

Document

Social Reform Should Form the Core of Governance: The Basic Sector's Agenda for the Post-Ramos Administration

NATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE

We in the National Peace Conference (NPC), representing more than 500 basic sector alliances, women's groups, trade union federations, and non-government organizations, strongly assert that social reform should be included as the core of governance of the post-Ramos administration.

We believe that a platform of government with an asset redistribution and poverty alleviation core will provide a strong basis for sustainable development in the country. We envision such a program to lay the basis for enhancing the productive capacities of all the sectors in society. This will intensify the gains derived from growth and shield the country from the vagaries of a global economic slowdown. And we are certain that the conditions for building the foundation for strong societal institutions for governance would require a citizenry who have equal access to economic resources, are well represented in national and local decision-making and whose security of life, person, and livelihood is inviolable.

How would this program of governance be crafted? We need to derive the lessons from our engagement with the Ramos government in the implementation of the Social Reform Agenda and develop a broad-based framework for poverty reduction, coming from the basic sectors themselves.

Culling the Lessons from Participation

Our participation in the Social Reform Agenda has its roots in our agenda-building exercise which started in 1991, and led to our adoption of a Basic Peace Agenda, composed of immediately doable executive policy proposals and legislative agenda to improve the conditions of farmers, fisherfolk, labor, and the urban poor, who comprise the majority of our population.

In 1992, early in the Ramos administration, we presented our Basic Peace Agenda to the National Unification Commission (NUC) which constituted a comprehensive peace plan for the Ramos government. With the view of furthering our proposals, we agreed to participate in the 1993 Multi-sectoral Economic Summit, which resulted in the inclusion of some of our proposals in the Social Pact on Empowered Economic Development (SPEED). Due to our persistent advocacy, the government saw the need to launch the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) in 1994 and thereafter invited our participation in the 1994 Social Reform Summit. During these consultations, we were able to further refine and craft our proposals into concrete, time-bound, and doable policy and legislative recommendations.

During these various government fora, we maintained that our participation did not mean a “domestication” of our agenda but a mutual partnership with government to assist the basic sectors; we saw these venues as opportunities to debate with government and other sectors on the necessity and desirability of our advocacies. As such, we decided that this process would always be subject to regular review, modification, and even, should the need arise, immediate termination. We also affirmed that the institutionalization and implementation of our calls would further the peace process. Lastly, it was our understanding that this strategy would not mean the abdication of our other responsibilities as part of “civil society,” particularly to constructively criticize and develop alternatives to government programs.

Despite government’s general inattention to the commitments jointly agreed upon by government and the basic sectors at the Social Reform Summit in 1994, we again participated in the National Anti-Poverty Summit (or NAPS) in 1996, a decision which elicited criticism from other sections of civil society, which had already become cynical of these public consultative processes. We again introduced our list of proposals for comprehensive social reform, and agreed that these should also be formulated as a package of services and local reforms to be extended to disadvantaged provinces and municipalities.

Our Agenda

During the Summit, we advocated a comprehensive agenda of workable measures (“do-ables”), including 12 legislative and 95 executive measures, and succeeded in securing government’s commitment to them.

- In the area of legislation, we advocated several sectoral bills, including: the Anti-Rape Law, Fisheries Code, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, the National Land and Water Use Code, and the repeal of the Anti-Squatting Law. We pushed for the Magna Carta of Students' Rights, the Magna Carta for the Urban Poor, and the strengthening of senior citizens' representation in government. We also demanded the passage of an enabling law mandating elections for sectoral representatives in local bodies, as well as the lifting of restrictions on trade union organizing.

- In the area of policy, we pinpointed “do-ables” for the executive branch, including the signing of specific executive orders (EOs) or implementing rules and regulations (IRRs), the strengthening of the implementation of previously signed measures, and more substantial basic sector representation in government bodies, the brunt of which are focused on existing asset reform legislation. These included measures such as the review of the Medium Term Agricultural Development Plan, implementation of the Urban Development and Housing Act, IRR mandating local government units to declare municipal waters for exclusive use of small fisherfolk, EO directing LGUs to ensure security of the workplace of vendors, and moratorium of issuance of mining permits.

