PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS: CATALYSTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - THE CASE OF SDG 16 IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT
The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 were established as a comprehensive framework to address the global challenges currently faced by the world. SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions is essential to all development goals, from poverty eradication to cooperation and partnerships. As societies implement these goals, it is incumbent on them to use the lenses of peace and justice to build an inclusive society for socio-economic development for all. This study analyzes the value of SDG 16 in achieving related UN SDGs and discusses the latest progress report in the Philippines to infer some lessons. The qualitative case study approach and secondary data analyses, drawn from the accounts of designated reporting agencies in the Philippines, are utilized. The data set shows several challenges in attaining the specific indicators of SDG 16. Still, it could all boil down to two main concerns — equitable and accurate access to data and the transparency and accountability mechanisms of the institutions. The recommendations provided in this study can help policymakers and practitioners improve the implementation of SDG 16 in the Philippines and other developing countries and contribute to the existing literature on the topic.

KEYWORDS
Sustainable Development, Peace and Justice, Philippines, Governance, Open Data, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call to action to eradicate poverty, safeguard the planet, and ensure everyone can live in peace and prosperity. In September 2015, there were 17 SDGs approved by the United Nations member states that streamlined the 2030 global agenda for sustainable development for "people, prosperity, and the planet" (UN, 2015). The innovative goal among the 17 SDGs is the call for the integration of peace to advance accountability and trust in government. It offers insight into how the people may hold their leaders accountable and attain the SDGs by 2030. There is much evidence for the causation of peace toward economic development. For instance, the World Development Report (2011) of the UN and World Bank states that instability and conflict are significant development constraints that impede development gains. In the same vein, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) (2019) revealed that higher levels of violence had a significant impact on economic development by restricting foreign direct investment (FDI) and the broader macroeconomic environment.

These economic impacts are consistent with the theories and attributes of Peace as advanced by sociologists and international relations experts who attributed the world's economic downturn to various forms of violence (Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galce, 2010). According to one of the sociologists, Johan Galtung (1995), founder of peace and conflict studies in Norway, peace does not merely pertain to the absence of war or direct violence but to the "uneven distribution of wealth and resources, as well as the uneven distribution of power to decide over the distribution of said resources" (Galtung, 1969). Hence, peace has causal relationships with socioeconomic development. It requires eradicating all facets of injustices and violence (structural, sociocultural, and ecological), as shown in Figure 1 below (Cheng & Kurtz, 1998).

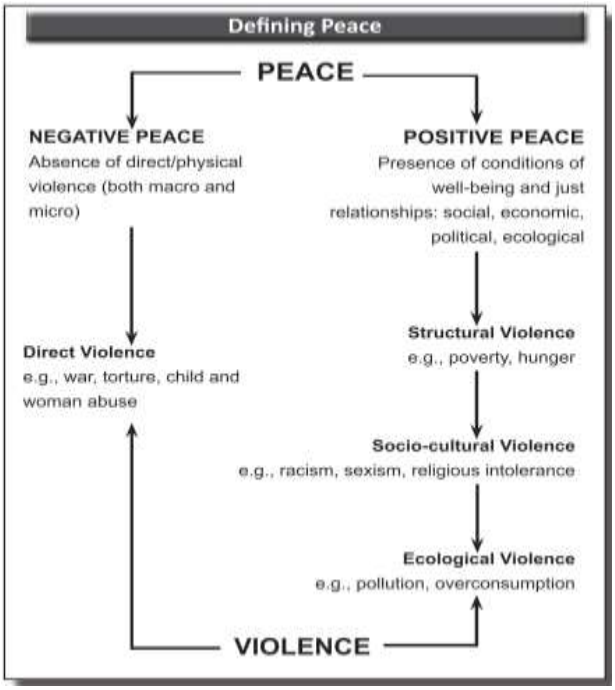

Figure 1. The Interplay of Peace and Violence (*Source*: Navarro-Castro, L., & Nario-Galce, J. (2010)

