



Mercedita Agcaoili Sombilla is currently the Undersecretary of the Regional Development Group of the National Economic and Development Authority or more commonly known as NEDA. USec Sombilla is in fact a returnee to NEDA its first employer when she graduated Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. She left NEDA for her PhD in Agricultural Economics at the University of Minnesota U.S.A. Her career path was diverted after her PhD where she pursued to become a full time researcher. This career diversion was further realized when she became affiliated with various international research organizations including the International Food Policy Research Institute based in Washington D.C., the International Rice Research Institute based in Los Baños, Laguna and the Southeast Asian Center for Graduate Studies in Agriculture, also based in Los Baños Laguna.

As a researcher she focused doing policy studies related on the development of the agriculture sector, on the rice sub-sector in particular, and to improve the welfare of rural households. While being a full time researcher, she also served a consultant to various development partners like the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and to various governments including Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines.

She rejoined NEDA in 2012 as Director of the Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Staff. Her return to NEDA deepened her understanding of the agriculture sector and expanded her field of expertise to include work on the more sustainable management and use of natural resources and on the identification of adaptation and mitigation measures to enhance resilience to climate change and other natural disasters. Her transfer to the Regional Development Group made her work in agriculture and rural development doubly meaningful especially with the country's goal of promoting more balanced growth across regions. USec Sombilla's work experience is an illustration of a complete cycle of policy research where the development reforms that are pushed are based on results of policy studies.