



CODE-NGO E-news May 2010

In this issue of the **CODE-NGO e-news**, we bring you:

- **Constitutional Reform after the May 2010 Philippine Elections**
- **The Filipinos Deserve a Transparent and Accountable Government: Ratify the Freedom of Information Bill!**

Constitutional Reform after the May 2010 Philippine Elections

The Coalition for a Citizen's Constitution (C4CC), of which CODE-NGO is a member, finds new hope in the recently held national and local elections last May 10, 2010. With new political leaders voted into office, it would be possible to push for long term structural reforms in the government. The attitude of the next administration on the issue of constitutional reform is crucial. C4CC advocates for a federal form of government to give way to a more decentralized governance. This structural reform in the political governance of the country requires a change in the fundamental law of the land.

It is clear that C4CC would face several challenges in engaging with the new administration. First, there is a need to find the appropriate time to push for charter change - when the people have attained some level of confidence that the newly elected leaders would not use it to advance their own personal political agenda. Second, there is a need to further educate the public about the importance of constitutional reform, and to build credible champions for federalism to advance the decentralization of powers in our country. And finally, there is a need to make sure that the pro-poor and social reform provisions of the current constitution are preserved and upheld.

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The Filipinos Deserve a Transparent and Accountable Government: Ratify the Freedom of Information Bill!

It is not yet too late!

After almost a decade of disillusionment, distrust and deep frustration with government, the Filipino people have shown a reignited spirit of active citizenship as thousands volunteered to help ensure clean and honest elections and millions braved long lines under the intense heat of the sun to cast their votes. The results of the elections also show the public's deep yearning to stamp out rampant corruption from government and move towards change and improvement in the lives of the Filipino people.

Many painful and difficult reforms will have to be undertaken by the next administration and this will require the continued active citizenship of the people. Government must see the public as a partner in reform and in the fight against corruption. It must equip the public with tools to facilitate their effective engagement with government.

One such tool is access to information, a guaranteed right by the constitution that has not been effectively exercised due to the lack of details for its implementation. The Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill addresses this to enable citizens to gain full access to public information. The legislation has already passed the bicameral conference committee and has been ratified by the Senate. However, the House of Representatives and its leadership failed to deliver on its commitment to

ratify the FOI Bill before Congress recessed in February 2010 for the elections.

Last Gasp of Hope in the 14th Congress

There is still hope for the passage of the Freedom of Information Act in the 14th Congress when session resumes on May 24, 2010. The rule giving privileged status to Bicameral Conference Committee Reports in the consideration of business remains applicable to the FOI Bill. With the political will of our elected representatives, the Freedom of Information Act can be ratified by the House of Representatives, and transmitted immediately to the President for enactment into law. If enacted, the Freedom of Information Act will no doubt be a historic and lasting legacy to political reform by the 14th Congress.

Thus, we call upon Speaker Prospero Nograles to lead the House to put the Freedom of Information bill first in the order of business on May 24, before they convene as Board of Canvassers, to ratify it and transmit it immediately to the President for signing into law.

We also call upon Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr., having been voted President by an overwhelming number of Filipinos on a platform of transparent and accountable government, to use his mandate and exert leadership to rally support for the ratification of the Freedom of Information Act in the House of Representatives.

Signed on May 21, 2010 by:

CODE-NGO
Association of Foundations (AF)
Coalition for Bicol Development (CBD)
Central Visayas Network of NGOs (CENVISNET)
Eastern Visayas Network of NGOs and POs (EVNET)
Mindanao Coalition of Development NGO Networks (MINCODE)
Partnership of Philippine Support Services Agencies (PHILSSA)
Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resource in Rural Areas (PHILDHRRRA)
Western Visayas Network of Social Development NGOs (WEVNET)

Share your news for next issue

We are interested to hear about social development initiatives of non-profit organizations from all over the Philippines. If you are interested to share your news or resources through the **CODE-NGO e-News**, we invite you to submit your contributions to caucus@code-ngo.org. Materials should not be more than 1MB and can be in Open Office, MS Word or PDF format. To subscribe or unsubscribe to **CODE-NGO e-News**, or for any comments, e-mail us at caucus@code-ngo.org. To know more about the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO), visit us at www.code-ngo.org.

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