

## **NHDR Write-Up: VDA Practitioner Course on Human Development**

### **The 2005 National Report**

By Andrew Villanueva (Office of Human Resources, Bureau of Management, UNDP New York)

The Philippine Human Development Report 2005, the 5<sup>th</sup> and latest report since 1990, was reviewed for the purpose of this assignment. It should be noted that comments posted on this was from the perspective of a student based in Headquarters.

The PHDR was authored with the objective of highlighting the challenges faced by the society in its fight against armed conflict and insurgency. Its overarching topic is Peace, Human Security and Human Development in the Philippines with a focus on Mindanao, the southernmost region of the country.

The contentious ideologies of the various types of population in the region have paved the way for decades-long arms conflict which in turn has successfully denied development and progress that could have abounded Mindanao. This deprivation has led to regional unrest, armed conflicts and political protests which have undermined progress in the areas of economic growth and national development. The population has suffered from widespread poverty which has eventually denied people of their rights to education, economic independence, justice, political freedom and identity. The near non-existence of their rights has even led to demands for an autonomous region to the extent of being a separate state.

In its effort to recommend solutions to the above, seven alternative operational strategies were presented with an 8<sup>th</sup> suggesting to 'undertake human development investments for their own sake'. This suggests that HD, in the form of human security, must serve as an instrument in ending the conflict. The socioeconomic policy reforms aspect of it is presented as a primary means to address the deprivation in health, knowledge and other provisions in the region. And to better understand why the report seems to have zeroed in on this reform, one needs to understand that widespread poverty especially in the rural areas is a challenge that has faced the Philippines in many, many years. Poverty has co-existed with the lives of the Filipinos for the longest time. Through the years, studies have shown that the response of poverty to economic growth lags behind than those of its Southeast Asian neighbors, particularly Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam. Even though, historically, poverty indices of these countries have measured lower than the Philippines, they have in recent years surpassed the country's level.

While there is no argument to the recommendations presented in the report, more discussion on assessing the Human Rights standing of the country could have been presented. While the government has generally respected the rights of its citizen, there still exists much weakness in exercising the rule of law, official impunity and most importantly, the wide gap between the rich and the poor (which contributes to social injustice). The national government with the assistance of civil-related organizations and institutions must take the lead role in the promotion of human rights especially in the Mindanao region where it has been reported that violations remain frequent. While dialogues and attempts to legislate national policy on peace are in the process, the lack of HR will continue to 1) sideline the peace process and 2) negate the efforts in improving the human development of the region and the country as a whole.