

The Philippine Ranking in the ASEAN Community Five Years After the ASEAN Integration: Where Did We Gain? Where Did We Lose? ¹

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Abstract

The Philippines used to be among the top performing ASEAN Member States (AMS) in various metrics. But our comparative advantage has been eroded over the years, and it is important, if not imperative for our economy to remain competitive at least regionally, if not globally.

Recognizing the role of statistics in monitoring progress of Philippine society, in a series of papers, the principal author with co-authors from the then National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) assessed the ranking of the Philippines among the AMS on several economic and social indicators from different development monitoring frameworks. It started 18 years ago in 2004, and included papers presented during the 11th and the 13th National Convention on Statistics (NCS), which assessed the Philippine ranking from 2000 until the start of the ASEAN integration in 2015.

The ASEAN integration ushered new development challenges for the national development plans of each AMS. In turn, this brought new issues and concerns for the National Statistical System (NSS) of each AMS to monitor progress under the ASEAN integration.

Realizing how important it is to continue monitoring the competitiveness of economies regionally and globally, specifically how the Philippines has been performing under the integration relative to the other AMS, this paper revises the set of indicators from the previous initiatives and analyzes the time series data on the AMS during the five- year period before and after the integration. It ranks the improvements of the AMS by theme and overall; identifies the areas where the Philippines has gained/lost its relative position since the integration, and provides some indication of the impact of the integration/pandemic on the ASEAN as a region. Lastly, it recommends statistical initiatives so that the Philippine Statistical System (PSS) and the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) can better respond to the information requirements of monitoring whether the Philippines is benefitting from the ASEAN integration.

Keywords: ASEAN, ASEAN Member States, integration, ranking, monitoring, measure of progress, statistical framework, statistical indicators, challenges and opportunities, national statistical system

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I. INTRODUCTION

In a number of initiatives that started in 2004, the principal author, in collaboration with colleagues from the then National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB)³, assessed the ranking of the Philippines among the ASEAN Member States (AMS) on several economic and social indicators, including indexes produced by the international community to monitor progress of individual countries. It began with a Statistically Speaking⁴ article entitled: “The ASEAN – Where Do We Stand or Wobble?”[27], which showed a deteriorating position for the Philippines among the AMS. The succeeding papers/articles [28], [29], and [30] confirmed the deterioration of the relative standing of the Philippines in ASEAN on some metrics although we gained grounds on others.

The many challenges and opportunities to the AMS brought about by the regional economic integration of ASEAN in 2015, underscore the need to know where the Philippines stands relative to the other AMS as we strive not only to achieve progress on various international development monitoring frameworks but more specifically to attain the “Ambisyon Natin 2040”⁵ development goals. Five years into the regional integration of ASEAN, it is time once again to assess whether our integration strategies towards creating “a predominantly middle-class society where no one is poor in 24 years” have benefited the Filipinos, and to pinpoint areas where we are gaining and where we are losing.

The 2016 NCS paper [30] presented various statistical frameworks that can be used to monitor the performance of the AMS. This paper uses some of those and introduces others in providing an updated analysis of the comparative performance of the Philippines vis-à-vis the other AMS using relevant indicators for which data are available in the Philippine Statistical System (PSS) and in the international statistical community.

The following is informative how the international community currently perceives the Philippines. In addition to what will be presented later, it should be a wake-up call for our leaders in all branches of the government to realize how we stand with respect to the rest of the world even as the Philippines still has to ratify the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) signed by ASEAN, Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand on November 15, 2020 which offers opportunities as well as challenges among the signatories for inclusive and sustainable growth. [10]:

- In terms of managing the COVID 19 pandemic, the Philippines ranked 40th out of 50 countries in The Economist’s June 22 update of the Global Normalcy Index, which tracked how behaviors changed due to the pandemic based on eight indicators in three domains: transport and travel; recreation and entertainment; and retailing and work. In spite of our 40th ranking, good news is we are third highest in East and Southeast Asia, behind Singapore (36th) and

³ Before its abolition in 2012, the NSCB was the highest policy-making and coordination body on statistical matters in the country and was tasked with the compilation of the major economic framework on the System of National Accounts.