- In the area of financing, we demanded the proper identification of public resources for priority measures and the full allocation of the resource requirements of asset reform programs, such as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, the Community Mortgage Program and the implementation of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils. We pushed for transparency in the budget process, and stressed the importance of monitoring the use of social reform funds.

- With regard to the institutionalization of the social reform agenda, we advocated the full operationalization of SRA structures and mechanisms at the national and local levels. We proposed processes — such as basic sector participation in decision-making and regular consultations with government on sectoral issues — which could facilitate the implementation of the NAPS commitments.

With the Ramos government's stated commitments, we viewed the outcome of the Summit with guarded optimism, recognizing that these opportunities offered towards strategic reform. We considered these openings as initial — but potentially decisive steps — towards the

reorientation of the bureaucracy and a more decisive mainstreaming of asset reform in the agenda of government.

Our Assessment

In hindsight, our caution has been justified; while there have been gains in our advocacy, several important sectoral and multi-sectoral calls still have to be realized. Our detailed June 1997 assessment, entitled Social Reform or Social Regression, sufficiently amplifies this point. We do recognize, however, that the important achievements of the present SRA, although largely symbolic, has provided a good foundation for the future implementation of social reform.

Among the gains were:

- The SRA was able to articulate the principle of social reform at the highest level of government. At least in principle, the importance of asset reforms and people's participation has been recognized as important components of public policy. The government has been made aware, especially during the last months of this administration, that its performance in the implementation of SRA would be judged according to the number of important legislative reforms it has passed and its seriousness in the implementation of SRA executive measures.

- Basic sector participation in the highest levels of government was recognized. For children, fisherfolk, workers in the informal sector and victims of disasters and calamities, the SRA provided the venue for their recognition as legitimate sectors. The representation of the basic sectors came to be a required feature of major government consultative processes, albeit often observed only in a nominal fashion. The appointment of basic sectors representatives in the Social Reform Council was an important part of this participation process.

- The SRA was able to strengthen civil society players and structures by providing venues for the coordination of action and public representation on national issues. Basic sector and NGO leaders have been recognized nationally and internationally as legitimate spokes-persons for the interests of the marginalized sectors. SRA-related structures became focal points for the coordination of cross-sectoral advocacy on issues, such as the charter change issue and the discussion of the local sectoral representation bill.

- Localization of social reform action plans became an important aspect of advocacy for civil society. The SRA further pushed NGOs and POs to “think locally” regarding the terms of the accomplishment they expected of government, and the importance of lobbying with local governments on the provision of important public services and the local implementation of asset reforms for the poor.

- Beyond the level of symbols, the flagship program on the Comprehensive Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) was judged to have improved its understanding, formulation, and implementation of program commitments resulting from more meaningful dialogue with its constituent sectors.

- Of greatest import, the rush of legislation in the last four months of Congress materially improved the policy baseline for social reform for the next administration. While the implementation and enforcement of these laws, particularly the Indigenous People’s Rights Act, the Anti-Rape Law, the Family and Child Courts Law, the Repeal of PD 772, and the Poverty Alleviation Law, remain to be seen, the significance of these legislative victories, which will be difficult to duplicate in the opening months of the next Congress, cannot be overstated. The institutionalization of social reform through these new laws will provide greater access of the basic sectors to government decision-making.

Despite these substantial gains, however, it is clear that there are important issues, which still need to be addressed by the next administration if it is serious in its pursuit of social reform. These include the following:

- The subtle but significant shift in the priorities of government, demonstrated by the removal of the explicit reference to asset reform in the earlier SRA documents, including 1996 NAPS agreements, in its more recent policy papers, has greatly disheartened the basic sectors. The shift in policy statement implies a regression in government’s understanding of social reform and a dilution of its commitment to equity reform. While the issue of social services has been increasingly highlighted, the implementation of the redistributive agenda has been severely inadequate and occasionally flawed. For the SRA to be truly meaningful to the basic sectors, government needs to reassert its primary commitment to asset reform.

