BROWN BAG LECTURE:
THE SOCIAL WEATHER SURVEYS OF ECONOMIC WELL-BEING, 1983-2024
by: Dr. Mahar Mangahas, Social Weather Stations

About the Event Proceeding

The Program on Data Science for Public Policy of the U.P. Center for Integrative and Development Studies hosted the first brown bag lecture for 2024 entitled: "The Social Weather Surveys of Economic Well-Being, 1983-2024." These brown bag sessions, designed to foster discussion and knowledge sharing, are conducted to discuss updates, challenges, and issues on matters related to Data Science for Public Policy.

Two distinguished associate professors who are also part of the CIDS Program served as panel reactors, bringing their wealth of knowledge and experience to the discussion. Dr. Rogelio Alicor Panao, the Convenor of the Program on Social and Political Change (PSPC), and Dr. Vladimer Kobayashi, one of the Research Fellows of the Program on Data Science for Public Policy, provided valuable insights and perspectives.

Noteworthy is that the data presented herein by Dr. Mahar K. Mangha of the Social Weather Stations has also been reported and featured in GMA Public Affairs News.

Opening Remarks

Dr. Ebinezer Florano, Program Convenor of the Data Science for Public Policy, is also a Professor and Scientist at the National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG). He formally commenced the activity by introducing the objectives of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies, particularly the Program on Data Science for Public Policy (DSPPP), as well as the expected outcomes of this Brown Bag lecture.

He acknowledged the presence of the former Convenors of the DSPPP, namely: (1) Dr. Jalton Taguibao, an Associate Professor of the Department of Political Science, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, as his immediate predecessor. He claimed to owe a lot of progress in the Program through the previous efforts of Dr. Taguibao, and (2) the original Convenor who first conceptualized and formed the DSPPP in August 2017 is former Chancellor Dr. Fidel Nemenzo of the Department of Mathematics. He further acknowledged the presence of the former Vice-Chancellor of the UP Open University, Dr. Melinda Lumanta, and the Dean of the UP School of Statistics, Dr. Joseph Ryan Lansangan, for whom DSPPP is grateful for recommending DSPPP to their students. Another data analysis expert from the College of Medicine, UP Manila, is Dr. Alvin Marcello. He further acknowledged the presence of the Convenors of the UP-CIDS' Alternative Development Program, Dr. Ed Tadem, and the Program on Social and Political Change, Dr. Rogelio Alicor Panao. This session was made possible with the assistance of the DSPPP interns, the BS Statistics students, and the BS Computer Science interns of UP Diliman.

Dr. Florano, on behalf of Dr. Rosalie Arcala Hall, the Executive Director of the UP CIDS, welcomed all the participants to the first brown bag lecture of the DSPPP. He proceeded to the business at hand, which was introducing and welcoming the presence of the esteemed guest speaker.

> *"He holds a Master of Arts degree from the University of the Philippines, a Ph in Economics at the University of Chicago, and a blue-blooded Atenean from grade school to high school. He was Professor of Economics at the University of the Philippines, Vice-President for Research of the Development Academy of the Philippines, and UNICEF Consultant on Social Indicators for the Governments of Malaysia and Indonesia. He was then a Consultant on Agrarian Reform, an ESCAP Consultant on Quality-of-Life Indicators in Asia and the Pacific, Asia's Foundation Consultant on Public Opinion Only in Bangladesh, and a columnist in various newspapers in the country. In 1985, he co-founded and has since been president of the Social Weather Stations (SWS), The Philippines ED Institute for Quality-of-Life Monitoring, Opinion Only, and Social Survey Archive. He has done research on rice economics, land reform, poverty, hunger, income inequality, quality of life, governance, and public opinion. Among these awards are the Helen Kinnerman Award, the highest award of the World Association for Public Opinion Research for championing the rights and freedom of survey researchers in the Philippines in 2001, the University of Chicago Alumni Award for Public Service in 2011, and the Distinguished Research Fellow Award of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies in 2014. Under his editorship, the Philippine Economic Journal was awarded the Best Philippine Social Science Journal for 1975-1979 by the Philippine Social Science Council. Ladies and gentlemen, the Chairman Emeritus of the Social Weather Stations, Dr. Mahar Mangahas."*

The Social Weather Surveys of Economic Well-Being, 19833-2024
By: Dr. Mahar K. Mangahas

Dr. Mangahas opened his lecture with a challenging question to the participants: "Can anyone tell me what they think poverty is in the Philippines right this year, 2024? What proportion of Filipino families is poor now? 18%? 15%? Higher?"

Some participants answered 18% and said their reference year was two years ago, which Dr. Mangahas remarked was a communication failure on the SWS's part. He humbly said that SWS has not been able to inform enough people or convince enough people that they have the data. They have had the data for a long time, up to this year, and their survey continues. This afternoon's lecture was his first attempt to try to convince people in UP of what the data are. What the data really say.

The title of this lecture emphasizes that this series goes back as early as 1983 and continues up to the present. Dr. Mangahas made this title for his lecture: "Economic well-being in the Philippines: The people's history." Why is it the people's history? According to him, "because it is the history in numbers of how the Filipino people say they are and to all of us, because we are a serving institute."

Dr. Mangahas first presented this lecture at the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) Conference on "Human Happiness and Well-being in an Uncertain World," held in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, on 27 June 2024. ISQOLS is a 30-year-old institution, a society of international giving organization in which people in his field belong. They are journalists who are conducting research on quality of life and publishing articles in the Journal of Happiness. They are affiliated journals, of which Dr. Mangahas has been a member since the beginning.

There is also a recent book that serves as a reminder, entitled: "The Untold People's History," in which Dr. Mangahas is one of the authors. It is essentially a kind of world history that uses the indicators the authors think are the best and the most recent. It may not necessarily be the official, governmental, or multilateral indicators, but what these people believe is the best. His chapter focused on Southeast Asia: "The Untold History of Development in Southeast Asia." His co-author is Professor DJ Jesus, the former president of AIM, whose discipline is History.

The first proposition is on the role of survey-based statistics in development studies. In the field of research surveys, it is essential to use statistics. Statistical data are necessary for scientific guidance of governance. The use of data should be of high quality. Dr. Mangahas assured the group that SWS have the highest quality of data. He challenged anyone to do what SWS is trying to do and compete. Ultimately, it would be worth seeing if we do not get the same answers. Quality data is very nice, especially when discussing economic indicators. The use of high-quality data means that the data is relevant, realistic, frequent, and accurate. Using such data demonstrates sincerity of purpose in what you do. Survey-based indicators are bottom-up from the people, the subjective well-being that makes them realistic and are practical tools for analysis. They are easier to do and faster to gather. Survey data are amenable to independent validation, should anybody doubt what they say, and because others can do it also.

Surveys done by SWS, particularly on poverty, are bottom-up (people-based) and not top-down (policy-based). SWS had been doing it for almost 40 years. The latest data are for the first quarter of 2024. It comprises 46% of Filipino families who consider themselves poor. Currently, they are completing the fieldwork for the second quarter of 2024, which will be published within the next 30 days. Dr. Mangahas was apprehensive that maybe nobody knew about that, hence, SWS had to improve its communication capability. SWS make this poverty survey every quarter, and they keep reporting this at www.sws.org.ph, for which newspapers pick it up. The survey measurement units used percentage (%) of households or individuals are naturally democratic. They are based on people and not based on money. They are not values because they are people.

SWS maintained its sampling and field interviewing methodology over time to enhance historical analysis. SWS is going to be 39 years old next month. SWS archive all these raw data so these can be restudied and/or recomputed for validation and further research. Dr. Mangahas remarked that, "All we need is the initiative and the effort. Even if you have a library, the library doesn't read the books for you. You've got to do it."

The subject of economic well-being is not the only well-being. There are indeed many, and economic well-being is a critical component of the general public's well-being. Looking at SDGs is a very useful classification system not only in the market. The SWS economic indicators focused more on deprivation, such as:

a. Self-Rated Poverty (SRP) has been surveyed 142 times since 1983. These are national surveys, statistically and scientifically conducted quarterly since 1992. SRP has had 102 surveys since 1988 and has been quarterly done since 2001.
b. Joblessness had 123 surveys done quarterly since 1993.
c. Hunger had 104 surveys done quarterly since 1998.

This is actually the most rapid survey-based system monitoring of poverty and hunger in the world. Dr. Mangahas remarked that he kept challenging everybody if they could find another one and that even UP does not know this while it is very near in proximity to SWS. It is all on the website. You don't even have to go there. It's on the website.

Dr. Mangahas presented the SWS survey system using the Self-Rated Poverty (SRP) as a prime indicator during interviews with the key question: "Where would you place your family on this card?" *(Saan po ninyo ilalagay ang inyong pamilya sa kard na ito?)* This requires that the respondents can read. But Filipinos can read at least this simple card with a line in the middle between _MAHIRAP_ (poor) and _HINDI MAHIRAP_ (not poor). This grid for the interviewer is strictly based on the question, *"Saan po ninyo ilalagay ang inyong pamilya sa kard na ito?"* Household heads answer this question. This card has been translated into many languages depicting the meaning of _MAHIRAP_. For example, at the very bottom is the Tausug term, which is "*Miskin*." This is also the word used in Malaysia or Indonesia. This kind of survey cannot be done via telephone. This card has to be shown as there is no other stimulus except this card. No other question is asked except, *"Saan po ninyo ilalagay ang inyong pamilya sa card na ito?"* From the very start, SWS discovered that people tend to point at the line, which is one of their main findings. The line in between were never mentioned, but most of the people (respondents) have been pointing at the line.

The SWS Self-Rated Poverty (SRP) face-to-face question:
"Where would you place your family on this card?"
"Saan po ninyo ilalagay ang inyong pamilya sa kard na ito?"
[SHOW CARD; DON'T READ]

HINDI MAHIRAP (Not poor)

MAHIRAP (Poor)

Mahirap
Iluko: "Marigrigat"
Bikol: "Pobre"
Hiligaynon: "Imol"
Cebuano: "Pobre"
Waray: "Pobre"
Maguindanaon: "Miskinan"
Maranao: "Kareregenan"
Chavacano: "Pobre"
Tausug: "Miskin"

Hindi mahirap
Iluko: "Saan nga marigrigat"
Bikol: "Dai pobre"
Hiligaynon: "Indi imol"
Cebuano: "Dili pobre"
Waray: "Diri pobre"
Maguindanaon: "Dekena miskinan"
Maranao: "Di Kareregenan"
Chavacano: "Hinde pobre"
Tausug: "Bukun Miskin"

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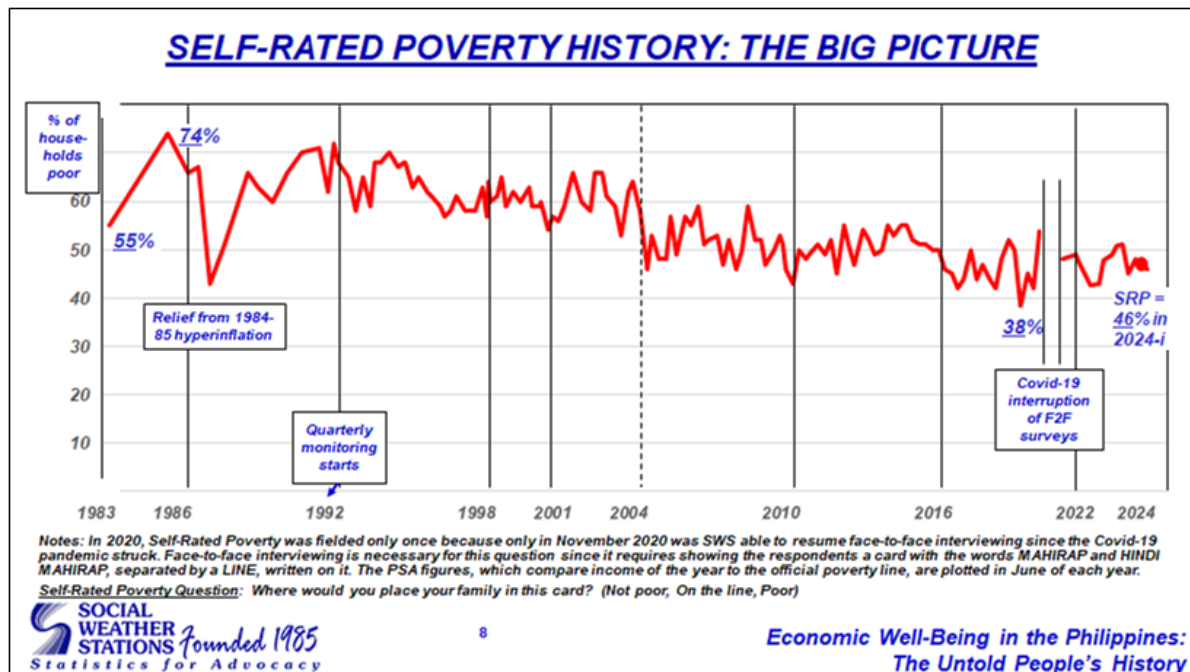Economic Well-Being in the Philippines:
The Untold People's History

Lessons from Self-Rated Poverty (SRP) Surveys

People recognize the border between the poor and the not-poor (*hindi mayaman at hindi rin mahirap*). Even if the card has no label, no description, and it is even unspoken, it is simply shown as a survey tool. As of the first quarter of this year (2024-i), the border is wide: it was 46% poor, 30% in the border line, and 23% not poor. According to Dr. Mangahas, this is the most realistic measure of poverty in the Philippines, which is much bigger than the government data in the Philippines. These three (3) groups: poor, border, and not poor--can fluctuate significantly from quarter to quarter. Significantly means bigger than the margin, which is only 3+% nationally, even over one quarter. This justifies the reason why the survey has to be done often.

