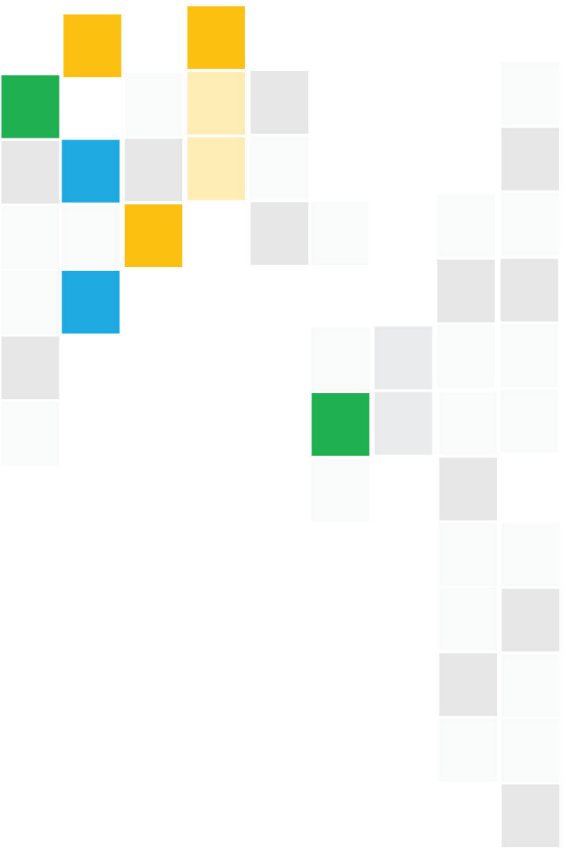




Situation of Children in the Philippines

INSIGHTS 2024

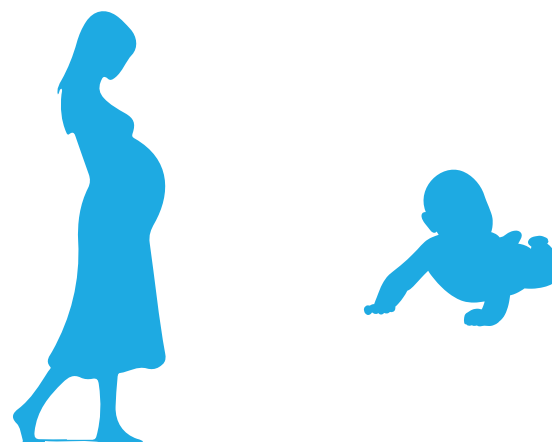


OVERVIEW

The Situation Analysis of Children in the Philippines (SitAn) offers insights based on latest data and evidence on the progress as well as challenges in the protection and realization of the rights of children in the country. It highlights persistent and ongoing deprivations, inequities, and risks in key areas of children’s rights, as well as obstacles faced by children, their caregivers, and duty bearers. The SitAn also analyzes key legal frameworks, policies, plans, and programs to address these challenges and achieve better developmental outcomes for children.

The total population of the Philippines stands at over 109 million as of 2020 growing at 1.63 per cent annually between 2015 and 2020. Urban population comprises 54 per cent of the population, a marked increase from 45.3 per cent in 2010. Urban areas have swelled rapidly across the country, with city populations growing at 1.9 per cent annually, outpacing the growth of the total population.

Following the economic slowdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippines is on track to becoming an upper middle-income country. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown at an average of over 6 per cent both quarterly and annually since 2021. Poverty levels are at new lows declining to 15.5 per cent in 2023 from 16.7 per cent in 2018 and from 18.1 per cent during the pandemic in 2021.



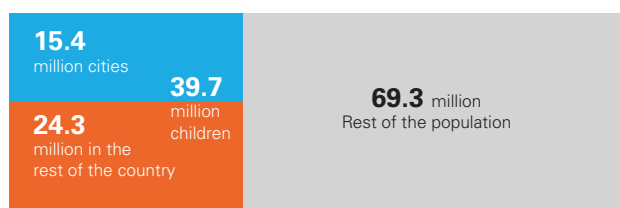
FIRST 1000 DAYS

AGES 0-2

Despite a healthy economy and significant poverty reduction, the country still faces risks from climate change, natural events and disasters, and ongoing issues with access to social services and income insecurity for marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Children aged under 18 years make up about 36.5 per cent of the total population. This is equivalent to around 39.7 million children in 2020 with a sex ratio of 107 boys for every 100 girls. Children aged under five years comprise 10.2 per cent of the population or 11.1 million. There is a small percentage of children and adolescents, 1.4 per cent, with disability or with at least one domain of functional difficulty.