Table 1: Policy Baseline Before and After the National Anti-Poverty Summit

Sector	Pre-National Anti-Poverty Summit Sectoral Policy Baseline (1998)	Sectoral Policy Baseline Towards the end of the Ramos Administration (1999)
Peasant	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law	
Fisherfolk	Fisheries Code ¹	
Urban Poor	Urban Development and Housing Act, Comprehensive and Integrated Shelter Financing Act	Urban Development and Housing Act, Comprehensive and Integrated Shelter Financing Act, Repeal of PD 772
Women	Women in Nation Building	Women in Nation Building Law, Anti-Rape Law
Formal and Informal Sector		
Indigenous Peoples	Indigenous People's Rights Act	
Senior Citizens	Senior Citizens' Act	
Persons with Disability	Accessibility Law	
Children	Family and Child Courts Law	

Note: ¹ But with substantial deficiencies raised by the sector

- Government needs to systematically remedy its evident low level of institutional capacity to address anti-poverty issues. While there has been explicit commitment by government to address basic sector issues, the institutions, which were supposed to implement the substance of the SRA, were clearly not prepared to implement these commitments. The structures which were supposed to support government-basic sector partnerships were themselves often insensitive to sectoral dynamics and

processes; the implementation of several key programs remained poor due to lack of funding or lack of personnel; the awareness of government personnel about the SRA has been generally weak; and the monitoring instruments for tracking the SRA commitments have not been conducive to the development of deeper analysis.

- The various initiatives of the government with respect to civil society remain unintegrated. There is a strong potential for synergy in the complementation of the SRA, Philippine Agenda 21, and the sidelined agenda on Human and Ecological Security (HES), government programs which have a strong civil society agenda component and which had been adopted by government in partnership with the basic sectors. Government has to address the need for consistency and harmonization between its related initiatives such as these.

- Government has to learn to respect and properly deal with the level of integrity and autonomy required by civil society for it to participate fully and meaningfully in initiatives for social reform. The administration's initial instruction mandating respect for basic sector process, Administrative Order 291, was a welcome step to elucidate the autonomy of the basic sectors vis-à-vis government decision-making processes. However, government actions — such as those which aimed to undermine PO/NGO consensus on certain critical issues, or to distort consultation and joint planning processes, or to belittle civil society critique of its performance — of which there was much evidence especially over the last year, ran counter to ensuring this level of civil society integrity and independence.

- Public resources have to be fully harnessed for social reform programs. There is a need to address fully the funding requirements for important asset reform programs, which can reduce poverty in the long-term. In our earlier report, we decried the lack of funds for critical asset reform measures, and the lags in the disbursement of the Poverty Alleviation Fund, which were crucial to the success of the implementation of the program.

- And last and most importantly, the issue of the actual and potential conflict between government's commitments to the basic sectors and the implications of its economic policy on the poor remains to be addressed. The economic deregulation and liberalization programs of this administration have posed a threat to the security of life and livelihoods of

the basic sectors. Government has turned a blind eye to the conversion of agricultural land into real estate projects, which threaten the implementation of the agrarian reform program. The Mining Act continues to inflict harm on the sacred environment of the ancestral domains of indigenous communities. Innumerable cases of community displacement arising from so-called development projects have been reported by the basic sectors.

In summary, these issues heighten the urgency for the next administration to seriously pursue the continued implementation of the Social Reform Agenda, which matter has been legally mandated with the passage of RA 8425 or the Social Reform Agenda and Anti-Poverty Alleviation Act.

Our challenge, therefore, this coming election is clear: seriously, directly and immediately address the issues of social reform, so that this becomes a core component of governance. With the coming national and local elections as an ominous backdrop, we challenge the candidates to let social reform — and not only the much-ballyhooed promise of economic growth — be the litmus test of the next administration's capacity to govern for the benefit of the majority.

The Social Reform Agenda in the Next Administration

The implementation of the SRA should have institutionalized equity reform as a key strategy in the country's development framework. Unfortunately, the early drafts of the Philippine National Development Plan, or the country's 25 year development blueprint being developed by the National Economic and Development Authority in order to guide the next medium term plan, do not yet reflect this thinking.