There are also additional questions, such as the SRP thresholds which are self-adjusting and realistic: *"Magkano ang kailangan ninyong panggastos sa bahay para hindi niyo sabihing mahirap kayo?"* "How much is the minimum home expense budget so as not to be poor?" Then, the SRP gaps are substantial (actual expenses versus threshold). The question is: "How much do you need for your household expenses so that you won't tell that you're poor?" The concept of threshold and gap is well-known in poverty analysis. It doesn't matter how you measure it. The details are here, and surveys have been conducted 142 times. It is done every quarter, and the line is repeated and extended. This is the most important database for surveying the country's development statistics.

Dr. Mangahas takes pride in the SWS surveys that can confidently compete with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). PSA has its own terms of reference for its 2023 survey, which is still ongoing. SWS can debate about what indicators to use since they have more up-to-date data. SWS currently conduct its 7th quarter survey for this year; the fieldwork is just about to end, and within 30 days, another last round of surveys for the last quarter will be conducted. The surveys will continue like driving an airplane using radar; it is like using

last week's radar if one is using the government data as the radar. There are good social and political reasons why the government does what it does in underestimating information. They don't want to overestimate, which is another matter. By far, SWS is doing a superior job scientifically, and more people should listen to SWS on this subject. SWS have the best estimate of poverty in the Philippines. It is the fastest in the entire world in terms of measuring poverty by means of surveys.

SELF-RATED POVERTY HISTORY: THE BIG PICTURE

Notes: In 2020, Self-Rated Poverty was fielded only once because only in November 2020 was SWS able to resume face-to-face interviewing since the Covid-19 pandemic struck. Face-to-face interviewing is necessary for this question since it requires showing the respondents a card with the words MAHIRAP and HINDI MAHIRAP, separated by a LINE, written on it. The PSA figures, which compare income of the year to the official poverty line, are plotted in June of each year.

Self-Rated Poverty Question: Where would you place your family in this card? (Not poor, On the line, Poor)

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Economic Well-Being in the Philippines:
The Untold People's History

Since 1983, SRP was first done by the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP). Dr. Mangahas was then the Vice-President of the so-called Research For Development Department, better known as RFD and not R&D. They managed to get a national survey using the same system at that time, which came up with 55% SRP. They were never able to publish it since it was suppressed. It should have come out in 1983. The next number, 74%, was in 1985. Two years ago, it collapsed due to the COVID pandemic. It's an all-time record for poverty at 74%. Why should it jump up by 21 points in two years' time (1983-85)? It was not unexpected since there was 50% inflation in the year 1984 and another 25% in 1985. Those were hyperinflation period in 1984 and 1985. Then there was price stability in 1986. It was a calm period in 1986. So there was a significant drop in poverty. It didn't last so long. However, inflation came back again. In a year and a half, it became double-digit again and got close to 20% in a few years. Actually, that is the rough and ready parametric of this survey. The top variable is possibly inflation that affects poverty.

As you look at the big picture, there is a long haul from the beginning to the present. It was not at all smooth but ragged. Why should it be ragged? Why should poverty jump up and down in terms of why people feel poor? This is because inflation jumps up and down. All of a sudden, calamities strike the people and then they get relief, and Dr. Mangahas promised to tell more stories on this.

SWS have been doing this SRP survey quarterly since 1992. That was purely a matter of resources, and thanks to the Almighty, SWS is still solvent. SWS use its own funding to do 15 to 20 surveys yearly. Not all surveys are being published due to time constraints. However, four rounds of published social weather surveys make SWS self-supporting, which is their pure agenda. There was a blank of 3 quarters in 2020 due to the lockdown, interviewers were not able to go to the field. It was not because of COVID but because of the lockdown. The Philippines had one of the worst lockdowns in the world, as there was no transportation.

SELF-RATED POVERTY: MORE RAPID & REALISTIC THAN OFFICIAL INCOME-POVERTY
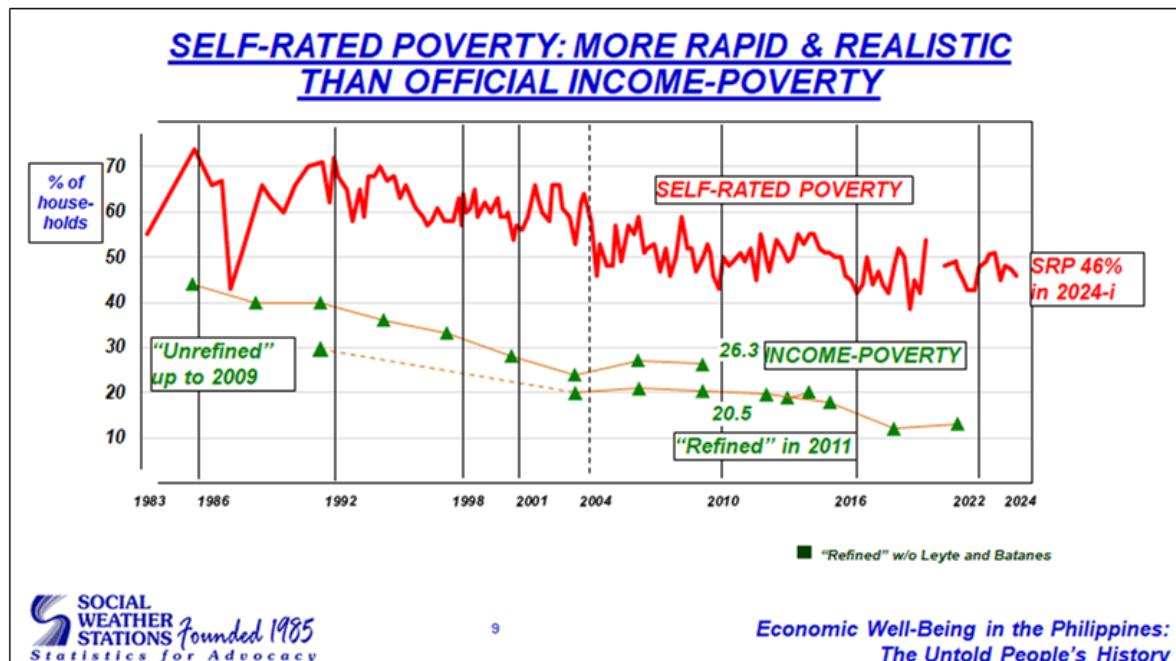
Here is a comparison between the self-related poverty and the income poverty. There are two lines for income poverty. This is because, in 2011, the poverty line was lower. PSA was the one that computed the poverty under the old system and the new system. They computer and analyzed it at 26.3% of families under the old system and 20.5% under the new system. So, in a flash, they reduced poverty by six (6) points, given the new policy definition. It was not because they gave a very generous poverty line. Dr. Mangahas wrote an article in his column in 2011, "The Lowering of the Poverty Line," on this subject matter. It was pitiful in 2011, as they removed anything fried and made it boiled. In 2011, the `ulam' became purely fish; bananas were reduced from two to one; the milk for the children was removed completely, but they kept the little milk for the adults' coffee. They called this `refining the poverty estimate' which is being applied until now. That's the PSA term. Of course, it's getting harder and harder. But the point is that if data are unrealistic, you cannot expect people to be so excited about it. The most straightforward fact is that everything is an infrastructure problem.

**1983-1990: INITIAL POOR = 55%; 1985 PEAK POOR = 74%**
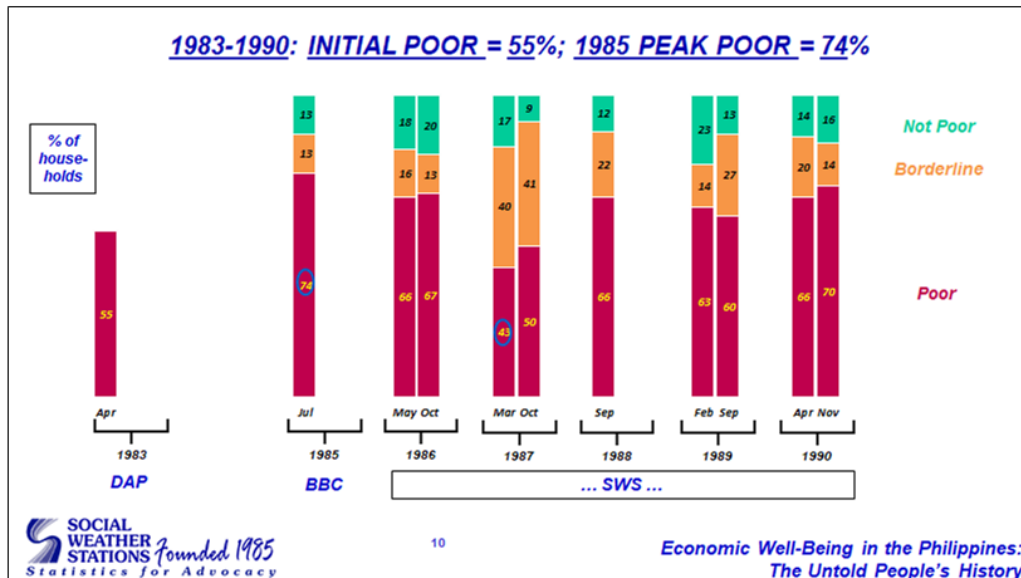
In the first decade up to 1990, initially, people experiencing poverty was 55 percent. The peak was 74 percent in 1985. In the first year, the numbers were lost from the data of the DAP. But the publication was there. The red lines are the <u>poor</u>. The orange lines are the <u>border</u>. The green lines are the <u>not poor</u>. This alone is a very important lesson. It's not a narrow line between poor and not poor. It is a growing expanse that historians should cite. Hence, it is the `Untold History.' When do the UP historians use the real history? This is the history from below: the people's history. "The People's History" is the title of a book by Howard Zinn on American history where he talks about the American Indians, not only the whites.

**1991-2000: RECORD-LOW NOT-POOR, JULY 1991 = 8%**
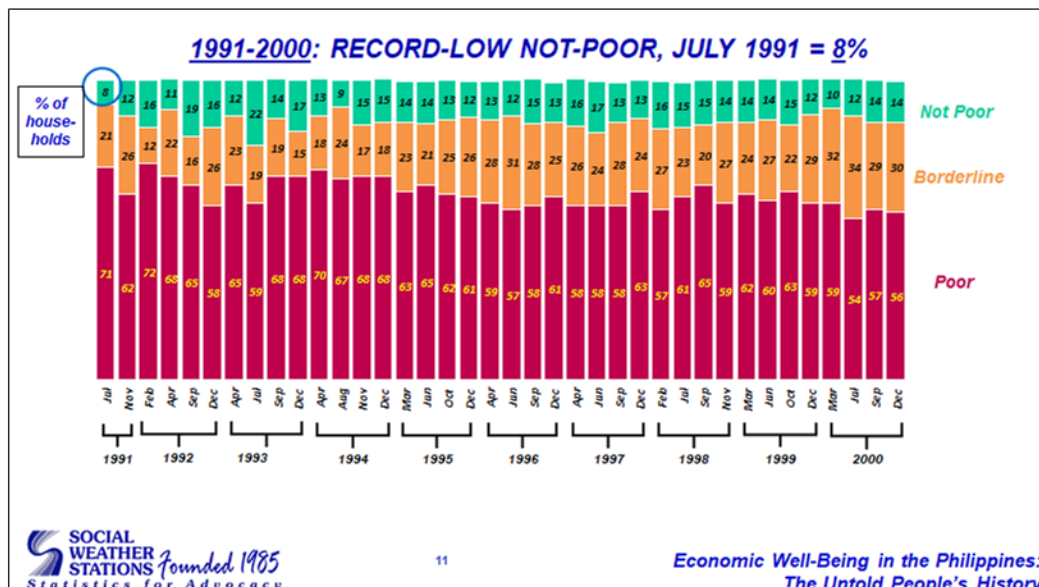
The quarterly reports began in the second decade. The record showed that the not-poor in 1991 was only 8%. People said they were not poor "*hindi sila mahirap.*" But the borderline was growing, and the poor were slightly diminishing.