⁴ The Statistically Speaking is an online column on the then NSCB website that tackled different statistical issues and concerns, supported by statistics generated by the Philippine Statistical System and the international statistical community. The column stopped when the principal author retired from government service in 2012 but has been revived as Statistically Speaking v2.0 [26] at <https://www.facebook.com/romulo.virola>

⁵ The Philippine Development Plan and its successor plans.

Thailand (39th) but ahead of South Korea (41st), Hongkong (42nd), Japan (47th), and China (50th).[14]

- In terms of freedom of expression, the Philippines was classified as “Highly Restricted” and ranked 105th out of 161 countries in the latest edition of the Global Expression Report (GxR)⁶. The report assesses how free every person is to express, communicate, and participate in a society, including the freedom to post online, take to the streets, investigate, and access the information needed to keep leaders accountable and whether people can do this without fear of harassment, legal repercussions, or violence. It classifies whether countries are Open, Less Restricted, Restricted, Highly Restricted, or In Crisis. The Philippines got a score of 37 on a scale between 0 (not free) and 100 (freest), below the global and Asia-Pacific region’s overall scores of 50 and 42, respectively. We ranked behind Indonesia (84th) and Malaysia (102nd), but ahead of Singapore (116th), Thailand (125th), Hongkong (127th), Vietnam (134th), Cambodia (137th), Myanmar (140th), and China (156th). [13]. The Philippines was categorized as Less Restricted from 2010-2015, Restricted from 2016-2019, and Highly Restricted from 2020-2021 [2], indicating the gradual suppression of our freedom of expression during the period 2016-21.
- In the 2022 edition of the Fragile States Index [15] by Fund for Peace, the Philippines improved by a notch to place 50th most fragile out of 179 countries. The index measures a state’s vulnerability to conflict or collapse thru ways such as loss of physical control of territory; erosion of “legitimate authority” to make collective decisions; the inability to “provide reasonable public services”; and to interact with other states in the international community. In the 2022 FSI, the countries were categorized into Very Sustainable, Sustainable, Very Stable, More Stable, Stable, Warning, Elevated Warning, High Warning, Alert, High Alert, Very High Alert

In ASEAN, the Philippines was the second most vulnerable tied with Cambodia after Myanmar (10th overall). [12] and [15] Quite surprisingly, we were considered slightly more fragile than Sri Lanka (56th overall), a country that recently faced trouble.

In the last few years, the Philippines has remained in the High Warning group of countries, although we were slightly better ranked at 54th most fragile out of 178 countries in 2016 and 2017. From 2015 to 2022 in ASEAN, we were less fragile than Myanmar. From 2015-2017, we were also less fragile than Cambodia but from 2018-2021, we were more fragile than Cambodia, definitely something to be concerned about

⁶ The article/report was published/prepared by the international human rights group ARTICLE 19.[2]

- In the World Bank's Statistical Capacity Indicators (SCI)⁷, the Philippines⁸ was ranked first among the 10 AMS every year from 2008-2013. We slipped down to 3rd or 4th from 2014-2018 when the four major statistical offices were merged into the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). However, we recovered by placing 2nd in 2020 when the World Bank stopped generating the SCI and replaced it with the Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI).
- Meanwhile, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, the Philippines will be one of eight countries where more than half of the projected increase in global population up to 2050 will be concentrated, together with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Philippines is expected to maintain its current standing as the 13th most populous country in the world in 2050 [11] and [22]. This will certainly pose great challenges in our development planning agenda, and with its data requirements, to the PSS.

Moreover, our leaders should be reminded that last August, based on preliminary estimates of the PSA, the pandemic pushed 2.3 million Filipinos into poverty, raising the poverty incidence from 16.7% in 2018 to 18.1% in 2021. [17]

This paper seeks to answer the following questions:

Is the Philippines benefitting from ASEAN progress, if any, after the integration?
 Is the Philippines contributing to ASEAN progress, if any, after the integration?
 Is ASEAN as a region benefitting from the integration?