What would be an ideal development framework?

We envision a prosperous Philippine society where the economy continues to grow while the majority simultaneously reap benefits from this growth. This economic development should be characterized by sustainability, equity, and meaningful participation of the people. This development should also be based on genuine political democracy where national sovereignty and human rights are defended and where political participation is maximized.

Our proposed framework for social reform thus puts equity reform at its center. This calls for the inclusion of an explicit strategy for asset redistribution and broadened political participation as a core component of the medium-term development plan. This plan should recognize the necessity of a comprehensive set of interventions, including a phased program of policy reforms, public expenditure and institutional development, and should prioritize the public policies to reduce poverty incidence and wealth inequity.

This Social Reform Agenda for the next administration should include the following aspects of equity reform (see Table 2 for matrix):

- Asset Reform is an important aspect of our advocacy. The distribution of resources would correct the inequitable distribution of resources in the country and provide the sustainable basis for uplifting the lives of the poor and marginalized. The importance of this thrust cannot be overstated; only with wide-ranging asset redistribution would the poor sectors be assured of their livelihoods and their proportional share of the benefits of growth and development in the long-term.
- Equal Representation and Participation is necessarily the other side of our advocacy. The lack of channels for participation in decision-making among the poor hinders the legislation and implementation of crucial reform measures to uplift their lives. Representation is not only a means but an end in itself: as the poor take part in the political process, they are able to exercise their full rights as citizens and to contribute to the sustainability of democracy and democratic institutions in the country. There are two aspects to equal representation: first, the strengthening of the rights of access of marginalized sectors of society, and second, formal representation in the appropriate structures of governance.
- Protection of the Security of Life, Person, Livelihood and Indigenous Culture, and Fortifying the Rights, especially of the marginalized sectors, against the imposition of violence, is an essential requirement of equity reform. Basic human rights of the poor and powerless need to be respected and defended. In situations such as the present, where the government can not guarantee the safety of the poor's lives and incomes, economic and legal safeguards have to be put into place. Indigenous culture has to be protected as an essential life-giving element of Philippine life, belief systems, and environment.

These reforms embody the commitments of the government made during various international social development and human rights conventions, such as the 1995 Social Development Summit in Copenhagen, and the promises made during the numerous social reform consultations initiated by this administration.

In our view, these main concerns are important aspects to be considered. We believe that the state has a strong role to play, despite the now-popular call for a “minimal government,” by both safeguarding the interests of the marginalized sectors and pursuing broad-based and equitable economic growth.

Asset Reform and Social Reform

These equity reforms include:

- The legislation of the basic sector-version of the National Land and Water Use Code integrating the principle of food sustainability in land and water use, including sectoral representation in a Land and Water Use Policy Administration and strengthening the Administration’s quasi-judicial powers, and imposing stiff fines and penalties for land use conversion and taxes on idle land.
- The distribution of the remaining four million hectares of targeted public and private land in the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform by 2004 should be guaranteed. Agrarian reform communities should be established nationwide to ensure the provision of support services. An executive order making the coconut levy fund a public trust fund for small coconut tenants and farm-workers should be announced.
- Provide amendments to the Fisheries Code which will ensure the exclusive access for small fisherfolk of municipal waters up to a 15 kilometer distance from the shoreline, creation of a Philippine Fisheries Commission which have substantial fisherfolk representation, limit Fisheries Lease Agreements to a period of 15 years, and the immediate reversion of unused fishponds and fishponds whose lease agreements have expired to their mangrove state.

