



## Articulating the Co-operative Identity

### Statement on the Co-operative Identity (SCI)

There is an ongoing consultation by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) on possible changes to the **Statement on the Co-operative Identity (SCI)**. The Co-operative Identity Advisory Group (CIAG), composed of co-op experts and practitioners from around the world, was created to facilitate the consultation among ICA members and is circulating right now *discussion drafts* to allow members to contribute to the discussion.

The proposed changes to SCI will allow co-operatives **to better articulate, live, communicate, and protect the Co-operative Identity.**

The changes should (a) go further than the existing Statement in distinguishing a co-operative from other forms of enterprise; (b) render the language of SCI either clearer or more contemporary; and (c) continue to give expression to the universal elements of our identity and so

remain applicable to all kinds of co-operatives.

In other words, the changes should allow co-operators, wherever they are, to accentuate the distinctiveness of co-operatives while exemplifying their shared identity.

### Some Background

The Statement on the Co-operative Identity (SCI) was formally adopted by the general assembly of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) in 1995. It defines what the co-operative means and enunciates the ten (10) Co-operative Values and seven (7) Co-operative Principles that co-operatives around the world adhere to. SCI was the 3rd revision of the Rochdale Principles that the Pioneers formulated to guide their co-operative and which the ICA first adopted when it was organized in 1895.

Organizations that call themselves co-operatives have to follow SCI to preserve their distinctiveness as values-based and principled

enterprises, and to differentiate them from for-profit businesses.

On January 3, 2017, ICA issued the Guidance Notes to the Co-operative Principles as a practical and interpretive companion to the SCI. The guidance notes are meant to ensure that co-operative leaders, educators, and policymakers are on the same page when they talk about co-operatives, and for co-operators (co-op members, leaders, managers, and employees), in particular, to be guided on how to practice and live the co-operative values and principles.

### Proposed Changes

Now, ICA has seen it fit to review the SCI thirty (30) years after it was formulated and became the standard for all co-operatives the world over. CIAG has come up with a set of 15 recommendations, in effect *restituting* the co-operative values and principles, for ICA and its members to better articulate, live, communicate, and protect the Co-operative Identity.



Let's take the 3rd Co-operative Principle which has the longest definition, as an example of how the principle is restated for clarity.

### 3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation

“Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative.

“Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.”

This principle is proposed to be restated, thus: *Members participate in their co-operative as producers, consumers, workers, community*

*members or independent business owners. They contribute equitably to its capital, a portion of which remains common property under the democratic control of the co-operative. Members receive a limited return, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership.*

Some reasons given for the change or the restatement of the 3rd principle are:

- During the consultation, many argued for speaking generally to the use of the co-operative's services, noting that use is an important form of economic support. The statement proposed is broader and more universal in its application (e.g. being a member of a worker co-operative does not, in itself, constitute use of the co-operative's services).
- It also captures the idea of member participation, which many consultation participants wanted to see.
- The current formulation contains unnecessary qualifiers, making it too weak and too wordy.

Consultation is ongoing and those who would like to participate in the consultation can view the proposed changes to SCI at <https://co-opidentity.ica.co-op/draft-changes>. They can share their comments and suggestions by October 31, 2025, by writing to: [consultations@ica.co-op](mailto:consultations@ica.co-op).

### Relevance to co-op movement in the Philippines

Why are the proposed changes relevant to co-operatives in the Philippines at this stage of their development?

First, this is an opportunity for co-op leaders and managers, in particular, to reflect on how the co-operative values and principles are practiced in the country. The truth is some of these values and principles are loosely applied now, in some cases openly violated, if we look closely at the present business practices, even policies, of co-operatives.

Second, this violation has bearing on the competitiveness of co-operatives. Co-operatives in the country are operating in a very competitive environment with various players actively – and aggressively promoting – various financial products and services, including neobanks offering digital and other innovative services. All this in response to BSP's advocacy of financial inclusion, to make available and accessible financial services to as many Filipinos as possible, especially the unbanked, underserved, and low-income population.