2001-2010: POOR, _43-66%_; BORDER, _15-35%_; NOT-POOR, _9-28%_
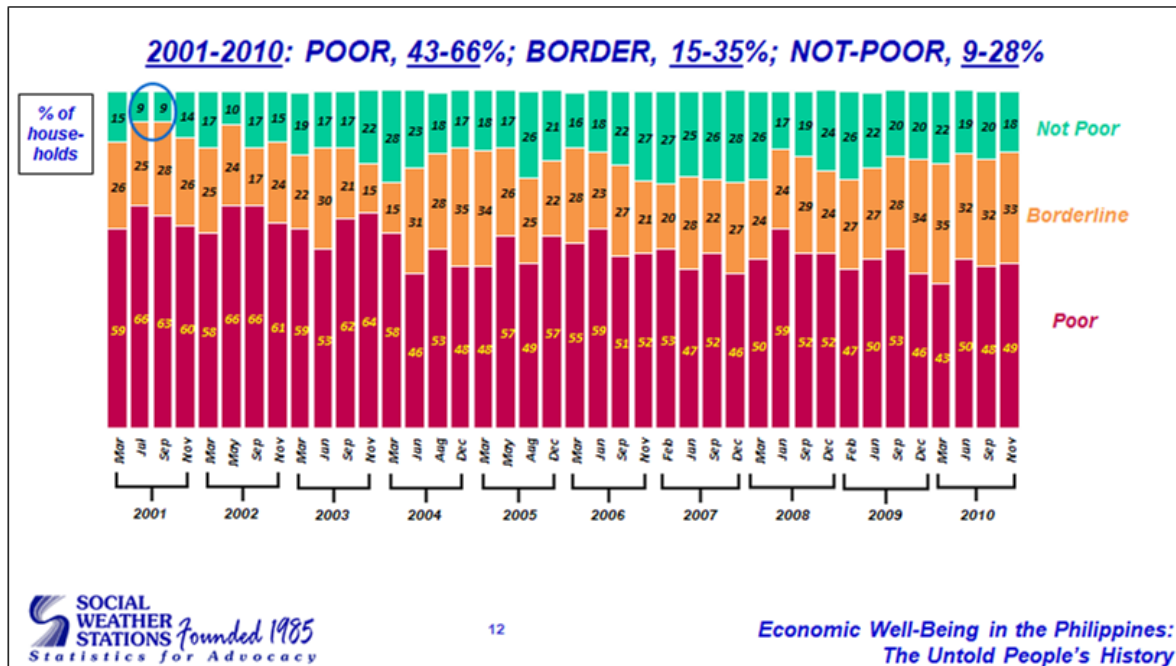
From 2001 to 2010, the poverty range was from 43% to 66%. The range of the <u>border</u> was from 15 to 35 percent. The range of the <u>not poor</u> was from 9% to 28%. It was moving, and things were changing.

2011-2024: PEAK NOT-POOR, 2014Q4 = _30%_; RECORD-LOW POOR, 2019Q1 = _38%_
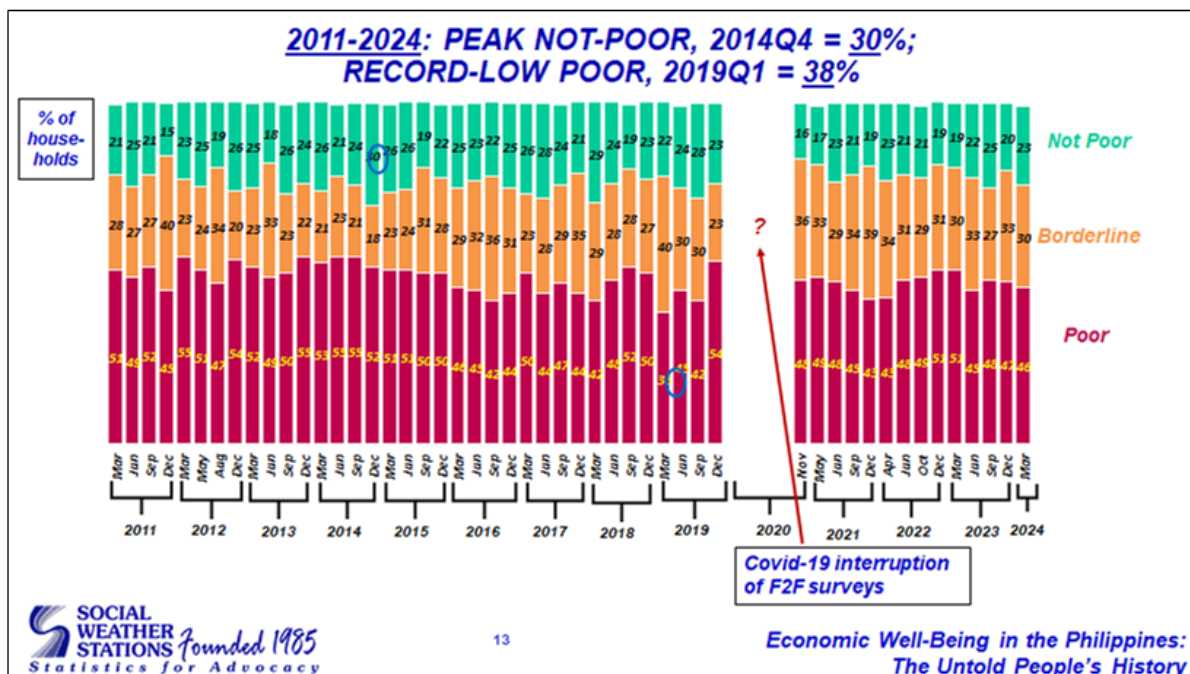
Up to the present, the peak of the <u>not poor</u> was reached ten years ago. In the fourth quarter of 2014, it was 30%. The record low poor was reached 5 years ago, at 38% in the first quarter of 2019. Every new report has all the old numbers also, but no one looks at them because they are ashamed to offend NEDA and PSA.

SWS had a blank space during the COVID-19 pandemic due to lack of transportation. SWS decided not to fool around with the procedure of conducting face-to-face interviews with the card. They had to discontinue the card face-to-face surveys for a while. SWS, however, continued with the hunger surveys using mobile phones since they could not go to the field personally. They had a database of mobile phone users and had been asking their sample people if they had a mobile phone and were willing to be interviewed again. In this way, SWS accumulated 50,000 numbers from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao as their sample respondents during the 2-year COVID period.
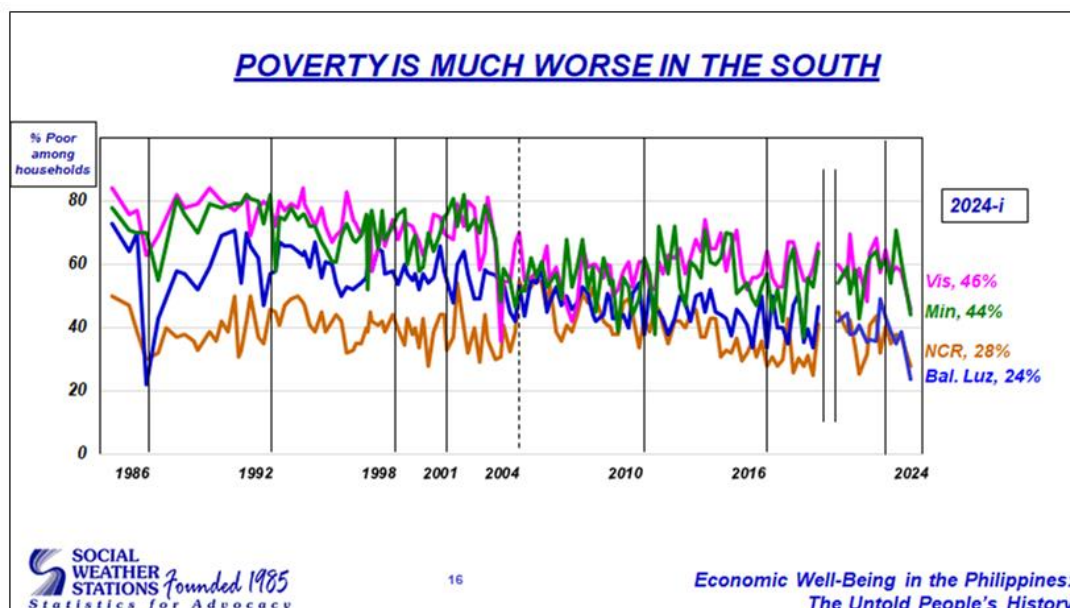
In their hunger survey, they asked if their family experienced hunger. They got a response from someone saying, "Which family? The family he left in Luzon since he could not return home; or the family where he is right now?" There was so much migration inside the country. They could not go home during that time.
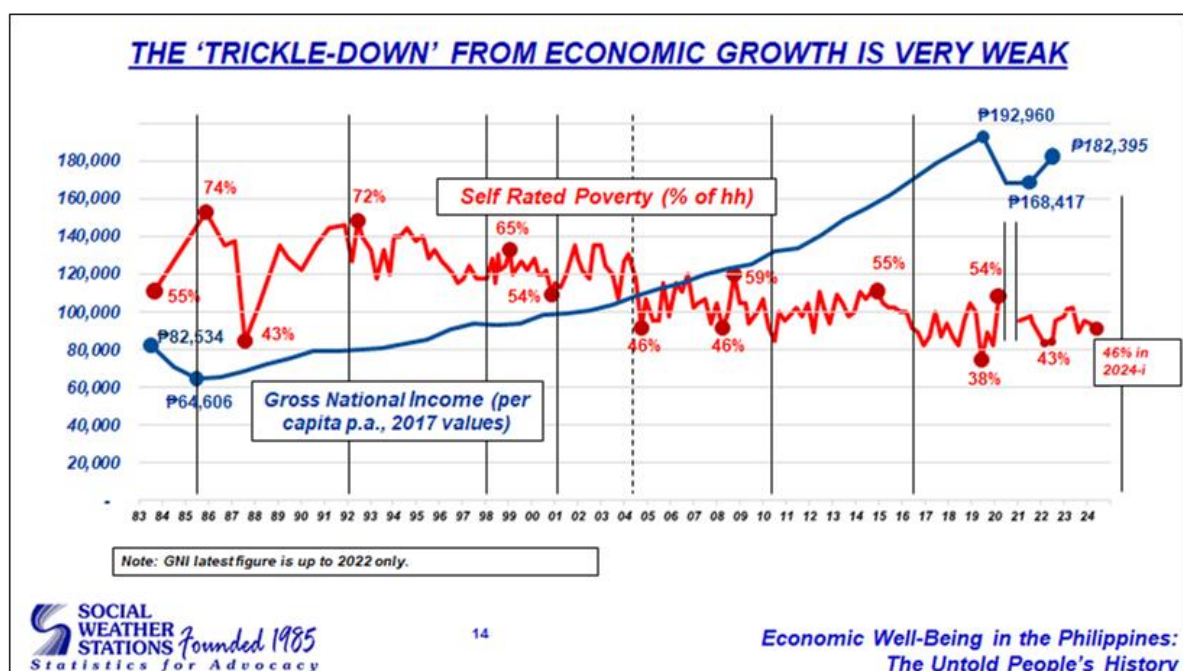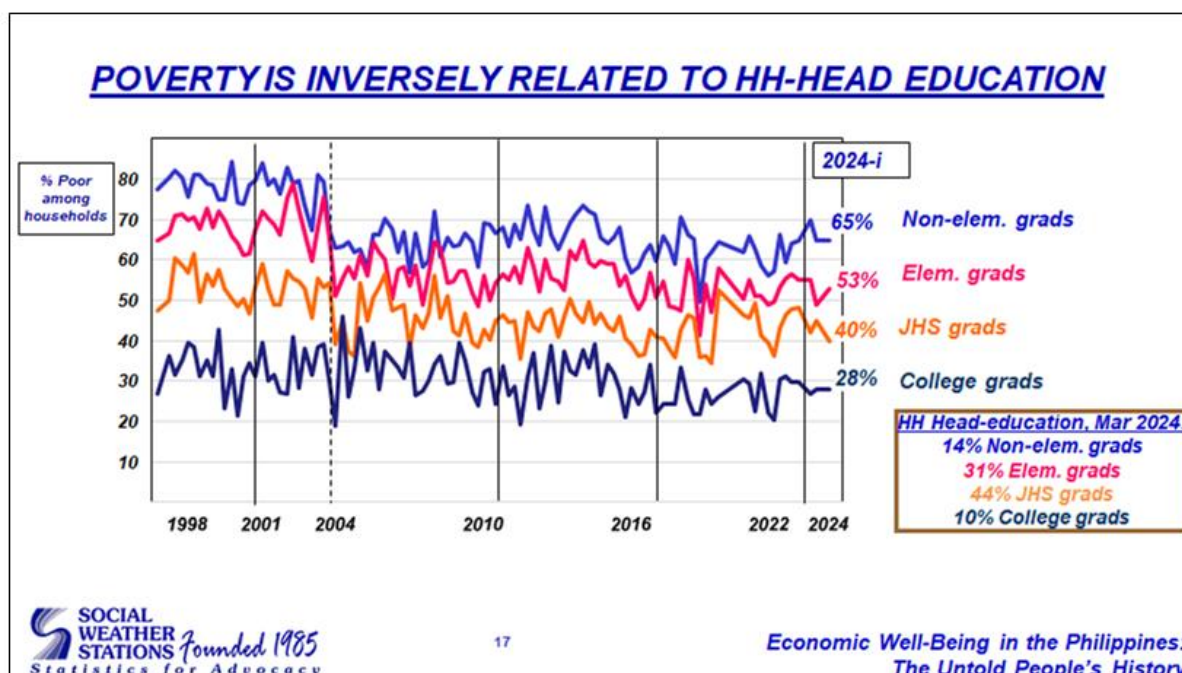

Gross national income increased, but the trickle-down effect was fragile. This is supposed to be corrected for inflation already. Look at how much it has increased since the beginning, yet the trickle-down effect has been fragile.