The paper is organized as follows: The next session presents the methodology including the conceptual & statistical framework with the indicators, and data sources used. The third section presents the results; the fourth presents the limitations and the last provides conclusions and recommendations towards better monitoring the country's performance under the ASEAN integration as well as under other development initiatives including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

II. METHODOLOGY: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, INDICATORS, & DATA SOURCES

Conceptual Framework

The ASEAN economic integration will surely affect the three pillars of the ASEAN Community (AC): the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), and the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC). This is reflected in the conceptual framework shown in ANNEX 2022 NCS - ASEAN

⁷ The World Bank data series for the SCI ended in 2020; the SCI has been replaced by the Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI).

⁸ The PSA released the StatDev 2021 on August 2, 2022, 8 days after the first SONA of Pres. Bongbong Marcos. During the last few years prior to its abolition, the then NSCB released the StatDev, which monitors progress in achieving the targets of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP), before the SONA to enhance its relevance to development planning.

INTEGRATION - 01 to assess the impact of integration on ASEAN as a whole and on the individual AMS.

Because of the uneven statistical development of the three community pillars, the framework covers themes/indicators similar to those adopted in various ASEAN/international publications like [1] [3], [4], [6], [7] [8], [9], [16], [18], [19], [20], [21], [23],[24], [25], [31], and [32] that consider the data limitations under the ASCC and particularly the APSC, with some changes to incorporate concerns related to the objective of the paper.

The development of the framework started with the identification of the major themes that are important to ASEAN as well as to global frameworks for monitoring progress of societies. This is followed by a listing of relevant indicators including those found in different source documents. A preliminary data assessment shortlisted the indicators excluding those for which either there are no publicly available data or at least 5 AMS have no data point in either the pre-integration period (2011-2015) or the post-integration period (2016-2020)⁹ The final list takes into consideration the limitation imposed by the NCS Secretariat on the submitted papers.

The methodology for this paper is different from the methodology used in the 2016 paper [30] on two aspects: the use of a different set of indicators and a different approach in measuring progress of the AMS/ASEAN over time.

In general, equal weighting is used for the indicators and subthemes as is the common practice in compiling international indexes. However, for the main themes, the weights used (quite arbitrarily, but also considering the importance of the indicators under each theme to development monitoring) were

Macro	0.40
Economic	0.30
Social	0.30

The paper compares the performance of the individual AMS during the five-year period prior to (2011-2015) and the five-year period (2016-2020) after integration. It uses themes/subthemes, indicators, and weights listed in the statistical framework.

In particular, it identifies areas of concern where the Philippines has gained or lost after integration.

The detailed methodology is in ANNEX 2022 NCS - ASEAN INTEGRATION - 02

INDICATORS: STATISTICAL FRAMEWORK

The indicators are organized around themes/subthemes and have been chosen on the basis of their conceptual relevance to the AC Vision 2025 and their data availability. The statistical framework is thus data-driven and is shown in ANNEX 2022 NCS -

⁹ Refer to the Statistical Framework on the various options used to deal with the dataset. In the ASEAN@50 publication, an ASEAN aggregate is estimated for an indicator only if there are at least 6 AMS with data.

ASEAN INTEGRATION - 03, with the list of indicators to be used in assessing the performance of ASEAN and of the AMS, prior to and after the integration. It builds on existing and applicable monitoring frameworks used by the international community and by ASEAN.

