



**Philippine Institute for Development Studies**  
*Surian sa mga Pag-aaral Pangkaunlaran ng Pilipinas*

## What Does ASEAN Mean to ASEAN Peoples? (The Philippine Case)

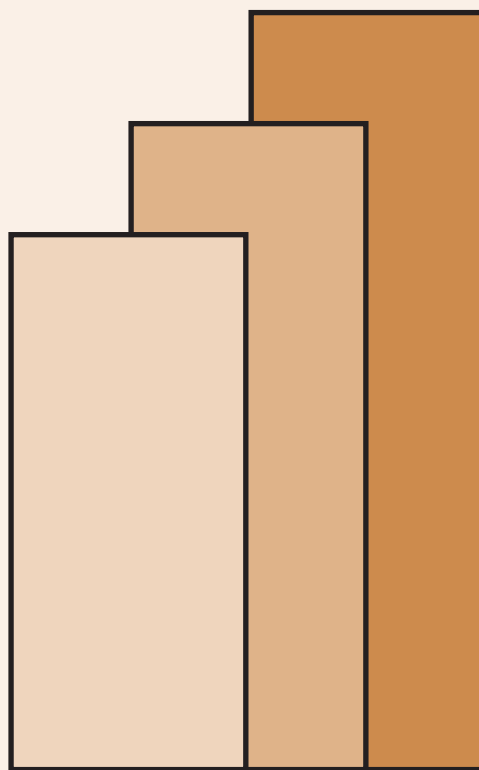
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and Gilberto M. Llanto*

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# What does ASEAN mean to ASEAN peoples<sup>1</sup>?

(The Philippine Case)

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Philippine Institute for Development Studies

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## Abstract

Using a purposive online and paper-based survey and focus group discussions with select target groups, this study makes inferences about the level of awareness of the Filipino people on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), their perceived problems confronting the Philippines and ASEAN, and their aspirations, concerns, and hopes for the association. It reveals moderate familiarity about ASEAN as well as modest identification as ASEAN citizens, which improves with age and experience. There is also a general sentiment that Philippine membership of the association is beneficial for the country, albeit only moderate as well. Media coverage on ASEAN is also perceived to be inadequate. The study validates the most immediate concerns being faced by the Philippines today, notably affordable internet connections, poverty, corruption, agriculture and food security, and energy provision and price. The most pressing regional-level concerns are climate change and natural disasters, territorial and maritime disputes, trade and investment issues, agriculture and food security, and income disparity and social inequality. These reflect the priorities that ASEAN leaders should focus on in the immediate future to remain relevant and responsive to the needs of ASEAN peoples. Aspirations are high for ASEAN to realize its integration agenda and to play an active role in global negotiations and forums and for its member-states to achieve inclusive economic prosperity. How to realize these aspirations rests in part on the ability of its member-states to work harmoniously with one another and contribute actively toward the realization of the ASEAN Community Vision. For its part, ASEAN has to provide a strong leadership role in integrating its member-states, which individually are also confronted by a host of problems. As ASEAN's coordinating body, its Secretariat needs to strengthen its capability so it can provide more effective technical support to the association in meeting its goals and aspirations.

## Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a grouping or coalition of 10 member-states in Southeast Asia to foster regional cooperation. Formed on August 8, 1967 with Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand as founding members, ASEAN has grown over the years with the joining of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.

Based on the Bangkok Declaration of 1967, the association aims to: promote economic growth, social progress and cultural progress in the region through joint endeavors; foster regional peace and security; encourage active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields; promote partnership in the development of agriculture and industries, trade, and transportation and communication facilities within the region; promote Southeast Asian studies; and maintain "close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves".<sup>3</sup>

A turning point in ASEAN's history and considered a major milestone in the regional integration of ASEAN was the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. The ASEAN Community is composed of three pillars: the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, and the ASEAN Political-Security Community.

Each pillar has its own blueprint. The AEC Blueprint, adopted by the ASEAN Leaders in November 2015, forms part of a general master plan called "ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together" that is geared toward the realization of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025. The said concept envisages, among others:

"a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centered ASEAN Community, where our peoples enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, higher quality of life and the benefits of community building, reinforcing our sense of togetherness and common identity, guided by the purposes and principles of the ASEAN Charter...a peaceful, stable and resilient Community with enhanced capacity to respond effectively to challenges, and ASEAN as an outward-looking region within a global community of nations, while maintaining ASEAN centrality...a vibrant, sustainable and highly integrated economies, enhanced ASEAN Connectivity as well as strengthened efforts in narrowing the development gap..." (ASEAN Secretariat 2015).

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<sup>3</sup> <http://asean.org/the-asean-declaration-bangkok-declaration-bangkok-8-august-1967/> (accessed on November 10, 2016).

As ASEAN approaches its 50<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary in 2017, it is timely to ascertain public perception of the association to determine the gaps and areas for improvement. The region and the world when ASEAN was born 50 years ago are very much different to what they are now. ASEAN should evolve with and adapt to the times and must remain relevant and responsive to the needs of its peoples.

In this regard, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) was commissioned by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) to carry out a research project as part of the “ASEAN at 50: Retrospectives and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance and Future of ASEAN” project. The research is aimed at making inferences about the level of awareness of the Filipino people of ASEAN as well as their aspirations, concerns, and hopes for the association. The results are intended to inform ASEAN’s policies, programs, and projects.

## Methodology

The study was carried out through the conduct of a purposive survey (online and paper based) as well as of focus group discussions (FGDs) with select target groups. The instruments used for the survey were provided by ERIA (see Appendix 1). Additional effort was made to simplify some of the questions, particularly the statements on expectations about and aspirations for ASEAN during the FGDs.

To get respondents for the survey, invitations were sent by PIDS to people in government, academe, business sector, and civil society organizations/nongovernment organizations (CSOs/NGOs). The survey was also advertised through the PIDS social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter), the Institute’s electronic newsletter “*PIDS Updates*”, and personal contacts.

For the FGDs, three sessions were organized. One session was with the youth sector in Butuan City, the regional center of Caraga (a region in Mindanao). Another FGD targeted the business sector and was held in Cebu City (in the Visayas). The third FGD was for a mixed group composed of representatives from government, academe, business, and CSOs/NGOs; it was held in Quezon City (in Luzon). Given the limited resources made available to this project, the selection of strategic areas for the FGDs was intended to obtain as much as possible a broad spectrum of views and opinions on ASEAN.

## Results and Discussion

### Profile of Survey Respondents

The survey had a total of 289 respondents. The biggest group of survey respondents was from government, followed by those from academe, CSO/NGO, business, and others. “Others” comprised students, staff of international organizations, and media personnel.

Three quarters of the survey respondents were more than 30 years old, of which there was an equal proportion of respondents that were 31-49 and more than 50 years old. There were slightly more male than female respondents.

Table 1. Profile of survey respondents

<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>Share of respondents (%)</b>
Government	90	31.14
Academe	61	21.11
Business	48	16.61
CSO/NGO	53	18.34
Others (mostly students)	37	12.80
Total	289	100.00
<b>Age</b>		
15-30	73	25.26
31-49	108	37.37
50+	108	37.37
Total	289	100.00
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	150	51.90
Female	139	48.10
Total	289	100.00

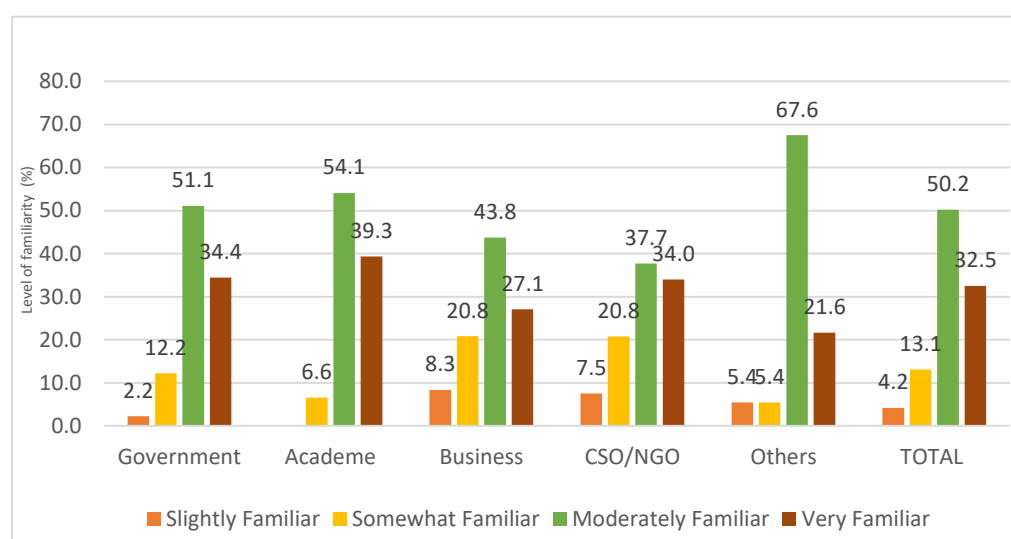
CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

### Awareness of ASEAN

Across groups, the majority of the survey respondents were moderately familiar with ASEAN (Figure 1). Slightly more respondents from academe were more aware of ASEAN than those from government.

Figure 1. Awareness of ASEAN, by affiliation

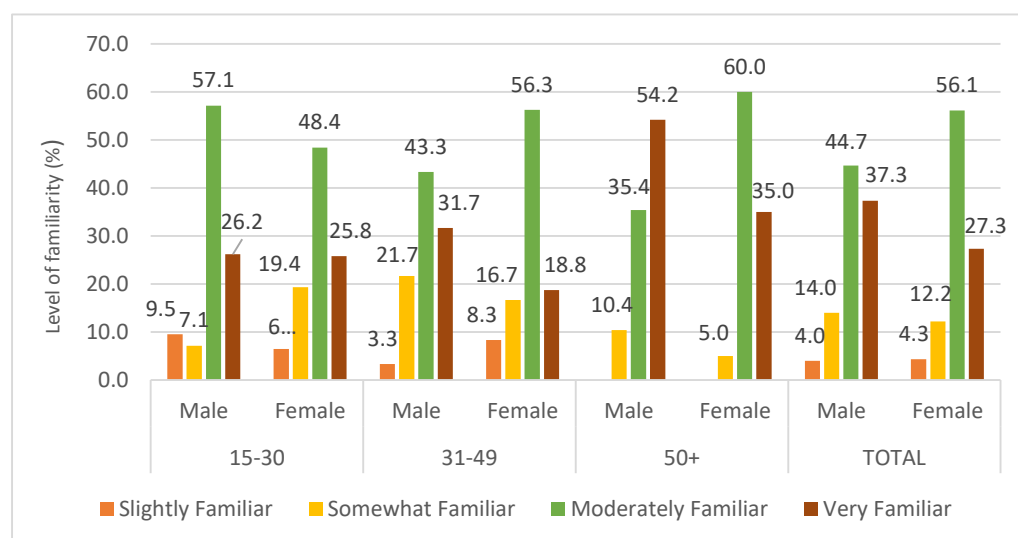


CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

There were also more survey respondents from the three age groups (15-30, 31-49, and 50+) that were moderately familiar than very familiar with ASEAN (Figure 2). Among respondents aged 15-30 and 31-49 years old, more respondents—regardless of sex—were moderately aware of ASEAN. For those more than 50 years old, those who expressed moderate familiarity with ASEAN were predominantly female. However, there were slightly more males 50 years and above that reported high awareness of ASEAN.

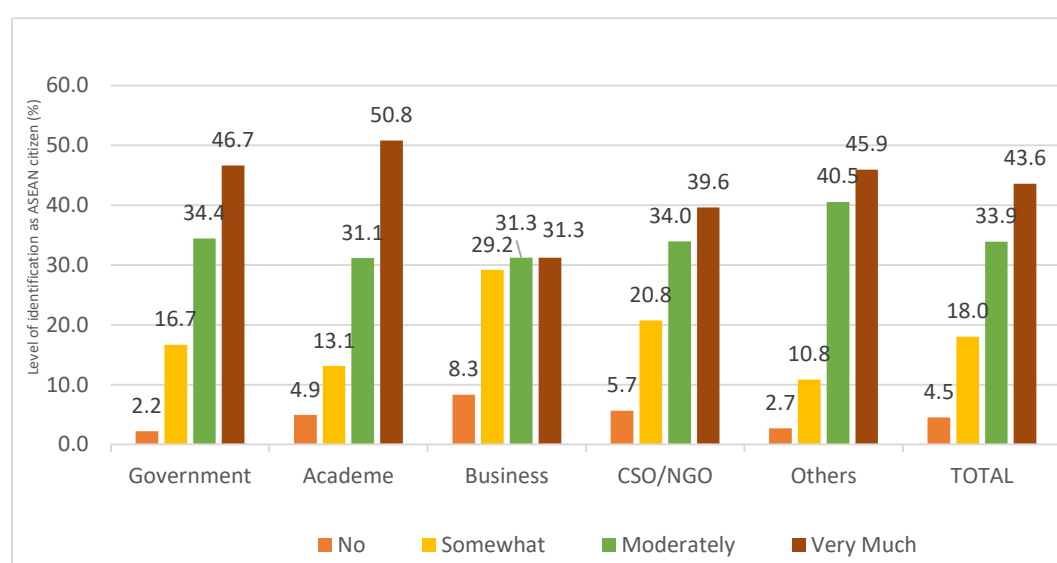
Figure 2. Awareness of ASEAN, by sex and age



Source: Authors' compilation

Majority of the survey respondents from academe and government felt very much that they are ASEAN citizens (Figure 3). Many respondents from CSO/NGO had the same sentiment, while there was an equal number of respondents from the business sector who felt either very much or only moderately that they are ASEAN citizens. This affiliation of ASEAN citizenship was validated in the FGD with the business sector, where respondents said they consider themselves as ASEAN citizens (Appendix Box 2). Respondents categorized as “Others” conveyed a strong affiliation toward ASEAN.

