



G-Watch
Citizen Action for Accountability



Making the Elections an
Accountability Platform

FactCheck 2022

Presidential Candidates

Transparency, Participation, & Accountability (TPA)

Transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA) is a response to the “realization that bad governance is often a key driver of chronic underdevelopment,” and that reform measures would only succeed “if developing countries build capable (and) effective state institutions.” [1]

Broken down and simplified into three components, (1) *transparency* covers initiatives “promoting information disclosure and access to information for a wide range of government processes”; (2) *participation* refers to approaches that “empower beneficiaries to benefit at all stages of the decision making, implementation and monitoring processes”; and (3) *accountability* is, among others, “the process of holding actors responsible for their actions.” [2]

In the Philippines, TPA is also closely understood in the context of measures to fight corruption. As it stands, the country is a “significant decliner” for having gone down five points since 2014, and for dropping two places since 2020, in the 2021 Corruption Index. According to Transparency International, “since the election of Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines has also seen a sharp decline in freedom of association and freedom of expression, making it harder to speak up about corruption. In 2020, it was the country with the second highest number of murdered human rights defenders, with a total of 25 deaths.” The group also cited worrying trends in the Asia Pacific region, including the weakening of anti-corruption institutions and the rise of populism, with corruption spreading in most countries through the curtailment of civil liberties. [3]

Track Record



Leody **de Guzman's** TPA track record—especially in citizen participation and accountability—may be viewed from his 38 years of experience as a labor leader, mobilizing participation from union and labor groups and demanding the fulfillment of workers' rights from government and abusive corporations. [4] As a presidential candidate, he has made several bold statements regarding corruption in government and certain individuals in the course of his campaign. For instance, he called out fellow candidate Bongbong Marcos, who said he is not open to releasing his Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN) if elected president: “Ang pagtanggap ilabas ang SALN ng isang opisyal ng pamahalaan ay katraydurang sa mamamayan.” [5] Most recently, he called for the filing of cases against individuals involved with the anomalous Pharmally deals, directly challenging the current administration and the next: “Hamon sa susunod na Pangulo ng bansa na kamatin ang hustisya para sa lahat ng tapat na nagbabayad ng buwis at singilin si Duterte at mga kasabwat niya sa pagwawaldas nila sa tiwala ng mamamayan.” [6]



Isko **Moreno** himself has also faced allegations of plunder. In 2014, barangay chairs from Manila filed cases against Moreno (who was then vice mayor) and other local officials for allegedly pocketing over Php 70 million in real property taxes that year. (A fact-check by Vera Files shows this piece of information has been used to mislead audiences at present, through a video that makes it appear as if this was a recent case. The same fact check states there is no decision by the Ombudsman available for this plunder charge.[14]) Moreno dismissed these allegations as “politically motivated.”[15] On the flipside, when he won as Manila mayor, Moreno's first executive order (EO) promoted open governance: it mandated, among others, that all city government issuances be published in the official media platforms of the city within 24 hours after issuance and or approval, and that all procurement and bidding activities, contract signings, official meetings of all city officers be streamed online in social media platforms for transparency.[16] Reacting to Marcos' statement on SALNs, he has stated that he is open to release his own SALN if elected president.[17]



As senator, Panfilo **Lacson** both conducted numerous investigations on corruption issues and introduced bills and laws to curb corruption and promote TPA. He authored and sponsored the Anti-Red Tape Act (ARTA) of 2007 (RA 9485) which encouraged efficient and expeditious government service, and is one of the principal authors of the Anti-Money Laundering Act (RA 9160), as amended. During the pandemic, he filed resolutions to investigate corruption in PhilHealth and COVID-19 spending. [7] He also filed two bills relating to citizen participation and empowerment: SB 24, or the People's Participation in the National Budget Process Act of 2019, to facilitate the participation of civil society organizations in the preparation of the annual national budget, and SB 23, or Budget Reform for Village Empowerment Act, a proposed bill to institutionalize rational and equitable budget distribution for LGUs for them to be “active participants in nation building.” [8]



