



PIDS urges strengthening of infra planning system

byCzeriza Valencia – January 20, 2018

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The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) is urging the government to strengthen the planning and programming system for infrastructure before going full steam ahead with the Build Build Build program.

In a statement, the stake think tank said the government needs to address the “particularly low efficiency rate of public transport spending and the high levels of corruption” before it boosts infrastructure spending.

PIDS said while reforms have been made to strengthen oversight agencies with respect to policy coordination, implementing agencies suffer from weaknesses in planning and programming for infrastructure projects.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), for instance, still does not have an estimate of the manpower necessary for the Build Build Build program.

“The DPWH should already project the number of new engineers it needs and submit a funding proposal to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) if it wants to keep up with the burgeoning demands of the Build, Build, Build program,” the think tank said.

The Department of Transportation (DOTr), it added, still relies heavily on external consultants for project analysis as at present, it does not have in-house competence for such.

Agencies also suffer from lack of skilled manpower for project preparation and documentation.

“Currently, budget resources and costs need to be planned over multiple years because of the multiyear nature of infrastructure projects. However, specialized skills which are crucially needed to evaluate projects and manage their implementation are lacking for both the oversight and implementing agencies,” said PIDS.

PIDS said, however, that these can be addressed by intensifying training at all levels of government and establishing tie-up arrangements with think tanks and research institutes similar to what Chile, Norway, and Ireland are doing.

It also urged the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) to create a “publicly accessible databank” for completed projects to provide input to policy research on lessons learned from past project management experience. These lessons can be used for efficient planning moving forward.