



National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL)

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Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) holds Asia Regional Workshop on Engaging Citizens to Fight Corruption

by Eric Jude O. Alvia, NAMFREL Secretary General

As part of its partnership with the PTF through the Medicine Monitoring Project, NAMFREL along with other Philippine NGOs, participated in a regional peer learning and knowledge sharing workshop on Engaging Citizens Against Corruption in Asia. The event was sponsored by PTF in collaboration with its Indian partners the Public Affairs Center, CUTS-International and Transparency International.

The four-day workshop held in Jaipur, India on November 29 to December 2, 2011 brought together Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from nine Asian countries and anti-corruption experts from all over the world. The workshop also featured results from over 30 case studies and four country programs.

Governance and anti-corruption experts from the PTF, World Bank, Transparency International and other organizations presented good practices in helping citizens fight corruption. The participants underwent sessions amongst peers and experts discussing a variety of topics related to Good Governance, funding strategies, sharing of best practices, innovations in engaging media and new technologies for anti-corruption programs.

The 2011 Asia Regional Peer Learning and Knowledge Sharing Workshop's intents are to 1) Foster peer learning and networking among PTF grantees and other CSOs outside the current PTF grantee community on engaging citizens against corruption projects; 2) Enhance the capacity of participants through interactive expert presentations and break-out sessions on topics prioritized with participants' inputs and based on participants' case studies; 3) Promote and stimulate participants' awareness on global good practices in citizen engagement; and 4) Document and share workshop proceedings with all PTF grantees as well as the broader community of social accountability practitioners in Asia and around the world.

Interactive and participatory workshops were conducted that generated content on the basis of participants' own anti-corruption project experiences. This had been supplemented by participants' project reports that serve as a basis for the experts session papers and presentations.

Five common and relevant anti-corruption topics and themes identified were covered at the workshop. These were:

1. Strategies for empowering communities to demand good governance in public service delivery and increase responsiveness of service delivery of public services.
2. Analyzing and exposing corrupt practices in government and public sector programs and developing results driven anti-corruption programs.
3. Advocating anti-corruption policy and legislative reforms

4. Creative and innovative engagement of media in anti-corruption projects
5. Increasing capacity of CSOs for helping citizens in a sustainable manner, raising funds and measuring and communicating results.

The Philippine country case presentation dealt with experiences and learnings from various PTF-supported local anti-corruption initiatives. These included the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCAGG) (Namfrel-Abra's) road monitoring project; G-Watch's school book and school building procurement monitoring; Davao Procurement Transparency Core Group's local & national procurement and spending monitoring; Evelio Javier Foundations' strengthening local mechanisms for an effective public procurement process; EcoLink's local government & national agencies motor vehicle fleet management monitoring; and NAMFREL's medicine procurement, delivery & stock management monitoring.

CGMA and Abalos: From one case to another

After her being on hospital arrest at the Veterans Memorial Medical Center for electoral sabotage case in relation to the 2007 elections, the lawyers of former President and currently Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo have resigned upon request of their client. Father and son lawyers Jose and Albert Flaminiano and Laurence Arroyo filed before Pasay RTC Judge Jesus Mupas a motion to withdraw as legal counsels of Rep. Arroyo. Only Atty. Benjamin Santos remains as counsel to represent Arroyo in the electoral sabotage case. CGMA requested the three lawyers to concentrate on the graft cases at the Sandiganbayan.

Meanwhile, Pasay RTC Judge Jesus Mupas issued a warrant of arrest against former Comelec Chairman Benjamin Abalos and his lawyer Brigido Dulay on charges of contempt. The presiding judge on the electoral sabotage case asked the respondents to explain why they should not be held in contempt for their accusations that the judge extorted money from them in relation to favorable decisions on the case. Abalos is currently detained at the Southern Police District headquarters in Taguig City. Abalos filed before the court several motions including inhibition of Judge Jesus Mupas, motion to bail and house arrest, which are yet to be resolved by the court.

Incidentally, CGMA and Abalos are also co-accused on two counts of graft case filed by Bayan Muna Party list Rep. Teddy Casiño in relation to the botched NBN-ZTE deal. The case is under the jurisdiction of Justice Gregory Ong of the Sandiganbayan.

