

# Editor's Note

This 18th volume of the Public Policy Journal puts together articles centering on issues of inclusive economic growth, environment, and sustainability. It includes an array of articles featuring research on topics such as an economic valuation of the ocean-based blue economy, a comparative presentation of finance mechanisms for biodiversity conservation, and a discussion on human rights of a marine-based indigenous people of Sama-Bajao in Southern Philippines. The volume also presents examples of sustainability endeavors and recommendations on land use planning for watersheds and cities and an assessment of a credit program for small farmers. Lastly, a think paper on the challenges and recommendations for the 2016-2022 administration caps this issue as an effort to contribute to the current administration's national direction as embodied in the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022.

The first article of this volume gives due prominence to the largely untapped Philippine coastal and marine resources and its potential contribution to sustainable development initiatives in the country. Written by Rhodora V. Azanza, Porfirio M. Aliño, Reniel B. Cabral, Marie Antonette Juinio-Meñez, Ernesto M. Pernia, Ronald U. Mendoza, and Charles S. Siriban, "Valuing and Managing the Philippines' Marine Resources toward a Prosperous Ocean-Based Blue Economy" is a pioneering attempt to estimate the value of the total coastal and marine ecosystems of the Philippines. The paper provides an overview of the said ecosystems, fisheries and other related industries, and highlights the aspects that form part of the economic valuation. Acknowledging the potentials of blue economy as represented by the valuation results, the article also discusses the current national initiatives and regional involvements to ensure health and sustainability, alongside risks and threats to the said economy. To ensure that benefits from blue economy is optimized, the study proposes the establishment of an independent Department of Marine Resources to lead the efforts in valuing the ocean-based economy as well as the harmonization of efforts and policies concerning marine resources among related government agencies, and develop investment and development strategies. Similarly, the study highlights the promotion of inclusive sustainable development and ecological integrity in pursuit of the Philippine blue economy.

The article written by Ricardo M. Sandalo and Almira Geles B. Lumbres, "Potentials of Conservation Financing in Planning for Areas with High Biodiversity Value in the Philippines" proposes a solution to financial sustainability, the leading

obstacle to effective planning and management of high biodiversity protected areas (PAs). The article identifies and characterizes four major types of finance mechanisms that could generate sustainable revenues for the conservation of the protected areas: user fee system, public-private partnership, payments for ecosystem services, and the community enterprise development mechanism. Although there are already existing and initiated conservation finance mechanisms available to managers, the authors indicate that it is imperative for extensive documentation, exhaustive impact evaluation and wider dissemination regarding the schemes to allow familiarity and wider application. Moreover, it is important to understand that well-defined management or business plan of the PA is vital for the development of the finance mechanisms and that there is no single mechanism that is applicable for all PAs. Lastly, the research notes important considerations in the establishment of the sustainable conservation finance method, such as type and quality of the natural endowments in a PA; the capability, knowledge and skills of the PA managers and their management boards; the availability of possible partners, the communities' willingness to participate, and the exogenous entities who may be able to extend assistance in the establishment of the scheme; and the policy support that can be provided by the national government to the national PA managers and to the locally managed protected areas.

Aurora Roxas-Lim's research titled "Marine-Oriented Sama-Bajao People and Their Search for Human Rights" is a discourse on the marginalized Sama-Bajao in pursuit of regaining their respect and entitlements as humans and citizens. In the hope of inviting effective assistance programs for this marine-oriented indigenous people (IP), the paper presents their socio-economic status by providing a brief history accounting the social, economic, and cultural events that led to their current state. While the paper exposes the struggles of the Sama-Bajao towards an advanced economic and social status, it also details the various efforts on the part of the government aimed to assist the Sama-Bajao—efforts such as the introduction of seaweed farming and creation of Bajao village in Zamboanga, among others. The article cites key policy alternatives to help alleviate the unwanted situation of the Sama-Bajao. This includes granting of a Certificate of Land Title to guarantee their access to land, provision of potable water and other essential public services, appropriate schooling and training, and extended protection from Coast guard and revenue-collecting officials and pirates.

Using the case of the Santa Cruz watershed in Laguna, the article titled, "Vulnerability and Communities' Adaptive Capacities for Food Security: Implications for Land Use Policy in the Santa Cruz Watershed, Laguna, Philippines" highlights increasing vulnerability of a water resource used for food production due to climate change hazards and improper land use practices.

