



Philippines

- is an archipelago situated off the southeastern coast of the Asia Mainland
- 1,707 islands
- 91 million people (estimate for 2007)
- 110 ethnolinguistic groups (languages)
- 85% Christian
- Presidential, unitary form of government
- Member of Association of SE Asian Nations
- (ASEAN)



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**The birth control policy in the
Philippines in the midst of the
conservative churches : challenges
to future generations**



Population

- ⇒ **Population:** 83.7 million (2006)
- ⇒ **Projected Population:** 147.3 million (2050)
- ⇒ **Age structure:**
- ⇒ *0-14 years:* 34.5% (male 16,043,257/female 15,415,334)
- ⇒ *15-64 years:* 61.3% (male 27,849,584/female 28,008,293)
- ⇒ *65 years and over:* 4.1% (male 1,631,866/female 2,128,953) (2007 est.)
- ⇒ **Population growth rate:** 2.36% annually (highest in Asia) the country's population is projected to reach 118.4M in 2025 and 147.3M in 2050.
- ⇒ **Total Fertility Rate (desired) :** *2.7 children per woman*
- ⇒ **Total Fertility Rate (actual) :** *3.5 children per woman*
- ⇒ **Birth rate:** 24.48 births/1,000 population (2007 est.)
- ⇒ **Death rate:** 5.36 deaths/1,000 population (2007 est.)
- ⇒ **Net migration rate:** -1.48 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2007 est.)
- ⇒ **Sex ratio:** *at birth:* 1.05 male(s)/female
- ⇒ **Total population:** 0.999 male(s)/female (2007 est.)

SOURCES: Philippines Commission on Population; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Philippines National Statistical Coordination Board; Population Reference Bureau; UNICEF; World Conservation Union; and the World Bank.



Church Stand on Population Control

What's **POSITIVE** in the natural family planning approach :

- 1.natural - it works with the natural rhythm of the human body;
- 2.safe - there is no risk to health, unlike many pills;
- 3.affordable - there are no financial costs involved;
- 4.practical - it is easy to learn, regardless of educations level; and
- 5.integral - it respects the totality of relationships in responsible parenthood, in particular the moral demands of our Catholic faith

Responsible Parenthood

- parents should strive to beget only those children whom they can raise up in a truly human and Christian way.
- parents who plan their families according to the moral norms taught by the Church."
- encompasses the married couple's recognition of their relationship and duties toward God, their family, society at large, and themselves.



Birth Control Policy in the Philippines?

Responsible Parenthood and Population Act - a private bill that proposes to restrict families to **two children**, introduce **sex education** and enable the **distribution of contraceptives**.

The legislation has so incensed the Church that it has threatened not to give Holy Communion to any government worker promoting the bill. Monsignor Jesus Dosado of the Ozamiz diocese on the southern island of Mindanao was quoted recently saying that any government worker who promotes what he called "the bill's anti-life policies" are "not worthy to receive the body of Christ (Holy Communion) and will be refused".

Population Policy Manual - is a compendium of selected laws and regulations issued by the Philippine Government. Four volumes were developed to respond to the need for consolidating systematically all existing population and population-related policies.



Challenges to the Birth Control Policy

- Majority say “there is no way such a bill will become law”
- While it has already passed the House Committee on Health, it has not been officially endorsed by the government, because it encourages couples to plan their family size.

Church vs. State

- While "Most catholic countries today leave the issue of birth control to the elected government. In the Philippines the **church** still has a very strong voice on the subject.
- "That voice reflects the late pope's conservative view on the issue. How the church's stand on birth control changes with a new pope remains to be seen.



Why a Birth Control Policy?

➔ Government's Response

- ➔ Such a population policy is urgently needed to stop the worsening maternal and child deaths brought about by unplanned pregnancies in the country.
- ➔ The United Nations Population Fund has estimated that more than 400,000 women put their lives at risk each year by having abortions, which are still illegal in the Philippines.
- ➔ to curb population growth, which is a major cause of poverty.



Center for Reproductive Rights

Non-profit legal advocacy organization dedicated to promoting and defending women's reproductive rights worldwide.

December 11, 2006 -- The Philippine government is currently reviewing a bill that seeks to impose penalties for the production, selling, and distribution of so-called abortifacients. In its definition of "abortive" drugs and devices, the bill includes oral contraceptives, emergency contraception, injectables, and IUDs, banning these commonly used forms of contraception

- In response to this alarming proposal, the Center submitted a letter in December to the committee responsible for reviewing the bill, stating that the bill's characterization of commonly used contraceptives as "abortive" drugs and devices has no scientific or legal basis. Our letter further argues that restricting access to the full range of contraceptive methods violates women's basic human rights.
- **September 2006** -- The Center for Reproductive Rights submitted a shadow letter to the 36th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women highlighting violations of reproductive and sexual rights of women in the Philippines. A delegation from the government of the Philippines reported to the Committee on governmental efforts to fulfill treaty obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a key UN treaty established to further women's right to nondiscrimination and gender equality.

Women's groups detailed numerous violations of the Convention resulting from arbitrary restrictions on :

- modern methods of contraception including emergency contraceptive pills;
- criminal abortion laws; and
- abuses in post-abortion care facilities.



Center for Reproductive Rights

Access to Contraceptives and Abortion : Rights of Women.....

- One of the direst consequences of the government's failure to respect reproductive rights is the country's high rate of maternal mortality.
- In its Concluding Observations, the Committee urged the State party to take concrete measures in the following areas:
 - 1) to improve women's access to sexual and reproductive health services, in accordance with the Convention.
 - 2) to make contraceptives more available and affordable and
 - 3) to provide comprehensive sex education to adolescents.

The Committee recommended that the government consider removing provisions in abortion laws that punish women and instead provide access to quality services to reduce maternal mortality rates.



Survey Says

- ➔ **A survey conducted by the polling group Social Weather Station last year found out the ff:**
 - **20% (percent)of Filipino women aged between 18-24 admitted taking contraceptive pills**
 - **2% (percent) used condoms.**
 - **70% percent of Filipinos were not using any family planning methods.**



Implications on Philippine Population

Substantial societal changes have improved Filipino women's lives and influenced their family-size goals. Fertility has fallen considerably, and women want even fewer children than they typically have. But given the present ambiguous population policy....

- Almost half of recent births were either not wanted at all or not wanted at the time. At the national level, this situation has not improved over the last decade; in some regions, unplanned childbearing has increased.
- Nonuse of contraception and increasing use of traditional methods contribute to the high level of unplanned pregnancy. Half of married women do not want a child soon, or want no more children, but are not using a modern contraceptive.
- An estimated 400,000 women from all regions and backgrounds have illegal abortions each year; approximately 100,000 are hospitalized for related complications.
- Poor access to modern contraceptives, a reflection of a lack of social and political support, is a major obstacle to wider use. Increased government support and resources are needed at all levels to improve access to family planning services.



Competing Stands on Population in the Philippines

The Catholic Church :

- encourages families to have as many children as they can raise and educate well
- approves only natural family-planning methods
- would not support any form of artificial contraception
- Any form of artificial birth control is anti-life

Women's Groups:

- promote, defend and uphold the rights of women
- supports artificial contraception and other methods
- Supports sex education
- Pushes for increased government support in improving access to family planning services
- Pushes for access to modern contraceptives and its distribution, even in rural areas, as part of the rights of women

The State:

- in educating teenagers, this would expose them to the use of artificial contraceptives like condoms and pills
- we will orient teenagers about the responsibility of not having children at an early age but we will not tell them that they are free to use condoms and contraceptives



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