

PHILIPPINES

POPULATION IN 2016

103.320.222

SIZE

300,000 KM²

HDI RANKING 2016

116/188

INEQUALITY ADJUSTED HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT INDEX 2016

0,556

GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX 2016

0,436

CIVIC SPACE (CIVICUS MONITOR 2017)

OBSTRUCTED

HDI - Human Development Index and its components, ranks countries by HDI value and details the values of the three HDI components: longevity, education and income.

IHDI - Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index - IHDI looks beyond the average achievements of a country in longevity, education and income to show how these achievements are distributed among its residents. An IHDI value can be interpreted as the level of human development when inequality is accounted for.

GDI - Gender Development Index, measures disparities on the HDI by gender. The table contains HDI values estimated separately for women and men; the ratio of which is the GDI value. The closer the ratio is to 1, the smaller the gap between women and men.

Civic space - The CIVICUS monitor assigns each country a rating on civic space based on constant analysis of multiple streams of data on civic space. The rating is open, narrowed, obstructed, repressed or closed. <https://monitor.civicus.org/Ratings>

Introduction

The Republic of the Philippines, or The Philippines, is a democratic republic in Southeast Asia situated in the western Pacific Ocean. It is an archipelago comprising 7,641 islands that are divided into three major geographical areas: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao (from north to south). These are further divided into 18 regions, 81 provinces, 145 cities, 1,489 municipalities and 42,029 barangays. Currently, some 12.88 million people are located in the capital, Metro Manila. The Philippine economy is the 33rd largest in the world, with an estimated 2016 gross domestic product (nominal) of \$310.312 billion and is categorised by the World Bank as a low-middle income country.

Voice in The Philippines is managed by Hivos. Over the next two years, proposals will be accepted from all five-target groups for all types of grants from any geographical location within the country. The context analysis recognised that each sector has specific needs and issues, and varying levels of capacity in terms of advocacy work and visibility in national level movements, thus requiring specific interventions.

Successful projects, however, are expected to show a multidimensional approach to addressing intersectional themes such as:

- Lack of access to legal protection and justice;
- Social discrimination/stigma, abuse and violence;
- Poverty and discrimination in employment;
- Inadequate and poor social services and social protection;
- Political exclusion and clientelism;
- Lack of comprehensive and disaggregated data; and
- Spatial exclusion.

Several laws have also been passed safeguarding the rights of marginalised people, including their civil and political rights. Some of the landmark legislations are as follows:

- Child and Youth Welfare Code – Presidential Decree No. 603;
- Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act – R.A. 7610;
- Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act – R.A. 9262;
- Magna Carta of Women (MCW) Act – R.A. 9710;
- Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (RH Law) – R.A. 10354;
- Magna Carta of Persons with Disabilities – R.A. 7277;
- An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments and Public Utilities to install Facilities and Other Devices (Accessibility Law) – B.P. 344;
- Indigenous People’s Rights Act (IPRA) – R.A. 8371; and
- The Senior Citizens Welfare Act – R.A. 7432.

Some of these are in accordance with the international frameworks ratified by The Philippine government:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC);
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD); and
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

State of affairs

Of the five Voice target groups, four are officially recognised as part of the 14 basic sectors – ‘the poor’ and ‘the marginalised’ groups – in Philippine society, as defined in the Republic Act 8425 or the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act of 1998. These acts adopt an area-based, sectorial and focused approach to poverty alleviation. The LGBTI community is excluded since the national movements on sexual orientation and gender identity, begun in the 90s, is still considered as an emerging discourse in development.

Below is a summary of each group’s socio-demographic and geographical profile based on available data at the national level. It is important to emphasise the pervasive existence of social stigma against all groups. This is glaring and is considered as one of the most serious but overlooked forms of discrimination. Furthermore, advocacy initiatives in The Philippines have commonly focused on legislation and programme implementation rather than behavioural changes.

People living with disabilities

According to the 2010 census, just over 1.5 million or 1.5% of the population was considered to be living with a disability. This data falls drastically short of the global estimate, which is around 15% of the population (WHO 2016). In The Philippines, the definition and measurement of disability is very narrow. It is largely defined from a medical perspective and is confined to accessible areas of the country only.

In the world of work, the government has stipulated that five percent of all casual, emergency and contractual positions in a company should be held by people living with disabilities. Employers receive incentives to hire people living with disabilities and to make improvements or modifications in the workplace for them. Despite this, adherence is limited due to:

- Applications that require a certain amount of literacy and the means to provide medical evidence of disability, which then has to be registered at Local Government Units;
- An assumption that people living with disabilities have the economic means and access to information and resources;
- And discrimination in the workplace and negative attitudes of co-workers.

