

TO GAUGE how human rights issues figure in the 2010 elections, PhilRights looked into the platforms and sampled some public appearances of the presidential candidates.¹

Campaign Platforms²

Of the eight platforms reviewed, five parties/candidates contained provisions which expressly mentioned human rights: Liberal Party (LP), Nacionalista Party (NP), Bangon Pilipinas, Lakas-Kampi-CMD (Lakas)³ and Sen. Jamby Madrigal (Independent). Of the five, LP's platform offered the most elaborate discussion on human rights. Three political parties (Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino or PMP, Bagumbayan, and Ang Kapatiran) did not explicitly mention human rights in their platforms.

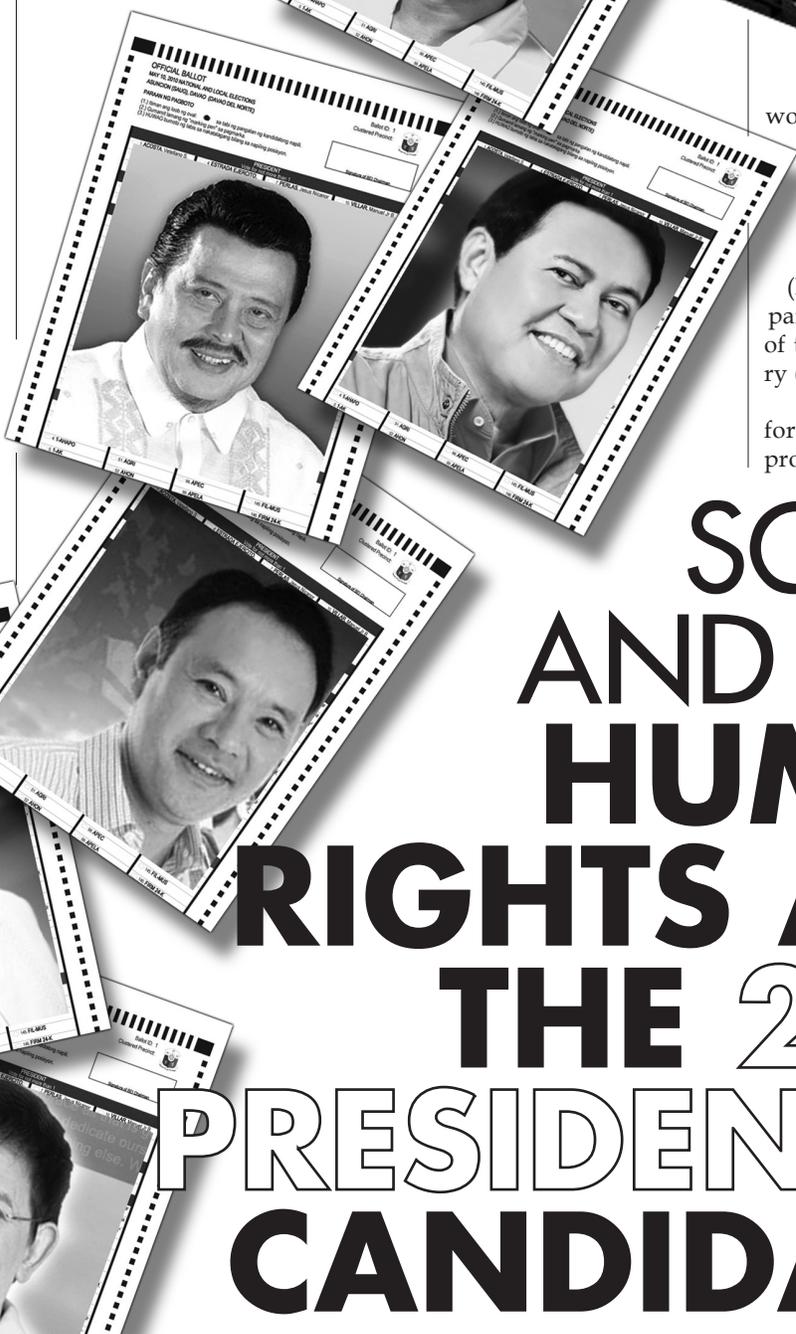
Provisions for *accountability* and *participation* were also looked into. Not surprisingly, the various parties/candidates view accountability from different perspectives: Bangon Pilipinas and Lakas discuss accountability in relation to transparency in government transactions; NP and Madrigal believe that the government should be accountable for human rights violations. LP discusses accountability from

the perspective of citizen's power over State institutions.

