



G-Watch
Citizen Action for Accountability



Making the Elections an
Accountability Platform

FactCheck 2022

Presidential Candidates

Political Reform

Political reform refers to the effort to “gradually and incrementally transform the way governing is done through changes in policies, mechanisms and processes.”[1] Changes are, therefore, sought “within the existing legal framework or political system, using means and measures that legitimate authority legalizes and binds.” [2]

For the May 2022 elections, Government Watch (G-Watch) has narrowed down the political reform to three burning issues:

- Peace talks with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) along with its military arm, the New People’s Army (NPA), and its and political wing, the National Democratic Front (NDF)
- Banning of political dynasties
- Strengthening the party system

Peace Talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF

Formed on 26 December 1968, the CPP has been waging an armed revolution against the Philippine government for more than half a century. Considered as the longest communist insurgency in the world, this conflict has led to untold suffering, with more than 40,000 casualties since 2017.[3] Peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF began in 1986, during the administration of President Corazon Aquino. Since then, more than 40 rounds of peace talks have been conducted by the Philippine government and communist rebels. On 23 November 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte announced the termination of peace talks with the CPP and declared the group a terrorist organization 12 days later. [4]

Track Record on the Peace Talks



Though labor leader **Ka Leody de Guzman** did not explicitly address the ongoing insurgency prior to his candidacy, his group Sanlakas once “lamented the collapse of the peace talks between the government and communist rebels.” [5]



Former head of the Philippine National Police (PNP), **Panfilo Lacson**, supported the Duterte administration’s suspension of peace talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF after the communist leadership ordered its fighters to intensify tactical offensives following the declaration of martial law in Mindanao.[6]

A year later, on 11 July 2018, Lacson issued a statement claiming that localized peace talks would be fast and practical, adding that, “(Ang) localized peace initiatives ang mas practical, mabilis at menos gastos pa na pamamaraan sa pakikipag-usap sa mga rebeldeng komunista” (Localized peace initiatives would be a more practical, fast, and financially-efficient way to communicate with rebel communists). [7]



Though **Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.** has his own website (bongbongmarcos.com), it does not contain any clear information regarding his platform. However, information from the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) reveal that Marcos Jr. initially vowed to address the “root causes of conflict” when he was still seeking the vice presidency in 2015. But recently, Marcos was “saddened” when several senators called for the “defunding and abolishment of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict over allegations of red-tagging and summary executions of those tagged as communist cadres.”[9]

He then reiterated his support for localized peace talks with communist rebels, stating on 2 December 2020 that, “Giving up on peace should not be an option. But given the failures of past administrations who engaged in centralized peace negotiations, I fully support the present efforts of localizing it.” [8]

Peace Talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF

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Track Record on the Peace Talks



Manila Mayor **Francisco Domagoso (popularly known as Isko Moreno)** attended the second and third rounds of the GPH-NDF peace talks in Asker, Norway as a consultant of the NDF in 2016-2017. [10] During the online forum Kapihan sa Manila Bay held 13 October 2021, Moreno expressed willingness to resume peace talks with the communist rebels, stating, *“Mamamayan mo din itong mga ito. Baka naligaw ito ng landas. Di ba dapat kinukumbinsi mo itong mga ito, hindi mo ini-alienate?”* (These are also your constituents. They might have lost their way. Aren't you supposed to convince them instead of alienating them?) [11]



Though he had not explicitly mentioned the peace process in the past, **Emmanuel “Manny” Pacquiao** was once quoted in the Las Vegas Sun saying, “I told them (the armed forces) that if that can be the reason the guns will be silent in my country, I can fight every day—just for them,” after he was informed by high-ranking military officials that communist rebels and government troops call a truce whenever he has a fight.[12] In fact, on 26 August 2016, the NPA released two captive policemen to Pacquiao in Lupon, Davao Oriental prior to the resumption of the GPH-NDF peace talks.[13]



While turning over laboratory and cooking to several public schools in Mulanay, Quezon province, Vice President **Maria Leonor “Leni” Robredo** called on President Rodrigo Duterte to resume peace talks with the CPP, adding that the negotiations should be left to the government panel, not just the military. [14] In a phone interview, Robredo said, “It is right that the military should be on top of it, but the [government] peace panel should also be involved because that’s the main reason why they were formed—to search ways and solutions for lasting peace.”

