

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH (18TH) CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 0461



Introduced by **HON. ELISA T. KHO, M.D., FPCCP**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

In 1999, the Government launched the Convergence Strategy as a mechanisms to achieve institutional coordination and eventually success in Rural Development. The 2011-2016 Philippine Development Plan (PDP) reaffirmed the mechanisms and objectives of the National Convergence initiative towards more efficient use of resources.

Unfortunately, institutional weaknesses have plagued the Convergence Strategy, resulting in little or no results being realized in the almost two decades. These weaknesses have become entrenched in the Departments of Agriculture, Agrarian Reform, and Environment and Natural Resources – the three agencies principally responsible for rural Development. As a result, operations have been fragmented, thus weakening rather than amplifying the impact of development activities on the intended beneficiaries.

To mitigate the institutional coordination problems, Government has repeatedly underscored the importance of the roles that the DA, DAR, and DENR have to play in the adoption and implantation of joint and complementary activities in rural areas. Even so, various assessment measures have repeatedly pointed out poor coordination as a serious weakness among the three principal development agencies.

It is at this point that one must simply realize that the institutionalization of the Convergence Framework is necessary for countryside development. As it stands right now, the Framework is unable to address the challenges which confront not only the DA, DAR, and DENR, but the LGUs as well. Most – if not all – of the aspects of the Convergence Framework even originate from National Government sources. The capacity of LGUs to perform tasks associated with the achievement of sustainable countryside development goals is curbed as a result. By institutionalizing the Framework, it is hoped that the efforts of the DA, DAR, and

DENR would complement those of the LGUs in order to ultimately contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in the countryside.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this proposed measure is earnestly sought.



HON. ELISA T. KHO, M.D., FPCCP

Representative

2nd District, Province of Masbate

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH (18TH) CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 0461

Introduced by **HON. ELISA T. KHO, M.D., FPCCP**

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE CONVERGENCE STRATEGY FOR
SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROVIDING THE
IMPLEMENTING MECHANISMS THEREFOR

*Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives
of the Philippines in Congress assembled:*

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTORY PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. Title. This Act shall be known as the “National Convergence Initiative Act.”

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policies and Objectives. It is the policy of the State to promote agricultural development as a means to ensure food security and alleviate poverty especially among the rural folks. Towards this end, the State shall develop and operationalize a common framework for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable rural development through the convergence of the resources of the principal rural development departments to maximize its impact.

The implementation of the National Convergence Strategy shall be guided by the following principles:

- (a) The Department of Agriculture (DA) – Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) – Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) (DA-DAR-DENR-DILG). National Convergence shall be treated as an institutionalized complementation strategy between and among these four (4) rural development departments. The Convergence shall work with other national line agencies, donor agencies, international and local non-government organizations (NGOs), people’s organizations (POs) mentioned in Section 6 hereof;

- (b) The implementation of a national convergence strategy shall in no way alter and/or impair the respective mandates of the four (4) rural development departments;
- (c) The critical role of local government units (LGUs) as the integrating and converging force for sustainable rural development at the local level shall be emphasized;
- (d) The participatory approach shall be adopted in all phases of development: from planning and budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- (e) Complementation of resources and expertise of the concerned departments and LGUs shall take primordial consideration in the implementation of the Convergence Initiative;
- (f) Convergence shall be mainstreamed in all programs, projects and activities of the national government departments and concerned LGUs;
- (g) Instituting relevant measures for an enabling environment to encourage investment by the private sector, cooperatives and other NGOs;

SECTION 3. Scope. This Act shall apply to all rural development areas primarily inhabited by the targeted beneficiaries – the marginalized farmers (both agrarian reform beneficiaries and non-agrarian reform beneficiaries), fisherfolks, upland dwellers and indigenous people.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITION

SECTION 4. Definition of Terms. As used in this Act:

- (a) ***Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries (ARBs)*** refer to landless farmers and regular farm workers, irrespective of tenurial arrangement, who were awarded lands as evidenced by an Emancipation Patent (EP) or a Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA) under Presidential Decree (PD) No. 27, or the Republic Act (RA) No. 6657, as amended, otherwise known as the “Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law of 1988.” ARBs also include the leaseholders to the landowners’ retained areas who represent the ARB group which are not awarded with lands but whose tenurial rights have been strengthened through the registration of leasehold contracts.
- (b) ***Agricultural lands*** refer to lands devoted to or suitable for agricultural activity and not classified by law as mineral, forest, residential commercial industrial land.

