

Program Brief

Title: **Judicial Reforms Advocacy Initiative**

The Sponsor: **Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX)**

About FINEX:

FINEX is a non-stock, non-profit, non-political association founded in 1968 and is composed of more than 700 finance executives all over the country. It has several chapters all across the country, and is one of the founding members of the International Association of Financial Executives Institute (IafEI) which is based in Zurich.

The mission of FINEX is to promote the progressive and innovative application of financial knowledge and skills in beneficial service to business, government, the academic community and society as a whole, observing the highest standards of competence and ethical behavior at all times.

Project Summary and Objective:

FINEX recognizes that a truly business friendly environment is key in fostering a sustainable economic growth in the country. While the current political administration has made significant strides in curbing corruption in some government agencies, major challenges remain and need to be addressed immediately. Because of this, the image of the country is still badly tainted, causing many foreign investors to shy away from the Philippines as an investment destination of choice.

One area of particular concern to financial executives is the country's judicial system. While current efforts to stamp out corruption and improve governance systems had been largely directed towards government agencies and certain political figures, reforms in the judiciary should equally be given proper attention by the authorities.

Needless to say, a speedy and judicious disposition of legal cases is badly needed in this country. Billions of pesos are wasted in legal costs (including, personnel time and company resources), because of inefficiency, incompetency and/or corruption in the judicial system, not to mention the injustice that is done to the aggrieved party. Thus, FINEX believes that the

private sector, particularly the business community, has a significant interest and role to play in any judicial reform initiative.

In view of the foregoing, and consistent with its mission, FINEX has embarked on an advocacy program aimed at upholding integrity in the country's judicial system. As an initial step, its members have agreed to sign the "Citizens' Groups' Covenant for Judicial Reforms" (copy attached), as a testament to their strong resolve to uphold integrity in our judicial system.

Recognizing that this is just the initial step, the FINEX Board and its membership would like to take this advocacy forward by undertaking a series of advocacy initiatives. FINEX does not seek to initiate or undertake on its own such programs which are within the scope of functions and responsibilities of the judiciary and other government bodies. Instead, FINEX shall collaborate with these government entities, together other cause-oriented groups, to ensure that relevant reform programs are not just initiated, but are also sustained in the long term. Moreover, part of this advocacy is to instill a culture of integrity among the FINEX members and their respective companies, especially in their dealings with the courts, hoping that by cutting off the "funding", widespread corrupt practices can be minimized.

Program Components and Description:

The advocacy program has the following key components:

Phase 1. Create heightened awareness on the need for Judicial Reforms

- Invite experts and speakers to talk about Judicial Reforms in a forum sponsored by FINEX
- Publish related articles on Judicial Reforms through media partners
- Utilize social networking and/or create special website to collect suggestions/ ideas/ experiences and best practices relative to the need for Judicial Reforms
- Partner with other organizations to identify critical areas which need greater focus for reforms, solicit ideas/ suggestions, and expose bad practices/ erring judiciary officials

- Partner with law schools to strengthen the integrity and ethics curriculum, tap law students/ professors to participate in the information campaign on judicial reforms; and create a support group composed of law students to assist aggrieved parties who intend to file or have pending cases against some members of the Judiciary/ Public Prosecution teams
- Create public awareness on standard court procedures, as well as the appropriate mechanisms to address grievances against erring judges, fiscals, etc. through the internet and other media;
- Arrange a multi-sectoral workshop to identify priority areas/issues for judicial reform

Phase 2. Call on the proper judicial authorities to initiate and/or expedite crucial reform programs

- Together with the SC and DOJ, formulate a vision for Judicial Reforms and a 10-point Program for Judicial Reforms, with definite time table and measurable results
- Urge the SC/DOJ to strengthen the mechanism for filing cases against erring judges, justices, fiscals, and other personnel/ officers.

Phase 3. Monitor the progress of the judicial reform programs

- Request for periodic progress reports on the 10-point Agenda from the SC/ DOJ to be disseminated to the public
- Adopt a mechanism for performance evaluation for the Judicial and Prosecutorial arms, including the performance of Supreme Court and DOJ officials
- Recognize best practices/ success stories regarding judicial reforms, including the “most improved” judicial branches in Metro Manila and key provincial cities.