a full-time task force within DepEd to review teachers' involvement in non-teaching related activities like elections, rice distribution, health projects, etc., with the end in view of recommending clear-cut policies to relieve teachers of such responsibilities.

Social Welfare

- ◆ Direct the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and other agencies concerned with socio-economic development, such as the Departments of Agriculture, Trade and Industry, and Environment and Natural Resources, to design and institute a simple, transparent, verifiable and sustainable system for targeting the poor. Encourage local governments to institute and maintain the same transparent and verifiable targeting system.
 - Review and revise or replace the current system for identifying and verifying the bottom poor, to eliminate the potential politicizing of the system, which creates further

- inequities and marginalization
 - The system must also have the built-in capacity to regularly monitor improvements among the targeted beneficiaries
- ◆ Instruct NEDA to formulate and annually report measures for economic development that quantify progress achieved in equity, equality of opportunity and quality of life of the population in addition to the standard quarterly growth in GDP and GNP.
- ◆ Greater effort must be exerted to get all children ready for formal education through a variety of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) interventions in homes, communities or institutions.
 - Expand the training of day care workers through a partnership between DSWD and a wide range of educational institutions and non-government organizations
 - Address the perennial problem of the politicization of the appointments of day care workers by creating a mechanism, together with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and Civil Service Commission (CSC), that will regularize the appointments of day care workers who have undergone training
 - Initiate a proposal to rationalize the regulatory system for ECCD in both the public and private sector so as to ensure that minimum standards are met

Higher Education

- ◆ Protect students and their parents from spending hard-earned money to pay for substandard education.
 - Colleges and universities offering professional degrees (i.e., teachers, engineers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, accountants, etc.) that have had no passers in the respective licensure examinations over the past five years should not be allowed to accept incoming students for that particular course in the coming school year. Recognition of its program will be withdrawn by CHED
 - Using each licensure examinations' historical national passing rate as a benchmark, identify all colleges and universities whose passing rate falls below 50% of the national average. They shall be given a four-year period to show marked improvement measured annually
 - Publish the information on the record of schools by licensure examination for public awareness
- ◆ Address the proliferation of state universities and colleges (SUCs) and ensure the quality of instruction.
 - No new SUCs shall be approved
 - All SUCs should be required to review all its land/resources and rationalize and conduct study on becoming sustainable through their own means (no additional budget)

Agriculture and Agrarian Reform

- ◆ Direct LANDBANK of the Philippines to revert to its original social mandate to spur countryside development.
 - Ensure and increase the provision of direct credit assistance to small farmers, fisher folk and agrarian reform beneficiaries
 - Limit lending activities to agri-agra, SMEs and LGU financing of agriculture and fishery related projects
- ◆ The Department of Agriculture (DA) should prioritize the construction of productivity-enhancing infrastructure like communal irrigation systems and the improvement of farm-to-market roads.
- ◆ Hasten land tenure improvement by prioritizing the largest landholdings where would-be beneficiaries are organized, are asking for coverage and are prepared to work with each other to develop their farms.
- ◆ Improve the delivery of agrarian justice by resolving agrarian cases and legal issues faster.
 - Restore the “flashpoint” system, which allows the Secretary and Operations Undersecretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to specify which agrarian cases shall be resolved within 30 days. These would include cases where a threat of violence exists as well as other high profile problems
 - Develop a farmer paralegal formation and development system together with alternative legal groups in order to help farmers defend their interests more effectively and reduce cases to be submitted to administrators and adjudicators for resolution

Environment

- ◆ Delineate the final forest line in order to arrest the further decline of forest cover and use this as a concrete basis for planning and programs.
 - Invest in the Community-Based Forest Management Program to cover community organizing and invest public infrastructure funding in basic community infrastructure such as all-weather roads, potable water and renewable energy to support local resource-based enterprises and livelihood
 - Allocate a budget for satellite imagery and maps that should be made accessible to academic institutions and non-government organizations for study and planning
- ◆ Complete and integrate the geo-climatic hazard map for the whole country with a detailed assessment of priority vulnerable areas and make these maps available for academic institutions, non-government organizations and local governments to plan and establish community-based disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation programs.
- ◆ Complete the delineation and mapping of the 15-kilometer-zone municipal waters, as mandated by the Fisheries Code of 1998 (RA 8550), to empower local governments to protect and conserve their marine and fresh aquatic resources from overfishing and destruction.