- (c) ***Agro-based cluster*** refers to the concentration of producers, agribusiness and institutions that are engaged in the same agricultural or agro-industrial sub-sector, and inter-connect.
- (d) ***Coastal areas*** refer to a band of dry land and the adjacent ocean space (water and submerged land) in which terrestrial processes and uses directly affect oceanic process and uses, and vice versa. For purposes of initiating and implementing the Convergence Initiative, it shall include foreshore land.
- (e) ***Convergence Area*** refers to the physical areas where the national Convergence Initiative – Sustainable Rural Development is implemented.
- (f) ***Ecosystem*** refers to the complex relationships among the living resources, habitats, and residents of an area. It includes plants, trees, animals, fish, birds, micro-organisms, water, soil and people.
- (g) ***Enhanced National Convergence Initiative (Enhanced NCI)*** refers to the National Convergence Initiative Strategy provided for under DA-DAR-DENR Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, Series of 2010 and the DA-DAR-DENR-DILG Joint Administrative Order No. 01, Series of 2015.
- (h) ***Farmers*** refer to natural persons whose primary livelihood is cultivation of land or the production of agricultural crops, agro-forestry products, livestock and/or fisheries, either by himself/herself, or primarily with the assistance of his/her immediate farm household, whether the land is owned by him/her or by another person under a leasehold or share tenancy agreement or arrangement with the owner thereof.
- (i) ***Fisherfolk*** refers to people directly or personally and physically engaged in taking and/or culturing and processing fishery and/or aquatic resources.
- (j) ***Good agricultural practices*** refer to applied knowledge and practices geared at addressing environmental, economic and social sustainability dimensions for on-farm production and post-productions processes, resulting in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products.
- (k) ***Mangrove forests*** refer to silt-rich, saline (brackish water) habitat generally found along large rivers, deltas, and estuaries in the coastal areas. It is characterized by low tree diversity with a low broken canopy. It serves as barrier to strong tidal waves and habitat of various aquatic species.

- (l) ***National Convergence Initiative (NCI)*** refers to the complementation of efforts and resources between and among the DA, DAR, DENR, DILG, and LGUs that seek to promote sustainable rural development. It is a response to the fragmented and sometimes overlapping delivery of agriculture and rural development services.
- (m) ***Primary forests or old growth forests*** refer to untouched, pristine forest that exists in its original condition and has been relatively unaffected by human activity.
- (n) ***Ridge-to-Reef strategy*** refers to the development approach to improve the lives of the ARBs and small farmers, indigenous peoples, marginalized dwellers and fisherfolks from upland and forest areas, in middle and lowland areas, down to the coastal areas.
- (o) ***Rural development departments*** in this Act refer to the DA, the DAR, the DENR, and the DILG.
- (p) ***Strategic Agricultural and Fisheries Development Zones (SAFDZ)*** refer to areas within the Network of Protected Areas for Agricultural and Agro-industrial Development (NPAAAD) identified for production, agro-processing and marketing activities to help develop and modernize, with the support of the government, the agriculture and fisheries sectors, in an environmentally and socio-culturally sound manner.
- (q) ***Secondary growth forests*** refer to the largest and most dynamic natural forest ecosystem in the Philippines. Further, it shall refer to an area which has been distributed in some way, naturally or naturally created in a number of ways such as degraded forest recovering from the effects of selective logging or areas cleared by slash-and-burn agriculture or “kaingin” that have been reclaimed by forest growth. It is also characterized by a less developed canopy structure, smaller trees, and less diversity.
- (r) ***Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)*** refers to the development objectives of meeting the needs of the present generation in rural communities, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs consistent with the principles of social equity, efficiency and environmental integrity.
- (s) ***Upland or forest ecosystems*** refer to areas or at least an 18% slope that provides ecological benefits and support to agricultural production, industries, water, and power needs. Timber production as well as agro forestry activities may be promoted in these areas to maximize their utilization.

- (t) **Watershed** refers to a topographically delineated area of land from which rainwater can drain as surface run-off vis-à-vis specific stream or river system to a common outlet point which may be a dam, irrigation system or urban water supply take-of point, or where the stream discharges into a river, lake or the sea.

CHAPTER III

PHYSICAL FRAMEWORK

SECTION 5. Guiding Framework. The convergence strategy shall adopt the watershed and integrated ecosystem management (IEM) and integrated area development (IAD) approaches as the intervention framework in the convergence areas. This is primarily because the “ridge to reef” convergence strategy is an environmentally sustainable approach to development since human interventions in the forest and upland areas would impact on the lowland areas, and this in turn would affect the coastal and marine areas. Selection of convergences zones shall likewise take into consideration the SAFDZ provision of Republic Act No. 8435 otherwise known as the “Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) of 1997”.

SECTION 6. Criteria for Selection of Convergence Areas. The following criteria shall guide the selection of convergence for the agro-enterprise cluster:

- (a) Adequacy of ecosystem zones – The convergence sites should cut across the various ecosystems or should be a combination of two (2) or more ecosystems;
- (b) Key production zones, agrarian reform communities (ARCs) and clusters with connectivity for increased productivity and income - The convergence sites should be current key production areas or with potential to substantially expand and scale-up production. As such, the area may transform from mono-cropping to integrated, multi-cropping or high value farming system. In terms of connectivity, the key production zone may be linked with surrounding areas for allied industries or services, or for backward linkages;
- (c) Combination of sites across major poverty groups – The convergences sites must cover a significant number of small farmers, agricultural workers including actual and potential ARBs, fisherfolk, indigenous people, and rural women and upland dwellers;
- (d) The convergence sites should involve LGUs and local chief executives (LCEs) who are willing to support the convergence initiative;
- (e) The convergence sites should have active POs and/or NGOs that can be tapped to

support the convergence initiative. Presence of private, business, academic, and research institutions that are willing to partner within the convergence framework shall be an advantage.

CHAPTER IV

NCI TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS (TWGs) AND COMPONENTS

SECTION 7. Technical Working Groups of NCI. The implementation of the NCI shall be done through Technical Working Groups in an ecosystem. The three (3) working groups are equally important and shall be mutually re-enforcing. They shall ensure that the objectives of the NCI as a means of improving institutional efficiencies in the governance of sustainable rural development are achieved. Infrastructure development shall form part of the improvement of the ecosystem and shall sufficiently consider the impact of such development on ecosystem services.

- (a) The TWG on Coastal and Marine Resources management shall address the issues and concerns pertaining to the use and management of coral reefs, sea grasses and algal beds, brackish wetland areas, mangroves and beach forests ecosystems. The TWG shall be composed of concerned departments/units of the DA, DAR, DENR and the DILG. Other government agencies, NGOs/ POs, the academe, private sector or business groups, and other associations may also be part of the TWG whenever necessary.
- (b) The TWG on Sustainable Lowland Agriculture shall address issues and concerns on the use and management of agricultural ecosystems through application of good agricultural practices. The TWG shall be composed of concerned departments/units of the DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG. Other government agencies, NGOs / POs, the academe, private sector or business groups / associations may also be part of the TWG whenever necessary.
- (c) The TWG on Forestry and Upland Development shall address issues and concerns on the use and sustainable management of the upland areas and forests ecosystems through conservation of biodiversity, protection of primary or old growth forests and secondary growth forest, and rehabilitation of degraded and denuded ecosystems. The TWG shall be composed of concerned departments / units of the DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG. Other government agencies, NGOs/ POs the academe, private sector or business groups / associations may also be part of the TWG whenever necessary.

SECTION 8. Components of the NCI. The following shall serve as cross cutting components of the three (3) TWGs.

- (a) Policy and Advocacy. The component shall address the issues and problems of conflicting, overlapping, and other unclear policies related to land administration, regulatory, framework, operational strategies and jurisdictional boundaries.
- (b) Agro-Enterprises and Agribusiness Development. The component shall facilitate enterprise development and agribusiness within the convergence sites through the establishment of agro-enterprise clusters in all provinces. These clusters shall be the focus for agribusiness initiatives based on the potential of the areas especially those designated as strategic zones as identified by the SAFDZ maps.
- (c) Capacity Development. The component shall ensure the organizational preparedness of the three agencies and capability of the implementors and other stakeholders to implement the convergence initiative.
- (d) Knowledge Management. The component shall ensure that NCI programs, projects and initiatives are implemented and monitored in an efficient and effective manner. It shall likewise ensure that innovations are documented for possible adoption, expansion and scaling up.

CHAPTER V

IMPLEMENTING STRUCTURE AND MECHANISM

Article One

National Policy Administration

SECTION 9. NCI Executive Board. The NCI shall have an Executive Board hereinafter referred to as the Board which shall act as the policy making body of the NCI. The Board shall direct the implementation of the provisions of this Act.

The Board shall be composed of four (4) voting members:

- (a) The Secretary of the DA as Chairperson;
- (b) The Secretaries of the DENR, DAR and DILG as members; and
- (c) The Executive Director of the NCI Secretariat and as ex-officio member, The Department Secretaries may appoint their respective permanent alternate representatives whose rank shall be lower than Undersecretary.

SECTION 10. Powers and Functions. The NCI Executive Board shall assume the following powers and functions:

- (a) Provide overall policy directions for the implementation of programs/projects and other related activities under the NCI;
- (b) Approve/ratify implementing rules and regulations, programs, projects and plans pertaining to the operation of the NCI;
- (c) Appoint the National Focal Person (NFP) with a rank of Assistant Secretary and a Deputy National Focal Person (DNFP) with a rank of Director IV to spearhead the NCI Technical Working Group (NCI-TWG) and oversee and supervise NCI operations.
- (d) Consult with other concerned national government agencies, stakeholders, and partner agencies on policies and major programs related to sustainable rural development;
- (e) Approve of Memorandum of Agreements with investors and funding agencies being recommended for approval by the NCI National Focal Person;
- (f) Approve the implementation and coordination structure of the NCI, including the membership of the National Convergence Initiative – Technical Working Group (NCI-TWG), the three (3) NCI-Ecosystem Technical Working Groups (NCI-ETWG) and the four (4) NCI-Component Working Groups (NCI-CWG), through a Joint Special Order;
- (g) Allocate resources to carry out the plans, programs, projects, and other related activities of the NCI;
- (h) Regularly advise the President on all matters concerning the implementation of convergence initiative strategies;

SECTION 11. Meetings of the Board. The Board shall meet on a quarterly basis and may hold special meetings as deemed necessary. The Secretary of the DA shall act as Lead Convenor while the Secretaries of the DAR, DENR and DILG shall act as Co-Convenors. In the absence of the Lead Convenor and/or Co-Convenor of the host department, the present principal members may decide or choose between themselves who will be the Chairperson of the meeting. Furthermore, the NCI-Executive Board meetings may be done in rotation amongst the five (5) departments;

SECTION 12. National Focal Person and Deputy National Focal Person. A National Focal Person, who shall have has a rank of Assistant Secretary, shall be appointed by the NCI Executive Board to spearhead the NCI-Technical Working Group (NCI-TWG) and supervise NCI operations. The National Focal Person assisted by a *Deputy National Focal Person*, shall have a rank of Director IV. The NFP shall also convene the members of the NCI-TWG to discuss updates/status on programs, projects and activities before the conduct of NCI Board meetings. The NFP shall come from the lead agency (DA) while the DNFP shall come from any of the three (3) co-convenor rural development departments.

SECTION 13. The National Convergence Initiative-Technical Working Group (NCI-TWG)-The NCI-TWG shall serve as the advisory and recommendatory body to the NCI Executive Board on matters related to the implementation of the NCI.

SECTION 14. Composition of the NCI-TWG. The NCI-TWG to be convened by the NCI national Focal Person shall have the following members:

- (a) Chairperson, TWG on Coastal and Marine Resources Management
- (b) Chairperson, TWG on Lowland Resources Management
- (c) Chairperson, TWG on Forestry and Upland Development
- (d) Convergence Focal Person, DA (Agro-Enterprise Development)
- (e) Convergence Focal Person, DAR (Policy and Advocacy)
- (f) Convergence Focal Person, DENR (Knowledge Management)
- (g) Convergence Focal Person, DILG (Capacity Development)
- (h) Executive Director, NCI Secretariat Office

SECTION 15. Agency Convergence Focal Persons. Each agency shall designate a Convergence Focal Person who shall be responsible for the coordination and management of the convergence program in their respective departments (national and field levels). The Department Convergence Focal Person shall likewise be a member of the NCI-TWG.