Children with disabilities face the worst forms of exclusion. In 2005, the Department of Education reported that 97% of children living with disabilities were not in school and only 2% had access to Special Education. This can be caused by parents who either limit them before looking at their potential or are too protective of them and thus do not send them to school. Service providers are also not properly equipped to include children living with disabilities in the education system regarding curriculum design, accessibility of infrastructure and facilities, technical capacity of teachers and administrators, and disability identification.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI)

Gender non-conformity is not new to The Philippines. It was prevalent through the *babaylan*¹⁷ prior to Spanish rule. In the 16th and 17th centuries, crossing genders and transvestism was intrinsic to The Philippine culture. This was all but

¹⁷ The *babaylan* was a spiritual leader, a high priestess, a medicine woman, and an important member of the council of leaders in pre-colonial Philippines. The word connotes woman but Garcia (2004) wrote of male *babaylans* recognised as women, openly ‘marrying’ or having sexual relations with men.

wiped out by more than 300 years of Spanish occupation/colonisation and the emergence and dominance of Christianity, especially the Catholic Church.

In 2013, there were 100 organisations providing services to LGBTI persons. Data gathered by those working in the field of HIV and AIDS estimate the number of ‘Men who have Sex with Men’ (MSMs) in The Philippines to be anything between 300,000 and 800,000 (LAGABLAB, 2016).

Poverty in The Philippines is pervasive. Livelihood options are limited; many LGBTI persons are forced to engage in ‘sex work’ or undertake work that is demeaning and reinforces stereotypes, like beauty, entertainment and service industries. Those in the formal, non-stereotypical sector experience stigma and discrimination, and a lack of opportunities in the workplace.

Social exclusion is common. Many LGBTI people suffer from depression, anger, suicidal tendencies and conflicts within their families. This is especially true for those who struggle to disclose their sexuality or gender identity i.e. ‘come out’ to their families. Services such as psychosocial counsellors equipped with proper skills and training to deal with these problems are few. Moreover, almost all health facilities and healthcare professionals are ill equipped to deal with transgender health issues. Many transgender people ignore routine pap smears or prostate check-ups. Many avoid being tested for HIV due to stigma and the poor attitude of health care workers (FGD LGBT, Nov 2016).

LGBTI students face discrimination at school not just from their co-students but also from teachers and school administrators. It is a common reality that they are given failing grades or expelled from school just because of their gender identity. Some families also do not allow their children to go to school when they learn about them being gay or lesbian.

Women facing exploitation, abuse and/or violence

Despite being in the World Economic Forum’s top 10 countries in gender equality and closing the gender gap in health care, The Philippine reality on violence against women is bleak. The 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey (PSA, 2014) shows some startling figures for women aged 15-49 in urban and rural settings:

- 20% or one in every five women was physically abused;
- 6% of women have experienced sexual violence;
- 4.2% have experienced both forms of violence;
- 21.5% have experienced emotional abuse.

A major concern indicated by women’s groups is the inadequacy of services for women and the difficulty of accessing existing services. There are no ‘one-stop’ shops for rescued women, making the post-rescue process tedious and traumatic for survivors as they are made to go from one government agency to another (Williams, 2010).

For abused women and girls, aside from a lack of social services, the issues extend to a lack of access to justice. According to the 2013 NDHS survey, only 30% of victims nationwide sought help to stop violence, mostly from their own families. Only 5.7% of abused women who sought help went to the police and an even smaller proportion of abused women (1.3%) sought help from lawyers (PSA, 2014). This shows that the help-seeking behaviour of victims of gender-based violence is generally weak.

Government shelters tend to provide services for adult women rather than girls. This does not take into account the fact that most females trafficked are adolescent girls. For women living with HIV and AIDS, the difficulty in accessing government services is magnified, since many services target key populations, such as MSMs and transgender.

Poverty, coupled with low educational attainment, renders women vulnerable to various forms of abuse and exploitation. Living in poverty remains a critical push factor for women to migrate to cities and outside the country. They may then become victims of trafficking. Poverty can also be the cause of the re-victimisation of some women.

Age-discriminated vulnerable groups

Children

Government agencies generally follow the UN age classification for this sector:

- Children - those aged 17 and below;
- Adolescents - those aged 10-19;
- Youth - those aged 15-25 and;
- Young people - those aged 10-24.

In 2010, there were 38.5 million Filipinos aged 5 to 24 making up 41.8% of the total population. The Net Enrolment Ratio for primary school age children was 92.6%, 64.9% for secondary and 20.7% for tertiary education. The main reasons cited for not going to school were: ‘employment/looking for work’ (28.8%), ‘family income not sufficient’ (15.7%) and marriage (12.9%).

Only recently have adolescents in The Philippines been tagged as ‘left behind’ by health facilities due to the absence of services for them. The Republic Act 10354 or the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act contain several provisions for adolescent sexual and reproductive health. However, in Section 7, it is specified that ‘minors will not be allowed access to modern methods of family planning without written consent from their parents or guardian/s except when the minor is already a parent or has had a miscarriage.’ This problem is compounded by the pervasive cultural norm that stigmatises discussions about sex especially with young people. Pregnant teenagers fear telling their parents of their pregnancy for risk of getting physically and verbally abused or being evicted from home. They are thus less likely to get parental consent for the sexual and reproductive health services that they need.

Older Persons

According to a study made by Moody’s Investors Services in 2014 (ABS-CBN News, 2014), The Philippines will officially be considered an ‘ageing society,’ in 2030. Based on the 2010 census, there were over 9 million older people, of which 1.3 were considered to be indigents.

