

PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR THROUGH THE “*EHEM*” ANTI-CORRUPTION PROGRAM

A COUNTRY PAPER

By: ERODITH A. VERTUCIO
Associate Project Officer III
Development Academy of the Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Anticorruption through good government is one of the key reform packages that Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in her recent State-of-the-Nation-Address (SONA) this year strongly pointed out. In Chapter 21 of the Philippine Medium Term Development Plan (MTPDP), which is titled “Anti-Corruption”, the document categorically supported the President’s call in combating graft and corruption.

Over the years, initiatives against graft and corruption in the Philippines have included administrative measures, legislative action, and greater people participation. Progress has been made in the last three years to enhance transparency and accountability in the public sector as well the effectiveness of sanctions against corrupt behavior, although there is still a lot to be done. Recently, 16 government agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups have joined forces in investigating the morality and lifestyle of government officials to gather evidence of graft and corruption. On March 20, 2003, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed creating the “Lifestyle

Check Coalition.” The coalition pools the expertise, resources and manpower of its members in identifying leads, gathering information and prosecuting accused public officials.

The following case presentation complements the efforts of the different sectors in promoting transparency and accountability in governance as well as in the promotion of quality and productivity awareness in the public sector.

OBJECTIVES

Towards the end of the project case presentation, the participants would have:

- Defined and discussed good governance vis-à-vis productivity enhancement in the public sector;
- Determined the role of the Development Academy of the Philippines in promoting good governance through the principles and practices of transparency and accountability especially in the pursuit of productivity enhancement in the public sector;
- Identified training and advocacy as workable strategies of the Academy in promoting good governance for productivity enhancement in the public sector.

THE ACADEMY and THE PROJECT CASE

The Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), established in 1973, is a government-owned and controlled corporation under the Executive Branch of the Republic of the Philippines. The Academy's mission is to build capacities and partnerships among the key sectors of Philippine society; generate innovative, value-adding, and synergistic solutions to national and local concerns; and join hands with the international community in promoting sustainable human development and global competitiveness. To achieve this mission, DAP implements projects (training and education, technical assistance, consultancy, research, advocacy and publications) for government, particularly national line agencies, local government units, and government corporations. It also undertakes projects for the private sector, namely: international donor agencies, private corporations, non-government organizations, and the academe. Since 1973, DAP has been the national productivity organization (NPO) of the Philippine Government. As NPO, DAP fulfills the country's commitment to the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) in promoting productivity in the Philippines. It spearheads the development of productivity consciousness and promotes the principles, techniques, and practice of productivity and quality in key sectors of the economy.

The Academy's programs and projects cover six focus areas, as expressed in its 2002-2012 Strategic Plan: governance, productivity and quality, knowledge management, sustainable human development, democratic reform, and

development education. The Academy has identified as one of its major thrust the promotion of productivity and quality consciousness as well as improving transparency and accountability in the entire public sector. It is presently undertaking promotion and advocacy of productivity and quality consciousness in local government unit through the Philippine Quality Awards (The Philippine Quality Award is the highest level of national recognition for exemplary organizational performance. It promotes productivity and quality excellence by providing an internationally comparable framework and criteria for assessing performance and recognizing quality excellence).

The DAP is presently providing technical assistance to the Anti-Corruption Swift Action Team in developing the National Anti-Corruption Program of Action (NACPA) through the participation of the different stakeholders.

The Academy, through it's Mindanao Office, sits as a member of the Technical Working Group of the "EHEM Anti-Corruption Program in Government". The committee spearheads the drive against corruption in the government sector in Mindanao and is constantly planning and implementing advocacy and training activities, adopting the "Ehem anti-corruption framework.

PROJECT CASE BACKGROUND:

The sentiment to reduce if not totally eradicate graft and corruption has been a great concern in most key sectors in the society. The church in particular has

been very sensitive in this aspect. To this effect the Society of Jesus-a religious congregation in the Philippines has convened the Committee on Evangelization of Culture, which was mandated, to ways by which significant interventions can be made in transforming not only socio-political and economic, but also the cultural dimension of people's lives. The Committee has then chosen to focus its work in the issue of corruption. It is through this noble task that the "EHEM" intervention is born.

"Ehem!" is a voice of protest that calls attention and makes one's presence known before others. It is a gesture to grumble, to confront, and to resist corruption. It is a gentle but powerful sound to caution and make one's presence known, which brings forth some sense of embarrassment among those who will commit corruption". It is also a nondidactic but confrontational signal that calls the attention of people, especially those who have the propensity to commit corruption. "Ehem" is a guttural pitch that deters or discourages the commission of corruption.

The EHEM! Anti-corruption intervention is a tool for making people more seriously sensitive and bothered about corruption and more deeply involved in combating it at the individual, group and institutional levels.