Figure 3. Whether they feel they are an ASEAN citizen or not, by affiliation



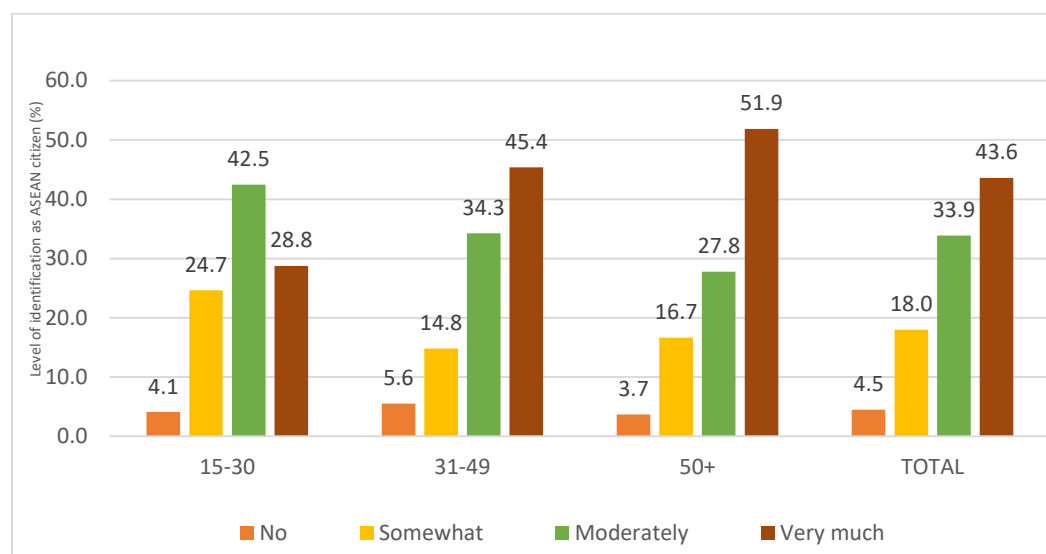
CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

Regarding oneself as an ASEAN citizen increases with age (Figure 4). Majority of the younger respondents (15-30) in the survey identified moderately with being ASEAN citizens (Figure 4) while those who participated in the FGD said they did not feel they are part of ASEAN (Appendix Box 1). In contrast, the older respondents (31-49 and 50+) considered themselves very much as ASEAN citizens. This can be attributed to the greater awareness of ASEAN through work or personal experience as one advances in years.



Figure 4. Identification as ASEAN citizen, by age



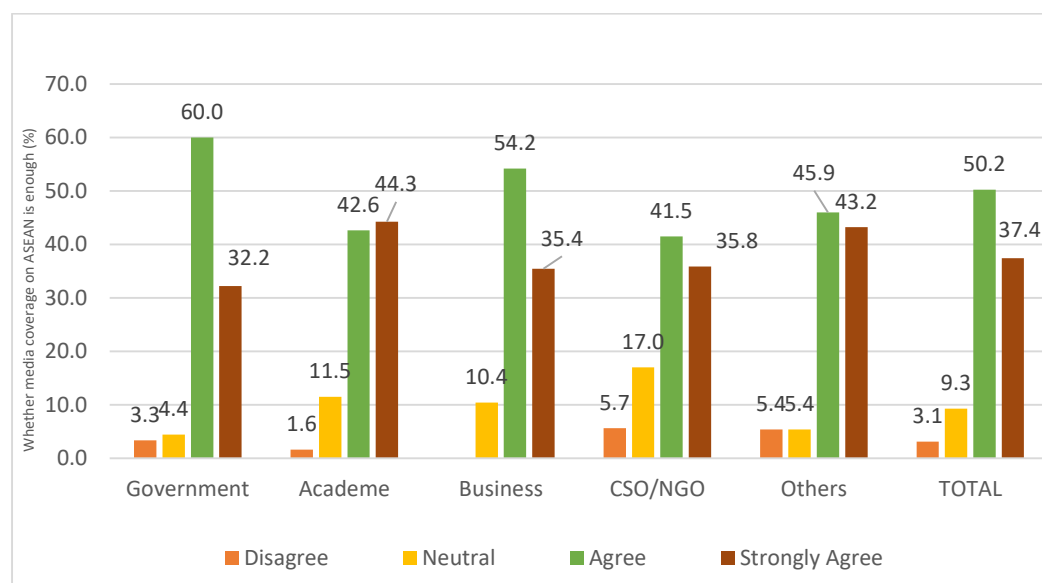
Source: Authors' compilation

There is consensus across groups that media coverage on ASEAN is not enough (Figure 5). The survey respondents from government felt most strongly about this followed by those from the business sector and others. The youth respondents in the FGD said they do not receive enough information about ASEAN.

When asked whether they agree with using school textbooks to increase awareness and educate young people about ASEAN's progress, achievements, and challenges, there was a strong agreement among respondents from government, academe, CSO/NGO, and Others (Figure 6). Those from the business sector also answered in the affirmative but were slightly less enthusiastic about this idea.

Survey respondents aged 15-30 and 50+ years, particularly the younger respondents, expressed strong agreement on using school textbooks to educate young people about ASEAN, (Figure 7). However, those aged 31-49, although in agreement, agreed to a lesser extent. Slightly more respondents from this age group chose "agree" than "strongly agree".

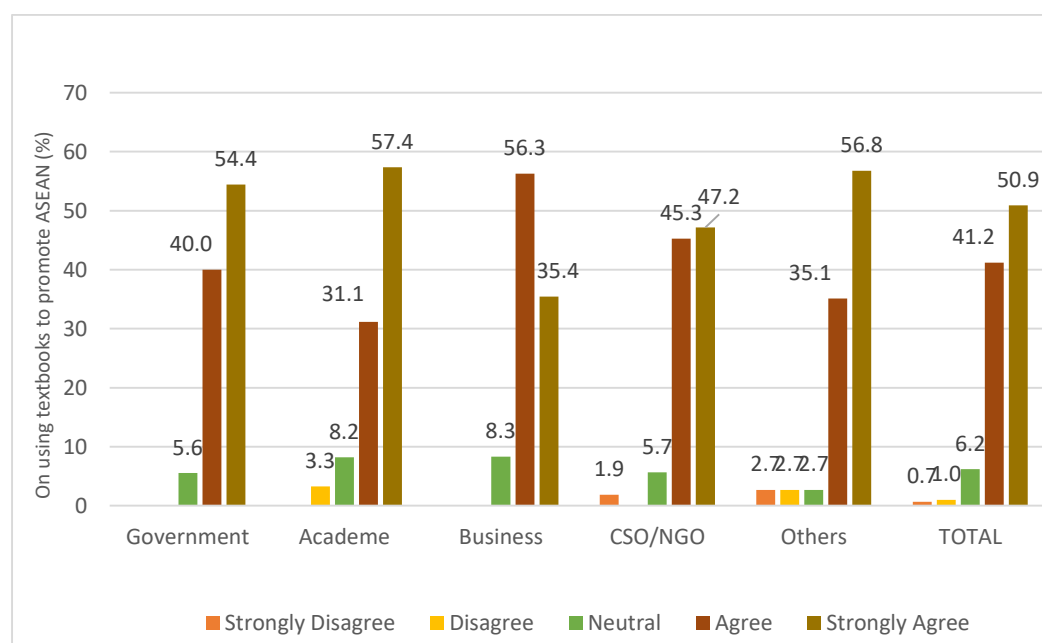
Figure 5. Agreement or disagreement on the view that media coverage on ASEAN is not enough, by affiliation



CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

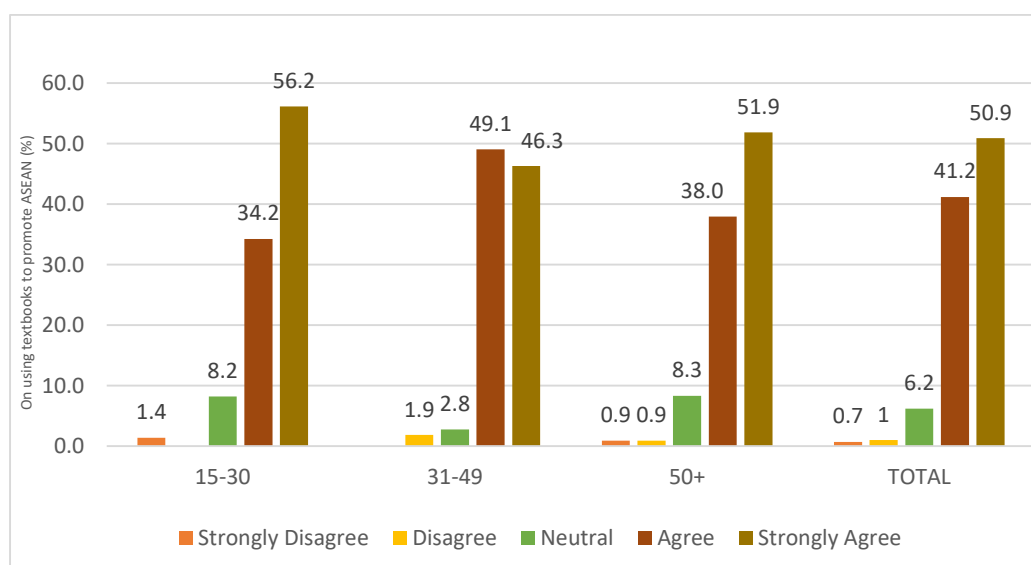
Figure 6. Perception of the use of textbooks to promote ASEAN, by affiliation



CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

Figure 7. Perception of the use of textbooks to promote ASEAN, by age



Source: Authors' compilation

## Membership of ASEAN

For all groups, the majority of the survey respondents (between 85% and 97%) favorably viewed the Philippines' membership of ASEAN (Figure 8). The largest percentage of those that responded positively came from the government and the lowest was from the business sector.

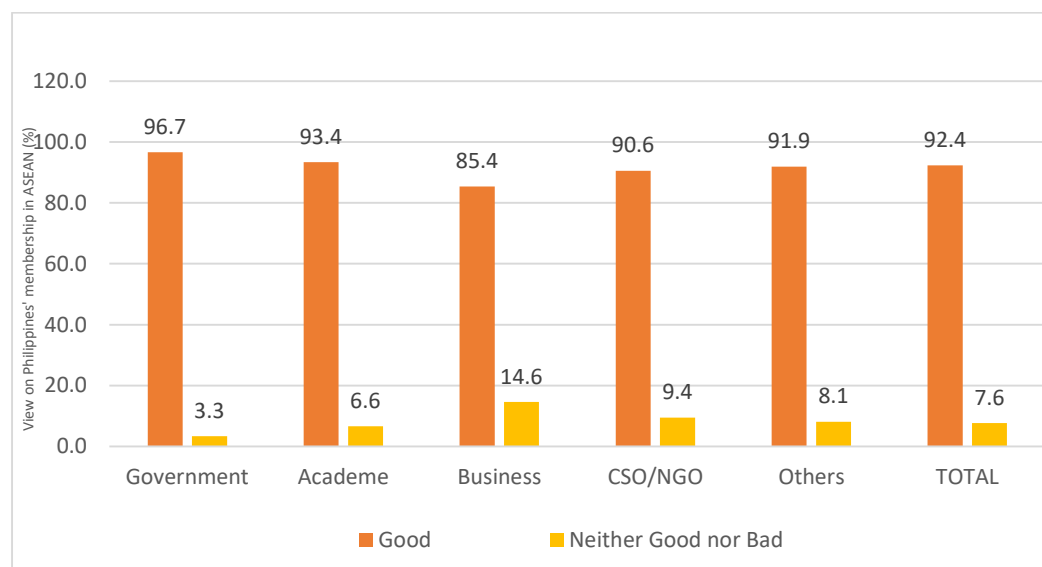
More than 9 out of 10 respondents across all age groups also thought being part of ASEAN was favorable for the Philippines. These results coincide with the results of the FGDs in which all participants expressed their agreement over the Philippines' membership of ASEAN.

