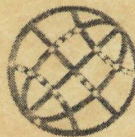


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Canadian Centre
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Development



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de la politique étrangère

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**REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE:
GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THE PHILIPPINES**

Marketa Geislerova
Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

March 16, 2001
Ottawa, Ontario

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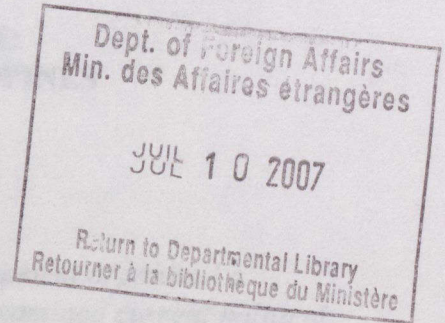
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The Roundtable report is divided into two main sections:

1. Good Governance and the Philippines Today

- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Two Perspectives from the Philippines
- 1.3. Challenges to Good Governance and Possible Future Directions
- 1.4. Synopsis of the Discussion

2. Canadian Expertise and Insights

- 2.1. The Canadian International Development Agency in the Philippines
- 2.2. Possible Policy Options and Tools for Canada

Key recommendations:

Canada could assist the Philippines with governance related issues:

- Help strengthen "democratic" political culture at all government levels (i.e., the principles of accountability, transparency, public goods)
- Share experience with decentralised mode of governance and help develop local power sharing
- Share experience with the development and delivery of public services

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REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE: GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THE PHILIPPINES

**March 16, 2001
Ottawa, Ontario**

On March 16, 2001, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development organised a roundtable on Good Governance and the Philippines. Participants examined current political, social and economic conditions, addressed challenges to good governance, and explored Canadian interests and expertise. The Honourable Dr. Rey Pagtakhan M.P. (Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific) participated, along with Canada's Ambassador to the Philippines Robert Collette and other government officials. Haydee Yorac (National Peace Forum) and Eric Batalla (De La Salle University) came from the Philippines. Others included Alicia Natividad (Philippine-Canada Business Council), Nora Angeles (University of British Columbia) and Nilo Cachero (NC Info Management). Steven Lee (Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development) chaired the meeting.

The Roundtable report is divided into two main sections:

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 - 2.1. The Canadian International Development Agency in the Philippines
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Key recommendations:

Canada could assist the Philippines with governance related issues:

- Help strengthen "democratic" political culture at all government levels (i.e., the principles of accountability, transparency, public good).
- Share experience with decentralised mode of governance and help develop mechanisms for power sharing.
- Share experience with the development and delivery of public services.

Conferences and exchange programmes (aimed at training and education) could be among the mechanisms which effectively expose our values. The focus on the development of human resources is especially pertinent to the changing political culture in the Philippines.

There are 6 public and private areas where Canadian expertise (and know-how) could have an especially positive impact:

- electoral reform
- judicial and legal reform
- tax management (collection)
- public finance systems
- reform of the banking sector
- environmental protection

Canada could use its leading edge in Information and Communications Technology as a tool to achieve its policy and programming goals. The use of technology was promoted in tackling corruption, tax management, reform of the electoral and public finance systems as well as the banking sector.

1. GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THE PHILIPPINES TODAY

1.1. Introduction

Steven Lee (Chair, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development) welcomed the participants to the roundtable and expressed his appreciation for their commitment to the development of Canada's foreign policy. He set the goals for the day:

- to share information and views about the current situation in the Philippines
- to examine challenges and opportunities related to good governance
- to identify instruments to promote (and strengthen) good governance, including Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)
- to identify potential partnerships and synergies
- to explore possible roles for Canada.

In the opening remarks, the Honourable Dr. Rey Pagtakhan M.P., Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific, said that good governance should be at the foundation of every society. In its broader sense, good governance is key to human development and security. It requires adequately developed civil society so that governing responsibilities are shared between the state and the citizens. In a democracy both the division (use) of power and the distribution of common resources, should be aimed at improving the quality of life of all citizens, rather than a self-selected few. To ensure the long-term prosperity of a nation, the people must take an active part in governance (i.e., promoting accountability and transparency of government actions).

