



People's Scorecard on SDG Progress 2025



SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS

General questions about the Agenda 2030 implementation process at national level:

1. Overview of SDG progress

Please provide your perspective on the progress made on SDG implementation since 2015.

What are the areas that you believe need the most attention? Which of the Goals do you think will be achieved by 2030, and what has helped make progress in those areas?

Please provide data or links if available

Since 2015, the Philippines has made uneven progress toward the SDGs. The country is projected to achieve or be “on track” only for SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), reflecting successful implementation of waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable production initiatives. SDG 1 (No Poverty) shows modest improvement due to programs like 4Ps, although gains were set back by the pandemic. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) have advanced through infrastructure and digitalization efforts, yet inclusivity and job quality remain as concerns.

However, SDG 3 (Health) and SDG 4 (Education) are stagnating due to persistent service gaps, while SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) face severe challenges. Climate vulnerability, weak health systems, and widening inequality highlight the need for stronger governance, equitable social investment, and climate-resilient development.

Source: 2024 SDG Pace of Progress

2. Civil society priorities at national level

What have you identified as civil society's most crucial demands to your government for delivery of the SDGs in your country?

Please give your key points in 100 words or fewer, feel free to provide links to wider materials.

Civil society's most crucial demands mirror the people's priorities. A 2025 SWS survey for the midterm elections found that 94% of Filipinos support candidates committed to creating decent jobs and strengthening agriculture to ensure food security – central to SDGs 1, 2, and 8. Health care (93%), quality education (92%), and workers' rights (92%) follow closely, alongside urgent calls to address climate change (87%) and reduce poverty and hunger. Civil society organizations echo these priorities, calling on the government to advance social protection, inclusive growth, climate action, and accountable governance to achieve the SDGs.

Source: Social Weather Station

3. Governance Mechanism for SDG implementation

If you know about a formal institutional mechanism put in place for oversight of the SDG implementation process in your country, please describe it here.

Is the Governance mechanism based on an existing Council or Committee? A newly created Council or Committee? Is this a multistakeholder committee or only government-based?

Which government actor provides leadership within the governance mechanism? Head of Government or State? Individual Cabinet Minister? Multi-ministerial set up? Parliamentary Committee?

Please provide data or links when available and fill in your answer in 150 words or fewer.

The Philippines has established several institutional mechanisms to oversee SDG implementation. The Stakeholders' Chamber under the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) serves as a multi-stakeholder platform that promotes understanding, ownership, and partnerships between government and non-government actors to align resources and actions toward the SDGs. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) Philippines, co-chaired by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and a civil society representative, further strengthens transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance.

In the legislature, both chambers of Congress have formal oversight bodies for the SDGs: the Senate Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, the Innovation and Futures Thinking, and the House Committee on Sustainable Development Goals. Standing committees on Climate Change, Environment, Economic Affairs, and Appropriations also contribute to advancing specific aspects of the 2030 Agenda.

These mechanisms form a multi-actor governance framework that integrates policy, participation, and accountability in SDG delivery.

4. National planning, implementation and budget commitments

How have the SDGs been incorporated into national policy, planning and implementation frameworks?

Has the government in your country incorporated the SDG framework into its national development plan and related strategies? Has the government incorporated the SDGs through a specific SDG strategy document? Is there any “cherry-picking” or do you see all SDGs as being equally covered?

What kind of budget commitments have been agreed? Has civil society been able to provide input into these processes?

Please provide data or links when available and fill in your answer in 150 words or fewer.

The Philippines has integrated the SDGs into its long-term vision, AmBisyon Natin 2040, and the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028 that serves as the main framework for SDG implementation. The PDP aligns national priorities with the 17 Goals, focusing on poverty reduction, innovation, and climate resilience. However, budget allocations remain uneven, with greater emphasis on infrastructure and defense modernization than on social services, education, and health – sectors that have faced cuts in the 2025 national budget.

While the government promotes “whole-of-society” engagement, civil society participation is limited, particularly in budget deliberations where organizations are often confined to advocacy and lobbying roles without formal decision-making power. This highlights the need for inclusive and transparent fiscal governance to ensure that the SDGs are not only embedded in planning documents but also backed by equitable resource distribution.

4. Monitoring & Review

Please outline your experience of engaging with monitoring processes on the SDGs.

Are you able to access official data on SDG monitoring? Do you have opportunities to feed in your own sources of information and data to monitoring and review of SDGs?

Is data available on key communities who face being left behind and does your government include this in planning & policy-making?

Civil society engagement in SDG monitoring in the Philippines has been active but limited in influence. Organizations participate in consultations for the Philippine Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and dialogues of the Stakeholders’ Chamber on the SDGs, where the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) presents official data through the Pace of Progress reports. These reports track SDG indicators and are publicly accessible.

However, while access to official data has improved, opportunities for civil society to contribute alternative or community-generated data remain ad hoc and underutilized. Many grassroots organizations collect valuable local data on poverty, gender, environment, and governance, but these are rarely integrated into national monitoring systems. Data on marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples, informal workers, and persons with disabilities, remain incomplete or outdated, limiting the government's ability to design inclusive, evidence-based policies that ensure no one is left behind.

6. Overview of climate change commitments

How well do you think your country is delivering on commitments made in the Paris Agreement in terms of the Nationally Determined Contributions?

In your view, what additional policy changes are needed to address the climate emergency in your country?

Please provide data if available and keep your answer to 150 words or fewer.

The Philippines' delivery on its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) remains slow and inconsistent with its climate commitments. The country pledged a 75% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2030, but only 2.7% is unconditional, with the rest dependent on international support. In practice, emissions continue to rise, driven by the dominance of coal (43%) and the rapid expansion of liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects. Recent policy directions, such as the PhilAtom Law that promote nuclear energy and the approval of gas facilities in the Verde Island Passage, contradict the country's renewable energy and biodiversity goals.

To address the climate emergency, the government must phase out fossil fuels, stop nuclear expansion, and massively scale up solar, wind, and community-based renewables. Strengthening the Just Transition framework to protect workers, enhancing climate finance transparency, and enforcing environmental safeguards in energy and infrastructure projects are also critical to achieving genuine climate resilience.

7. Progress since last VNR

If your country has already delivered a previous VNR, please set out progress made on the agreed priorities.

Please set out areas for follow up from the last VNR. Is there a national action plan based on the SDG strategy/National Development Plan and the VNR assessment? Was there a policy and/or data based gap analysis developed and if so, has it led to policy prioritization or broader policy dialogue?

Please provide data when available and fill in your answer in 150 words or fewer.

Following the 2022 Voluntary National Review (VNR), the Philippines prioritized recovery and institutional reforms through the Whole-of-Nation PLUS approach. Key advances include the passage of the Trabaho Para sa Bayan Act (SDG 8) and the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children Act; the rollout of the Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino Program; and the expansion of specialty health centers (SDG 3). The government also earmarked 20% of sin tax revenues to support SDG programs.

The Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028 functions as the national SDG action plan, integrating all 17 Goals. A data-driven gap analysis informed the Program Convergence Budgeting (PCB) mechanism to align budget priorities with lagging areas. Follow-up priorities include SDGs 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13; where progress has stalled or regressed due to structural inequalities, fiscal constraints, and pandemic-related disruptions.