Children population in the Philippines





EARLY CHILDHOOD
AGES 3-5



SCHOOL-AGED
AGES 6-9



ADOLESCENCE
AGES 10-19

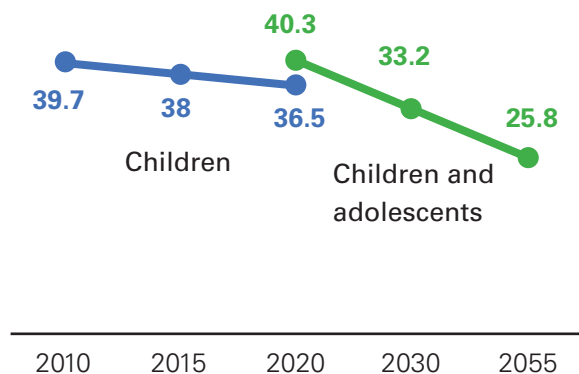
Forty-one per cent of the total population, including 38.7 per cent of all children, reside in the country’s 149 cities (as of 2024). Half of the children in cities are in highly urbanized cities which comprise only 22 per cent of all types of cities, while four in five children live in the first to third class cities of the six-tier income classification of cities.

The proportion of children in the total population is declining — from at least 39.7 per cent in 2010 to 38 per cent in 2015 and 36.5 per cent in 2020. Latest projections suggest that the share of the midyear population of children and adolescents aged up to 19 years will decrease from 40.3 per cent in 2020 to 33.2 per cent in 2030, and further to 25.8 per cent by 2055. In particular, under five children will drop from 10.2 per cent in 2020 to 7.8 per cent by 2030, and only 6 per cent of the total population by 2055.

The Philippines is facing a significant demographic shift. As total fertility rates slowly decline, annual growth rates reduce, and the share of young population decreases, the country looks to a more urbanized future with a burgeoning workforce. This points to a critical period for investing in education and job training to capitalize on this ‘demographic dividend.’

In the meantime, key challenges to child rights persist and demand immediate action. Severe malnutrition, high mortality rates, declining quality of education, prevalent child labor practices, and violence, in particular online sexual abuse and exploitation, highlight ongoing deprivations of rights and multidimensional poverty of children. Addressing these issues requires more intensive, collaborative efforts from the government, civil society, the private sector, caregivers, and communities, to effectively uphold and protect children’s rights.

Share of children and adolescents in total population (%)



SURVIVE AND THRIVE

Health of children, adolescents, and mothers

CHILD RIGHTS AND EQUITY ANALYSIS

Significant improvements in institutional and skilled birth attendant deliveries, nationally and across most regions, have been observed over the years.

Maternal mortality ratio, the last available estimate of which was in 2017, was significantly below the global average at the time. Yet, child mortality trends in the country have changed little with under-five and child mortality seeing a slight decline and infant and neonatal mortality showing a small increase in 2022.

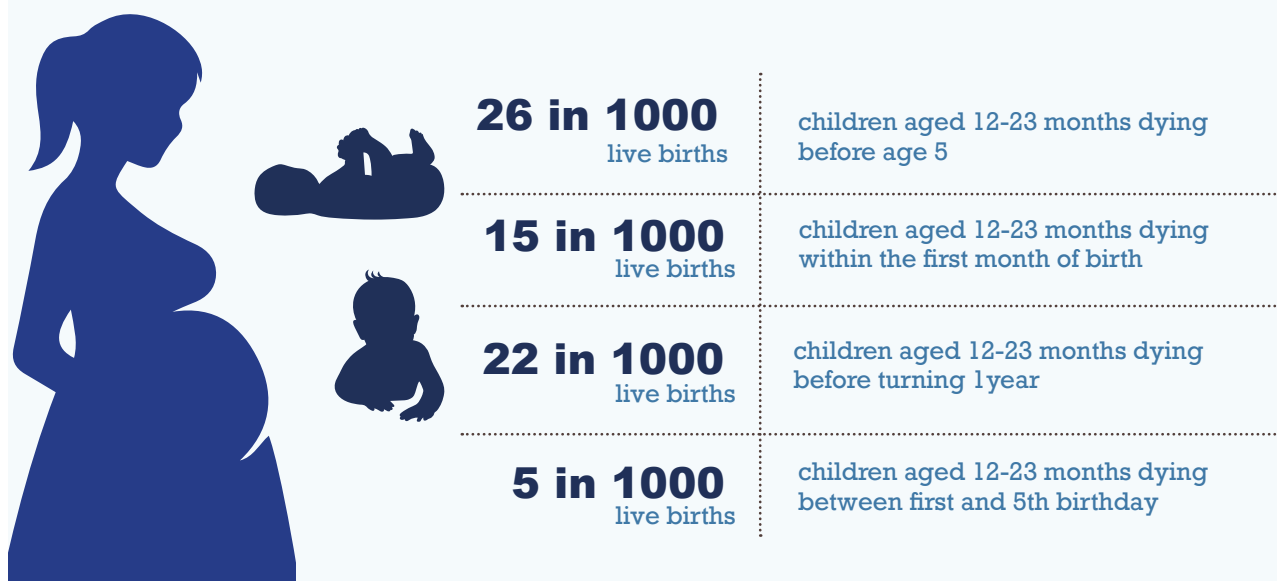
Twenty-six children in every 1,000 live births might not have made it to their fifth birthday in 2022, only slightly fewer than a decade or so ago. While under five mortality rates have continuously dropped over the years, the decline has been quite slow. Relatedly, five children in every 1,000 live births likely did not survive between their first and fifth birthdays by 2022.