For this purpose, the EHEM framework and philosophy is continuously promoted and integrated in the public sector, in all regional line agencies, government

organizations and institutions, government owned and controlled corporations and local government units, especially in the Mindanao areas. On June 3, 2003, then Presidential Assistant Jesus G. Dureza issued Memorandum Circular 001 series of 2003 adopting the anti-corruption framework of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus. In his circular he urged all local government units, regional line agencies, and government-owned and controlled corporations in Mindanao to actively support or initiate activities along anti-corruption. Further, the Memorandum particularly endorsed the use of “*Ehem! A Manual for Deepening Involvement in Combating Corruption*”, prepared and published by the Committee on Evangelization of Culture of the Society of Jesus, which offers valuable reference materials for greater sensitivity, and understanding of corruption as it is experienced in Philippine society to inspire active involvement in addressing it at the individual, group and institutional levels. The Ehem! Intervention looks at graft and corruption prevention through a cultural dimension.

ROLE OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

By virtue of abovementioned MC, the inter-agency *Ehem!* in Government Technical Working Group (TWG) of which the **Development Academy of the Philippines –Mindanao** Office is an active member, was created to **spearhead the drive against corruption in Mindanao and to plan for the advocacy and training activities adopting the *Ehem* framework and Manual**. The Committee which acts as a coordinating body is composed of the following: the Office of the President- Mindanao, Office of the Ombudsman – Mindanao,

Development Academy of the Philippines in Mindanao, Department of Education, Civil Service Commission, Department of Local and Interior Government, National Commission for Indigenous People, Office of Muslim Affairs, and Mindanao Economic Development Council. The Office of the President – Mindanao, serves as convenor and secretariat of the Technical Working Group.

On November 2005, MC 001 series of 2005 was issued to expand the representation and participation of the inter-agency *Ehem!* in Government Technical Working Group to the private sector to further strengthen the implementation of the anti-corruption program in Mindanao.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since its creation, the inter-agency Ehem! in Government Technical Working Group has been actively and continuously pursuing its drive against corruption. One major accomplishment of the TWG is the conduct of the ” **Trainers’ Training on Promoting Good Governance through the EHEM Program,**” which was designed and managed by the Development Academy of the Philippines. It was participated by all TWG members. In a nutshell the EHEM training program discussed the EHEM framework which is the following:

1. EXPERIENCING Corruption

Bringing the participants to undergo the process of feeling through, and actually immersing them in a reality exercise on the problem of corruption.

It is intended to primarily level off on the notions, definitions and the current state of corruption in the Philippines.

2. **ANALYZING** the cause and consequences of corruption, which brings the participants to a higher level of analysis.
3. **REFLECTION**, which brings participants into a serious reflection on the cultural value systems that reinforce and perpetuate corruption, as well as look into the personal roles and involvement in the commission or prevention of corruption.
4. **APPLICATION and ACTION PLANNING**. Participants craft their personal and team plan through the application of their learning's in combating corruption in their personal and organizational lives.

Among the TWGs annual activities is the ***Multi-Sectoral Forum*** such as the ***“Lifetystle Check”*** and the ***“Curbing Corruption in the Land Transport Sector.”*** .

The following interventions are still in the proposal phase:

Filipinos Who Tell the Truth – a multi-event activity which will showcase hopes, visions and dreams for a better tomorrow of the young Filipinos. All activities revolve around the central idea of the Filipinos truthfulness and trustworthiness.

Sustaining the Gains of Good Governance and Integrity-driven workplace through the Appreciative Inquiry mechanism - Taking at a more positive, and

affirmative stance towards prevention of graft and corruption is the use of the APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY as one mechanism that looks not at the gaps or the problems on corruption in the workplace but more on the inventory of mechanisms, resources, systems or policies that are promotive of transparency, accountability and integrity in the workplace. Meaning, it focuses on what is present (e.g., performing or productive employees, proven efficient financial and accounting and procurement systems, performance-friendly work policies, sustained positive feedback of management practices, etc) and put more premium on these positive aspects that are considered as building blocks of integrity and productivity in the workplace.

Currently, the TWG through its series of meetings and discussions had been continuously exploring, identifying and hopefully would cause the institutionalization of certain mechanisms that either would eradicate and/or prevent graft and corruption in the government organizations and institutions specifically in Mindanao and hopefully enhance government productivity.

OBSTACLES and ISSUES and RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are few of the obstacles and deterrents in the implementation of the TWG projects and its corresponding recommendations:

Financial Constraints – The TWG has no sufficient financial resources to fund its programs and projects. Even how noble the intentions were, it's more often

constrained by the lack of financial resources. Although the Office of the President through the Mindanao Economic Council, provides meager fund allocation purportedly for meetings, small activities, etc. The proposed activities mentioned earlier are still on the process of being proposed for possible funding by some government organizations, similar programmes and donor institutions.

TWG Stability – The TWG is just a committee, which anytime can be dissolved. There is a strong need to firm-up its organizational set-up and functions as well as the need to fund its activities, its operations, programs and projects. The TWG must have a strong support from all government agencies, most specially from the Office of the President. It must find its rightful place in the entire governmental structure.

RESULTS or EFFECTS of the CASE

The training and advocacy of the EHEM anti-corruption framework has considerably gained a widespread acceptance and integration in the Mindanao-based government institutions. Few of the EHEM TWG facilitators and trainers have already conducted replication training programs and advocacy in their respective offices, and to a certain extent, there was a significant reduction of the graft-related cases in the Office of the Ombudsman (*the office that takes charge on the prosecution of corrupt government officials and employees*) in Mindanao.