SDG 16 is essentially anchored and motivated by these impacts of achieving genuine economic development through mainstreaming Peace in the policies and programs of both public and private stakeholders. However, peace is unattainable without an effective arm or instrument to bring peace to society. This is where the concept and presence of Social Justice and strong institutions will have a significant role in peace becoming a reality and being felt by all people. This translates to strengthened institutions, the rule of law, and law enforcement that will facilitate the implementation of international peace agreements and the establishment of a culture of peace in society. Because sustainability without some consideration of justice would be nonsensical from a normative perspective and even difficult to achieve strategically (Castro, 2015). Therefore, the UN SDG 16, or Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, is imperative to all types of development goals, from Poverty eradication (SDG no. 1) to sustenance of biodiversity and ecosystem (SDG 15) as well as international cooperation and partnership (SDG 17) for achieving a prosperous and dignified society.

There are twelve (12) targets with 23 official indicators for SDG 16, the 12 targets are shown in Figure 2 below;

Figure 2. The UN SDG on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions and its Indicators (**Source**: https://sdgs.un.org/goals)

These SDGs have strong correlations and overlapping functions with other goals and indicators in the 17 UN SDGs, as shown in Figure 3 below;

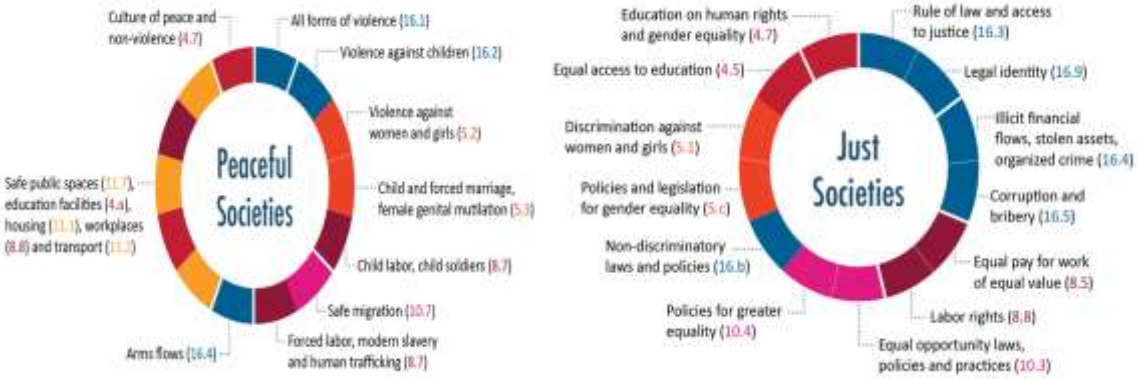

Figure 3. SDG 16 and its relationship with various SDGs
(Source: https://wfuna.org/program/16-forum/)

The research aimed to investigate how the implementation of SDG 16 contributes to achieving the other SDGs and the challenges and opportunities in the Philippine context. The specific objectives are:

1. Analyze the correlation between SDG 16 and the other SDGs, particularly their interconnectedness within the Philippine context. This analysis will shed light on how the successful implementation of SDG 16 can facilitate progress toward achieving other SDGs in the Philippines.
2. Identify and assess the challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing SDG 16 in the Philippines. This objective will be accomplished through a qualitative case study analysis, examining the experiences and perspectives of various reporting agencies tasked by the national government. By exploring these challenges and opportunities, a comprehensive understanding of the specific contextual factors influencing the implementation of SDG 16 in the Philippines will be obtained.
3. Provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the implementation of SDG 16 in the Philippines and other developing countries facing similar challenges. Drawing from the qualitative case study analysis findings and the identification of challenges and opportunities, this objective seeks to offer practical and actionable recommendations that can effectively address the

identified implementation gaps and contribute to the successful attainment of SDG 16 in the Philippines and beyond.