- Invest adequately and provide incentives for local government units (LGUs) to invest in Community Resource Management Programs and Marine and Mangrove Protected Areas, strategies that have already been proven to both conserve and provide alternative livelihoods
- Priority marine areas will include the rich fishing grounds (such as the Visayan Sea, Sulu Sea, Northern Palawan, Danajon Reef), and the major bays and gulfs (such as Manila Bay, Lingayen Gulf, Sarangani Bay and Illana Bay); and priority freshwater lakes (Laguna, Taal, Lanao and Mainit Lakes)
- ◆ Withhold all pending and highly questionable mining permits and claims and implement transparent processes in acquiring mining permits (including exploration). Strengthen the regulatory mechanism to ensure continuing compliance with all plans and commitments after permits have been granted.

Infrastructure and Housing

- ◆ Develop and publicize a typology of roads and other infrastructure and come up with benchmark figures (minimum and maximum) per typology that will automatically serve as the minimum, maximum cost for different kinds of roads.
 - Determine benchmark costs per kilometer of road according to typographic qualification such that any project in excess of these benchmarks shall go through an automatic review
 - Study the World Bank report on the NRIMP with the end in view of plugging the loopholes that allow corruption to exist
 - Formulate a citizen's handbook on infrastructure that provides for easy steps in checking on the quality and integrity of infrastructure projects
- ◆ Pilot/Showcase in Metro Manila an alternative way of urban renewal and in-city relocation that can be replicated in other areas. The concept of the "urban poor" must not be limited only to informal settlers but must include renters and sharers who belong in the same socio-economic situation. Variation options – in-city medium and high rise units and near city medium rise and row houses – must be made available to them through a variety of payment schemes.

Overseas Filipinos

- ◆ Audit the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration to rationalize the management of its funds, in terms of the benefits provided as well as how the funds are invested.
- ◆ Complete a global trading master plan that aims to establish worldwide trading posts that rely on the labor, knowledge and entrepreneurial spirit of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs).

II. ACTIONS TO REBUILD PEOPLE’S TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT AND STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Budget

- ◆ Ensure transparency in budget processes through an open information system and information flow.
 - Package budget information for the media, especially the local media
 - Details of all lump sum disbursements should be posted in the DBM web site
 - Immediately formulate a self-imposed set of conditions for the release of appropriations charged against “unprogrammed” funds so as to eliminate abuse
- ◆ In principle, there should be no pork barrel. Until such time that the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) is abolished, there should be no selective releases. The policy should be proportional releases to all districts so that the President cannot use the PDAF as a bargaining chip especially with members of the House of Representatives.
- ◆ Serious implementation of Results-Based Budgeting
 - Quantitative and qualitative measures of agency performance as well as compliance with findings of the Commission on Audit (COA) shall determine succeeding budget allocations
 - Directly link the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Performance Management System-Office Performance Evaluation System (PMS-OPES) with the DBM Organizational Performance Indicator Framework (OPIF)
- ◆ Preparatory to the passage of a law, the President shall create a Presidential Select Committee to provide oversight over all lump sum disbursements (PDAF, contingency, calamity, AFMA, intelligence and confidential funds). The Committee shall be composed of bi-partisan members of the legislature, the private sector and civil society members who shall be bound by an Oath of Confidentiality.

Bureaucracy

- ◆ Respect and strengthen the career service.
 - Incumbent Senators should pass the Senate version of approved House Bill 3956 “An Act Establishing the Career Executive System” which rationalizes and limits the appointing powers of the President. If this is not passed:
 - Strictly enforce the qualification standards, especially on eligibility
 - Ensure that at least 50% of Undersecretaries and Assistant Secretaries are career personnel
 - Delegate appointing authority to positions below Assistant Secretary to Cabinet Secretaries
 - Ensure the structural integrity of agencies by abiding by the legally provided plantilla

- positions, including those in the Office of the President
 - Nomenclatures like Presidential Adviser, Presidential Consultant and Presidential Assistant should be used sparingly and should have no line functions
 - Stop the practices that undermine professionalism in the bureaucracy like “desire letters” and appointments in an “acting” capacity
- ◆ Accountability in Cabinet and sub-Cabinet Presidential appointments
 - Public vetting of Cabinet appointments focused on integrity
 - Create a structure similar to the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) to recommend appointments to Constitutional bodies and sub-Cabinet positions in government financial institutions (GFIs) and government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) as well as critical agencies like PMS, CHED, TESDA, OWWA, POEA, CESB, NCCA, NCRFW, CWC, etc.
- ◆ Professionalize the Foreign Service by scrupulously observing, as a minimum, the provisions of the Philippine Foreign Service Act.
 - Ensure that 80% of ambassadors are qualified career ministers
 - No ambassadorial ranks shall be given apart from those already provided for in the plantilla
 - Strictly follow the specified tours of duty of foreign service personnel
 - Labor, military, social welfare, trade and other attaches shall be under the administrative supervision of the respective ambassadors in each country
- ◆ Energize the bureaucracy by requiring all heads of agency to seriously institute the following procedures:
 - An effective and measurable performance management system to be approved by the Civil Service Commission (CSC)
 - Explain the key reform areas to all personnel so that each one can situate their respective functions within the organizational goals and find meaning in the work that they do