At present, co-operatives are losing out in their strategy of imitating or doing what the banks are doing. In the process, they lose their distinctiveness – and their competitiveness. As shown by successful co-operatives around the world, that competitiveness comes from preserving and accentuating the Co-operative Identity and embedding the co-operative values and principles in their operations and system of governance. As Jonathan Tetrault of McKinsey & Co. noted: “The current economic environment presents an opportunity for co-operatives, but they need to stay true to their values and adjust to the new realities of a busy, online world.” **RMV**

**The Co-operative Principles are subtly linked; when one is ignored, all are diminished. Co-operatives should not be judged exclusively on the basis of any one principle; rather, they should be evaluated on how well they adhere to the principles as an entirety.**

*Dr. Ian MacPherson, Chairperson of the ICA Committee that formulated the Statement on the Co-operative Identity*

# QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

BUILDING FUTURES TOGETHER

## A CELEBRATION OF CO-OPERATIVE LEADERSHIP AND COLLECTIVE VISION: MASS-SPECC HOLDS 2025 LEADERS' FORUM, OATH-TAKING CEREMONY



With the powerful theme “Co-operatives as Instruments for Sustainable Development and Social Justice,” the same global theme for this year’s International Day of Cooperatives (IDC), MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center convened its 2025 Leaders’ Forum and Oath-Taking Ceremony on July 11 at N Hotel in Cagayan de Oro City.

This annual gathering served as both a leadership summit and a ceremonial installation of new officers, affirming the co-op movement’s shared mission of people-centered development and social equity. A total of 165 delegates from 51 co-ops across Mindanao participated in the event, representing diverse sectors and communities.

While not held on the exact date, the activity served as a belated celebration of the IDC, which was observed globally on July 5. The IDC is an opportunity to raise awareness about co-operatives’ significant contributions to sustainable development, peace, and social inclusion.

This year’s celebration is also especially significant as the co-operative movement marks the International Year of Cooperatives, reinforcing the global call to recognize co-operatives as key actors in achieving inclusive and sustainable growth.

The forum was graced by two distinguished resource speakers: Dr. Cielito F. Habito, renowned

economist and former NEDA Director-General, and Janette Toral, digital transformation advocate and leadership coach.

Dr. Habito delivered a compelling keynote on “Agri-Industry Co-operatives: Our Path to a Vigorous Farm Sector,” encouraging co-ops to take a leading role in revitalizing agriculture through integration, innovation, and inclusive value chains.

*“For a farm sector to flourish, it must be rooted in cooperation, sustainability, and rural empowerment,”* he emphasized.

Toral followed with a timely talk titled *“The Future-Proof Co-operative: Digital Strategies for Resilience, Sustainability & Justice.”*



She urged co-operatives to embrace digital transformation, AI, and data-driven decision-making to remain relevant and impactful.

“Technology must not replace human values but should be used to reinforce them,” she said. “It’s time to make digital justice part of co-operative justice.”

The forum was followed by the Oath-Taking Ceremony of the new set of officers of MASS-SPECC for 2025–2026. Hon. Aminoden A. Elias, Regional Director of the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) Region X, presided over the ceremony and emphasized the importance of ethical governance, inclusivity, and strong leadership in co-operative development.

Inducted were the Board of Directors and Committee Officers of MASS-SPECC, as well as officers from its affiliate and partner organizations: (1) Mindanao Cooperative Managers’ Club (MCMC); (2) Co-op Youth Parliament (CYP); and the (3) Mindanao Cooperative Hostel Services (MCHS).

Outgoing Chairperson Dir. Doris B. Calapiz delivered her Legacy Address, highlighting the achievements of her term and reaffirming her confidence in the incoming leadership. Incoming Chairperson Atty. Jose Agerico R. De Guzman accepted the gavel in a symbolic turnover and committed to lead MASS-SPECC with integrity and vision.



## MASS-SPECC, CLIMBS, OIC, CLIFSA DONATE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT TO BUDA COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE CENTER

True to their co-operative identity and commitment to uplifting human dignity, MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center, in collaboration with CLIMBS Life and General Insurance Cooperative, Oro Integrated Cooperative (OIC), and CLIFSA General Insurance Agency, formally turned over medical equipment, hospital signage, and solar-powered lights to the Buda Community Health Care Center (BCHCC) on July 18, 2025.

The symbolic handover was among the highlights of BCHCC's 19th Founding Anniversary celebration, held under the theme "BCHCC@19: 19 Years of Healing, Hope & Heart."

This act of generosity reflects the co-operative principles in action, as the four organizations extended support to a mission-driven, community-based healthcare facility serving marginalized and indigenous peoples (IPs) in the boundary areas of Barangay Buda in Davao City; Quezon and Kitaotao in Bukidnon; and Arakan, North Cotabato.

*"Through programs and partnerships with local government units and civil society organizations, BCHCC plants seeds of empowerment and resilience,"* said Nestor R. Carbonera, President of the BCHCC Board of Trustees. *"We need to open the door to a better future. For the past 18 years, our donors have helped us sustain the delivery of vital services."*

Since its founding in 2006, BCHCC—operated by the Committee of German Doctors for Developing Countries, Inc.—has provided essential clinical services, acting as a vital health lifeline for underserved communities long neglected by mainstream health systems.

The donations included 20 units of solar-powered lights, laboratory and



medical equipment, and updated hospital signage—critical enhancements that will help ensure consistent and dignified healthcare services for the center's patients. Carbonera emphasized that the support from MASS-SPECC and its partners goes beyond material aid—it is a reaffirmation of hope.

Held during BCHCC's anniversary celebration, the turnover ceremony also honored indigenous leaders and patients whose lives are closely connected with the center.

BCHCC serves as a rare beacon in a region where healthcare access is often limited by distance, poverty, and discrimination. It is here where co-operative values like equity, solidarity, and self-help are lived out in real and urgent ways.

MASS-SPECC also emphasized that this initiative is not a one-time engagement but part of a broader effort to promote inclusive development, especially in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAs). By strengthening community health systems through sustainable and locally rooted solutions, co-operatives help build a more equitable future for all.

The celebration ended with a fellowship lunch, group photo, and messages of gratitude from local leaders and stakeholders. But its true legacy is the reaffirmed bond between co-operatives and the communities they serve — not just in Mindanao, but across the Philippines.



# MASS-SPECC STRENGTHENS ASIAN TIES AT ASIAN CREDIT UNION FORUM 2025



The co-operative spirit shone brightly at the Asian Credit Union Forum 2025, the annual gathering led by the Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU) and hosted this year by the National Confederation of Cooperatives (NATCCO) and the Philippine Federation of Credit Cooperatives (PFCCO) at the Crowne Plaza Manila Galleria on September 11–13, 2025.

This year’s forum was especially significant as the global movement celebrated the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025 with the theme, “*Cooperatives Build a Better World.*” In line with this, the event also showcased how co-operatives contribute to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — highlighting their impact on poverty reduction, decent work and economic growth, gender equality, climate action, and building resilient communities.

The event brought together co-op leaders, practitioners, and advocates from across Asia to exchange knowledge, explore innovative strategies, and reaffirm the role of

credit unions in driving financial inclusion and sustainable development. Before the program proper, participants joined co-op visits to 11 selected co-operatives in Manila and nearby areas, gaining first-hand insights into successful models and best practices.

From Mindanao, MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center fielded a 26-member delegation, comprising 11 members of the Board of Directors (BOD), one admin and finance manager, and 14 representatives from its member co-ops. Their presence underscored MASS-SPECC’s commitment to regional collaboration and to amplifying the voices of Mindanao co-operatives on the Asian stage.

The forum featured plenary sessions, panel discussions, and networking activities that covered a wide range of issues—including the future of credit unions in the digital economy, policy frameworks that promote co-operative resilience, inclusive financial services for underserved communities, and co-op leadership for sustainability.

For MASS-SPECC, these exchanges provided timely insights to reinforce its mission of strengthening federations and grassroots co-operatives, while championing accountability, transparency, and innovation as core values.