In accomplishing these research objectives, this study aims to advance scholarly knowledge on the interdependencies between SDG 16 and other SDGs, provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities specific to the Philippines' context, and offer evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and practitioners to enhance the implementation of SDG 16, thus fostering sustainable development and inclusive societies.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative case study analysis, which draws on the perspectives of multiple reporting agencies in the Philippines tasked to provide relevant data on the indicators of SDG 16. The reporting agencies are the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Government Manpower System of the Department of Budget and Management, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT), and Commission of Human Rights. The primary basis for selecting these reporting agencies was under the national government's PSA resolution no. 4 series 2016. The data was accessed through public or institutional archived primary research datasets.

The methodology mentioned above was selected due to its capacity to facilitate a comprehensive investigation of the obstacles and prospects associated with the execution of Sustainable Development Goal 16 within a particular setting. The data was examined through secondary data analysis (SDA) and drew on existing data collected from various reporting government agencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following findings are from the collective efforts of various government agencies to supply the necessary information to monitor the country's performance concerning various SDGs, part of it is for SDG 16 or the Peace, Justice, and strong institutions under the **PSA resolution no. 4 series of 2016**. There is eight (8) metadata out of 24, Philippine indicators for SDG 16, which include the baseline data and the most recent data with their corresponding agency source (PSA, 2016). The various reporting agencies on goal 16 in the country established committees and programs to address data-driven monitoring and eliminate data gaps.

The following eight (8) indicators for the Philippines under SDG 16 are;
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
16.6 Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels
16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

These eight indicators can be examined with the succeeding reports and discussions collated across the agencies concerns;

A. The Philippine crime rate for SDG is 16.1

SDG 16.1 or the reduction of all forms of violence in the country is being monitored through what the Philippine National Police (PNP) refer to as the Index crimes or violence involving crimes;

1. against persons such as murder, homicide, rape, and physical injury; and,
2. against property such as theft, robbery, carnapping/carjacking, and cattle rustling (Guillermo, 2019).

The PNP utilizes the monthly average index crime rate (AMCR) in the country, which measures the ratio of crime to every 100,000 individuals or residents. The 2016 baseline data, where the country had a crime rate of 11.3, implies that for every 100,000 persons, there were approximately 11 monthly crime incidents. Compared to the latest crime rate data released by the PNP in 2021, which was 2.8, the AMCR in the country is 24.8% lower than its baseline data, as shown in the table below (PSA, 2022).

Table 1. Monthly Average Index Crime Rate (AMCR) in the Philippines

Target	Baseline	Latest	Data (Agency)	Source
SDG 16.1				
Monthly average of index crime	**11.3 (2016)**	**2.8 (2021)**	**PNP**	

B. The Philippines on the reduction of corruption and bribery on SDG 16.5

The National Household Survey on the Experience with Corruption in the Philippines was established and tasked by the Office of Ombudsman to conduct and submit a survey and report on families' experiences with corruption and bribery incidents in the country. Respondents are asked whether they have conducted official business with a government agency and whether a family member was asked for a bribe when conducting official business with a government official or in a government agency. The number and proportion of families bribed (relative to those who conducted a government transaction) are indicators for tracking bribery (PSA, 2016).

The report shows that since 2016 there have been insignificant changes in the data. The 2016 data indicates a 3.2 rate, whilst, in 2020, there was 3.1 percent, a 0.1 decline from the baseline. The following set of data is the percentage of families that were asked to give bribe by a government official by type of service;

Table 2. Those families who have experienced bribery or were asked to give bribes by a government official

Target	Baseline	Latest	Data Source (Agency)
Percentage of families that were asked to give bribe by a government official with whom they transacted, by type of service;	3.2 (2016)	3.1 (2020)	National Household Survey on the Experience with Corruption in the Philippines, Office of the Ombudsman.
Availing of social services	3.0 (2016)	2.8 (2020)	National Household Survey on the Experience with Corruption in the Philippines, Office of the Ombudsman.
Payment of taxes and duties	0.5 (2016)	1.0 (2020)	National Household Survey on the Experience with Corruption in the Philippines, Office of the Ombudsman.
Access to Justice	0.9 (2016)	2.2 (2020)	National Household Survey on the Experience with Corruption in the Philippines, Office of the Ombudsman.
Securing Registry of Documents and licenses	2.5 (2016)	1.4 (2020)	National Household Survey on the Experience with Corruption in the Philippines, Office of the Ombudsman.