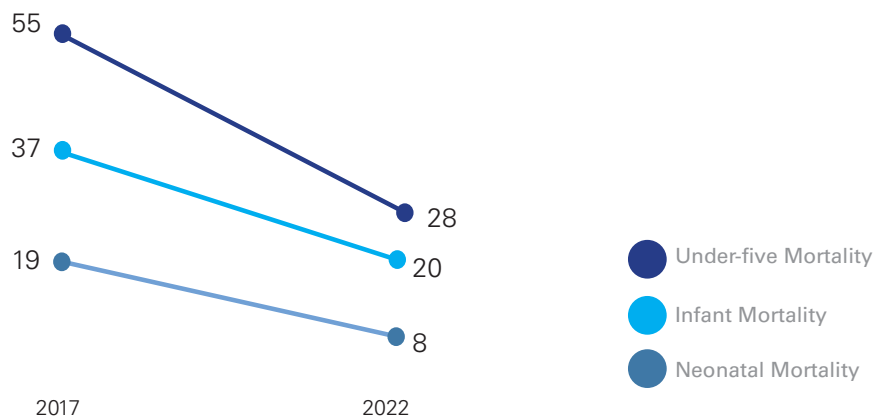
Fifteen children in every 1,000 live births were likely to not have survived within the first month of birth in 2022, nearly back to the same rate some fourteen years before. Neonatal mortality rate has gone down to 8 children per 1,000 live births in 2013 but has since been increasing. Similarly, infant mortality rate is slightly up in 2022 after slowing down in 2017.

BARMM remarkably halved mortality rates among children in 2022. Under-five mortality rate in BARMM dropped from 55 per cent in 2017 to 28 per cent in 2022, the same trend observed for neonatal, infant and child mortality rates. Region I registered the highest under five mortality rates among regions surging from 29 per cent in 2017 to 39 per cent in 2022.

Boys are more likely to die before reaching any age under five years, and so are children in urban areas, whose mothers have no education, and belonging to the poorest families.

Child mortality rates in the Philippines



Child mortality rates in BARMM (per 1000 live births)

So why are children still dying? The most common and primary causes of deaths among children are reported to be infections and parasitic diseases, many of which can be prevented by vaccines. The leading causes of neonatal deaths are complications from preterm birth and intrapartum related events.

In 2022, zero vaccination persisted and even surged to its highest rate since 1993. While seven in ten children aged 12-23 months were fully-immunized with basic antigens in 2022, one in every ten children did not receive any vaccination. At 11.2 per cent, the proportion of zero-dose children is almost three times the 3.8 per cent rate in 2013 and marks the highest ever rate reported since 1993. Despite this, the 2023 WHO and UNICEF Estimates of National Immunization Coverage report shows that the Philippines is no longer among the top twenty countries in the world with the highest number of zero-dose children. However, it remains one of the top six priority countries in the East Asia Pacific region.

In 2022, BARMM and most of Mindanao had the lowest immunization coverage and highest zero vaccination rates. Only one in five children aged 12-23 months was fully immunized in BARMM while three in five children did not receive any vaccination in 2022.

Children with zero vaccination

1 in 10
PHILIPPINES



6 in 10
BARMM

Adolescent pregnancy and birth rates have declined significantly in the last ten years.