However, while membership of ASEAN was generally perceived to be positive, more respondents thought the Philippines benefited only moderately from ASEAN (Figure 9). In the business sector, slightly more respondents chose "somewhat" than "moderately". This corroborates the business group's tepid response to the question on the Philippines' membership of ASEAN, which, although positive, was not as warm as the other groups (Figure 8). However, more survey respondents, regardless of their affiliation, said they would be extremely concerned if the Philippines were to leave ASEAN (Figure 10). In the FGDs, the participants also expressed that it is advantageous for the Philippines to keep its membership of ASEAN.

The majority of respondents were also moderately optimistic of ASEAN's future, with the largest percentage coming from the CSO/NGO sector (Figure 11). This could have been influenced by the moderate familiarity of the respondents about what ASEAN does (Figure 1) and/or the

perception that the Philippines has only moderately benefited from its membership of the association (Figure 9).

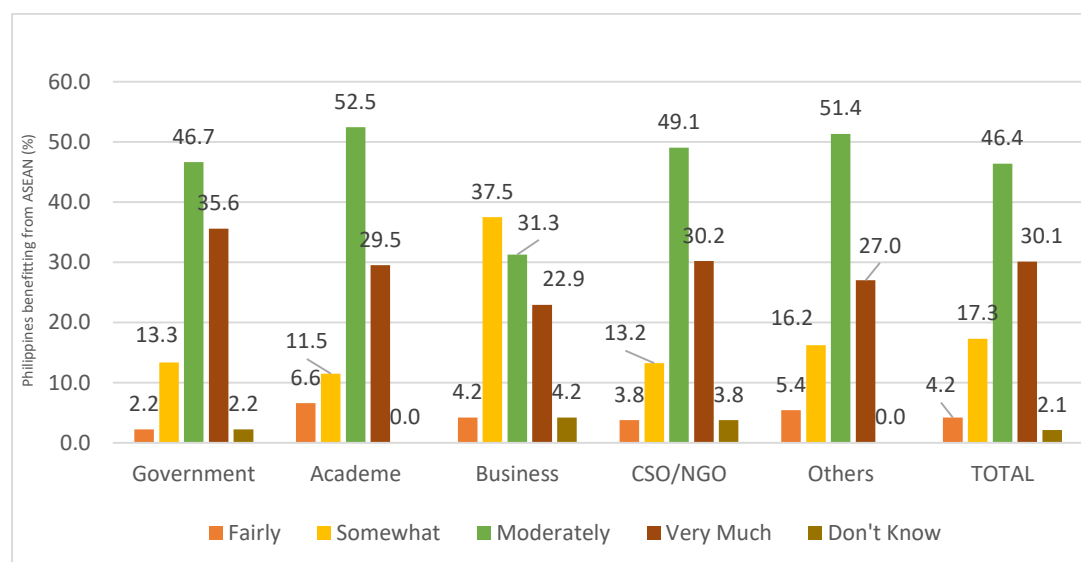
Figure 8. Perception of the Philippines' membership of ASEAN, by affiliation



CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

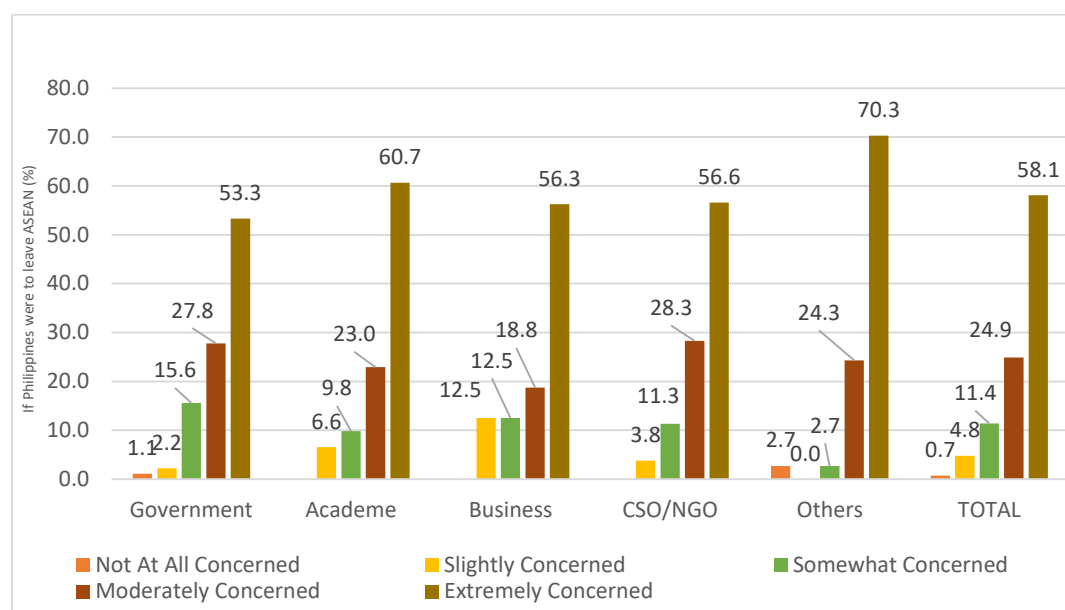
Figure 9. Whether the Philippines benefits from ASEAN, by affiliation



CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

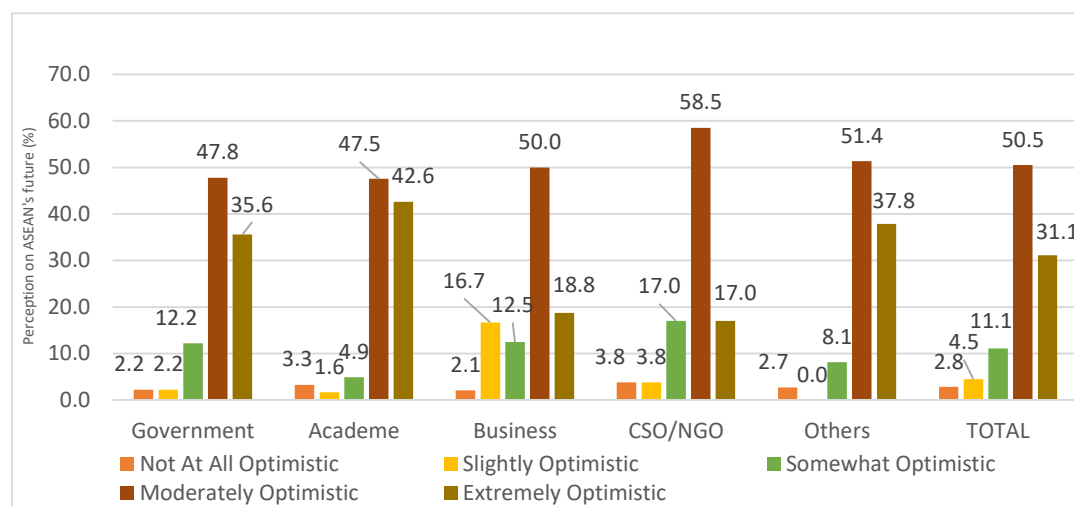
Figure 10. Feeling if the Philippines were to leave ASEAN, by affiliation



CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

Figure 11. Perception of ASEAN's future, by affiliation



CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

## Pressing Problems

From a list of choices, respondents were asked to choose five items that they thought were the most pressing problems faced (a) by the Philippines and (b) by the ASEAN Community today and until 2025.

The results differed in the two settings. As shown in the summary graph (Figure 12), the top five issues for the Philippines were (1) affordable internet connections, (2) poverty, (3) corruption, (4) agriculture and food security, and (5) energy provision and prices. Meanwhile, what emerged as the most pressing problems for ASEAN were (1) climate change and natural disasters, (2) territorial and maritime disputes<sup>4</sup>, (3) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence, (4) agriculture and food security, and income disparity and social inequality, and (5) corruption. The only common response is agriculture and food security, which is indicative of the urgency and gravity of this problem at the local (country) and regional (ASEAN) levels. The survey respondents and FGD participants are acutely aware about the mediocre performance of Philippine agriculture, which has accentuated concerns about food security especially among the poor and the vulnerable. They are also aware of the need to boost agriculture performance and ensure food security in the face of a growing ASEAN population, and the higher priority that member-states have apparently given to investing in regional production networks in manufacturing and related activities in services.

The top five pressing problems for the Philippines validate the most immediate concerns being faced by the country today. As a foremost concern, information and communications technology (ICT) services in the Philippines—which include the internet—are among the highest in ASEAN. As previously explained in a PIDS discussion paper (Albert et al. 2016), fixed telephone services in the Philippines in USD purchasing power parity cost 36.15 USD per month—the highest in ASEAN. Meanwhile, mobile cellular services and fixed broadband services are priced at 22.24 USD per month (second highest) and 51.59 USD per month (third highest), respectively, based on data from the International Telecommunication Union. Price, nevertheless, does not translate to quality service. Despite the high cost, internet speed in the Philippines is among the slowest in the Asia-Pacific region. According to AKAMAI, a cloud data network that monitors internet traffic, in its “State of the internet” report, the Philippines’ average connection speed at 2.8 Megabits per second (Mbps) for the third quarter of 2015 is way below the global

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<sup>4</sup> Territorial and maritime disputes is not in the original list of problems in the questionnaire provided by ERIA. However, the PIDS research team decided to add it in view of its growing relevance domestically and regionally.

average connection speed of 5.1 Mbps and the second lowest in Asia Pacific. The Philippines also ranked third in terms of lowest peak connection speed at 25.3 Mbps, much slower than the global average of 32.2 Mbps. This is a big concern because the Philippines' services sector owes much of its stellar performance to improvements in ICT, which was instrumental to the robust growth of the information technology-business process management (IT-BPM) industry. In 2015, the industry generated more than USD 22 billion in revenue and more than one million full-time jobs (IBPAP 2016). The poor quality of service provided by Philippine telecommunication firms will create a significant hindrance to the continuous growth of the IT-BPM industry and of the services sector as a whole.

Meanwhile, as the second most serious concern selected by the majority of survey respondents, high poverty incidence remains a daunting challenge for the Philippines. While the country enjoys a rapid economic growth, averaging 6 percent from 2010 to 2016, this growth is not enjoyed by all segments of the population. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority estimated a poverty incidence of 21.6 percent in 2015. While this is significantly lower than the 25.2 percent reported in 2012, this figure is still rather substantial. It could have been further reduced if not for major setbacks that affected the Philippines between 2012 and 2015, particularly climate-related disasters. The problem of high poverty incidence has framed the current discussions of the policy community on pushing the government's development strategy and agenda forward with inclusive growth as a critical goal.

Corruption, as the third most pressing concern in the Philippines, is related to the general perception of the persistence of corruption (and its relative worsening in recent times) as reflected in the corruption perception index (released by Transparency International). In 2015, the Philippines ranked 95<sup>th</sup> out of 168 countries in the index, 10 places lower than its ranking in 2014 (85<sup>th</sup>). In 2013 and 2012, it ranked 94<sup>th</sup> and 105<sup>th</sup>, respectively. In this regard, the government has recently established Project Repeal, which is intended to reduce the regulatory burden on firms. It has required government agencies to implement more resolutely the Anti-Red Tape Act, and issued an executive order establishing a freedom of information framework and implementation plan in government, among others.

Unreliable power supply and high cost of electricity in the Philippines are likewise top concerns among respondents. The energy woes not only affect local households and businesses but also discourage foreign investors. The Philippines' power rates are among the highest in the world. A study by the International Energy Consultants in June 2012 shows that the average retail tariff charged by Meralco (the country's largest distributor of electrical power), USD 0.2026 per

kilowatt-hour, is the ninth highest in the world and the second highest in Asia (KPMG Global Energy Institute 2013). Sixty-five percent of this tariff consists of the generation cost, which is borne by power producers. There is an ongoing review of the energy and power policies and plans being undertaken by the government in consultation with various stakeholders. It is important to pin down and revoke any policy, regulatory, or institutional issues that have contributed to high power costs.

Meanwhile, the pressing problems identified for ASEAN reflect the transnational scope and the seriousness of climate change, territorial and maritime disputes, and trade and investment issues. These are not new problems in the region, and yet they have inarguably intensified over the years. Southeast Asia is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to the impacts of climate change. ADB (2009) attributes this to a number of reasons, including its large and growing population (as disasters are partly a function of population exposure), long coastlines, high concentration of human and economic activities in coastal areas, dependence on agriculture as a source of livelihood of a large segment of people, and reliance on natural resources and the forestry sector for growth and development.