C. Effective, accountable, and transparent institutions on the SDG 16.6

State institutions are the key players in promoting peace and stability in the country, including the equitable distribution of economic resources and opportunities. Thus, these institutions must be efficient and accountable for delivering quality public services. SDG 16.6 measures the various government agencies' efficiency in spending and disbursement from their allocated budget. The national government has generally complied with the agreed allocations for total budget expenditures. The baseline data in 2016 shows that 86.9 percent of the budget for social services had been lowered, it appeared that this sector lacked the absorptive capacities to spend the budget they requested; one of the issues being identified is the procurement processes. Thus, many government agencies in 2016 recommended streamlining the budget procurement processes. According to the present data, this budget disbursement was expected to exceed the allocation in 2020 to fully account for the government's increased spending obligations in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Table 3. Government expenditures ratio vis-à-vis the budget allocation

Target	Baseline	Latest	Data Source (Agency)
Primary government expenditures as a proportion of the original budget	91.5 (2016)	107.4 (2020)	Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing (BESF), DBM
Economic Services	98.4 (2016)	94.0 (2020)	Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing (BESF), DBM
Social Services	86.9 (2016)	117.3 (2020)	Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing (BESF), DBM

Defense	87.1 (2016)	90.7 (2020)	Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing (BESF), DBM
General Public Services	91.6 (2016)	113.1 (2020)	Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing (BESF), DBM

Moreover, transparency is also vital for institutions to be effective and accountable. Thus, the Interior and Local Government Department (DILG) of the country took some initiatives to release a memorandum from 2010 on the "Full Disclosure of Local Budget and Finances, and Bids and Public Offerings" to all Local Government Units (LGUs) concern during a specific fiscal year. Republic Act 9184, also known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, specifically requires government agencies to post invitations to Bid, Notice of Award, and Notice to Proceed, including the approved contract for the public to view. However, economic growth and good governance aren't the same everywhere in the country, especially in rural areas far from megacities. For instance, according to the latest report from PSA (2019), in the first semester of 2018, 55.4 percent of the families in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) are poor. Among the ARMM provinces, Basilan, Lanao del Sur, and Sulu remained the poorest in the region and the entire country, where poverty incidence is more than 65 percent across all three provinces.

For decades, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has been at the center of conflicts between the government and groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). At the heart of this dispute are the groups' demands for ownership and control of their ancestral lands and the Muslims' right to self-determination due to clan conflicts and the region's corrupt and ineffective government. According to the data, the ARMM constantly lags behind the rest of the country in terms of development outcomes. In the current political development of the region, however, the Bangsamoro Organic Law or Republic Act 11054 was enacted in the third quarter of 2018, allowing ARMM, now known as the Bangsamoro ARMM, to have the right to self-governance and particularly determine its sociopolitical and economic development. The law also provides autonomy

over its fiscal and expenditures since it controls its income and revenue (Art. XII, R.A. 11054).

D. Responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels on SDG 16.7

This target of SDG focuses on the "Proportions of positions (by age group, sex, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local), including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions."

However, the updated data available in the country is on the sex of public employees as supplied by the Government Manpower Information System of the DBM. No data is being collated based on age group, persons with disabilities, and ethnicity. Nevertheless, there has been a significant increase in the number of women in positions of power in public institutions, but this still falls short of gender parity, according to the data below.

Table 4. The proportion of positions in public institutions in sex-disaggregated data.

Target	Baseline	Latest	Data Source (Agency)
NGAs and State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in the Philippines			
FEMALE	73.7 (2018)	73.5 (2021)	Government Manpower Information System, DBM
MALE	26.3 (2018)	26.5 (2021)	Government Manpower Information System, DBM

This available data of the public positions in the proportion of position by sex of public officials in National government agencies (NGAs) and State Universities and Colleges (SUCs). The numbers indicate that far more women than men are working in NGAs and SUCs. The high proportion of women is

primarily due to the "feminized bureaucracy" of public school teachers (GMIS, 2021).