8. Civil society engagement with government

Has your organisation/coalition had a regular policy dialogue with relevant government ministries on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

Has civil society been invited to supply and/or review evidence and data? If yes please provide details.

Please keep your answer to 100 words or fewer.

Civil society organizations regularly engage the government through platforms such as the SDG Stakeholders' Chamber and the Open Government Partnership (OGP), where CSOs participate in consultations, monitoring discussions, and co-creation of commitments. CSOs have also been invited to contribute evidence to the Philippine Voluntary National Review and provide feedback on the Pace of Progress reports presented by the Philippine Statistics Authority.

In Congress, civil society continues to push for greater inclusion in the entire budget process, especially amid concerns of corruption and opaque bicameral proceedings. These engagements aim to advance transparency, accountability, and participation.

9. Key groups who face being left behind

Please detail which groups are most often subject to marginalisation or discrimination in your national context.

Groups most often subject to marginalization and discrimination in the Philippines include women, children, and the LGBTQIA+ community. They face barriers in employment, education, and access to justice. Indigenous Peoples experience land dispossession, exclusion from decision-making, and threats from extractive industries. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are often left behind in terms of education and employment due to inadequate accessibility and inclusive services. Rural poor and small farmers face deep economic insecurity, worsened by climate impacts and limited government support. Informal workers and migrant laborers also remain vulnerable to exploitation, low wages, and lack of social protection.

10. Public awareness

How well is the 2030 Agenda publicised in your country?

Have there been any public campaigns on the SDGs? Have materials related to the 2030 Agenda been translated into local languages? Which languages? Are local governments actively engaged in the SDGs? If so, how? Are educational bodies and researchers actively seeking to analyse and share the SDGs?

Please keep your answer to 100 words or fewer.

There is an active public campaign for the SDGs in the Philippines, visible from national to local levels, with major policies aligned to the 2030 Agenda. Private companies and universities promote the SDGs through corporate social responsibility programs, research, and extension initiatives, while civil society and NGOs continue to push for transparency and accountability in implementation. Some SDG materials have been translated into Filipino and local languages, but outreach remains limited. Local governments have started integrating SDG indicators into development plans and producing Voluntary Local Reviews, reflecting growing institutional engagement though broader public awareness and grassroots participation remain necessary.

GOAL 1: END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE

Poverty remains one of the most pressing and persistent challenges in the Philippines. Republic Act 8425, or the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act, laid the foundation of the country's anti-poverty agenda by institutionalizing mechanisms for sectoral participation and targeted programs. Over the years, this has been complemented by contributory social insurance schemes, including the Social Security System (SSS), Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), and PhilHealth, that provide health and pension benefits for formal sector workers. Parallel to these are social assistance programs designed to protect the poor and vulnerable: the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) to break intergenerational poverty, the Food Stamp Program (Walang Gutom 2027) to reduce hunger, Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (KALAHI-CIDSS) for community-driven development, and the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) to deliver immediate relief. Livelihood initiatives such as the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) and the AlkanSSSyas scheme have also attempted to expand opportunities for informal workers and low-income earners.

Official statistics suggest progress. The 2023 Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES) reported that poverty incidence among families dropped from 13.2% in 2021 to 10.9% in 2023, or about 3.0 million families. At the individual level, poverty incidence fell from 18.1% in 2021 to 15.5% in 2023, representing 17.54 million Filipinos. These averages conceal deep inequalities: Indigenous Peoples (32.4%), fisherfolk (27.4%), and farmers (27.0%) continue to record the highest poverty levels, while senior citizens, formal labor and migrant workers, and urban residents report much lower rates. Even where the numbers point to improvement, public perception reveals a different reality. A 2023 Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey showed that 63% of Filipinos consider themselves poor – the highest self-rated poverty level in two decades.

The People's Scorecard rated SDG 1 at only 1.47% – signaling very low progress and exposing the deep disconnect between official reports and lived experience. Respondents revealed that rising inflation and the soaring cost of basic goods continue to erode incomes, leaving many households struggling to cover even daily needs. Having a job no longer guarantees security, as wages are often insufficient to meet the cost of living. Beyond income poverty, systemic exclusion persists: persons with disabilities remain cut off from equal opportunities due to the lack of communication support and specialized schools; informal workers and nano-entrepreneurs, especially in disaster-prone areas, face repeated shocks with little to no protection; and women-headed households or those in conflict-affected areas continue to experience heightened vulnerability.

Government programs for solo parents and other marginalized groups are acknowledged but widely perceived as insufficient and short-term. Respondents point to bureaucratic hurdles, poor dissemination of information, and underutilization of local government capacities that prevent people from accessing benefits. They also reported cutbacks in PhilHealth coverage, weak disaster risk reduction (DRR) planning, and unspent funds meant for social services. Assistance, they stressed, often feels like mere dole-outs rather than transformative support that can build resilience and economic empowerment.

The people voiced frustration that poverty reduction frameworks, though well-intentioned, remain weak in reach, sustainability, and equity; fueling a growing distrust in government efforts. People are calling for deeper structural reforms: decent and stable jobs, living wages, universal social protection systems, equitable resource distribution, and meaningful investments in climate adaptation and disaster resilience. For them, poverty reduction must move beyond statistics and temporary relief to a model that ensures development truly reaches the most vulnerable and dismantles the systemic inequalities that keep millions of Filipinos at the margins.

GOAL 2: END HUNGER, ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVED NUTRITION AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The Philippines' framework for addressing hunger and malnutrition is guided by the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2023–2028, supported by laws such as the Masustansyang Pagkain Para Sa Batang Pilipino Act (RA 11037) and the Kalusugan at Nutrisyon ng Mag-Nanay Act (RA 11148). These provide a roadmap for tackling malnutrition through child feeding, maternal and child health, and nutrition-sensitive interventions, signaling the government's intent to go beyond immediate relief toward long-term outcomes.

Despite the policy foundation, hunger remains a daily reality for millions. The 2024 Global Hunger Index ranked the Philippines 67th of 127 countries with a score of 14.4, while national data show only marginal improvements: moderate to severe food insecurity declined from 33.4% in 2021 to 31.4% in 2023, but severe food insecurity rose from 2.0% to 2.7%. Stunting among children under five fell from 26.7% to 23.6%, but continues to be a problem of high public health significance. These figures highlight that food insecurity in the Philippines is not simply about supply, but about inequality, weak agricultural systems, and insufficient safety nets.

The paradox is stark: those who produce food are also among the hungriest, from Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolk, to farmers. Producers point to low productivity, lack of subsidies, poor irrigation, and exploitation by middlemen as barriers to achieving food security. Climate change amplifies these vulnerabilities through crop failures, recurrent disasters, and land conversion, while aging farmers and the loss of traditional agricultural practices weaken community resilience.