The main themes of the framework are chosen considering the priorities of the Blueprints of the AEC, ASCC, & APSC under the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 [5] , and quite arbitrarily subject to data availability: Macro, Economic, and Social, each of which has its own subthemes as shown below:

Macro (6 themes, 21 indicators)

- Government & Governance (6 indicators)
- Money, Finance, & Prices (5 indicators)
- Employment (2 indicators)
- Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) (2 indicators)
- Connectivity: Communication & Internet Users/Access (2 indicators)
- Environment (4 indicators)

Economic (7 themes, 36 indicators):

- National Account Aggregates (3 indicators)
- Agriculture - Food Security (4 indicators)
- Manufacturing (2 indicators)
- Trade (5 indicators)
- Transport (17 indicators spread across the subthemes Road, Rail, Maritime, and Aviation)
- Tourism (2 indicators)
- Energy & Electricity: Oil & Petroleum Products Dependency (3 indicators)

Social (4 themes, 26 indicators):

- Population, Poverty (4 indicators)
- Education (6 indicators)
- Health (10 indicators)
- Gender Equity (6 indicators)

For the indicators, in addition to data availability, the paper draws from other monitoring frameworks cited as references in the paper.

DATA SOURCES

Data used for the indicators by country come from both the AMS themselves, as well as those compiled by international statistical organizations using their own methodologies, including adjustments to achieve international comparability.

The major data sources used for this paper are the various issues up to 2021 of the ASEAN Statistical Yearbook (ASYB) and ADB Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific.

Other data sources include databases from the international community that are available to the public, including those from the sources cited under Methodology.

III. RESULTS/ANALYSIS

. At the outset, it must be emphasized that changes in the indicators from 2011-2015 to 2016-2020 cannot be the result of the integration and the pandemic alone.

Using the metrics and subject to the limitations of this paper, ANNEX 2022 NCS - ASEAN INTEGRATION – 04 summarizes the impact of 5 years of integration combined with that of the COVID 19 pandemic on the relative standing of the Philippines among the AMS. It may be recalled that the metrics measure the improvement from the pre- to the post-integration period, not the standing of the country relative to the other AMS during the post-integration period. Moreover, it should be noted that for some of the indicators, the degree of change could be very close among the AMS.

THE PHILIPPINES AFTER THE INTEGRATION:

As shown in ANNEX 2022 NCS - ASEAN INTEGRATION – 04, the Philippines did best among the AMS in improving its ranking between the 5-year period prior (2011-2015) to and the 5-year period (2016-2020) after the integration in the following indicators:

- External Debt as % of GNI; and we had the second lowest ratio among 9 AMS in 2016-2020
- Global Competitiveness Index; although we only had the 6th highest index among the 10 AMS in 2018, the last year for which the GCI data are available
- Share of FDI Inward Flows to ASEAN (in percent share); although we only had a 6.0% average share in 2016-2020 behind Singapore, Vietnam, and Cambodia
- Share of Intra-ASEAN FDI inward Flows to AMS, from lowest share to 3rd lowest, however, calling attention to the need for better efforts to attract FDIs from the other AMS
- Maritime International Passenger Traffic
- Share of Intra-ASEAN inbound tourists (visitor arrivals from AMS) ; i.e, inbound tourists from other AMS to an AMS
- Proportion of Population Below the National Poverty Line
- Maternal Mortality Ratio (SDG 3.1)
- Incidence of Malaria (SDG 3.3)
- Incidence of Tuberculosis (SDG 3.3), although we continue to have the highest incidence in ASEAN

On the other hand, ANNEX 2022 NCS - ASEAN INTEGRATION – 04 also shows that the Philippines did worst among the AMS in the following indicators:

- Corruption Perceptions Index, indicating that as far as Transparency International respondents are concerned, the Duterte years were more corrupt than the Aquino years.
- Growth rates of Manufacturing Production Index
- Rail Route Length
- Aviation Domestic Passenger Traffic
- Aviation International Cargo Unloaded

- Proportion of Population with Access to Improved Sanitation
- HIV Prevalence Rate Among 15-49 Year-Old
- Ratio of Net Enrollment Ratio in Primary School, Female to Net Enrollment Ratio In Primary School, Male
- Ratio of Net Enrollment Ratio in Secondary School, Female to Net Enrollment Ratio In Secondary School, Male

It is noted that in 2 of the 6 indicators on gender equity, the Philippines did worst among the AMS. Both indicators are on education. It is no wonder then that the Philippines has been faring badly in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)¹⁰.

