

People Over Profits, Society Over The Market: The Balay Kalinaw People's Agenda to Respond to the Economic Crisis

Friday 20 February 2009, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 29 January 2009).

Prompted by the worst economic meltdown in our generation, we come together to collectively discuss the implications of the current crisis in the Philippines.

Our analysis begins with a consensus that the multiple crises we experience today – characterized by persistent underdevelopment and stagnation, massive unemployment, food insecurity, strife and conflict, widespread poverty and hunger, ecological destruction – result from a development thrust that promotes profits over people.

In the face of this worsening crisis, we oppose any measures that will make the poor and the marginalized bear its burden. The poor were not responsible nor did they benefit from the policies that led to the crisis. We demand not only that those responsible for the crisis be held accountable but that the economic paradigm they pursued be abandoned.

The economic crisis underscores the need for a more decisive role of society over the market, for more democratic access to resources, as well as for greater public participation in economic decision-making.

At the same time, the climate crisis compels us to move away from the single-minded focus on growth that for so long has disregarded the environmental and social costs that come with increasing extraction and consumption for the benefit of a few.

The enduring conflicts in our country demand that development must be accompanied by respect for basic human rights, including the right to self-determination.

It is imperative that we put in place a strategic and coherent national framework of development, not only to respond to the crises, but to ensure an economic thrust that will revive our local economy, invigorate our domestic market, and create jobs and livelihoods in the country, in accordance with the principles of equity, sustainability and justice.

With these in mind, we demand the following (followed by concrete recommendations):

- Make the market meet society's needs, not the other way around
- Prioritize social services over debt payment and eliminate corruption
- Provide quality education, health care, housing and other social services for all
- Pursue social and environmental pump-priming
- Restructure the economy to build the domestic market
- Share the country's resources more democratically
- Share the benefits and burden of taxation fairly
- Ensure that no one goes hungry
- Give everyone decent work in the country

- Give everyone a say in the national budget and in other economic decisions
- Address the climate crisis
- Devote resources for peace, not for bombs

Make the market meet society's needs, not the other way around

- Recover public ownership in and strengthen public accountability over strategic industries and economic activities (such as oil, utility, and energy companies, among others) with a view to assuring universal provision of basic goods and services, ending oligopolistic price control, impunity in price-fixing, and profiteering
- Bring down the prices of basic commodities through government action (i.e., greater government participation in buying and selling of basic goods, regulating prices, etc)
- Enact anti-inflationary measures that would ensure that real wages increase and that workers' share in output relative to that of business owners increases
- Open banks' financial books and strengthen bank oversight
- Strengthen regulation of speculative investments, hedge funds, private equity funds, and the like
- Impose cross-border capital controls so as to regain autonomy over exchange rates and interest rates and set these as guided by a coherent developmental, environmental and social criteria
- Impose short-term capital flows-tax as a form of regulation and spend the revenues on social services
- Ban derivatives trading and short-selling in the country and work with other countries to have it banned at the global level
- Require strict regulatory approval and compliance for any new financial products
- Establish public banking and other financial institutions that operate based on mutuality and solidarity, that lend according to what will maximize social welfare and not merely profits
- Include social criteria (labor standards, environmental compliance, gender parity, etc) on all lending

Prioritize social services over debt payment and eliminate corruption

- Repeal the Automatic Appropriations Act
- Repudiate onerous loans and re-channel government expenditure away from corruption, debt payment, and military spending
- Eliminate the President's and Congress' pork barrel and all forms of discretionary funds
- Limit the perks and benefits of high-ranking public officials while raising those of rank-and-file employees; there should be no exemptions from the Salary Standardization Law
- Reject any new loans from the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.
- Contribute to the global efforts to create more democratic international financial institutions that promote the interests of peoples over bankers (i.e. Fund for the South initiatives, etc)

- Undertake an unprecedented reallocation of public funds to social services beginning in 2009
- Allocate more funds for emergency relief for the poor, for the unemployed, for repatriated overseas workers, and for displaced local workers – subject to democratic decision-making and oversight
- Increase allocation for climate change adaptation

Provide quality education, health care, housing and other social services for all

- Reverse the privatization of all social services; implement a moratorium on any further privatization projects
- Embark on large-scale socialized housing projects that will employ the unemployed and use local resources
- Overhaul Philhealth and provide it with more resources to ensure universal and quality health care coverage; implement universal access to affordable and quality medicines
- Increasing the budget of education to meet the 6% of GNP ideal so as to build more classrooms, increase teachers' pay, upgrade facilities and lower the teacher-student ratio
- Reorient the educational system away from its single-minded goal of providing employment for multinational corporations or for overseas work, in favor of employment towards national social development
- Increase the salaries and benefits of public doctors, nurses, teachers, and other civil servants; fully implement the Magna Carta on Teachers and Public Health Workers