For Manny **Pacquiao**, his anti-corruption stance only became apparent at the tail-end of the Duterte administration—when he accused various government departments of anomalous activities in a string of exposes. He accused the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) of corruption because 1.3 million beneficiaries were unable to get the financial assistance through an e-wallet app engaged to disburse such; the Department of Energy (DOE) for entering into an alleged questionable agreement with the Independent Electricity Market Operator of the Philippines (IEMOP); and has called the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as the most corrupt government agencies.[18] He has stated he is “open” and even “proud” to release his own SALN if elected president.[19]



Marcos Jr.—as the son of dictator Ferdinand Marcos—has never acknowledged nor accounted for the atrocities committed during the Philippines' regime of Martial Law. He has refused to discuss human rights violations during his father's administration and admit the existence of his family's ill-gotten wealth, preferring instead to talk about his plans as presidential candidate. [9] This despite overwhelming proof showing not only his family's liabilities but his own: he and his sisters Irene and Imee (a sitting senator), among others, were affirmed by the Sandiganbayan as beneficiaries of Swiss foundations meant for their interests, where public funds were deposited. [10] On his own account, Marcos has been implicated in 2016 on the pork barrel scam: he was sued for plunder for funneling Php20 million of his pork barrel to fake non-government organizations (NGOs), a case that remains unresolved with the Ombudsman today. [11] He faces a disqualification case for his presidential candidacy on grounds of lying under oath on a previous conviction for tax evasion [12], and has flipfopped on his openness to release his SALN if elected president. [13]



Leni **Robredo's** track record in TPA and anti-corruption measures is clear through her background as legislator. She has successfully caused the passage of the Tax Incentives Management and Transparency Act (RA 10708) as principal author; the law promotes fiscal accountability and transparency in the grant and management of tax incentives. She has filed and initiated numerous bills in the House of Representatives to promote people empowerment (the People Empowerment Act of 2014 or HB 4911, mandating the creation of a “people's council” in every local government unit); full disclosure of fiscal management information (the Full Disclosure Act or HB 00019); accountability in public financial management (the Public Financial Accountability Act or HB 6117); participatory budgeting (the Participatory Budget Process Act or HB 3905); and freedom of information (the Freedom of Information Act of 2013 or HB 3237), among others. On SALNs, Robredo said that she has always released her SALN upon request and has always been in favor of SALNs being public.[20] Her office, the Office of the Vice President, has been consistently been given the top rating by the Commission on Audit since 2017.[21]

Platform & Plans

Almost all candidates include TPA and anti-corruption efforts in their platforms and plans, except **Marcos**, who has no published plans to fight corruption or promote TPA as of writing.

Both **Lacson** and **Pacquiao** cite a “zero tolerance policy for corruption,” while **Robredo** aims to eradicate corruption and “palakasan culture” via good governance measures. **Moreno** also includes good governance in his 10-point agenda, while **de Guzman**, among others targets accountability for erring public officials, including Duterte and the Marcoses.



Lacson's zero tolerance policy for corruption is set in the context of monitoring public infrastructure projects for erring contractors and suppliers: “Integrity in our infrastructure spending must be built on transparency and accountability,” he says, and promises to “institute a geo-tagging system to provide an open data visualization platform containing all public infrastructure projects.”[22]



Pacquiao has stated that his “zero tolerance policy on graft and corruption” means, as of the moment, the issuance of an EO mandating the creation of a “mega prison” or a main detention facility for all officials arrested for corruption.[23] Asked on how exactly he will address corruption, he said “it would come out as a surprise” to prevent corrupt individuals from undertaking preparations.[24]



Robredo's policy on TPA and anti-corruption is articulated in terms of the second part of her “Kalayaan sa COVID” platform, or “Hanapbuhay Para Sa Lahat,” which also discusses her plan to restore trust in government in the context of facilitating business and employment. She suggests good governance [25] measures in this regard, such as strengthening the implementation of Ease of Doing Business Act and the mandate of ARTA; utilizing Citizen's Charters to clarify processes in industries with public service component; and fast-tracking digitalization to lessen corruption. [26]



