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Submission

Application

Participant: Philippines Team

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS:

As you consider which initiative to put forward for the Open Government Awards, please consider the following questions:

(1) Does the initiative seek to improve a public policy or service?

● Yes ○ No

(2) If yes, does the initiative seek to improve the ability of citizens to provide feedback and/or to make decisions in the design or implementation of a policy or service? For examples of initiatives, see: http://www.opengovguide.com/topics/citizen-engagement

● Yes ○ No

If you have answered "Yes" to BOTH of these questions, please proceed with your application.

A. THE TEAM

The following information is required to capture a basic understanding of those responsible for your initiative and any partnerships that have helped you to meet your goals.

INITIATIVE NAME (required)

Provide the name of the initiative that your team is submitting for consideration by the judges of the 2014 Open Government Awards (under the inaugural theme, Citizen Engagement). If the initiative is operating under one or more alternate name(s), provide the name that is most commonly recognized.

Grassroots Participatory Budgeting (also referred to as Bottom-up Budgeting)

THE NOMINATION (required)

Begin by describing how this initiative was selected. For example, mention any nomination or consultation process held with civil society partners or others when selecting the initiative. Please offer your explanation of this process in 200 words or less.

Selection for the our nominated initiative was done through the Philippine OGP Steering Committee, which guides the implementation of OGP in the Philippines. It is composed of representatives from government, civil society and business. The CSO representatives in the committee conducted an online consultation with more than 20 CSOs that participated in the OGP Regional Conference in Bali, Indonesia. While 2 other programs were nominated, more than 70% of those who responded recommended this initiative given its scale and impact. Based on this recommendation from CSOs, the Phl-OGP SC agreed to nominate this initiative.

GOVERNMENT POINT OF CONTACT (required)

Provide the name and title of a single point of contact for the purposes of communicating with your team. The person should be the most senior individual responsible for overseeing the application submission. Provide the phone number(s), email address(es), and physical address of your designated point of contact. You may provide alternate contact information, if it is a direct means for reaching the designated point of contact.

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CIVIL SOCIETY POINT OF CONTACT (strongly recommended)

We strongly encourage applicants to submit a joint application from a government agency and a civil society partner. If submitting a joint application, please provide the name and title of a single point of contact *at the partner organization. If not, please be sure to focus on the "validation of claims" in Section B (see pg. A-3).*

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OTHER PARTNERSHIPS (optional)

If you are partnering with one or more other government agencies, private sector entities, media, or other organizations, please list each partner. In 250 words or less, provide a brief narrative of the partnership, including the roles that each partner assumes in the initiative.

The program was designed by four national agencies (Budget and Management, Local Government, Social Welfare, and the Anti-Poverty Commission) which serves as the program's executive committee. These agencies are led by Secretaries who come from civil society and are staunch advocates for deepening people's participation in government. They decide on the program's policies and supervise its implementation.

Thirteen national government agencies also participate in the program as implementing agencies that provide funding, technical assistance and oversight in the implementation of the priority projects identified through the program.

The participation of all city and municipal governments (totalling 1,634) and community organizations/civil society groups in these localities is the foundation of this program. Local governments and civil society groups must cooperate and work together in identifying priority poverty reduction projects that they will collectively propose to national government for funding. Proposals that are not mutually agreed upon by local government and civil society representatives are not accepted by national government.

Civil society networks at the national level, such as CODE-NGO, have also been instrumental in improving program implementation by providing feedback to policy makers, providing capacity building assistance and helping cascade information to local CSOs.

In addition, the World Bank and the Australian Embassy are providing technical assistance in conducting external monitoring and evaluation studies of the program's implementation. However, the program itself is fully funded by the Philippine government and is not supported by any multilateral or bilateral loan.

B. THE INITIATIVE

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is prepared to celebrate a range of successful applicants to the Open Government Awards. This year's theme is "citizen engagement." To qualify for recognition, we need to understand the various elements of success for your initiative and its sustainability over time.

PROBLEM DEFINITION (required)

In 200 words or less, please identify the specific problem your initiative intended to solve. Why was this problem important to solve at a particular time and for the particular context in which you are working?