Organizational Structure

- ◆ Streamlining should begin with the Office of the President.
 - Only one Cabinet-level position in the Office of the President, the Executive Secretary, to avoid too many power centers and overlapping mandates
 - Whenever it is deemed necessary to create new offices and positions, the President shall commit to provide detailed mandates and functions and prepare job descriptions and terms and conditions of employment and send these to the CSC for advise
- ◆ Review the recommendations of the defunct Presidential Committee on Effective Governance (PCEG).
 - Abolish the agencies identified as redundant
 - Seriously implement EO 366 (Rationalization Plan)

- Abolish GOCCs that have outlived their usefulness
- ◆ Create a Government Reorganization Task Force to work in coordination with CSC and DBM with the two-fold task of crafting a government reorganization bill for recommendation to Congress.
- ◆ Strengthen the roles of agencies with cross-cutting concerns like the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), and the National Commission on Culture and the Arts (NCCA) by providing each with the powers to formulate policies and promulgate enforceable orders the violation of which can become the subject of administrative sanctions through any of the existing Constitutional bodies like the CSC, COA and the Office of the Ombudsman.
- ◆ Constitute a Presidential Task Force with a six-month mandate to review whether the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) is fulfilling its role on the welfare of government employees with special attention on the apparent disparity between member benefits and actual collections.
- ◆ Review the need for and viability of GOCCs and GFIs by assessing the relevance of their respective mandates, their actual performance and their profitability including exemption from the Salary Standardization Law.

Transparency Mechanisms

- ◆ Require all non-career Cabinet and sub-Cabinet appointees to accomplish a waiver of the Bank Secrecy Law.
- ◆ A Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth should be made public upon the filing of candidacy especially for the positions of President and Vice President.
- ◆ All projects supported by public funds, especially infrastructure, should not waste resources in signage that attribute the project to the President, members of the Cabinet or legislators.
- ◆ Create clear-cut and hassle-free procedures for citizens to monitor all government projects and report their feedback through the most accessible means like SMS/text messaging and the internet.
- ◆ Create a task force to review the viability of all government subsidies and incentives.

III. ACTIONS TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS TO URGENT PROBLEMS

Comprehensive solutions based on serious analysis and planning are required for some of the country's gravest problems. Instead of stop-gap and uncoordinated projects, well-chosen experts shall be asked to constitute full-time 5-7 person task forces. These task forces shall be set up for a six-month period with the mandate to come up with new thinking and fresh solutions that outline practicable steps to take in addressing the following issues:

Corruption

The increasing use of public power for private gain has marked the past decade. Although having a new President and Cabinet members who are acknowledged for their personal integrity will go a long way to retard corruption, it is necessary to formulate an anti-corruption master plan that can be vigorously pursued. A key component of this is the simplification and rationalization of the tax system for equity and ease of compliance by every citizen.

Human Rights

Respect for human rights is a cornerstone of a vibrant democracy. The focus should be both on the alarming use of state power against government critics through the military and police but also on instilling a rights-based approach to development.

Peace

The continuing hostilities with the MILF and the CPP-NPA-NDF require an enduring solution, which cannot be military in nature. While it is important that the parties return to the negotiating table, it is equally important to ensure that non-armed stakeholders be an integral part of the solution.

Population and Migration

The increase in population and the movement of people both internal to the country as well as overseas are critical factors in national development planning. The costs and benefits of population increase and migration, both social and economic, must be analyzed and reconciled with varying, often emotional and opposing, perspectives in order to formulate clear-cut policies.

Culture and Heritage

Culture and heritage – both tangible and intangible, as expressed in architecture, literature, visual arts, film, theater, music, dance, food, rituals and lifestyles, including those of indigenous peoples – constitute the soul of the nation, the source of national pride and identity and the repository of a people's values and aspirations. Unfortunately, these have been sorely neglected in the consuming concern for economic development. There must be a categorical recognition of their invaluable role in national development and concrete steps must be taken to mainstream culture and history in governance.