



Filipino IT Community Conference on the AES: Safeguarding the People's Vote

Rationale

As part of the multi-stage research, education and election monitoring project Project 30-30 funded by the European Union, the Center for People's Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG) with the Computer Professionals' Union (CPU) and other project partners are organizing a National Conference on Citizen Electoral Monitoring. We aim to update the ICT sector with the current situation of the 2010 automated elections, show our concerns on the lack of internal and external safeguards on the AES, showcase the different ICT efforts to push for safeguards, the various initiatives being conducted to monitor the elections, and commit the IT sector to help uphold the integrity of this democratic exercise in a concerted effort.

Efforts to empower the Filipino people with information, as well as mobilizing them to lobby for a safer and more transparent implementation of the AES and to go out and protect their votes must be put in place. With the advent of New Media, or information and communication technologies (ICTs) with networking and interactive characteristics, people now have a potential tool that will help in these democratic endeavors.

These ICTs, such as the internet and mobile SMS, continue to enjoy growing penetration rates: according to the 2009 Yahoo-Nielsen Net Index, the overall internet reach in National Urban Philippines increased from 20.8% in the first quarter to 28% by the end of 2008. Mobile penetration rates, meanwhile, have reached 75% of the total population by the end of 2008, according to wireless industry research conglomerate Wireless Federation. New Media's interactive and networking characteristics also make it easy to be integrated in traditional communication approaches, enabling it to reach even non-users of New Media.

This Conference hopes to culminate in drawing in the involvement of various online citizen journalism and monitoring efforts against fraud, violation of human rights and election-related violence towards ensuring an honest and transparent first ever 2010 national automated elections.

Statement of Unity:

Call to Vigilance: Monitor the Automated Elections and Safeguard the People's Vote

Problems and controversies continue to sprout as the Philippines enter uncharted waters in its foray into its first ever automated elections this 2010. At the rate that the implementation of the Automated Election System (AES) is going, with no source code review opened to the public, questionable decisions on the poll



technology used, and logistical schedules fraught with setbacks, there are sure to have technical and transparency problems.

The ICT community was not consulted whatsoever about the implementation of the AES. While the collective wisdom of the industry was offered to the COMELEC from day one, we were consistently pushed to the side, leaving the entire poll automation project to the monopoly of Smartmatic-TIM. Various IT and Policy groups have aired unsolicited but nonetheless sound advice, but only to be met by deaf ears.

We do not want to be a party to this implementation that has run roughshod over various concerns pointed out by concerned institutions and formations. We seek to enjoin the entire IT community to have a proactive role in collaboratively monitoring the elections. We aim to use our knowledge in technology and communication to advance the politics of transformative change.

More importantly, we pledge to engage in concerted action should the spectre of electoral fraud and failure rear its ugly head come May 10. We, the ICT community, unite to uphold Philippine democracy.

Tentative Programme

1:00-1:20 pm – Welcome Note

Catherine Abon
UP Geology Alumni Association

Opening Remarks

Rick Bahague
CPU

1:20-1:35 pm – AES Situationer: Vulnerabilities & Safeguards

Bobby Tuazon
Project 30-30

1:35-1:50 pm – STAR Scorecard

Lito Averia
CENPEG, IT Consultant

1:50-2:10pm – Citizen's Role in Monitoring the Election

Kontra Daya

2:10 – 2:15 - Break

2:15-2:30 pm – Voter Ed & Mobile SMS election monitoring by WE-Watch

Annaleah Escresa



EILER, Inc.

2:30-2:40 pm – Vote Mapping & Monitoring: Election Exchange.ph

Brian Tan Seng

98labs, Inc.

2:40-2:50 pm – Google Precinct Mapper

Aileen Apolo

Google Philippines

2:50-3:00 pm – Vote Report PH: Voter Ed & Fraud Monitoring through Ushahidi

Rick Bahague

CPU

3:00-3:15 pm – Open Forum

3:15-4:00 pm – Presentation: Citizen Journalism Efforts

- 100 Araw (15 minutes)
Tonyo Cruz, Project Editor
- Blogwatch.ph (15 minutes)
Noemi Lardizabal- Dado, Project Editor
- Pinoy Weekly (15 minutes)
Kenneth Guda, Editor-in-Chief

4:00-4:05 pm – Synthesis of the Election Monitoring Initiatives

Leon Dulce

New Media Coordinator, CPU

4:05-4:10 pm – Closing Remarks

Giovanni Tapang

CPDG, Chairperson

4:10-4:15 pm – Pledge of Unity

Emcees

4:20-5:00 pm – Snacks & Socials