Findings from the People's Scorecard reveal that communities perceive hunger as worsening. Respondents identified inflation and surging food prices, especially during the 2025 rice crisis, as major drivers of food insecurity. Despite global price declines, domestic rice prices soared, fueling frustration among producers and consumers alike. Many trace this to the 2019 Rice Tariffication Law, which weakened the National Food Authority (NFA) and left small farmers vulnerable to cheap imports and volatile market forces.

Respondents also shared that children suffer from both calorie and nutrient deficiencies, with growth and learning hindered by limited access to affordable, nutritious food. While government interventions largely target micronutrient deficiencies to address stunting, communities emphasize that calorie deficiency, particularly during pregnancy and the first two years of life, demands greater attention. Parents acknowledge the value of school feeding programs, but view them as temporary relief rather than lasting solutions, as processed and unhealthy foods continue to dominate local markets.

The People's Scorecard rated SDG 2 at 3.24%, highlighting very low progress and the urgent need for systemic reform. Respondents call for genuine participation in the design and monitoring of nutrition programs to ensure relevance to local needs. They urge local governments to proactively address stunting and food insufficiency, particularly in households with multiple children and pregnant women. Farmers demand rice policy reforms, including restoring the government's role in importation and buffer stock management. Beyond rice, respondents highlight the need for investment in climate-resilient agriculture, rural infrastructure, and inclusive food systems that empower small producers. The people affirm that ending hunger requires moving beyond stopgap solutions toward structural reforms that guarantee food security as a right, not a privilege.

GOAL 3: ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AT ALL AGES

Despite milestones in health policy and landmark laws – such as the Universal Health Care Act (RA 11223), the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (RA 10354), the Philippine Mental Health Act (RA 11036), and the Sin Tax laws, health outcomes in the Philippines remain fragile and uneven. Communities reveal that the promise of these reforms often fails to reach those who need them most.

Maternal mortality persists at 84 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2023, with 1,868 maternal deaths recorded nationwide. Adolescent pregnancies remain high due to weak access to reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education. Child health indicators show modest improvements: under-five mortality continues to decline, and the fertility rate has dropped to 1.9 children per woman, now below replacement level.

The burden of infectious diseases remains severe. The Philippines has the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in Asia, with 252,800 people living with HIV in 2025 and 57 new infections daily. Tuberculosis remains widespread, with 739,000 new cases in 2023, complicated by drug resistance and HIV coinfection. Malaria has been eliminated in most provinces but persists in Palawan, placing more than 730,000 people at risk. At the same time, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, and stroke driven by unhealthy diets, alcohol, and tobacco. While smoking prevalence has declined, e-cigarette use is rapidly rising, especially among youth. Mental health needs are also alarming: an estimated 12.5 million Filipinos live with depression, anxiety, or related conditions, yet services remain scarce, stigmatized, and underfunded.

The People's Scorecard underscores how these challenges translate into daily struggles. Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, and those in remote or conflict-affected areas report being left behind; lacking access to medicines, health workers, or functioning facilities. Respondents shared that while free consultations are sometimes available, medicines are often unaffordable or unavailable, forcing them to travel long distances at great cost. Health workers themselves face poor support, leading to shortages in disadvantaged areas. Respondents further flagged underfunding and politicization of health budgets, with cuts to PhilHealth undermining the promise of Universal Health Care.

Environmental health adds another layer of inequity. Communities near coal plants, LNG facilities, and mining operations describe respiratory illnesses and contaminated water, while weak enforcement of health impact assessments leaves them unprotected. Air pollution and traffic-related deaths continue to claim lives yet remain absent from national health planning.

For many Filipinos, progress on SDG 3 feels fragmented and inequitable. **The People's Scorecard rating of 9.30% reflects very low progress** – visible in urban centers but failing to reach the most marginalized. Respondents call for stronger and fairer health financing, equitable deployment of health workers, accessible and affordable medicines, and preventive, community-based care. They also stress the integration of environmental and occupational safeguards into the health system. The path forward requires moving beyond laws on paper to realizing the right to health in practice, ensuring no one is left behind.

GOAL 4: ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Education in the Philippines is anchored in laws such as the Kindergarten Education Act, the Enhanced Basic Education Act (K-12), the Early Years Act, the Early Childhood Care and Development Act (RA 8980), the Alternative Learning System Act (RA 11510), and the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (RA 10931) aim to expand access, continuity, and equity in learning. These are reinforced by strategic policies like the Basic Education Development Plan, the K-12 Curriculum Framework, and the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy, which together signal the state's commitment to inclusive and quality education.

Despite this foundation, the people describe the system as facing a "learning crisis." The World Bank (2022) found that 91% of Filipino children at late primary age are not proficient in reading, while national assessments show that 90% of students fail to meet minimum proficiency in reading and math by the end of primary school. Five percent of children remain unenrolled, and early childhood education participation is low, with only 20% of 3–4-year-olds in pre-Kindergarten.

Although the Philippines has largely achieved gender parity in education, with near-equal enrollment rates for men and women across most levels and higher completion rates for girls in secondary school – deep inequities persist. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) reports that only 17% of young people from the poorest households pursue higher education, compared to nearly half from the wealthiest. While tuition is free in public institutions, scholarships and benefits often fail to reach marginalized learners. Research and innovation are concentrated in a few universities, leaving many graduates underprepared for employment. Technical and vocational training offers alternatives but remains constrained by low financing and heavy reliance on household contributions.

The People's Scorecard highlights persistent poverty-related barriers that drive dropouts: incidental school fees, and children needing to work. Parents report covering basic school needs due to resource gaps, while teachers face overcrowded classrooms, shortages, and inadequate materials. Learners with disabilities face systemic exclusion: despite recognition of Filipino Sign Language (FSL), recent amendments weakened its role in Deaf education, leaving many without bilingual curricula or appropriate materials. Advocacy groups call for stronger FSL protection and inclusive education.

Climate change compounds vulnerabilities, with typhoons, flooding, and extreme heat disrupting classes, particularly in rural and coastal areas. Respondents stress that these disruptions worsen already weak access and quality. While initiatives like EDCOM II aim to address systemic problems, underfunding remains a critical barrier. Education spending is just 3.6% of GDP, below UNESCO's 4–6% benchmark, constraining infrastructure, teacher training, and quality assurance.

For many, education access has expanded but quality has deteriorated, leaving students without the functional literacy and skills needed for work and civic participation. International assessments such as PISA and SEA-PLM confirm what parents, teachers, and students already see: Filipino learners lag significantly behind their regional peers.

The People's Scorecard rated SDG 4 with only 0.29%, showing very low progress. Urgent reforms through greater investment in early childhood education, stronger functional literacy, better teacher support, inclusive curricula for learners with disabilities, and systemic reforms to ensure both access and quality. Communities are clear: education reform cannot stay on paper; it must deliver equitable and transformative learning for all.

GOAL 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Gender equality in the Philippines is often recognized internationally, with the country long regarded as a regional leader. The Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710), Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313), Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act (RA 9262), Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law (RA 10354), and Prohibition of Child Marriage Law (RA 11596) anchor the state's commitments to protect women's rights and expand their participation in public life. Global indices reflect this, with the Philippines ranking 20th out of 148 in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Report, scoring 78.1% and posting gains in economic participation and wage equality.

