



# Our Languages in Government

**Vision: a Constitution that  
helps our government  
uplift the Filipino people  
and their languages**

# THE facts



✓ The Philippines is a multilingual country: it has more than 180 languages—informally called “dialects” (Ethnologue, 2018)



✓ A dozen Philippine languages are spoken by more than one million people each

✓ Each region has a unique population profile—with one or more of its own languages.

# THE problem

It's not our languages that are backward...  
**It's our POLICIES.**

✗ The 1987 Constitution only recognizes one national language (Filipino) and one other official language (English)



**Our language policies are not inclusive...**

- More resources are typically directed toward Filipino/Tagalog than other Philippine languages.
- Offices/schools are enjoined to celebrate the national language for 1 month. Other mother tongues are usually not included.

- ✗ The government's language body, the Commission on Filipino Language (or *Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino*), has not given equal attention to Philippine languages.
- ✗ Visayan is the community language of more provinces than any other Philippine language, but it is not given official/national status in the 1987 Constitution
- ✗ Filipino/Tagalog and English dominate the education system and the media
- ✗ Not enough safeguards are in place to protect local and regional languages from being marginalized.
- ✗ The percentage of people who can speak, read, and write their native languages fluently is decreasing (except for Tagalog).

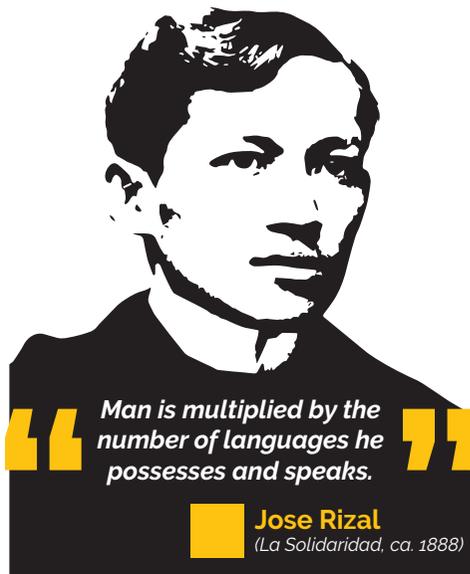
# THE opportunity

★ The Constitution can be amended to be more suitable for a multilingual country

★ Examples of good language provisions of other multilingual countries, like Singapore, South Africa, and Spain can be studied and considered

★ The constitution can protect Philippine linguistic diversity and protect people's right to learn, use, and develop their native languages

★ An inclusive policy that respects language diversity is essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2012)



**Jose Rizal**  
(*La Solidaridad*, ca. 1888)

National hero Jose Rizal spoke numerous languages, and understood the value of knowing many. We have a moral obligation to protect Philippine languages for the benefit of future generations

# THE strategy



→ The Constitution can recognize several national or official languages, as do other multilingual countries. Singapore recognizes 4 official languages, while South Africa recognizes 11. Switzerland has 4 national languages. Senegal recognizes any “codified” native language as a national language, qualifying at least 6.

With more language-friendly laws, we would see more examples of our languages in public

→ Alternatively, the Constitution should allow regions/states to recognize co-official languages in addition to Filipino and English (similar to Spain)

**GOOD**  
Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino

**BETTER**  
Komisyon ng mga Wika sa Pilipinas

→ The KWF should fully embrace diversity as a commission for all Philippine languages

→ As much as possible, State borders should align with traditional language boundaries. This reform was done by India in 1956. It shall ease internal governance and communication. It shall also prevent the break-up and erosion of Philippine ethnic groups.