Participation is discussed in all but Bagumbayan's platform. Participation is defined as decentralized and participatory democracy (LP and Madrigal),

working with local NGOs and civil society groups (Ang Kapatiran and Madrigal), building capacity of LGUs and increasing local government autonomy (PMP and Lakas), peoples' participation in the screening of the members of the judiciary (Bangon Pilipinas).

For the most part, the platforms examined reveal that programs related to basic ser-



SOUND AND FURY: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE 2010 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

VICES were not discussed as rights but as programs.

Survey Results⁴

Ang Kapatiran

Ang Kapatiran expounded on the relationship between integrity and human rights, defining integrity as "the steadfast adherence to a strict ethical or moral code", and underscoring the principle of respect for life and dignity of the human person.

The party believes that corruption "is the biggest culprit and major cause of the nation's poverty and hunger. It violates human rights and is a social and moral cancer." To address this problem, Ang Kapatiran has a six-point program that seeks to address the structures that promote corruption.

The party rejects the Reproductive Health (RH) Bill; is for the dismantling of the "culture of guns" and seeks the prohibition of political dynasties and pork barrel. It also promises to improve delivery of basic services in education, health care and housing.

Bagumbayan

Bagumbayan "assigns the highest priority in upholding the rule of law, uplifting the level of dignity of our people and good governance," and promises to protect basic human rights to life, liberty and property.

Gordon's top human rights issues are: a) addressing the huge gap between world standards and local conditions in education and health care; b) solving the war in Mindanao through sustainable development; and c) addressing the numerous cases of extra-judicial killings through better enforcement of the law.

Bagumbayan will 'encourage the creation of a deep pool of knowledge workers by providing scholarships directed towards greater access to vocational training and science/engineering programs.' It also plans to "utilize school systems to improve health outcomes for the youth." To solve the war in Mindanao, Gordon notes that

people turn to violence because of the absence of better opportunities and thus calls for sustainable development. Claiming to be the son of a victim of extrajudicial killing, Gordon emphasizes that there must be swift action against EJKs, and calls for better law enforcement.

Lakas

The party's human rights platform is based on what it calls a "Centrist Humanist Agenda" which believes that "politics and government should serve the greater good of the greatest number of people in society." Lakas advocates the principles of a democratic system and believes in people empowerment as the basic requirement in the advancement of democracy.

Its top human rights issues are: a) protection of migrant workers; b) urban poor resettlement; c) solving extrajudicial killings and disappearances and d) the rights of indigenous peoples, including ancestral domain.

Lakas proposes safeguards and support systems that will protect migrant workers at all stages (from recruitment to employment) and will assist in matters of legal issues, repatriation and support. It plans to address housing insecurity of the poor through the use of productive economic projects. It also stresses opposition to all forms of violence. It will work with the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of HR violations. It also calls for stronger implementation of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) to promote the cultural, economic and social welfare of IP communities.

Pangmasa

Pangmasa affirms "the importance of developing the full human potential of a person" to ensure maximum contribution to society. It recognizes the importance of people's participation in an "authentic participative democracy", and believes in equal sharing of the fruits of economic activity. It also places importance on gender sensitivity "that respects the unique

OFFICIAL BALLOT
 10th INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDENT ELECTIONS
 ASACON (BAGUIO, BANGAL, BANGAL, BANGAL, BANGAL)

PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVE

Ballot # 1
 Candidate Name

Province of Baguio

1. AGUIO	2. BAGUIO	3. BAGUIO	4. BAGUIO	5. BAGUIO	6. BAGUIO	7. BAGUIO	8. BAGUIO	9. BAGUIO	10. BAGUIO
11. BAGUIO	12. BAGUIO	13. BAGUIO	14. BAGUIO	15. BAGUIO	16. BAGUIO	17. BAGUIO	18. BAGUIO	19. BAGUIO	20. BAGUIO
21. BAGUIO	22. BAGUIO	23. BAGUIO	24. BAGUIO	25. BAGUIO	26. BAGUIO	27. BAGUIO	28. BAGUIO	29. BAGUIO	30. BAGUIO
31. BAGUIO	32. BAGUIO	33. BAGUIO	34. BAGUIO	35. BAGUIO	36. BAGUIO	37. BAGUIO	38. BAGUIO	39. BAGUIO	40. BAGUIO
41. BAGUIO	42. BAGUIO	43. BAGUIO	44. BAGUIO	45. BAGUIO	46. BAGUIO	47. BAGUIO	48. BAGUIO	49. BAGUIO	50. BAGUIO
51. BAGUIO	52. BAGUIO	53. BAGUIO	54. BAGUIO	55. BAGUIO	56. BAGUIO	57. BAGUIO	58. BAGUIO	59. BAGUIO	60. BAGUIO
61. BAGUIO	62. BAGUIO	63. BAGUIO	64. BAGUIO	65. BAGUIO	66. BAGUIO	67. BAGUIO	68. BAGUIO	69. BAGUIO	70. BAGUIO
71. BAGUIO	72. BAGUIO	73. BAGUIO	74. BAGUIO	75. BAGUIO	76. BAGUIO	77. BAGUIO	78. BAGUIO	79. BAGUIO	80. BAGUIO
81. BAGUIO	82. BAGUIO	83. BAGUIO	84. BAGUIO	85. BAGUIO	86. BAGUIO	87. BAGUIO	88. BAGUIO	89. BAGUIO	90. BAGUIO
91. BAGUIO	92. BAGUIO	93. BAGUIO	94. BAGUIO	95. BAGUIO	96. BAGUIO	97. BAGUIO	98. BAGUIO	99. BAGUIO	100. BAGUIO

contributions of men and women".

Pangmasa's top three human rights issues are: a) abolishing private armies; b) re-opening investigations into extra-judicial killings; and c) releasing detained military men and women who are fighting for rights and reporting abusive plans and actions in all military departments.

Media Forums⁵

In the media forums sampled, the issue of accountability was often discussed. The presidential candidates believed in the need to prosecute erring officials, and the need for transparency in government transactions.

Health issues were also discussed constantly in relation to the RH bill. De los Reyes of Kapatiran was against it because of "respect for life," stressing instead that the health industry

should improve on basic health care services. Others propounded on the concept of choice in justifying their position on the bill, such as Villar (NP) and Gordon (Bagumbayan), who stressed that a huge yet educated and skilled population is an asset to the country. Aquino (LP) pushed for responsible parenthood, while Teodoro (Lakas) called for a "moral obligation" of individuals to be responsible for their families.

Of the three media forums sampled, *Inquirer's* Presidential Debate touched on more HR issues compared to the other two, even as the questions and answers were not expressly framed as human rights *per se*.

Lakas standard-bearer Gilbert Teodoro was asked whether he would defend the rights of IPs when mining, logging and other programs threaten their communities. Teodoro said that it is necessary to get the consent of IPs to ensure sustainability of these projects.

Villar (NP), on the issue of impunity, stressed the importance of strengthening the human development index in places where private armies are rampant, through the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills, health and access to education, while also strengthening security through enhancement of the military.

Madrigal (Ind.) sees the need to control advertising of junk food, saying that the emphasis should be on food quality. She said she intends to limit the advertising of several companies and implement stringent measures against companies that "misadvertise," such as milk companies that advertise powdered milk as breast milk substitute.

Eddie Villanueva underscored the importance of social security for the elderly.

De Los Reyes reiterated his stand against the RH bill, but stressed the importance of maternal health and promoting better access to medical services.

Gordon was asked his opinion regarding proposals to

restore criminal liability to minors. He noted the tendency of some criminals to use minors for their crimes and said that rights must be balanced with responsibilities.

When asked about his opinion on mining investments that will bring improvements to a community but may potentially damage the environment, Peralas (Ind.) stressed that because IPs regard the environment as a crucial factor for development, all projects must respect their culture, and must see them as part of national development. On a liberalized mining industry, he batted for a new mining law that will respect IP rights. He also advocated for a broader framework that will both address societal needs and the environment.

Villanueva (Bangon Pilipinas) stressed that while women's rights are primordial and basic, this doesn't extend to activities "that violate the morality of a family," such as abortion. He also called for the reimposition of the death penalty for moneyed criminals.

Aquino stressed the importance of education for employment.

Not quite there yet

The content analysis of the platforms of the presidential candidates reveal that human rights included in the platforms mostly pertain to civil and political rights (i.e., references to the Bill of Rights, EJK, democracy, participation). Most of the platforms have programs on the economy, work, health, education, and housing, among others. These, however, were not expressed as human rights, but were discussed as part of the promised programs. Some which mentioned human rights were not able to expressly link human rights principles into their programs. Aspects of economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights, such as education, health, housing, work, etc., were discussed within the frame of social services and not as basic rights (ex., NP and

Pangmasa). Placing these basic rights within the frame of social services naturally will have a major effect on the realization of these rights.

The principle of accountability is discussed in most platforms, except in the case of PMP. Accountability in PMP's platform can be extracted from its political principle, which states that the criminal justice system must prioritize "the prosecution of the rich and powerful offenders and criminal syndicates."

The human rights principle of participation is tackled in all nine platforms (except in the case of Bagumbayan), ranging from local government autonomy (Lakas, PMP, Madrigal), participatory democracy and decision-making (LP, Madrigal), monitoring implementation of projects (Lakas, Pangmasa), and supporting non-government organizations and communities (Ang Kapatiran, Lakas, Madrigal, Pangmasa).

Only the platform of independent candidate Madrigal mentioned women's participation. Pangmasa's platform mentioned consumer rights.

ESC issues in the forums sampled were discussed as human rights whenever they were framed in terms of rights of specific sectors: women's rights, consumers' rights, children's rights. Otherwise these issues were placed under the sphere of social services.

Challenging the feeble

It is not enough that a full-blown rights-based approach is lacking and even completely missing from the platforms of the candidates; what is more cause for concern are the candidates' pronouncements that contravene human rights standards. Among these are the plans to reimpose the death penalty (Villanueva) and restore criminal liability to minors (Gordon), as well as the outright rejection of the RH bill (De los Reyes). These are but a few chilling examples that show how feebly informed by human rights principles is the

campaign discourse that plays out in the run-up for the 2010 national and local elections.

By experience, the promises of those who are seeking public office are for the most part forgotten after the election season. Civil society organizations should monitor the performance of those who win in the national and local polls and hold them accountable to the programs and directions they promised during the campaign period.

These are the challenges that human rights defenders and the electorate have to respond to, not only during the campaign period, but even more so during the term of office of the next president.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The materials used for the research were the parties' campaign platforms, a survey questionnaire sent to all presidential candidates, two (2) TV forums and one (1) radio program.
- 2 Platforms were assessed using the principles of the human rights-based approach (RBA).
- 3 Lakas-Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino-Christian Muslim Democrats
- 4 The presidential candidates were asked the following:
 1. What is your human rights platform?
 2. If elected, what are the top three human rights issues you would prioritize?

Only four of the nine presidential candidates sent back their answers: Ang Kapatiran, Pangmasa, Lakas and Bagumbayan.

In response to the survey questions, NP sent back a copy of its platform. This was not included in the results of the survey as the study had a specific section for GPOAs.

- 5 Three media forums/discussions were looked into: Inquirer's Presidential Debate (held February 9, 2010), DZBB's "Ikaw Na Ba" Series hosted by Mike Enriquez, and the ANC "Harapan" Presidential Forum (which aired on January 29, 2010).

Platforms Reviewed:

Ang Kapatiran Party. *Ang Kapatiran Party Political Platform.*

Bagumbayan Party. *Manifesto for Change.*

Bangon Pilipinas. *Platform of Government and Statement of Basic Principles and Policies for Governance of Bangon Pilipinas party 2010.*

Jamby Madrigal for President. *Reclaim and Regain the Wealth, Sovereignty and Dignity of the Filipino People and Nation: A vision of genuine change for the Filipinos.*

Lakas Kampi CMD. *The Lakas Kampi CMD Platform: Renewing the Filipino spirit.*

Liberal Party. *Partido Liberal Pilipinas Platform.*

Nacionalista Party. *In Response to the People's Concerns*

Partido ng Marangal na Sambayanan. *Platform of the Partido ng Marangal na Sambayanan.*

Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino. *Partido ng Masang Pilipino Platform of Government.*

.....
Note: For the full version of the study, visit the PhilRights website: <http://www.philrights.org>.

"Elections themselves are human rights events: first, because they give voice to the political will of the people involved; and secondly, because, to be truly free and fair consistent with international standards, they must be conducted in an atmosphere which is respectful of basic human rights."

– Human Rights and Elections: A Handbook on Legal, Technical and Human Rights Aspects of Elections