Moreno's open governance policy in Manila is a centerpiece of his presidential agenda,[27] which pushes for “open, transparent, and inclusive governance.” Moreno expounded this by stating he will “put in place honest, competent, progressive, passionate, cooperative, goal-oriented and hardworking teams who value Meritocracy, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in leadership positions at government agencies.”[28]



De Guzman's platform on TPA and anti-corruption is distinct for explicitly including the recovery of Marcos' wealth and the exhumation of Ferdinand Marcos' body from the Libingan ng mga Bayani as specific plans.[29] So far, his platform is also the only platform which provides for the institution of direct democracy and popular participation in decision-making at all levels of government; holding accountable past and present public officials for their crimes against the public good, including the prosecution of Duterte; subjecting all fundamental legislative proposals to a national referendum; ensuring that majority of Congress members come from marginalized sectors; and ending political dynasties.[30]

Endnotes

- [1] See <https://g-watch.org/sites/default/files/resources//tpanow-introduction-nov4.pdf>
- [2] See <https://g-watch.org/sites/default/files/resources//tpanow-introduction-nov4.pdf>
- [3] <https://www.rappler.com/nation/philippines-rankings-corruption-perception-index-2021/>
- [4] <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=295753412558485&set=pcb.295754175891742>
- [5] <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/presidential-aspirants-response-ferdinand-bongbong-marcos-jr-statement-salns-january-2022/>
- [6] <https://www.facebook.com/KaLeodyDeGuzman/posts/335752385225254>
- [7] <https://pinglacson.net/article/legislative-output>
- [8] <https://pinglacson.net/article/legislative-output>
- [9] <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-presidential-bet-marcos-shuns-talk-past-atrocities-2022-01-25/>
- [10] <https://ph.news.yahoo.com/marcos-corruption-is-a-human-condition-064335357.html>
- [11] https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/128448-youth-group-ombudsman-probe-marcos-pdaf-scam/?mc_cid=3b03af597c&mc_eid=d166ba3c9c
- [12] <https://www.bworldonline.com/rally-held-over-delay-in-election-bodys-decision-on-marcos-disqualification-cases/>
- [13] <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/01/24/2156057/avoid-unnecessary-issues-marcos-wont-release-saln-if-elected>
- [14] <https://verafiles.org/articles/vera-files-fact-check-video-cites-old-report-isko-moreno-plu>
- [15] <https://news.abs-cbn.com/nation/metro-manila/09/12/14/isko-moreno-plunder-raps-usong-usong-eh>
- [16] <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1136654/moreno-signs-eo-for-open-governance-policy-in-manila>
- [17] <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/01/26/2156527/isko-moreno-says-open-releasing-saln-if-elected-president>
- [18] <https://www.rappler.com/nation/manny-pacquiao-accuses-dswd-of-corruption-over-missing-billions-sap-funds>
- [19] <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2022/01/26/2156546/pacquiao-says-hes-willing-release-saln>
- [20] <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/11/16/leni-robredo-saln-officials-candidates.html>
- [21] <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/06/29/news/robredos-office-gets-highest-coa-rating-for-3rd-straight-year/1805072>
- [22] <https://pinglacson.net/article/lacson-pushes-transparency-geo-tagging-to-counter-ghost-infra-projects>
- [23] <https://www.manilatimes.net/2022/01/30/news/national/pacquiao-eyes-mega-prison-for-corrupt-officials/1831077>
- [24] <https://philstarlife.com/news-and-views/838368-pacquiao-tells-boy-abunda-he-ll-focus-on-solving-corruption-if-elected-president?page=2>
- [25] <https://www.philstar.com/news-commentary/2021/10/14/2134133/curbing-covid-pushing-good-governance-robredo-gives-preview-presidency>
- [26] <https://lenirobredo.com/>
- [27] <https://www.reportr.world/news/how-isko-moreno-plans-to-address-corruption-as-president-a4833-20210922>
- [28] <https://rmn.ph/tao-muna-mayor-isko-inilatag-ang-kanyang-10-point-bilis-kilos-agenda/>
- [29] <https://twitter.com/LabanNgMasa/status/1451793901753298947>
- [30] <https://twitter.com/LabanNgMasa/status/1451793901753298947>

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. List of references are provided in every Fact-Check Briefs.

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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.*