

Philippines rated 'Weak' by Global Integrity (by Mahar Mangahas)

Saturday, 02 February 2008

Last Updated Saturday, 02 February 2008

MANILA, Philippines -- The new 2007 Global Integrity Report, publicly released last January 30th (Washington, D.C. time), rates the Philippines as Weak in terms of governance and corruption, relative to other countries in the world [<http://report.globalintegrity.org/Philippines/2007>].

Global Integrity is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to tracking trends in global governance and corruption. Its 2007 Report gives the Philippines' overall score as 67, on a scale from 0 to 100. A rating of Weak means significantly below the median of the 55 countries included.

I was the scorer for the Philippines in the three Global Integrity reports of 2007, 2006 and 2004. The scoring uses a questionnaire that has now expanded to over 300 items, in six categories and 23 subcategories, dealing with the strengths and weaknesses of the national public integrity system.

Global Integrity recruited a social scientist in each country to make the underlying scores; the assemblage of country-scores gives the global median. Global Integrity assigns ratings of Very Weak, Weak, Moderate, Strong, or Very Strong depending on the country's position relative to the global median. In short, I scored the Philippines on individual items, but Global Integrity did the computations, and rated the Philippines in the global context. I have no objection to the Global Integrity system of rating countries relative to each other.

The overall Philippine classification in 2006 was Moderate, and thus the 2007 rating of Weak is a downgrade, subject to a Global Integrity qualification that "the change in the Philippines' overall score from 2006 to 2007 is largely due to a new methodology addressing state-owned enterprises." In the subcategory "State-owned enterprises," used in 2007 for the first time, the Philippine score happens to be only 28, or Very Weak.

In Global Integrity's 2007 scoring system, the six main categories are unchanged from 2006, but each category contains many more items than before. The exact way to make a comparison over time is to check the scores of those individual items that were repeated. Nevertheless, the Philippine ratings fell in three main categories, and remained the same in the other three. Since it did not rise in any category, the overall rating would still fall if only "old" questionnaire items are considered. In other words, the Philippines is a backslider.

The 2007 report specifically notes that some countries were gainers, and some were backsliders, compared to 2006, contrary to the conventional wisdom that it takes many years for changes in governance and anti-corruption performance to manifest themselves. It specifically cites Nigeria and Georgia as the worst backsliders.

What are the three categories in which the Philippines slid back? The first is "Civil Society, Public Information and Media," which dropped from Moderate in 2006 to Weak in 2007. This was the net result of the subcategory "Civil Society Organizations" rising from Moderate to Strong, the subcategory "Media" staying Weak, and the subcategory

"Public Access to Information" falling from Moderate to Very Weak.

Secondly, the rating of the category "Oversight and Regulation" fell from Strong in 2006 to Weak in 2007 (i.e., it bypassed Moderate). It included the first-time subcategory "State-Owned Enterprises" which rated as Very Weak. On the part of the original subcategories, "National Ombudsman" fell from Strong to Weak, "Supreme Audit Institution" stayed Very Strong, "Taxes and Customs" stayed Weak, and "Business Licensing and Regulation" fell from Strong to Moderate.

Thirdly, the rating of the category "Anti-Corruption and the Rule of Law" fell from Moderate in 2006 to Weak in 2007. It includes "Anti-Corruption Law" which remained Strong, "Anti-Corruption Agency" which fell from Moderate to Weak, "Rule of Law" which fell from Moderate to Very Weak, and "Law Enforcement" which fell from Weak to Very Weak.

The three main categories with ratings unchanged from 2006 to 2007 were: "Elections"-- Very Weak, "Government Accountability"-- Moderate, and "Administration and Civil Service"-- Moderate. The only subcategories with ratings upgraded from 2006 to 2007, aside from "Civil Society Organizations," are "Legislative Accountability" and "Budget Processes," which both rose from Weak to Moderate.

Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer by Mahar Mangahas