While our constitution and various laws mandate people's participation, decision-making on the allocation of government resources has remained to be an exclusive exercise of government. At the national level, many departments (or ministries) conduct little or no public consultation on the design of their programs and their distribution across the archipelago. A very centralized decision making process has led to:

- mismatch of what government provides to some localities and what is actually need;
- lack of transparency in projects that are being implemented by government on the ground; and
- patronage-based resource allocation at the national and local levels (based on political affiliation rather than common public good)

At the level of local governments, mechanisms such as local development councils have been created by law to enable the participation of civil society organizations in crafting the local government development plans. However, most of these councils have not functioned as intended because they are either not convened or civil society representation is chosen by the mayor.

The lack of transparency and participation over the distribution and use of government resources has led to poorly designed and poorly implemented projects. In many cases, these have become opportunities for corruption as well.

TARGET POPULATION (required)

In 100 words or less, please identify the target population who may benefit from this initiative. Highlight your understanding of the needs or demands of the target population that were *addressed by your initiative.*

1) Organized community and civil society organizations are given a vote in the allocation of the national and local budgets. Priority community projects that they identify together with their local governments will be funded and implemented leading to more responsive and improved service delivery.

2) Local governments will also improve their capacity through the provision of additional funding and technical assistance from national government. Better performing local governments will benefit their constituencies.

3) Civil society is given the opportunity to better organize themselves and enable them to be a stronger countervailing force to the dominant political culture.

INITIATIVE DESIGN (required)

In 350 words or less, describe your initiative's goals and objectives. Focus specifically on how the initiative was designed to meet those objectives. For example, identify stage(s) of the policy/service design or implementation when you solicited citizen participation. What kind of participation did you seek from citizens (e.g., feedback, consultation, joint decision-making, monitoring of activities, etc.)? Explain why this particular approach was best suited to achieve the initiative's goals. How did you encourage citizens to participate? Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

The initiative seeks to:

- Improve government service delivery through participation
- Improve capacity and governance of local governments
- Empower citizens

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING
National government has committed at least US$350,000 for each city/ municipality for the implementation of priority projects identified through a participatory planning and budgeting

process. Local governments also provide counterpart funding.

The program goes beyond mere consultation as decisions are made through a body composed of 50% government and 50% CSO representatives. CSO representatives are elected through a city/municipal level assembly. National government does not accept proposals that are not signed by CSO representatives. The importance given to CSOs in this process and the projects that are implemented as a result have encouraged more than 8,000 organizations to participate in the program.

PROJECT MONITORING

The CSOs are expected to meet quarterly with their local governments to monitor the progress of project implementation, during which they can discuss concerns and issues. In addition, provincial level CSOs have been tapped by national government to conduct an audit of the planning process and the implementation of projects. At the same time, civil society networks engaged in the program, such as CODE-NGO, have been conducting independent assessments and have been regularly providing feedback to the managers of the program.

IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND GOVERNANCE

By implementing more projects with the assistance and oversight of national government, local governments will increase their capacity to implement projects and provide better public services.

The program also seeks to deepen the practice of transparency and accountability among local governments by tying the release of the additional funding to their attainment of minimum governance conditions (budget transparency and proper fiscal management) as assessed by the Seal of Good Housekeeping program being implemented by the Department of Interior and Local Government. Local government should also implement a Public Financial Management Improvement Plan with assistance from the Department of Budget and Management.

EMPOWERMENT

At the heart of the program is empowerment. By providing citizens with an experience of participatory governance that leads to results, citizens will be empowered and demand for good governance across government.

INITIATIVE OUTCOMES (required)

In 250 words or less, describe the intended outcomes and the actual outcomes that the initiative achieved. Who were the ultimate beneficiaries, and what benefits did they experience? For example, list any concrete improvements in policy, services, behaviors, or power relations between the government and citizens. Try to present your case from the perspective of the various stakeholders involved (e.g., your agency, citizens, Civil Society Organizations, media, et al.). If there are any baseline indicators or standards to measure the outcomes of the initiative, such as the breadth of depth of engagement, please describe them in detail.

The program intends to institutionalize the practice of participatory planning and budgeting and improve local governance. It has proven to be effective in changing local government behaviour. Previously opposed local governments have started engaging CSOs and they are also more conscious about obtaining the Seal of Good Housekeeping.

CSOs have shared that the program has expanded the space for engaging local governments. Even rich local governments are forced to give importance to the program because of demand from their constituents.

National government has also become more transparent and accountable. The first year of implementing projects was slow, creating much frustration among stakeholders. While an adjustment period for national government was expected, this did not make the experience of national agencies in confronting complaints from civil society and local governments less agonizing. While this is a problem, it is also a sign of progress. In the past, local governments and citizens did not know what was provided to them in the national budget. If projects got implemented, they would be grateful. If the projects did not get implemented, no one would complain because no one knew.