Dr. Pagtakhan was optimistic about the recent changes in the Philippines. During his visit there, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the leader of the People Power Coalition, showed her determination to change the politics of her country. Her commitment to good governance was also reflected in her inaugural speech. (Dr. Pagtakhan was the first Minister-level dignitary to meet the new administration.)

The Government of Canada has a role to play in strengthening good governance in the Philippines, he said. Promoting responsible governance is one priority in programming assistance, besides supporting social and economic development. Canada could capitalise on its position as a world leader in ICTs and use these technologies to further its foreign policy goals. He encouraged the participants to think about his proposition and other ways to help the Philippines on its road to democracy.

Canada's Ambassador to the Philippines, Robert Collette, noted the high level of civil society interest in the events leading to the ousting of the former Philippine President Joseph Estrada (Power of the Masses), and the accession of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo as his constitutional successor in January this year. The movement to oust Mr. Estrada was wide-spread. It extended to the countryside and included the business sector, the middle class, as well as some segments of the poor. The political shift was accompanied by intrigue, growing corruption, fear and an economic downturn. The vast majority of people expressed their desire for a democratic change and an end to corruption.

Ambassador Collette outlined the main challenges facing the new administration:

- Creating a credible government, including the selection of Cabinet members. President Macapagal Arroyo is under a tremendous pressure from a variety of interests (i.e., business, civil society, armed factions) and the way she chooses her Cabinet will be indicative of her future directions.
- With the view to the May 14th mid-term congressional elections, efforts are being made to introduce politics of parties with legitimate (and credible) platforms to replace politics based on personalities.
- The new administration is tasked with a challenge to signal to the rest of the world that the way politics and business are done in the Philippines has changed. There also seems to be an enhanced interest in international relations, which was missing in the previous administration.
- President Macapagal Arroyo and her government may also face a challenge of legitimacy from the ousted President Estrada, who offered no letter of resignation and who has gone to court to challenge the legality of his dismissal.

- The money allegedly siphoned off from the country by Mr. Estrada should be found and restored to the state's treasury.¹

He said that the priorities set by the new administration include:

- Establishing a "clean" and transparent government. This will require changing the "culture of corruption" in both the public and the private sphere. Sanctions against corruption will have to be strengthened, disincentives created, discretionary funds eliminated and meritocracy in government service promoted.
- Demonstrating the commitment to good governance by personal example (such as the President's decision to cancel a purchase of a new limousine).
- Delegating authority to lower levels of government.
- Focussing on implementing and executing existing laws.
- Building confidence and launching peace negotiations throughout the country.
- Restoring confidence in the economy. This will require stopping larger budget deficits (implementation of austerity measures), appointing credible (not compromised) candidates to key economic posts.
- Promoting the Philippines as an ICT hub.
- Ending poverty "by the end of this decade."

1.2. Two Perspectives from the Philippines

Haydee Yorak (Co-Chair of the National Peace Forum and National Chair of the Parish Council for Responsible Voting) said that two Presidents have been ousted from office in the Philippines in the last 15 years. In both cases, the issue of good governance was key for those who ousted them. She outlined 4 factors that compel people to take up arms, based on a survey made by the National Unification Commission (NUC):²

1. Massive and abject poverty combined with a lack of access to both power (influence) and resources.
2. Bad governance, reflected in the behaviour of abusive and corrupt officials that do disservice to the public.
3. A corrupt, slow and inequitable justice system.

¹Mr. Estrada stands accused of "economic plunder" - a charge reserved for those who steal \$1 million or more from the state. The authorities claim he siphoned off more than \$80 million from the country after kickbacks, bribes, misdirected taxes and much else. *The Economist*, April 28-May 4, 2001, 41.

²The NUC was set up to lead the way to a comprehensive and just peace. Among the Commission's basic aims was to bring different rebel groups into the peace process.

4. A political monopoly of power by a small self-appointed elite. A political system dominated by war lords and political dynasties, closely identified with the abuse of minority rights.

She highlighted two aspects of good governance:

1. delivery of basic services (i.e., order, education, health care)
2. transparency and non-corruptibility.

Through the case studies of three key government offices, Haydee Yorak demonstrated the conundrum faced by the new administration when it comes to rooting out corruption and establishing accountable and transparent guidelines. First, she took up the example of the Commission on Elections, to which she was appointed. The Commission had a bad reputation. It overpriced the cost of printing ballots and was charged with ballot over-printing. The Commission was partisan and known to make (or "sell") decisions favourable to the party in power. She related the difficulties in changing this situation quickly and effectively, starting with tightening control over purchases and imposing checks on the prerogatives of the Commission officials. Despite threats made on her life, she noted the need to overcome fear and demonstrate that government can (must) function legally. Enduring these tensions, some reforms were implemented and the Commission became more credible and independent.

Second, she drew attention to the Office of the Ombudsman, which acts as a prosecutor and preliminary investigator in corruption cases. It can also order public officials to prevent corruption, for instance. While the Office is a very powerful body, considered second only to the President's office, it has no powers to execute its rulings. Moreover, the structure to address corruption cases is overly complex and technical. Such an overextended due process offers grounds for manoeuvring and opens the door to corruption. "Structural procedures are so intricate that when a problem is finally resolved, all the parties are dead," she said. People appointed to the Office often have been seen as either incompetent or cronies. The highest post opens up for appointment next year, when the President will have a chance to change this pattern and appoint a competent and credible candidate.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government, the third body examined by Haydee Yorak, also exhibits high levels of mismanagement and possible corruption. For instance, principal cases filed in 1987 are only now in their pre-trial stage. Charges have been made that information (evidence) was exchanged for money. The Commission is missing annual reports from the period between 1987 and 1992. In some cases, sequestered corporations have been making payments to the Commission for delaying prosecution.

There is a need for the anti-corruption campaign:

- on the administrative level, honest, competent and dedicated people should be hired and promoted
- structures and processes should be simplified and non-essential technical components and rules eliminated

- decision making should be quick and transparent.

Eric Batalla (Vice-Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, De la Salle University) addressed three basic questions:

1. What economic and social problems has the new administration inherited from the past?
2. What are the key steps the President is expected to take in order to alleviate the current situation?
3. What interventions are needed to strengthen the legitimacy of the new government?

The most significant economic problems inherited by the new administration include large budget deficits and a growing debt. There are fears that an economic slowdown in the U.S. may affect the health of the economy in the Philippines as well. Local manufacturing industries can not compete on global markets, with negative effects on employment and upward pressure on prices. The agricultural sector has also been experiencing difficulties. The Philippines rely on domestic agriculture for food security. The decline therefore directly affects living standards. Moreover, intensive agriculture has negative effects on the environment. These economic realities undermine the ability to finance reforms. They also point to the need to retain (or increase) the current taxation level - an obviously politically sensitive issue which will test the nerves of both the new government and the population at large. It is necessary that taxpayers' money is spent meaningfully and transparently.

Economic growth in the Philippines is essential to enhance the ability of the government to provide services to a population that is growing at a high rate. A new disturbing trend, related to poverty, is the high drop-out rate of university (college) students. According to Eric Batalla, only about 2 million people, out of the population of 78.4 million, are college graduates. Other immediate socio-economic problems faced by the new administration include crime and traffic management, particularly in Manila.

Factors associated with these and other socio-economic problems include:

- A political legacy of vested interest and patronage which nurtures a society (culture) rooted largely in the "individual," rather than the "national."
- Corrupt and incompetent bureaucracy which derails well-intentioned policies of popular leaders.
- Weak civil society, ineffective in influencing the traditional way politics is conducted and the country administered.

Reiterating Ambassador Collette's points, the new administration is expected to:

- improve moral standards
- create new politics (i.e., politics based on platforms rather than personalities, establish a competency-based selection process for election candidates, etc.)
- eliminate poverty
- lead by example

The interventions required include:

- Public governance must be improved. Between 3.8% and 4% of GNP is taken up by corruption. Before any reforms can be implemented, this situation has to be effectively addressed. A percentage of GNP should be dedicated to rooting out corruption.
- The civil service should be transformed into an efficacious organisation with tough recruitment requirements and inherently democratic ethics (i.e., accountability, transparency, sense of the public good, responsibility, etc.). Education and major retooling will be required to achieve such standards.
- Corporate governance has to be improved in a similar vein.

Human resources should be motivated and civil society empowered to achieve these common, national goals. Demands far outweigh the capacity of the Philippine government for reform. Therefore, there is a need to focus on those areas which can be improved in the short to medium term in order to build wide-spread confidence in the reform process.

1.3. Challenges to Good Governance and Possible Future Directions

Leonora Angeles (Centre for Human Settlement, University of British Columbia) outlined four key governance questions:

1. How can decentralisation efforts support democratic governance in the Philippines?
2. How can democratic governance support sustainable poverty reduction?
3. How can individuals, families, communities, NGOs, local governments, national government and other agencies strengthen institutions for democratic governance?
4. How important is social learning, social capital, community empowerment, and civil society in good governance?

She identified three factors that influence governance in the Philippines:

1. the character of state-elite relations (i.e., the use of state patronage for private ends, the insensitivity of state elites to needed social policy reforms)
2. the character of state-civil society relations (i.e., mutual distrust, state is seen as lacking the autonomy to mediate conflicting elite interests and upholding the public good, civil society organisations are weak)
3. bureaucratic politics in the delivery of basic social services (i.e., social service delivery is hampered by the lack of resources, there is lack of continuity in implementing programs like the Social Reform Agenda, existing mechanism for participatory governance are not reaching or being utilised by the poorest segments of the Philippine society).

She offered some recommendations to address these issues:

- Review and strengthen policies on participatory governance under the 1991 Local Government Code.
- New forms of political engagement with the state and traditional political parties must emerge. (Creative forms of engagement could include the federation of progressive

municipal and village leaders in national or regional political parties to challenge traditional parties.)

- Participatory governance in improving the local tax collections systems could help restructure the national tax administration, as well as the national budget and fiscal policies. An efficient and progressive taxation system could provide welfare transfer to vulnerable social groups. It could also expand the tax base through increased direct taxation of wealth and less use of indirect taxes.
- There is a need for inter-government coordination and cooperation with local communities in the delivery of social programmes. Poverty reduction could be better tackled by moving away from the "beneficiary model" to building "competent communities of the poor."
- The formulation and implementation of Social Safety Net Programs ought to be linked to a more comprehensive anti-Poverty Programme that converges at the local level.
- The foundation laid by the Social Reform Agenda ought to be built upon.
- Support for the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services Program ought to be continued.
- The Social Reform Agenda needs to specify the institutional mechanisms and procedures for the participation of the poor in local and national governance.
- Active, well-informed and well-educated population is key to the success of institutional and political reforms. Restructuring of the educational system is needed to make it more socially relevant.
- International development aid agencies could give priority to poverty reduction programmes and to assisting local communities.
- Community empowerment and grassroots democracy could become effective tools of sustainable poverty reduction when communities, particularly its poor and underprivileged members, are empowered to use their democratic rights not only to press for individual and collective rights and freedoms, but also to reinvigorate the notion of public good, and social responsibility.

1.4. Synopsis of the Discussion

Robert Miller (Parliamentary Centre) asked whether the new course set by the People Power Coalition is sustainable. He pointed out that the problems facing the country have been the same over a prolonged period of time and despite two previous government changes. He drew

attention to the phenomenon of "soft states" and the possibility of the Philippines falling within this category. What is different this time? Ambassador Collette expressed his optimism about the sustainability of the reforms. He pointed out that democracy in the Philippines is still young. Civil society is maturing and coalescing. The new President has a vision and strong leadership skills.

Despite some optimism about the direction of the new administration, people in general have become cynical about the prospects of democratic reform. Leadership and vision are key, since structures for good governance already exist (i.e., there is a system of checks and balances based on the U.S. model, extensive anti-corruption measures also already exist).

