

PREFACE

Floods, Fault Lines, Futures: Rethinking Development through Social Science Research in the Philippines

Mary Joy S. Parajas

Corruption in flood control projects by local governments in various parts of the country is a major issue in the Philippines today. This is not just a matter of corruption among government officials but also a pervasive problem that undermines the security and safety of Filipinos who are submerged in floods, devastated by typhoons, and shaken by earthquakes every year. Flood control projects, which are intended as technical solutions to the environmental hazards, now serve as a symbolic arena for negotiation among state agencies, local communities, and civil society to challenge and redefine the concept of development. The tension between ordinary Filipinos and those involved in substandard, unfinished, or "ghost" flood control projects (a slang term referring to unstarted infrastructure) is intensifying the public demand for security and sustainable livelihoods—livelihoods that are resilient and protected from future calamities and disasters.

In brief context, the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee commenced its inquiry into the anomalous flood control projects following an announcement by President Marcos Jr. that fifteen contractors had cornered a disproportionately large volume of flood control projects, collectively valued at approximately ₱100 billion. This revelation underscored the "disproportionate concentration and awarding of projects to a selected group of contractors," which served as the official premise for the legislative probe. The President's explicit call for a review and accountability subsequently prompted the legislature to act on the matter.

Consequently, in response to this issue which has claimed numerous lives due to severe flooding, a significant number of Filipino citizens organized the Trillion Peso March on September 21, 2025, coinciding with the anniversary of Martial Law. The principal demands centered on accountability, specifically calling for the immediate arrest and imprisonment of government officials, legislators, and private contractors implicated in anomalies, ghost projects, and substandard infrastructure. Another major demand was the recovery of stolen funds and ill-gotten wealth, including luxury assets, from those proven corrupt. The protesters further pushed for transparency through the immediate public disclosure of officials' Statements of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALNs), the lifting of bank secrecy restrictions, and the prevention

of opaque and abuse-prone congressional insertions in the national budget. Finally, to achieve more sustainable development, a key call was to abandon cement-centric projects and shift toward nature-based solutions, such as reforestation and watershed restoration, which are deemed more resilient and less susceptible to corruption.

In these circumstances, Filipinos have become more critical in discussing development that should have been more responsive to the needs of every citizen, grounded in the actual lived experiences (*danas*) of their respective communities. What perspective on development is truly necessary for Filipinos? The role of social science is crucial in investigating and deliberating the issue of development. It serves as a reminder that progress is not solely focused on infrastructure, statistics, and economic growth. Utilizing a broad variety of research methods—including ethnography, participant observation, survey analysis, critical theory, and immersion—social science reveals the human dimensions of development: how communities interpret risks, how policies are implemented in daily life, and how Filipinos assert themselves before agencies when facing structural constraints.

This issue of *Social Sciences and Development Review* takes this enduring dilemma as its point of reflection. The flood control controversy serves here not merely as a topical reference but as a conceptual metaphor for understanding social sciences' task in turbulent times. It draws inspiration from these tensions, exploring how social forces negotiate the meaning of development amid ecological risk and everyday struggle. The articles in this issue examines how Filipinos – workers, activists, believers, students, and communities – navigate these channels of constraint and possibility, crafting forms of resistance, adaptation and meaning in the process. It offers more than empirical findings; they compose a narrative of confluence – where advocacy, community development, labor, gender, culture, and education flow into one another. Each article, in its own way, examines how Filipinos respond to the uneven currents of modernization and globalization. Whether resisting the privatization of health, adapting to disaster risks, sustaining dignity at work, or nurturing communal bonds, these works reflect a shared inspiration for justice and human flourishing.

The *Social Sciences and Development Review* extends its deepest gratitude to the contributors, reviewers, and readers whose efforts make each issue possible. In publishing this collection, the editorial board reaffirms its commitment to fostering critical, interdisciplinary, and community-oriented research. As the Philippines continues to confront the challenges of climate change, social inequality, and civic reawakening, the task before scholars is clear: to build not only stronger infrastructures but also stronger solidarities.