In terms of territorial and maritime disputes (between ASEAN member-states or with other neighboring countries), the most immediate issue that comes to mind is the conflict in the South China Sea (SCS). The participants in the FGDs likewise associated territorial and maritime disputes with the SCS dispute. As a highly contested territory, the SCS disputes involve the competing claims of China, Philippines, Viet Nam, Malaysia, and Brunei. In July 2016, The Hague's Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled in favor of the Philippines. The PCA concluded that China's claims of historic rights to the disputed areas in the SCS have no legal basis and thus China's activities within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, specifically "(a) interfering Philippine fishing and petroleum exploration, (b) constructing artificial islands and (c) failing to prevent Chinese fishermen from fishing in the zone" are an infringement on the Philippines' sovereign rights.<sup>5</sup> China refused to accept the ruling. Nevertheless, a recent state visit by President Rodrigo Duterte to China appears to have helped improve the relations between China and Philippines.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://pca-cpa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/175/2016/07/PH-CN-20160712-Press-Release-No-11-English.pdf> (accessed on November 10, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Recent news reports indicate that Filipino fishermen now fish in the traditional fishing grounds in the Scarborough Shoal without harassment by the Chinese coast guard. Whether this is only short term or a permanent arrangement has yet to be established.



Corruption, agriculture and food security, and income disparity and social inequality also emerged as among the top problems confronting ASEAN today and until 2025. ASEAN is a major nexus of growth in the world and its member-states have exhibited relatively good economic performance. However, this survey revealed several major regional challenges that signal the priorities that ASEAN leaders should have in the immediate future.

In terms of issues for the Philippines least chosen by the survey respondents, they are (1) non-tariff barriers/measures and gender parity, (2) right to public participation, (3) trade, investment, and regulatory coherence, (4) territorial and maritime disputes, and (5) customs issues. These reflect the respondents' perception that these items are not so much of a concern for the country. This could be because of impressions that these problems have already been addressed or are already being acted upon, or because they think these problems are more of regional rather than local concerns. This is seen in the case of territorial and maritime disputes and trade, which although regarded as among the least of concerns in the Philippines, have emerged as among the top pressing problems in ASEAN.

Meanwhile, for ASEAN, the following were the least chosen by the respondents as pressing problems: (1) health services, and energy provision and price, (2) affordable internet connections, (3) quality education, and land and water use and access, (4) unemployment, and (5) public participation. While internet connection and energy provision and prices were not a concern for the respondents as far as ASEAN is concerned, these items were among the top five pressing problems for the Philippines, reflecting the survey respondents' perception that they are more of domestic rather than regional issues. The low level of concern for the other problems may be indicative of views that measures are already being made to solve them, and thus, they are no longer pressing problems for ASEAN.

*Pressing Problems: Who should address them (independently by each ASEAN member-state or jointly/concertedly under ASEAN)*

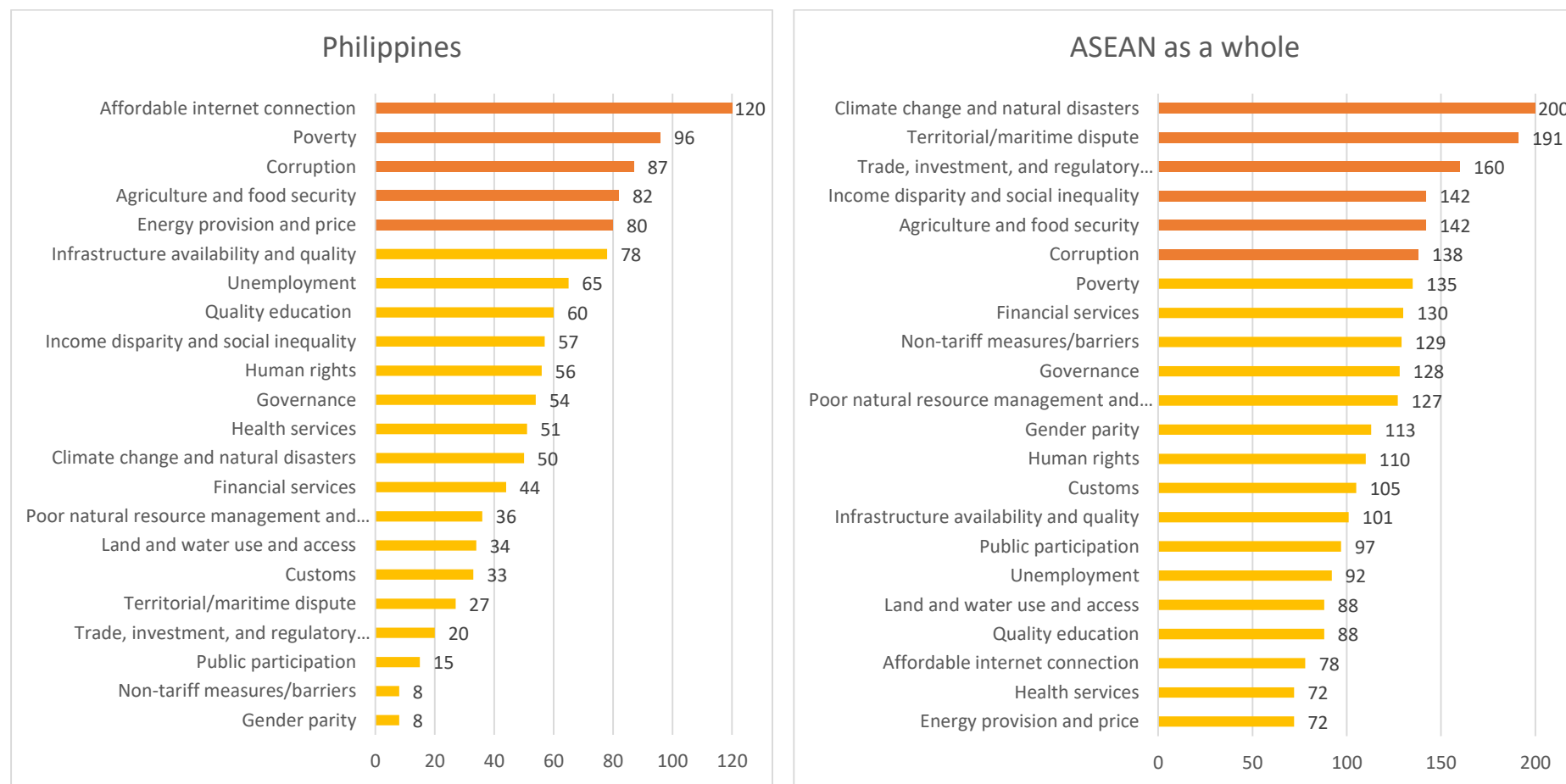
Using the same set of problems, the survey respondents were asked to indicate if they thought each ASEAN member-state's government should act independently in addressing the problems or if they thought the governments should act jointly and/or concertedly under ASEAN.

Figure 13 presents the summary results. For 21 of the 22 items, the majority of respondents said these issues should be addressed by ASEAN as a group. This view is most prominent in the following items, for which between 75 percent and 95 percent of the respondents gave this response: (1) agriculture and food security, (2) climate change and natural disasters, (3) non-tariff

barriers/measures, (4) territorial and maritime disputes, and (5) trade, investment and regulatory coherence. That four of these items (i.e., climate change and natural disasters; territorial and maritime disputes; trade, investment, and regulatory coherence; agriculture and food security) also surfaced as among the top five most pressing problems in ASEAN further validates the importance of these issues in the region and the need for international cooperation to address them.

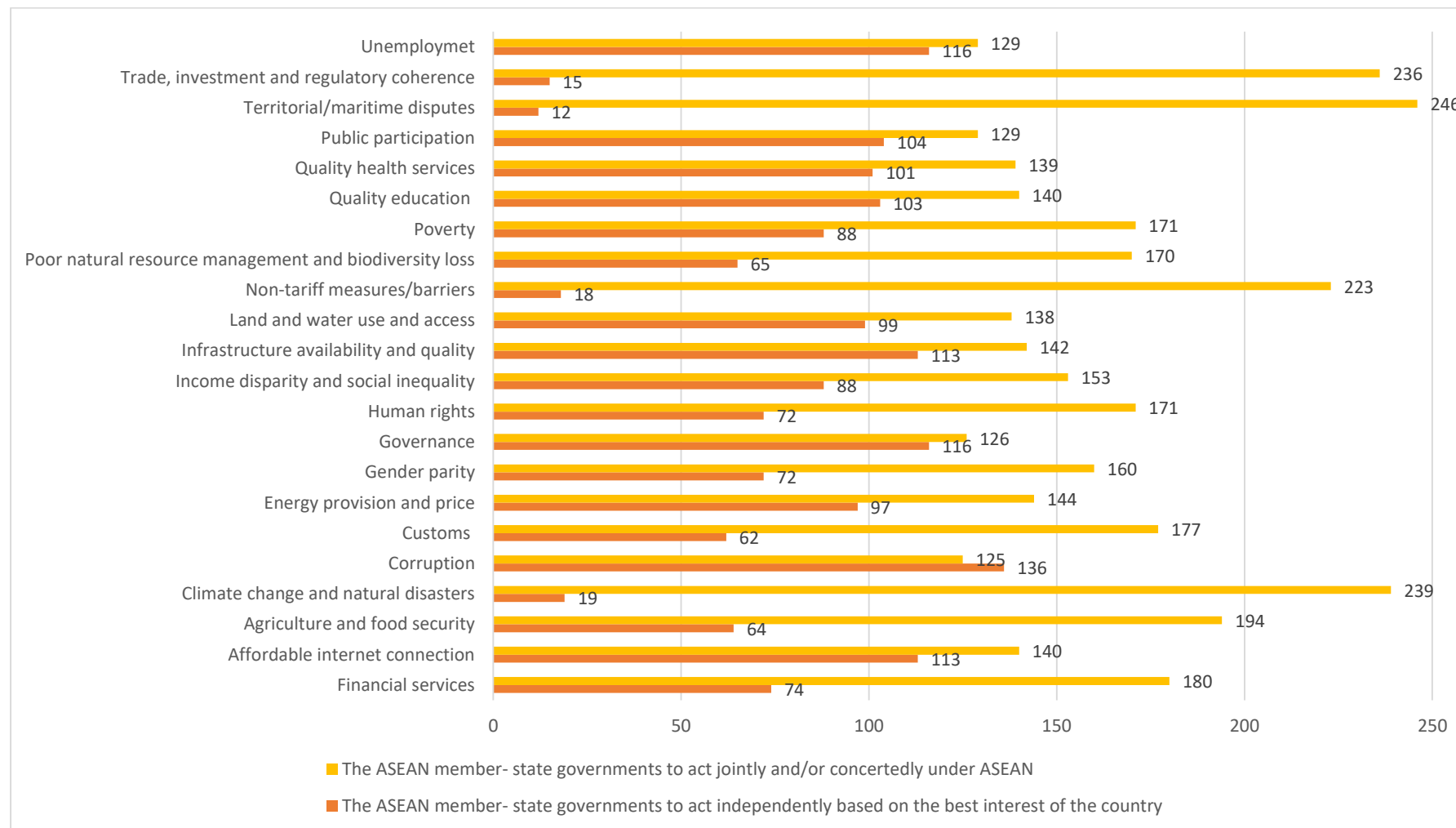
The only issue regarded by survey respondents as within the ambit of individual member-states to tackle was corruption. It can be recalled that corruption emerged as one of the top pressing problems in the Philippines. The respondents' choice that it should be addressed by the member-states individually somehow confirms their view that corruption is more of a domestic concern and an issue that can be more effectively addressed by the individual countries.