Two years later, on 15 December 2020, the Vice President’s spokesperson, Atty. Barry Gutierrez, issued a statement assuring the public that the Vice President believes that “peace talks are crucial in resolving (the country’s) decades-old conflict.” However, Gutierrez clarified that their Office is not involved in the negotiations which “must be conducted through official, formal channels.” The statement was issued after the NDF raised the possibility of holding separate talks with the opposition, which Robredo headed, prompting Duterte ally, Senator Bong Go, to express “his concern over a supposed proposal for Robredo’s office to spearhead talks with communist rebels.” [15]

Peace Talks with the CPP-NPA-NDF

Platforms and Plans on Reviving the Peace Talks



De Guzman's Bagong Pulitika, Bagong Ekonomiya platform vows to “unconditionally resume peace talks with the CPP-NDF-NPA.”[16] This was reiterated during an online press conference on 23 October 2021, when he and his running-mate Walden Belo called for “the unconditional resumption of peace talks with communist rebels.” [17]

Pacquiao is taking a similar stance, claiming that he is open to reviving peace talks with communist rebels. During a forum held in mid-February by the Citizens Alliance for Just Peace, the boxer-turned-politician said: *“Buhayin po natin ang usaping pangkapayapaan sa pagitan ng gobyerno at mga rebeldeng komunista. Lahat po ‘yan may solusyon basta’t pag-usapan ano ‘yung problema nila. Wala naman silang hinihinging kapalit kundi development lang at magkaroon sila ng sustainable livelihood, may makain sila at hindi sila magutom (Let’s revive the peace talks between the government and communist rebels. Everything has a solution as long as you tackle their problem. They are not asking for anything in return, but development, sustainable livelihood and food so they will not get hungry). [21]*



Lacson's platform also calls for the “continuation of peace talks with rebels.” But at the same time, it also emphasizes the “enforcement of the law against all offenders while ensuring human rights violations are held liable.”[18]



On the other hand, information from the COMELEC suggests that **Marcos Jr.** wants to end the rebellion and called for “enough funds to suppress insurgency.” [19]



Robredo is in favor of initiating localized peace talks with communist rebels. During a visit in Cagayan de Oro on 16 October 2021, the Vice President said, *“Tingin ko kailangan may localized na pag-uusap. Mas maa-attain natin ang kapayapaan kung ang pinaka-root ng problema ma-address.”* (I think there should be localized talks. We can better attain peace if we can address the root of the problem.) However, localized peace talks had earlier been rejected by the NDF. [22]



In contrast, **Moreno** said that he would “look into” the possibility of dropping the government’s terrorist tag on the CPP if elected as president. Speaking to media while campaigning in Lucena on 21 March 2022, the Manila mayor expressed his willingness to return to the negotiating table, adding that, “at the end of the day, *ito ay mga kababayan natin na maaaring kailangan ng atensyon, kailangan may tainga, kailangang mapakinggan.* I hope when they come to the table, I hope they will meet us halfway.” [20]

On 13 December 2021, Robredo asserted the need for a “whole of nation approach” in dealing with the insurgency and said that the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) should not be used to red-tag and harass activists and those critical of the government. [23]

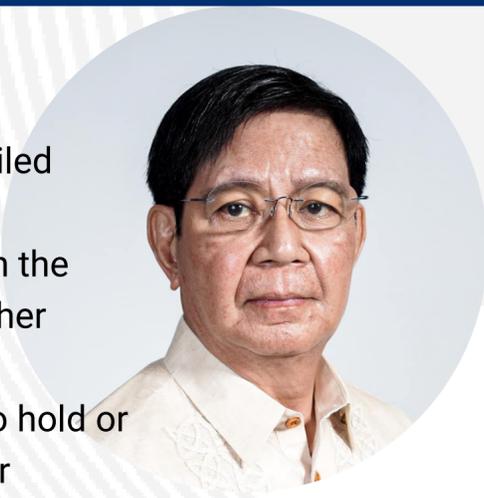
Banning of Political Dynasties

The 1987 Constitution stipulates that, “The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law.” The wording of this provision meant that Congress would have to craft an enabling law banning political dynasties. Unfortunately, the country’s post-Marcos Congress has been dominated by political clans, comprising about 70.4% of all district legislators elected to the House of Representatives from 1987 to 2016.[24] Three and a half decades after the Constitution was ratified a year after the ouster of the Marcos dictatorship, the Philippines has yet to have an anti-dynasty law.