Arroyo and Abalos are facing two counts of violations of Republic Act 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and Republic Act 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees before the Sandiganbayan in connection with the \$329-million National Broadband Network-ZTE contract together with Abalos.

In a resolution, the Sandiganbayan issued a hold departure order against Arroyo and her co-accused in the graft case. This will prevent them from leaving the country without the court's permission.

Second generation politicians in Zambales' special election

On February 4, 2012, more than 200,000 voters in the province of Zambales will see no new faces in the special election for the second congressional district. The special election was set by Comelec upon the request of the Provincial council of Zambales to replace Rep. Antonio Diaz, who died last year.

The second district of Zambales covers the capital town of Iba and the towns of Botolan, Cabangan, Candelaria, Masinloc, Palauig, San Antonio, San Felipe, San Narciso, and Santa Cruz.

The possible candidates for the special election are Rica Diaz, daughter of the late Representative Antonio Diaz; Cheryl Deloso-Montalla, daughter of former Governor Amor Deloso; Jun Omar Ebdane, provincial administrator and son of Governor Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.; and Board Members Wilfredo Pangan and Alfred Mendoza. According to Comelec, Ebdane, being an appointed official, should first resign before filing his certificate of candidacy. Filing period will be from January 16-18, a day before the campaign period which will be from January 19 to February 2.

The province is also under the Comelec imposed gun ban which started on December 14, 2011 and will last until February 14.

Based on the Comelec guidelines, any private individual, incumbent officials or political candidates are prohibited to carry firearms and hire armed personnel during the congressional election.

The conduct of the election, for which the Comelec has yet to decide whether to use the PCOS machines used in 2010 or to revert to the manual system, will be supervised by Comelec Commissioner Christian Robert Lim.

Comelec initiates steps to uphold transparency

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) en banc promulgated Resolution no. 9307, otherwise known as the "Code of Conduct Governing Procurement Activities of the Commission on Elections". The resolution emphasized Comelec's staunch commitment to uphold transparency and efficiency in its procurement process.

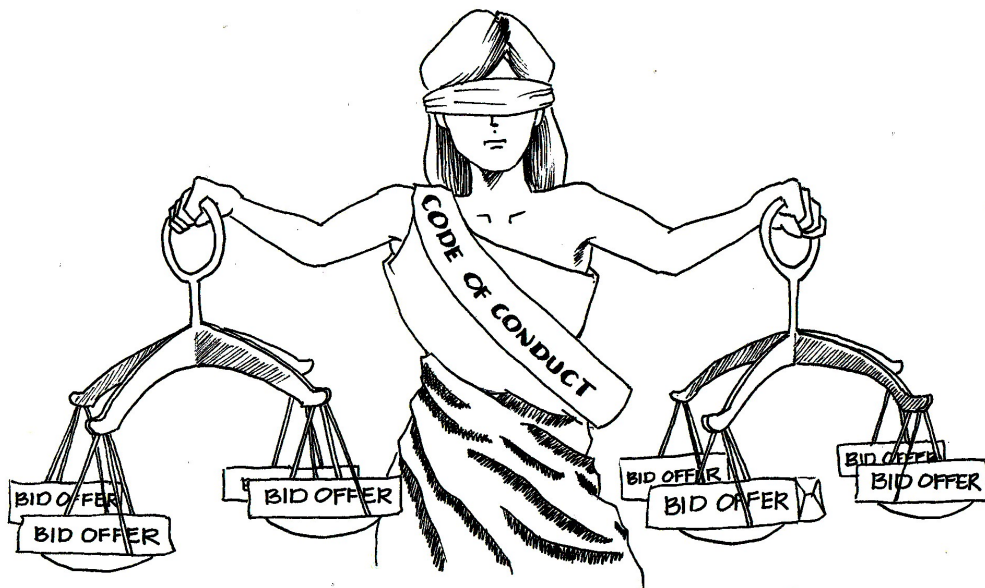
The resolution stressed, among others, that the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) members and personnel should maintain independence and integrity by not accepting any form of "gift, favor or benefit" from any potential bidder or supplier. This helps to ensure that the proceedings being carried out by Comelec officials serving as BAC personnel are free from any forms of influence, thus maintaining credibility in carrying out their tasks. The resolution further pointed out that all personnel involved in carrying out the functions of the BAC should adhere to Comelec's commitment to public interest, which entails wise and efficient use of government resources thus avoiding unnecessary expenditure.

