



Analysing the effectiveness of policies and programs for sustainable development in the Philippines

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Abstract In the modern era it has been found that the Philippines has been facing many environmental issues and as a result introducing effective policies for sustainable development has become a necessity. The present research has observed some of the problems that the country has been facing before discussing the potential that sustainable strategies possess for the country as they can help in building vital ecosystems and respect the overall environmental quality of the country. The research has discussed past policies of the Philippines and the new Philippine Development Plan (PDP) and AmBisyon 2040, both of which aims at implementing political leadership into their programs and projects for promoting sustainability, the policies will also be helping with ensuring inclusive and equitable education while creating opportunities for the people to improve their economic conditions.

Keywords: Philippines, sustainability, development, strategies, environment, policies

1. Introduction

The Philippines is one of the fastest-developing countries in East Asia, and environmental sustainability has been a critical concern within the country for a long time; however, internal problems such as poverty, pollution, environmental degradation and urbanization prevent the Philippines from making its practices sustainable. As an agricultural country, a large portion of the population is dependent on agriculture, forestry and fisheries for their livelihood; as a result, climate change poses a severe threat to the environment. The Philippines government has taken significant steps over the years with policies such as the “Renewable Energy Act in 2008, Climate Change Act in 2009, and National Greening Program in 2011”, all of which aimed at reducing the use of fossil fuel in the country and making practices within the country more sustainable. The present research revealed these existing policies along with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) and AmBisyon 2040, both of which plan to help the country transition toward renewable energy sources and reduce carbon emissions to improve reforestation efforts. Understanding these policies and initiatives will open new possibilities and help both communities and businesses adopt greener practices.

2. Struggles Faced with Sustainability in the Philippines

Studies show that the modernistic idea of sustainability emerged from developed capitalist societies and is supposed to represent the middle class. In this context, it can be argued that the rhetoric for economic growth goes against the modes of social development for developing countries. Despite sustainable development for the growth of communities, policymakers and environmentalists have not successfully engaged people from different demographic groups (Beasy, 2020). Mikulčić et al. (2020) suggested that integrating energy, water and sustainable environmental systems is essential for sustainable growth; however, the problems that can arise from these issues need to be addressed for the preservation of resources for future generations. While policies are necessary to ensure the sustainable development of the nation, economic assessment of the different kinds of technologies is equally important for making better decisions. While the Philippines has certain challenges with pollution and heavy dependence on fossil fuels, these can be addressed through the introduction of electric grids and better waste management. The Philippines does not have energy transfer limitations due to its wide availability of resources; by addressing these problems, the country can transition toward a sustainable green economy.

In their research, Collera (2021) carefully mentioned that the Philippine archipelago has more than 7461 interconnected islands, and as the population of the country grows every year, there is a rising need for continued economic development. The overdependency on coal, oil and other fossil fuels has been mentioned to identify the unstable energy security experienced by people and the problem of sustainability. While the country has been working to discover

sustainable alternatives, geothermal and hydropower have been dominating the renewable energy markets in the country. Hydropower is the energy generated from falling water into reservoirs; the water that falls on blades generates electricity, and the abundance of rainwater in the country makes this kind of energy alternative sustainable. However, problems with hydropower include the passage of a large amount of water to spillways, which results in erosion, landslides and flooding, running the lives of nearby communities. Sustainable development within the country can only take place with a proper supply of energy; however, the dependency of the Philippines on unreliable power infrastructure and unstable electricity continues to create problems for development.

Figure 1 shows the problems with sustainability in the Philippines. A survey carried out in the Philippines revealed that health, lack of economic opportunities and inadequate access to education are among the leading issues that prevent sustainable development within the country (Statista, 2023). Poverty and inequality among people have led to moderate economic growth within the country, increasing risks of natural disasters, economic crises and conflicts among people. According to the Environmental Performance Index (EPI), the Philippines has ranked 158 among the 180 nations, and poor waste management and a rise in deforestation have caused significant issues for the country. While the government has introduced several policies to make practices greener, innovative technologies play an important role in making sustainable lifestyles for people (Billion Bricks, 2023). The World Bank (2022) has pointed out the problems that climate change can bring to the lives of people living in the Philippines and how it can hamper the lives of people belonging to the upper middle class. However, the country possesses tools and instruments that are required for reducing the damage caused by sustainability.

