

COLUMNISTS

COMMENTARY

# A post-COVID-19 green stimulus for PH

By: [Laurence L. Delina](#) - [@inquirerdotnet](#)

[Philippine Daily Inquirer](#) / 05:03 AM April 09, 2021

Another Philippines exists in which policymakers planning for post-COVID-19 economic recovery prioritize the creation of a carbon-neutral society for all Filipinos: a green stimulus. Our new reality should already be bringing about a sense of urgency among our politicians to scour for resources and inject vast sums of money to stimulate a post-COVID-19 economy. In this alter-Philippines, the government would create meaningful jobs in areas such as public health, housing, sustainable energy, and education with an emphasis on “shovel-ready” projects that can put unemployed and precariously employed Filipinos to work immediately.

The government could provide jobs as needed through an extensive jobs creation campaign that would swell during the economic recession, and narrow as the economy improves and when people begin to find work elsewhere. The green stimulus economy provides an alternative to low-paid work bound up in carbon-intensive supply chains like those at fast-food chains and shopping centers, which are currently the major employment opportunities on offer for many Filipinos. This approach addresses the immediate needs of Filipino workers who have been laid off or have had their working hours reduced because of the enhanced quarantines. At the same time, the green stimulus would address the climate emergency with the urgency it demands.

ADVERTISEMENT

Instead of seeing the need for renewable energy transition postponed or suspended, a green stimulus could jump-start it, while also stimulating the Philippine economy. The government can drive new investments in renewable energy, particularly through new large-scale investments to turbocharge the development, deployment, and integration of

wind, water, sunlight, and geothermal energy, making public buildings efficient, and constructing energy-efficient public housing. At the same time, the government can also invest in energy transition- and public health-related education in senior high schools, colleges, and universities. The recent drop in oil prices offers a timely opportunity for the Philippines to remove its subsidies on fossil fuel consumption, thus triggering further energy transition. Money saved from these subsidies could instead be spent for public health, education, and renewable energy projects.

More radical policy interventions that could improve the health of the planet, our communities, and our lives can also be embedded in the green stimulus blueprint. Embracing a 32-hour workweek can reduce emissions and greatly improve the quality of life for the working Filipino. Although a four-day workweek anytime is unlikely in the near future, the acute disruptions we have experienced of late provide a rare opportunity to revamp the essence of what is viable and doable in Philippine society. The fissures created by enhanced quarantine orders is presenting us a preview of what work is “indispensable” to society—food distribution, health and care work, and education. Perhaps these crevices offer us a hint of what life might be like if we all went to work a little less.

Sociologist Juliet Schor of Boston College calls this “plenitude.” The concept points us to the prospect of being rich in things that matter to us the most, and the wealth found from our relationships with one another. Plenitude places ecological and social functioning at its core, but it is not a paradigm of sacrifice; instead, plenitude encompasses a way of life that produces more well-being, rather than gluing ourselves to business- and politics-as-usual which has deteriorated both the natural and economic environments.

This is an experiment worth considering for post-COVID-19 Philippines. But just like other aspirations, we have to wake up and start the work. Change does not happen overnight. Its path is nonlinear. Building a sustainable economy for the country will take decades, and this green stimulus proposal is a strategy for prospering during that transition.

---

Laurence L. Delina (LLD@ust.hk), of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, is from South Cotabato.

*For more news about the novel coronavirus click [here](#).*

*[What you need to know about Coronavirus.](#)*

*For more information on COVID-19, call the DOH Hotline: (02) 86517800 local 1149/1150.*

The Inquirer Foundation supports our healthcare frontliners and is still accepting cash donations to be deposited at Banco de Oro (BDO) current account #007960018860 or donate through PayMaya using this [link](#).

Read more: <https://opinion.inquirer.net/139168/a-post-covid-19-green-stimulus-for-ph#ixzz6rszVwkLx>

Follow us: [@inquirerdotnet on Twitter](#) | [inquirerdotnet on Facebook](#)