Table 2: Draft SRA Policy Map for the New Administration
 (words in italics means legislation)

Asset Reform

Sector	Legislation and Implementation of Asset Reform Policy	Removal of Questionable Provisions in Existing Law
All Sectors	<i>Legislation of National Land and Water Use Code</i>	
Farmers	Implementation of the CARP (RA 6657); <i>Legislation of Coco Levy Bill</i>	Minimize scope of and increase time requirement for approval of conversion of agricultural land in the IRR of the Agri-Modernization Act
Fisherfolk	Amendment of the Fisheries Code	
Urban Poor	Implementation of the Urban Development and Housing Act (RA 7279)	
Indigenous Peoples	Implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (RA 8371)	Moratorium on FTAA's/mining projects
Women	Ensure equal ownership rights in all laws and executive orders	

Equal Representation/Participation

Sector	Anti-Discrimination/ Equal Access Policy	Representation Policy
Women	Implementation and assure substantial funding of requirements of Women in Nation-Building (WIN) Law (RA 7688)	<i>Legislation Reserving thirty percent of all government board/council seats for women representatives</i>
Persons with Disability	Implementation of the Accessibility Law (RA 344)	
Senior Citizens	Full implementation and Expansion of the Senior Citizens' Act (RA 7432)	EO creating a Commission on the Senior Citizens
Youth and Students	<i>Legislation of the Magna Carta of Students</i>	
Fisherfolk		Implementation of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils in coastal municipalities and barangays
Workers in the Informal Sector	<i>Legislation of the Magna Carta of Home-workers</i>	<i>Legislation creating the Bureau of Informal Workers Sector</i>

Equal Representation/ Participation

Sector	Anti-Discrimination/ Equal Access Policy	Representation Policy
Formal Labor	<i>Labor Code amendments to protect security of tenure; Dept. Order 9 amendments¹</i>	
All sectors	Provision of the full requirements of human capital services, particularly basic education and health, and proper targeting to poor households	<i>Strengthening Party List Law (RA 7941); Legislation of Sectoral Representation in Local Government; Appointment of Sectoral Representatives in Executive Bodies with substantial human and financial staff support and adequate powers; Sectoral Representation in the Formulation of Sectoral Medium Term Plans</i>

Note:¹ Which include permitting national unions and federations to file a petition for certification without the necessity of first forming a chapter or affiliate and recognition of legal personality of a local or affiliate by the mere issuance of a charter certificate of a duly-recognized national union or federation.

Security of Life, Person, Livelihood and Indigenous Culture

Sector	Law/Policy
Women	Strengthening Anti-Rape Law (RA 8353)/Anti-Sexual Harassment (RA 7877) Laws
Women and Children	<i>Legislation Against Abuse of Women and Children in Intimate Relations (Domestic Violence) and Against Trafficking of Women and Children</i>
Children	Implementation of Child and Family Courts Act (RA 8369); <i>Law strengthening rights of children in local adoption cases</i>
Farmers and Workers in the Informal Sector	Review of the Code on Rural Workers, to ensure security of tenure for small farmers
Urban Poor	Implementation of the PD 772 Repeal Law (RA 8369), including the dismissal of all pending cases of PD 772, and Urban Development and Housing Act; Development of Framework on Demolition
Workers in the Informal Sector	Implementation of EO Protecting Security in the Workplace for Vendors; Issuance of an Executive Order on the Occupational Safety and Health of Construction Workers in the Workplace
Indigenous Peoples	Recognition of indigenous culture and practices under RA 8371
All sectors	Program for displaced families, including enterprise development; Ensuring the ratification and implementation of international social development covenants

- The conduct of consultations among IP communities in the formulation of the IRR on the Indigenous People's Rights Act.
- Immediately delineate ancestral domain claims of IP communities nationwide. Declare a moratorium on the signing of Financial and Technical Agreements with local and foreign mining companies, and on the development of large-scale mining projects.

- The identification and distribution of socialized housing sites to the urban poor as mandated by the Urban Development and Housing Act (R. A. 7279). This would entail the provision and strengthening of enabling mechanisms for LGUs to implement R.A. 7279 including financing and guaranty assistance to LGUs for socialized housing programs and upgrading LGU capacity for land management.
- The protection and promotion of rights of women over lawful claims of land and water resources in all laws and executives orders, such as equal ownership of agrarian reform areas.

