Discussion Highlights

High-Level Policy Dialogue on Meeting the 2030 Global Agenda Pledge to Leave No One Behind in the Philippines

Expanding and deepening the relevance and effectiveness of higher education institutions for eradicating poverty at the local level

Co-hosted by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies and the United Nations Development Programme, Philippines | April 10 2018, 9am – 330pm | PIDS, Quezon City

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A. Summary of Discussion

There is recognition of the unique role of higher education institutions (HEIs) in first, identifying the poor, second understanding the culture of poverty, and third finding solutions to address poverty. HEIs, especially those outside of Metro Manila, are embedded and are part of local communities, giving them the ability to point out the nuances of poverty and the socio-political and cultural issues that occasion it.

HEIs however find that poverty data are insufficient, with most data at national level, and not disaggregated at subnational level. In cases where data exist, HEIs find that government do not make them available to the public, and do not share them with other agencies.

As to the type of poverty data and poverty interventions, HEIs observe that there are very few programs that address extreme poverty. Some are discrete programs, for example, on health and education, which lack integration and by themselves, cannot eradicate poverty. There is a call as well to examine the drivers of the research agenda, to look into what will pull people down, for example, the threats of climate change, instead of what will pull people up, for example, jobs.

Even with this awareness of research gaps, HEIs cannot always respond to the dearth in knowledge. National agencies and donors often impose research directions and focus that divert HEIs from pursuing more relevant research areas and innovating in their research. There is pressure to engage in science and technology research which is required to attain

and maintain international academic ranking, and also to obtain funding. HEIs recognize too that capacity to undertake research is uneven, with Manila initiating much of it.

When in fact the research is generated, the findings are not effectively shared with key audiences in government, either because there is no partnership with the local or national government or there is no platform for such partnership and knowledge exchange. Hence research is neither translated to policy nor does it inform programs or decisions of government.

Given these gaps, there is agreement that there needs to be stronger partnership and collaboration between HEIs, local and national government, civil society, and private sector. This can be in the form of a consortium, with continuing dialogue, a structure for coordination and knowledge exchange, a complementation of capacity across HEIs, and a mechanism for conveying research findings to key audiences so that they can inform policies and programs. There is agreement among HEIs that the UNDP can support such a consortium.

The environment where this consortium can operate has existing mechanisms and incentives, for example, the national government's open data policy and access to information, local government's seal of good governance, and the regional development councils. Nevertheless,

HEIs are seen as the braintrust in the ecosystem, providing research and analysis to meet local demand, while maintaining their independence. There is an explicit call to insulate research from political influence, and the consortium is one way of protecting the integrity of the research process and the individual researchers whom local politicians may attempt to influence. To enable them in their role in the ecosystem, there is a call for government to invest in research, and with development agencies to provide support as well.

[This summary captures the input of feedback of some 20 representatives from academe, government, civil society, and business.]

B. Welcome Remarks

Dr. Celia Reyes, President, Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS)

Theme of dialogue is in line with PIDS directions. PIDS has been working with HEI in the regions, which have the capacity and commitment to work in local communities. PIDS thinks this model is sustainable in generating and applying knowledge, to be used by CSOs and local government.

PIDS has policy work and research on MDGs and poverty.

PIDS hopes the dialogue becomes a continuing partnership with UNDP for knowledge exchange.

C. Reflections on eradicating poverty to ensure no one is left behind

Dr. Noel De Dios, President, Human Development Network (HDN)

Do/Can Universities have a role in local poverty alleviation

With emerging middle class and declining number of the poor, empathy may erode and a pro-poor policy agenda may be left behind.

Philippines has growth acceleration. Who are the left behind? We have a declining share of the poor, with an increasing middle class. Implication is a possible erosion of empathy, people may become apathetic while in their fairly comfortable condition. This has implication on policy. And a pro-poor agenda might be 'left behind'.

Currently not a concern. But in the future, might a policy that leaves behind the poor be possible? Take the case of HEIs.