Figure 12. Pressing problems of the Philippines and ASEAN (number of respondents)



Source: Authors' compilation

Figure 13. Perception of who should address each problem: the ASEAN member-state governments to act independently or the ASEAN member-state governments to act jointly under ASEAN (number of respondents)

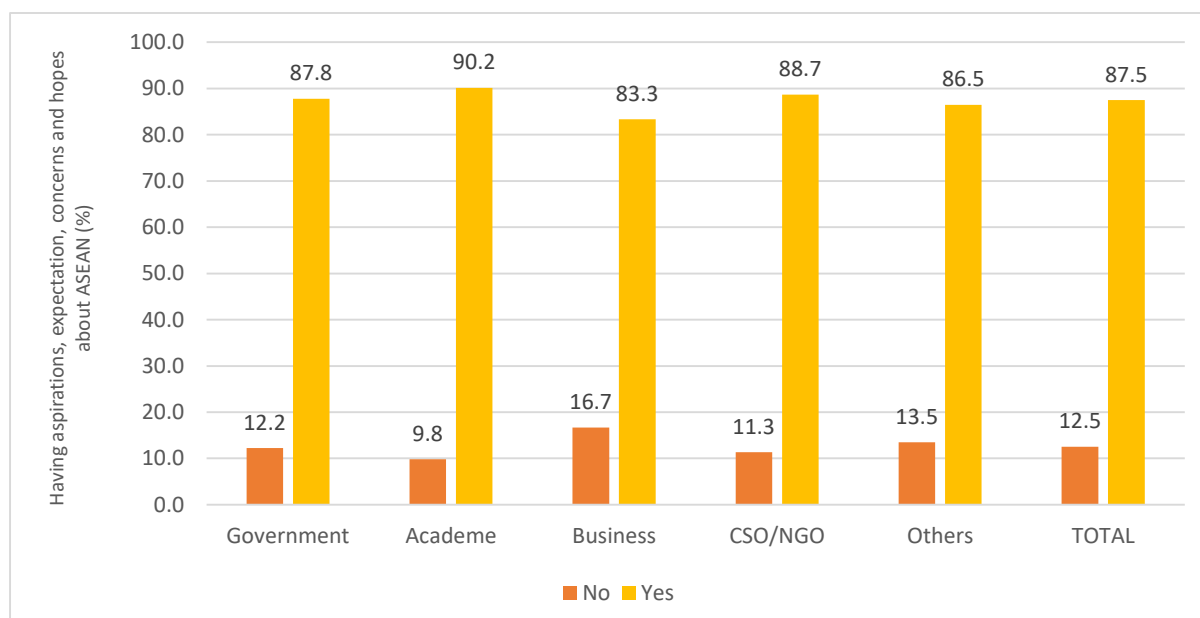


Source: Authors' compilation

## Expectations for ASEAN (What will likely happen by 2025)

The majority of respondents replied positively when asked whether they have aspirations, expectations, concerns, or hopes for ASEAN (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Whether respondents have aspirations, expectation, concerns, and hopes for ASEAN, by affiliation



CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

To probe their responses, they were asked to state their agreement or disagreement with 15 statements depicting particular situations in ASEAN.<sup>7</sup> They were asked how likely they thought the situations were to happen by 2025 and to express their views using a six-point Likert scale (strongly agree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, don't know).

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<sup>7</sup> The situations pertain to the following: free movement of goods, services, and business among ASEAN countries; ease of finding work within ASEAN by skilled workers; basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers; good governance and less corruption; ease of physical movement due to good infrastructure; good digital connectivity; ASEAN peoples have deep awareness of the ASEAN Community and its programs; the ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its peoples; equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples; effective protection of human rights and minorities in the region; proper conservation and sustainable management of the region's biodiversity and natural resources; less polluted and more liveable cities; effective response and fast recovery from natural disasters and health hazards; ASEAN has a strong voice and is an important player in global negotiations and forums; and ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and the Asia-Pacific region.

For all statements except for one, the majority of the respondents agreed that the situations described were likely to happen by 2025 (Figure 14). The only exception was the statement “ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today” for which there was an equal number of survey respondents who were neutral and agreeable to the statement. This indicates a certain ambivalence toward the realization of this scenario. This result coincides with the views of the business sector participants in the FGD. Their expectation was lowest on this item along with two other scenarios. The youth sector participants in the FGD also felt that having liveable cities is difficult to achieve. A similar result was seen for the FGD with a mixed group of participants. This reflects pessimism about the quality of life in ASEAN cities, which face problems of congestion, lack of infrastructure, and rapid urbanization due to the growth of immigration from rural areas—all of which constrain the delivery of quality services.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that for the statement about good governance and low corruption, a number of respondents were neutral to it. While the majority (118) agreed that the scenario could likely happen by 2025, 95 respondents chose not to take sides, indicating they were uncertain whether this scenario would be achievable in the future. This somehow reflects the seriousness of the corruption problem in the minds of some of the respondents, who felt doubtful whether things could change for the better. In the FGD with the youth sector, the participants opined that corruption would be highly impossible to eradicate, with one of them saying that she thought corruption was inborn in the culture of ASEAN countries. Even in the FGD with the business sector and in the FGD with a mixed group, participants had the lowest expectations on the reduction of corruption. Accepting corruption as a fact of life is different from accepting that nothing can be done to minimize, if not eliminate, it. The responses, which cut across different types of respondents, seem to reflect how much corruption has impaired the social fabric. Corruption is a very serious social problem that the ASEAN leaders and the community need to effectively deal with.

This ambivalence is likewise seen in the statement on the effective protection of human rights and minorities in the region. A total of 118 respondents thought this scenario would likely be achieved by 2025, but 90 were neutral to it. A similar view was seen among the youth in the FGD. For them, this scenario is achievable depending on the country’s leaders. Those from the business sector during the FGD expressed pessimism on the attainment of this goal.

## Aspirations and Hopes for ASEAN

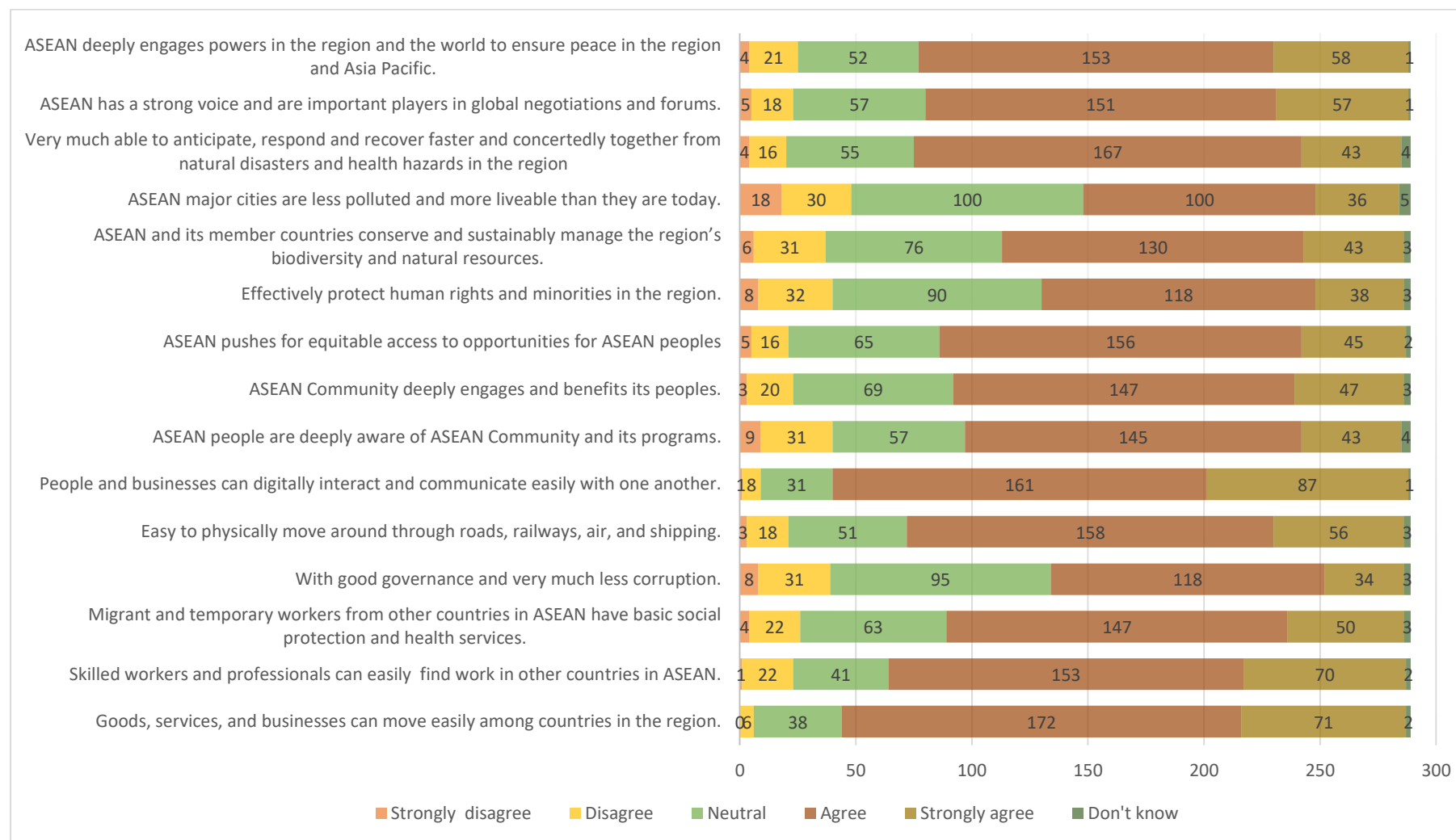
Using the same set of statements, survey respondents were asked to express their aspirations for ASEAN by 2025. Their possible responses were “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “strongly agree”, and “don’t know”.

In all 15 statements, the majority answered “agree” or “strongly agree” with more survey respondents choosing the latter (Figure 15). Specific answers were obtained in the FGDs. For participants in the three FGDs, economic growth was one of the things they aspired for ASEAN. A participant from the business sector expressed hope that the ASEAN member-states would soon be able to rank among China, the Republic of Korea, and Japan, and added that Singapore may be able to lead ASEAN in this regard. However, he added that a progressive ASEAN can be realized only if the member-states can consolidate their political powers through the integration agenda. This participant said that to make this happen, the member-states should be able to play an active role in global negotiations and forums that directly affect the ASEAN region. This view was supported by another participant who said that through strategic alliance, competitive advantages could be attained when negotiating and trading with nations outside of ASEAN. A participant related territorial disputes to this, stating that conflicts in geopolitical jurisdictions could be won over through a unified stand and support for the concerned member-state.

Similar views were expressed by the youth participants in the FGD. The concept of cooperation among ASEAN member-states, of treating each other like “brothers and sisters”, and having peace and unity in the region entered the discussion as one of their aspirations for ASEAN. While cooperation among member-states in addressing territorial and maritime disputes was not mentioned, unlike in the FGD with the business sector, the youth participants expressed hope that the member-states would help one another, especially in times of calamities and disasters. They also mentioned good governance, the absence of corruption, and member-states benefiting from ASEAN’s programs and projects in their hopes for ASEAN.

Education was also mentioned during the business sector FGD. One participant brought up that ASEAN could be instrumental in building quality education through faculty and student exchanges and the training of professionals in member-states.

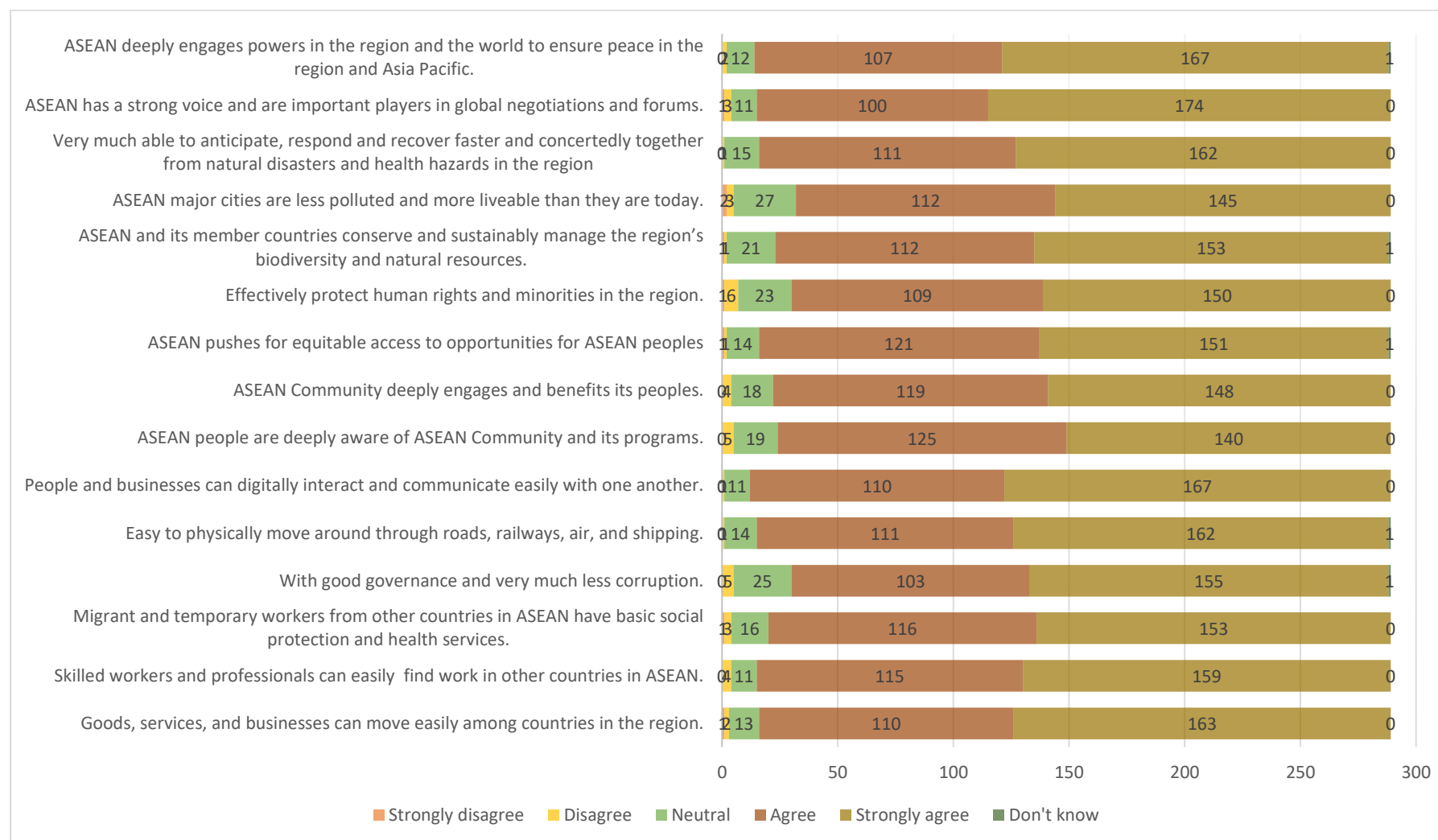
Figure 14. Expectations for ASEAN (number of respondents)



Source: Authors' compilation



Figure 15. Aspirations for ASEAN (number of respondents)



Source: Authors' compilation

## The ASEAN Secretariat

Majority of the survey respondents were agreeable to the idea of upgrading the capability of ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges (Table 2).