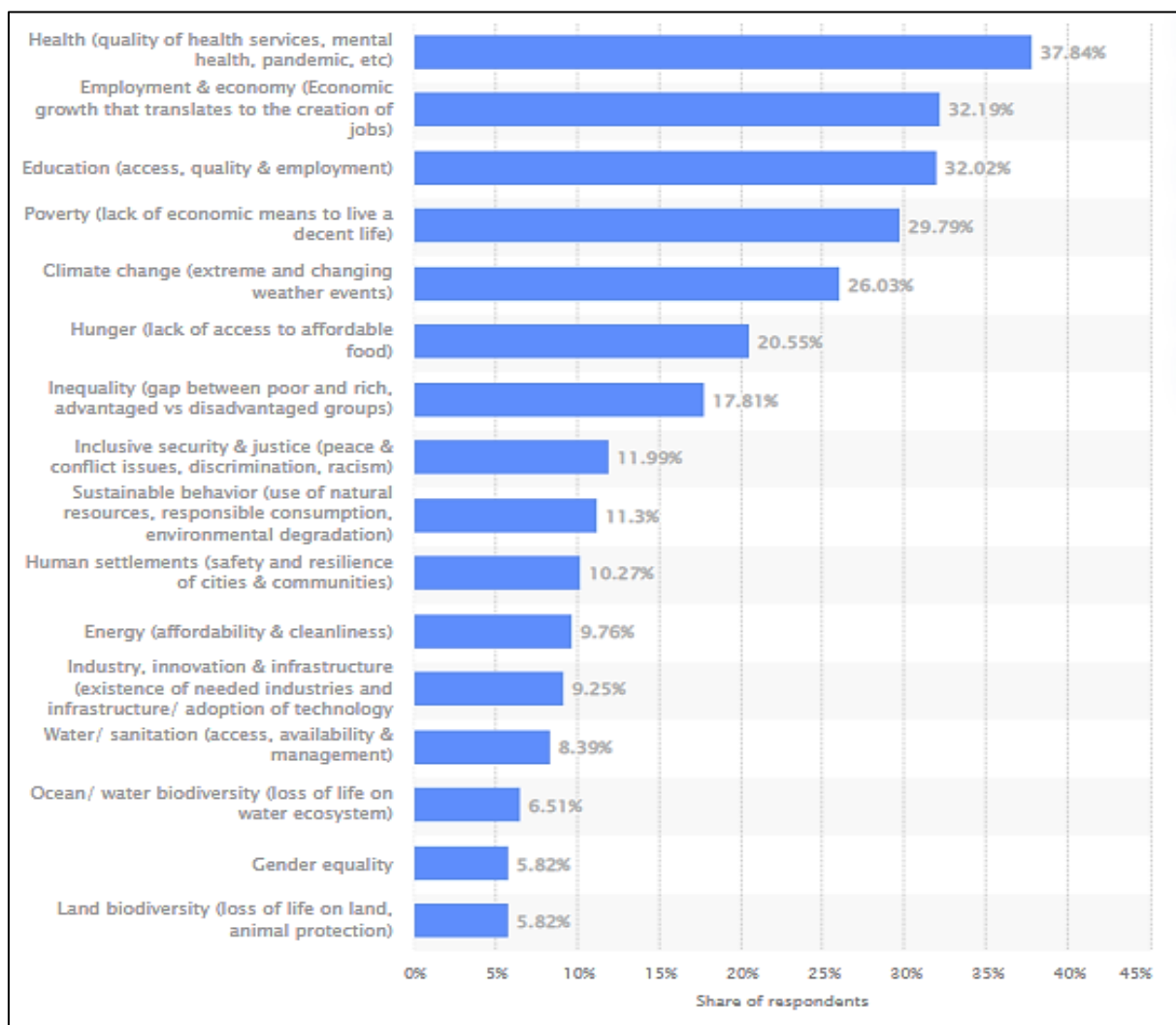


Figure 1 Problems with Sustainability in the Philippines. *Source:* Statista, 2023.

Figure 2 shows the income inequality and poverty in Asian countries. The research carried out by Ratnawati (2020) has shown a reduction in GDP growth for the Philippines, with a rise in both income inequality and the ratio of poor people living in the country. The findings of the study prove the need for the financial inclusion of these people to increase stability. As the Philippines is one of the fastest urbanizing countries in East Asia, it is also the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. The Climate Resilient Cities (CRC) initiative can help in making cities more resilient, conserving and restoring the environment.