Initial Econometric Modeling of SRP-Change

Not too much emphasis was placed on the initial parametric modeling. Still, the elasticity of poverty with respect to a rise of 1% in food inflation implied a significant increase in SRP of about 0.68 (holding unemployment constant). A rise in unemployment by 1% has a significant implication to SRP of about 1.7% (holding food inflation constant). However, a rise in GDP does not have a significant coefficient; it may be negative, but it is not statistically significant, unlike inflation and unemployment.

POVERTY IS MUCH WORSE IN THE SOUTH

% Poor among households

2024-i

Vis, 46%
Min, 44%
NCR, 28%
Bal. Luz, 24%

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*Economic Well-Being in the Philippines:*
The Untold People's History

SWS surveys have always been geographically stratified into NCR, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, with a quota of 300 for each. At that level, the error margin is +/-6 points. The error of margin may be big, but SWS works on what is possible, and there are many times when it can change by more than 6 points in as little as one quarter. From 2004 to 2013, the numbers merged and then spread again since then. High poverties came down, while low poverties came up a little bit for a while. UP CIDS, as a Center, may already be aware of the dynamics of how fast things can change. It would not be surprising that NCR and Luzon have the least poverty, while Visayas and Mindanao have the worst poverty.

POVERTY IS INVERSELY RELATED TO HH-HEAD EDUCATION

% Poor among households

2024-i

65% *Non-elem. grads*
53% *Elem. grads*
40% *JHS grads*
28% *College grads*

HH Head-education, Mar 2024:
14% Non-elem. grads
31% Elem. grads
44% JHS grads
10% College grads

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Economic Well-Being in the Philippines:
*The Untold People's History*

Poverty is also inversely related to household head and education. The college graduates have the least poverty. But who doesn't know that only 28% of households are headed by college graduates? Whereas, those headed by a dropout or an elementary dropout is 65%. If

only we could eliminate the non-elementary graduates already and have, at the very least, junior high school-headed households. JHS graduate have at least already completed their education. The latest data in March 2024 has 10% college graduates and 44% junior high school graduates.
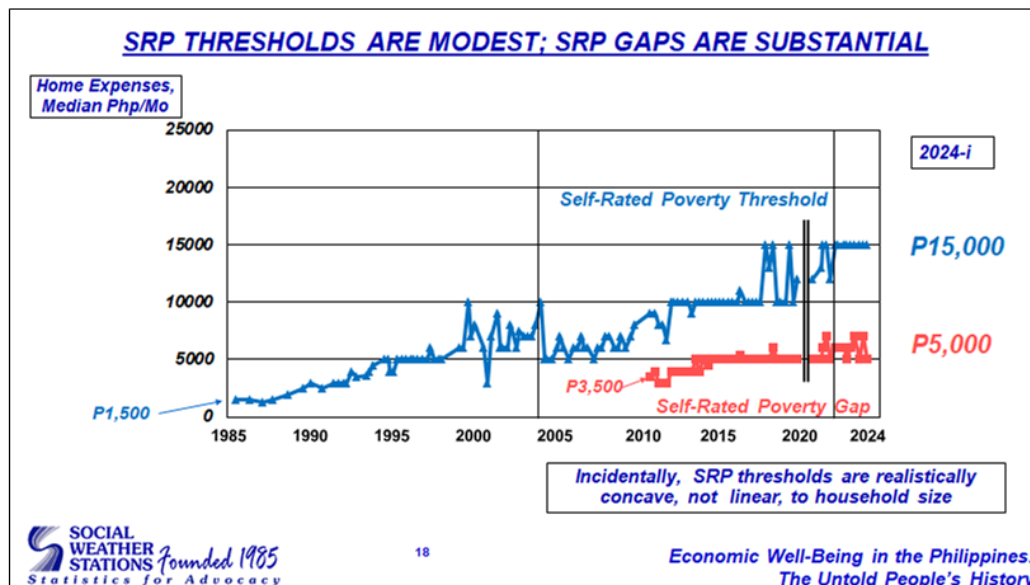

Here the threshold is presented as a national median average. It presents how much household excess is needed by the family for home expenses in order not to be poor. Of the ones who said that they are in NCR, nowadays, it's flipping between 20,000 and 15,000 a month. In Mindanao, it's flipping between 10,000 and 15,000 a month. The gap is substantial, while the SRP thresholds are modest. In other words, the problem is big not in the command of economic growth but in making sure that the people who need it get it.
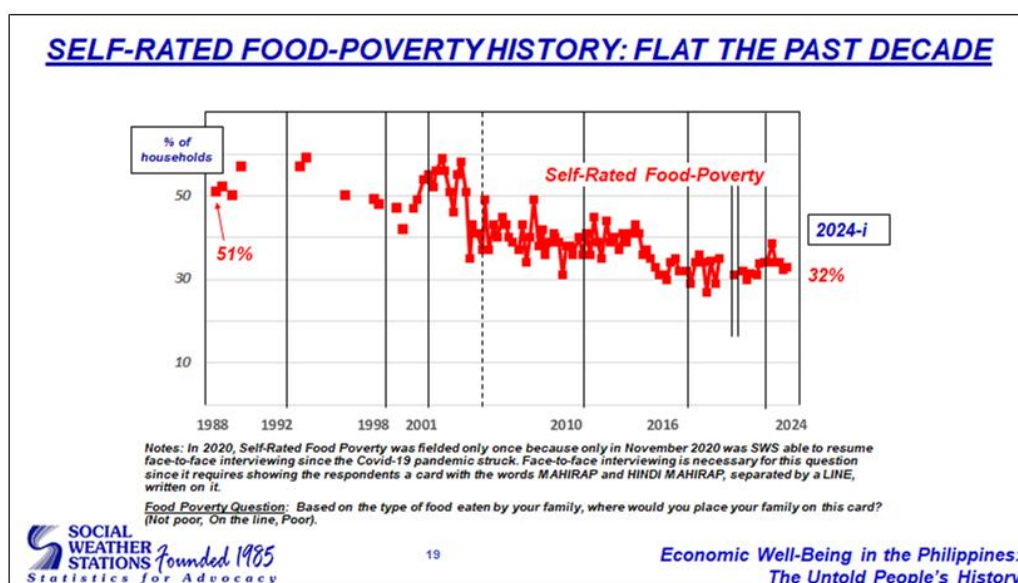

The history of food poverty is shorter and has been trending downward quarterly since 2001. However, for the past 10 years, it has generally been flat. SWS has constantly emphasized staying at the outskirts, and this point has been appreciated.
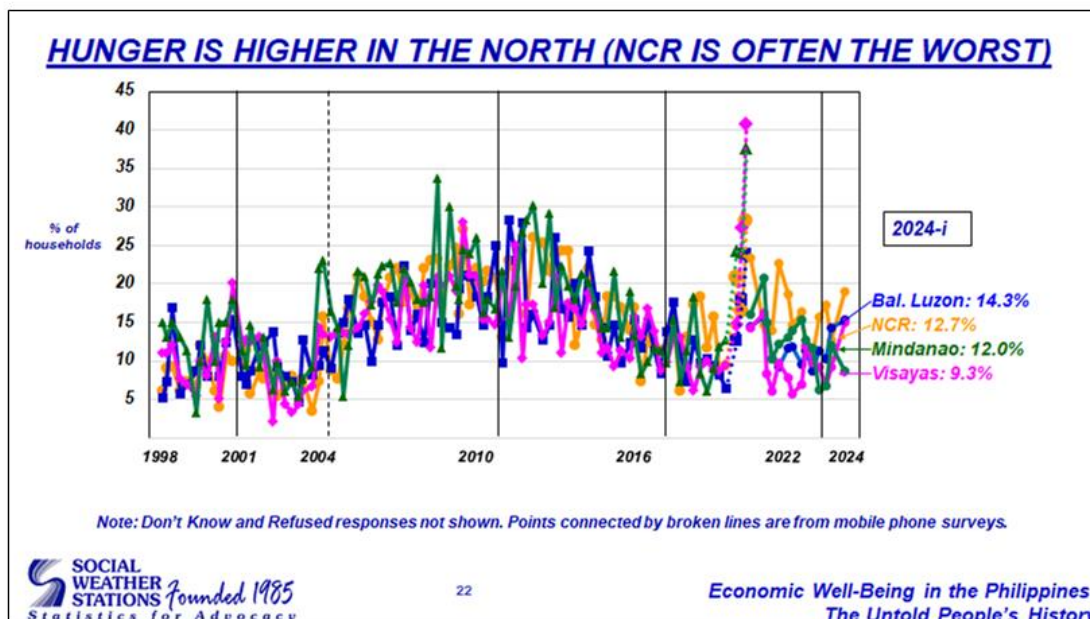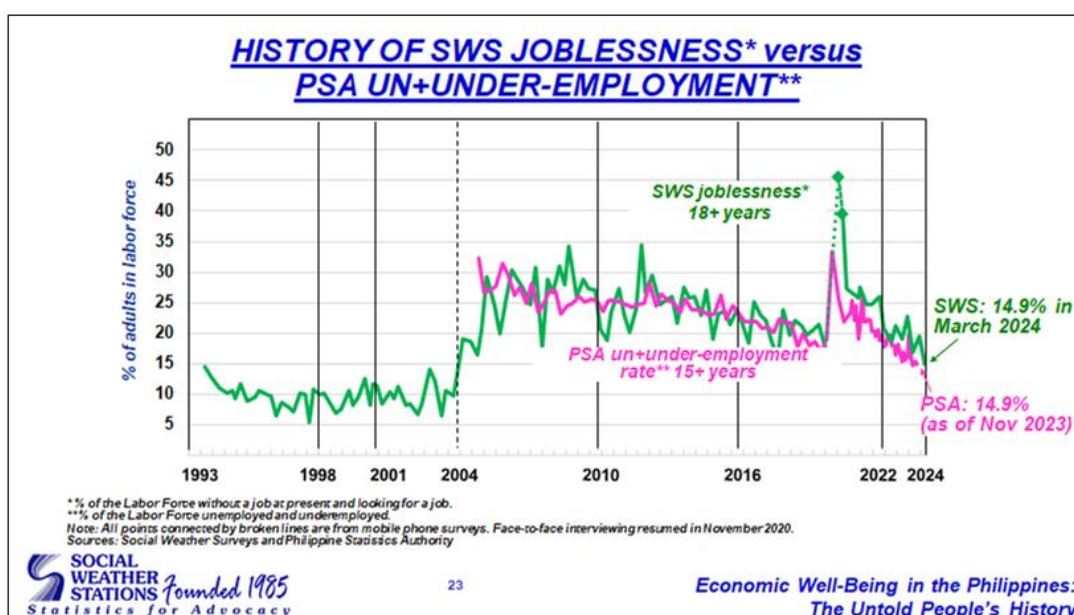
SELF-RATED FOOD-POVERTY THRESHOLDS AND GAPS
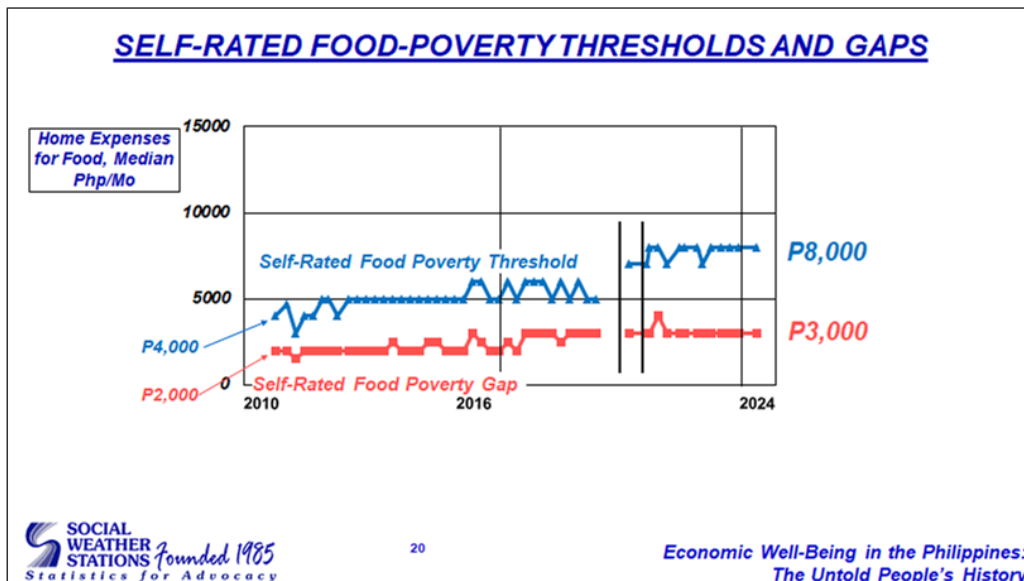
The food poverty threshold has a larger gap. It's not small.