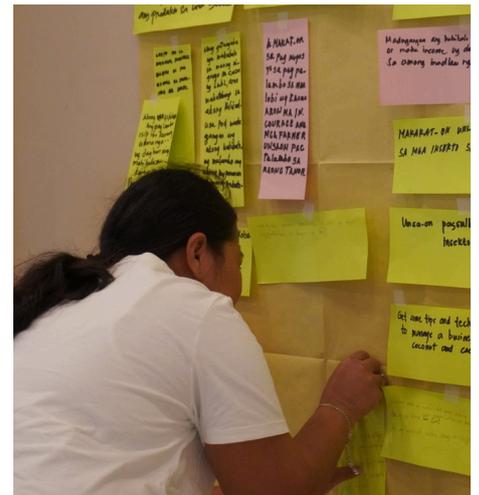
The gathering highlighted not only the achievements of Asian credit unions but also the importance of working together across borders. By fostering partnerships with federations and institutions throughout the region, the forum amplified the message that co-op are key players in shaping an inclusive financial system.

As the IYC shines a spotlight on the sector’s impact, MASS-SPECC stands united with its Asian counterparts in building sustainable futures rooted in solidarity.

Its active participation in the Asian Credit Union Forum 2025 reflects its dedication to empowering communities, championing financial inclusion, and proving that indeed, “*Cooperatives Build a Better World.*”



# AGRO-ENTERPRISE CLUSTER LEADERS STRENGTHEN SKILLS IN SUSTAINABLE MARKETING



Advancing from planning to implementation, co-operative cluster leaders participated in the Module 2 Training on Agro-Enterprise Clustering Approach (AECA) and Shared Leadership, held in different areas in Regions 9, 11 and 12.

Organized by MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center under the Coop-PROPEL Project, with support from the SPADE Project co-funded by the European Union and the German Government (GIZ), the training aimed to enhance the capabilities of co-op leaders to manage their agro-enterprise clusters more effectively and independently.

Building on foundational concepts from the first module, Module 2 focused on practical application and sustainability. Participants explored Steps 5 to 8 of the AECA framework:

- **Step 5:** Finalizing marketing agreements
- **Step 6:** Testing and implementing the marketing plan
- **Step 7:** Reviewing marketing results and lessons learned
- **Step 8:** Developing a sustainability plan

With these steps, the training shifted from theory to real-world execution. Co-op leaders were encouraged to take greater ownership of cluster

operations, strengthen internal systems, and craft forward-looking strategies for long-term viability.

Beyond technical topics, a key component of the training was shared leadership development, fostering teamwork, accountability, and active participation within cluster groups. Through interactive workshops, peer-sharing, and reflective activities, participants practiced self-management, assessed their group development stages, and reinforced their roles as co-operative leaders.



The program also emphasized the vital relationship between co-operatives and clusters in ensuring stable supply, coordinated marketing, and collective decision-making. Bonus sessions on leadership commitment and sustainability planning helped cluster leaders envision their growth trajectory beyond project support.

A total of **374 participants** representing **MIEDECO, BCS MPC, Makilala MPC, Paglaum Consolidated MPC, Sta. Catalina MPC, MIFAMCO, Sindangan Community FACOMA, and TIMMULCO** came together for the multi-day training. United by a shared vision, these co-operatives are working to develop profitable, farmer-led agro-enterprises that can compete and thrive in today's marketplace.

As MASS-SPECC continues to provide technical assistance and mentoring, the AECA Module 2 training marks a pivotal transition toward self-reliant, market-driven co-operative enterprises — empowering smallholder farmers not just to participate, but to lead in agricultural value chains.



## AdvocaSEE Corner:



Photo by: Cooperative Development Authority

### MASS-SPECC drives Youth Engagement and Empowerment through Dialogue, Advocacy, and Leadership

MASS-SPECC continues to push for systemic change in the co-operative movement by empowering and meaningfully engaging youth through dialogue, advocacy, and leadership. In August 2025, MASS-SPECC stepped onto both local and international platforms, carrying the vision of an inclusive and sustainable future for co-operatives.

On August 12–13, 2025, Cherry Ann P. Adayo, MASS-SPECC Youth Program Staff and former Youth Representative to the Board of Directors, proudly joined the International Forum on the World's Youth (IFWY) Regional Youth Dialogue in Bangkok, Thailand. Supported by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) MBC,



Debate Korea, ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation, and the Credit Union League of Thailand, the event brought together young co-operators from across Asia.

It served as a dynamic space to exchange perspectives on inclusivity, sustainability, and the co-operative identity.

The momentum continued on August 14–15, 2025, when MASS-SPECC took an active role in the 2025 Cooperative Youth Forum organized by the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) at Ibis Styles Manila, with the theme “Empowering the Next Generation: Building Future Leaders in Cooperatives.”

MASS-SPECC Youth Board Representative and Co-op Youth Parliament, Inc. President Cyna Wella Culpa of Bansalan Cooperative, together with Justin John Nagac, Strategic Communication Analyst and Gender and Development Focal Person, represented the Mindanawon Co-op Movement in this groundbreaking forum.

Meanwhile, on August 13, 2025, the Youth Summit of CLIMBS Life and General Insurance Cooperative and the Co-operative College of the Philippines brought participants to Chali Resort and Conference Center in Cagayan de Oro City.

There, youth delegates “sat in” on a roundtable discussion with distinguished co-operative CEOs and listened to the journeys of co-op managers, including MASS-SPECC Chief Executive Officer Bernadette Toledo, who shared her path in the movement. Her reflections on leadership, perseverance, and the vital role of young co-operators inspired participants to shape the co-operative movement’s future with courage and innovation.

These back-to-back engagements affirm that MASS-SPECC youth are not just the future of the movement—they are its present. Their energy, ideas, and advocacy continue to advance the cooperative identity, ensuring that solidarity and sustainability remain at the heart of development. Most importantly, these initiatives resonate with the global call of the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives, underscoring the role of empowered youth in building a better quality of life today and a better world for generations to come.



Photo by: Cooperative Development Authority



Photo by: Cooperative Development Authority



*As CO-OP Monitor debuts the AdvocaSEE Corner, we celebrate the vibrant commitment of MASS-SPECC’s advocacy programs—empowering its affiliates to build an inclusive and sustainable co-operative movement that advances our vision from better quality of life to building a better world.*

# Economic highlights and market trends Q3, FY 2025

Amid significant economic challenges, the country underwent transformative changes, profoundly influencing the co-operative movement. Dynamic shifts across various sectors — emerging opportunities, disruptive innovations, policy reforms, and evolving consumer behavior — have created both challenges and opportunities for co-operatives.

By understanding and capitalizing on these trends, co-operatives can adapt, innovate, and drive inclusive and sustainable socio-economic growth. The following news report are culled from local newspapers to highlight certain developments in the economy and Philippine society that may be of interest to co-operatives. Besides raising awareness, these reports can hopefully enhance strategic thinking and decision-making among co-op leaders and managers whom members of co-operatives depend on for direction and guidance.

## ‘DYNAMIC SHIFT’ IN PH WORKFORCE

*Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer*

A “dynamic shift” has been observed among Filipino youth either in or entering the labor force, one that the government and the private sector cannot afford to ignore if they want this new generation to become productive members of a fast-growing Philippine economy.

According to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), young Filipinos looking for decent employment against a backdrop of rising costs of living and evolving dynamics in both the government and private sector are “increasingly seeking not just any job, but meaningful work that aligns with evolving global demands.”

“This includes a growing interest in flexible work arrangements, digitally driven roles and contributions to sustainable practices,” said Labor Undersecretary Carmela Torres.

DOLE estimates that there are 6.415 million youth—those aged 15 to 24



*Photo by: Metro News Central*

years old—in the labor force as of April 2025, of which 88.5 percent or 5.67 million are employed. And new workers continue to be added every year in step with the growth in the country’s young population. Given this, Torres said the government must be “flexible” and nimble enough to adapt quickly to the

demands of this latest cohort in the labor force, thus the call for increased training such as in digital skills as well as new strategies to match the wants, needs and the capabilities of the young workers. This will ensure that they are “well-prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, particularly in emerging green and digital sectors.”