Adolescent (or teenage) pregnancy (among women aged 15-19 years) declined to 5.4 per cent in 2022, from 8.6 per cent in 2017. Pregnancy among 15-17-year-old girls likewise decreased from 3.2 per cent to 2.9 per cent. Adolescent birth rate (age-specific fertility rate) is down by almost half, from 47 per cent in 2017 to 25 per cent in 2022. Adolescent pregnancy rates are highest in Region X, Region XI, Region III, and Caraga Region, and among the poorest households.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Objectives for Health (NOH) 2023-2028. The NOH is a comprehensive strategic plan that aims to address a wide spectrum of deprivations and system gaps affecting the health of Filipinos including children and their caregivers, especially those in poor, deprived, marginalized, and climate-vulnerable communities

The NOH recognizes key challenges in the health and nutrition of children such as on stunting, infant mortality rate, immunization, as well as those of women, including teenaged women, especially on reproductive health.

The NOH is anchored on several key legislations such as:

- The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act (RA 10354)
- 'An Act Safeguarding the Health of Filipino Mothers at the Time of Their Childbirth' (RA 1416)
- Mandatory Infants and Children Health Immunization Act (RA 10152)
- Philippine HIV and AIDS Policy Act
- Philippine Mental Health Act (RA 11036)

BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

Demand and access

- Limited access by households — especially children, adolescents, and pregnant and lactating mothers – to sufficient, diverse, and high-quality food and to health care facilities and services due to poverty, geographical access.
- Inadequate and deficient knowledge and practices on health and health care seeking behaviors and good nutrition among children, adolescents, and caregivers and decision makers in the families feeding.

Supply

- Inadequate supply chains for health and nutrition from national to the local level.
- Limited access to health care facilities due to long travel, distances, financial bottlenecks, and gendered norms.
- Inadequate primary health services delivery due to limited number and capacity of the health care providers.

Enabling environment

- Lack of demand for health care services.
- Inadequate education and relevant strategies to address the proliferation of misinformation and inconsistent cultural beliefs about immunization which had led to vaccine hesitancy or decreased confidence in vaccines.
- Fragmentation and lack of interoperability of health information systems especially at national, regional, and local levels which affect effective planning, targeting, and delivery of health services to affected children and mothers.
- Varying level of capacities among the local level decision makers for evidence-based planning and budgeting for health and nutrition.

SURVIVE AND THRIVE

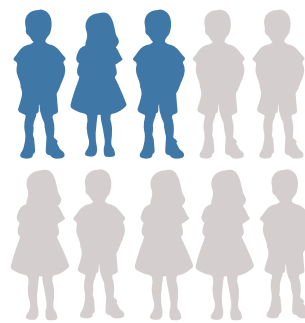
Nutrition of children, adolescent and women

CHILD RIGHTS AND EQUITY ANALYSIS

While some progress has been made in reducing stunting, wasting among children, and micronutrient deficiency in women, as well as promoting good breastfeeding practices, significant challenges in the nutrition of children, adolescents, and women remain. Stunting has decreased, but progress is slow and off-track to meet the SDG target.

Nearly three in ten children under five were stunted in 2021, equating to almost three million stunted children. The national stunting rate has hovered around 30 per cent since 2003, showing only gradual improvement. The 2021 stunting rate for children under five was 26.7 per cent, the lowest since 1989, but still higher than the global average of 22.3 per cent. This remains a serious public health issue based on WHO malnutrition thresholds.

In 2021, about 4.4 million children 5-10 years and adolescents >10-19 years were overweight or obese. The prevalence of overweight and obesity in these age groups is high according to public health standards. These rates have been rising steadily since 2003, and by 2018 they had crossed



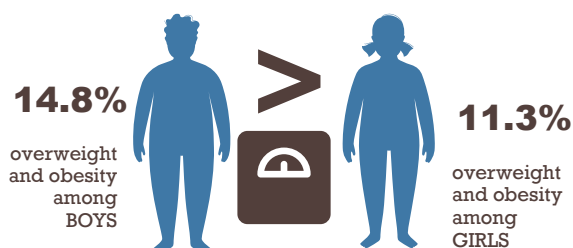
3 in 10
children under
5 years old are
stunted; remains
a high public
concern

into high public health concern thresholds. From 2015 to 2021, the average rate increased to 11 per cent, significantly faster than the 7 per cent average from 2003 to 2013. If this trend continues, the prevalence may soon exceed the critical threshold of 15 per cent for overweight and obesity, unless substantial interventions are put in place. This threshold has already been exceeded among boys, with an average rate of 15.5 per cent, particularly in 5-10-year-olds, at 16.1 per cent, and among children in urban areas, at an average of 16.8 per cent, in 2021.