HUNGER HISTORY, 1998-2024: NO NET GAIN
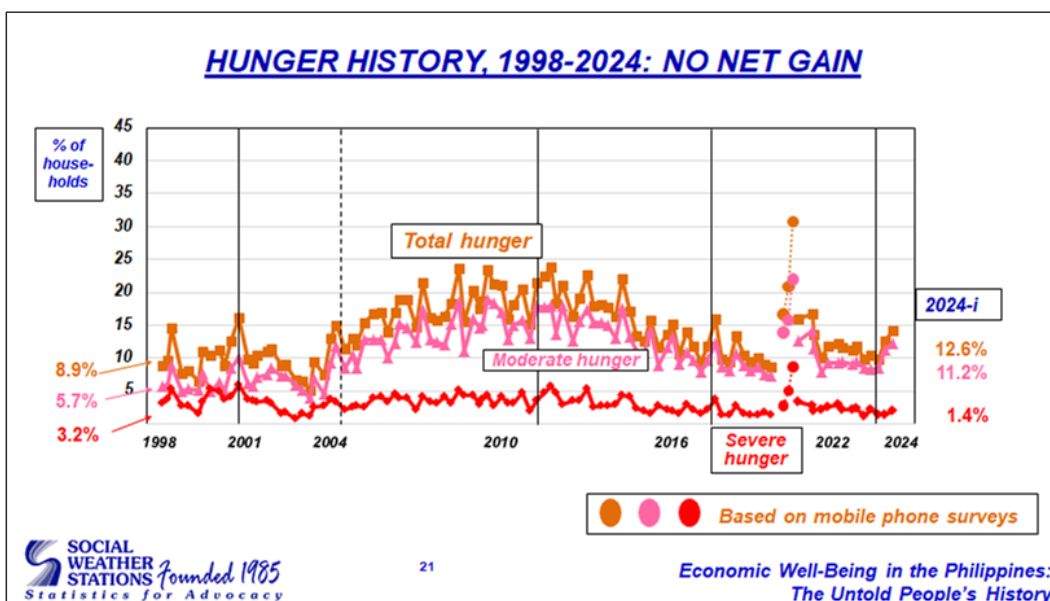
The hunger survey was started in 1998 and grew steadily in 2000. It fluctuated a little bit, going down, and then it began to grow year by year from about 2004 to about 2015. It steadily reached practically 20%. Families said they experienced hunger at least once in the last three months. If severe, hunger was experienced often or not always; "*malimit*" or "*palagi*." If moderate, that's "*minsan*" or "*ilang beses nangyari*." Those are the simple gradations. The latest data presented that 1.4% experienced severe hunger during the first quarter of this year. The base year would have 22+ million families or households with 77 million adults. So, the overall trend for hunger is flat because there was an aversion in the middle that has subsided again. So the net over 40 years is like nothing happened "*walang nangyari*" and was back to the 1990 original level.

HUNGER IS HIGHER IN THE NORTH (NCR IS OFTEN THE WORST)

Note: Don't Know and Refused responses not shown. Points connected by broken lines are from mobile phone surveys.

Economic Well-Being in the Philippines: The Untold People's History

The bigger problem now is that hunger is higher in the north. Sometimes, it's frequently highest in NCR (orange line at 12.7%), especially in the last several years, because they do not have supplements from their gardens. Planting or gardening in NCR is practically zero. Visayas and Mindanao have been reproducing their home-produced food.

HISTORY OF SWS JOBLESSNESS* versus PSA UN+UNDER-EMPLOYMENT**

* % of the Labor Force without a job at present and looking for a job.
** % of the Labor Force unemployed and underemployed.
Note: All points connected by broken lines are from mobile phone surveys. Face-to-face interviewing resumed in November 2020.
Sources: Social Weather Surveys and Philippine Statistics Authority

Economic Well-Being in the Philippines: The Untold People's History

Joblessness is the substitute word for unemployment or underemployment. Officially, to be employed, you only have to work at least one hour a week during the last week before the survey. If you worked for at least one hour and earned income, you are considered employed. In other words, unemployment means idleness. Underemployment is another separate subjective indicator. Government does not negate using subjective indicator and they can ask you: "*sapat ba iyong work or naghahanap ka pa ng ibang trabahong mas malaking sahod*?" This means underemployment, which is basically what the people say. Now, it's already pretty big to add the unemployment and the underemployment using the

same base, namely, the labor force. It's not necessarily re-computation when they are using the employed labor force. SWS corrected the base using the labor force. PSA may be using lavender, while SWS uses the green line, which is longer. There is a slight difference in age applicability when PSA used 15 years of age while SWS considers 18 years. SWS do not ask whether the laborer is 16 or 17 years old, as it is a small matter. One can see in the figure that if there is a related data series, there's no big difference.
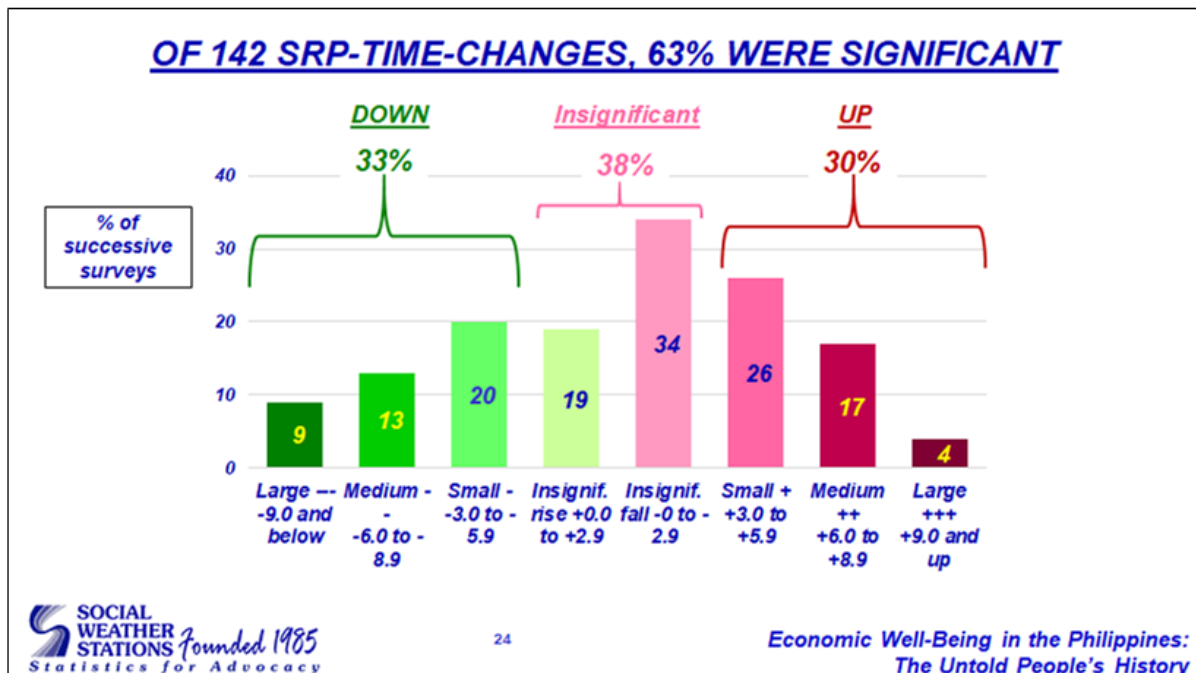
Here, the significance of the changes is down and shortened. There is no need to count since it is only from one point to another point, and most of these are only one point per quarter. Between six months and one year, most of these changes are just one-quarter of changes. The change is insignificant, whether up or down; it is less than three points. It is significant, up or down, more than three points. It is considered small if it is between 3 and 6; medium is between 6 and 9; and large is more than nine. All those things happen, but the bigger ones are more seldom than the smaller ones--33% is significantly down, 30% is significantly up. Having more down trends is better than the minimal up. Hence, the overall trend is still slightly down.

OF 102 SRFP-TIME-CHANGES, 58% WERE SIGNIFICANT
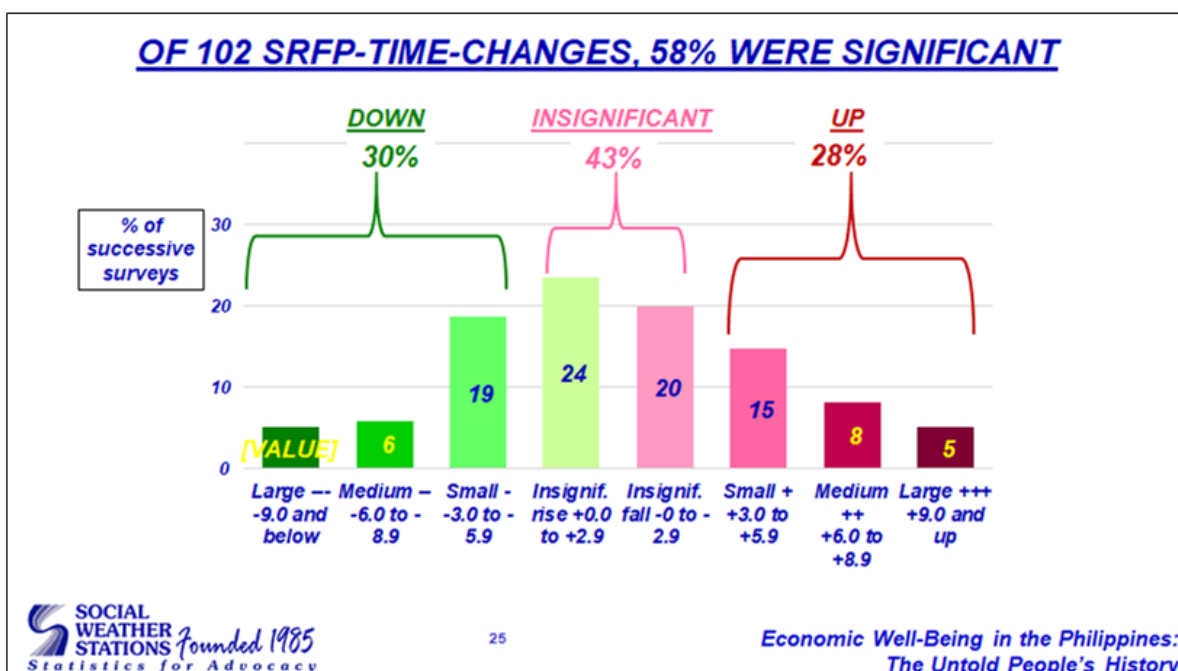
Full poverty is almost the same, that is, slightly down. There were insignificant changes at 43%, down at 30%, and up at 28%. They are almost the same, but slightly more down.

**OF 103 HUNGER-TIME-CHANGES, 40% WERE SIGNIFICANT**
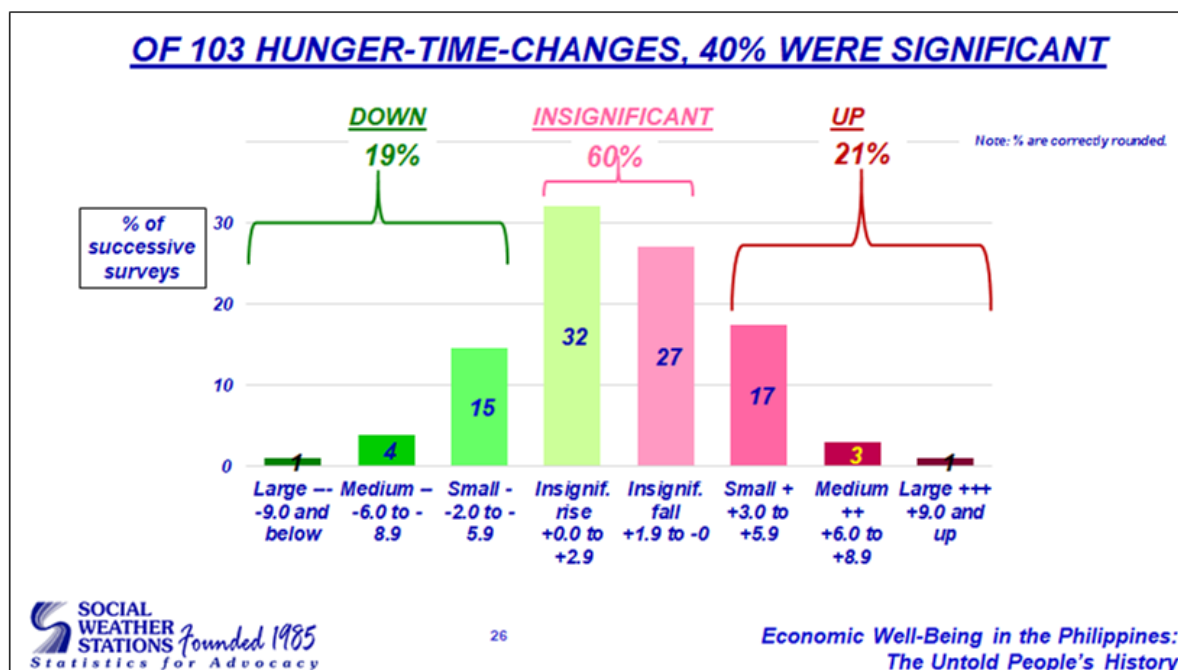
Food poverty also went slightly down, and hunger has significantly changed at a 40% gap. This is still very big.

In joblessness, 42% was significant. The term "joblessness" was used to differentiate SWS results from PSA. When PSA uses the word unemployment or underemployment, SWS uses "joblessness" as the interview question they posed is: "*May trabaho kayo*?" The local term "*trabaho*" is used. If the respondent says, no work, then the next interview question is:

"*kung gaano katagal na wala at kailangan naghananap ng trabaho, para hindi sila `jobless.*'" That is their role – house people. SWS uses the term jobless for clarity of data compared with PSA.

