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PREFACE

I WISH TO CONGRATULATE the Human Development Network on the completion of the third Philippine Human Development Report. This effort reaffirms a remarkable dialogue on social issues and human development that has been carried on for many years now between civil society organizations and the government. Without denying that some differences over policies may be possible, this dialogue has nonetheless helped in no small measure to create a common language and basic understanding among government and civil-society development planners and practitioners alike.

The Philippine government fully shares the fundamental idea that lies behind human development, which is that the main concern of development should be people, and that, following A.K. Sen, the true measure of progress lies not simply in the magnitude of wealth created, but in the human capabilities and functionings that the majority of people achieve. The current Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 1999-2004 ("Angat Pinoy 2004") in particular gives prominent place to the Human Development Index (HDI). With its express concern for the poor, this administration in particular experiences no qualms in using the HDI and other social indicators as yardsticks for the evaluation of its own performance by the people.

Indeed, the present Report physically embodies the fruits of civil-society-government dialogue and cooperation. The essay in this volume by my Cabinet colleague, Secretary Andrew Gonzalez, FSC, is a valuable and authoritative response to current issues raised in the education sector. In addition, I note the active involvement of the National Statistical Coordination Board in the generation of the statistics on human development across provinces, which provides researchers, development workers, and government planners alike with a useful criterion for classifying areas by development levels. The work of generating the HDI has thus now passed from experiment to policy, and this is to be lauded.

The theme of the present Report, on raising the quality of public education, is the very thrust of the chapter on social reform and development in the government's current medium-term plan. The government recognizes the deterioration in quality in public education and is determined to take steps to remedy it. As a matter of fact, a Presidential Commission on Educational Reform has been created to take a closer look at the current state of education and draw up the education reform agenda of the present administration. I therefore applaud the aim of this publication in wishing to stir up much-needed substantive discussions on education reforms, not only in the boardrooms of planners and other officials, but in classrooms and around family dining tables. Education is an issue that affects all families and their future, and people should be encouraged to express their preferences and take a hand in its design and implementation. People, after all, are both the subject and the agents of change, and government can ignore this only at its own peril.

FELIPE M. MEDALLA
SECRETARY
SOCIOECONOMIC PLANNING

FOREWORD 1

UNDP WARMLY CONGRATULATES the Philippines Human Development Network for producing the third Philippine Human Development Report. The Philippines has the distinction of being one of the very first countries to produce a national Human Development Report and one of the few which, through the efforts of the Human Development Network, has pursued the continuing production of the report every two to three years as advocacy for placing human development at the center of the country's development debate.

The theme of Education for the third Report is timely. The United Nations, working with and through member governments, is in the process of reviewing the global commitment to *Education for All*, 10 years after 155 countries and 150 organizations made a pledge in 1990 in Jomtien (Thailand), to work for universal primary education and massive reduction of illiteracy before the end of the decade. The Presidential Commission on Education and recent sector policy work by the World Bank highlight serious concerns with performance in the education sector. Overcoming these constraints is critical to the country's future if it is to succeed in bringing down poverty, facing the challenges of globalization, and taking advantage of the tremendous opportunities of technological advancement.

Education is a fundamental right of all people — women and men — and is at the core of human development. It is an effective equalizer of economic and social opportunities for people. It is the foundation of an enlightened and free society. The Philippines fully recognizes this and, as a nation, has put a premium on education, as reflected in its impressive enrollment rates — both for boys and girls; the high percentage of public expenditure allocated to basic education; the large number of private educational institutions all over the country; and the priority given by families in their budgets to children's education. The nation's investment in education, however, has not translated into full income potentials as shown by low growth in per capita incomes — as the report quotes: "If we're so smart, why aren't we rich?"

The Report draws attention to a number of serious concerns, including, among others, the quality of inputs to education and low achievement levels for critical areas of learning, the relevance of learning to the context of living, the increasing gap between public resources and the rising demand of a rapidly growing population, and the unevenness of access and quality among the provinces. A 1996 international survey that found the performance of Philippine students to be among the bottom performers is indeed cause for concern. If the nation is to become effective in global competitiveness, its human resources are perhaps the single most important asset in creating the base for such a capability.

We are also very pleased that the Report has once again been able to produce the Human Development Index (HDI) for all the provinces. We hope the results will prompt the local government politicians and officials to find ways to raise the relative level of the HDI in their provinces as a goal for their respective communities.

We greatly appreciate the work of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) with the support of the National Statistics Office (NSO), in making possible the determination of the HDI, now a designated national statistic. The Philippines is perhaps, so far, the only country where the HDI has been recognized as an official statistic, clearly reflecting the importance the government places on the human development aspects of development as part of the measure of the country's progress.

UNDP is of course honored to be associated with the publication of the third Philippine Human Development Report. We hope that the message of the report reaches many and spurs to action policymakers, legislators, local chief executives, and other government officials, as well as civil society and the private sector to address key issues raised in this report.

TERENCE D. JONES
RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

FOREWORD 2

WHEN THE THEME for this Report was being considered two years ago, very lively discussions ensued on which of the various topics suggested should be given top priority. Education won, hands down, and for a very good reason: it was recognized as a key factor, a constant refrain, as it were, that underpinned all the other topics. The single most important contributor, for example, in explaining observed differences in the welfare of households, based on the Family Income and Expenditure Survey, is the educational attainment of the household head. Furthermore, education, particularly of women, influenced the education and health of children, largely through the increased share of household income spent on human priority expenditures. Finally, its crucial role in ensuring that the country would rise with the tide of globalization, instead of being drowned by it, was brought out.

Despite the universal homage paid to the importance of education, however, anyone but a complete outsider would recognize that education in the Philippines confronts serious problems that are most manifest in low achievement, both in standardized international tests and in national tests. The attention of budget-makers and decision-takers in the past has been focused — overly — on the problem of the size of budgets and on meeting the annual tide of enrollment. Having decided that the problem is one of money, and having determined that there is none, people are satisfied that they have done their best and leave things the way they are. This Report does not minimize the problem of education finance. But it does point to other problems that may be more fundamental: the quality of education received by the poor; the efficiency of allocation within education budgets themselves; the possibility of using new teaching methods and approaches; the relevance of what is taught to what is lived, and so on.

This Report on the quality, relevance, and access in basic education in the Philippines seeks to revive the discussion on the state of basic education (elementary to high school). Much as a fire attracts attention, a national debate on the issue may succeed in putting education once more in its rightful place on the national agenda.

It is hoped that like those of its predecessor Reports, the findings and recommendations from this Report will increase the awareness of the Filipino people to the challenges and opportunities of Philippine education, and serve as a spur to the country's decision makers to take the necessary action that will result in increased levels of Human Development. ▀

SOLITA COLLÁS-MONSOD
PRESIDENT
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK