

# Fresh Start for Genuine Change: A Case For Newly Elected Sangguniang Kabataan and Barangay Officials

On 30 October 2023, the Philippines held the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Elections—with a staggering 1.41 million people filing for candidacies to fill the 672,432 vacant seats (Rappler, 2023). This election is crucial since this was the first time since 2019 that the Barangay and SK (BSK) Elections were held after the Duterte and Marcos administrations separately approved the postponement of the polls set in 2020 and 2022. Indeed, the Barangays and SKs in the country are facing great anticipation from voters to see who will lead them for the next three years after a long hiatus. A day after, the new BSK officials took office amid challenging times.



Figure 1: (Source) Rappler, 2023

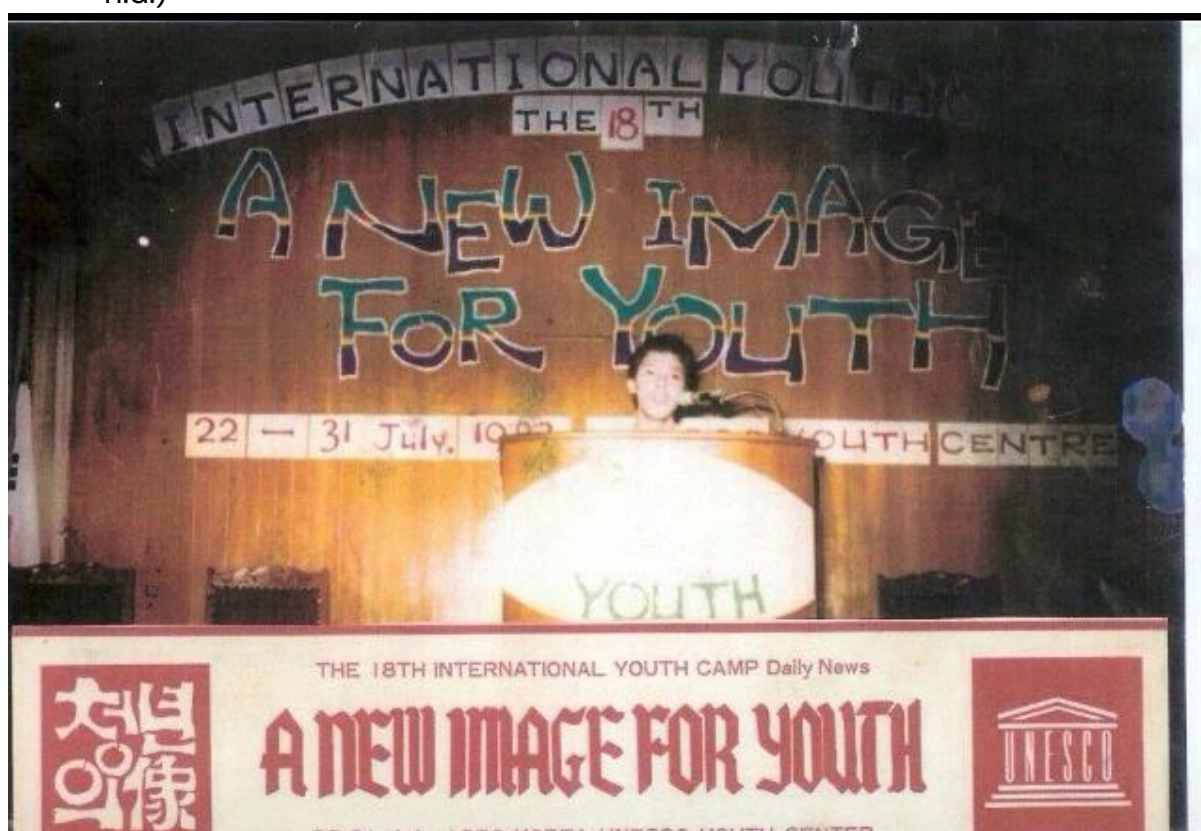


Figure 2: (Source) MindaNews, 2023

Despite being the smallest political unit, the barangay serves as the face of government at the local level. It is considered a forum in which the collective views of the people may be expressed and considered through consultation, which catalyzes planning and implementing plans, programs, projects, activities, and government policies in communities (Abagado Jr., 2018). **The Barangay system was a result of the 1986 People Power Revolution after the ousting of Ferdinand Marcos Sr. from power**, and the move from decentralization after the Martial Law era was essential for barangays and the country as a whole because it empowered the local governments to:

**TOGETHER, LET'S KEEP THE CHANGE!**

- 1) Have control over many of the essential social services, such as health and agriculture;
- 2) Enforce laws and regulations, including environmental laws and food inspection;
- 3) Authorize taxation and increased share of funding from the national government to the local barangay;
- 4) Enhances local civil society by allowing local political units the ability to create local population and the ability of the population to vote on local referendums; and
- 5) Partner with the private sector to promote local development. (Edleman, n.d.)



(Source) John4Youth, 2014

As such, the barangay offered the Filipinos a more personal political and justice system wherein their voice could be **heard and transformed** for a more significant change starting from their localities.

The SK represents an opportunity for the youth to be genuinely represented in political and policy spaces, as mandated by law. **It gives the youth the ability and capacity to be involved in local and national building.** In 2019, the National Youth Commission introduced the Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) to

enhance the effectiveness of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK). The PYDP serves as a framework for aligning youth development and political rights actions. It highlights focus areas for youth participation, including health, economic empowerment, and active citizenship. The goal is to streamline efforts and resources towards these priorities for more impactful youth engagement. When the youth have a seat at the table, they can work on projects with other organizations to support important causes like good governance, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and resilience (Rosales, 2023). Moreover, young people can enact ordinances and resolutions with tangible effects, like establishing curfew hours for minors, implementing a tobacco ban for minors, and creating bicycle lanes to promote safer, active mobility (Balanon, Ong, Puzon, Granada, and Trinidad, 2007).