Nilo Cachero (NC Info Management) linked corruption in the Philippines to poverty. If people did not worry on a daily basis about what to put on the table, they would not be compelled to take bribes. Haydee Yorak pointed out that the causal link between poverty and corruption is too simplistic. The most costly and worrisome corruption occurs at the highest levels and is perpetrated by already rich elites, not by impoverished local administrators. She said that more attention should be paid to corporate corruption and the role of the corporate sector has in corrupting government officials. She also addressed the "schizophrenic" attitudes in the Philippines toward corruption. While corruption is wide-spread, it motivated two popular uprisings. Leaders who demonstrate their ability to eliminate corruption often win public support.

A debate developed around the maturity of civil society in the Philippines. Some said that relative to other South East Asian countries, the Philippine civil society is quite active. Others, including Haydee Yorak, pointed out that despite the enhanced role civil society had in capturing political power from the discredited Estrada government, non-governmental actors still function at the periphery. Popular (local-level) leaders and women had to be actively encouraged and supported to participate in the elections. Despite obstacles and threats posed by some segments of the collapsing regime, a few broke through to win seats.

2. CANADIAN EXPERTISE AND INTERESTS

2.1. The Canadian International Development Agency in the Philippines

Ted Langtry (Special Assistant, Canadian International Development Agency) said that the goal of CIDA's programmes in the Philippines is to contribute to poverty reduction through equitable and sustainable development. CIDA's strategic objectives are:

1. To foster efficient, responsive, transparent and accountable governance at all levels. Expected results include: improved government accountability and transparency, greater participation of civil society in decision making and improved access of rural and urban poor to government services.

2. To support the development of small and medium enterprises that create meaningful jobs for both men and women.
3. To strengthen programming in areas related to social development.

CIDA's strategy to foster good governance (point 1) reflects the concerns expressed today around the table and is compatible with the Philippine government's agenda for development. Assistance is delivered through bi-lateral as well as multi-lateral channels. There is a number of governance related programmes run by CIDA, including the *National Commission for the Role of Filipino Women Institutional Support Project*, *Philippines-Canada Environmental and Economic Management Project*, local government support project aimed at building capacity of organisations in the context of state-led decentralisation, a policy training project, and others.³

Edna Keeble asked whether the assumption that poverty reduction and good governance are mutually supportable goals was true. Can programmes aimed at poverty reduction contribute to good governance in the Philippines?

Peachy Cuenca-Forbes (Executive Director, Philippine Development Assistance Program) said that CIDA has been successful in building partnerships. She said that these partnerships (i.e., exchange and training programmes) are key to changing values in the Philippines and contribute to human resource development. They also help long-term development. Overall, the Canadian government's focus on governance as well as the private sector has been successful. Canada is instrumental in providing models, particularly for the NGOs. CIDA should continue working with non-governmental sector, while continuing to have a well established relationship with the government.

2.2. Possible Policy Options and Tools for Canada

Based on its own experience (and history), Canada could assist the Philippines with a range of governance related issues, including:

- Help strengthen "democratic" political culture at all government levels (i.e., the principles of accountability, transparency, public good, etc.). The civil service and the Parliament were singled out as two areas where Canada's ethics could be particularly transferable.
- Share experience with decentralised mode of governance and help develop mechanisms for power sharing.

³ For more details, go to:

http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/webcountry.nsf/asia_e.html and click on the Philippines, Canadian Assistance.

- Share experience with the development and delivery of public services, health care in particular.

Conferences and exchange programmes (aimed at training and education) could be among the mechanisms which effectively expose our values. The focus on the development of human resources is especially pertinent to the changing political culture in the Philippines.

Governance and poverty reduction programmes should be targeted at the most marginalised people, including women and Indigenous Peoples, who have had very little protection at the present.

The participants specified 6 public and private areas where Canadian expertise (and know-how) could have an especially positive impact:

- electoral reform
- judicial and legal reform⁴
- tax management (collection)
- public finance systems (to ensure transparent and fair bidding practices, for instance)
- reform of the banking sector
- environmental protection (and management, including garbage removal)

There is a role for international organisations, including the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Two views were presented in respect to the role of the World Bank in rooting out corruption. The first supports the claim that imposing "no corruption" conditionality on loans is effective in changing the behaviour of government officials. The second view is sceptical. It charges the World Bank with complicity when dealing with corrupt governments.

A point was made that Canada can only catalyse change, not drive it. Long term solutions will have to be found in the Philippines.