In the FGD with the youth participants, however, none had heard of the ASEAN Secretariat. In the FGD with the mixed group of participants, all participants were aware of the ASEAN Secretariat, but its mandate and functions were not commonly known to them. One participant added that based on its name, she thought it provides “secretariat” or administrative services to ASEAN, especially during meetings and conferences. One added that the ASEAN Secretariat should promote itself by publishing specific position papers similar to those by staff members of other international organizations.

Table 2. Agreement or disagreement with the idea of upgrading the implementing and monitoring capability of ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges (number of respondents)

Affiliation	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Government	0	1	2	34	53	90
Academe	0	0	1	23	37	61
Business	0	0	3	22	23	48
CSO/NGO	0	0	3	22	28	53
Others	1	0	0	13	23	37
Total	1	1	9	114	164	289

Age	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
15-30	1	1	4	30	37	73
31-49	0	0	2	43	63	108
50+	0	0	3	41	64	108
Total	1	1	9	114	164	289

Sex	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Male	1	1	5	60	83	150
Female	0	0	4	54	81	139
Total	1	1	9	114	164	289

CSO/NGO = civil society organization/nongovernment organization

Source: Authors' compilation

## Conclusion

This study revealed moderate awareness of ASEAN and moderate identification as ASEAN citizens among Filipinos. These aspects were found to be increasing with age and experience. There was recognition that the association has become a mechanism by which member-states are able to discuss issues of common concerns and that Philippine membership in ASEAN has had its benefits to the country, albeit only moderate as well. All of these may be attributed to the limited information about ASEAN disseminated to the public through the media. Clearly, this reflects the need for more vigorous communication and outreach activities to increase awareness of ASEAN and promote a deeper understanding of how it is working for the benefit of ASEAN peoples. Making use of platforms for civil society engagement, business sector participation, and youth participation could promote greater interface between ASEAN and its stakeholders and encourage broad-based support for the association.

Having a more inclusive and people-centered ASEAN, where the gains from economic growth are felt by all segments of society, is critical for greater appreciation. ASEAN also needs to be responsive to emerging and prevailing issues across the region, notably climate change and natural disasters; territorial and maritime disputes; trade, investment, and regulatory coherence; agriculture and food security; and income disparity and social inequality.

By and large, there is hope that the ASEAN, in a changing world, will find opportunities for mutual cooperation as it pursues a common vision for ASEAN peoples. These rest in part on the ability of its member-states to work harmoniously with one another and contribute actively toward the realization of the ASEAN Community vision. For its part, ASEAN has to provide a strong leadership role in integrating its member-states, which individually are also confronted by a host of development issues and challenges. As ASEAN's coordinating body for the implementation of its projects and activities, the ASEAN Secretariat needs to strengthen its capability so it can provide more effective technical support to the association in meeting its goals and aspirations.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Survey instrument



#### What does ASEAN mean to you?

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 in Bangkok with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration by the ASEAN Founding Fathers. The Association will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017. To celebrate ASEAN's half-a-century journey, the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) are partnering to carry out a public-opinion survey and focus group discussions as part of the "ASEAN at 50: Retrospective and Perspectives on the Making, Substance, Significance and Future of ASEAN" project. This survey aims to make inferences about the aspirations, expectations, concerns, and hopes of ASEAN peoples on ASEAN. Target respondents of this survey are various groups of people in ASEAN, which will include those in the business, youth, culture, civil society, education, SME sectors, and the like. It will only take you 15 minute to complete this questionnaire.

We would greatly appreciate your answers in all the questions. Individual responses are guaranteed confidentiality of information provided, i.e., insights gained from this survey will be aggregated to ensure anonymity.

#### **I. Respondent Information**

Please fill in questions 1 to 6 with your information.

##### **(1) Name / Email address**

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(Please tick one that applies v)

##### **(2) Country**

Brunei Darussalam	<input type="checkbox"/>	Myanmar	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cambodia	<input type="checkbox"/>	Philippines	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indonesia	<input type="checkbox"/>	Singapore	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lao PDR	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thailand	<input type="checkbox"/>
Malaysia	<input type="checkbox"/>	Viet Nam	<input type="checkbox"/>

##### **(3) Specific location (city/municipality)**

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**(4) Age**

15 – 30	
31 – 49	
50+	

**(5) Gender**

Female	
Male	

**(6) Affiliation**

Academe	
Business	
CSO (Civil Society Organization)/NGO (Nongovernmental Organization)	
Government	
Labor	
Student	
Other:	

**II. Voices on ASEAN****(7) Generally speaking, what is the extent of your awareness of ASEAN?**

(Please tick one that applies v)

Very familiar	
Moderately familiar	
Somewhat familiar	
Slightly familiar	
Not at all	

**(8) I feel I am an ASEAN citizen**

(Please tick one that applies v)

Very much	
Moderately	
Somewhat	
No	

**(9) Do you have aspirations, expectations, concerns and hopes about ASEAN? [****] No****[ ] Yes. Please indicate below:**


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**10) What do you think of the Philippines' membership in ASEAN?**

(Please tick one that applies ✓)

A good thing	
A bad thing	
Neither good nor bad	
Don't know	

**(11) Would you say the Philippines has benefited or not from being a member of ASEAN?**

(Please tick one that applies ✓)

Very much	
Moderately	
Somewhat	
Fairly	
Don't know	

**(12) How do you feel if the Philippines were to leave ASEAN?**

(Please tick one that applies ✓)

Extremely concerned	
Moderately concerned	
Somewhat concerned	
Slightly concerned	
Not at all concerned	

**(13) Would you say you are optimistic or pessimistic about the future of ASEAN?**

(Please tick one that applies ✓)

Extremely optimistic	
Moderately optimistic	
Somewhat optimistic	
Slightly optimistic	
Not at all optimistic	

**(14) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:**

**"The media (newspapers, radio, televisions and online news) do not cover enough about ASEAN progress, achievements and challenges".**

(Please tick one that applies ✓)

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neutral	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

**(15) Would you agree or disagree on using school textbooks to socialize and educate young people about ASEAN progress, achievements and challenges?**

(Please tick one that applies v)

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neutral	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

**(16) What do you think are the top five (5) most pressing problems facing the Philippines and the ASEAN community today and until 2025?**

(Please tick your top five items in each column)

	Philippines	ASEAN as a whole
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services		
Affordable internet connection (in relation to digital economy)		
Agriculture and food security		
Climate change and natural disasters		
Corruption		
Customs		
Energy provision and price		
Gender parity		
Governance		
Human rights		
Income disparity and social inequality		
Infrastructure availability and quality		
Land use, water use and access		
Non-tariff measures / non-tariff barriers		
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss		
Poverty		
Provision of quality education		
Provision of quality health services		
Right to public participation		
Territorial and maritime disputes (of ASEAN member-states with each other or with neighboring countries)		
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence		
Unemployment		
Others (please specify):		

**(17) Of the following concerns, would you prefer to address them either independently by each ASEAN member-state (A) or jointly and concertedly under ASEAN (B)?**

Please tick ✓ (A) or (B)

	<b>(A)</b> The ASEAN member-state governments to <b>act independently based on the best interest of the country</b>	<b>(B)</b> The ASEAN member-state governments to <b>act jointly and/or concertedly under ASEAN</b>
Access to high-quality, affordable financial services		
Affordable internet connection (in relation to digital economy)		
Agriculture and food security		
Climate change and natural disasters		
Corruption		
Customs		
Energy provision and price		
Gender parity		
Governance		
Human rights		
Income disparity and social inequality		
Infrastructure availability and quality		
Land use, water use and access		
Non-tariff measures / non-tariff barriers		
Poor natural resource management and biodiversity loss		
Poverty		
Provision of quality education		
Provision of quality health services		
Right to public participation		
Territorial and maritime disputes (of ASEAN member-states with each other or with neighboring countries)		
Trade, investment, and regulatory coherence		
Unemployment		
Others (please specify):		

**(31) What is your opinion on the following statements? Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement by ticking (✓) the cell that best indicates your opinion.**

**Expectations: what you believe the situation is likely to happen by 2025**

<b>Expectations by 2025</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
1. ASEAN is a region where goods, services, and businesses can move easily among countries in the region.						



2. ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.						
3. ASEAN and its member- countries provide basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.						
4. ASEAN is a region of good governance and very much less corruption.						
5. ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around through roads, railways, air, and shipping.						
6. ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another.						
7. ASEAN peoples are deeply aware of ASEAN Community and its programs.						
8. ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its peoples.						
9. ASEAN pushes for equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.						
10. ASEAN and its member-countries effectively protect human rights and minorities in the region.						
11. ASEAN and its member-countries effectively conserve and sustainably manage the region's biodiversity and natural resources.						
12. ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.						
13. ASEAN and its member-countries are very much able to anticipate, respond and recover faster and concertedly together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.						
14. ASEAN has a strong voice and are important players in global negotiations and forums.						
15. ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and Asia Pacific.						

**(32) What is your opinion on the following statements? Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement by ticking (✓) the cell that best indicates your opinion.**

**Aspirations: what do you wish the situation will be for ASEAN by 2025**

<b>Aspirations and Hopes by 2025</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
1. ASEAN is a region where goods, services and businesses can move easily among countries in the region.						
2. ASEAN is a region where regulations and procedures make it easy for skilled workers and professionals to find work in other countries in ASEAN.						

3. ASEAN and its member-countries provide basic social protection and health services to migrant and temporary workers from other countries in ASEAN.						
4. ASEAN is a region of good governance and very much less corruption.						
5. ASEAN is a region where it is easy to physically move around through roads, railways, air, and shipping.						
6. ASEAN Community is a region where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate easily with one another.						
7. ASEAN peoples are deeply aware of ASEAN Community and its programs.						
8. ASEAN Community deeply engages and benefits its peoples.						
9. ASEAN pushes for equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples.						
10. ASEAN and its member-countries effectively protect human rights and minorities in the region.						
11. ASEAN and its member-countries effectively conserve and sustainably manage the region's biodiversity and natural resources.						
12. ASEAN major cities are less polluted and more liveable than they are today.						
13. ASEAN and its member-countries are very much able to anticipate, respond and recover faster and concertedly together from natural disasters and health hazards in the region.						
14. ASEAN has a strong voice and are important players in global negotiations and forums.						
15. ASEAN deeply engages powers in the region and the world to ensure peace in the region and Asia Pacific.						

**(20) Would you agree or disagree on the idea of gradually upgrading the implementing and monitoring capability of ASEAN Secretariat to meet its increasing challenges?**

Note: The ASEAN Secretariat was set up in 1976 to provide greater efficiency in the coordination of ASEAN agencies and for more effective implementation of ASEAN projects and activities. It is located in Jakarta, Indonesia.

(Please tick one that applies ✓)

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neutral	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

Thank you so much for your participation!

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## Appendix Box 1. Results of the focus group discussion (FGD) with the youth sector

**Date of FGD:** 31 August 2016

**Venue:** Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) Satellite Office, Butuan City, Philippines

### Participants

Seven participants, with ages ranging from 16 to 28, participated in the FGD. Their ages correspond to the definition of youth set by the Philippine National Youth Commission which is between 15 and 30 years old.<sup>8</sup> Five of the participants are male and two are female.

Three of the seven participants are studying and four are out-of-school youth. Of the four who are not studying, two are already working. Of the three who are attending school, one is a law student.

### Awareness of ASEAN

All of the participants have heard of ASEAN. Those who are not attending school said they heard of ASEAN either on the radio or TV while those who are attending school said they heard of ASEAN on the radio, TV, or in their school.

Asked about what they know about ASEAN, one of the participants answered that it's a grouping of countries in Asia. This was seconded by another participant who added that the organization has 12 member-countries, which was immediately corrected by the facilitator.

