DEVELOPMENT OF MUNICIPAL E-GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS IN NABUA AND BULA, CAMARINES SUR: A POLICY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE
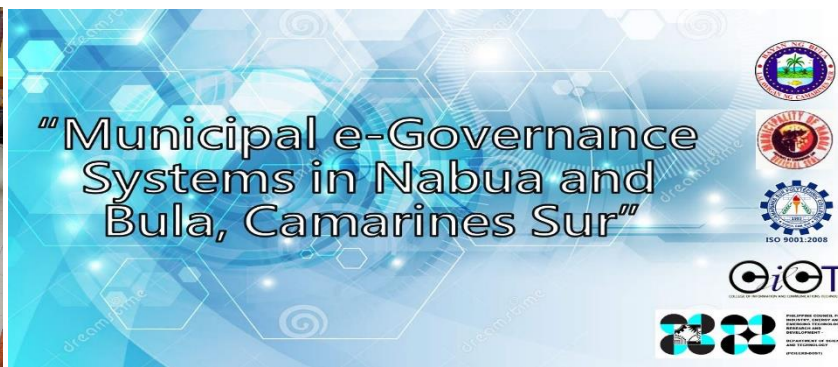

"Municipal e-Governance Systems in Nabua and Bula, Camarines Sur"

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

The country is considering regional development as support to the philosophy of inclusive growth, which underscores easy governance, good governance and economical governance as key ingredients in achieving equitable growth. This challenge to sustain growth and make it more inclusive, places the Philippine government to take several policy initiatives and chart out a roadmap to operationalize an e-Government Master Plan by virtue of Executive Order no. 47 series of 2011.

The plan acknowledges Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a potent tool for ushering an era of innovative, transparent, collaborative, integrated and efficient e-Government in the Philippines. The implementation of ICT in e-Governance shall electronically revolutionize and enhance government services to empower society towards a strong and digitally inclusive evolvement within their localities.

E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve different ends: a) better delivery of government services to citizens b) improved interactions with business and industry and, c) citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions (World Bank, 2015; AOEMA Report).

The UN E-Government Survey 2016 on "E-Government in Support of Sustainable Development" offers a snapshot of trends in the development of e-government in countries across the globe. According to the Survey, more governments are embracing information and communication technologies (ICTs) to deliver services and to engage people in decision-making processes in all regions of the world. It also provides new evidence that e-government has the potential to help support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The survey came up with rankings and it analyzes how governments of the world are employing e-Government policies and programs to support efficiency, effectiveness and inclusiveness as the parameters of sustainable development efforts worldwide.

The Philippines rank 71st in overall world ranking and rank 3rd in the ASEAN countries. It is behind Malaysia and Thailand in terms of Telecommunication Infrastructure Component and behind Thailand and

E-Government	
	Rank
Top 5 Countries	
United Kingdom	1
Australia	2
Republic of Korea	3
Singapore	4
Finland	5
ASEAN Countries	
Singapore	4
Malaysia	60
Philippines	71
Thailand	77
Brunei Darussalam	83

Table 1: E-government Development Index (EGDI)

Brunei Darussalam in Human Capital Component. These pose a challenge in making significant advancements in e-Government development for the country.

Likewise, the ASEAN will embrace the evolving digital technology as leverage to enhance trade and investments, provide an e-based business platform, promote good governance, and facilitate the use of green technology (ASEAN Economic Blueprint 2025).

The regional initiative on electronic commerce would play a significant role in boosting cross border trade, further capitalizing on a more digitally connected ASEAN.

ASEAN Country	EGDI Rank	Online Service Component	Telecomm. Infrastructure Component	Human Capital Component
Singapore	4	0.9710	0.8414	0.8360
Malaysia	60	0.7174	0.4397	0.6953
Philippines	71	0.6667	0.3791	0.6839
Thailand	77	0.5507	0.4117	0.6942
Brunei Darussalam	83	0.5072	0.3512	0.7310

Table 2. E-government Development Index (EGDI) ASEAN states

In compliance to the e-Commerce Act of 2000, the E-LGU project by the National Computer Center was launched. Under the eLGU project, a total of 110 eLGU CeCs were established in 2008. The success of this project led to the creation and implementation of the Philippine Community eCenter (PhilCeC) Program. It has a mission of promoting the socio-economic development and enhancing the productivity of Filipino communities through the availability of affordable, appropriate, and critical ICT-enabled services in the CeCs, thereby improving the overall quality of life.