HEIs are constrained by their own organization and their compartmentalization within. They are clustered in disciplines or fields of specialization. They are constrained by time and budget.

Aspirations of HEIs are cosmopolitan. Premium is given to work that has universal application or significance. There is compartmentalization of disciplines, which hinders the approach to complex problems. Problems can't be compartmentalized in real life. But in the academe, they are organized by discipline.

HEIs already see themselves as agents of social mobility. Education will give a person a chance in society. But do HEIs have to do anything different? HEIs are already fulfilling their social role. In effect, there's some kind of sluggishness to move to a different environment, like poverty reduction.

The situation is complicated for HEIs because their time for research is predetermined, very little time for research on poverty and poverty alleviation. Also hindered by budget considerations.

To be competitive in the international scene, HEIs must generate leading edge research, with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This focus does not leave much room for HEIs to innovate and venture into poverty research.

For higher level HEIs, the push is toward leading edge research, an emphasis on STEM and higher quality, with international recognition. With this pressure, universities are pushed to do more research--to be novel and to experiment at the leading edge and at the same time fulfill their role as university.

The mantra for HEIs in upper middle countries is to move to STEM, with more integration into the mainstream of research.

There is also a very uneven distribution of capacity among HEIs to do poverty research.

Low level of research, largely because of uneven distribution of talent and intellectual pool among HEIs in the country.

But HEIs should care about poverty alleviation. Because HEIs are founded on the upliftment of human condition.

Why should HEIs do it, why care. If the national agenda changes, HEIs might be caring less and less.

But HEIs should. Because HEIs are founded on upliftment of human condition.

Active engagement can be an active pedagogical and research method. To do that, we might need a great deal of talent to innovate.

HEIs are in the communities, embedded and are part of the communities, and therefore are best positioned to point to us where the pockets of poverty are.

HEIs having access to communities is like having own datasets.

Looking at a complex problem may serve as the motivation and vehicle, to foster cross disciplinary collaboration in the university.

It has always been a problem for HEIs to reach out to the outside. The complaint is that HEIs don't link up enough with business. That research is not useful to business. But poverty research can be a vehicle for institutional partnerships. Can expand university influence and create a network. Therefore there is a moral and social imperative to be engaged in poverty research.

There are good examples.

Poverty Action Lab of MIT – randomized controlled trials. Gave birth to an NGO that generates data applied in antipoverty interventions. Other examples in Columbia U, etc. (Refer to de Dios' slide presentation)

What HEIs can do

Integrare poverty research in mainstream of academe.

Align admissions, scholarships, mentoring

Have knowledge entrepreneurs, leaders, do state of the art research. Be open to networking and collaboration.

Dr. Celia Reyes, President, Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS)

Leaving No One Behind: Reducing Inequality of Opportunities

PIDS research on access to education of ethnic groups shows some research areas that HEIs can take on. For example, PIDS found that some ethnic groups have lower school participation rate than others. This is a topic that can best be studied by an HEI located in a community rather than a think-tank in Manila. As well, HEIs are in a better position to find out what interventions can be done.

Poverty incidence lowest in NCR, highest in ARMM. Country hasn't made significant progress in reducing inequality.

Philippines has 182 ethnic groups. Majority of Filipinos are neither Muslims nor IPs; non-Muslim IPs are 9%; Muslims are 6%. Non-Muslim, non-IPs dominate the population in all regions, except ARMM & CAR. School participation among younger children increased, decreased among older cohort. Muslim ethnic groups have lowest school participation rate. Total inequality for years of schooling and literacy went down from 2000 to 2010. Years of schooling and literacy rate of Filipinos had generally improved. (Refer to Reyes' slide presentation)

This is one area where HEIs can come in. Why are some ethnic groups not finishing school, or why do they have lower school participation rate and literacy rate. HEIs outside Manila are in better position to take on this research gap

HEIs can generate disaggregated data, because currently, the Philippine Statistical Authority provides largely national data. If you want to know who are left behind, you need these data.