OF 123 JOBLESSNESS-TIME-CHANGES, 42% WERE SIGNIFICANT
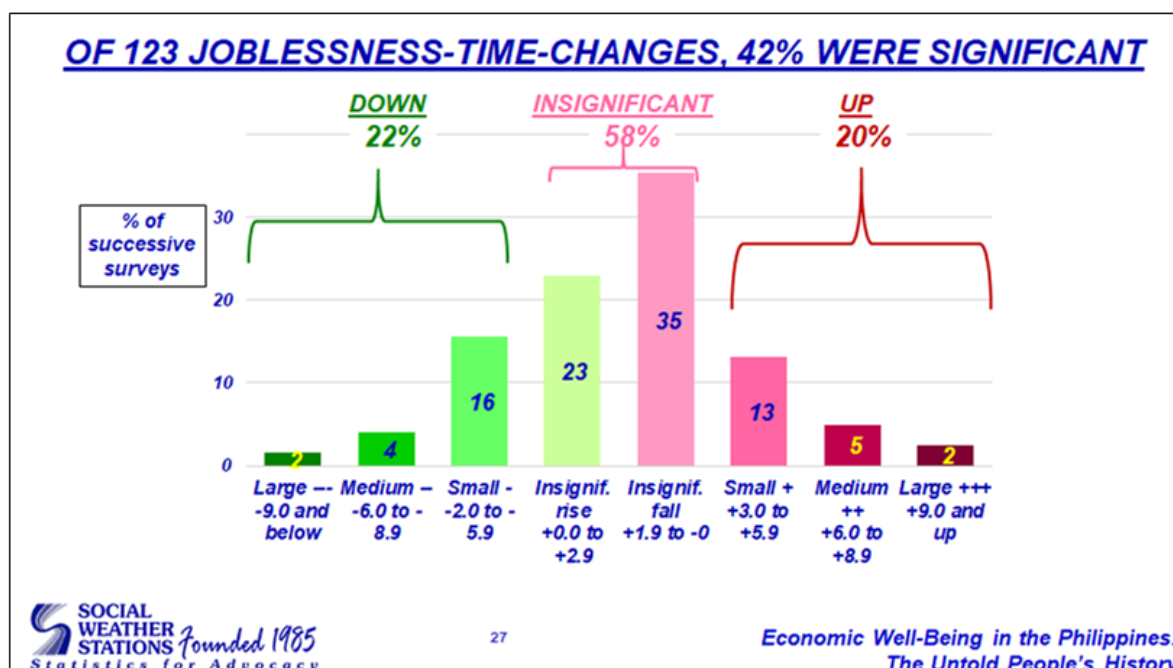
More Lessons Learned

Very large proportions of the change in the SWS survey findings have been statistically significant over three months—SRP 63%, SFRFP 58%, hunger 40%, and joblessness 41%. This shows the importance of quarterly surveying—there is the need to take measures frequently. If there are large gaps between the time measure and public view, automatically, there will be an appearance of calm–as if nothing is happening and there is just a straight line. Actually, situations are changing, and the jumps are significant. In the hospital, a patient is tested against some health indicators you and the nurses check on the patient every hour. Why every hour? Why not once a day? It is because they have experienced that the stats could change fast, so they do it every hour. It was based on experience, and this is how SWS relates its survey to the masses.

What percent of the poor are hungry? Dr. Mangahas asked if anyone had seen government data about hunger among the poor. When was the last time they measured hunger? Would anyone want to be considered poor? No. He espoused that there are separate measurements for hunger and poverty. There's always more hunger among the poor. However, the reading or the mean of hunger is not fixed; it can fluctuate from point to point, from time to time. Once in a while, not most of the time, hunger and poverty can move in opposite directions. SWS show this in their report, and the reason for this is because still there is more hunger among the poor and the not-poor. There is also hunger among the non-poor on a lesser scale. He questioned whether anyone had seen official data differentiating hunger among the poor and non-poor. There is none. However, SWS reports the hunger of the poor and the hunger of the non-poor every quarter.

Final Remarks

Dr. Mangahas chided the audience for not looking at the SWS website. He even apologized for being too frank sometimes. His point is that all data are on the SWS website, and it dates way back through the years. The SWS surveys are scientific, realistic, up-to-date data on economic deprivation, continuous, and will never go away. Those are not temporary, and no one will get demerits for not continuing the data.

GNP and GNI are aggregative and exaggerations of people's progress. They don't say anything about the distribution as there is so little data and so little public attention to the poor due to the lack of data. That is part of the way data work. Seriously, there should be more aggressive policies to combat the lack of data on poverty. Cash transfer is one way to do it, and SWS has separate research on targeted programs for cash transfer, such as the Impact Evaluation Service. These are extensive surveys commissioned usually by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Philippine Integrative Development Studies (PIDS) is tasked to analyze this survey since SWS is just gathering data. Dr. Mangahas happily reported that their progress is working according to the analysis. SWS is not putting in self-reported poverty, except once when the sponsor said so. To fight these problems, there must be bigger and stronger targeted programs, especially in schooling, which is so bad, and all of these are due to inflation.

Many people can do policy analysis. SWS's role is to alert the public to what's going on as advocates. SWS focuses on this topic because it is a severe problem, and they will not leave it unsolved. SWS deserve to stay on this agenda and continue advocating this issue. Dr. Mangahas challenged the audience to look in particular, at the data areas that are not studied. What is happening in the Visayas and Mindanao? SWS may not be in a position to explain that. But they can see something significant happened there with 6 to 10 points going down. These numbers are all on the website.

SWS do not have a regional development staff who will know what is happening there. One thing they did was to have some special look-back after Yolanda. Special questions about whether the family was affected by Yolanda and SWS figured out that Yolanda increased poverty by three percentage points, naturally due to disasters. Naturally, when a disaster happens, one must be prepared for that eventuality.

SWS figured out that their work involves (1) alerting and showing what it is by looking at the eyes. People must see what it was. (2) Get people `consciencitized' from their heart about the problem. (3) They have the data that have been analyzed. SWS have focused more on gathering this particular data, which is part of their curriculum. There are many other things to do, too, and as an economist, Dr. Mangahas also shared that they look into the survey on satisfaction in life and happiness once a year. Using the word happy or "*Masaya*," the basis is not much from zero to ten. What do the numbers say? These are the knots and bolts of measuring. What can you measure when the person doesn't feel it? Four-point scale to all? *"Kayo ba talaga'y masaya? Medyo masaya? Hindi masyadong masaya? Talagang hindi masaya? Mas mahalaga yung hindi masaya,"* the lower two points. *"Hindi Masaya"* is not the majority, but they are too many. One can still say that the majority of Filipinos are happy. Now that there is happiness, poverty and hunger at the same time, these are clearly

super correlated. Those who are hungry and those who are poor have the lowest happiness. It is related, and it all makes sense. Some unhappy people are poorer and have lower happiness. Why is there a gap between them and the ones who are happy? It is unfair to have undeserved unhappiness, but that is how to look at it.

This is SWS advocacy, and they are doing a lot of other things while there is still a lot of politics. Dr. Mangahas felt aggrieved when people thought the surveys are for voting purposes. SWS had to get the political scientists to see if there's any relation to votes. There's no relationship to popularity. But why is the popularity of politicians different? Dr. Mangahas, as an economist, challenged politicians and political scientists to analyze those things. {end}

Panel of Reactors

DSPPP's Convenor, Dr. Ebinezer Florano, thanked Dr. Mahar Mangahas for sharing an important case of historical data about suffering and poverty in the Philippines. There were a lot of learnings from the presentation, however, depressing those figures in red may seem of poverty. But these should serve as a challenge to all to do advocacy, as Dr. Mangahas has said, on issues about the data presented, and some of the policy recommendations for cash transfer, junior high school completion, and accounting application.

Introduction of 1st Reactor: Dr. Rogelio Alicor Panao

> *The first reactor is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of the Philippines, Diliman. He finished his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Master of Industrial Relations degrees at UP Diliman. He later earned another Master's Degree in Public Administration and a Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Science Program) with Political Science as an area specialization from the International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan. He is the author of a doctoral presentation titled "Beyond Roll Calls: Bill Authorship and Executive-Legislative Dynamics in the Philippine House of Representatives." It examines how the Philippine executive dominates legislative policymaking as an agenda-setter through the exercise of constitutional and residual powers. His research interests are legislative politics, Philippine executive-legislative relations, labor economics, and political economy.*

Dr. Rogelio Alicor Panao essentially provided the political science perspective. In political science, they usually distinguish between what is referred to as pocketbook evaluations of the economy and the social profit variety of that valuation. So, pocketbook and social profit indicators are two different ways of assessing economic conditions. They each have particular perspectives on the economy. Each has its own set of theoretical and empirical significance. Despite being conceptually distinct, they are indeed complementary in terms of research value. These differing perspectives have significant empirical and theoretical implications in political science and economics.

Pocketbook evaluation of the economy focuses on an individual's perception of their financial situation. Pocketbook indicators point to how individuals feel about their economic situation, including income, employment status, personal financial stability, sense of hunger, and sense of poverty. One can see that most of the stabilizing conventions, for example, are the ones listed:

➢ Personal income changes
➢ Employment status (e.g., job loss or job gain)
➢ Personal debt levels
➢ Personal savings and investments
➢ Personal feeling of hunger
➢ Personal feeling of poverty

Sociotropic indicators refer to the collective level of economic perceptions based on broader, national economic conditions. These indicators reflect how individuals perceive the overall state of the economy and its time, independent of their personal financial situation. These include macroeconomic indicators often seen in papers or in the news, such as the national unemployment rate, inflation rate, GDP growth, and national debt levels.

So, in empirical research, pocketbook evaluations are critical for understanding how personal economic circumstances influence one's political behavior. These evaluations are based on individuals' assessment of their financial situations. For example, income changes, employment status, and overall economic well-being. Literature has shown that voters, for instance, who perceive their finances to be improving are more likely to support incumbents; whereas, those who feel economically insecure are inclined to vote for the challenger. In empirical work, these pocketbook measures are used to explain another dependent variable. In this case, political participation, vote, or support for a political party, an incumbent, or whoever the incumbent is endorsing.
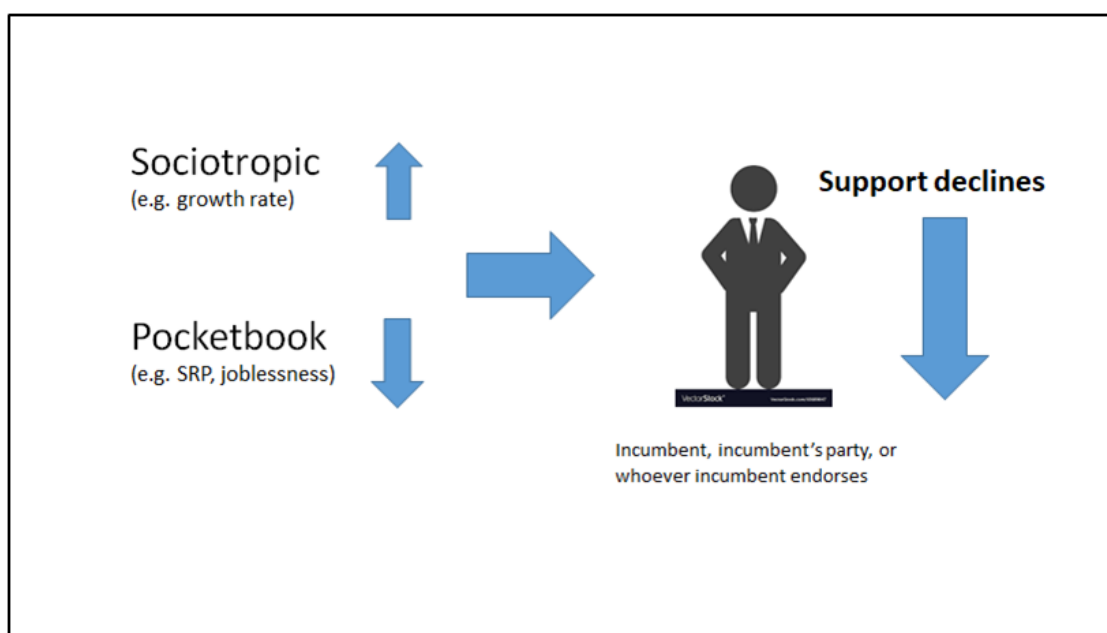
One implication, well-known in many stands of economic and political literature, is that when the pocketbook evaluation of the economy deteriorates, notwithstanding impressive pocketbook indicators, support for the incumbent, his or her party, or whoever the incumbent endorses also wins. This can be seen in declining approval ratings. The theoretical logic behind this is that pocketbook evaluations underscore the role of self-interest in political decision-making. The idea is based on rational choice, which posits that individuals make decisions based on their personal benefits and costs. So, in your pocketbook, evaluations of paid-in-hunger, for example, align with a view suggesting that voters are primarily motivated by their financial well-being.

Of course, there are many advantages to using pocketbook evaluations in research. For example, there is a direct impact on voting behavior. Pocketbook evaluations provide direct insights into how personal economic circumstances influence voting decisions. Also, there is clarity and specificity. Personal financial situations are more tangible and easier to measure than perceptions about the broader economy. It also affords individual-level analysis because it is based on survey data. Pocketbook evaluations allow for examining individual-level data, offering a granular understanding of how economic perceptions vary across demographic groups.