## CO-OPERATIVES SEEN KEY TO BOOSTING FARMER FINANCING

Source: *Business World*

Co-operatives need to play a major role in improving farmers' access to financing, according to the former head of the government's economic planning agency.

At a Senate agriculture hearing, Cielito F. Habito, former director-general of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA, currently the Department of Economy, Planning and Development), noted that only a third of the country's 5.56 million farm households were cooperative members.

In Thailand, the equivalent rate is 95%, with 4,000 co-operatives having 6.81 million members, he noted. Mr. Habito added that co-operatives can be formed from the National Irrigation Administration's irrigation associations, while also incorporating data from the Department of Agriculture's Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture.

Photo courtesy of Department of Agriculture

## LGUS ORDERED TO DEVELOP COASTAL 'GREENBELT' ZONES

Source: *Business World*

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) has issued a memorandum directing local government units (LGUs) to create or rehabilitate coastal greenbelt zones. In a memorandum circular, the DILG said LGUs are in the best position

to implement localized strategies to establish and manage coastal greenbelts as "frontliners in disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation."

LGUs were tasked with assessing areas that can be declared coastal greenbelt zones and working with civil society groups in rehabilitation plans.

Coastal towns should lead to the removal of illegal structures within easement areas, according to the circular.



Photo courtesy of Santos Knight Frank



## BIZ BUZZ: SKY-HIGH DEPOSIT RATES FLAGGED

Source: *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) is keeping a close eye on banks that have been dangling jaw-dropping deposit rates to reel in more savers.

And reeled in, they have. High-ranking BSP officials recognize risks from the sustainability of these sky-high yields. Sure, they're working like a charm for now, but how long can these banks keep this up?

Global credit watcher Fitch Ratings earlier noticed the same thing: While these juicy promos are shaking up

the playing field and forcing smaller traditional banks to go full throttle on digital-only peers, don't expect those rates to stick around forever.

Still, the strategy is clearly paying off. BSP data show that digital banks, which sometimes offer promotional rates of more than 7 percent per annum, racked up P102.3 billion in deposits by end-March—up a whopping 33.2 percent from last year. Compare that with the modest 5.8-percent growth in deposits (albeit coming from a larger base) across the entire banking system, which now stood at P20.2 trillion.

## CONSUMER PUSH TO DRIVE RISE IN PHILIPPINE BANKS' NONPERFORMING LOANS

Source: *Business World*

S&P Global Ratings expects Philippine banks' nonperforming loans (NPL) to increase over the next two years amid their aggressive expansion into the consumer segment.

"We are observing an uptick in the NPL ratios in these unsecured loan segments. We believe this trend is likely to continue over the next two years. As this portfolio matures, the NPL should inch up further," S&P Financial Institutions Ratings Director for South and Southeast Asia Nikita Anand said in a webinar on Thursday. "Our forecast is that the sector-level NPLs could rise to 3.4% to 3.5% of total loans over the next two years."

As of June, Philippine banks' NPL ratio stood at 3.4%, which was the



Photo courtesy of *Retail Banker International*

lowest level in three months or since the 3.3% in March, data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas showed.

S&P also expects credit losses to stay elevated at around 0.8% to 0.9% of

total loans — higher than the pre-pandemic average of 0.5% — due to banks' expansion into riskier segments, she said.

## NEARLY HALF OF PHL GEN ZS, MILLENNIALS CONSIDER THEMSELVES ‘FINANCIALLY INSECURE’

Source: *Business World*

The proportion of Philippine Gen Zs and Millennials who consider themselves financially insecure jumped sharply to nearly half in both cohorts, Deloitte Philippines said, citing the results of a study.

Both generations named the cost of living as their top concern, with 48% of GenZs — those born between 1995 and 2012 and 46% of Millennials — those born between 1980 and 1994 — classifying themselves as financially insecure — up from 30% and 32%, respectively, a year earlier.

Cost of living has been the top concern for both age groups for four consecutive years.