HEIs can profile the community, generate disaggregated data at local level, barangay/village level. Find out disparities

HEIs can work with local government to use data to inform local policies and programs.

Data are underutilized because of insufficient capacity of local government to use data to inform policies and programs.

HEIs can do monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation programs.

D. Discussion Part 1 – Plenary

Good practice cases for local and national partnerships with HEIs on poverty reduction

Facilitator: Dr. Toby Monsod, University of the Philippines, School of Economics

Policy and Institutional Framework

1. **We have an environment that occasions poverty**. The local economy does not generate opportunities for growth. In fact, 4Ps rewards poverty, because people get subsidy if they're poor.
2. **We have a narrow view of poverty.** Local conditions and national conditions are different. Girls go to school because they don't want to do house chores. Boys would rather play Dota (video game). In Mindanao, the only opportunity to get out of poverty is to win elections.
   National government imposes policies, but blind on where these policies are applied.
   Discrete education or health programs by themselves cannot solve poverty.
3. **There is a coordination problem**, especially in national government. Groups don't work together, programs are compartmentalized, few focus on addressing extreme poverty.
   35 government agencies have their own data, don't share data, don't work together
4. **Few programs address extreme poverty,** and if you add up investments in poverty interventions, they can actually address extreme poverty. Most interventions focus on health, education. But these discrete programs cannot alleviate extreme poverty. And most of them don't work together.
5. **Our laws don't empower local government and communities to address poverty.** The Local Government Code does not readily support implementation of the indigenous people's aw (IPRA). Local government structure does not complement nor allow IP governance structure, such as the elections.

Barangay local government units are not empowered, no allocation for education in IRA.

6. **National policies are often impositions on local universities.** HEIs are made to do what Manila wants, with national government impositions. We want to produce teachers in the realities of the local community, but national government wants to instead make teachers study extraneous topics for x number of hours.

Gaps

7. **Need data**
   Need census to show where the poor are, especially in Mindanao. ARMM has no data.
   In agriculture, we need this very much, who are the upland and lowland farmers.

8. **Need budget to generate data**
   An example: nutrition data study is funded by international development agencies, but is that way of funding research sustainable? Country should invest in data.

9. **Need to improve capacity for research among HEIs**
   We need to replenish our pool of research professionals. Pool is not being replaced, with generation of USAID scholars from the 80s retiring and USAID not funding it anymore.
   Insufficient capacity for research in local universities. Also, research driven by stakeholders (funders?). There are flavors of the month: peace, violent extremism.

10. **Need to look into the driver of our research agenda**
    We have real, compelling realities, such as climate change and the vulnerabilities of people and communities. We need to shift our view to what will pull people down, instead of what will pull people up. In climate, for example, global warming. We need data here. What is the dearth in data, there's very little that's been produced by local scientists. The House helped form the special committee on climate change. Adding the poverty situation in Samar, because unless this is addressed, then poverty situation will worsen.

11. **Need to make knowledge available and communicate research to communities and local government**
    Community extension programs of HEIs need to be strengthened. These programs will help make knowledge accessible to people.
    Not many have the capacity to communicate the research effectively. HEIs are researchers but not all can communicate.

Role of HEIs

12. **Private sector needs HEI research to give evidence and provide directions**
    Private sector's interest in job generation is not because it merely wants to fill up factories with workers but jobs are drivers of growth.
    Solutions to poverty are in the unopened PDFs (quoting Washingtong Post or WSJ?), so private sector is very much interested in what HEIs can offer, their studies.
    HEIs are asked to meet existing market demand, but shouldn't HEIs be suppliers of capacity that will generate demand. You want HEIs to produce graduates who meet market demand, instead of suppliers of new capacities.

13. **HEIs can collaborate among themselves to complement capacities**
    An example is the knowledge exchange partnership of the World Bank with universities or think tanks.
    Some HEIs are partnering with Manila-based universities.
14. **HEIs can use the local participatory mechanisms in local government**
    There are participatory mechanisms for civil society, but underutilized, for example, in local development councils.
15. **HEIs can supply national government with research for policy making**
    HEIs can undertake research with both economic and social focus.