Another participant said ASEAN is about the environment because he has heard of an environmental conservation project of ASEAN on the radio.

Except for one, all of the participants do not feel they are part of ASEAN. One of them added that she doesn't know what ASEAN is doing. The sole participant who answered affirmatively

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<sup>8</sup> Across ASEAN, there is no standard definition of youth. The ages vary from one country to another. In Malaysia, the 1997 National Youth Development Policy indicates that youth range between the ages of 15 and 40, yet the same policy also specifies that youth development programs and activities shall focus on youth aged 18 and 25 (<http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/malaysia/>). Meanwhile, Singapore's National Youth Council defines youth as 15-25 year-olds (<http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/singapore/>) while the Youth Law of Indonesia defines youth as 16-30 year-olds (<http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/indonesia/>). In Thailand, the Youth Development Act and the Youth Development Plan define youth as 18-25 years (<http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/thailand/>).

said he feels he is part of ASEAN because the government conducts 3R activities (reduce, recycle, reuse) such as tree planting which, he said, is part of what ASEAN does.

All of them said they are not receiving enough information about ASEAN. One said he knows more about the UN than ASEAN.

Most of the participants opined that using textbooks can be a good way to spread information about ASEAN to students. They added that holding seminars and symposia and having TV programs about ASEAN would be a good way as well.

### **Membership in ASEAN**

Although awareness of ASEAN and what it does is low, all of the respondents agreed that membership in ASEAN is good for the Philippines for a number of reasons. First, it is beneficial for tourism. Second, it is good for trade especially in the export of fruits. Related to this, one of the respondent added that being a member of ASEAN is beneficial for the Philippines because the country needs help in rice importation. Third, ASEAN membership is a “big thing” in terms of resolving conflicts on sovereignty. The participant who gave this reason (the student who is taking up law) said it is important to have a “moderator” when resolving conflicts among ASEAN members or between ASEAN and non-ASEAN members. He added that ASEAN should help in peace-building and in resolving problems related to food security, hunger, and technology. All of the participants agreed that being connected with ASEAN is beneficial in terms of receiving help from other member-countries in times of need. However, most of them feel ASEAN is not doing anything to help the Philippines in its geopolitical tension with China on the West Philippine Sea. They said that in terms of assistance to resolve this conflict, USA is the one helping the Philippines not ASEAN.

All of the participants said the Philippines should keep its membership in ASEAN. For them, ASEAN is important for trade. Another reason given is the poor capacity of the Philippines to create jobs. Membership in ASEAN will help Filipino nationals access jobs in other ASEAN countries. Leaving ASEAN will weaken the Philippines, according to one respondent. She explained that if the country will cease being part of ASEAN, it will be alone in solving its own problems, particularly conflicts and calamities. This respondent used the analogy of not having friends if the Philippines is not part of ASEAN and thus, the Philippines will become weak. On this point, however, one of the respondents said he is somewhat ambivalent that the Philippines needs ASEAN in times of calamities. He said that in terms of providing aid, the

ASEAN neighbors do not help the Philippines much. Most of the aid, he said, comes from non-ASEAN countries and the UN. He added that even in the West Philippine Sea dispute, ASEAN has not helped the Philippines.

### **Expectations about ASEAN**

Several scenarios in the form of statements were described to the participants. They were asked of their views whether these can be achieved by 2025 or not by answering “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree”, or “strongly agree”.

There are more scenarios the participants perceive as strongly not achievable (“strongly disagree”) by ASEAN in nine years. One of these is the *ease of movement within ASEAN to work*. The participants said this will not fully happen due to differences in religion and culture, and issues of gender and identity. Most Filipinos also prefer to work outside of ASEAN due to higher wage differential. There are also ASEAN countries that do not treat their foreign workers right, as reported in the media. Relatedly, the participants also expressed pessimism over the vision of each ASEAN member-states *providing basic social protection to migrants and temporary workers*. They said this is not feasible because as of now, there is not much social protection given to migrants or temporary workers working in ASEAN countries.

*Corruption* will also be highly impossible to eradicate, hence, good governance within ASEAN cannot be achieved by 2025. One respondent said corruption is “inborn” in the culture of ASEAN countries. Having *good digital connectivity* is also a long shot. All of the participants said it will be a long time before the slow and high cost of internet connection in the Philippines will be solved.

On *benefiting from the gains of the ASEAN Community*, all of the participants said this goal is also highly unrealistic. Even the complementary objective of *providing equal opportunities to every ASEAN citizen, regardless of gender, nationality, religion, and other cultural differences* is highly unlikely to be achieved in the eyes of the participants. One of them said gender issues, particularly the discrimination against the LGBT community, are still prominent across ASEAN countries. Same-sex marriage is still not accepted due to religious beliefs. Another respondent agreed to this and added that cultural differences are a significant factor that impedes the attainment of equal opportunities within ASEAN.

As to the *effective conservation and sustainable management of the region’s biodiversity and natural resources*, the participants were not too strongly opposed to the idea that this can be

achieved by 2025. One of them said it appears feasible because officials will be motivated to meet this objective given its potential advantages to tourism. However, for most of the participants, its realization depends on the leadership and governance and on the citizens themselves. In the case of the Philippines, more serious efforts are needed. The participants cited the issues of illegal logging and mining in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao where these activities are still rampant. One participant explained that although there are laws than ban illegal activities, many people still violate them to gain profit or to earn a living. Mining has caused a lot of damage to the biodiversity of Mindanao and has put the well-being of local communities at risk.

*Having ASEAN major cities that are less polluted and more liveable than they are today* is also an objective that is difficult to achieve (“disagree”). Similar to biodiversity and natural resources conservation, participants opined that whether or not it can be achieved depends on how serious the officials of ASEAN member-states are. Two participants added that the citizens also have a role to play in realizing this goal.

For the other scenarios described to the participants, the participants chose “neutral” as their response, explaining that these are achievable by 2025 provided that the right conditions are present. On the *free movement of goods, services, and business across ASEAN*, they said this is already happening but only to some degree. This scenario, they said, is not fully achievable because China is flooding the ASEAN markets with its products. They added that smuggling is also impeding the free movement of goods.

On ASEAN being *a region with good physical infrastructure*, while majority said this is feasible by 2025 because ASEAN countries will push this given its benefits to tourism, one participant said it also depends on leadership and governance. This respondent explained that if the governments of ASEAN will not make infrastructure a priority, it cannot be achieved. Another respondent agreed with this opinion. He said that as long as corruption is present, it would be impossible to have good infrastructure. He cited instances where officials would steal budget for public roads by using substandard materials thus resulting in poorly constructed infrastructure.

A similar view was expressed when the topic of *protecting human rights and minorities in the region* was brought up. All of the participants said this is achievable depending on the

country's leaders. According to them, the presence of policies and programs is not enough; equally important is their effective implementation.

The same sentiments were expressed by the participants when asked whether they think that by 2025, ASEAN and its member-countries have the *capacity to respond and recover successfully from natural hazards and disasters*. All of them said this is achievable as long as there is cooperation from all sectors—government, nongovernment, and citizens. One participant said it is realistic if politics and corruption do not get in the way. Another participants added that in times of disaster, even poor countries can extend help in whatever form they can because sometimes, even rich countries need assistance.

*High awareness of ASEAN and its programs among the ASEAN peoples* is also possible if the association would intensify its information dissemination efforts. In terms of *ASEAN having a strong voice and ASEAN countries being important players in global negotiations and forums*, the participants said this is also possible in the future. Similarly, they think the vision of *ASEAN playing an active role in engaging the powers in the region to ensure peace in the region and in the Asia Pacific* is achievable by 2025, provided that ASEAN is also able to strengthen the communication among its members and foster deeper cooperation among them.

### ***Aspirations for ASEAN***

Asked about their aspirations for ASEAN by 2025, the participants gave common answers: a progressive region; member-countries are benefiting from ASEAN programs; helping one another especially in times of need particularly when there are natural calamities and disasters; no corruption; there is peace and unity; there is good governance in all countries comprising ASEAN; and member-countries treat one another like “brothers and sisters”.

Using the same set of 15 scenarios described to them earlier, they were asked which of these they aspire for ASEAN by 2025. Except for two participants, all of them selected all of the scenarios given: free movement of goods, services, and businesses; ease of movement within ASEAN for employment; basic social protection for migrant and temporary workers; good governance (particularly the absence of corruption); good physical infrastructure; good digital connectivity across ASEAN; deep awareness of ASEAN and its programs; ASEAN citizens are benefitting from the gains of ASEAN Community; equal opportunities to every ASEAN citizen; protection of human rights and minorities in the region; effective conservation and sustainable management of the region's biodiversity and natural resources; less polluted and



more liveable cities; fast response and successful recovery from natural hazards and disasters; ASEAN having a strong voice and the member-countries being important players in global negotiations and forums; and ASEAN engaging the powers in the region and in the world to ensure peace in the region and in the Asia Pacific.

The two participants who did not choose all 25 scenarios as their aspirations for ASEAN by 2025 chose only a few items. One of them selected good physical infrastructure and effective conservation and management of the region's biodiversity and natural resources. The other participation selected only one, which is faster response and successful recovery from natural hazards and disasters.

### **Pressing concerns**

#### *Philippines*

The participants were asked to choose the most pressing concerns in the Philippines from a list of issues. The resulting choices were ranked based on the number of times they were chosen. The prevalence of corruption emerged as the most pressing problem in the Philippines. It was chosen by all of the respondents. It is followed by climate change and disasters, and agriculture and food security, which were both chosen by five participants. In third place are poverty and lack of access to affordable and quality education, which were both selected by four participants. In fourth place is human rights violations. Emerging in fifth place are lack of gender parity and governance issues.

#### *ASEAN*

Using the same set of choices, they were asked to select the ones they think are the most pressing concerns in the region. The most common answers are corruption and lack of gender parity as selected by five participants each. In second place are trade, investment and regulatory coherence; unemployment; and climate change and natural disasters. Four items emerged in third place: lack of reliable and affordable internet connection; human rights violations; poor management of natural resources and loss of biodiversity; and poverty.

#### *Pressing concerns the Philippines alone needs to solve*

Asked which among the issues listed should be solved by the Philippines, the participants chose the following: corruption; governance issues; human rights violations; problems

associated with land use and water use and access; and lack of affordable and quality education.

*Pressing concerns that ASEAN members should solve as a group*

In terms of issues that ASEAN members should solve as a group, the participants selected nine items, namely: reliable and affordable internet connection; climate change and disasters; customs issues that lead to delay in services, shipment problems, and clearance issues; lack of gender parity; income disparity and social inequality; poor management of resources and loss of biodiversity; poverty; territorial and maritime disputes (of ASEAN member-states with each other and with neighboring countries); and unemployment.

**ASEAN Secretariat**

No one has heard of the ASEAN Secretariat.

Before the FGD ended, a participant asked if ASEAN has any program at present. The facilitator responded by giving some information about the ASEAN Economic Community or AEC which is new to their ears.

## Appendix Box 2. Results of the FGD with the business sector

**Date of FGD: October 7, 2016**

**Venue: Quest Hotel, Cebu City**

The FGD was held in collaboration with the faculty of University of San Carlos (USC), particularly Dr. Cora G. Anzano, Coordinator for Research in the School of Business and Economics. The discussion started at 10 a.m. and ended by lunch time.

### **Participants**

Eleven participants from the business sector participated in the FGD. Four participants are owners/co-owners of their own companies while the other seven participants hold several positions in private firms. The type of businesses they are involved in ranges in different scales, from a small retail store (*sari-sari store*) to international corporations. Seven of the participants are female while four are male.

USC faculty and students also took part in the FGD, including 2 professors and incumbent president Fr. Dionisio Marcelo Miranda, together with FGD facilitator and documentor from PIDS.

### **Awareness of ASEAN**

All participants said that they have at least heard of ASEAN. Some said that ASEAN was generally introduced to them in their schooling, a few stating as early as the secondary level while others mentioned the tertiary level. A participant added that ASEAN-themed events in schools are instrumental in promoting the institution, especially for the youth sector.

One participant mentioned that he heard it from the news. He further added that his idea of ASEAN is that it is composed of 10 nations.

One participant mentioned that she is a member of the Philippine Institute for Industrial Engineers. According to her, the idea of ASEAN is ‘common’ to its members.

In terms of identifying themselves with the ASEAN community, the participants agreed that they consider themselves as ‘citizens’ of ASEAN. One mentioned that she can easily find work in ASEAN member-countries. Another participant added that she identifies herself with ASEAN because the physiques of Filipinos are similar to other Asian people, especially to the other ASEAN nationals.

When asked on how we should further promote the activities, achievements and challenges of ASEAN, the participants all agreed that the ASEAN agenda should be introduced in education, preferably in the primary levels. However, one suggested that topics related to ASEAN may require a broader international consciousness which are usually acquired by students in tertiary education. She added that while ASEAN may be introduced in the early levels of education, a deeper understanding should be discoursed later on.