Frustration levels have since subsided as the pace of project implementation has improved. As of first quarter of 2014, 64% of the 6,000 projects identified for the 2013 budget are now completed or have visible physical accomplishments on the ground.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)

In 200 words or less, please describe any plans for scaling up and/or sustaining the initiative in the future. Base your description of the strategy on information provided in the previous sections, such as how you intend to leverage your current success and increase your reach or capacity. Address any threats or operational challenges to your initiative and describe how you intend to manage those risks on a regular basis.

The program has a multi-pronged strategy for sustainability. First, coverage was rapidly expanded from 30% of local governments in the first year to all local governments (numbering 1,634) by the third year. This was a conscious decision to create strong and widespread demand for the program.

Second, a robust monitoring and evaluation system is being implemented to ensure timely intervention and availability of evaluation data.

Third, constant stakeholder engagement (local governments, politicians, national agencies, civil society, academe and media) is being undertaken to address program issues and expand political support for sustaining the program. Legislation institutionalizing the program is already making progress in Congress.

Finally, it is important to go through several more cycles of the process to create an expectation and demand from stakeholders, making it politically costly for any politician to put the brakes on this program.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS (required)

While it is strongly encouraged that each initiative includes partners, such as Civil Society Organizations, private sector agencies, media entities, etc., it is not a requirement. However, you are required to secure and upload documents from one or more credible nongovernmental actors who can attest to the veracity of any claims made in your application.

You are only allowed to upload one file. If you have multiple documents, please zip them into a single file first. The file types that are allowed to be uploaded have an extension of .ZIP, .PDF, .DOC, .DOCX, .XLS or .XLSX.

OGP Validation of Claims.zip

C. THE PITCH

The following information allows each applicant to make their strongest (and final) case for consideration.

BEST CASE (required)

In 250 words or less, please present the most compelling facts for why your initiative should be recognized. This is an opportunity to distinguish your initiative, based on any factors that you have not had the opportunity to describe in the previous sections. What is your best argument for why your initiative has achieved a meaningful outcome? What elements of the initiative make it different and better than others, that have been tried and tested? Be creative and concise.

After only three planning cycles, the Grassroots Participatory Budgeting program has resulted in major changes in critical government processes. All local governments are now engaging civil society and community organizations. More importantly, engagement is not merely through consultation, but rather through joint decision-making. The right mix of incentives are used to encourage local governments and civil society to work with each other. The process has resulted in 6,000 projects in 2013 (amounting to over US$200 million) and 19,000 projects in 2014 (amounting to over US$500 million) that are now being implemented across the country.

While participatory budgeting is not new, it has never been implemented at this scale and at this level. The program is being pushed by national government using national government funds and implemented across 100% of all local governments.

There are early signs that the program is creating increased demand for participation and accountability from civil society and citizens. This bodes well that the program will have a positive impact on its primary objective: Citizen Empowerment for a Better Government.

VIDEO SUBMISSION (recommended*)

OGP does not offer a venue for applicants to meet our judges during the application process. In order to provide the opportunity for making a personal connection, you are encouraged to upload a short video to complement your application. You may also depict an individual participant in your initiative and describe his or her experience. We do not need to know actual names or personal details. Take this opportunity to tell a story, to connect with our panel of experts, so that they might better understand your attention to specific needs.

Video submissions should follow these guidelines:

- Maximum length of 3-4 minutes.
- Please focus on personal presentations; it's not necessary to develop a sophisticated or polished video.

Here are some logistical and technical suggestions:

- Video cameras, digital cameras, and phones are easy ways to record a video.
- Laptop and desktop computers can typically record video through Skype or other software.
- If possible, set to a low resolution to reduce file size. This will enable an easier video uploading process.
- If you are having difficulty uploading the video file, try logging out of the application and logging back in using another Internet browser.

Here are general suggestions for delivering a high-quality video pitch:

- Include the following:
  - Introduce yourself and your initiative.
  - Focus on describing your intended benefits and/or services and how they have been effective.
  - What is unique about your initiative, partners, or technical approach?
- Hone your content:
  - Keep your description and language simple.
  - Demonstrate passion through your words and enthusiasm.

*If the burden of developing a video presentation is either prohibitive or might not reflect the best characterization of your initiative, then you are not required to submit one, and the judges are instructed not to discount your application because it may not include a video. We hope that this option offers a new and inventive way in which you can best express the results of your work.