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## **BBB program ‘not responsive’ to social infrastructure requirements, PIDS study shows**

By Cai Ordinario – January 5, 2021

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2021/01/05/bbb-program-not-responsive-to-social-infrastructure-requirements-pids-study-shows/>

The lack of social infrastructure projects in the government’s Build, Build, Build (BBB) program may affect the Duterte administration’s efforts to achieve its Philippine Development Plan (PDP) targets, according to the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).

In a study titled Review of the “Build, Build, Build” Program: Implications on the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022, PIDS Research Fellow Janet S. Cuenca reported that infrastructure projects, such as school buildings and health facilities were not included in the program.

Part of the PDP is to reduce gaps in basic infrastructure for human capital development. This, the PDP stated, aims to reduce inequality nationwide.

“The health-related projects identified to address gaps in basic infrastructure for human capital development were focused on construction and upgrading of health facilities nationwide under the Health Facilities Enhancement Program,” Cuenca said.

“The list of IFPs [Infrastructure Flagship Programs] as of August 19, 2020 does not contain major capital projects of this sort. In this sense, it is not responsive to the PDP targets for social infrastructure,” she added.

Cuenca noted that the latest IFP list only includes the proposed establishment of the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines (VIP), which has an estimated cost of about P500 million.

Based on the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), she said, the VIP will secure P284 million in fiscal year (FY) 2021 to purchase equipment and other needs for start-up research activities.

The proposed VIP, Cuenca added, still has a pending bill in the House of Representative and the Senate. It aims to study and develop vaccines on humans, animals and plants.

“No major capital projects address the PDP targets in the area of social infrastructure [e.g., school buildings and health facilities], and technology adoption and innovation. Thus, attainment of the relevant PDP targets will depend heavily on priority PAPs [Projects and Programs] in the PIP [Public Investment Program],” Cuenca said.

“The findings of the study are aimed at providing guidance in the formulation of future public policy relating to accelerating infrastructure development and also, in prioritization of infrastructure projects,” she added.

Based on the PDP target for 2022, the government needs to increase Barangay Health Stations (BHS) to 36,336 from 26,732 in 2017, while Rural Health Units (RHUs) should be raised to 5,700 by the end of the plan from 2,961 in 2017.

The PDP also targets to increase the number of polyclinics to 1,140 in 2022, from 300 in 2017. The plan also aims to increase the number of government hospital beds to 57,597 by next year from 38,607 in 2016.

In terms of classrooms, the government aimed to decrease the classroom student ratio from 1:34 in 2014 to 1:25 by 2022 for kindergarten while for junior high school, the target is to decrease to 1:40 in 2022 from 1:48 in 2014.

The PDP also aims to increase the proportion of public schools with adequate water and sanitation facilities to the total number of public schools.

For Primary or Kindergarten to Grade 6, the target is 98 percent in 2022 from 91 percent in 2014 while for Junior High School, the target is 100 percent in 2022 from 94 percent in 2014.