SECTION 16. Creation of NCI Secretariat Office. A permanent NCI Secretariat shall be created with the corresponding plantilla positions for its administrative and technical staff complement. Filling up of permanent personnel shall be based on the current and existing NCI Secretariat organizational structure. The NCI Secretariat Office shall be headed by an Executive Director who shall be appointed by the DA Secretary.

The NCI Secretariat shall be strengthened with detailed personnel coming from the secretariat of the four (4) NCI core departments on top of the designated coordinators of each working group. The NCI Secretariat shall work closely with the NCI National Focal Person and Deputy National Focal Person, the Chairperson of the different Working Groups and the Agency Convergence Focal Persons.

SECTION 17. Functions of the NCI Secretariat. The NCI Secretariat shall have the following functions:

- (a) Coordinate the conduct of the NCI-Executive Board and NCI-TWG meetings and workshops, writeshops, seminars, for a and consultations;

- (b) Provide administrative, logistics, and technical support to the NCI-NSC and NCI-TWG;
- (c) Document, prepare, and disseminate the highlights of the proceedings of NCI Executive Board and NCI-TWG meetings and activities;
- (d) Ensure that appropriate actions are taken on agreements reached during NCI Executive Board and NCI-TWG meetings and activities;
- (e) Submit monitoring/progress reports to the NCI Executive Board and NCI-TWG and other oversight bodies;
- (f) As coordinators, follow up on the activities to be conducted by the three (3) NCI-ETWGs. Ensure that the timelines for the activities are strictly followed.
- (g) Coordination with the KM-TWG in management of convergence areas' database; and,
- (h) Perform other functions as the NCI Executive Board may direct. There shall be a satellite secretariat office to be established in the DA, DAR, DENR and DILG Department. Each satellite secretariat office shall be composed of staff from the offices of the Departments' respective Alternate Board Representatives.

Article Two

Sub-National Level Administration

SECTION 18. Regional Convergence Initiative-Technical Working Group (RCI-TWG). Parallel to the NCI-TWG, the RCI-TWG shall manage and supervise the programs, projects, and other related activities at the regional level. The RCI-TWG shall be the regional arm of the NCI Executive Board in carrying out its functions.

SECTION 19. Duties and Responsibilities

- (a) Work closely with other government line agencies and offices and with the Regional Development Council (RDC) and concerned Provincial Development Council (PDC) to ensure that the enhanced convergence initiative interventions are aligned with the regional development agenda and initiatives;
- (b) Facilitate complementation of efforts and resources for greater impact;
- (c) Coordinate and work closely with the Provincial LGUs in the implementation of the NCI plans, programs, projects, and other related activities. The Regional Directors of DA, DAR, DENR and DILG may enter into an agreement with the Provincial Governor or LGU leagues, as necessary;
- (d) Meet monthly or as deemed necessary.

SECTION 20. Composition of the RCI-TWG. The RCI-TWG shall be composed of:

- (a) DA, DAR, DENR or DILG Regional Directors, who may act as Chairperson;
- (b) Depending on the result of the election of Chairperson, the three other rural development department directors will act as Co-Chairpersons;
- (c) Regional Focal Persons for all the departments and Head RCI-TWG Secretariat as Members.
- (d) The Chairperson of the RCI-TWG shall be a convergence champion and shall be decided by and among the Regional Directors of DA, DAR, DENR and DILG. Upon the completion of the RCI-TWG composition, a resolution to that effect shall be submitted to the NCI Secretariat. Membership of the RCI-TWG may be expanded to include representatives from the Provincial LGUs and other agencies as deemed necessary.

The RCI-Secretariat shall be composed of representatives from the regional offices of DA, DAR, DENR, and DILG. The RCI Secretariat shall be headed by the Regional Focal Person. The Regional Focal Person and the members of the RCI Secretariat shall be designated by the Chairperson of RCI-TWG.

SECTION 21. Provincial Convergence Initiative Technical Working Group (PCI-TWG). The PCI-TWG shall be responsible in implementing plans, programs, projects and other related activities of the NCI at their respective provinces in collaboration with RCI-TWG. The PCI-TWG shall identify or determine appropriate interventions, resources, and support services needed such as, but not limited to infrastructure, logistics, extension, inputs, lands, and institutional development for the implementation of the NCI plans and programs.