1 in 10 school aged children
and adolescents
are
overweight and obese

More boys are becoming stunted or overweight compared to girls. Wasting primarily affects infants and young children 0-2 years old. Stunting tends to worsen as children reach one year of age and peaks among 3-4-year-olds, approaching a very high level of public health concern.



Stunting is more prevalent among children from poorer families, while overweight and obesity are more common among children in urban areas and higher-income groups. Wasting is also more severe in urban areas but affects children more in the lower to middle-income classes.

Breastfeeding is improving, with seven in ten newborns receiving early breastfeeding initiation and six in ten infants 0-6 months exclusively breastfed in 2021. While breastfeeding initiation rates have slightly declined, the 2021 rate of 72.4 per cent remains significantly higher than the global average of 48 per cent in 2023. Exclusive breastfeeding among infants 0-6 months has increased to 60.1 per cent in 2021, a notable rise from 48.8 per cent in 2015. This rate surpasses the global average of 44 per cent, but there below the



7 in 10

newborns receiving early breastfeeding initiation

70 per cent SDG target by 2030.

In 2021, while nine out of ten children met the recommended daily meal frequency, only one in ten received a sufficiently nutritious and diverse diet. From 2015 to 2021, about 91 per cent of children aged 6–23 months were fed meals or complementary foods at the recommended frequency. However, just 13.3 per cent and 13.8 per cent of these children received the minimum acceptable diet and dietary diversity, respectively.

Micronutrient deficiencies in pregnant and lactating women have dropped significantly since 1998. In 1998, half of all pregnant women and all lactating women aged 15–49 years had iron deficiencies. By 2021, these figures had dropped to 23 per cent for pregnant women and 10 per cent for lactating women. Among non-pregnant women, iron deficiency declined from 14.2 per cent in 2014 to 11.6 per cent in 2019, well below the global average of 29.6 per cent. However, anemia remains a moderate public health concern among girls under 20, affecting 23 per cent in 2021. Similarly, Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) in pregnant women decreased from 22.2 per cent in 1998 to 2.8 per cent by 2019, and among lactating women, it fell from 16.5 per cent to 2.2 per cent.

The nutritional-at-risks for pregnant women have steadily declined, as has chronic deficiency in lactating women. The proportion of nutritionally at-risk pregnant women aged 15–49 decreased by nearly half, from 30.7 per cent in 1998 to 16.4 per cent in 2021. However, teenage mothers (under 20 years old) are still considered moderately at-risk. Chronic energy deficiency among lactating women also dropped significantly, from 13.6 per cent in 2015 to 8.4 per cent in 2021. Meanwhile, overweight and obesity remains a persistent problem, affecting 35–36 per cent of non-pregnant, non-lactating women between 2015 and 2021.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition (PPAN) 2023-2028. The PPAN provides a roadmap to end malnutrition in all its forms emphasizing the crucial first 1,000 days of a child's life and especially stunting which has become a development and economic emergency.

The PPAN aims to implement nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programs, underpinned by key policies and laws like the First 1000 Days Act and Healthy Lifestyle Policy.

It also recognizes and aligns with the country's international commitments under the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the 2025 Global Targets for Maternal, Infant, and Young Child Nutrition, and the 2014 International Conference on Nutrition.

Among the key targets under PPAN are the reduction of under 5 stunting to 23.8 per cent by 2024 and 17.9 per cent by 2028 and prevalence of overweight and obesity among 5-10-year-olds and children and adolescents aged above 10 until 19 years to 5.7 per cent and 4.6 per cent, respectively, by 2028.

BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

Demand

- Limited access to adequate, diverse, and high-quality diets and services and care practices, particularly for children and pregnant or lactating mothers. This is due to:
 - Issues related to income, proximity to services, and mobility, especially in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, and among families impacted by unemployment, illness, or disabilities in children or parents.
- Suboptimal care practices around good nutrition, including health-seeking behaviors, among children and caregivers. This includes inadequate infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices among caregiver.

Supply

- Insufficient capacity in financing, procurement, delivery, and storage of essential nutrition and medical, along with inadequate monitoring of supply delivery and utilization.
- Weak water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, which hinder nutrient absorption and increase health risks.
- Inefficient transportation systems, particularly in rural areas, disrupting access to nutritious diets, as well as health and nutrition supply chains.
- Limited technical capacity to conduct nutrition promotion and preventive interventions, including early detection and management of malnutrition and promoting proper nutrition and care practices.