Through different locally led sustainable practices, sustainable incomes and livelihoods can be provided to people to improve environmental conditions and contribute to sustainable development within the country (US AID, 2023). The Philippines faces challenges with water security as the population continues to grow, and introducing deficient wastewater management can help resolve these issues and increase access to sustainable water resources for the people. The rapid growth of cities without sustainable practices has led to environmental degradation, a lack of inadequate housing and a rise in unemployment within the country; without addressing these issues, environmental issues and sustainable development cannot be achieved.

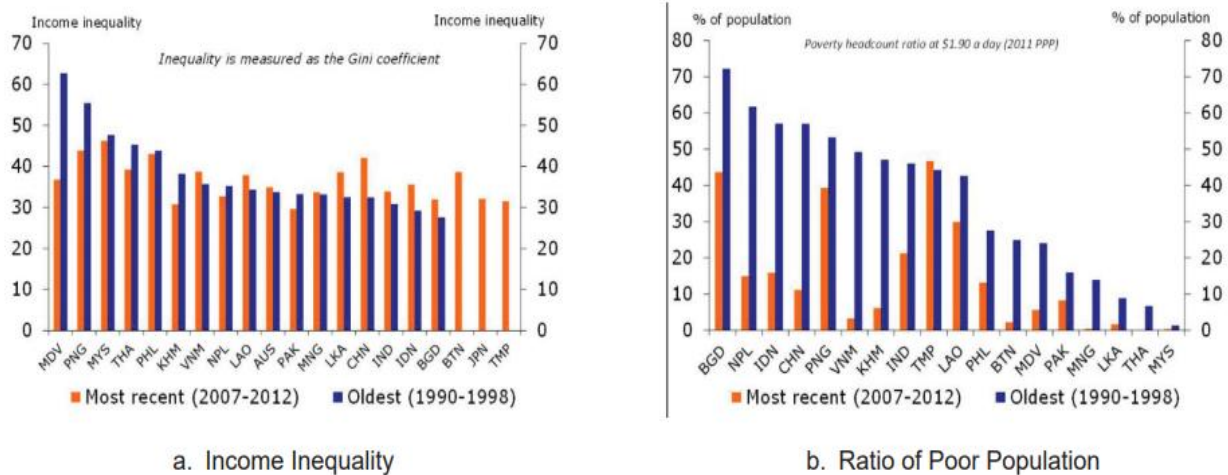


Figure 2 Income Inequality and Poverty in Asian Countries. *Source:* Ratnawati, 2020.

3. Policies for Supporting Sustainable Development Goals

The Philippines has employed government and societal approaches for the implementation of sustainable developmental goals within the country. The Renewable Energy Act in 2008 was one of the first in this context to focus on the benefits of using renewable energy as an energy source for the country. The policy has been successful in accelerating the exploration and development of different renewable energy sources in the country, particularly in the fields of biomass, solar, wind, hydro, geothermal and ocean energy. This policy has not only reduced the reliance of the country on fossil fuels but also contributed to the growth of different energy resources (Rosellon, 2017). The policy has contributed to different organisations achieving energy self-reliance and developing strategic programmes that can increase the utilization of renewable energy. The trust fund developed by the government contributed to the greater utilization of renewable energy.

Another policy introduced by the Philippines government to address growing concerns about sustainability was the Climate Change Act in 2009. The focus of this policy has been to reduce the negative impacts on the climate while integrating different disaster risk reduction practices into business practices and measuring climate change adaptation plans. The act was observed as landmark legislation, as it was the first of its kind within the country that directly dealt with the problems of climate change. The policy has helped with strengthening the existing government initiatives and ensuring that they work in coordination to help with the implementation process. The policy not only impacted government-level problems, as it included the public and different businesses for the formulation and establishment of frameworks that could aid the country in its fight against climate crises (Eisma-Osorio, R. L., & Estenzo-Ramos, 2015). The strategy successfully identified the different problems with security, sustainable energy, environmental stability and food security among different services that could help with knowledge and development of the Philippines.