Sectoral Representation and Social Reform

The anti-discrimination and access calls include:

- The implementation of the provisions of the Women in Nation Building (WIN) Law which strengthen women's role through laws, policies and programs.
- Implementation of the Accessibility Law for all public buildings by constructing structures for persons with disability and senior citizens; infrastructure and the expansion of the Senior Citizens' Act to include health care and food subsidies for the elderly.
- Legislation of the Magna Carta for Home-workers which will codify the rights of domestic workers, including the right to just compensation and sufficient health care.
- Amending the Labor Code, to ensure the security of tenure of formal sector workers, and the Department Order No. 9 to include permitting national unions and federations to file a petition for certification without the necessity of first forming a chapter or affiliate and recognition of legal personality of a local or affiliate by the mere issuance of a charter certificate of a duly-recognized national union or federation.

We believe in the importance of ensuring the adequate provision of basic human services, particularly such as education, health and water services, in contributing to the poor's productivity and the capacity to provide opportunities for themselves. Investments in "human capital" are important redistributive tool to society, and thus becomes a core component

of equitable access to livelihood. Thus, we call for increasing the budget on social services, especially towards basic education and health, and for ensuring that these services are properly targeted to the lowest income households.

The call for formal representation of the basic sectors include:

- Establishment of local housing boards, either through legislation or executive order, to ensure the effective representation of the urban poor in the planning and monitoring of social housing programs and preparation of urban land use plans.
- Creation of the following agencies:
 - Commission on Senior Citizens which will oversee the programs to improve the welfare of elderly Filipinos.
 - Bureau of the Workers in the Informal Sector to ensure that the programs for vendors and other workers in the informal sector are properly identified and implemented.
- Creation of Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils (FARMCS) in all provinces, and coastal municipalities and barangays to ensure representation of small fisherfolk in the planning of and decision-making on the system for coastal and marine resources management.
- The enactment of an enabling bill, which will ensure sectoral representation of the basic sectors in local government legislative bodies, as embodied in the 1991 Local Government Code.
- Strengthening the party list law by increasing the number of Lower House seats allocated to sectoral representatives, ensuring that the allotment of this increase goes to basic sectors and raising the ceiling on the number of party list representatives that a party can get. A law should be passed assuring representation of the basic sectors in all national executive commissions and councils (especially those pertaining to the welfare of the poor and marginalized), including the reservation of 30 percent of seats to women representatives. These sectoral representatives should be provided equal powers as the regular members of the commissions and councils.

- Legislation of the Magna Carta of Students' Rights, which will include the protection from unreasonable search and seizure and the right to due process, and representation in all decision-making bodies in tertiary education institutions.

Protection of the Security of Life, Person and Livelihood and Indigenous Culture, and Social Reform

The security of life, person and livelihood advocacies include the following:

- Strengthening the provisions in the Anti-Rape Law, to provide crisis centers for victims, and Anti- Sexual Harassment Law, to widen the scope of the law, clarify the agencies monitoring the law and strengthen its penalties. Legislation to criminalize trafficking and pornography among women and minors should be passed.

- Laws should be passed against abuse of women and children in intimate relations.

- Implementation of the Child and Family Courts Act.

- The review and strengthening of the Code on Rural Workers should be reviewed to strengthen provisions on the security of tenure for agricultural workers. And the issuance of an Executive Order to direct national and local government units to rationalize and coordinate in the implementation of occupational health and safety of construction workers in their workplace.

- The strict enforcement of provisions of R. A. 7279 pertaining to demolitions by establishing a potent mechanism for preventing illegal demolitions which can discipline local governments. For projects involving relocation, urban poor communities must be represented in inter-agency committees overseeing and making decisions on these projects. All pending cases of P.D. 772, which has been repealed, must be immediately dismissed.

- For workers in the informal sector, the existing rules on subcontracting (Department Order No. 10, Series of 1997) should be amended since it further liberalizes subcontracting by allowing the contracting

out even of regular work and other kinds of employment, where the principal employer retains the right to control the means and the manner by which the work is done.

- Recognition of indigenous culture and practices such as community based management of natural resources and education and health practices.
- The implementation of a comprehensive program for displaced sectors, who have been victims of crop failures and land conversion in rural areas, and of urban demolition, to include training and capitalization for enterprise development.