Track Record on Political Dynasties

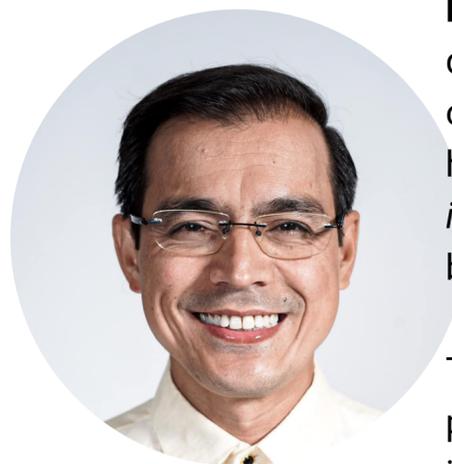
During the 17th Congress (2016-2019), **Lacson** filed Senate Bill No. 49 to ban political dynasties by “prohibit(ing) the spouse or person related within the second degree of consanguinity or affinity, whether legitimate or illegitimate, full or half blood, to an incumbent elective official seeking re-election, to hold or run for any elective office in the same city and/or province in the same election.” It also proposed prohibiting “two or more persons who have a political dynasty relationship from running simultaneously for an elective office within the same city and/or province, even if neither is so related to the incumbent public official.” The measure was refiled as Senate Bill No. 30 during the 18th Congress (2019-2022).

Despite his anti-dynasty stance, Lacson’s son, Pampiran, ran for Cavite vice governor in 2013, eventually losing to Jolo Revilla.[25]



Marcos Jr., on the other hand, believes that there is nothing wrong with political dynasties, saying: “You cannot stop people from wanting to serve.” [26]

Marcos’ sister, Imee, is an incumbent senator; while his eldest son, Sandro, is seeking the congressional seat of Ilocos Norte’s first legislative district. In addition, his nephew, Matthew Joseph Marcos Manotoc, is the governor of Ilocos Norte; while the vice governor, Cecilia Araneta-Marcos, is his cousin-in-law.



Moreno has not taken any actions to support the banning of political dynasties. Nevertheless, Moreno insists that he has no intention of forming one. In an October 2018 interview with Chrisian Esguerra, Moreno said, “I have 5 kids but you’ve never heard [of them]. Even my wife, *hindi ninyo kilala in any news or even entertainment. Wala kayong maririnig sa asawa ko* because I don’t want them to be in politics.” [27]

Two years later, on 4 June 2021, the mayor of Manila appeared in the ANC program Headstart where he said, “I don’t believe a government position is inherited in a democratic government. In a democracy, the people make the choice.” [28]

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Track Record on Political Dynasties

In contrast, **Pacquiao** believed that a law banning political dynasties could be undemocratic. During a *Rappler Talk* interview held on 1 March 2019, the former boxing champion claimed that, “*Yung batas sa political dynasty makakaapekto ‘yan sa ano mo eh, yung free will mo, kasi nga demokrasya nga tayo kasi pipili mga tao. ‘Di naman ilalagay, iboboto ng mga tao. Meaning tao ang pipili, hind yung sarili mo o someone put them there*” (The law against political dynasties will affect people’s free will because we are in a democracy, where people will choose their leaders. The leaders will not be appointed, they will be elected by the people). [29]

Not only was Pacquiao opposed to banning political dynasties, several of his relatives have also been elected to public office. Pacquiao's wife, Jinkee, for example, was a one-term vice governor of Sarangani from 2013-2016. In addition, his son, Jimuel, has been elected to the national executive council of the Workers and Peasants Party (WPP), which is contesting the 2022 partylist elections.

