

Philippines



Population: 97,976,603

Population Growth Rate: 1.957%

Birth Rate: 26.01 births/1,000 population

Life Expectancy: total population: 71.09 years; male: 68.71 years; female: 74.15 years

Literacy Rate: total population: 92.6%; male: 92.5%; female: 92.7%

Net Migration Rate: -1.34 migrants/1,000 population

Unemployment Rate: 8%

Gross Domestic Product per Capita: \$3,300

Religions: Roman Catholic 80.9%, Muslim 5%, Evangelical 2.8%, Iglesia ni Kristo 2.3%, Aglipayan 2%, other Christian 4.5%, other 1.8%, unspecified 0.6%, none 0.1% [

Languages: Filipino (official), English (official), eight major dialects (including Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon or Ilonggo, Bicol, Waray, Pampango, and Pangasinan)

Ethnic Groups: Tagalog 28.1%, Cebuano 13.1%, Ilocano 9%, Bisaya/Binisaya 7.6%, Hiligaynon longgo 7.5%, Bikol 6%, Waray 3.4%, other 25.3%

Capital: Manila¹

Trafficking Routes

There is a serious problem with human trafficking in the Philippines as a country of origin, destination, and transit.² The U.S. Department of State estimates that between 300,000 and 400,000 women and 60,000 to 100,000 children are trafficked annually.³ A United Nations agency lists the Philippines as one of the seven worst countries for child trafficking in Asia.⁴

According to the Filipino National Bureau of Investigation, the Philippines is within the top five countries of origin.⁵ The same article reports that many Filipino trafficking victims are sent to Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Cyprus. A different article reports Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Canada, Cyprus, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Palau, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates as destinations.⁶

¹ CIA, THE WORLD FACTBOOK 2009, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rp.html> (Last visited Sept. 22, 2009).

² BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR, 2008 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT- PHILIPPINES (2009), <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eap/119054.htm>.

³ BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR, 2006 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT- PHILIPPINES (2007), <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78788.htm>.

⁴ UNICEF, REVERSING THE TREND: CHILD TRAFFICKING IN EAST AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA (2009), http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Unicef_EA_SEA_Trafficking_Report_Aug_2009_low_res.pdf.

⁵ *RP Among Top 5 nations with Most Human Trafficking Victims in the World*, GMA NEWS.TV, Aug. 11, 2008, <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/112895/RP-among-top-5-nations-with-most-human-trafficking-victims-in-the-world--NBI#>.

⁶ Juan Mercado, *Troubling Numbers*, PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, Aug. 21, 2008, available at: <http://opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/columns/view/20080821-155873/Troubling-numbers>.

The Philippines is also a transit country for many international criminal groups trafficking women mainly from China, through the Philippines, and ultimately to other destinations.⁷

The Philippines is a destination country for a small number of victims from foreign countries including Russia, China, and South Korea.⁸ However, there is also a large problem with domestic trafficking as many Filipinos are moved from rural to urban areas.⁹ These include metro Manila, Cebu, and Quezon City.¹⁰

Factors That Contribute to the Trafficking Infrastructure

Many factors contribute to the high levels of human trafficking, particularly of women and children, in the Philippines. Poverty is a significant factor, compounded by the lack of economic development and available jobs in poor, and often rural, areas. Trafficking victims may be forced by their economic situations to put themselves in positions where they are at risk of being trafficked. There are also gender inequalities that make women and girls more vulnerable than men or boys to being trafficked, though boys are affected by child sex and forced labor trafficking¹¹. Families do not always understand the danger when they send children to work away from home.¹²

A lack of information is also a problem for women seeking to emigrate to other countries and work abroad. They might have insufficient or completely false information as to what they will be doing there. Some women lack travel documents and cannot leave the country or return without the help of traffickers.¹³

Sex tourism is another large problem because it fuels the human trafficking trade. As more and more foreigners come to the Philippines for the commercial sex trade, it will continue to drive up the demand for women and children to be exploited.¹⁴

Forms of Trafficking

There are very high rates of trafficking of women and children in the Philippines, especially for the commercial sex industries. The United Nations reports that there are between 60,000 and 100,000 child prostitutes in the Philippines.¹⁵ According to a U.N. report, the majority of child trafficking in East Asia and the Pacific is for the purpose of child prostitution;

⁷ Bureau of Democracy *supra* at 3.

⁸ Mercado *supra* at 6.

⁹ Bureau of Democracy *supra* at 3.

