

## **From Tech for Growth to Tech for Good: Unlocking Quality Digital Economy Growth in the Philippines**

“Tech for Good” is a key enabler for inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth in the Philippines.

This was a key insight at the Research Presentation and Dialogue on 22 September 2023 by regional think-tank, Tech for Good Institute (TFGI) and the Asian Institute of Management Rizalino S. Navarro Policy Center for Competitiveness. The presentation and dialogue focused on TFGI’s latest research paper – [From Tech for Growth to Tech for Good](#).

The study, which involved over 130 participants from government agencies, digital economy companies (DECs), think tanks and civil society organisations from Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, was supported by AsiaTechX Programme Office and the Infocomm Media Development Authority of Singapore. The question was how these important stakeholders envisioned the next stage of digital transformation for their own countries, and for the region.

The study found alignment across the countries that the future of Southeast Asia, at both regional and national levels, will depend on a collaborative effort to foster inclusive, equitable, climate-resilient and sustainable growth, enabled by the digital economy and the integration of online-to-offline (O2O) economies, as well as increasing innovation and startup activity.

The Philippines is one of the fastest growing digital economies thanks to continuous innovation across the information and communications technology (ICT) space. With the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 identifying key sectors such as e-commerce, fintech, platform companies and the gig economy, Gross Merchandise Value is expected to reach US\$40bn by 2025.<sup>1</sup> The country’s rapid digital transformation – especially during the pandemic – have been enabled by local, regional and global Digital Economy Companies (DECs), which in turn have also become catalysts for local innovation, livelihood job creation, and human capital development.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Growing Philippine Digital Economy: A Focus on eCommerce and Digital Payments. (2022, June). Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department. Retrieved 22 May 2023 from [https://cpbrd.congress.gov.ph/images/PDF%20Attachments/CPBRD%20Notes/CN2022-01\\_The\\_Growing\\_Philippine\\_Digital\\_Economy.pdf](https://cpbrd.congress.gov.ph/images/PDF%20Attachments/CPBRD%20Notes/CN2022-01_The_Growing_Philippine_Digital_Economy.pdf)

## **Findings from Philippines and the Region**

In line with respondents from across the region, Philippines stakeholders identified two common enablers to leverage technology to deliver sustainable growth.

First, innovation at a technical and technological level had to be complemented with innovation in business models and modes of governance. Only with innovation at all levels can there be an enabling ecosystem for growth, while protecting citizens and society, and ensuring national interest for the population.

And second, this innovation had to be coupled with building a confident digital society to ensure whole-of-society safety, resilience and inclusive benefit.

For Philippines in particular, stakeholders highlighted the need for:

- 1) affordable quality access across the archipelago;
- 2) a national ICT skills roadmap and capacity-building for meaningful and productive participation in the digital economy;
- 3) outreach to traditionally underserved populations, such as rural communities, women, the elderly and persons with disabilities;
- 4) building trust in emerging technologies through effective governance, such as verified digital identities for every citizen;
- 5) impactful investment and innovation, sandboxes to promote innovation and a review of the national IP strategy; and
- 6) evidence-based research to inform policy making with open communication channels for the public, private and people sectors to provide inputs into regulation.

## **Holistic approach for quality economic growth**

The Research Presentation was followed by a Dialogue with Senator Grace Poe, Ms. Grace Vera Cruz (Country Head, Grab Philippines), Mr. Winsley Bangit (Vice-President of New Businesses, Mynt), Mr. John Rubio (Country Director, Meta Philippines) and Mr. Prim Paypon (Executive Director, AIM - Dado Banatao Incubator), moderated by Dr Ming Tan (Founding Executive Director of TFGI).

Senator Grace Poe shared the important role of the government in the digital ecosystem, “As we move forward, the government must play a supporting role in our mission of digital inclusion. This entails not only building an enabling environment, but also modernising our analogue legislation and constructing a legal environment that nurtures innovation, rather than one that stifles it.”

Dr. Jamil Paolo Francisco mentioned, “Engaging regional partners like TFGI in continuous dialogue on how to adapt the newest technologies to the specific needs and particular context of a labor-abundant, emerging economy like the Philippines allows us to learn from various country experiences and best practices across industries. It also fosters a collaborative environment for win-win growth and development.”

Dr Ming Tan noted, “When impact is the driving purpose of technology, there is much scope to align innovation with the developmental goals of the country and region. The key trend that the Tech for Good Institute is seeing is the broadening of priorities for digitalisation beyond economic value creation. The potential of technology must be managed in a more proactive and collaborative manner to ensure an inclusive, equitable and sustainable future for all. The Tech for Good Institute serves the entire innovation ecosystem across Southeast Asia as a platform and catalyst for dialogue, research and collaboration. However, insights must be grounded in local context and to this end, we are grateful for the opportunity to work with Asian Institute of Management-Rizalino S. Navarro Policy Center for Competitiveness and in the Philippines with partners from the public, private and civil sectors.”

\*\*\*

### **About Tech for Good Institute**

The Tech for Good Institute (TFGI) is a non-profit organisation working to leverage the promise of technology and the digital economy for inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth in Southeast Asia.

TFGI was established in response to the growth of Southeast Asia's digital economy and increasing digitalisation of society. Digitalisation is one of the key transitions of this decade. Digitalisation's general enabling technologies and new business models also play a key role in facilitating other significant transitions, such as the shift to low-carbon and circular economies, and distributed systems of power and information.

With a population twice the size of the US and strong demographics, Southeast Asia's digital economy is evolving rapidly. At the same time, the region's trajectory will be unique, shaped by its diverse cultural, social, political, and economic contexts. The Tech for Good Institute serves as a platform for research, conversations and collaborations focused on Southeast Asia but connected to the rest of the world. Our work is centered on issues at the intersection of technology, society, and the economy, and that are intrinsically linked to the region's development. We seek to understand and inform policy with rigour, balance and perspective, through research, effective outreach and evidence-based recommendations.

The Institute is seed-funded by Grab, Southeast Asia's leading superapp, to advance the vision of a thriving, innovative Southeast Asia for all. We welcome opportunities for partnership and support, financial or in-kind, from organisations and individuals committed to fostering responsible innovation and digital progress for sustainable growth in the region.

More information about the Institute can be accessed at its [website](#), or via [LinkedIn](#).

### **About Asian Institute of Management**

The Asian Institute of Management (AIM) is an Asian pioneer in management education. The Institute was founded in 1968 by a consortium of prominent business leaders, Philippine academic institutions, and the Harvard Business School.

AIM is the first school in Southeast Asia to receive accreditation from the US-based Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), globally recognized as having the world's highest standards.

Throughout its history, the Institute has sought to empower students to thrive in challenging, rapidly shifting environments. It achieves this by encouraging a more considerate, effective, and sustainable approach to business in society.

### **About Asian Institute of Management-Rizalino S. Navarro Policy Center for Competitiveness**

Established in 1996 amidst a policy environment of sweeping reforms in the Philippines, the Asian Institute of Management-Rizalino S. Navarro Policy Center for Competitiveness (AIM-RSN PCC) is the Institute's public policy think tank and research arm.

Formerly known as the AIM Policy Center, the AIM-RSN PCC is tasked with responding to emerging international economic trends and the demands of an increasingly integrated and competitive global trade and finance environment. Since its inception, it has carried out its mandate by producing cutting-edge policy and academic research, providing technical assistance to multilateral organizations and actors from the public and private sectors, and hosting evidence-based policy discussions in support of the long-term growth and development of the Philippines and the Asian region.

The Center gives special attention to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are important sources of growth and employment. AIM-RSN PCC spotlights the following: the SME's competitiveness; linkages among themselves and with large enterprises; their participation in

local, regional, and global value chains; and how competition and competition policy affects them.

In addition to its core research agenda, AIM-RSN PCC frequently responds to current events and participates in relevant policy debates that affect national competitiveness through evidence-based opinion/editorial articles, events, and research papers. The Center has engaged in timely research on, among others, crime, corruption, political inclusiveness, taxation, access to finance, crisis resilience, and youth affairs.

Complementing the resources and effort put by the Center on its research are partners from the academe, government, multilateral organizations, and civil society. The Center has a longstanding partnership with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the International Institute for Management Development in producing the World Competitiveness Yearbook, and the Social Weather Stations.