Pacquiao’s brother, Rogelio, on the other hand, was elected as Sarangani congressman in 2016. He became deputy speaker on 7 December 2020, and is now running as governor of the province. Another brother, Roberto Pacquiao, is the incumbent representative of OFW Family Partylist. And Roberto’s wife, Lorelie, is the president of General Santos City’s Liga ng mga Barangay. She is now gunning for the mayoralty post.



In the book *Frontline Leadership* by the Ateneo School of Government, **Robredo** said that she was asked to run for mayor of Naga in 1998 to succeed his husband Jesse, but she replied, “Non-negotiable *na ako ang pumalit kay Jess as mayor. Hindi ko talaga nagustuhan ang mga family dynasties na feature ng PCIJ. Grabe naman kung gagaya ako*” (The idea that I replace Jess a mayor is non-negotiable. I really didn’t like the political dynasties that were featured in PCIJ. It would not be good if I followed in their footsteps). [30]

Robredo was also a member of the House Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms during the 16th Congress (2013-2016), which endorsed House Bill No. 3587 or the Anti-Political Dynasty Bill. Though not one of the principal authors, she is considered as one of the Bill’s co-authors by being a member of the said Committee.

Robredo is also one of the co-authors of Republic Act 10742 (Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act), which includes the first anti-political dynasty restrictions for elected officials since 1987. [31]

She reiterated her anti-dynasty stance when she visited Legaspi City on 23 March 2018. Asked regarding proposals to shift to a federal form of government, Robredo replied: “We should pass the anti-dynasty law first before we discuss federalism.”[32]

Banning of Political Dynasties

Platforms and Plans



Under Laban ng Masa's *Bagong Pulitika, Bagong Ekonomiya* platform, **De Guzman** vows to "put in place the conditions to ensure that majority of Congress members come from marginalized sectors; end political dynasties." [33] In his interview with Jacobin Magazine, de Guzman further pledged that if he is elected as president, he will introduce an anti-dynasty law through a people's initiative. [34]

During his 8 February proclamation rally in Imus, Cavite, **Lacson** said that the "prevalence of political dynasties" was one of the major obstacles to good governance. [35]



On the other hand, **Moreno** explicitly addresses the problem of political dynasties in his campaign platform. Dubbed *Bilis Kilos 10-Point Economic Agenda*, the platform aims to "encourage political inclusion by discouraging political dynasties in any form and (by) banning fat dynasties (when multiple members of the same family hold positions at the same time). [36]



Though he has successfully established his own political dynasty, **Pacquiao** said that he would prohibit his relatives from running for public office if an enabling law is passed. Speaking during DZBB's "*Ikaw Na Ba?*" presidential interview, the senator said, "*Kung 'yan po ang kagustuhan ng majority ng ating mga kababayan, why not? Kapag nandyan na ang batas ay susunod po tayo. Hindi tayo lalabag sa batas*" (If that is what the majority wants, why not? If there is a law, we will follow it. We will not violate the law). [37]



In a forum held on 4 February 2020, **Robredo** said that she will champion a measure banning political dynasties. Speaking to members of the *Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas* (KBP), the Vice President said, "*Co-author ako ng Anti-Dynasty Law. Feeling ko panahon na para ipasa iyon*" (I'm co-author of the Anti-Dynasty Law. I feel like it's time to pass it). [38]



Two months earlier, during a speech in Baguio, Robredo revealed that her eldest daughter Aika is being urged to run as Naga City mayor, but she stressed that, "our policy is that while I am in government, no one is allowed to run in our family." [39]

Strengthening the Party System

According to German political scientist Thomas Meyer, political parties are “the main organizational forms of modern democracy.”[40] While there are more than 170 registered parties in the Philippines, they “bear little resemblance to those of Western democracies” since “they have no real members to speak of” and “no party funds to collect or to account for.”[41] Due to the weakness of our parties, political dynasties have instead become “the most prevalent and preferred form of organization in local politics.” [42]

Track Record on Strengthening Political Parties



In 2001, **Lacson** won as senator under Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP). Three years later, he ran for president as an independent, but was defeated by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Then, on 29 July 2021, Lacson joined Partido Reporma and was immediately sworn in as its chairman. But then, on 24 March 2022, Lacson announced his resignation from the party after learning that the leadership of Reporma had decided to shift their support to Vice President Robredo. With no party behind him, Lacson vowed to continue his presidential bid as an independent.