However, the People's Scorecard reveals how progress often fails to reach daily realities. Violence against women remains pervasive, with 17.5% of women reporting intimate partner violence and over 13,000 cases officially recorded in 2023. Harassment and misogyny persist offline and online, with the Philippines emerging as a global hotspot for online sexual exploitation of children, most of them girls. The child marriage ban was hailed as progress, and prevalence has declined (from 16.5% of girls in 2017 to 9.4% in 2022), but respondents note that unions before 18 remain common, driven by poverty, inequality, and weak enforcement.

Sexual and reproductive health concerns also remain pressing. Communities describe how adolescent pregnancies continue to rise; an alarming sign of systemic failure. Respondents link this to the absence of comprehensive sexuality education, persistent stigma against young mothers, and limited access to reproductive health services. While Reproductive Health Education is now implemented by the Department of Education, it begins only at age ten, excluding younger children, despite records of pregnancies as early as eight years old. More than a decade after the RH Law's passage, unmet family planning needs remain high in rural and underserved areas. Meanwhile, the Philippines faces the fastest-growing HIV epidemic in the Western Pacific, hitting youth aged 15-25 the hardest.

Economic and political gaps compound these issues. Women's labor force participation remains below 50%, with many forced to drop out after childbirth due to lack of reintegration support. The weight of unpaid care work—an average of 13 hours a day compared to men's 8—further limits women's economic opportunities. In marginalized and conflict-affected areas, women juggle caregiving with small-scale livelihoods, often with little support. Despite some advances, women hold only 21.1% of ministerial posts and 23.3% of elected positions.

Revealed by the **People's Scorecard**, communities express frustrations over the stagnant progress toward SDG 5, **rated as very low progress, at only 11.34%**. Laws exist but are weakly enforced, programs are underfunded, and access to justice is slow and costly. While awareness of gender equality is stronger than in the past, many women, girls, and gender-diverse persons remain unprotected in daily life. LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face discrimination in schools, workplaces, and public spaces, without comprehensive legal protection. Women and girls with disabilities are left behind due to systemic neglect and the absence of inclusive programming.

Communities and advocates stress the need for urgent action: to recognize, measure, and redistribute unpaid care work; strengthen enforcement and funding of existing laws; and pass a comprehensive anti-discrimination law protecting all regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or characteristics. Only then can gender equality in the Philippines move beyond reputation and policy frameworks to become a lived reality for all.

GOAL 6: ENSURE AVAILABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL

Clean water and sanitation are recognized as fundamental rights in the Philippines, with the Philippine Clean Water Act (RA 9275) and Executive Order No. 22 creating the Water Resources Management Office to strengthen oversight. Despite these frameworks, water governance remains fragmented, with over 30 agencies sharing overlapping roles without a central authority managing the full water cycle. This fragmentation has created inefficiencies in planning, monitoring, and enforcement, with poor data systems further undermining evidence-based decision-making.

The country is rich in natural water assets, but uneven distribution, El Niño, and rainfall variability leave many communities facing recurring shortages. Since 2017, the Philippines has been under water stress, with per capita water availability now below the global threshold. By 2040, the country is projected to experience “high” water stress, raising serious concerns for long-term security.

Environmental degradation compounds the problem. Over 130 watersheds are in urgent need of rehabilitation, and more than half of major rivers fail safety standards due to untreated sewage, agricultural runoff, and industrial pollution. Between 2010 and 2019, more than 53,000 Filipinos died from waterborne diseases such as typhoid, diarrhea, cholera, and leptospirosis – proof of the devastating health impacts of unsafe water and inadequate sanitation.

The Annual Poverty Indicators Survey 2024 report progress, with 97.5% of families having access to at least basic drinking water and 84.7% to sanitation. These figures hide stark inequities: in NCR, 85.5% of households access safely managed water, compared to just 14.8% in BARMM. Geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs) and conflict-affected regions remain the most underserved.

The People’s Scorecard rated SDG 6 at only 7.46%, reflecting very low progress. Communities report broken water systems, unsustainable projects, and bills too costly for poor households. In some barangays, water flows only at night, forcing women and children to queue with buckets in the dark. Respondents say privatization has made matters worse; services are unreliable and expensive, while large-scale dams prioritize industries and urban centers over local needs. Many also point to deforestation, mining, and watershed depletion as daily threats to their long-term water security, frustrations compounded by corruption, overlapping mandates, and weak law enforcement.

Communities and advocates call for urgent change: unify water governance under a central authority, invest in watershed rehabilitation and pollution control, and prioritize decentralized, community-driven solutions that work for rural and disadvantaged areas. Closing the ₱1.07 trillion financing gap by 2030 and strengthening LGUs’ technical and financial capacity are critical steps. By responding to the realities revealed by the People’s Scorecard can clean water and sanitation move from commitments to lived guarantees for every Filipino.

GOAL 7: ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE, AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL

Affordable and clean energy remains a national challenge in the Philippines. Guided by the Renewable Energy Act of 2008 (RA 9513) and the National Renewable Energy Program (NREP) 2020–2040, the country aims for renewables to reach 35 percent of the power mix by 2030 and 50 percent by 2040. While the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) 2025 report noted that electricity access now covers over 98 percent of households, the People's Scorecard exposes a stark gap between policy ambition and lived realities.

Fossil fuels continue to dominate the energy mix, supplying nearly 79 percent of electricity in 2024. Power sector emissions have tripled over two decades, while the renewable share has fallen from 25.4 percent in 2015 to just 22.3 percent in 2023; far behind global trends. Respondents cite weak regulatory support, inadequate transmission infrastructure, and the lack of financing for clean energy as major barriers. For most households, these failures are felt through rising electricity bills, with privatized and monopolized power structures passing fuel price shocks directly to consumers.

Communities also voice concern over the government's recent approval of the Philippine Atomic Energy Regulatory Commission Modernization Act (PhilAtom Law), which is a move perceived as prioritizing nuclear development over renewable alternatives. Many see this as a step backward, given global momentum toward decarbonization and the long-term risks tied to nuclear waste, safety, and cost. Respondents further decry ongoing fossil gas expansion, particularly in Verde Island Passage, the "center of the center" of marine biodiversity, where LNG terminals and pipelines threaten coastal livelihoods and critical ecosystems. Likewise, the proposed floating solar project in Laguna Lake has sparked alarm among over 800 fishers who fear displacement and damage to the aquatic ecosystem beneath.

The People's Scorecard rates SDG 7 with very low progress at 7.25%, underscoring how energy policy remains captured by fossil and corporate interests. The 2020 coal moratorium is riddled with loopholes, allowing over 5 GW of new coal capacity to advance. Consultations with affected communities are often perfunctory, leaving them excluded from decisions that shape their environment and future.

Respondents call for a just energy transition, anchored in renewable expansion, decentralized energy systems, and community empowerment. Rooftop solar, micro-grids, and community-based wind projects, they argue, can lower costs, strengthen climate resilience, and promote inclusive development. Achieving this requires scaling renewable capacity six to seven times by 2030, phasing out coal and gas by 2035, investing in grid modernization, and ensuring transparent, participatory governance.

