

The Philippine Poverty Line: Does it Really Tell Us Who is Poor?

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There is a need to challenge official poverty discourse. For one, official poverty estimation in the Philippines is based on arbitrary assumptions that keep the poverty threshold low, thereby reducing poverty incidence. In a country of high inequality and where the differences in incomes of a large swathe of the population are generally small, the placement of a poverty line underscores its conceptual and methodological weaknesses. The arbitrariness of this measure also has implications on how anti-poverty interventions and targets are conceptualized.

This paper outlines a number of possible options in dealing with the limitations of the poverty line approach which includes introducing the notion of a poverty zone to make targeting more inclusive. Furthermore, it points that greater efforts should be placed towards developing universal delivery of social services, including social protection programs.