Marcos Jr. was a member of Kilusang Bagong Lipunan (KBL)—the party his father founded—when he first ran for public office in 1992. However, in 2009, the KBL removed Marcos Jr. as party member after the latter joined the Nacionalista Party’s senatorial ticket.[43] He later vied for the vice presidency as an independent in 2016, but lost to Robredo of the Liberal Party (LP). On 18 September 2021, the Partido Federal ng Pilipinas (PFP) endorsed Marcos’ presidential bid,[44] who joined the party on 5 October the same year and became its chairperson that same day. [45]

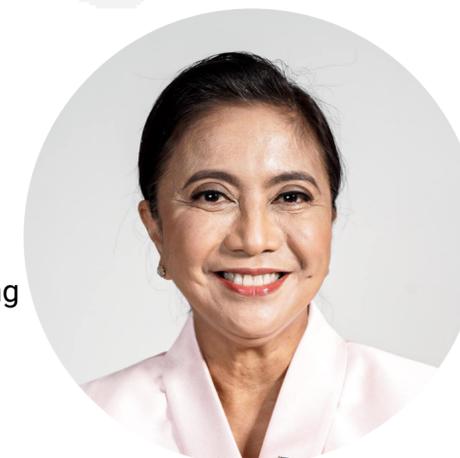


Moreno ran under Asenso Manileño when he successfully sought Manila’s vice mayoralty position in 2007. He was reelected in 2010, this time as a member of the Nacionalista Party (NP). Moreno then joined the Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP) in 2012, after he was chosen by Joseph Estrada (who was then gunning for mayor of Manila) as his running mate. But in 2016, Moreno again shifted his political affiliation, this time with the National Unity Party (NUP). Three years later, Moreno was named as vice chairman for political affairs of NUP. He eventually resigned from NUP and became a member of Aksyon Demokratiko on 5 August 2021. Five days later, the Manila mayor was elected as the new president of Aksyon Demokratiko.



In 2008, **Pacquiao** contested the congressional seat of the First District of South Cotabato as a member of the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (KAMPI). He lost. Two years later, Pacquiao won as congressman for the lone district of Sarangani under the Nacionalista Party. He was later reelected in 2013, this time as a member of PDP-Laban. On 1 October last year, Pacquiao filed certificate of candidacy (COC) for president under the Progressive Movement for the Devolution of Initiative (PROMDI).

On 29 October 2018, during the Basic Orientation Seminar on Liberal Democracy in Legaspi City, **Robredo** said she is in favor of law banning turncoatism to strengthen the country’s party system. Robredo is now running as an independent, though she is the current chairperson of the Liberal Party (LP).



Strengthening the Party System

Platforms and Plans



De Guzman's platform does not include strengthening the party system. Instead, its pledges to "institute direct democracy and popular participation in decision-making at all levels of government." [46]

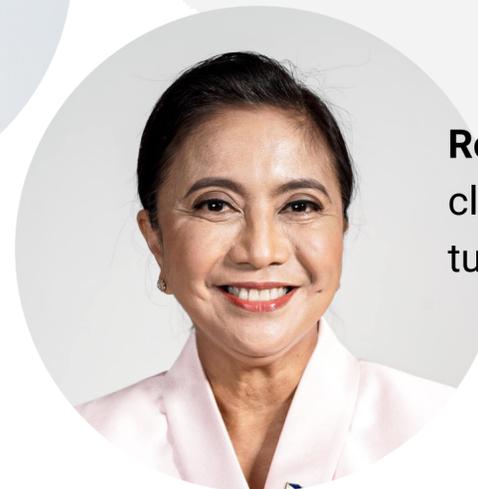
Marcos shares the same view. In his one-on-one interview with Boy Abunda, Marcos said that "we lack the political maturity in the Philippines to understand that ideology must play a part in a multi-party system." [49]



Lacson's proposal, on the other hand, is to return to a two-party system. He believes that doing so would prevent having common candidates on a party ticket and address the "bastardizing of party affiliations." [47]



Robredo also wants a shift to a two-party system, claiming that it could address the problem of turncoatism. [50]



Moreno also said that that he is in favor of shifting to a two-party system, saying, "I think it's ripe already." [48]

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About MEAP FactCheck

G-Watch views the upcoming polls in 2022 as an extremely important terrain that has to be engaged, and that would complement other accountability efforts that are being undertaken before, after and beyond elections. In this light, G-Watch is undertaking a citizenship education initiative that aims to Make Elections an Accountability Platform (MEAP). The first round of MEAP focused on the conduct citizenship education sessions and the convening of multi-stakeholder dialogues.

