The regional consultation on the World Bank Group (WBG) Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the Philippines kicked-off in University of San Carlos – Talamban Campus, Cebu City last May 30, 2019. With the cooperation of the university Knowledge Development Community (KDC) partner, the WBG conducted an open forum on the Philippine Economic Update (PEU) followed by a brief description of the CPF and focus group discussion (FGD). The PEU report emphasized the need to invest in human capital, which is central to ensuring more inclusive growth, a message which resonated strongly with audiences.

Consultation Details:
Country Partnership Framework Consultation in Cebu
Fr. Rigney Hall University of San Carlos – Talamban Campus, Cebu City
30 May 2019, 9:00AM – 12:00NN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty members, non-teaching staff and students</th>
<th>Local Government Unit</th>
<th>Business Sector</th>
<th>Civil Society Organization</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 participants</td>
<td>6 participants</td>
<td>5 participants</td>
<td>25 participants</td>
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Consultation Agenda:

- Opening message given by USC and World Bank
- Presentation of the Philippine Economic Update (PEU)
- Open Forum on the PEU
- Background on the Country Partnership Framework for the Philippines
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on CPF

Discussion Highlights during the FGDs:

One of the breakout groups during the focus group discussion session.

On the Philippine Economic Update

- People in different economic levels have different views about economic growth and whether it is felt in the region. While growth may be there, not all Filipinos benefit from this. Farmers do not feel the positive growth, but the middle class feel it, especially those employed in BPOs which have boosted employment in the region. However, when the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) law was brought up in one of the FGDs, the BPO employees in the group believe the law hurts their industry because investors would lose incentives.

- Investments in the education system are needed to properly equip young Filipinos with the skills to make them employable for a fast-changing society. Private sector, students, members of the academe agreed that the education system in the country needs an update, that the skills learned in school are not the ones needed in most companies available in the country, and school facilities and materials need improvement.
Misgivings about the K-12 program. Students who attended the consultation in Cebu felt that, as part of the first few batches of the K-12 program they had not yet benefited from the changes.

Other areas of education that need better support. Various specific issues were raised in relation to education. These include financial literacy, socio-emotional skills, ability to face and handle challenges, decision-making skills, and taking responsibility. One participant suggested that there is a need to improve the coordination among all education implementation agencies, DepEd, CheD, TESDA, and even DSWD.

Reduction of poverty through various government programs. Conditional cash transfers are helping the poor, but there were gaps in the targeting system of the program. The promise of increased access to health care services through the expansion of PhilHealth is welcomed, but the red tape in PhilHealth must be reduced and its coverage extended since cost is rising faster than its coverage policies. A doctor during the forum in Cebu raised the point that PhilHealth cannot be used to access specialists from private hospitals and can only be used in public hospitals, which lack specialists. Participants added that the current health care approach in the Philippines is curative rather than preventive, and that more support for health maintenance and disease prevention is needed to truly support the population’s overall health.

On the Philippines’ assets and strength

Filipino values. Filipinos are work-driven, flexible, talented, intelligent, empowered, industrious, and have strong family ties.

The centrality of community among Filipinos is also perceived as an asset. This spirit leads to community-led development programs in forms of knowledge sharing, extending help for the marginalized, trafficked and out-of-school youth, farmers, entrepreneurs, and the youth.

Filipino talents abroad. Universities in Cebu established relationship with universities abroad and Filipino migrant groups through scholarship and knowledge exchange programs.

Natural resources and culture. As a culturally diverse country, the Philippines is privileged to have vibrant cultures that attract local and international tourists.

On issues and challenges

Housing and traffic as emerging concerns brought about by urbanization. In Cebu, urbanization and housing are the pressing issues. Houses are cramped, and population continues to grow. Infrastructure is good for connecting various parts in Metro Cebu with appropriate mitigation amid construction.

Low public awareness of government programs. Citizens feel left out of many government initiatives because they only hear about it informally through networks but there are no systematic means for this information to reach the majority of people in provinces. Even LGU officials say they have limited knowledge of national government-initiated programs, and have very little relationship, if any with the national agencies.

The Filipino “mentality” and “identity”. Stakeholders in Cebu raised that a “sense of co-ownership with the government’s programs” should be inculcated among Filipinos. Most LGUs in Cebu are captured by political dynasties.

On priorities for local development

Establishment of a Metro Cebu development authority for urban planning, coordination and convergence of all LGU plans and programs;
• Make LGU an industrial area, seat of production and employment, booming industries, particularly steel industry;
• Creation of more economic zones to boost economic growth;
• Roads and bridge connecting Mactan to the rest of Cebu to address the enormous volume of traffic;
• LGUs are drafting their comprehensive land use plans (CLUP), which should include the roads in Cordova, and address upland congestion;
• More infrastructure for more businesses to come in;
• Big entrepreneurs to help small ones;
• PH-China relations particularly concerns about the issue West PH sea, illegal workers, and debt trap;
• Respect rule of law;
• Lessen corruption in barangay level;
• Rationalize laws because some laws are in-conflict with others; and
• Evaluate educational system especially for Senior HS
• On environmental issues - Coastal resource management sustainability; marine alternative livelihood; natural resources management; proper waste disposal; curb plastic waste, transparency on the government managing the natural resources and youth’s involvement in climate change campaign, biodiversity