¹⁰ ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, EUROPEAN UNION (EU), UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF), UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (UNIFEM), UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (UNFPA), AND NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE ROLE OF FILIPINO WOMEN, "PARADOX AND PROMISE IN THE PHILIPPINES: A JOINT COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT 84 (2008), available at: http://www.unicef.org/philippines/PHI_CGA_final_manuscript_August_2008.pdf.

¹¹ CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES, HUMAN TRAFFICKING: AN OVERVIEW-OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS, http://crs.org/public-policy/in_depth.cfm (last visited Feb. 16, 2010).

¹² UNICEF, Factsheet: Child Trafficking in the Philippines, <http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/ipulocaltrafficking.pdf>. (Last accessed September 22, 2009).

¹³ Asian Development Bank *supra* at 10.

¹⁴ Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), November 2008, <http://www.catwinternational.org/> (Last visited Sept. 21, 2009).

¹⁵ UNICEF *supra* at 11.

however, some victims are sold as forced labor for the industrial and agricultural fields.¹⁶ Children are also exploited by being forced to participate in pornography.¹⁷ Youths often go to Internet cafés to chat online with men in Western countries.¹⁸

Trafficked women are often forced into labor, prostitution, or marriage. Women trafficked from rural to urban areas often end up working in brothels, bars, sweatshops, and private homes.¹⁹ There are also many Filipino Web sites dedicated to pairing Western men with Filipino women. These relationships can be online or in person (if the man visits the Philippines), or the women are trafficked out of the Philippines and forced into marriage in another country.²⁰ Women trafficked to the Middle East are usually forced into prostitution and domestic service. The Philippine Embassy in Bahrain receives several calls a day for help, and at least three housemaids walk into the embassy every day complaining about abuse²¹.

Government Responses

In 2003, the government of the Philippines adopted the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act in hopes of introducing policies to eliminate trafficking, establish the necessary programs to protect and support trafficked victims, and provide penalties for the offenders by defining trafficking and trafficking-related acts.²²

Foreigners who commit any of the offenses enumerated in the act are subject to immediate deportation after serving the sentence and are barred permanently from re-entering the country.²³ With the creation of this law, the Philippine National Police (PNP), National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Justice, and other agencies concerned with the issues of trafficking joined together in hope of promoting programs and events that will help safeguard the victims of all sorts of trafficking activities.²⁴

In 2008, the PNP in Negros Occidental started to implement a local antitrafficking in persons data bank re-training program by making use of their local resources. In doing this, the national police are meeting challenges head-on, such as budgeting priorities and the usual fund limitations.²⁵

Most recently in 2009, the government of the Philippines released a report stating that “since 2007, a total of 14,854 passengers have been offloaded at the international airports for various reasons, although mostly for being possible victims of human trafficking.”²⁶ Throughout the years, the country’s national government has become more aware of human trafficking issues

¹⁶ UNICEF, Child Protection Information Sheet, May 2006, <http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/Trafficking.pdf>.

¹⁷ Rob McBride, *Combating Child Sexual Exploitation in the Philippines, Pornography Trade*, UNICEF, Nov. 17 2008, available at: http://www.unicef.org/protection/philippines_46406.html.

¹⁸ Rob McBride, *Youths Drawn Into Online Sexual Exploitation in the Philippines*, Dec. 15, 2008, available at: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/philippines_46852.html.

¹⁹ *Supra* at 10.

²⁰ *Supra* at 10.

²¹ *Call to Review Housemaids’ Conditions*, BAHRAIN TRIBUNE, Dec. 26, 2002.

²² Section 3 on “Definition of Terms.”

²³ Section 10(g).

²⁴ Press Release, Philippine Information Agency (PIA), STEER provides Philist software to PNP members (July 29, 2008), available at: [http://mail.pia.gov.ph/default.asp?m=12&sec=reader&rp=8&fi=p080729.htm&no=74&date=.](http://mail.pia.gov.ph/default.asp?m=12&sec=reader&rp=8&fi=p080729.htm&no=74&date=)

²⁵ *PNP-Negros conducts re-training on data banking against trafficking*, THE SUNDAY TIMES, June 29, 2008, <http://www.trafficking.org.ph/v5/>.

²⁶ Press Release, Republic of the Philippines, PGMA to inaugurate newly-renovated Immigration office (Sept. 7, 2009), http://www.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2001611&Itemid=2.

and trafficking-related acts. The government is working to increase involvement and promote programs, events, and education on prevention and assistance to trafficking victims and the general public.