E. Participation in Global governance as a developing country on SDG 16.8

In the globalization era and the integration of world economies, where developing countries like the Philippines are directly hit by the decisions and treaties of international political, and economic institutions, inclusivity is the key to facing these new challenges. Active and inclusive participation of developing countries like the Philippines is crucial in peace and economic development, especially with the enormous impact of climate change throughout the globe that is directly felt by countries in the Pacific Ring of Fire and Typhoon Belt. The deliberation of decisions of various economic institutions – World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), UN Economic and Social Council, and Asian Development Bank, will influence the Philippine economic stability. Hence, the indicator of this goal (16.8) is concentrated on the membership and voting rights of the country in different international organizations.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and respective UN International Organizations, the Philippines is currently an active member and has voting rights to the majority of the key institutions of the world. The table shown below are the major institutions of the world that directly or indirectly influence the country's socioeconomic policy and development, including the institutions where voting right on which are both represented by 1.0 (satisfied/met), otherwise 0.0 (no membership or voting rights) based on the most recent data in 2021.

Table 5. The 2021 Data on Philippines International Membership and Voting Rights

Goals	**Member**	**With Voting Right**	**Data Source Agency**
Proportion of membership and voting rights of Developing countries			
UN General Assembly	1.0	1.0	DFA

UN Security Council	0.0	0.0	DFA
UN Economic and Social Council	0.0	0.0	DFA
International Monetary Fund	1.0	1.0	DFA
World Bank (IBRD)	1.0	1.0	DFA
International Finance Corporation	1.0	1.0	DFA
Asian Development Bank	1.0	1.0	DFA
World Trade Organization	1.0	1.0	DFA

F. Legal identity for all from birth on SDG 16.1

A person's rights as a citizen of a country are protected by having a legal identity. For instance, to obtain crucial documents and access basic services, one must have legal identification. The ability to work, possess or buy a property, and enjoy a decent standard of living are all made possible by having a legal identity. Because of this, public institutions should ensure that all people have legal identities and are eligible for these rights and opportunities.

In the Philippines, 80% of children under 5 had births registered with a civil authority as of 2016. This eventually faced a downturn when the pandemic struck the world, as shown by the latest data from the PSA in Figure 6 below. Obtaining birth certificates for the remaining 25 percent, who are frequently stigmatized, such as some members of the Muslim minority and Indigenous peoples (IPs), is the current obstacle to be addressed by the concerned agency and national government.

Table 6. The proportion of children under 5 years and have been registered from birth

Target	Baseline	Latest	Data Source (Agency)
The proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age	80.7 (2012-2016)	75.0 (2016-2020)	Vital Statistics Report, PSA

G. Public access to information, and protect fundamental freedoms on SDG 16.10

With the passage of Executive Order (EO) 2, series of 2015, the freedom of information is guaranteed. Under this Executive Order, "…every Filipino shall have access to information, official records, public records and to documents and papers of official acts, transactions or decisions, as well as to government research data used as the basis for policy development" (Section 3). This proclamation applies to all executive branch agencies, including Government Owned Corporations and Local Government Units. The Executive Order further mandates that government entities produce a People's FOI Manual for information requests, including offices, contact persons, procedures, and appropriate fees. The EO on FOI mandates that government entities produce annual FOI reports on the amount of data requests processed and that they are placed under an incentive system that encourages due compliance with the policy. This EO is a great leap from the slow passage of enactment from the legislature. However, the Philippines have to look at a more comprehensive FOI implementation of the concerned agency to make sure the data are available for the citizens who need them, whether or not there is a request to obtain one data or document. This is why people have to face the digital divide in accessing or requesting vital data for the citizens, especially with certain communities that need access to propose land use programs or prevent and mitigate natural hazards.