The 2nd phase of MEAP is taking on the issue of the use of information to make elections an accountability platform. In February, G-Watch's annual awareness-raising campaign *Ako, Ikaw, Tayo May Pananagutan* took on the issue of fake news and disinformation. Hundreds participated in varied activities in 10 G-Watch local sites all over the country.

The other critical component of the 2nd phase of MEAP are activities to check on the candidates' track record and platform on critical issues and agenda: the conduct of Local Candidates Forum targeting local candidates in G-Watch sites all over the country and the production and release of FactCheck Briefs covering key presidential candidates.

The MEAP FactCheck Briefs review the position, platform and track record of key presidential candidates on issues and agenda G-Watch deemed important and critical. Position refers to the candidates' pronouncements about the agenda that can be found in printed materials like news, statements or online. Platform refers to the candidates' plans in tackling the agenda as stated in their official platform. Track record refers to the direct action taken by the candidates in advancing/ realizing the agenda. We determine whether the candidates have taken direct action in terms of bills filed, laws passed, decisions made, programs/ projects personally/ directly championed as stated in official or reliable/ verifiable records. A list of references is provided in every FactCheck brief.

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Make the 2022 Elections an Accountability Platform!

Statement of Government Watch (G-Watch) on the Upcoming May Polls

In exactly two months from now, Filipinos will once again go to the polls to elect the country's next President, along with the Vice President, 12 senators, 316 members of the Lower House, as well as 16,055 local officials. While every election is important, the upcoming poll is both unique and extremely crucial due to the ongoing pandemic, and the continuing threats to democracy and to our people's very survival.

The dismal performance of the national government in handling the COVID-19 crisis is going to be the backdrop of the 2022 elections. It has to be. The 2022 elections will also be critical in reaffirming many democratic values that has been under threat for the past years, such as inviolability of human rights, the rule of law, and the principle that a public office is public trust since all power emanates from the people.

The 2022 polls, in other words, has to be turned into an accountability process, where candidates have to be made answerable for their performance or lack thereof.

We call on voters to elect candidates that will restore checks and balances in government, strengthen accountability institutions, uphold merit-based public management, and support independent civil society monitoring and advocacy.

At the same time, G-Watch offers the following agenda for the next administration:

- Ensure access to relevant, useful and clear information.
- Pass the Freedom of Information Law.
- Bolster transparency mechanisms and efforts.
- Ensure that feedback, complaint and grievance redress mechanisms properly work so that the concerns of citizens can be adequately addressed.
- Enhance the capacity of accountability institutions, mechanisms and programs inside government.
- Ensure that the country's legal framework remains supportive, facilitative and enabling of progressive civil society, including independent citizen accountability efforts.

We also call on the Philippine development community to start rebooting, retooling and re-energizing civil society-government engagement to one that synergizes interdependent power which checks abuses at the top and uplifts the most marginalized.

If all these are done, then we can turn elections to what it should be—as a way to allow even the most ordinary of citizens to speak truth to power and change the course of the country's history.

** Adopted during the 2022 G-Watch National Meeting & Learning Exchange on March 4-8 in Pasig and Baguio Cities. G-Watch is an independent action research organization embedded in constituencies of civic and advocacy-oriented organizations all over the Philippines that aims to contribute in democratic deepening through the scaling of accountability and citizen empowerment. G-Watch has local sites and partner civil society organizations and government allies in Pasig City, Quezon City, Naga, Puerto Princesa, Cebu, Bohol, Tacloban, Dumaguete, Bacolod, Southern Leyte, Lanao del Sur, Samal Island, and Agusan del Sur.*