

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL NOW!

Largest network of PH CSOs slams anomalous flood control projects, calls for transparency, accountability and reform

The Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO), the largest network of non-government organizations, people's organizations, and cooperatives in the Philippines, joins the nation in condemning the mismanagement, irregularities, and anomalies plaguing government-funded flood control projects throughout the country – the worst public scandal since the Pork Barrel Scam.

The ongoing investigation on this controversy by the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as recent exposes by media organizations and local government units, unveiled numerous ghost projects, license renting schemes, monopolies by contractors allied or affiliated with certain political personalities, misalignments between project distribution and the actual susceptibility of localities to flooding, and substandard construction.

These probes also revealed major lapses in stakeholder participation and engagement in local flood management, from inadequate consultations with local government units to the lack of citizen participation in different stages of the project development and management cycles for our flood control projects. On top of these issues, the brazen display of wealth by contractors and lawmakers linked to the said projects, as well as that of their spouses and children, affirm the remorseless corruption at the heart of the controversy.

As actual lives, property, and public funds are at stake, CODE-NGO calls on the national government to go beyond optics and grandstanding and ensure that heads will roll in their effort to hold perpetrators to account. The network likewise stresses the importance of upholding public transparency, social accountability, and people's participation in public works, a sector that is highly susceptible to corruption, and other projects that are imbued with public interest and consequential to social development. Promoting open governance will ensure that government projects capture public concerns and grievances and respond to the actual needs of vulnerable communities and sectors.

With the country's flood mitigation strategy needing widespread reforms, the network would like to propose the following to the national government:

- Convene a citizen's commission comprised of non-government organizations, people's organizations, cooperatives, members of the academe, media, and private sector, representatives from flood-prone areas, and auditors that can initiate a genuinely independent probe on the ongoing flood control projects controversy
- Direct the Securities and Exchange Commission, Philippine Competition Commission, and Anti-Money Laundering Council to aid in investigations against unscrupulous

contractors and their patrons in government and engage non-government organizations, people's organizations, cooperatives, and representatives from flood-prone areas in monitoring these efforts, scrutinizing contractors working with government, and developing reforms to strengthen social accountability in the public works sector

- File charges against public officials, contractors, and bank officials and employees found liable for various irregularities in the country's flood control projects, and blacklist companies involved in the said anomalies
- Remove flood control projects and other public works projects from the national budget that lack due diligence and proper planning
- Direct the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Economy, Planning, and Development, Department of Finance, and Department of Environment and Natural Resources to revisit the country's flood mitigation and management strategies and ensure the meaningful participation of non-government organizations, people's organizations, cooperatives, and representatives from flood-prone areas in such review, as well as the formulation, monitoring, and evaluation of future plans
- Proactively disclose information on the country's flood control projects and other public works and strengthen and institutionalize participatory mechanisms, e.g. third-party tripartite (government-business-CSO) monitoring of public works projects, citizens' participatory budgeting and audit, consultation with local development councils before DPWH projects are finalized and implemented, to ensure transparency and accountability in all stages of the project development and management cycles for flood control projects and other types of public infrastructure
- Develop a comprehensive and evidence-driven flood management framework and masterplan aimed at fostering anticipatory action, long-term community resilience, and environmental protection and conservation

We likewise call on foreign investors and international development agencies to suspend funding and support for government infrastructure projects that lack sufficient safeguards against corruption.

While the extent and depth of greed seem daunting, it is not a force of nature beyond our control. CODE-NGO asserts that abuse by the powerful can be checked and corrected by the power of the people. History has many warnings for those who refuse to heed the voice of their people. From the People Power uprisings of 1986 and 2001 to the Million People March in 2013, the country has witnessed, time and again, the force of a vigilant people fully aware of its true strength.

Corruption kills communities! Accountability saves lives!
Accountability, transparency, justice, and reform – NOW!