

## The First Year of the Aquino III Administration

After one year, people's trust in the Presidency of Benigno Simeon Aquino III remains strong. According to the latest survey, 7 out of 10 Filipinos still look forward to the fulfillment of reforms promised by P-Noy.

There are several factors that may have contributed to this perception. The sirens or *wangwangs* — regarded as symbols of the power and arrogance of corrupt politicians — are now largely silenced. Hidden abuses and anomalies of the previous government have begun coming to light, thus the NFA rice over-importing and overpricing affair, the PCSO SUVs controversy, and the probe into the fat paychecks and perks of GOCCs (or government-owned and –controlled corporations). Cases against officials charged with misusing funds and abusing authority — such as the Maguindanao massacre and the AFP *pabaon* scandal — are now being conducted with more freedom and seriousness. Former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is herself facing four counts of plunder in the Department of Justice and the Office of the Ombudsman.

The latest survey of the Social Weather Station showed that the number of hungry families decreased from 20.5% in March to 15.1% in June, which is encouraging; at least one million fewer households are going hungry.

If these trends continue in the succeeding year, we may be able to say that the administration's efforts to "straighten the path" of our politics are indeed resulting in meaningful changes for our country.

However, while PNoy's determination to minimize corruption and prosecute criminals is commendable, critics still say that the economy still lacks the attention it deserves. A comprehensive economic plan to reduce poverty has yet to be unveiled.

And while the administration of PNoy may boast gains in industry and commerce, these gains largely benefit big business and foreign investors. While malls, condominiums, and subdivisions continue to proliferate, there have been no substantial gains for farmers and small to medium enterprises. Rural development continues to lag behind urban development, presenting an urgent challenge for policy-makers who are truly serious about inclusive growth. We need an economic vision for the nation that incorporates thorough, executable policies and programs specifically designed to assist the groups and sectors most in need.

In the meantime, let us take comfort in the truth that the Lord, upon whom we hope, is a God of justice. As he said to His people in Isaiah 30:18-21:

"Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! You will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

*This editorial is co-written by Fe B. Mangahas (ISACC's Fellow on History) and Rei Lemuel Crizaldo (ISACC Head for Advocacy)*