### **Membership in ASEAN**

Upon discussing the significance of ASEAN awareness in the member states, the FGD facilitator asked the participants on their stand regarding the advantages or disadvantages that the Philippines takes a hold of, as part of the ASEAN community. All of the participants agreed that the Philippines is benefitting as a member of ASEAN.

When asked for the main benefit that the participants are able to observe, lower barriers for trade was mentioned by several participants. One further specified that ASEAN policies have brought an ease to importation and exportation activities, which essentially benefits private firms and corporations. She added that the prerequisites for travelling to other ASEAN member-states are more relaxed compared to other countries outside of ASEAN nations. This was seconded by another participant who practices engineering, stating that ASEAN has made it easier for highly skilled workers such as engineers to land a job in the other member-states.

Another participant expressed his satisfaction towards the advantages of being part of the ASEAN community, stating that the institution serves as an arena wherein the member-states are able to sync with one another, in terms of political and economic agendas. A unified stand to address issues faced by each member country and the community as a whole is achieved through ASEAN. He uttered his concern regarding territorial disputes that the country is now facing, and said that the leaders in ASEAN should collaborate with the Philippines in trying to gain more grounds in this issue.

### **Expectations about ASEAN**

The FGD facilitator opted to measure the expectations of the participants by asking them to quantify their responses in a range of 1 to 5, with 1 having a “strongly disagree” stand on the likelihood that the statement is accomplishable by 2025 and 5 as “strongly agree”.

The only expectations the participants dealt with unanimous optimism was that *each member-state in the ASEAN can import and export goods and services within the region*, and *the movement of businesses is enhanced* and *each ASEAN citizen can easily move in another ASEAN member-state to find work*. The participants responded to both expectations with a score of 4, showing their confidence in agreeing that a smoother flow of goods and services, including that of human resources, is generally attainable within a timeframe of less than ten years.

Meanwhile, the expectation that *peace is achieved and maintained within the region and in the Asia Pacific* by 2025 brought forth the differences of opinion from the participants, with some showing some optimism while a few answered with a “neutral” (score of 3) response on its achievability. Another five<sup>9</sup> expectations were received with a neutral response by the participants.

Likewise, the provision of *basic social protection*<sup>10</sup> *to every migrant or temporary worker from other ASEAN member-states* divided the sentiments of participants, with a few choosing to neither agree nor disagree while most were inclined with the latter.

The participants showed further pessimism on the achievability of the following three goals for each ASEAN member-state: *citizens benefit from the gains of the ASEAN Community*; *the right and safety of their people are protected against human right violations and agenda that neglect the need of the minorities*; and *an active role is played in global negotiations and forums that directly affect the ASEAN region*. However, their expectations are lowest on *reduction of corruption*, *national resources conservation*, and *livability of major cities*.

### **Aspirations for ASEAN**

Before the start of the session, the FGD facilitator clarified that there is a difference between their *expectations* from their *aspirations* for ASEAN. The latter, as repeatedly mentioned by the facilitator, pertain to what they desire for the ASEAN member-states to achieve by 2025.

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<sup>9</sup> (1) Improving land, sea, and air infrastructure; (2) Improving connectivity with other states by enhancing regulations and platforms where people and businesses can digitally interact and communicate with each other, such as in the Internet; (3) Spreading the visions of the ASEAN Community, such as political security, economic competitiveness, and inclusive socio-cultural developments, and its programs; (4) Providing equal opportunities to every ASEAN citizen, regardless of gender, nationality, religion, and other cultural differences; and (5) Anticipating, responding, and recovering from natural hazards and pandemics that affect the whole region by collaborating with other states.

<sup>10</sup> employment and education, and health services, such as insurance, maternity care, and nutrition

Upon asking the participants on their aspirations for ASEAN member-states, regardless of attainability, the primary concern that came up was economic growth. One participant said that he hopes that member-states would soon be able to rank themselves with China, Korea and Japan, in terms of being economically stable. He added that he sees Singapore leading ASEAN in this regard. The participant, however, added a caveat – in order to arrive at this aspiration, member-countries must be able to fortify their political powers through the integration agenda. That is, for the ASEAN member-states to *play an active role in global negotiations and forums that directly affect the ASEAN region*. Another participant related territorial disputes to this, stating that conflicts in geopolitical jurisdictions could be won over through a unified stand and support for the concerned member-state.

Another participant proceeded to discuss the idea that ASEAN integration is key for each member-state's growth and development. She added that through strategic alliances, competitive advantages could be attained when negotiating and trading with nations outside ASEAN. Through such, companies owned by nationals from ASEAN member-states could make a mark in the international market.

Education was also mentioned as part of the participants' aspirations for ASEAN. One participant brought up that ASEAN could be instrumental in building quality education through promoting scholarship grants. In consequence, more professionals could be raised and trained by the member-states.

### **Pressing concerns**

#### *Philippines*

From a list of issues provided by the facilitator, the participants were asked to choose the top three pressing concerns in the Philippines. The resulting choices of participants were aggregated and ranked based on the number of times it was cited.

Two exceeded all issues and tied as the top concern chosen by participants. The first is the prevalence of corruption within the member-states<sup>11</sup>. The other pressing concern, no less than

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<sup>11</sup>In point of fact, during the earlier parts of the FGD, the participants expressed their lowest expectations on resolving corruption. The participants mentioned during the discussion of expectations that they would have given the lowest score to corruption reduction had there been a score of 'zero'.

the first, is unemployment. Poverty and climate change were next in the ranks of most raised issues, respectively.

#### *ASEAN*

Following the sentiments of the participants on the concerns faced by the Philippines, they were then requested to identify three issues that are most pressing under the ASEAN region as a whole. Under the same set of choices, poverty incidence emerged as the most pressing problem. Tied in the second rank are problems in trade and investments, and unemployment. Following after these two is the prevalence of corruption.

#### *Pressing concerns the Philippines alone needs to solve*

The participants were asked to determine problems that need to be resolved under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Philippines. Seven issues came up, namely: lack of job opportunities, weak infrastructures, neglect of human rights and due process, climate change, health issues, prevalence of corruption and high poverty incidence.

#### *Pressing concerns that ASEAN members should solve as a group*

In terms of issues that the ASEAN nations should address as an institution, the participants recognized six: law enforcement issues in customs, high poverty incidence, lack of stakeholder engagement, geopolitical issues, detrimental nontariff measures, and weak infrastructure.

### Appendix Box 3. Results of the FGD with the general public

**Date of FGD: October 25, 2016**

**Venue: Conference Hall, Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), Quezon City**

#### **Participants**

Eight participants from various sectors participated in the FGD. Two participants are from the academe (from De La Salle University and the University of the Philippines). Another two participants represent CSOs/NGOs dedicated to serve the interests of farmers and Filipino migrant workers, respectively. The sector with the most number of participants is government. One participant is representing the business sector. Among the eight participants, only two participants are male.

The FGD was handled by two facilitators and one documentor from PIDS.

#### **Awareness of ASEAN**

All participants said that they are familiar with ASEAN. Some mentioned that ASEAN was generally introduced to them in their schooling, in both secondary and tertiary levels. One mentioned that it was part of her Asian History class. However, the same participant added that during her younger years, the idea of an ASEAN community did not have a strong influence.

Most participants stated that they got to understand what ASEAN is when they delved deeper in their career paths. One participant mentioned that the NGO he is affiliated with is a member of an umbrella group called ASEAN Farmers Association (AFA). He added that ASEAN is always part of their discussions with the Department of Agriculture. One participant from the academe said that her early research work of country studies has expanded with a greater awareness of the ASEAN region. She added that the Senate of the Philippines has called the University of the Philippines to take part in a research endeavor to examine the implications of ASEAN integration. A participant from the business sector said that she became more aware of the ASEAN region when she discovered that visas are not mandatory when traveling to other member-states.

In terms of bearing ASEAN citizenship, one participant mentioned that she feels the sense of belongingness because the visas are not required. She added that self-identification as ASEAN citizens is being inculcated to students today. Another participant furthered the feeling of being a citizen of the region, stating that such notion is felt during conferences and discussions with



representatives of other member-states. However, a few participants disputed such ideas. One participant expressed that despite sitting on discussions of ASEAN integration, she said that she attends as a Philippine delegate who defends the interests of the country. She suggested the use of the term “(ASEAN) national” instead of “ASEAN citizen”, which for her is more appropriate as one’s attachment with ASEAN is related more to one’s sense of identity than to citizenship. Another participant seconded the rebuttal by saying that the ‘no-visa’ policy of the member-states is not tantamount to citizenship. She noted the absence of an ASEAN flag, and added that during meetings of delegates, each participant is represented by the flag of their own country.

When asked on promoting the activities, achievements, and challenges of ASEAN, the participants all agreed that there remains a lot that needs to be done. One participant, in particular, said that the media plays a key role in disseminating information, adding that the current media coverage is not enough to reach the grassroots level. In terms of using education to promote ASEAN progress, the participants expressed their disagreement to use textbooks to teach the achievements and challenges faced by the region. One participant mentioned that textbooks are not updated on a regular basis, so the process of relaying information could be delayed. Another participant agreed with the previous statement by suggesting the use of booklets or pamphlets.

### **Membership in ASEAN**

After discussing the participants’ thoughts on ASEAN awareness, the FGD facilitator asked their views on the advantages of being part of the ASEAN community. All of the participants agreed that it is beneficial for the Philippines to be a member-state of ASEAN. One participant said that while there is not much “citizenship” identification, there is a sense of pride on being a member of ASEAN. She added that being a part of an ASEAN community was helpful, especially during the time she faced conflicts while working in another member-state (i.e., Myanmar).

When asked if the Philippines were to leave ASEAN, all agreed that they did not want the country to do so.

### **Expectations about ASEAN**

The FGD facilitator introduced a measurement of expectations to quantify the responses of the participants. A preference scale was used with a range of 1 to 5, with 1 having a “strongly disagree” stand on the likelihood that the statement is attainable by 2025 and 5 as “strongly agree”.

The three expectations with the highest frequency of agreement are *concerns on good governance, advanced digital interaction and communication, and smooth movement of goods, services and businesses among ASEAN member-states*. Meanwhile, half of the participants agreed that ASEAN will be able to anticipate, respond, and recover faster from natural disasters and health hazards by 2025.

By and large, the participants expressed neutral opinions on the attainability of many expectations. Majority chose to neither agree nor disagree on the feasibility of ASEAN being able to *establish less polluted and more liveable major cities and push for equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples*. Meanwhile, the expectations that the ASEAN Community will *deeply engage and benefit its peoples, and engage powers and ensure peace inside and outside the region*, had a neutral response from half of the participants.

Only three expectations received a “disagree” response, which came from a few participants. Two participants, one from the government sector and another from an NGO, disagreed that ASEAN will be able to *effectively conserve and sustainably manage the region’s biodiversity and natural resources and have less polluted and more liveable major cities by 2025*. Meanwhile, one participant from the government expressed her pessimism on *human rights and minority protection*.

### **Aspirations for ASEAN**

The participants expressed high hopes on the situations mentioned by the FGD facilitator. All the aspirations stated received unanimous optimism from the participants, with the exception of having *equitable access and opportunities to ASEAN peoples*. One participant expressed her preference to prioritize Filipino citizens rather than provide equal opportunities for all.

### **Pressing concerns**

#### *Philippines*

From the list of issues presented by the facilitator, the participants expressed their choice of top three pressing concerns in the country. The responses were aggregated and ranked chronologically based on the number of times it was cited.

Climate change came out at the top of concerns of the group, with four participants stating that it is one of their top three concerns for the Philippines. Three participants said that corruption is

another problem that needs to be addressed. Four concerns tied in third rank (being chosen by two participants each).

#### *ASEAN*

Under the same set of choices, the participants were also requested to identify three issues that are most pressing for the ASEAN region as a whole. The most cited issue is on territorial and maritime disputes, with four participants expressing their sentiment on geopolitics. This is followed by two concerns—inequality and climate change—chosen by three participants. In third rank are another two concerns chosen by two participants: trade and unemployment.

#### *Pressing concerns the Philippines alone needs to solve or the ASEAN members should solve as a group*

When the FGD facilitator asked about the preference of participants with regard to the manner of solving the issues, they posited that if the pressing concern is most present in the country, then it should be solved by the Philippine government alone. At the same time, if the issue is largely a concern of the region, then it should be resolved by ASEAN.

#### *ASEAN Secretariat*

All of the participants know that the ASEAN Secretariat exists. However, its mandate and functions are not common to them. One participant added that she thinks that based on its name, it provides “secretariat” or administrative services to ASEAN, especially during meetings and conferences. One added that the ASEAN Secretariat should promote itself by coming up with specific position papers similar to those being done by staff members of other international organizations.

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