Table 7. Compliance with the policy of public access to information (where one (1) is represented as compliant and 0 for non-compliant)

Target	Baseline	Latest	Data Source (Agency)
Adopted or Implemented Constitutional, statutory policy guarantees for public access to information	1.0 (2016)	1.0 (2021)	eFOI, DICT

H. The institution on the prevention of violence, and combat terrorism, and crime

The indicator that the international community is looking for this SDG is the independence of a human rights institution to all member countries. The inception of a Constitutional body in 1987 through what they call a Commission on Human Rights was selected as the leading institution in policing rogue law enforcement agents.

Table 8. Compliance in public independent institutions on human rights

Target	Baseline	Latest	Data Source (Agency)
Existence of independent national human rights institution/s	1.0 (2016)	1.0 (2021)	Commission on Human Rights (CHR)

The Philippine government has to enact legislation that would improve transparency and accountability in the country. The Freedom of Information Bill must be revisited, and the data could be more extensive across all partnered agencies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Peace is unrealistic without economic development; however, economic development does not necessarily foster peace. Therefore, it requires economic development that promotes peace (Hope, 2020). Two striking data have to appreciate as well as anticipate from the Philippine government reports on their progress on achieving SDG 16 and its eight (8) indicators;

1. The importance of having **equitable access to data,** ranging from the Freedom of Information Act or establishing ICT-based infrastructure to a social platform where people could participate and access the relevant data, anytime and anywhere. Hence, people could be empowered with accurate information and provide greater engagement in policymaking.

2. **Strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms** of the government. This was inferred from the reports on the corruption and

bribery incidents in the government. These two sets of information are significant and correlated, for they will enhance the various agencies' people's and institutional capacities. The prevalence of poverty, bribery, and lack of relevant data (such as in the case of goal 16.7 or inclusive decision-making) impacts and compromises the attainment of all other SDGs in the country.

Political Will and Transformational Leadership

Political will is the degree of commitment among key decision-makers to a specific policy solution. This could attain if transformational leadership is embedded in every sector, agency, and country institution. It would create collaborative and networked governance by building their confidence in one another as interdependent key players. However, institutional change must have enough political will from its leaders to make relevant policy outputs and results effectively achieved. For a specific policy solution to a particular issue, key decision-makers must be committed to investing time and political capital to bring positive outcomes.

Political will is a crucial factor in achieving policy solutions to specific issues. It requires more committed support among key decision-makers willing to spend time and political capital to bring about positive changes. Transformational leadership is a critical component of building political will and must be embedded in every country's sector, agency, and institution. This would create collaborative and networked governance by building confidence among interdependent key players. However, institutional change requires enough political will from its leaders to achieve relevant policy outputs and results effectively.

Capacity Building and Good Governance

Those SDGs are undermined by an insufficiently qualified workforce, dysfunctional organizational structures, outdated procedures, dilapidated infrastructure, outdated equipment, flawed incentive structures, and corruption. The civil service requires reforms to fill existing capacity gaps in the executive branch, where flawed incentive structures and employment methods, weak leadership and management, dysfunctional organizational structures, outdated procedures, and corruption are adversely affecting the implementation of government policies and the delivery of public services, contributing to structural violence.

Open Data for a more inclusive society

The Philippine national government has to ensure a cross-agency collaboration to optimize the use of existing databases being managed by different government agencies to generate a greater scale of information. Empirical evidence shows that having fully accessible data could augment speedy and effective decision-making. To expand the capabilities of national statistics bureaus and give them more independence, data needs to be freely shared and made available across all possible platforms, including both printed and electronic forms of communication (UNDRR, 2019).

In the globalization era of networked governance, where collaborative efforts for both public and private sectors are critical to socio-economic development, this article mainstreamed the indispensable role of state institutions in leading society and its citizens to achieve peace. Socioeconomic development, as a great mechanism that supplements the institutional functions of public administration, must be streamlined in every policy and program of the government anchored in peace and justice.

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