GOAL 8: PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

Decent work and economic growth remain pressing challenges for the Philippines. While the country has shown resilience compared to regional peers, growth expectations have recently softened. In 2025, the World Bank downgraded the GDP growth forecast to 5.3 percent, below the government's 6–8 percent target. Much of this growth has been driven by capital accumulation rather than productivity, with over 90 percent of expansion since 2010 coming from capital inputs and less than 10 percent from total factor productivity.

The People's Scorecard reveals that while jobs have increased, 11.7 million added since 2010 with real wages rising by 24 percent, many workers feel excluded from the benefits. Three out of four new jobs are concentrated in non-tradable sectors with low productivity, while export competitiveness continues to erode. Respondents note that opportunities remain constrained, especially for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which employ 63 percent of the workforce yet face a \$206-billion funding gap, the second largest in Asia-Pacific. While initiatives like DTI's Pondo sa Pagbabago at Pag-Asenso (P3) have improved microenterprise financing, barriers to scaling up remain high.

Structural inequalities persist. Women face an 18.4 percent gender pay gap in digital sectors; persons with disabilities remain underemployed despite legal employment quotas; and youth unemployment and underemployment are rising, with NEET rates reaching 15.9 percent in 2025. Although child labor has declined, from 1.09 million in 2023 to 863,000 in 2024, it remains prevalent in agriculture and informal work, reflecting weak law enforcement.

Workers' rights continue to face systemic repression. The International Labor Organization (ILO) and labor groups have raised alarm over restrictive provisions in the Labor Code that criminalize or penalize strikes, undermining the constitutional right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Union leaders and organizers continue to face harassment, surveillance, and red-tagging, perpetuating a climate of fear in workplaces. Respondents stress that genuine social dialogue is stifled, weakening workers' ability to negotiate fair wages and safe working conditions.

The People's Scorecard, which rated SDG 8 with very low progress at 5%, underscores how economic gains fail to translate into dignified livelihoods. The national minimum wage, averaging ₱440, remains far below the ₱1,207 family living wage, leaving most workers unable to afford basic needs. Informal, contractual, and gig workers lack job security and social protection, deepening inequality.

As the country advances discussions on a Just Transition toward a green and sustainable economy, respondents stress that workers must not be left behind. Transitioning away from fossil fuel industries must include decent work guarantees for affected laborers. Respondents also identify Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives, and social enterprises as key drivers of sustainable livelihoods if supported through affordable financing, innovation incentives, and access to global markets. Equally, investing in skills development, particularly in green jobs, circular economy initiatives, and digital work, can promote resilience and inclusivity.

Communities and advocates call for urgent reforms: bridging the wage gap through adjustments tied to the cost of living; expanding social protection and labor rights enforcement; and scaling investments in youth skills, PWD employment, and workforce reintegration. At the same time, creating an enabling ecosystem for SMEs and social enterprises is seen as essential to achieving inclusive and sustainable growth.

GOAL 9: BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND FOSTER INNOVATION

Industrial development remains a central pillar of the Philippine government's growth agenda, with infrastructure spending targeted at 5–6% of GDP between 2022 and 2028 and a ₱1.507 trillion allocation for 2025 under the "Build, Better, More" program. A total of 197 flagship projects cut across connectivity, water resources, agriculture, health, digital infrastructure, energy, and other sectors, with the government urging private sector partnerships to bolster financing and implementation.

Beneath these headline figures, communities see uneven and often exclusionary progress. Despite some improvements in roads and transport, the Philippines continues to lag behind its Southeast Asian neighbors in technological readiness. In a regional index of smart tourism ecosystem development, it ranked only fourth out of six ASEAN states, reflecting long-standing weaknesses in electricity reliability, network coverage, digital literacy, and affordable internet access. These barriers deepen the urban-rural digital divide, with many communities in far-flung areas feeling left behind by promises of modernization.

Industrial performance also shows strain. Growth in the sector slowed to 2.1% in the second quarter of 2025, a steep drop from 7.9% the year before. While still a key semiconductor supplier in regional production networks, the Philippines has failed to generate enough employment or attract investment at the scale of its neighbors. Respondents interpret this stagnation as another sign that large-scale industrial priorities benefit investors more than workers, particularly when opportunities remain concentrated in Metro Manila and nearby growth hubs.

Innovation has been framed as a bright spot, with the Philippines ranked 50th of 133 economies in the 2025 Global Innovation Index and recognized as an "innovation overperformer." But the people's scorecard reveals a contrasting story, **rating SDG 9 at 17.10%, or very low progress.** Ordinary Filipinos feel little of this progress in their daily lives.

Research and development spending remains far below global standards, and respondents point out that the lack of researchers, technical support, and accessible financing keeps grassroots innovation stunted. Many see flagship infrastructure as politically driven and skewed toward extractive industries, while renewable energy integration, decentralized systems, and community-based solutions remain overlooked.

What communities emphasize most is the persistence of inequality in infrastructure and energy access. In Mindanao, energy deficits and nearly a million households without electricity underscore the gap between national targets and lived realities. Households report unreliable supply, volatile prices, and an ongoing dependence on fossil fuels, which they believe erodes both resilience and trust. Displacement linked to industrial expansion in rural and coastal areas further fuels perceptions that growth is achieved at the expense of the poor, deepening poverty and environmental risks.

The people's scorecard makes clear that industrialization and infrastructure development must work for people, not just markets. Respondents call for research and innovation investments to reach at least the 1% benchmark of GDP and for policies to prioritize green technologies and decentralized renewable energy. They want equitable infrastructure investment, particularly in Mindanao and underserved regions, to ensure fair energy access. They also stress the importance of stronger safeguards against displacement and environmental harm, and demand decentralization of innovation through support for SMEs, local universities, and research hubs so that opportunities are not confined to urban centers.

GOAL 10: REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES

The Philippines has experienced notable shifts in growth distribution over the past decades. Between 1985 and 2000, growth patterns were largely pro-rich, disproportionately benefiting households at the upper end of the income spectrum. From 2000 to 2018, growth became more pro-poor, with the lowest-income groups experiencing faster gains than wealthier households. Communities stress that these gains have not dismantled deep-rooted inequalities. A 2022 World Bank report ranked the Philippines 15th out of 63 countries in income inequality, with the top 1 percent capturing 17 percent of national income while the bottom 50 percent shared only 14 percent.

The people's scorecard reveals that inequality is felt not only through income but also in labor, gender, and migration. Workers note that job opportunities remain unequal and often precarious, while marginalized groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities continue to face barriers despite the presence of protective policies. Communities acknowledge that reforms such as the Public Financial Management (PFM) Reforms Roadmap 2024–2028 and the Capital Markets Efficiency Promotion Act (CMEPA) could improve accountability and broaden economic participation. But they also point out that these policies have yet to translate into tangible change for households who continue to feel excluded from opportunities.

On gender equality, Filipinos take pride in the country's high global ranking, consistently leading Asia in closing gender gaps. The Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710) and recent measures like DOLE Department Order No. 251-25 (2025) show progress in addressing workplace discrimination. Respondents highlight that these gains do not extend to everyone. The stalled passage of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Equality Bill leaves LGBTQ+ people without comprehensive protection, reinforcing the feeling that equality remains selective and incomplete.