E. Synthesis of Discussion Part 1

Toby Monsod, Facilitator

What do we expect of HEIs? Two levels. What does national expect, what does local expect.

There could be overbearing or blind impositions from national. There are local research agenda. The question is, should there even be a contention there

On issue of data and the statistical ecosystem. Are there data requirements in local level not met by national, and vice versa

There are data but not shared. Can HEIs help local government who may have data, but cannot or do not convert data to information

Who is left behind, or what can bring the whole country down. Is there a niche for academe for long term studies

There are local pathways for leaving no one behind. Pathways are impeded, PDFs are not read, some HEIs can't communicate their research

Also should HEIs scale up or scale down on their work. There is a call for visibility for HEIs and autonomy to do things, not dictated by national government and other bodies.

F. Discussion Part 2 – Small group discussions and feedback

Questions:

Identifying opportunities and constraints for strengthening partnerships between HEIs and stakeholders at the local and national level to ensure no one is left behind

What are the opportunities for strengthening partnerships between your organizations/agency and other stakeholders at the local and national levels to ensure no one is left behind

What are the major constraints to realizing these opportunities

What solutions are needed to respond to the identified constraints

Opportunities

- **Resources and programs.** These are human and material resources. For example, there are HEIs that are part of regional development councils

- **Availability of data.** With Open Data Policy, there are data that can be used. Also CSOs have some data used in monitoring government performance. These data can be validated.
- **Performance incentives in local government**. There are performance grants like Seal of Local Good Governance that qualify LGUs to apply for additional fund
- **Incentives for HEIs** in terms of budget support, possibly from CHED or DOST. There are as well publication incentives.
- **Regional development councils** would be a good platform to embed research in planning and maybe even have budget allocated for research
- **Congress** has key role in coordinating poverty alleviation efforts
- **Social engagement of HEIs** in research, and service learning (community service or students). This gives needed human resource and budget to engage with community. This can be sustained, can be problem-based extension of the university
- **Opportunity to make local development planning process more participatory.** HEIs can help in local planning, whether participatory or in actual provision of data or evidence as well as facilitators and maybe even via technical assistance
- **PDP is clearer on how planning and budgeting can happen**, and therefore a good guide

Constraints

- **Inadequate resources**
- **Capacity gaps**, especially in engaging with local governments
- **Teaching overload**
- While data are available, need is for **disaggregated data**
- With respect to performance, poor local governance and existence of corruption, traditional politics, questions of **transparency and lack of trust**
- Regional development councils, if they have the money, could have a **politicized** way of giving research grant
- **Politicians meddle** with research process
- **LGUs may need help in planning**, perhaps universities can capacitate LGUs
- **Need to provide LGUs with actual data**, so that discussions are not just anecdotal
- Distinction between state universities and private HEIs. **SUCs are very politicized.** The need to provide the distance and independence for SUCs.
- **No budget for research**. DOST-type of research grants are available, but wouldn't that make focus of poverty research too much on the science-technical side
- There are **lots of research available**. Perhaps make the inventory available.
- **Translate research to policy or program,** this is the bigger challenge

Solutions

- **More funding**
- **Partnership** between national and local universities
- **Action research** funding
- Convene a **multidisciplinary team** of antipoverty researchers
- Create **non-trapo politicians,** breed local politicians
- Improve **incentive schemes**, finding that balance between teaching and research

- Create a **council of HEIs on a national level**, SUCs and private. Which is critcial because it will be the integrator for planning. It becomes the braintrust of LGUs to offer solutions to different agencies, so the agencies can use them in actual plans and programs
- Link to **national network**, like World Bank's Knowledge for Development Community (KDCs). Independence is needed
- HEIs can **pilot test programs**, and recommend policies
- There is a need to **disseminate data**, beyond what is captured
- Come up with **common research agenda**