Throughout the day-long discussion, participants suggested that Canada uses its leading edge in Information and Communications Technology to achieve its policy and programming goals. The use of technology was promoted in tackling corruption, tax management (and collection), reform of the electoral and public finance systems as well as the banking sector. Some participants pointed out that no matter how good technology may be, the outcome of reforms still rests on those individuals who use and control it. Technology should not be seen as an end in itself.

⁴ On the involvement of judges abroad, see Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, *Expert Deployment to International Peace Operations* (Ottawa, CCFPD, 2000), 1006.12E, and *Report from the Roundtable: Judges and Peace Operations* (Ottawa, CCFPD, 2001), 1006.17E.

Concern was raised that new technology will not help people put food on table. For the poor, ICTs could be useful as far as they help to earn money for basic resources. Participants stressed the need to train people properly and said technology has to be user-friendly. The Philippines already has a relatively solid ICT basis and with some assistance could be become an ICT hub.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked all the participants for their valuable contributions. He drew attention to what seem to be emerging "common themes" around good governance and related issues. Other CCFPD discussions have concluded with calls for attention to governance issues, including issues of building a professional public service, the long term challenges of establishing democratic practices and democratic political cultures in post-communist or post-authoritarian states and the often long processes of establishing viable political parties with platforms and electoral accountability. Some of what was said today about the Philippines has also been mentioned in connection with other countries and other policy development questions. Canadians may have valuable experience and "lessons learned" in looking at the evolution of parties, democratic practices and a professional public service. He challenged the academic community to bring these threads together and address the "big picture."

Minister Pagtakhan echoed the Chair's sentiment. He said that we should continue thinking about how to help sustain the new directions taken by President Macapagal Arroyo towards strengthening democracy in the Philippines. He emphasised the importance of drawing on the expertise of the non-governmental sector in policy development and the need to work together.

Roundtable on Good Governance and the Philippines

List of Participants

March 16, 2001

Railway Committee Room (253 D)

Ottawa, Ontario

The Honourable Rey D. Pagtakhan

Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific

Ambassador Robert Collette

Canada's Ambassador to the Philippines

Haydee Yorak

Co-Chair, National Peace Forum

National Chair, Parish Council for

Responsible Voting

Eric Batalla

Vice-Dean

College of Liberal Arts

De La Salle University, Philippines

Amelita Armit

Vice President

Staffing and Recruitment Programs Branch

Public Service Commission

Alicia Natividad

Chair of Philippine-Canada Business

Council

Peachy Cuenca-Forbes

Executive Director

Philippine Development Assistance Program

Athena Dionela

Program Officer

Philippine Development Assistance Program

Jim Beaulieu

President

Quasar Management Services

Akaash Maharaj

President and CEO

Concordis Foundation

Nilo Cachero

NC Info Management

Nora Angeles

Professor, Faculty of Human Settlements

University of British Columbia

Edna Keeble

Professor

St. Mary's University

Isabelle Meyer

South Asia Partnership Canada

Killaine Sharman

Asia Pacific Foundation Canada

Emmie Joaquin

Radio Producer/Announcer

CKJS Winnipeg

Aprodicio Laquian

Professor

Community and Regional Planning

University of British Columbia

Eleanor Laquian

Researcher

Robert Miller

Executive Director
Parliamentary Centre

Martha Melesse

International Development Research Centre

Gerett Rusnak

International Development Research Centre

Bronwyn Best

Transparency International

Jocelyn Santos

Executive Assistant
Office of the Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific)

Diane Gémus

Special Assistant
Office of the Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific)

Ted Langtry

Director General
Indonesia, Philippines and South Pacific
Program
CIDA

Masuda Anwar

Social Development Specialist
CIDA

Ingrid Hall

Director General
South and Southeast Asia Bureau
DFAIT

Nancy MacKay-Dietrich

Policy Officer
East/West Timor, Philippines, Brunei
Southeast Asia Division
DFAIT

Steven Lee

Executive Director
Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy
Development

Marketa Geislerova

Rapporteur
Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy
Development



SELECTED CCFPD REPORTS FROM 2000-2001

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