Pursue social and environmental pump-priming

- Prioritize spending on improving agricultural infrastructure (irrigation, farm to market roads, etc.) and direct subsidies for farm inputs to support small farmers
- Undertake massive public work projects that support community needs, provide mass employment, benefit larger numbers of people, do not displace the poor, and do not harm the environment (i.e. prioritize irrigation over prestige airports, public transport over expensive highways)
- Increase investments and employment in socially-owned and controlled renewable energy projects and energy efficiency measures
- Create and institutionalize mechanism for social monitoring of all pump-priming projects; adopt benchmarks for infrastructure standards and costs; institutionalize democratic control over Overseas Development Assistance (ODA-funded) projects

Restructure the economy to build the domestic market

- Create a national industrialization plan that fosters socially owned and accountable domestic industry without sacrificing agriculture and without harming the environment
- Implement a moratorium on proposals for new free trade agreements (FTA) and undertake an independent review of all existing agreements
- Nullify the ratification of the JPEPA and suspend the EU-ASEAN FTA negotiations

- Suspend lowering of tariffs and duties
- Provide incentives for those producing closest to the local market
- Pursue people-centered bilateral and regional trading and other economic arrangements with other countries that promote people's welfare and not those of transnational corporations, that is based on solidarity and not profit-seeking; pursue model offered by UNASUR, Bolivarian Alternatives for the Americas (ALBA), the Trade Treaty of the Peoples, BancoSur, etc

Share the country's resources more democratically

- Implement agrarian reform to accelerate the redistribution of lands to the landless and to farm workers
- Promote rural development that will provide decent jobs and adequate income for the rural poor
- Repeal the Mining Act and enact a just and equitable mineral development policy
- Implement an immediate moratorium on socially and environmentally deleterious resource-extraction businesses
- Ensure effective protection of indigenous peoples' (IP) rights; strengthen IP's security of tenure and uphold their ancestral domain claims and entitlements under the IP Rights Act (IPRA)
- In urban areas, implement an immediate moratorium on demolitions and evictions; accelerate urban land reform; prioritize livable mass housing projects over shopping malls and condominium projects for the rich
- Fast-track implementation of the Fisheries Code and delineate all municipal water

Share the benefits and burden of taxation fairly

- Repeal the Expanded Value Added Tax and replace it with specific tax
- Provide tax exemption for those earning below the current "living wage" while increasing taxes on higher-income earners
- Value reproductive work; apply tax cuts and provide social benefits for non-income-earning but working spouses
- Increase taxes on luxury goods and other imported goods already produced locally; reduce taxes on goods produced by communities and small producers
- Remove tax holidays and other fiscal incentives for large investors while providing support for socially owned enterprises
- Reject any moves to bail-out private companies using taxpayers' money; government should not assume responsibility for private debts.
- Work with other governments in closing tax havens, prosecute those involved in transfer pricing, and jail tax evaders

Ensure that no one goes hungry

- Ban future trading of and speculation in grains and other basic food commodities in the international markets
- Move towards food self-sufficiency, away from export-driven agricultural production
- Overhaul and empower the Department of Agriculture, the National Food Authority, and related agencies so as to more effectively intervene in the market in support of local producers and small farmers
- Augment the resources for credit and support services for farmers and fisherfolks and support them through marketing mechanisms, cooperatives and farmers associations
- Ban genetically engineered food
- Provide more incentives for local and small producers instead of transnational corporations in food production
- Enact disincentives for socially and environmentally destructive mono-culture enterprises

Give everyone decent work in the country

- Pursue full employment as the overarching goal of economic policy, taking it as the priority consideration when controlling inflation, reducing deficits, or setting exchange rates
- Embark on a strategic long-term plan through which workers can contribute to national development - and not be at the mercy of transnational or outsourcing corporations ready to relocate whenever they wish to
- Ensure retrenched migrant workers' safe return to and reintegration into the country; no forcible repatriation
- Secure national treatment for employed migrant workers in terms of labor rights, social security, and access to justice through agreements with receiving countries
- Immediately rescind the government's Rationalization Plan, while trimming the bloated Presidential bureaucracy (i.e. terminating advisers and other patronage posts)
- Implement a "minimum guaranteed work scheme"
- Provide universal access to unemployment benefits, social security, and insurance
- Reject attempts to make workers work longer and easier to retrench; outlaw precarious work arrangements
- Ensure equal pay for equal work for women
- Punish union-busters, jail employers that don't provide legally mandated wages and benefits, and penalize businesses that violate workers rights

Give everyone a say in the national budget and in other economic decisions

- Democratize decision-making and management over public resources by requiring congress to conduct participatory national budget hearings in their districts.