In support to the eLGU program, the Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development (PCIEERD) spearheaded the project entitled "Development of Municipal e-Governance Systems through ICT" implemented by the Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (CSPC), Nabua, Camarines Sur. This is a proactive program of the Council to transform local government services into a one-stop web portal solution by automating level operations across departments and sub-offices primarily for local government units in consonance with the Smart City program of the DOST.

Why Municipality of Nabua and Bula?

The geographical diversities of two municipalities make it significant as pilot municipalities for the implementation of PCIEERD's e-government project. Nabua is a first class

municipality in the province of Camarines Sur, Philippines. It has a population of 83,874 people subdivided in 42 barangays. Nabua is the mother town of Iriga City, Buhi, Bato, Balatan, Bula and Baao in Camarines Sur. Of the 1,342 municipalities, Nabua ranked 286th in the 2017 Cities and Municipalities Competitive Index. Rank 448th in terms of Government Efficiency and 255th in infrastructure respectively.

On the other hand, Bula is a second-class municipality in the province of Camarines Sur. The municipalities of Pili and Ocampo bound Bula on the north, on the east by the municipality of Baao; bounded by the Municipality of Balatan on the north. It is approximately 25 kilometers (16 mi) southwest of Naga City. Bula ranked 242nd in the overall ranking for the Cities and Municipalities Competitive Index, 315th in terms of Government Efficiency and 355th in infrastructure.

Nabua is adjacent to cities such as Iriga City and Naga City in the north and Legazpi City in the south, landlocked and no access to the sea and ports. Bula on the other hand, is not centrally located like Nabua.

Camarines Sur is also the home base of the Bicol Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology R&D (BCIEERD) consortium and the Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (CSPC) in Nabua as its base agency. CSPC has qualified project team from the ICT department of CSPC who possesses the qualification, the scientific and technological capability to assist the municipalities of Nabua and Bula to deliver efficient and transparent government services through this project.

Significance of the Policy Issue:

The project on e-Governance system is a web-based government solution that provides automated management, administration, and analytic systems for local government units to empower, enable, and enhance citizen participation, social and economic opportunities through open source technologies. This umbrella software solution developed primarily for LGUs include programs that shall cover inter-related applications. The project is developing six (6) interrelated systems that work as a cluster of interdependent modules in the following areas:

1. Legislative Management and Tracking System (LeMTrac) is an application to track status, manage and store communications, requests, proposed resolutions and ordinances, Sanggguniang Bayan resolutions and ordinances.
2. e-Building Permit System (eBPS) - systemize the building permit process by making the service open

24/7 via the internet. Citizen can easily transact routine business such as track progress of permit requests, schedule inspection, attach electronic plans and requirements, receive corrections, leave messages and self-print certifications.

3. Real Property Assessment and Tax Management System (RPATs) - This application shall automate real property transactions (appraisal, assessment, billing, and collection liquidation), onscreen public viewing of delinquent real property for auction and online printing of Declaration of Real Property Value (DRPV).

4. e-Business Permit and Licensing System (eBPLS) – it simplify business permit and licensing operations by computerizing the permit application process, assessment of taxes and fees, billing and liquidation of collections.

5. Financial Accounting - Point of Payment System (PoPS) - this system acts as the central unit to accept and manage payment transactions from fees, taxes and charges being collected by LGUs thru the inter-related systems.

6. Local ID System - This application shall establish a Local Government ID System to enhance the portfolio of citizen centric services.

To leverage and maximize the advantage provided by ICT through this project, the municipalities of Nabua and Bula expressed their interest to support the project in order to provide a faster and better service leading to speedier and qualitatively better decision-making, greater reach and accountability, better utilization of resources and overall good governance to its people.

Problem Statement:

The following concerns and issues were derived through consultations with the LGUs and the implementing institutions:

- Readiness of the LGU to implement the project in terms of infrastructure and manpower
- Maintenance and sustainability of the project
- Project counterpart – the two LGUs have no project counterpart in terms of funding, hardware/ equipment and manpower and rely solely from PCIEERD.
- Access control – control on the accessibility of the user to secure data and significant information in the system

WHAT SHOULD POLICY MAKERS DO?

- ❖ **Municipalities to file a resolution for the implementation of the e-government projects and allocate counterpart funds for manpower and equipment requirement.**
- ❖ **Integrate the e-governance budget in the annual budgeting plan of the municipality to make the project sustainable.**
- ❖ **Stimulate awareness among the constituents on the advantage of the e-government facilities to make the project more effective, and the delivery of services is efficiently carried out.**
- ❖ **Monitor and ensure transparent evaluation on the effectiveness of the e-government project.**

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