

## **G**overnment **W**atch: **CITIZEN MONITOR OF GOVERNMENT PROJECTS**

Government is too important to leave to bureaucrats. Year in and out, government agencies implement projects to improve the quality of life of Filipinos. Many of these projects are funded by official development assistance (ODA) and loans from multilateral and country financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), and the World Bank (WB).

With such huge amounts involved, it should be taken as a matter of course that the projects deliver the designated quantity of outputs, within schedule and budget, and at the specified level of quality. Sadly that is not the case. In 1998, the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) spent PhP70 million under the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) to build two classrooms. PhP35 million per classroom. The amount represented the commitment fees that the government paid to the World Bank. Commitment fees are like storage fees. We paid PhP70 million to the World Bank to store our own money.

The following year, the Philippine Government paid the World Bank US\$26 million in commitment fees. The amount could have easily built 4260 classrooms that could have accommodated 213,000 schoolchildren. Alternatively, it could have funded the printing of approximately 18,570,000 textbooks.

All these point to poor project management by government. Since citizens are the ones being asked to shoulder the burden of paying the principal, the interest rate, not to mention the commitment fees, it is only appropriate that they monitor what is happening to their money, if the projects that they are funding from their pockets are indeed running and delivering the outputs. Hence, the need for a Citizen Monitor of Government Project, G-Watch

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## **What is G-Watch?**

G-Watch is a civil society-initiated monitoring system of key government projects. It is one of several components of the *Philippine Governance Framework* (PGF), a collaborative project undertaken by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Ateneo School of Government (ASG), and the Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs (ACSPPA).

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## **What are the Objectives of G-Watch?**

### **G-Watch seeks to:**

- Monitor the performance of key government projects implemented by selected government agencies;
- Communicate the findings to the government agencies involved and to other important stakeholders.
- Using the findings, to facilitate problem solving sessions among the agencies and stakeholders concerned in order to improve project performance.
- Develop project monitoring tools and techniques that citizens' groups can use on the local level.

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## **How Does G-Watch Operate?**

G-Watch went on its first run in 2000. The key projects of three government agencies were monitored. The three agencies were: the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS), the Department of Health (DOH), and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). Projects selected represented major agency mandates. Monitoring was done in three of the main islands of the Philippines: Mindanao, Visayas, and Luzon.

The project's advisory committee and the research team headed by Ms. Patricia Sto. Tomas (now Secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment) solicited cooperation from and jointly identified the projects with the agencies concerned.

G-Watch fielded researchers to visit agency offices to obtain and review documents and went to the field to do actual inspection and interviews with key informants.

Before publicly presenting the findings, G-Watch solicited the comments of the different agencies. The findings were presented in a forum attended by government officials, Ateneo School of Government faculty, and civil society personages at the Ateneo Professional Schools in Rockwell, Makati on December 1, 2000.

For Phase II, G-Watch has been recognized by the Department of Budget and Management as an external monitoring arm of the government. Key programs and projects of Department of Education, Department of Health and Department of Public Works and Highways were monitored for the second run.

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## **What is the Relevance of G-Watch?**

- G-Watch is not an exercise in impact evaluation. G-Watch evaluates project outputs and not outcomes. G-Watch is not meant to replace or supplant internal government monitoring mechanisms.
- G-Watch is useful as an expenditure tracking tool. Is the money budgeted going to the specified inputs or not? Is it being used prudently? Is government getting its money's worth?
- G-Watch is a logical complement to perception/popularity surveys. Is the popularity of a government agency/official matched by performance?
- G-Watch is a forum where different government agencies and civil society interact to agree, refine, and ponder on the findings and discuss issues regarding project and their institutional context.
- G-Watch can be used as a multi-sectoral project problem identification and troubleshooting tool.
- Overall, G-Watch is a mechanism to promote transparency and citizen's participation in governance. It is a learning tool and experience towards a more performance-driven rather than personality-based governance.