Nongovernmental and International Organizations Responses

Numerous local nongovernmental organizations are working to combat trafficking and exploitation of women and children. One is the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). The commission's main functions are to inform and educate the national community on basic "human rights values, principles, and laws" through the idea of human rights protection and promotion.²⁷ The CHR is actively promoting human rights advocacy courses for members of the police and military forces in addition to training seminars for public school teachers nationwide.

The Center for Overseas Workers is another NGO that is working to eradicate human trafficking. This center carries out pre-employment information campaigns and education on exploitation, and provides "counseling, referrals, and assistance in filing complaints with the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration."²⁸

Several other organizations have programs in the Philippines. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women has 30 member groups in the country. The coalition pushed for the passage of the Anti-trafficking in Persons Act of 2003.²⁹

Within the last few years, many global administration responsibilities of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have been transferred to the IOM based in the Philippines. This move is part of the future undertaking and growth management of the organization without increasing the need for additional resources. The IOM created the Manila Administrative Centre to aid the expansion of various programs, offices, worldwide events, and other additional functions in information technology and administrative services.³⁰

Multilateral Initiatives

In 2006, the United States granted over \$1 million to combat trafficking in the Philippines. In June 2008, the Philippines was granted an additional \$300,000 by the United States government. The United States is allied with Visayan Forum Foundation, which works to create a safe haven for victims by creating shelters.³¹

Ferdinand Lavin, chief of the NBI Anti-Human Trafficking Division, reported there were 168 alleged cases of trafficking in 2008, a 60 percent increase over the previous year, with four convictions.³² In 2005, the president of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, created a special task force to combat human trafficking with Executive Order No. 406. This task force works with Japan to combat human trafficking, specifically regarding sex tourism. Its principle mission is to "establish friendly and cordial relations through dialogues with Japanese authorities

²⁷ *Commission on Human Rights—Philippines*, HUMAN TRAFFICKING.ORG, 2006, <http://www.humantrafficking.org/organizations/288> (Last visited Sept. 22, 2009).

²⁸ *Center for Overseas Workers—Philippines*, HUMAN TRAFFICKING.ORG, 2006, <http://www.humantrafficking.org/organizations/303> (Last visited Sept. 22, 2009).

²⁹ *Supra* at 14.

³⁰ International Organization of Migration, Overview, 2009, <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/activities/asia-and-oceania/east-and-south-east-asia/philippines> (Last accessed Sept. 21, 2009).

³¹ *US Grants Philippines \$.3 M to Combat Trafficking*, ABS-CBN, June 1, 2008.

³² *Philippines: Legal system Falls Short on Human Trafficking*, IRIN ASIA, July 22, 2009, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=85378> (Last visited Sept. 22, 2009).

with respect to the status and welfare of Filipino entertainers in Japan affected by Japan's new immigration policy."³³ The task force, which is overseen by the Department of Labor and Employment, is working to create greater supervision to prevent illegal recruitment out of the Philippines under the Commission on Filipinos Overseas.³⁴

Recently, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Hilario G. Davide Jr. actively participated in a themed discussion with the U.N. General Assembly on Taking Collective Action to End Human Trafficking.³⁵ This interactive dialogue was sponsored in a collaborative effort by the Philippines, Belarus, Egypt, Nicaragua, and Bahrain, and was held in New York on May 13, 2009.³⁶

The national government of the Philippines is working very closely with the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia to combat transnational crime issues, including human trafficking and trafficking-related acts. In fact, Childhope Asia Philippines is an organization that promotes the issue of human resource development by means of training and capacity-building activities.³⁷ These programs are conducted through the use of staff and NGO volunteers within the Philippines, in addition to other active members of the Asian community.

³³ Executive Order No. 406 Feb. 8, 2005, available at: <http://www.iom.int/pbmp/PDF/00916.pdf>. (Last visited Sept. 21, 2009).

³⁴ Anthony Vargas, *Govt Steps up Anti-Trafficking Campaign*, THE MANILA TIMES, Aug. 10, 2008, available at: <http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2008/aug/10/yehey/ofw/20080810ofw1.html>. (Last visited Sept. 21, 2009).

³⁵ Press Release, PIA, New Samar NGO Echoes needed for Synergy in efforts vs. Human Trafficking, May 22, 2009, <http://www.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&sec=reader&rp=2&fi=p090522.htm&no=13&date=05/22/2009> (Last visited Sept. 22, 2009).

³⁶ *Id.* at 35.

³⁷ Philippines Best Practices- International, 2006, http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/philippines/best_practices (Last visited Sept. 22, 2009).