WAS GOOD GOVERNANCE THE REAL LOSER IN THE 2010 ELECTIONS?

By

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Governance has been a development issue for some time now. In fact, some argue that disparity in development, more specifically, attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is an issue of governance. In the May 2010 presidential elections, good governance was the centerpiece of the platform on which President Benigno Simeon C. Aquino ran and won very convincingly. But at the local level, was good governance rewarded by voters, or did bad governance make for good politics?

Towards informing policy debate on governance, statistics have been generated and disseminated by both the private and public sectors, nationally as well as internationally. Based on internationally gathered governance statistics, the Philippines ranks poorly. According to the World Economic Forum, the competitiveness ranking of the Philippines dived from 71st in 2008 to 87th in 2009 out of 133 countries. Based on the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, the country’s ranking was 141st in 2008 and 139th in 2009 out of 180 countries. At the local level, perception-based surveys likewise paint a gloomy picture of governance in the country. Questions have been raised however, on the reliability, validity and accuracy of these governance statistics.

Recognizing the importance for statistical offices to be relevant and responsive to the data needs of users, the NSCB has undertaken a number of initiatives to contribute to the knowledge database on governance. The NSCB efforts started with the Philippine involvement in the promotion of the measurement of democracy, human rights and governance under the PARIS21 METAGORA project and with a paper presented in the 2004 National Convention on Statistics (NCS) that provided an integrated ranking of the provinces based on a Good Governance Index (GGI) that incorporates the aspects of economic, political and administrative governance. In the 2007 NCS, a sequel was presented that improved on the GGI and added a Voters’ Index that assessed whether voters recognized in the 2007 elections good governance of provincial governors based on the GGI. Modified versions of these papers have been presented in various international fora.

Results of computations of the Voters’ Index show that bad governance is not necessarily rejected by voters. Without implying that the GGI is a perfectly valid instrument to measure governance, there is an obvious need to continue to pursue the agenda of providing statistics that not only can allow the citizens to discriminate between good and bad governance but also to assess whether good governance is rewarded and bad governance punished.

1 Secretary General, Statistical Coordination VI, Information Technology Officer II, Statistical Coordination Officer II, and Statistical Coordination Officers I, respectively, of the National Statistical Coordination Board. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSCB.

2 PARIS21 stands for Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. The Philippine participation in the project was spearheaded by the Commission on Human Rights with the cooperation of local partners including the NSCB and other statistical agencies. The principal author currently sits on the PARIS21 Board and on its Executive Committee.

3 The paper entitled “The Best and Worst Provinces in the Philippines: What Happened to their Leaders in the 2004 Elections?” was jointly written by Romulo A. Virola, Severa B. De Costo, Joseph M. Addawae and Leonor G. Reyes.
This paper therefore continues the series of NCS papers on governance. It was spurred by the request of participants during the Forum of the Mayors’ Development Center, Inc. on 17 April 2007 when the provincial GGI was presented, to extend the GGI to the municipality level. Thus, the paper also deals with the issue of extending the GGI at the municipality/city level, and using the latest available data, assesses its impact during the 2010 elections.

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