The third policy for sustainable development introduced by the Philippines government was the National Greening Program in 2011. This policy mainly aimed to plant 1.5 billion trees across an area of 1.5 million hectares to regain the lands that have been lost in the country for increased deforestation. Previous reforestation attempts have not been successful due to poor-quality seedlings; however, the government ensured that high-quality seedlings were planted for operation. The government mandated that the seedlings be collected only from accredited nurseries, and different community groups from the government and private sectors participated in the initiative (Gregorio et al., 2017). The program successfully ran from 2011 to 2016 to cover the forestlands; in 2019, the program was extended until 2028 to cover the remaining forestlands. The initiative has been successful in improving environmental stability and continuing with the biodiversity conservation initiatives of the country.

Among the recent policies set out by the Philippines government, the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) is perhaps the most important, as the policy aims at transforming the country over the next 6 years, reducing poverty and reinvigorating job creation within the country. The main barrier noted within the research is the lack of access to proper healthcare and education, and as a result, this shared vision of the government needs to be met by the people (Cuenca, 2021). The country

also aims to use plans for reducing GHG emissions while supporting the development of a green economy within the Philippines. To adapt to changes within society, the government will need to be able to generate new jobs that increase economic growth for people and improve their quality of life. Studies have shown how the PDP initiatives were localized in the Philippines in an attempt to enhance the requirements and conduct better monitoring and evaluation for national development.

The AmBisyon Natin 2040 is another initiative launched by the government of the Philippines that aims to create inclusive growth opportunities for the country while upgrading governing institutions to make use of sustainable methods for achieving this vision. The vision states that by the year 2040, the country of the Philippines will be able to become a prosperous middle-class society where there will be no one poor, which will create a high-trust society, and the vision of the government will be achieved through sustainable development that does not compromise nature to protect the interests of future generations (Lopez et al., 2019). Setting long-term sustainable goals has therefore been an environmental necessity for people for effective health research systems. This new government initiative has the ability to strengthen the country and build sustainable means such as reorganization and decentralization to make protocols more people-centered to encourage all members of society to participate in the initiative.

4. Analysis of Policies for Sustainable Development in the Philippines

The significance of any policy lies in its ability to achieve sustainable development. In this context, in 2008, the Renewable Energy Act wanted to make the country transition to self-sufficient energy by almost 60%, and although the policy has not been successful, it has been found that it paved the way for innovation across multiple sectors in the Philippines and created new potential for commercialization. The government has successfully provided fiscal and nonfiscal incentives to different merchants performing in the Philippines to adopt renewable energy in their business practices (Pojadas & Abundo, 2021). The Climate Change Act of 2009 has been effective in the formulation of different strategies and programs that can help with climate change protocols at both the national and local levels. The policy was amended in the year 2011 for the creation of the People's Survival Fund (FFTC Agricultural Policy Platform, 2014). The Philippines has been successful in analyzing the level of risk and vulnerability associated with climate change and encouraging affected communities to participate and reduce poverty potential through cost-effectiveness and sustainability policies to help with climate change action plans.

Among the recent policies of the country, the PDP initiatives can be understood as a blueprint for the government, where the priorities of the government have been listed to carry out future projects and programs by adhering to sustainable development goals. Studies carried out on the success observed by the PDP have shown that there has been an increase in directions that lead to proper implementation of sustainable development. The local government bodies of the Philippines have been successful in establishing specific and achievable targets (Guillermo, 2023). The collaboration between the different stakeholders has increased since the introduction of this policy, as it has led to success for the organization as a whole. It can be argued that the success of collaboration initiatives is based on the value of reciprocity; in this context, the development plan of the country has brought people together from multiple sectors to strengthen local governance and make way for sustainable development within the country.

The AmBisyon Natin 2040 is considered to be effective for sustainable development because the ambitious project aims at bridging the gap between people and eradicating poverty in the country. Support from the government is needed to catalyze social support and strengthen the capabilities of the policy. The policy is positioned to influence different government frameworks in the country for future development and policy-making within the country for formulating subsequent development plans (Lamberte et al., 2019). Sustainable development in the Philippines can only be achieved when people in the country are lifted out of poverty, the problems that people face within the country are highly complex, and the policy has the potential to solve these issues and support sustainable development.

5. Conclusion

As concluding remarks for the present research, it can be observed that the Philippines has several potentials for achieving economic growth, protecting the resources of the country and bringing about environmental equality. The problems that the country faces with pollution, deforestation and rapid urbanization have been analyzed within the research to show the benefits of sustainable development within the country. The potential of renewable energy sources in the conversation and success of different policies has been presented in the research. Some of the environmental and social policies of the Philippines have been analyzed to show the economic growth potential and ways through which environmental integrity can be maintained.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

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