Since October 2010, Namfrel has been invited by the Comelec BAC to send a representative to observe their bidding process. Aside from Namfrel, the BAC also invites observers from the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN), Procurement Watch Inc. (PWI), Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), the Commission on Audit (COA), and the resident Ombudsman. Resolution no. 9307 puts an exclamation mark to Comelec's transparency advocacy.

From an observer's perspective, as far as the evaluation of bid offers is concerned, the bidding process of the election commission is getting grounds in terms of making official transactions open to the public to witness. Apart from the notices they send for the procurement activities (pre-bid conference, opening of bids), the BAC is also posting notices of awarded contracts on their website for the interested public. With the current steps that the BAC undertakes in performing their mandate, it is possible for Comelec to prove that it can uphold credibility and transparency in its transactions apart from procurement.

However, translating the code of conduct into doable actions requires genuine commitment by officials and

personnel involved to uphold the objectives of the code. The role of the civil society organizations (CSOs) now is to help ensure that the commission adheres to the code they set for themselves. For reference, a copy of Resolution No. 9307 can be accessed at: <http://goo.gl/kISQE>.



COMELEC PROCUREMENT

Sarmiento
20 JAN 2012

Assailed Imus Mayor appealed to Comelec, denied

Former Imus, Cavite mayor Homer Saquilayan's appeal for a temporary restraining order (TRO) from the Commission on Elections (Comelec) was denied. Saquilayan filed for a TRO after his appeal was rejected twice by the Imus Regional Trial Court (RTC) branch 22. The Comelec First Division headed by Commissioner Rene Sarmiento denied the petition.

Judge Cesar Mangrobang of the RTC came with a decision granting losing candidate Emmanuel Maliksi's appeal for a manual review of the results. After the ballots were reviewed, Mangrobang issued a resolution reversing the result of the election and proclaimed Maliksi as the winner. The votes for Saquilayan were nullified on grounds that they were found to be "stray votes." In the May 2010 elections, Saquilayan won over Maliksi by 8,499 votes. After the manual review, Maliksi edged Saquilayan by 665 votes. The incumbent mayor's camp and party-mate, Cavite Third District Representative Jesus Crispin Remulla dubbed Mangrobang as "biased" for not acknowledging that the ballots that were contested, including the ballot boxes, were tampered before the review started.

Saquilayan's hopes to remain as mayor now grew dim as Comelec junked his petition for a TRO. Maliksi was reported to have assumed his position as the mayor of Imus, after Saquilayan was given until December 27, 2011 to relinquish the post for Maliksi.

It was reported that the ousted mayor has conceded, but is not giving up the post just yet, and will even take the case to the Supreme Court for appeal. There were also reports that the Imus police heightened the security in

line with the development of this protest case. Saquilayan's supporters held a vigil on December 27, 2011, and the police officers since then have been on the look to avoid any untoward incident. The supporters eventually left the municipal hall peacefully.

GALLERY



Manang Pura Sumangil, Chairperson of Concern Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG) and NAMFREL-Abra presenting a case study on road contract implementation and maintenance monitoring during a conference - workshop on Engaging Citizens Against Corruption in Asia held last November 29 to December 2, 2011 in Jaipur, India.



Sen. Aquilino Pimentel III, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Electoral Reform and People's Participation, discussing amendments to the Omnibus Election Code; Voter's Registration Act; Fair Elections Act and the Automated Election Systems Law with representatives of NAMFREL, Philippine Computer Society and Transparency International-Philippines in a committee hearing last December 6, 2011.



COMELEC Chairman Sixto Brillantes, Commissioners Robert Lim and Augusto Lagman and Director Ferdinand Rafanan during a Multi-stakeholders Roundtable Dialogue on the 2013 Elections conducted by AESWatch, CenPEG, NAMFREL, UPITTC last December 13, 2011 at the University of the Philippines Information Technology Training Center.

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