At the same time, SKs face several institutional and political issues. For instance, SKs in many barangays are observed to have been **peddled by abusive politicians**, using SK officials as tools in advancing their political agenda, as well as exercising nepotism to sustain their agenda further. Additionally, the abuse from politicians marks the lack of support from above to develop and implement substantial, meaningful projects and programs, ranging from sports to street-cleaning activities. With the accumulation of such problems and being generally politically stunted, a negative picture of SK has been developed over time that led the public to see the SK officials as mere “consultative bodies” without real power to implement real impact, to drastically being perceived as **“incompetent, inefficient, and lacking initiative”** (Balanon et al., 2007). It is incumbent and a challenge for our newly elected officials to address the pertinent issues of their fellow youth and to find any avenue to push forward for meaningful change if stifled by the existing obstacles.

According to the latest data, **23,254,129 registered youth** have voted, and **42,001 SK officials** have been elected (Gita-Carlos, 2023), and this stands as a testament to the opportunity for youth representation in policymaking and youth across the nation to grasp the chance to create genuine youth policy reform. Therefore, the SK provides young people a way to participate actively in policymaking and community development. This involvement helps the youth grow, empowers them, enhances their skills, and fosters stronger community connections.

**TOGETHER, LET'S KEEP THE CHANGE!**



(Source) Rappler, 2023

Keep the Change: Youth Policy Lab stands ready to support and partner with our newly elected SK officials to capacitate our fellow Filipinos to understand our policies and processes through innovative and engaging workshops and seminars. We will serve as channels for our fellow SKs to amplify their voices, ensuring their agendas are heard and acted upon despite the challenges in their barangays.

For meaningful youth participation in the Philippines!  
Together, let's keep the change!

*Written by Glyre Treasure Faeldonia and Gerald John C. Guillermo. Glyre is the Research Lead of Keep the Change: Youth Policy Lab, a youth initiative to empower Filipino youth and other stakeholders to understand and participate in the Philippine policy environment and develop innovative solutions to solve complex public issues. The Lab was formed under Gerald John's Oxfam in Asia's Young Leaders Program 2023-2024. For collaborations, you may contact the Lab at [ktc.ypl@gmail.com](mailto:ktc.ypl@gmail.com) or via their social media platforms at [linktr.ee/ktc.ypl](https://linktr.ee/ktc.ypl).*

**TOGETHER, LET'S KEEP THE CHANGE!**

## References

- Abagado Jr. D. A. (2018). "Barangay-Based Mechanisms", *Saligan*, Available at: <https://www.saligan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Barangay-Based-Mechanisms-Primer.pdf>
- Balanon F. A.G., Ong M., Torre B., Puzon M., Granada J. P., & Trinidad A. (2007). "The Impact of Youth Participation in the Local Government Process: The Sangguniang Kabataan Experience", *UNICEF*. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Faye-Balanon/publication/282866168\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Youth\\_Participation\\_in\\_the\\_Local\\_Government\\_Process/links/5620721a08ae93a5c9243ea9/The-Impact-of-Youth-Participation-in-the-Local-Government-Process.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Faye-Balanon/publication/282866168_The_Impact_of_Youth_Participation_in_the_Local_Government_Process/links/5620721a08ae93a5c9243ea9/The-Impact-of-Youth-Participation-in-the-Local-Government-Process.pdf)
- Depasupil W. B. (2023). "Comelec: Quick assumption of office for poll winners", *The Manila Times*. Available at: <https://www.manilatimes.net/2023/10/31/news/national/comelec-quick-assumption-of-office-for-poll-winners/1917231>
- Edleman P. R. (n.d.). "Philippine Government Structure with a Focus on the Philippine Barangay", *Sauk Valley Community Village*. Available at: [https://www.niu.edu/clas/cseas/\\_pdf/lesson-plans/fulbright-hays/philippine-political-structure.pdf](https://www.niu.edu/clas/cseas/_pdf/lesson-plans/fulbright-hays/philippine-political-structure.pdf)
- Gita-Carlos R. A. (2023). "Oct. 30 declared a special non-working day for barangay, SK polls" *Philippine News Agency*. Available at: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1211552>
- Rappler. (2023). "Live Updates: Barangay, Sangguniang Kabataan Elections". Available at: <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/barangay-sk-elections-results-news-updates-2023/>
- Rosales R. J. J. (2023). "Assessing Sangguniang Kabataan Programs: A Baseline Study in Developing a Comprehensive Plan for the Development of the Youth in Cuenca, Batangas", *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 2(1). Available at: <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=18837>

## Appendix

Figure 1: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/campaign-period-barangay-sangguniang-kabataan-polls-october-19-2023/>

Figure 2: <https://mindanews.com/top-stories/2023/11/new-barangay-sk-officials-in-cotabato-city-sga-sworn-to-office/>

Figure 3: <https://john4nature.com/2014/04/15/youth-movement-before-and-after-edsa-on-a-personal-note/>

Figure 4: <https://www.rappler.com/nation/certificate-candidacy-filing-suspended-metro-manila-ilocos-norte-abra-august-31-2023/>

**TOGETHER, LET'S KEEP THE CHANGE!**