“Most Gen Zs and Millennials started



their careers while dealing with a global pandemic and financial crisis, greatly impacting the way they view work and success,” Rukhsana Pervez, human capital leader at Deloitte Philippines, said in a statement.

Some 66% of Gen Zs and 55% of Millennials said they live paycheck to paycheck, while 34% in both generations struggle to pay their living expenses.

## ONLY 50% OF FILIPINO ADULTS HAVE FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS — WORLD BANK

Source: *Business World*



Only 50% of Filipino adults had financial accounts at end-2024 even as 78% own mobile phones, according to the World Bank.

The World Bank said in The Global Findex Database 2025 report released on Wednesday that 50.2% of approximately 82 million Filipinos aged 15 years old and above had financial accounts in 2024, lower than the 51.4% recorded in 2021 but higher than 26.6% in 2011. This is below the 83.3% average account ownership rate for East Asia and Pacific (EAP) and the 70.4% for lower middle-income countries.

The EAP region is composed of the Philippines, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Worldwide, 78.7% of adults had financial accounts in 2024, up from 73.8% in 2021 and 50.6% in 2011.

Photo courtesy from Asian Development Bank

## DIGITAL BANK DEPOSITS HIT P100B FOR THE FIRST TIME

Source: *Business World*

The Philippine banking system's total deposits rose by 5.4% year on year to over P20 trillion as of the first quarter, the latest data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed, as digital bank deposits surpassed the P100-billion mark for the first time.

BSP data showed the banking industry's deposits increased to P20.2 trillion as of end March from P19.1 trillion in the same period in 2024.

The number of deposit accounts climbed by 19.1% to 150.8 million from 126.6 million year on year. The number of depositors likewise jumped by 16.7% to 134.5 million from 115.3 million.

Savings deposit accounts reached P8.82 trillion, while regular savings hit P7.47 trillion. Time deposits stood at P5.78 trillion, while demand deposits reached P5.54 trillion.



## PHILIPPINE ECONOMY NOW AT A 'SWEET SPOT' — BSP

Source: *Business World*

The Philippine economy now sits at a “sweet spot” as inflation remains benign while the country's banking sector and external position are strong, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said.

“Amid the swirling controversies over corruption, I am pleased to report a piece of good news. We think the economy is in good shape,” BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. said during a briefing at the Senate on Monday.

“Indeed, our economy is in what I would call a ‘sweet spot,’ and I think this would help our fiscal strategy (to) make it more effective,” he added.

For the first half, gross domestic product (GDP) growth averaged 5.4%, slower than the 6.2% a year ago.

Inflation averaged 1.7% in the January-July period, below the BSP's 2-4% annual target.

## FINANCIAL FREEDOM SEEN EMERGING AS PRIORITY IN PHL FINANCIAL PLANNING

Source: *Business World*

Financial well-being is growing in priority for Filipinos planning for their futures, Manufacturers Life Insurance Co., Inc. (Manulife) said, citing the results of a study.

“Filipinos are redefining what it means to live a good life. They are no

longer focused solely on longevity. Instead, they want to live better — with freedom, dignity, and the ability to enjoy life on their own terms. This shift challenges us to rethink how we support them — not just with insurance, but with holistic solutions that enhance their quality of life,” Manulife Philippines President and Chief Executive Officer Rahul Hora

said in a statement on Monday.

Manulife's Asia Care Survey 2025 surveyed 1,000 Filipinos in the January-February period.

For their older years, 26% of respondents selected financial independence as their top priority, while 17% selected physical and mental health as well as staying socially active. Only 13% of respondents named longevity as their priority.

# PBED: EDUCATION CRISIS PERSISTS, JOBS GAP WIDENS

Source: *Business World*

Despite decades of reforms to the education system, the country's learning crisis has persisted, with the gap between graduates and employment only growing wider and students' performance as well as teaching quality continuing to decline, an assessment bared on Monday by the nonprofit Philippine Business for Education (PBE) showed.

According to PBE Executive Director Hanibal Camua, these factors have caused a growing disconnect between education and employment, as graduates struggle to find jobs after graduation.