- Democratize the central bank, wrest its control from unaccountable technocrats, and realign its goal towards full employment and democratic distribution of resources
- Enhance the efficiency of public enterprises by empowering workers, staff, union, and consumers' organizations in management
- Democratize workers' control over the Social Security System, Government Service Insurance System and other public enterprises by ensuring meaningful workers' representation in these institutions.
- After recovering democratic control over strategic industries such as power or water companies, ensure peoples' and workers' participation in their boards and management

Address the climate crisis

- Formulate a coherent national plan on climate change that puts the interests of people over those of mining and logging companies, oil and energy corporations, etc
- In international negotiations, push for agreements that mandate reduced consumption on the part of the world's rich - both in developed countries and in developing countries; those who are most responsible for climate change should be the ones who pay the most for solving it; the burden of adjustment should not be on the poor
- Work with other governments in demanding compensation for historical ecological debts owed to the world's poor and use this to provide adequate resources for climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Suspend oil and gas exploration projects, keep oil underground, and - in exchange for limiting fossil fuel emitted to the atmosphere, demand compensation from the developed countries most responsible for climate change, as Ecuador is proposing
- Protect critical watersheds used as water source and for agriculture through proper land use policy and management and by banning mining and other extractive industries in these watersheds
- Repeal the Biofuels Law, ban land conversion for agrofuel plantations, and abandon agrofuels which divert land away from food to feed cars
- Create a national program for organic agriculture by increasing budget for technology development and training
- Reject false solutions to climate change such as nuclear power, ocean fertilization, "clean coal", carbon trading, etc
- Suspend all destructive "Clean Development Mechanism" projects in the country

Devote resources for peace, not for bombs

- Pursue justice for victims of extra-judicial killings, torture, and disappearances
- Return to the peace process, stop all military offensives, and pursue a peace policy
- Respect the ceasefire agreement between the MILF and the government
- Immediately address the current humanitarian crisis in Mindanao and use what would have

otherwise been spent for military spending for relief and rehabilitation

- Uphold human rights and international humanitarian law by creating a monitoring mechanism for violations and breaking the impunity of violators;
- Respect the Comprehensive Agreement for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL)
- Restore the Joint Assurance Immunity Guarantee (JASIG) and work towards the resumption of the peace process with the New People's Army
- End small arms and light weapons proliferation, stop the arming of civilians and disband paramilitary groups; stop recruitment of child soldiers
- End the Philippines' military alliance with the US and Australia by withdrawing all foreign troops from Mindanao and the rest of the country, and abrogating the Mutual Defense Treaty, the Visiting Forces Agreement, the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, and other similar treaties
- Recognize the right to self-determination of the Bangsamoro and indigenous peoples, while ensuring the welfare of the landless and marginalized migrants
- Recognize the national historical debt to Mindanao and to its peoples by compensating them for the resources which have previously been exploited by the national government, landlords, and corporations; put in a place a preferential policy mechanism that would ensure that reallocated funds would benefit and be controlled by Moros and indigenous peoples

These demands are not just a grocer's list of discrete ideals. Taken together, they constitute a coherent set of concrete policy recommendations that, when implemented, will enable us not just to survive the financial crisis but to emerge from it with an economy and society that is more equitable, more just, and more sustainable. Pursued together with people from other countries, they will move us away from beggar-thy-neighbor policies and towards a global economy built on sharing and solidarity. n

To sign on, click here: <http://www.balayagenda.org/index.ph...>

Signatures: List of Organizations

As of 18 February

Action and Solidarity for the Empowerment of Teachers (ASSERT)

Aguman dareng Maldang Talapag-obra keng Gabon (AMTG-Pampanga)

AKBAYAN Citizens Action Party

Alab-Katipunan

Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL)

Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao (AFRIM, Inc.)

Alyansa ng Kabataang Mindanao para sa Kapayapaan (AKMK)

Alyansa ng Maralitang Pilipino (AMP)

Alyansa sa mga Nagkahiusang Kabus sa Pantalan (ALKAP)

Aniban ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (AMA)

Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA)

Association of Genuine Labor Organizations (AGLO)

Automotive Independent Workers Alliance (AIWA)

Bagong Kamalayan Collective Inc

Balay Rehabilitation Center

Balikatan ng mga Manggagawa sa Konstruksiyon (BMK)

Billah Islam Community Organizing & Rural Development (BILLAH ISLAM)

Buklod ng Kababaihan

Buklod ng mga Manggagawa sa RCPI (BMRCPI)

Buklod-Olongapo

Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP)

Bukluran ng Progresibong Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (BPMP)

Bukluran sa Ikauunlad ng Sosyalistang Isip at Gawa (BISIG)

Center for Agrarian Reform Empowerment and Transformation, Inc. (CARET)

Center for Labor Justice (CLJ)