International Conventions and Social Reform

Ensuring the ratification, implementation and monitoring of international social development agreements such as the International Labor Organization covenants on indigenous peoples, social clause, occupational safety and health and migrant workers, and the United Nations international covenants for women (Beijing conference) and shelter (Istanbul conference).

Social Services and Social Reform

We believe in the importance of the provision of basic social services as a basic responsibility of government, which needs to be addressed outside the SRA framework. These include micro-credit and livelihood training opportunities for all sectors, day care centers for women and children, rehabilitation clinics for persons with disability, employment centers for the youth and unemployed and scholarship programs for students. The government should view the provision of these services as a fundamental part of its responsibility to the citizenry, and thus should not address it as a reform program, as if it were granting concessions for implementing such public goods.

Resource Implications of the Social Reform Program

We affirm the importance of increased budgetary allocation for the social reform program thrusts cited above. In achieving this, the international norms for national and local government allocation for human development programs should be closely observed.

This would mean the following:

- inclusion of the full requirements of the various asset reform programs above in the 1998-2004 Medium Term Public Investment Plan (MTPIP);
- adherence to the United Nations norm of spending at least 20 percent of the national budget and 20 percent of ODA on human priority services, such as water, education and health, besides spending on the requirements of asset reforms;
- provision of five percent of the total budget to programs which improve the welfare of women;
- elimination of the budget allocation to executive and congressional “pork barrel;”
- consent to increased transparency of the national budget through the provision of regular reports to the basic sectors and allowing full access to records;
- reprogram of public subsidy programs to better reach the poorest thirty percent income households through improved means testing techniques and combination of various targeting techniques;
- implementation of tax measures, which both support the social reform programs and act as market mechanisms to improve resource allocation among income groups, such as progressive land conversion tax and a tax on idle lands;
- implementation of administrative reforms in revenue collection by curbing tax evasion and improving the country’s capacity to absorb official development assistance.

Institutional Implications of the Social Reform Program

The institutional implications of the next SRA would be as important as the programs themselves. The establishment of the NAPC would facilitate the implementation of the programs. But, our experience in the present SRA would call for confronting and resolving of the following issues.

First, there is a need for substantial assessment of government structures and the restructuring of the bureaucracy in order to better deliver

the programs and services as required above. Experience has shown that the integration of social reform programs in the programs of regular public agencies provides the best success stories in poverty alleviation. Also, a flexible, adaptable and innovative institutional base, mediating between multi-sectoral, multi-level and multi-disciplinary planning is important.

Second, there is a need to ensure the integrity and autonomy of the representatives of the basic sectors. This would include the recognition by government of separate decision-making processes among basic sectors involved in the NAPC, and the provision of quasi-governmental powers to basic sector representatives to assist in monitoring the implementation of asset reforms and social service programs. More effective accountability mechanisms should be created down to the local level so that decisions in the NAPC should be affirmed by the basic sectors.

Third, appropriate monitoring, reporting and evaluation mechanisms should be developed. The participation of the basic sectors in the monitoring of poverty alleviation programs, together with the development of appropriate criteria by which programs can be evaluated by them, through improved check-list devices rather than existing and mechanical analyses of program implementation, should be made.

Fourth, greater efforts should be made towards the effective and meaningful localization of the SRA. Information dissemination activities, such as the conduct of seminars and dissemination of popular posters, should be made to gather the support of local government officials. Workshops should be conducted to adapt the SRA program in the local level. Basic sector representatives should ensure that these activities are institutionalized by LGUS.

Conclusion: The Need for Broad-based Reform

In the light of the present problems of the country, whose effects are apparent to the majority of Filipinos, the country needs a comprehensive and convincing program to address poverty, inequity and lack of participation. The need for a comprehensive evaluation of the performance of the SRA and for planning its implementation in the next administration should be clearly emphasized. While the present administration has given the SRA a sufficient start, an enhanced program should be implemented by the next. Through our recommendations, the issues of good governance, which have been plaguing the country for a long time, can be eventually addressed and only then will we realize a progressive and egalitarian Philippines. ❁