The Chairperson of the PCI-TWG shall be the Provincial Governor and the Provincial heads of DAR, DENR and DILG shall be the Co-Chairpersons. The members of the PCI-TWG are the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PENRO), Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer (PARO), Provincial Agriculture Officer (PAO), Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator (PPDC), Provincial Government – Environment and Natural Resources Officer (PG-ENRO), the Das Agricultural Program Coordinating Officer (APCO) and Provincial Interior and Local Government Officer (PILGO). The respective interface mechanisms shall be LGU-led with DA, DAR, DENR and DILG providing technical and operational support. Existing LGU mechanisms may be adopted to spearhead or manage the convergence initiatives at the LGU level.

SECTION 22. Municipal Convergence Initiative Technical Working Group (MCI-TWG).

The MCI-TWG shall be responsible in implementing plans, programs, projects, and other related activities of the NCI at their respective municipalities in collaboration with the PCI-TWG. The MCI-TWG shall identify or determine appropriate interventions, resources, and support services needed such as, but not limited to, infrastructure, logistics, extension, inputs, lands, and institutional development for the implementation of the NCI plans and programs.

The Chairperson of the MCI-TWG shall be headed by the Municipal/City Mayor and the Municipal head of DAR, DENR, and DILG shall be the Co-Chairpersons. The members of the MCI-TWG are the Community Environment and Natural Resources Officer (CENRO), City/Municipal Environment and Natural Resource Officer (C/MENRO), Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer (MARO), Municipal Agriculture Officer (MAO), concerned City/Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (C/MPDC), City/Municipal Interior and Local Government (C/MILGO) and a designated DA regional field office representative.

The respective interface mechanisms shall be LGU-led with DA, DAR, DENR and DILG providing technical and operational support. Existing LGU mechanisms may be adopted to spearhead or manage the convergence initiatives at the LGU level.

Article Three

Monitoring and Evaluation

SECTION 23. A monitoring and evaluation system based on performance indicators set by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) shall be developed and strictly implemented and managed, and a regular reporting system shall be installed in an open and transparent manner, in accordance with the Management for Development Results (MDR) principles. The monitoring and evaluation report shall contain gaps and issues experienced during the implementation of the NCIs, the learnings on convergence as an approach to sustainable rural development, and proposed policy recommendation.

CHAPTER VI

TRANSITORY AND FINAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 24. Convening of NCI Secretariat Office. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of Agriculture shall convene the NCI Secretariat Office. The current head of the NCI Secretariat Office until such time that a regular Executive Director has been appointed.

SECTION 25. Implementing Rules and Regulations. The implementing rules and regulations of this Act shall be drafted and approved by the NCI departments concerned within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 26. Structure and Staffing Pattern. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the NCI Executive Board shall formulate and submit the NCI Secretariat Office's proposed organizational structure and staffing pattern to the President for final approval through the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

The DA shall assist in the preparation of the Organizational Structure and Staffing pattern of the NCI Secretariat Office with corresponding number of plantilla positions as well as budgetary requirements to effectively carry out its mandated functions under this Act.

SECTION 27. Appropriations. Funds necessary to carry out the implementation of the NCI shall be taken from the available funds of the DA, DAR, DENR and DILG under the current General Appropriations Act. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the full operation of the NCI Secretariat Office and the staggered implementation of NCI plans and programs shall be included in the respective annual budget of the aforementioned Departments in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

Other sources of funds such as grants, donations, and other forms of assistance from donor agencies and other public or private entities may be tapped and facilitated by NCI Executive Board to support the program, subject to regular auditing guidelines and procedures. Cost-sharing or counter parting schemes among national government and LGUs is also encouraged to support the implementation of the NCIs.

SECTION 28. Non-Impairment Clause. Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or available to marginalized or basic sectors under existing laws including Republic Act Nos. 8371, 8550 and 6657.

SECTION 29. Separability Clause. If for any reason or reasons, any part or provision of this Act shall be declared or held to be unconstitutional or invalid, other parts or provisions hereof, which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 30. Repealing Clause. All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts or provisions thereof that are not consistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SECTION 31. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,