In terms of their welfare, the Constitution mandates that ‘the family has the duty to care for its elderly members although the State may also do so through just programmes of social security’ (Article XV, Section 4). The elderly constitute the eighth poorest sector in The Philippines, with an unchanging poverty incidence of 16.1% in 2009 and 16.2% in 2012 (PSA, 2016). Financial constraints rank first in their list of problems. The majority of older persons must still earn a living. However, age discrimination in employment limits their options for a livelihood.

The country’s pension system benefits only those employed in formal and regular work – something, which comparatively few people enjoy. Most receive 3,000 (\$60) pesos a month. For the majority of older persons, especially the poor and

indigents who only get 500 pesos (\$10) a month, this is inadequate to meet their basic needs. Organisations of older people estimate that around four million older persons (those whose livelihood was in the informal sector) do not receive any pension at all.

The most common cause of death of older persons is lifestyle-related diseases. Older persons comprise 22% of people living with disabilities according to the 2010 census and 15% of older persons are at risk (i.e. healthy but have limitations on their physical activities and mostly stay at home). Unfortunately, public geriatric services in the country are limited and medical costs are paid from their own pockets. The sector is also excluded from qualifying for private healthcare plans.

Indigenous groups and ethnic minorities

The Philippines is the only country in Asia that officially uses the term 'Indigenous Peoples' (Asian Development Bank, 2010) in its legal and political affairs, as defined in the Republic Act 8371 or the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA).

UNDP estimates that there are 14 to 17 million indigenous people in The Philippines who belong to at least 110 ethno-linguistic groups. Of these, 61% are in Mindanao, 33% in the Cordillera Administrative Region in Northern Luzon and the remaining groups are in Visayas. The Family Income and Expenditure Survey in 2015 showed that more than half of those in the top 20 poorest provinces of The Philippines are also indigenous people areas.

For indigenous people, their economic situation is related to the continued struggle for ancestral domain for they value land as life and the main source of their productive activities. Ancestral domain and ancestral lands are premised on the idea that the land belongs to the community/tribe and thus cannot be bought. It can only be passed on from generation to generation. This is a great source of conflict as 'an increasing number of indigenous peoples are being forcibly displaced from their lands by extractive industries like mining and logging, for so-called development projects like hydroelectric dams, expansion of mono-crop plantations of fruits, biofuels, fast-growing trees, and militarisation' (Tauli-Corpus, 2007).

Furthermore, their remote location, coupled with poverty, remains the biggest challenge to accessing basic social services such as education, health and even water. Likewise, elementary and high schools are located far from the communities and families are unable to send children to school due to the lack of uniform/clothes, inability to pay for fees for boarding schools and miscellaneous expenses. These financial challenges severely hinder and limit the progress of young people in education and other employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, while health centres are present in these communities, they are often understaffed and lack facilities and medicines. Women who give birth at home often miss out on free food, which is given in hospital, as they lack birth certificates for their children. They also fail to get prioritised for immunisation.

Role of Civil Society

The Constitution of The Philippines guarantees the legitimacy of civil society to engage and participate in matters concerning the State. Article II, Section 23 of the 1987 Constitution highlights: 'The State shall encourage non-governmental, community-based, or sectoral organisations that promote the welfare of the nation.' The landscape of civil society organisations and social movements is vibrant in the country.

According to the UNDP Civil Society Briefs, Philippine NGOs and other civil groups have, over the last two decades, 'increased their effectiveness through networking and coalition building, campaigning for policy reform, adopting good practice standards, and advancing "sustainable development" as a uniting vision for all organisations.'

The government is also generally supportive due to its democratic nature and 'has resulted in one of the most well-developed and institutionalised civil society sectors in the developing world.'

However, despite the conducive environment for civil society pushing for responsive and rights-based legislation, programmes and services from the government remain problematic. Most politicians and government agencies lack an understanding and knowledge of the existing laws protecting the rights of marginalised groups. Moreover, participatory governance mechanisms at the local level are weak, as is the implementation of plans and policies, due to lack of resources and skills, among others.

On the other hand, marginalised groups also lack the capacity to engage and are also viewed as incapable of participating in governance. Persons living with disabilities and the LGBTI community are commonly branded as *walang alam* – 'do not know anything'. The bigger and more established organisations are more successful at influencing the government. Small informal groups, including community-based organisations, often remain a mechanism for the larger organisations to mobilise people on the ground for their own agendas.

Older persons, especially those with good employment and education, are respected in their communities and their views are valuable for politicians. In most instances, however, mobility and health limitations make it hard for older people to engage actively. For indigenous people, their geographical location remains the biggest hindrance to engagement.

The role and impact of the Private Sector is particularly relevant for the indigenous people as many are in conflict over claims on their ancestral domains.

The most recent threat identified in the context analysis is the new administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, especially his stance on drugs, anti-human rights and his disregard for women's rights. This will have implications on the work and advocacy agenda of Voice partners/grantees.