Regarding the data as it may, critics point to several disadvantages in using pocketbook evaluations in research. For example, critics argue that its focus is too narrow. It concentrates solely on personal finances. Then, they say pocketbook evaluations overlook the broader context in which economic perceptions are formed. This narrows the focus and limits our understanding of how national economic trends influence individual behavior. It is quite obvious that these measures are subjective. Self-rated poverty, for example, is inherently subjective, relying on individuals' personal perceptions and feelings about their economic status. Critics say this subjectivity can lead to inconsistent and unreliable data, as perceptions may vary widely among individuals with similar objective economic conditions.

It is also susceptible to cultural and social norms, which can influence how people perceive and report their poverty status. For example, individuals from different cultural backgrounds or social environments may have varying thresholds for what they consider to be poverty. There is also potential for overemphasis. Overemphasizing pocketbook evaluations might lead researchers to underestimate the significance of sociotropic factors or the economy at large in shaping political behavior. Undeniably, psychological factors such as optimism or pessimism can affect how people rate their poverty status. For example, an optimistic person might rate themselves as less poor than their actual economic conditions would suggest, while a pessimistic person might be the opposite. Critics also say there is susceptibility to shock and temporary changes. Temporary changes in income or expenses, such as seasonal employment or unexpected medical bills, can influence self-rated poverty, leading to fluctuations that do not necessarily reflect long-term economic conditions.

Dr. Panao explains that he is not saying that sociotropic variables used by the PSA are immaculate and without issues. That's not the message here. He thinks that pocketbook indicators are worth our while precisely because of the empirical issues conventionally attached to measures such as GDP and inflation.

Sociotropic variables have a lot of issues too

A variable needs to be both valid and reliable

Validity → is the measure actually representing the variable it purportedly measures?

GDP as measure → ignores income distribution, overlooks non market activities, ignores externalities, and its share of measurement issues

Inflation as measure → Underestimates reality, susceptible to anticipatory behavior, susceptible to quality and substitution bias

For example, GDP as a measure ignores income distribution. High GDP growth can co-exist with significant income inequality, where the benefits of growth are not evenly shared. This was hinted at during the presentation. Also, GDP calculations do not include many valuable activities such as household work, caregiving, and volunteer work. Obviously, GDP ignores externalities. GDP does not account for negative externalities, such as pollution and social costs, or positive externalities, such as the benefits derived from public goods. It can provide a skewed picture of economic well-being.

Inflation, on the other hand, is a variable susceptible to underestimation of reality. That was also hinted at during the presentation. Inflation affects different groups in society differently. Public perception of inflation may not accurately reflect actual inflation rates. For example, media coverage, personal experiences with price changes in specific goods or

services, and psychological factors can distort how people perceive inflation. There is also what is referred to as inflation expectations. People's expectations about future inflation can influence their economic behavior. If inflation is expected to rise, for example, consumers might spend more now, while businesses might fake prices in anticipation, potentially creating a feedback loop that affects actual inflation.

In news reports and media statements, the Economic Planning Department emphasized that SWS pocketbook measures are not comparable with government data. I believe that is correct, but perhaps there are some nuances of order, as well. For methods to be fair, the variables need to be both valid and reliable. Pocketbook evaluations contain accurate measures of economic experience and are well-known in the literature. In fact, the literature also recognizes that some reported income measures have reliability issues. Reliability means that a measure has to be consistent across space and time.

Comparability

A variable has to be **valid** and **reliable**

Reliability issues – consistency across time and space

SWS data → validate government narrative on the economy

Sort of second opinion
Indicates areas where policy impact is nil or weak

Dr. Panao opined that the government should not be worried about SWS data. Based on the presentation, he does not think that SWS wants to be comparable in any way. As a user, he uses SWS data in his projects. SWS pocketbook indicators are useful, among others, in validating the government's narrative or account of the economy. According to Dr. Panao, SWS data is akin to the proverbial second opinion. The government should be receptive to SWS data, especially when there is a big gap or inconsistency with government statistics because they indicate failure or disconnect in economic policies and state-led economic interventions.

In conclusion, pocketbook indicators such as poverty and hunger and data from the SWS are important for their research value. They provide ground-level insights. These measures provide detailed insights into individuals' economic experiences, offer a bottom-up perspective that complements top-down macroeconomic data, and provide insights that can help validate whether government statistics accurately reflect the population's

economic reality. It also opens our eyes to subjective well-being. These measures are typically ignored, but they are important and can be used to study the relationship between objective economic conditions and subjective quality of life. Understanding how individuals' perceptions of their economic situation, according to literature, correlates to overall happiness. These were mentioned in the presentation, and life satisfaction can be valuable for economic and psychological research.

Pocketbook measures can also help researchers study socioeconomic inequality in greater detail. By examining how different demographic groups perceive their economic situation, researchers can identify disparities that may not be visible in aggregate data and may consequently benefit from policy design and evaluation. Researchers can use pocketbook measures to design and evaluate policies to improve economic well-being. These measures can help identify which policies most effectively address individuals and households' economic challenges. {end}

Introduction of 2nd Reactor: Dr. Vladimer B. Kobayashi

> *The second reactor is one of DSPPP's research fellows and officer of the newly created Intelligent Systems Center (ISC). He is a certified analytics professional and associate professor at UP Mindanao. He received the Erasmus Mundus Master Course in Data Mining and Knowledge Management Scholarship after he landed top 7 out of 2,000 people and pursued a double master's degree in Data Mining and Knowledge Management. He also received the Marie Curie Initial Training Network Fellowship, which enabled him to pursue a doctorate in Learning Analytics. He is the current program coordinator of the Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics at the College of Science and Mathematics. He also served as the university registrar from 2020 to 2021 and was the department chair of the Department of Mathematics, Physics, and Computer Science from 2019 to 2020.*

Dr. Vladimir Kobayashi is in Davao City and joined the discussion virtually. He first thanked SWS Chairman Emeritus Dr. Mahar Mangahas for his enlightening lecture on the economics of the well-being of Filipinos. Indeed, this is aptly called "The Untold History" because, in contrast to popular narratives of economic well-being, one can only see the unappetizing fact that many Filipinos still feel poor despite good projections of overall economic growth. It also reveals the discrepancies between what is reported in the official statistics and the true conditions of some of our countrymen. It also contradicts some official announcements that poverty is imagined in our country. The SWS case on well-being is an important step in understanding the well-being of the grassroots in the country. It reflects the situation on the ground. From the data science perspective, it provides data useful for triangulation. Of course, there are statistical or data science issues concerning such data's conduct, analysis, and reporting. This is a reaction from the point of view of a data scientist slash economic researcher.

In conducting surveys, questions such as the effectiveness of the sample arise as the sampling method, how often, and how survey questions are framed and asked during

surveys. Dr. Kobayashi commended SWS for putting a premium on data quality, considering the process of garbage in and garbage out. As highlighted, documenting the process of data collection is also very important. By analyzing historical data, one can detect a systematic pattern of bias. However, there is also the concern about how our perception of poverty has changed over time. What are the generational effects? Dr. Kobayashi explained that he would not consider himself poor during his time. But when you don't have an internet connection, you might consider yourself poor at this time of technology. It would be very interesting to look at that factor. Also, perception is influenced by different factors, and they should be considered to improve future surveys.

Operationalization was another concern raised by Chair Emeritus Mahar. How do we operationalize joblessness? Discrepancies arise from measuring different things or we measure the same thing differently. That is why there is a discrepancy in the way it is reported. Another interesting and perhaps the most crucial aspect is the insights generated from such data and the analysis performed. Since data is collected over time, or what we call temporal data or time-benefit data, there is an opportunity to triangulate this data with other data or indicators. This data can also be used in evaluation programs, such as the impact or effects of national policies on poverty reduction. Dr. Kobayashi highlighted the importance of triangulation because one source of data, or the data, is the window to see the world. One source of data is only one window of perspective. More intensive patterns will emerge when using or combining different data sources. Essentially, the world is multi-modal, combining sources like temporal data with spatial data and qualitative data, such as text, with images or video. Advances in data science, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, make the analysis of multi-modal data visible. As shown earlier, looking at the aggregate analysis by analyzing it by region, educational attainment, or even a combination of these is very interesting.

On the reporting question: What is the best way to report or present the data? One needs to be imaginative as it goes to the basics of communicating information. How do you present it to the public, other stakeholders, and policymakers at the national and local levels? These are essential inputs to drop-down policies that trickle down to the bottom. For instance, universal income may reach the city level, but what is the impact in the long term? Dr. Kobayashi emphasized the need to be imaginative about the future of these surveys in light of digitalization, AI, and data science. How can these technologies be leveraged to ensure data quality, increase the frequency of surveys, and conduct automated analysis and reporting? Chairman Emeritus mentioned that this is not yearly, but maybe it can be done daily or even weekly with new technologies. Imagine not doing forecasting anymore, but `now-casting.' In the same way, for example, in an airplane, you don't use the weather from yesterday to predict or to use it as your guide for today. This is very important in real-time, or not real-time, but nearly real-time monitoring.

Lastly, Dr. Kobayashi pointed out the importance of partnership and open science. By sharing the data for further study and validation, we reap the full benefits of this data. He thanked Chairman Emeritus Mahar Mangahas for starting and continuing this advocacy. He assured us that these data would be used. {end}

Response from the Lecturer: Dr. Mahar Mangahas

Dr. Mahar Mangahas thanked the two reactors for their comments. He was glad that there are attendees from the UP School of Statistics. Dr. Dennis Mapa, the National Statistician, is also one of the SWS fellows. SWS, by the way, is an NGO. Its General Assembly stakeholders are members of the organization. They don't receive anything. They don't have to pay for anything, and SWS invites them to use the data. In fact, Dennis Mapa had some very nice findings about the effect of inflation on poverty and hunger. He used a technique that showed the effect was like a pie. There is a significant effect in one quarter, and then another effect, until it gets smaller and smaller. In fact, it is very interesting. Despite inflation, it could have two or three or four quarters effect, little by little putting more fit into the equation. That is how it is done, and hopefully, it will continue with those data.

Dr. Mangahas doesn't like the term "pocketbook." It has nothing to brag about and what needs to be done with it. Incomes or people's incomes are the most challenging things to measure. It is too detailed and too expensive. The questionnaire on the family income and expenditure survey is awful. SWS would not want to do that because nothing else can be done with it. He doesn't blame PSA for doing that only once in a while. The trouble is PSA cannot do it more simply because that would change the measuring device. So, they tried to use a shorter questionnaire. They got lesser income, and as a result, the poverty went up, and that tool had to be thrown away. Once you use a certain measure, it cannot be stopped anymore. You got to stay with it. Hence, SWS has not tried to measure income. When they do that, they will have to go to everybody's income and every kind of activity, and then there will be more questions. SWS can get findings without measuring people's incomes, that is, by using education. If you want to know the socioeconomic classes, it is preferable to use education as it is very clear. People's education is evident when they measure it. There are robust correlations with other businesses.

Financial indicators are for the money people, the bankers, not us, ordinary people. SWS do not ask people about their finances. They ask them things like if they have savings or not. But putting money values or asking them about money values is very difficult and invasive. It wasn't mentioned earlier, but SWS have data on gainers and losers. "Are you getting better off? Or are you getting worse? Or is it still the same? Do you think things will get better off or worse off? That is subjective, also. This is actually being done by the Bangko Sentral, which they call consumer expectations. According to Dr. Mangahas, it is not the expectation that is important but the trend of the past which is the more important question. Just compare: *"kung ilan ang umaangat at ilan ang bumababa?"* It is geographic and not how much. It is very much related to status and always it is the poorer people, *"na hindi umaangat."* The report on gainers and losers shows what is happening to the poor and to the non-poor. Then they will say, "The poor get poorer." But, we want the poor to get better off, or else, *"paano sila makakahabol?"* The way it is going now, the poor will find it hard to cope. *"Di sila makakahabol kung palaging mas mabagal ang pag-angat nila."*

On voting, most politicians are interested in this, whether they are famous or not. They cannot be blamed. But they think this should not be looked upon. Dr. Mangahas guessed that he would have to look for some political scientists who would find the correlations

between these economic things and those political matters. Who is the one with the super-high popularity among the poor? Erap Estrada/*Erap para sa mahirap*.

The scientific value of elections is that it proves that the sampling was correct. What is not asked about the sampling? SWS checked its election track record to prove the sampling was correct. It also proves that people tell the truth to the best of their ability. Their best, as far as they can tell, is to tell the truth about themselves. Although, the best of all, is exit polling as compared to pre-election polling. Dr. Mangahas shared that he was sad that in 2022, SWS did not have a sponsor for exit polling. Having a sponsor would allow SWS to comment on the correctness of the elections of 2022, which cannot be done without the media. It was done before with the media, but they pulled out in 2022.