Migration further highlights both opportunity and vulnerability. Families dependent on overseas work see remittances as lifelines that reduce poverty and sustain livelihoods, but they also recount stories of exploitation, abuse, and lack of state protection.

Advisory No. 25, Series of 2025, issued by the Department of Migrant Workers, which sets higher accommodation standards for pre-deployed domestic workers, is viewed positively but insufficient in addressing systemic risks migrants face abroad. The people's scorecard reflects a growing call from families of migrant workers for stronger safeguards and reintegration support so migration becomes a choice, not a necessity born of inequality at home.

At the global level, the Philippines positions itself as a voice for equity, leveraging platforms such as ASEAN, the G-24, and developing country blocs to push for fairer global rules. From presiding over the 78th World Health Assembly to hosting the Board of the Loss and Damage Fund, communities question why this global leadership has not always translated into addressing inequalities in local contexts, where millions still feel excluded from the benefits of growth and global engagement.

Taken together, the Philippine policy context for SDG 10 reflects both progress and persistent gaps. With a **rating of only 0.63%, it shows very low progress.** Respondents stress that reforms in economic management and gender equality have laid important groundwork, but inequality remains entrenched in wages, discrimination, and migration vulnerabilities. What the people demand is not just policies, but political will to close these gaps and ensure that growth, rights, and protections reach those who have long been left behind.

GOAL 11: MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT, AND SUSTAINABLE

The pursuit of sustainable cities and communities in the Philippines rests on a comprehensive set of laws and policies, however, people continue to feel that these promises are far from reality. The Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992 envisioned inclusive growth through socialized housing and participatory planning, while environmental and resilience measures are institutionalized in the Clean Air Act, the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, and the recently adopted National Air Quality Control Action Plan. The Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 even commits to allocating 5-6 percent of GDP to infrastructure, with priorities in transport, housing, and urban resilience. These commitments form a strong foundation, but the people's scorecard shows that communities remain burdened by weak governance, uneven investments, and exclusionary decision-making.

Citizens feel the cracks in daily life. Commuters endure endless hours in traffic and overcrowded trains, while the country's main airport was ranked among Asia's worst. Port facilities remain costly and inefficient, and railway systems lag behind neighbors. Smart city initiatives are often showcased, but ordinary residents see little impact because of poor connectivity and underfunding. Housing is a source of frustration: units are built but left idle, while thousands of families continue to live in unsafe and informal settlements. For many, disasters highlight the same gaps year after year; relief is provided, but preparedness is weak, leaving communities vulnerable.

Respondents also feel that urban governance is not inclusive. Women and girls continue to face harassment in public spaces despite the Safe Spaces Act. Indigenous Peoples are displaced by extractive projects that push into ancestral lands without Free, Prior, and Informed Consent, undermining not only their rights but also their traditional ecological practices that could strengthen resilience. Persons with disabilities, particularly the Deaf, are excluded from disaster communications. The sense of exclusion is echoed in perceptions of a Metro Manila-centric bias: smaller LGUs say they are left without adequate support to conduct climate and disaster risk assessments, further widening inequalities.

Environmental and cultural heritage sites, which communities treasure, are also under threat. Residents lament the degradation of iconic places such as the Chocolate Hills and Tubbataha Reefs, where unchecked development and weak enforcement of zoning laws put livelihoods, ecosystems, and cultural identity at risk. To many, these losses reinforce the view that commercial interests take precedence over sustainability.

The people's scorecard rated SDG 11 at 6.06%, showing very low progress. It makes clear what citizens demand: investments that go beyond maintaining crumbling infrastructure to equitably expand transport and housing; genuine participation of marginalized groups and Indigenous Peoples in decision-making; inclusive disaster preparedness that ensures accessibility for all; and stronger enforcement of conservation and heritage protection. Communities are also calling for decentralization; resources and technical support must flow to local governments across the country, not just the capital. For the people, sustainable cities and communities cannot simply be measured in policies and plans, but in whether their voices shape development and whether their everyday lives are made safer, more inclusive, and more resilient.

GOAL 12: ENSURE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) has long been recognized in the Philippines as essential for balancing economic growth with environmental protection. Anchored on the Philippine Action Plan for SCP, the framework envisions a whole-of-society approach that links policy, innovation, research, and education to shift production and consumption patterns. National laws reinforce this; from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act and Renewable Energy Act to the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003) and Green Jobs Act; covering everything from efficient resource use and pollution control to greener markets and infrastructure. This wide array of programs demonstrates strong commitment, but respondents say progress on the ground has been slow, fragmented, and uneven.

Waste management continues to be one of the starkest failures. More than two decades since RA 9003, segregation is weak, illegal dumpsites remain, and fewer than one-third of local governments have sanitary landfills. Only 39 percent of barangays have functional Material Recovery Facilities. Respondents say single-use plastics are still everywhere, while household recycling is inconsistent and poorly supported. They describe waste management systems as “poor,” pointing to the government’s weak enforcement of both ecological solid waste provisions and extended producer responsibility laws.

Respondents also worry about unsafe chemical use and the way industrial pollution seeps into their air, water, and soil. They feel standards are poorly enforced and too often tilted in favor of industry rather than public health. Farmers and households highlight missed opportunities for composting and circular food systems, which are rarely promoted or supported despite being feasible solutions. They also note that budget priorities still favor imports and synthetic farming inputs, rather than investing in local sustainable agriculture and circular economy practices. Persons with disabilities, for their part, feel excluded from SCP programs, reflecting broader concerns that inclusivity is not baked into design and implementation.

The people’s scorecard reflects very low progress on SDG 12, with a rating of 1.25%. Many perceive sustainable consumption and production as a low government priority, unlikely to advance without simultaneously addressing related issues such as poverty, inequality, and food insecurity.

Local initiatives, such as Quezon City’s circular food system, show that small-scale pilots can succeed and inspire. Respondents call for scaling up these models nationwide, ensuring proper funding, and establishing the long-mandated Solid Waste Management Fund to support LGUs. The people also want stronger incentives for small and medium enterprises to adopt circular practices through grants, subsidies, and tax breaks. Education campaigns on waste segregation, recycling, and safe chemical use are seen as essential, but communities stress that these must go hand in hand with real accountability for violators.

The message from the people is clear: policies alone will not deliver SDG 12. What matters is whether the government enforces the rules it has set, empowers communities to act, and places sustainability at the center of development. By strengthening governance, providing adequate financing, and ensuring inclusive participation, the Philippines can begin to turn fragmented initiatives into a true national shift toward sustainable consumption and production.

GOAL 13: TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS

Climate crisis defines the lived reality of millions of Filipinos, being placed the country as the most at-risk nation in the 2025 World Risk Index. To address this, the Philippines has adopted policy frameworks, including the Climate Change Act of 2009 (RA 9729), the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 (RA 10121), and the National Adaptation Plan 2023–2050. Local governments are also mandated to integrate climate action into their Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs) and Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plans (LDRRMPs). The people's scorecard, however, reveals that these frameworks are poorly implemented; many plans remain outdated, underfunded, and beyond the technical capacity of LGUs, leaving communities exposed to recurring loss and damage.