G. Synthesis of Discussion 2

Andrew Parker, UNDP

- There is a focus on local circumstances, the centrality of locality.
- There is focus as well on the use autonomy to go into partnerships
- There is a need to look at local circumstances to move into acquiring a lens for looking for who is left behind. The interventions need to go beyond sectoral perspectives
- What kind of data do we need to have a more informed discussion. That may vary from data collection efforts of national agencies. Using CBMS etc. And how that is brought into the discussion.
- What is the role or capacities for HEIs

H. Closing Remarks

Titon Mitra, UNDP

Not just who is left behind, but also how that gap is bridged, or closed. How to measure the rate of progress.

Not just changes in numbers, but measure the process of inclusion

We can get caught up in data, but what are the quick measures that can help us respond

How to bring in HEIs: Create a council or consortium of HEIs. Localized poverty action, moving to scale. Knowledge platform, accessibility, translated to something usable

I. Participants

21 participants in all, representing academe, government, private sector, civil society organizations, and international development partners. Participants are high-level officials, with good representation from Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao; public and private sectors; and thematic focus, including macroeconomy, agriculture, environment, governance, and competitiveness. From government, there are representatives from the local government, legislature, research and policy making.

Additional 10 participants from the organizing teams of UNDP and PIDS.

Academe (9 participants: 4 from Luzon, 2 from Visayas, 3 from Mindanao; representing 3 state universities and 4 private)

1. Noel De Dios– President, Human Development Network
2. Francisco Magno – Director, Jesse M. Robredo Institute of Governance
3. Br. Armin Luistro – President, National Mission Council of De La Salle Philippines
4. Toby Monsod – Professor, University of the Philippines - School of Economics (facilitator)
5. Alice Ferrer   - Former (Vice Chancellor for Planning and Development) University of the Philippines – Visayas
6. Ben Malayang III – President, Siliman University
7. Acram Latiph - Acting Executive Director, Institute for Peace and Development in Mindanao
8. Shiela Algabre - Vice President for Administration and Extension and Executive Assistant to the President, Notre Dame University
9. Roel Ravanera - Vice President for Social Development, Xavier University

Government (7 participants: 1 from research, 1 legislature, 2 local government, 3 policy making; of which 3 from Luzon, 1 from Visayas, 1 Mindanao)

10. Celia Reyes – President, Philippine Institute of Development Studies
11. Manuel Aquino - Executive Director, Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (CPBRD)
12. Edgardo Aranjuez III - Chief Economic Development Specialist, National Economic Development Authority
13. Meylene Rosales - Assistant Regional Director, NEDA-Region VIII (Leyte)
14. Felicidad Rabe - Senior Economic Specialist, NEDA-Region XI (Davao)
15. Willie Villarama – Bulacan, Former Governor and Congressman
16. Franklin Quijano – Former Mayor, Iligan

CSO

17. Renato Redentor Constantino - Executive Director, Institute of Climate and Sustainable Cities
18. Darwin Mariano - Executive Director, Movement for Good Governance
19. Gina Estipona - Lead Coordinator - Education Cluster, Association of Foundations

International Organization

20. Bruce Tolentino - Director General, International Rice Research Institute

Private Sector

21. Coco Alcuaz - Executive Director, Programs and Projects Unit Director, Makati Business Club

PIDS-UNDP

22. Titon Mitra - Country Director, UNDP
23. Andrew Parker - Senior Advisor, UNDP
24. Maria Luisa Jolongbayan - MSU Team Leader, UNDP
25. Emmanuel Buendia - DG Team Leader, UNDP
26. Paolo Magnata - Junior Consultant, UNDP
27. Moira Enerva - Event Facilitator, UNDP
28. Rowena Ombao - Communications Associate, UNDP

29. Floradema Eleazar - Team Leader, Inclusive and Sustainable Development, UNDP
30. Sheila Siar - PIDS Focal
31. Rowena Taliping - PIDS Focal