

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT ENGAGEMENT AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN THE PHILIPPINES REPORT



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OF
CHILDREN**
IN THE PHILIPPINES

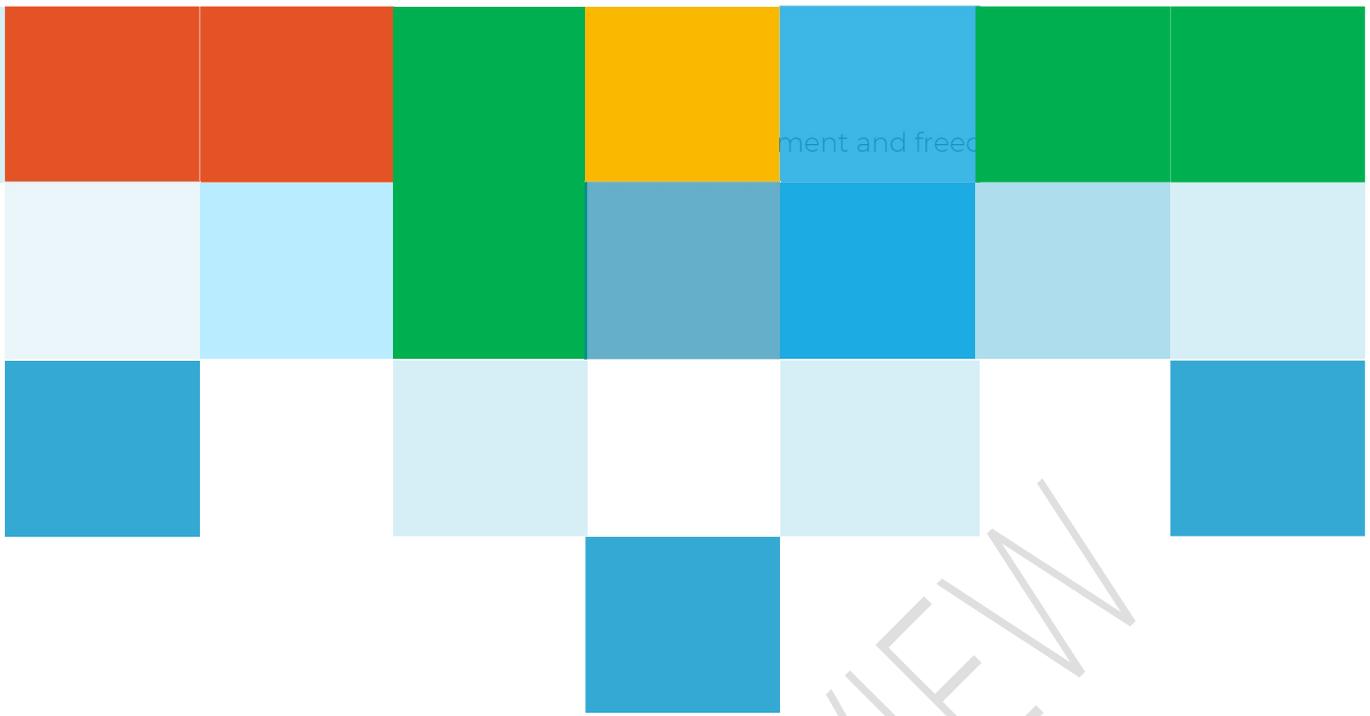


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In the Philippines, child and youth participation are recognized as important components of achieving the government’s political, social and economic goals.

As such, the Philippines context is one in which a significant enabling environment for the promotion of children and young people’s civil and political participation has been fostered, through mechanisms like the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), the Philippines’ version of the village youth council. However, it is noted that those with disabilities may be less systematically included in engagement opportunities, and that the quality of engagement is not always high as children and young people’s inputs can be ignored.

The Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) 2017-2022 aims to maximize youth participation in nation-building as proactive citizens, focusing on areas health, education, economic empowerment, social inclusion and equity, peacebuilding and security, governance, active citizenship, environment and global mobility. It is positive that the

National Youth Commission and its partners categorize types of adolescents and youth they consult in the development of the PYDP to ensure different characteristics and experiences are represented. Youth-led groups are also now actively consulted on issues such as policymaking and HIV/AIDS, as stipulated in the AIDS Medium Term Plan.

Child Rights Situation Analysis

At the subnational level, LGUs and barangays are mandated and encouraged to include youth participation in their activities. One incentive to improve their youth participation is an endeavour to win the Presidential Award for Child-Friendly Municipalities and Cities, which is given to LGUs that perform best on the Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit.

The number of Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children (BCPCs) with Child Representatives was found to have increased from 862 in 2014 to 1347 in 2018, indicating an improvement in child and youth participation at the subnational level. However, regional disparities were also highlighted.

It is also important to consider the quality of their participation. Issues such as missed school days, limited budgets and ineffective consultation processes hinder meaningful engagement. Despite the availability of

handbooks and guides for best child engagement practices, they are underutilized, necessitating concerted efforts to improve the quality of youth engagement. on behalf of female children than male children. There are key variations by region, with the highest number of complaints from CALABARZON while the lowest number from MIMAROPA . Interpretations of this data must be dealt with caution as a lower number of received complaints may also suggest that it is more difficult for children to access these mechanisms to register complaints.

Equity & Risk

EQUITY

Gender

This situation analysis has not been able to determine any data which disaggregates by gender under this subdimension.

Disability	This situation analysis has not been able to determine any data which disaggregates by disability under this subdimension.
Subnational	<p>The BARMM region saw the highest increase in the number of BCPCs with Child Representatives between 2017-2018, and Region I has a high percentage coverage in addition. Conversely, Regions II and IX saw a decrease or low percentage coverage, which could be cause for concern with regard to child and adolescent engagement in civil and political matters in those regions.</p> <p>In addition, children who are not registered at birth are deprived under this subdimension, as this precludes many from civil and political participation. Children most at risk of not being registered include children from geographically remote areas, orphans of OFWs and those who have been displaced by conflict or climate events. It should further be noted that many participation opportunities are in English or Tagalog, which can exclude those who do not speak these languages, particularly indigenous peoples.</p>

RISKS

Natural hazards	No natural hazard-related risks were identified as yet under this subdimension.
Conflict	When peace processes occur in the Philippines, youth engagement is reportedly not a priority which risks young people being an important constituency excluded from peace processes and the political settlements which can result. Processes primarily focus on the needs of the government and the other conflict party or armed non-state actor.
Health Crisis/Pandemic	The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant loss of leisure and culture opportunities in the Philippines. Some of the world's most stringent COVID-19 containment measures were implemented preventing many from attending school or engaging in learning for up to a year. As such, any such future health crisis would pose a significant risk to cultural outcomes and opportunities.
Other risks	<p>Research undertaken for this report identified gaps in the data on child rights. There is a lack of disaggregation by disability, and some total gaps against key indicators.</p> <p>In certain areas no reliable data was identified, which seemed to especially be an issue with regards to civil and participation rights data. The use of unreliable data to inform programming and policies represents a major threat to the realization of child rights: it can lead to resources being misdirected, the impact of programmes being misinterpreted and a lack of understanding surrounding the key</p>

determinants in the realization of child rights. It can also have a negative effect in terms of the planning of future programmes and policies for children.

Legislation & Policy Analysis

For 30 years, the SK has been in operation, providing significant opportunity for young people’s political engagement at the local level.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has hailed the Philippines as a pioneer on children’s participation, highlighting that three nationwide children’s consultations had been conducted in 2022. In addition, the Committee highlighted the 2017-2022 National Strategic Plan on Child Participation and the Magna Carta of Children - a comprehensive children’s human rights law, envisioned to be enacted in 2025 - as positive elements of the Philippines’ child participation policy framework.

Additionally, the National Youth Commission runs 10 centres of youth participation - engaging young people on matters ranging from health and education to agriculture - in work aligned under the PYDP, which is approved by NEDA under Republic Act No. 10742 (the SK Reform Act of 2015). Also approved by NEDA is AmBisyon Natin 2040, which is another framework supporting youth participation.

Bottleneck Analysis

Demand

Those without birth registration are often precluded from political participation. Those without birth certificates are largely unable to participate in civil and political matters, including voting once they are of age. This is a bottleneck particularly for unregistered children in BARMM, which has high rates of unregistered children.

Supply

- **Lack of data on those with disabilities limits the extent to which services and engagement opportunities can be tailored to respond to their needs.** There is a lack of clarity around how equitable and inclusive processes for civil participation really are for those with disabilities. UNICEF is working with the PSA to collect more data in a range of areas according to the Washington Group Set categorizations, but to date this lack of data has been a bottleneck with regard to the effective tailoring of engagement opportunities for children with disabilities.

- **Limited robust M&E on child participation plans.** Similarly, there has been a challenge that administrative actors cannot always implement child participation plans, and there is limited M&E in place to track this. For example, there is thought to be limited agreement around what constitutes effective child participation indicators, and how to measure them. Additionally, with over 42,000 barangays and SKs in the Philippines tracking the implementation of child participation plans is a huge administrative burden; only 75 per cent of barangays submitted reports against the CWC's Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance requirements recently. This has proved a bottleneck in determining the extent to which child participation approaches are developed and implemented, and their impact.

Enabling environment

- **Lack of data to determine extent of youth participation among marginalized groups.** For example, there is insufficient data on the extent to which children and youth with disabilities are included in SK activities at the LGU level. This, and the exclusion of girls and other marginalized groups, is likely to be a challenge.
- **Changes to personnel.** Key personnel from organizations like the National Youth Commission and partner government agencies is a critical bottleneck, limiting the extent to which they can grow and build their work, and the extent to which other actors can form effective partnerships with them.

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