The costs are devastating. Typhoons, floods, and earthquakes routinely wipe out lives and livelihoods. The World Bank estimates average annual losses at 1.2 percent of GDP, rising to 4.6 percent in catastrophic events, with projections suggesting up to 13 percent by 2040. Financing has never kept pace: in 2020, damages hit ₱114.9 billion, yet only ₱16 billion was appropriated. The ₱20 billion National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund is consistently insufficient, as seen during Typhoons Rolly and Ulysses in 2020 and Super Typhoon Odette in 2021.

Beyond financial gaps, governance weaknesses undermine resilience. Respondents recall corruption in flood control projects, which diverted resources away from the vulnerable. While public awareness has improved, with terms like "climate change" and "heat wave" now part of daily conversations, education programs have not translated into preparedness. Relief operations remain prioritized over prevention, and many families cycle between disaster and recovery with little systemic support.

The people's scorecard underscores widespread frustration – with a **rating of 10.15%, reflecting a very low progress.** Respondents say that awareness has not been matched by political will. They view climate targets as unambitious and weakly implemented, with deadlines consistently missed. Only three percent of the Philippines' greenhouse gas reduction pledge is unconditional, with the rest reliant on foreign support; perceived as the government's lack of accountability. Civil society also criticizes the reliance on debt-driven international loans rather than demanding reparations from high-emitting nations. At the same time, contradictions persist: reclamation and mining projects continue, and environmental defenders face threats, even killings, despite government commitments to sustainability.

The people were clear on what must change. They want disaster preparedness prioritized over reactive relief, with climate finance delivered transparently and free from corruption. Grassroots organizations and local leaders must be empowered to lead adaptation efforts, while livelihood support should help households break dependence on post-disaster aid. Citizens demand more ambitious unconditional emission reduction targets, stronger participation in climate planning, and genuine leadership in pushing for global climate justice. Above all, they call for protection of environmental defenders who remain on the frontlines of resistance against destructive projects.

For ordinary Filipinos, the climate crisis is not abstract – it is floods destroying homes, storms disrupting livelihoods, and heat waves threatening health. Bridging the gap between policies and lived realities requires political courage, transparent financing, and community-led action. By centering justice and inclusion, the Philippines can truly advance SDG 13.

GOAL 14: CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE OCEANS, SEAS AND MARINE RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Marine biodiversity is the Philippines' greatest natural wealth. At the heart of the Coral Triangle, the country hosts the world's third-largest reef system covering 22,000 square kilometers and teeming with marine life. However, this richness is under growing threat: from climate change, plastic pollution, destructive fishing, and unchecked coastal development that erode ecosystems and livelihoods.

The Philippines pioneered community-based Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the 1970s. Today, more than 1,500 MPAs exist, but fisherfolk and coastal residents observe that many protections remain weak. Only about a third are effectively managed, and just one percent of reefs are considered adequately safeguarded. Official reports claimed that 9.7 percent of seascapes were conserved in 2020, nearly meeting international biodiversity targets. However, a study concluded that 90 percent of reefs remain in poor to fair condition, with none rated excellent.

Conservation laws exist, anchored in the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-NIPAS) Act, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, and the Extended Producer Responsibility Act. However, the Philippines remains the world's largest source of ocean plastic pollution, with 466 rivers discharging waste into seas each year. The Pasig River alone contributes 63,000 tons annually. Respondents stressed that poor enforcement of these laws allows plastic waste to overwhelm coastal ecosystems, while fisherfolk are left to cope with dwindling fish stocks.

Governance failures further undermine coastal resilience. Reports of illegal commercial fishing in municipal waters rose between 2022 and 2024. The Supreme Court's 2024 decision allowing commercial vessels within 15 kilometers of shorelines was described by fisherfolk as a "betrayal," eroding protections under the Fisheries Code. For small-scale fishers, already among the poorest sectors, such policy reversals deepen inequality and fuel frustration that the government favors industry players over those sustaining marine food systems.

Industrial projects intensify these concerns. Respondents flagged reclamation, seabed quarrying, and fossil fuel developments as existential threats. The proposed Batangas gas hub, which could devastate the Verde Island Passage, the "center of the center" of global marine biodiversity, sparked strong resistance, as did campaigns against LNG projects in Mindanao. People expressed frustration that the government prioritizes extractive industries and geopolitical interests while neglecting fisherfolk welfare and biodiversity protection.

The people's scorecard rated SDG 14 with 0%, showing very limited regression. This highlights urgent solutions: MPAs must be properly financed and co-managed with fisherfolk and local governments; reclamation and fossil fuel projects in biodiversity-sensitive areas must be halted; and renewable energy transitions shall be pursued without compromising marine ecosystems. Laws on solid waste and producer responsibility must be strictly enforced to curb plastic at its source, backed by stronger local waste management. Protections for municipal waters must be reinstated to safeguard small-scale fisherfolk, alongside intensified efforts to curb illegal and destructive fishing. Most importantly, marine governance must be democratized, with fisherfolk, coastal communities, and civil society meaningfully engaged in conservation planning and decision-making.

GOAL 15: PROTECT, RESTORE, AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, AND HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION AND HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Life on land in the Philippines is both a source of pride and a pressing concern. The country is home to some of the world's most biologically diverse terrestrial and mountain ecosystems, yet these face mounting threats from deforestation, land degradation, wildlife trafficking, and invasive alien species. The Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System (E-NIPAS) Act of 2018 anchors the government's conservation efforts, complemented by the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act, the Philippine Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (PBSAP) 2024–2040, and the Wildlife Law Enforcement Action Plan (WildLEAP) 2018–2028. A National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan (NISSAP) 2020–2030 is also in place, though implementation suffers from gaps in data and monitoring.

Large-scale initiatives such as the Enhanced National Greening Program (eNGP) aim to rehabilitate degraded forests and watersheds. These are urgently needed: 75 percent of croplands are vulnerable to erosion, with agriculture losing 457 million tons of soil annually. Forest conversion for settlements and commercial use continues at an average of 47,000 hectares a year. By 2020, natural forest cover stood at 13.2 million hectares; yet between 2020 and 2024, another 43,800 hectares were lost, releasing 24 million tons of CO₂. From 2001 to 2024, tree cover declined by 1.52 million hectares, contributing nearly 928 million tons of CO₂ emissions. Palawan recorded the steepest losses, underscoring localized but severe deforestation pressures.

The Philippines has demonstrated symbolic leadership in combating illegal wildlife trade, notably in 2013 when it destroyed five tons of seized ivory – the first ASEAN country and non-elephant range state to do so. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, and pressures from logging, poaching, and land conversion continue to threaten endemic species. Emerging risks from invasive alien species further complicate conservation, with limited research constraining effective interventions.

The People's Scorecard rated SDG 15 with -2.46%, reflecting very limited regression. On the ground, conservation is widely perceived as fragmented and undermined by extractive industries. Protected areas in Sierra Madre, Palawan, Romblon, and CARAGA face encroachment from mining, plantations, and land speculation. Indigenous Peoples remain marginalized in governance. Their Indigenous Knowledge Systems, crucial for sustainable land management, are often overlooked, reinforcing exclusion and conflict.