"Our graduates cannot find jobs while industries cannot also find the right talent—so this paradox continues to define our education and labor landscape. The gap



Photo courtesy from *Business World Online*

between what our schools use and what our employers need is growing even wider," Camua said.

The current crisis affecting graduates is not simply a matter of unemployment, but of a skills

mismatch rooted in the "structural failure" in the country's "education to employment pipeline," added Camua.



Photo courtesy from *The World*

## PSA: PHL POPULATION NOW 112 MILLION

Source: *Business World*

The country's total population grew to 112.73 million in 2024, higher than the 109.04 million recorded in 2020, Census of Population data showed. Latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed that these represented a population growth of 0.8% between 2020 and 2024, decelerating from the 1.63% rate in 2015-2020.

"The slowdown of growth of the population seems to reflect the global trend of declining birth rates. This may be driven by economic pressures that discourage the formation of families with children," Reinielle Matt M. Erece, an economist at Oikonomia Advisory & Research, Inc., said in an e-mail. He added that the relatively expensive and inefficient healthcare system has impacted mortality rates, especially after the pandemic and several local outbreaks of some diseases.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) grew at the fastest pace among regions with 3.43% to 5.69 million from the 4.94 million in 2020.

# CO-OP News Story

## Inclusivity and Impact

# FROM GRIEF TO GRACE: LETICIA'S LIFE- BUILDING BUSINESS



*The Story of Leticia Corbita Martinez of Tagum Cooperative  
MICMA Katorse, Mauswagaon Category, 1st Runner up*

In a quiet neighborhood, a powerful story unfolds, one not of instant success but of sacrifice and faith. Leticia Corbita Martinez, once a caregiver in Taiwan, returned to the Philippines not to rest, but to rebuild a life closer to her family. Her decision not to return abroad was the turning point.

With her husband's encouragement, the couple started a modest business — crafting coffins. With only one carpenter and one painter, and her husband driving deliveries, they worked from home, fueled by hope and the little savings she had brought home.

As orders trickled in, so did the potential to grow. Leticia turned to Tagum Cooperative, not just for capital but for support and trust.

Every time she completed a loan, she applied for another, allowing her to buy materials in bulk and fulfill increasing orders. "If you're afraid of death, you can't survive in this business," she says candidly. "But there's no shame in honest work." Their business has grown steadily. From just the two of them, they now employ seven workers, each depending on the business for their daily needs. Leticia takes pride in never delaying salaries. "You cannot borrow someone's labor," she insists. "Even if I have to borrow money to pay them, I do. These workers have families, too."

Today, she no longer just builds coffins, she serves her community. As a Purok Leader, JKK Treasurer, Lupong Tagapamayapa member, Women's Council President, and

active barangay leader, Leticia gives back. For newborn deaths in her area, she provides coffins and delivery free of charge. "This isn't just a business," she says. "It's also a form of service. If someone has nothing, we help. We'll earn that back in blessings."

Faith is central to her story. She never misses Sunday Mass and prays daily for her family and the co-op that stood by them. "Without Tagum Coop," she reflects, "we wouldn't have grown. God gave us this opportunity and Tagum Coop was the instrument."

Leticia's journey is a testament to what courage, humility, and grace can build. She encourages others to join the co-operative that changed her life.

*The Mauswagaon Category of Mindanao Co-operative Micro-Entrepreneur Awards (MICMA) is dedicated to members engaged in micro-enterprises, providing a stable income for their families with a minimum asset value of Php 1 Million, not exceeding Php 3 Million.*

For further inquiries, please contact:

**INSTITUTE OF COOPERATIVE STUDIES (ICS)**  
MASS-SPECC Cooperative Development Center,  
Tiano-Yacapin Sts., Cagayan de Oro City  
Telefax: (088) 856-5753 (ICS line) or (088) 856-2339 loc 16  
Email: ics@mass-specc.com | Website: mass-specc.coop

MASS-SPECC Davao, Anahaw Road,  
Anahaw Village, Ma-a, Davao City, Philippines  
elefax: (082) 244-1096