Written by the team of Agnes C. Rola, Dulce D. Elazegui, Girlie Nora A. Abrigo, Cristino L. Tiburan Jr., Jose Nestor M. Garcia, Zenaida M. Sumalde, and Manolo G. Villano, the paper assesses the adaptive capacity of the community towards households' food security in the context of changing climate. The findings of the study show that physical aspects of the study area such as different elevations results to diverse degree of vulnerability and effects to the communities. The research also reveals that there is a need to improve the communities' adaptive capacity, but insufficient budget constraints the implementation of adaptation strategies whereas institutions and governance strengthen effective adaptation. To address the sustainability of the protection and conservation of watershed resources for a more secure food production, the paper puts forward policy actions for the creation of a comprehensive land use plan in the context of a watershed.

The paper of Kristian Karlo Saguin, Christopher John Chanco, Aildrene Israel Tan and Arnisson Andre Ortega titled, "Reclaiming Social Equity in Land Use Planning for Sustainable Cities," similarly aims to contribute to the land use planning policy in the context of urban cities. Their study advances urban sustainability through land use planning policies that emphasize social equity and justice in sustainable development guiding framework, grant consideration for improved community participation in land use governance, and present planning methods sensitive to the needs, contexts, and practices of the communities. Although sustainability seeks to address ecological integrity, economic growth and social equity, the paper accentuates on the often neglected element of social equity. Therefore, the study suggests strengthening participatory mechanisms and expanded land use planning methods, such as the use of network mapping and community mapping as employed in the course of the study. The study further recommends recognizing the roles of intermediaries and other government agencies in assisting the planning process.

An assessment of the immediate impacts of the government's directed credit program for the marginalized small palay farmers, the Sikat Saka Program, is provided by Karen P. Quilloy and Jan Danica S. Asma in their paper titled "Revitalizing Directed Credit Approach: Lessons Learned from Department of Agriculture Sikat Saka Program." Implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), the Sikat Saka Program is the credit component of the Food Staples Sufficiency Program (FSSP) aimed to provide timely, adequate and affordable production credit for small palay farmers; improve the viability of their palay production; establish their credit worthiness with a financial institution; and strengthen them as organized groups. Besides credit, FSSP also has two other major components which are marketing and capacity building. The study describes the implementation and features of the program and assesses the status of the program

vis-à-vis its objectives and the beneficiaries have positive response towards the credit facility. The article details the reasons for this specific response among the stakeholders. In terms of improving viability of palay production, the author believes that it is still early to determine its development since the program has only been running for three years. While it is premature to assess its improvement of the viability of palay production, it is noted that the objective of establishing credit worthiness and strengthening the group are considered to have improved, given that the beneficiaries are able to directly access LBP, and that Irrigation Associations act as conduits to formal lending. While the FSSP is perceived to be effective in meeting the credit needs of the target farmers, it also recognizes that the program is yet to conduct more significant activities to progress on its objectives concerning marketing of the farmers' produce and capacity building of the farmer beneficiaries. The author argues that the program appears to work well as a whole but identifies action points to further improve the program and to sustain its impacts and benefits to the small palay farmers to include the following: revisiting the collateral and marketing contract requirements as well as the Management Takeover Agreement for applicability in all implementation areas; stringent monitoring of ACPC for maintaining the integrity of the screening process; continuous information dissemination of the program for both existing and prospective farmers; and strengthening of the non-financial components of the program.

The final article is a think paper from the University of the Philippines crafted by a team of scholars from different disciplines. The paper titled "Knowledge-Based Development and Governance: Challenges and Recommendations to the Duterte Administration, 2016-2022" remains relevant as it presents human capital as the key to the country's persistent problems of inequality and poverty. The research reveals the constraints to obtaining human capital that upholds inclusive growth and points out that education is taken for granted because government spending on education is low compared with other services. Moreover, Philippine innovation remains low and synergy among the government, industry and academe seems poor. To help attain inclusive and sustainable growth, the University of the Philippines proposes the creation and development of suprastructure. The paper emphasizes on the potential of the country's human and knowledge capital which can be accelerated through substantial spending on education. The paper consequently offers a framework for the attainment of inclusive and sustainable growth, hyping on education and establishment of hub-and-spokes organizations across the nation for focused and coordinated knowledge generation and utilization.

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