Moreover, five years after the integration coupled with the impact of COVID19, the Philippines lost its pre-integration relative position among the AMS in the following indicators aside from those already listed above.

- Government Budget Deficit as % of GDP
- Government Taxes as % of GDP (assuming lower rate is better)
- Inflation rate (year-on-year average of period)
- Ratio of International Reserves to Imports (months); from highest to 3rd highest
- Growth rates of Agricultural Production Index
- Balance of Trade in (Exports – Imports) Fishery Products
- Balance of Trade in Goods (as % of AMS Total Trade in Goods)
- Balance of Trade in Petroleum Products (as % of AMS GDP)
- Under 5 Mortality Rate (SDG 3.2)
- Ratio of Labor Force Participation Rate (Female) to Labor Force Participation Rate (Male)

From the above results, it is not clear that the integration has done wonders for the Philippines. Although we gained in many sectors, we also lost in many sectors. Particularly worrisome are the very negative assessment of corruption and gender equity in education in the country.

By subtheme, the Philippine rankings in the measures of improvement relative to the other 9 AMS are as follows:

- Top 3 in
 - FDI
 - Environment
 - Population, Poverty
- Top 4-6 in

¹⁰ Unfortunately, the study team was not able to gather a sufficiently long data series for the TIMSS.

- Government and Governance
 - Employment
 - Connectivity: Communication & Internet Users/Access
 - National Account Aggregates
 - Agriculture - Food Security
 - Manufacturing
 - Tourism
 - Energy & Electricity: Oil & Petroleum Products Dependency
 - Health
 - Gender Equity, but very close to becoming bottom 4
- Bottom 4 in
 - Money, Finance, and Prices, where we ranked among the bottom 4 in 3 of the 4 indicators
 - Trade
 - Transport
 - Education

By major theme, the Philippines is among the top 4-6 in all three themes: Macro, Economic, and Social.

And our overall rank is 5.10, meaning we are below average among the 10 AMS in benefitting from the opportunities offered by the ASEAN integration. A challenge that our decision makers must try to address in the next three years.

HOW MUCH DID THE PHILIPPINES CONTRIBUTE TO THE OTHER AMS AFTER INTEGRATION/COVID 19?

From having the lowest average share of 0.2% in 2011-2015 of Intra-ASEAN FDI inward Flows to the AMS in 2016-2020¹¹, the Philippine share went up to 2.6%, a jump big enough to lift the Philippines to third lowest.

The Philippines had the 2nd biggest percentage reduction in average contribution to Intra-ASEAN Visitor Arrivals by Country of Origin, 2011-2020 from 1984.3 thousand in 2011-2015 to 1782.3 thousand in 2016-2020 or by 10.1%. From a 0.9% share of outbound tourists from AMS to AMS in 2011-2015, it rose very slightly to 1.0% in 2016-2020. In 2011-2015, its share is the lowest but in 2016-2020 it became the second lowest.

Thus, based on these two indicators, the Philippine contribution to the other AMS after integration is just a little bit more than during the pre-integration period, nothing much that we can really be proud of.

¹¹ Or the share of FDI outflows from the Philippines to the AMS as a % of total intra-ASEAN FDI inflows.

IMPACT OF THE INTEGRATION ON ASEAN AS A REGION FIVE YEARS AFTER

Despite the pandemic, the impact of the integration has been positive overall for ASEAN as a whole during the first 5 years in many areas:

- 8 of 10 AMS reduced their average inflation rate after the integration
- Average GDP in PPP increased by at least 15% in 9 of 10 AMS; likewise, GDP per capita in PPP increased in 9 of 10 AMS
- Average share of intra-ASEAN trade in goods increased for all 6 less developed AMS
- Average Maritime Domestic Cargo Throughput increased in 7 of 7 AMS
- Average Maritime International Cargo Throughput likewise increased in 7 of 9 AMS
- Average Aviation Domestic Passenger Traffic increased in 8 of 8 AMS
- Average Aviation International Passenger Traffic increased in 9 of 10 AMS
- Average Aviation International Cargo Loaded/Unloaded both increased in 8 of 10 AMS
- Average GDP per Unit Use of Energy increased in 7 of 10 AMS
- AMS with Surplus in Balance of Trade in Goods (as % of Total Trade in Goods) increased from 4 to 6; same with Trade in Services
- Average Age Dependency Ratio went down in 7 of 10 AMS
- Gini Coefficient (Political Security) improved in 5 of 6 AMS
- Income ratio of the richest 20% to the poorest 20% went down in 4 of 6 AMS
- Ratio of Net Enrollment Ratio in Secondary School went up in 6 of 8 AMS; 5 of 8 AMS in Primary School
- Pupil-Teacher Ratio improved in 6 of 9 AMS in both Primary and Secondary Schools;
- Mean Years of Schooling (HDI) increased in all 10 AMS; Expected Years of Schooling increased in 9 of 10 AMS
- In no AMS did the Proportion of Population with Access to Improved Drinking Water not increase,
- Proportion of Population with Access to Improved Sanitation did not increase in only 3 of 10 AMS
- Physicians (per 000 population) increased in 5 of 7 AMS
- Hospital beds (per 000 population) increased in 5 of 6 AMS
- Under 5 Mortality Rate (SDG 3.2) improved in 7 of 10 AMS
- Maternal Mortality Ratio (SDG 3.1) improved in 4 of 7 AMS
- Incidence of Tuberculosis (SDG 3.3) went down in 9 of 10 AMS
- All 10 AMS had increased Life Expectancy at Birth, Both Sexes
- 8 of 9 AMS had increased Proportion of Seats Held in National Legislature by Women

But after the integration and possibly aggravated by the COVID 19 pandemic, ASEAN was adversely affected in other areas:

- Labor force participation rate was reduced in 7 of the 10 AMS.
- Forest Areas as % of Land Area was reduced in 8 of 10 AMS
- 6 of 7 AMS suffered declines in Rail Passenger Kilometers travelled
- Average Maritime International Passenger Traffic declined in 5 of 7 AMS
- Ratio of Labor Force Participation Rate (Female) to Labor Force Participation Rate (Male) went up in 5 AMS but went down in 5 AMS
- Ratio of Unemployment Rate for female to Unemployment Rate for male went up in 5 of 9 AMS

- Global Gender Gap Index widened in all 10 AMS
- Gender sensitivity among the AMS seems to have not improved!

Overall, it seems that despite the COVID 19 pandemic, the ASEAN integration has been good, or at least not so bad for the ASEAN as a region.

IV. LIMITATIONS

Among the limitations of the paper are

1. Availability/accessibility/completeness of relevant, timely, user-friendly, and time series data; this prevented the use of relevant & interesting indicators like Land Use, Livestock and Poultry Production and TIMSS scores in reading, mathematics, and science; it also refers to indicators which used to be available from international organizations which are no longer available (like the score for starting a business from the ADB Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific as sourced from the World Bank);
2. Use of a data-driven statistical framework and the failure to include relevant indicators with available data, but which were missed by the authors;
3. Validity of the options for measuring improvement from pre- to post-integration; for instance, the Philippines had the 3rd highest ratio of international reserves to months of imports in 2016-2020, but had the 2nd largest percentage reduction from 15.1 months of imports in 2011-2015 to 11.7 months in 2016-2020, so it was ranked 9th. On the other hand, the Philippines had the 3rd lowest average Share of Intra-ASEAN FDI inward Flows to AMS in 2016-2020 but had the biggest % increase compared to its average share in 2011-2015, meaning that relatively, it benefitted the most since integration so it was ranked 1st, although in absolute value terms its share is only small;
4. Conceptual validity of using ranks by indicator/subthemes/themes to assess performance of the AMS before and after the integration although using magnitude of achievement/progress per indicator on the other hand may introduce bias in favor of the better-resourced AMS; it also covers the implication of calibrating ranks when not all AMS have data for some indicators;
5. Validity of the weighting scheme used;
6. For purposes of ranking the AMS and using smileys in the visualization, there might be some issues on the positive/negative indicators. For instance, we considered low % of government taxes to GDP as preferable to high!
7. Exclusion of Indicators when it is not definitively unambiguous whether high values are desirable (not clear whether it is a positive or a negative indicator) like annual imports of goods/services; and
8. Errors committed by data sources.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The importance of monitoring the performance of the Philippines vis-à-vis the other AMS under the ASEAN integration cannot be undermined and should remain a priority of the PSS/PSA. In order for the Philippines to optimize the benefits it can derive from the integration, the PSS/PSA should generate official statistics to inform policy- and decision-makers on whether the country's integration strategies and the Philippine Development Plan are effective in reducing the number of poor Filipinos, with due consideration to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Toward this end, subject to the limitations of this paper, it recommends the following:

1. For the PSA to
 - strengthen its statistical policy-making and coordinating role so that the PSS agencies will respond better to the parameters of the Open Data Framework being promoted by the ASEAN Community Statistical System Committee (ACSSC) and the Freedom of Information principles; this which would give better opportunities for the research community to be better partners in development;
 - review the prioritization of its statistical development programs under the PSDP, striking a user-determined desirable balance between data timeliness and conduct of more statistical activities (example: is it better to conduct annual FIES or monthly LFS than releasing survey results and PUFs in a more timely manner?); and
 - create/re-activate appropriate technical/interagency/advisory bodies with knowledgeable members to help provide guidance to the PSS.
2. For the government (OP, DBM, NEDA) and Congress to
 - recognize that some government agencies like the PSA may need more resources to hire qualified, professional, and hardworking staff than for MOOE, which can be misspent on unnecessary and/or unproductive workshops in expensive venues;
 - guide the PSS leadership in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, respecting the independence of statistical offices to make decisions based strictly on professional considerations;
3. For members of the academe to continue to support the PSS thru collaboration and active participation in statistical initiatives;
4. For the data users in government and the private sector to be more active in articulating reasonable and well-studied statistical demands based on genuine data needs that will translate later to actual policies, programs, practices, and strategies that spur national development; and
5. Finally, despite the COVID19 pandemic, the integration seems to have been working well for ASEAN as a whole, as envisioned by the ASEAN leaders but not as well as desired for the Philippines. While we did best in the Global Competitiveness Index, we were bottom dweller in some critical areas and our overall rank is 5.10, meaning

we are below average among the 10 AMS in benefitting from the opportunities offered by the ASEAN integration.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon NEDA and other concerned agencies/executive departments to exert better efforts in studying the areas where we are lagging behind and design much more effective programs and strategies so that we can maximize the benefits we can derive from the ASEAN integration.

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ABR	ASEAN SDG Baseline Report 2020
AC	ASEAN Community
ACPMS	ASEAN Community Progress Monitoring System
ACSS	ASEAN Community Statistical System
ACSSC	ACSS Committee
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AKF	ASEAN Key Figures
AMS	ASEAN Member States
APSC	ASEAN Political Security Community
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEC	ASEAN Secretariat
ASYB	ASEAN Statistical Yearbook
BFSDAS	Broad Framework for the Sustainable Development of ASEAN Statistics
COVID 19	Corona Virus Disease (2019)
DBM	Department of Budget and Management
FDI	Foreign Direct Investments
FFP	Fund for Peace
FIES	Family Income and Expenditures Survey

FSI	Fragile States Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
LFS	Labor Force Survey
MOOE	Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses
NCS	National Convention on Statistics
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NSCB	National Statistical Coordination Board
NSS	National Statistical System
OP	Office of the President
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
PSDP	Philippine Statistical Development Program
PSS	Philippine Statistical System
PUFs	Public Use Files
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SCI	Statistical Capacity Indicators
SPI	Statistical Performance Indicators
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TI	Transparency International
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Statistical Commission
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum

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