Center for Migrant Advocacy Philippines (CMA)

Center for Popular Empowerment (CPE)

Center for Rural Empowerment Services in Central Mindanao (CRESCENT)

Coalition Against Trafficking of Women Asia Pacific (CATW-AP)

Confederation of Independent Unions in the Public Sector (CIU)

Development Roundtable Series (DRTS) Thematic Working Group on Foreign Policy

DRTS Mindanao Thematic Working Group

DRTS Thematic Working Group on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

DRTS Thematic Working Group on Trade and Industrial Policy

ENVI-Watchers

EU-ASEAN FTA Campaign Network-Philippines

Focus on the Global South

Freedom from Debt Coalition (FDC)

Freedom from Debt Coalition Women's Committee

Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute

Global Call to Action against Poverty - Philippines (GCAP)

Global Network Asia

International Gender and Trade Network - Asia (IGTN-Asia)

International South Group Network (ISGN)

Jihad al Akbar Foundation

Kababaihan ng Kilusang Mangingisda

Kalayaan!

Kalipunan ng Maliliit na Magniniyog ng Pilipinas (KAMMPIL)

Katipunan ng mga Maralitang Obrero (KAMAO)

Kilos Kanayunan

Kilusan para sa Pambansang Demokrasya (KPD)

Kilusang Mangingisda (Fisherfolk Movement) (KM)

Kongreso ng Pagkakaisa ng mga Manggagawa sa Pilipinas (KPMP)

Labor Education and Research Network (LEARN)

Labor Rights and Democracy (LARIDE)

Lanao Alliance of Human Rights Advocates Inc. (LAHRA)

League of Independent Bank Organizations (LIBO)

League of Urban Poor for Action (LUPA)

Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC)

Lupah Sug Teachers MPC

Makabayang Alyansa ng Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (MAKABAYAN-Pilipinas)

Manggagawa para sa Kalayaan ng Bayan (MAKABAYAN)

Mariners' Association for Regional and International Networking (MARINO)

Metro Subic Network

Mindanao People's Caucus (MPC)

Mindanao Peoples' Peace Movement (MPPM)

Mindanao State University-Sulu Educators MPC

Mindanao Tri-People Women's Resource Center (MTWRC)

National Alliance of Broadcast Unions (NABU)

National Federation of Labor (NFL)

National Transportworkers' Union (NTU)

National Union of Workers in Hotel Restaurant and Allied Industries (NUWHRAIN)

Pagkakaisa ng Kababaihan para sa Kalayaan (KAISA-KA)

Pambansang Katipunan ng Makabayang Magbubukid (PKMM)

Pambansang Koalisyon ng Kababaihan sa Kanayunan (PKKK)

Pambansang Samahan ng mga Kilusang Magsasaka (PAKISAMA)

Pandayan para sa Sosyalistang Pilipinas (PANDAYAN)

Partido ng Manggagawa (PM)

Peace Women Partners Inc.

People's Alternative Studies Center for Research and Education in Social Development (PASCRES)

Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)

Philippine Employer-Labor Social Partners, Inc. (PELSPI)

Philippine Greens

Philippine Metalworkers Alliance (PMA)

Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)

Philippine Women Network for Genuine Peace and Security

Pinag-isang Tinig at Lakas ng Anak Pawis (PIGLAS)

Pinay Kilos!

PKI Employees Welfare Union (PEWU)

Popular Education for People's Empowerment, Inc. (PEPE)

Postal Employees Union of the Philippines (PEUP)

Progresibong Alyansa ng mga Mangingisda (PANGISDA)

Public Services Labor Independent Confederation (PSLINK)

Ranaw Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center (RDRRAC)

Resource Center for People's Development (RCPD)

Rural Poor Institute for Land and Human Rights Services (RIGHTS Network)

SALAM, Inc.

SANLAKAS

Sarilaya (Kasarian-Kalayaan), Inc.

Sinag Kababaihan

SOLJUSPAX

Stop the New Round Coalition

Subic Bay Islamic Dawah and Information Center

SUMPAY Mindanao

Teatrong Bayan

Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women

UNI Philippine Liaison Council (UNI PLC)

Union Impresores de Filipinas (UIF)

United Workers of Cavite

UP Alyansa ng mga Mag-aaral para sa Panlipunang Katwiran at Kaunlaran (UP ALYANSA)

WELGA ng Kababaihan Laban sa Kahirapan at Globalisasyon

WomanHealth Philippines

Women and Gender Commission - Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (WGC-AMRSP)

Women's Education Development Productivity Research Organization (WEDPRO)

Workers' Solidarity Network (WSN)

World March of Women - Pilipinas

YOKOBARI Foundation

Young Moro Professionals Network (YMPN)

Youth for Nationalism and Democracy (YND)