Farmers are also neglected. Respondents mentioned longstanding delays in agrarian reform, such as the decades-long case of the Don Carlos Bukidnon United Farmers Association, weakening land tenure security and driving unsustainable land use. Environmental defenders resisting destructive projects face persistent threats and violence, deepening mistrust in institutions. Meanwhile, policies promoting GMOs and hybrid crops are criticized for accelerating biodiversity loss and undermining native species conservation.

To realize SDG 15, the Philippines must scale up enforcement of conservation laws, expand financing for protected areas, and secure land tenure for farmers and Indigenous Peoples through timely agrarian reform and recognition of ancestral domains. Community-based management rooted in Indigenous Knowledge Systems should be institutionalized, while stronger safeguards are needed against mining, plantations, and large-scale land conversion. Reforestation and restoration must prioritize native species, research on invasive species must be strengthened, and protection of environmental defenders must be guaranteed. A people-centered approach can safeguard the country's biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of life on land.

GOAL 16: PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE, AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS

Peace, justice, and strong institutions are critical foundations for sustainable development, and the Philippines has made important strides to align with SDG 16's vision of inclusive, accountable, and rights-based governance. Recent reforms have aimed to strengthen transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. The Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, implemented through the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), seeks to streamline bureaucratic processes and reduce opportunities for corruption. Similarly, the Foundling Recognition and Protection Act (RA 11767) ensures that foundlings are recognized as natural-born Filipino citizens, advancing equal rights and legal identity.

Initiatives to close systemic gaps are also underway. The Birth Registration Assistance Project (BRAP), launched in 2022 by the Philippine Statistics Authority, has registered over 420,000 individuals, enabling access to essential services and protections. However, an estimated 3.7 million Filipinos remain unregistered. Internationally, the country's removal from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list in February 2025 after nearly four years of monitoring was hailed as progress in combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

Despite these gains, systemic corruption continues to weaken governance. In 2024, the Philippines scored 33 out of 100 in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), ranking 114th globally and falling below the world average of 43. While the government champions initiatives, such as the participation in the Open Government Partnership, these aspirations are frequently undermined by weak enforcement, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a culture of impunity.

Press freedom illustrates both improvement and ongoing risks. The Philippines rose to 116th in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, its best ranking in two decades; while 2024 marked the first year since 1985 that no journalist was killed in connection with their work. Yet the country remains the deadliest in Asia-Pacific for journalists over the last four decades, emphasizing the urgent need for stronger protections.

For respondents, **gaps in SDG 16 are stark, with a rating of -10.31%, reflecting very limited regression.** Marginalized groups, particularly in rural areas, continue to face barriers to civil registration, excluding them from basic services and political participation. Reports of extrajudicial killings and human rights violations tied to the anti-drug campaign reinforce perceptions of systemic impunity, where justice is seen as slow, inaccessible, and biased against the poor. Persons with disabilities, such as the Deaf community, point to weak implementation of progressive laws like the Filipino Sign Language Act, with corruption and inefficiency undermining service delivery. These realities deepen public mistrust and highlight the distance between commitments and lived experience.

To realize SDG 16, reforms must put inclusivity, accountability, and transparency at the center. Civil society has called for universal birth registration to eliminate exclusion and for greater openness in governance, starting with public access to bicameral budget deliberations and other legislative processes. Stronger measures against corruption must be paired with the long-overdue passage of a Freedom of Information Bill to institutionalize the right to information. Finally, greater protections for journalists, human rights defenders, and marginalized groups are essential to ensuring that institutions foster peace, justice, and inclusion for all.

GOAL 17: STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Partnership for the Goals in the Philippines reflects both progress and persistent challenges, as the country works to mobilize resources, expand trade, and strengthen cooperation for sustainable development. Recent fiscal performance demonstrates the potential for domestic resource mobilization: in the first semester of 2025, the Bureau of Internal Revenue surpassed its collection target by more than PHP 4.5 billion, while the Bureau of Customs sustained revenue gains through digitalization and stricter enforcement. However, watchdogs and community leaders warn that corruption continues to erode fiscal credibility, with overpricing, substandard project delivery, and “ghost” infrastructure. At the same time, the national debt climbed to nearly PHP 17 trillion, or 62 percent of GDP, in early 2025, a lasting legacy of pandemic-era borrowing that now constrains fiscal space for inclusive and sustainable programs.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) continues to bridge critical financing gaps, with the country’s portfolio reaching USD 39.6 billion in 2024. These funds support climate resilience, infrastructure, and governance initiatives. However, as the Philippines transitions toward upper middle-income status, concessional financing is expected to diminish. This shift highlights the need for stronger absorptive capacity, streamlined bureaucracy, and improved project execution to maximize the impact of available funds. In trade, regional cooperation through ASEAN and other frameworks has provided new market opportunities, but vulnerabilities remain. Under the U.S.-Philippines trade arrangement, for example, Philippine exports still face relatively high tariffs, while certain U.S. goods enjoy zero tariffs, putting local producers at a disadvantage.

Science, technology, and innovation partnerships show potential but remain underdeveloped. Programs such as the Green Technology Incentive Program have encouraged climate-friendly innovation. However, weak R&D funding, fragmented policies, and limited investment in human capital prevent the Philippines from fully benefiting from global innovation ecosystems. Stronger collaboration between government, academe, and the private sector is necessary to drive research, adoption, and scaling of new technologies.

Institutional mechanisms have been established to align the budget with the SDGs, such as the Development Budget Coordination Committee’s Sub-Committee on the SDGs and the Program Convergence Budgeting framework. While these initiatives reflect government commitment, civil society organizations (CSOs) argue that transparency and participation remain tokenistic. Open budget initiatives, including allowing observer participation in bicameral budget conferences, have yet to lead to genuine accountability. Persistent data gaps, especially in governance, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion, continue to limit evidence-based policymaking.

Stakeholders on the ground stress that progress under SDG 17 has not translated into truly inclusive or accountable partnerships, **scoring only 14.38%**, showing **very limited progress**. CSO involvement is often limited to post-decision consultations, while grassroots groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, women-led organizations, and cooperatives, remain underutilized despite their proven role in building resilience and advancing local development. Over-reliance on loans and aid has also raised concerns about long-term sustainability, while the absence of a Freedom of Information (FOI) law continues to restrict citizens’ ability to monitor public spending and hold leaders accountable.

Moving forward, the Philippines must consolidate fiscal gains by addressing corruption and ensuring that revenue translates into effective, people-centered investments. Strengthening absorptive capacity will be critical as concessional financing declines, while trade agreements should be rebalanced to safeguard local producers. Investment in R&D and innovation, supported by strong linkages between government, academia, and private stakeholders, will expand competitiveness. Most importantly, partnerships must be made genuinely inclusive by institutionalizing transparency, empowering grassroots actors, and adopting reforms such as the FOI law. Without these measures, SDG 17 risks remaining a framework of promise rather than a transformative driver of sustainable and equitable development.