In the Millennium Summit of 2000, world leaders resolved to “spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development”. Indeed, democratic governance could provide the enabling environment to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)3.

As countries realize the important role of democratic governance in development, the need for statistics and indicators on democratic governance to guide development planners and other stakeholders, especially in areas where poverty remains unabated has come to the fore. It could be argued that disparity in national as well as local development and the proliferation of poverty is in fact, an issue of governance.

For sure, efforts have been made in the past towards the measurement of human rights, democracy and governance. In most cases, the activities were undertaken either outside of the national statistical system or on an adhoc basis, raising concerns about the institutionalization or the regular compilation of the indicators.

The METAGORA (Measuring Democracy, Human Rights and Governance) Project was launched by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2004 under the umbrella of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) to develop statistical tools for monitoring democracy, human rights and governance. It pioneered an approach that, among other strategies, stressed the importance of engaging and involving the national statistical offices (NSOs). The problem is for varying reasons, most, if not all NSOs have had no experience or have no keen interest in the measurement of democratic governance, which could be a controversial issue that is perceived by official statisticians to be beyond their mandate.

Inspired by the experience gained in the implementation of the Philippine component of the METAGORA Project, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) has continued its efforts to advocate for the measurement of democracy, human rights and good governance by NSOs.


2 Secretary General, Statistical Coordination Officer VI, and Statistical Coordination Officer I, respectively, of the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) of the Philippines. The authors thank Noel S. Nepomuceno in the preparation of this paper.

This paper shares the experience of the Philippines with focus on the challenges faced by official statisticians and developing country national statistical systems in the measurement of democratic governance. It also offers some insights on the difficulties encountered in extending the measurement efforts to lower levels of disaggregation, such as at the municipality of village level. Lastly, it presents an approach towards assessing whether democratic governance pays off for politicians.