What is the issue about sampling? It was all there; the sampling was correct, and SWS was right during the past. When asked about the new question wording, SWS is transparent and uses English and Filipino versions. SWS is highly transparent and has not changed a single word of a question because it is for time series. If a respondent says: *"Anong ibig sabihin niyo nito?"* The trained interviewer will say: *"Bahala na lang kayo kung anong ibig nyang sabihin sa inyo. Walang script, nasa inyo kung ano ang katumbasan nyan sa pag-iisip niyo."* There is no spiel and no coaching. Dr. Mangahas claimed that "as far as technical competence is concerned, ladies and gentlemen, this is the first class best practices survey you can find." The sample may be small, but only a third of the sample size is specific. SWS do what it can afford to do. But it is world-class and world size. The samplings do not have to be bigger. The only reason to make it bigger is to have more geographic detail. If what is needed is by province, then ways have to be done per province. That is where knowledge of statistics comes into play; once a sample size's accuracy is known, there is no need to overspend money.

Back in 1984, Dr. Mangahas did 2,000 size samples and they said, "*Masyadong malaki yon.*" He had to make it smaller but still world-class so it could do more instead of only one. That is where statistical knowledge of science is involved. In 40 years, SWS has not changed its sample size, yet it's getting a smaller proportion of the population. Statisticians know that the accuracy of the proportion does not depend on the proportion of the sample to the total; it is the absolute number. A 1,000-size sample is as accurate for measuring a proportion now as 20 years ago, 40 years ago, or 60 years ago. But this has nothing to do with the sample. Accuracy has nothing to do with the proportion of the sample to the overall, which is learned only from theoretical statistics. It works not only in theory but also in practice.

Relationships between these economic indicators and the governance indicators are hardly analyzed. There are governance indicators and people's ratings of how the government performs on different things. The government's lowest grade is in fighting inflation. The government's second lowest grade is in fighting corruption. The government has a report card, and they have successfully passed in fighting inflation but borderline corruption. They have passed in fighting crime, as well as in fighting hunger. It is easy to analyze whether the people you invite are hungry or not. To do an analysis on that means one will find the relationships are in the right place. However, the elasticity or even the coefficient for this may not be known yet, but the data will definitely be there.

The meaning of poverty is purely in the word *"mahirap," which* has not changed at all. Even the system has not changed and even the probe has not changed at all. Dr. Mangahas contended that maybe the word *"mahirap"* means something different now than before. One could ask the people who have internet or not. That can be analyzed to see if there is a difference. So what if people nowadays have motorcycles? People have smartphones, so it could be that people's expectations or standards are higher. The bottom line is it is still *kahirapan*—it is still poverty.

Dr. Mangahas further addresses the audience: "Do you want to stick to a top-down measure of poverty on calories? What is necessary to have life and survive?" He does not mind doing that approach but would frankly claim that this is the "probe." It is simply the keyword. This is a process of getting data from people and their language. There is no mechanical probe like a thermometer that will immediately give numbers. It is in the words or terms used in limited degrees. As necessary, SWS does not use numbers; it only uses words. It has maintained its relationships with other survey organizations elsewhere that might have been using a question that has numbers from 0 to 5. SWS have just been following the standards, but SWS would prefer to use words. But in general, the Europeans do their survey with their every answer in words. They use only four to five answers at most.

Dr. Mangahas projected the image of the so-called happiness iceberg where children always get the top. He does not believe in anchoring at the tip and end. This can be anchored on a question that puts the top as the best possible life one can imagine, while the other end is the worst possible life one can imagine. Another question is using a scale of minus five to plus five, whereby plus five is the best possible life one can remember and minus five is one's personal words. These are all anchored on the person's memory. Zero is neutral, and if it is negative, that is clearly very painful.

An oncologist invented a scale that measures pain to pleasure. He used this in his practice and reported that there were cases when he got lower than minus five meaning that the pain was getting worse. This was his way of treating his patients. Dr. Mangahas claims that one should know one's personal best and personal worst without having to resort to an imaginary best and imaginary worst.

Thinking about the Finns and Scandinavians, who are always on top of the highest quality of life, they actually have a more modest feeling about what's possible since they already have more than what is attainable. They don't want so much more; hence, they are on top. The Americans have always strived to be billionaires. This is why they always score in the line of six or something to that level.

SWS has been into many surveys that are continuing, one of which, for example, is the views about China, and there may be connections here. Starting with a theory, it is a matter of politics, not religion. SWS have been very self-sufficient, and a lot of sponsors are requesting their services, most of which are not commercial projects but public service projects. SWS find these field works challenging, but they need to keep going.

In the meantime, topics of economic suffering are still blank. Hence, at the beginning of Dr. Mangahas' talk, his question was: "What do you think is hunger?" The government reports

the results of surveys conducted two years ago. Quality means being up to date. Government data on employment and underemployment may be up to date. These data may be correlated with SWS' joblessness and the government's underemployment, which are comparable, but there is nothing on hunger and poverty except data gathered every two years. In this way, SWS is more advanced in data gathering conducted on a regular quarterly basis.

Dr. Mangahas contends that government data portrays gainers and losers as exuding an optimistic presence, especially for the sake of the Bangko Sentral, which is another issue to tackle. This should not be centralized, but who should control the measure? Competition at this level will be healthy, especially when dissenting opinions and measures exist. Try to do the measures in your own way since science relies on replication. Even votes are replicated. It does not hurt to repeat the same study to prove that the data are scientific and evidence-based.

Concerning the economic suffering, the situation is really different. The institutional establishment position is purposely lessening as if hiding the gravity of the situation. Their poverty line is based on expenditure which they compared to income: how much to buy, to spend on food, etc. Using this form of measure will lessen poverty data because the income is always more than the expenditure. It was already pointed out by the national statistician, Dr. Albert, that he cannot change the system, because once it is changed, it will automatically increase numerical poverty to unimaginable heights. Government will not stand the impact of adjusting their data in any way that will make things look worse. For Dr. Mangahas, lowering the poverty line is already a moral problem. {end}

OPEN FORUM

The DSPPP Convenor, Dr. Ebinezer Florano, before opening the floor for discussion, first announced that soon enough UP will have a mirroring of the Philippine Statistics Authority Data Archive (PSADA). DSPPP had initiated the drafting of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in cooperation with the UP Intelligent Systems Center and UP Data Commons, who will be in charge of the technical delivery. It is expected that all members of the UP community, not just Diliman, but also those in Mindanao, will soon have access to this by simply registering. At the moment, the data may still be limited, but the Memorandum of Agreement is flexible enough to include all other data in the future.

Those who had questions were asked to provide their name and affiliation.

Q1: I'm Buena Bernal, a Philippines Correspondent for an international network, Channel News Asia (CNA). You said you did mobile surveys during the pandemic, but now you've gone back to field interviews with pen and paper. Did the mobile surveys not work? It's a question of technology. Will it bring down the cost? If it will lower costs, then you can do more public service surveys that telco surveys can fund.

MM: We like to do face-to-face surveys best in the field. That is actually the golden rule. We are lucky to have a database of some thousands of phone numbers from our own samples. But we do not know how long we can keep doing that. The telcos will

not allow sampling using their numbers, and that is a technical issue. You might see some surveys based in Singapore or Malaysia, and those are very dubious. Why was it done there? It would be illegal if it is not done here. We do not know how good those samples are; even phone surveys whose samples can be validated cannot be re-sampled. The telecommunication companies are not cooperating and will not allow sampling due to the privacy issue. Of course, SWS does not want any names. As soon as we go to the field, we will skip only three quarters and still be doing it. With online sampling, we will work with those who are habitually online, but we do not think Filipinos are habitually online. Even if they use Facebook, the same cooperation is not possible face-to-face.

Q1: Just two more quick questions: When people talk about economic growth, they usually talk about the growing middle class because of their purchasing power and how they can pay for children's education. Where does the middle class fall among those three?

MM: That is another thing that is different. From time to time, SWS asks people to identify their class. There are questions where the number of classes is ranged, maybe about five or six. SWS has been part of a network called the International Social Survey Program, which has self-identified classes. Once they do that class survey, then SWS will also have it for comparison, but not habitual. I recommend using education.

This is what I am disappointed about: The PSA itself tried to make a classification system, which is so complicated that nobody is doing it. As a private serving institution, SWS did it once and showed people the data we got. But nobody else ever revealed what they got, and the PSA is not using it. PSA tried to devise something, but they are not demonstrating what they took. Hence, the result is like PSA mandated using a specific data system, but they are not using it—that is unfair. As a result, you can use the DEFIES when there is an FIES, which is every two years now. FIES is as far as we will go now.

Q1: Last, has self-rated poverty changed since the interim government in BARMM? Is that available for us?

MM: BARMM is something else. While we always have Mindanao, the extent of BARMM in the SWS surveys is not fixed or stratified. SWS cannot identify BARMM separately any more than it can identify Bulacan in Luzon. SWS has many surveys in BARMM, and we have other sponsors there. However, I don't think we are including self-rated poverty in those surveys because that question would not be under our control, but the sponsors for that.

In the past, we have seen that the Moro people are definitely poorer. Just how much poor, I could not give you numbers. But as a result, it would be very nice to have such numbers. In fact, I always say BARMM deserves its own statistics – BARMM statistics as a group. I do not know when they are going to do that. However, we do not have the financial capacity to separate Mindanao into BARMM and non-BARMM. That's a big financial responsibility.

Q2:   I am Dr. Jalton Taguibao from Political Science. I wanted to find out your thoughts, Dr. Mangahas, on whether you're amenable to tweaking the instrument because you referred to it as self-rated hunger and self-rated poverty. Yet, the meanings of poverty and hunger appear to be intentionally ambiguated. Therefore, my view is that if they give an answer, it's actually a situated answer. So, it might be difficult to generalize from it. So, do you think it would be a good idea to ask them how they understand it because the language appears to be constant across time, but the meaning might change?

MM: I have given the show card specifically. The question is there. It is deliberately without explanation. There was minimal stimulus. It is all in the way the respondent understands the words, right? *"Para walang gulo. Walang misunderstanding. Walang verbal contamination."* Now, it could be studied in relation to the respondent's home assets. That has not been done. Because we know if they have a motor vehicle, we know if they have a flush toilet or not, or if they have about 20 or so assets. That could stand some analysis. I would guess that even the poor have more of these things now than they did 20 years ago because we know what they had 20 years ago. Twenty years ago, *"wala pang ganito eh."* Now they all have mobile phones. They think that they need a mobile phone; let us not begrudge them a mobile phone. In fact, I think the cost of earning is lacking in the official calculation. Not just the cost of living but also the cost of earning. Simply, you need a load. You need to make those costs, and we have asked about that occasionally. For load, it is at least median, at PhP1,000 a month in NCR for families. Be it *"katumbas"* of being poor, that probably changes a little bit. But, I'm not going to use that to adjust, or that would result in less poverty. To them, they are poor. *"Eh di yun ang kahirapan sa kanila."*

Q3:   I am Bern "Ondoy" Mijares, Jr. from Bohol Island State University. I saw the advertisement that there will be a lecture. In my previous university, in Holy Name University, I was involved in the conduct of polling called, "Bohol Polling." I decided to come all the way from Bohol to hear specifically from the horse's mouth, from the one who devised the questionnaire and the poll. My question is that aside from the self-rated poverty in which you use the show cards; what we actually used in the polling are the show cards, the rating boards, and the flashcards for the satisfaction of government services. Aside from the self-rated poverty, we also have the economic classification based on dwelling: the A, B, C, D, and E. Is there an upgrade to how we classify families' dwellings based on the criteria we have established?

MM: We give lectures and training at Holy Name University and consider Bohol Polling our showcase. On the question of whether there is an upgrade, no, it's still the same in terms of structure. There are actually photographs such as: this is A, this is B, which have not changed. It doesn't break down, and it doesn't demarcate the samples anymore. It's almost D and E now. So it's not helpful. The new PSA scheme might help, but PSA is not using it and is not showing what it will do. It is there for recommendation, but they are not taking their own recommendation since they are not using it because it is too complicated compared to our ABCDE. We still do that, but it is too small. Education is better because it is clearer.

Q3. So, the same question for education. What is the highest?

MM: That is very detailed already as to "*ano inabot nila?*"

CLOSING CEREMONY

While the plenary still had some questions, due to the difficulty of having another meeting among the DSPPP Working Group, the Convenor, Dr. Ebinezer Florano, proceeded to award certificates. He was joined by the former DSPPP Convenors, Chancellor Fidel Nemenzo, and Dr. Jalton Taguibao, in honoring the guest brown bag speaker, Dr. Mahar Mangahas, and the two panels of reactors, Dr. Roger Alicor Panao and Dr. Vladimer Kobayashi with the Certificate of Appreciation (see picture below).

The Data Science Working Group members were requested to proceed to the Executive Conference Room at the back. Again, let's have a round of warm applause for Dr. Mahar Mangahas.

Feedback

This event was a resounding success, as evidenced by the highly positive feedback. The majority of attendees found the event successful (63% of respondents gave a rating of 5 out of 5), and their expectations were met with a 75% rating. Comments indicate that Dr. Mangahas's topic is insightful and informative, allowing them to appreciate how SWS conducts its surveys and the importance of measuring public sentiment in policy-making and

investigating data collected by other enumerators, such as PSA. They also found the facilities and meals excellent (69%). Majority also rated the planning process (50%) and the effectiveness of event materials (56%) as excellent, although less pronounced than the other three. Some appreciated providing materials for the slides and graphs, while others pointed out camera and sound system issues. Most respondents (88%) recommended holding similar events in the future. Some suggestions for improvement include allocating more time for the question-and-answer portion, adhering more to the schedule provided, and expanding the seminar's scope to a broader audience.