Enabling Environment

- Lack of regulation that promote healthy food environments including unhealthy food marketing to children.
- Gaps in the implementation and monitoring of nutrition policies and programmes, stemming from challenges in financing, human resources, technical skills, motivation, and coordination between national and local stakeholders.
- Disconnection between national laws and policies and the capacity of local government units (LGUs) to implement related programmes and services at the community level.
- Heavy dependence on local political leadership for nutrition programs, services, and budgets. This includes the leaders' knowledge of nutrition outcomes, their willingness to prioritize nutrition, frequent changes in leadership, and the influence of political dynasties.
- Fragmented and insufficient data on nutrition and malnutrition outcomes, with limited access to timely, detailed, and high-quality data from national surveys and administrative reporting systems.

LEARN AND ACQUIRE SKILLS

CHILD RIGHTS AND EQUITY ANALYSIS

While basic education participation is fairly high, early childhood education (ECE) attendance significantly trails behind.

In 2021, nine in every ten children were enrolled in elementary, nearly the same number in junior high school, and six in ten in senior high school. While net enrolment rates in junior and senior high have been increasing since the K-12 program started in 2016, participation at the elementary level has been on steady decline from as far back as 2012. The Philippines has the lowest primary net

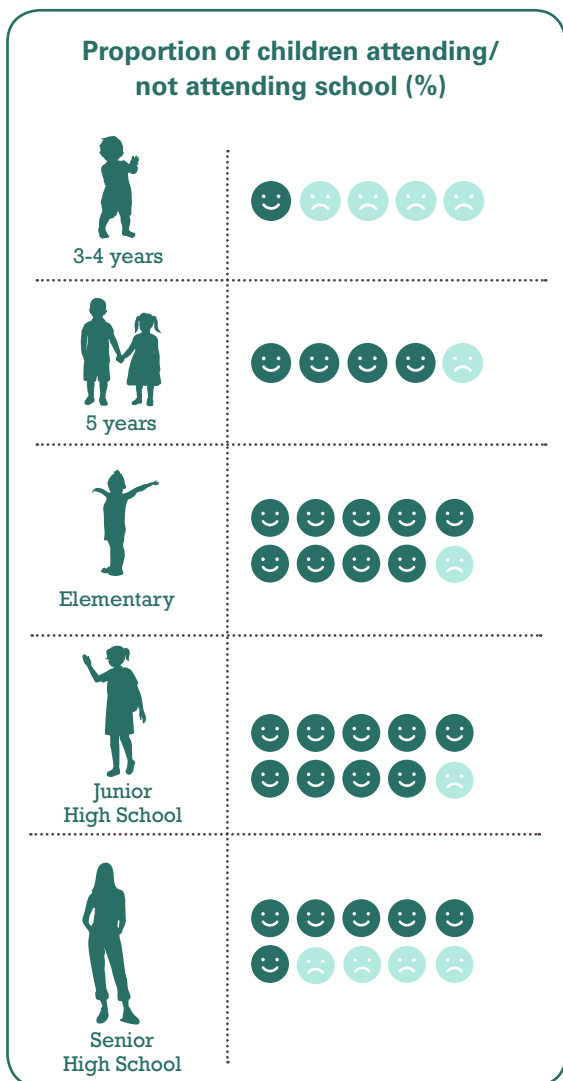
enrolment rate among eight ASEAN countries and 125th of 135 countries in the same year.

Girls are more likely than boys to survive through the last grade and to complete all levels of basic education. The higher ratios of girls to boys surviving and completing through all educational levels suggest higher dropout rates among boys. Key reasons cited include lack of interest and common custom where boys are more often encouraged to start working as they grow older.

Among children aged 5 years, nearly four in five children were reported to have attended school in 2022, marking a significant improvement from 2020. Participation in organized learning one year before the official primary entry age (net enrolment rate in kindergarten) was at 76.3 per cent in 2022, a significant jump from 66.1 per cent in 2020. Participation is higher among girls than boys — 78.4 per cent to 74.4 per cent, respectively.

However, about four in five children aged 3-4 years were not attending ECE in 2022. In the first year of the pandemic in 2020, almost all 3-4-year-olds did not attend school. There is a higher proportion of girls than boys in the age group that attended school in 2022. More than 90 per cent of 3-4-year-old children in BARMM and Region IX were reported to have not attended school in the same year, the highest among regions.

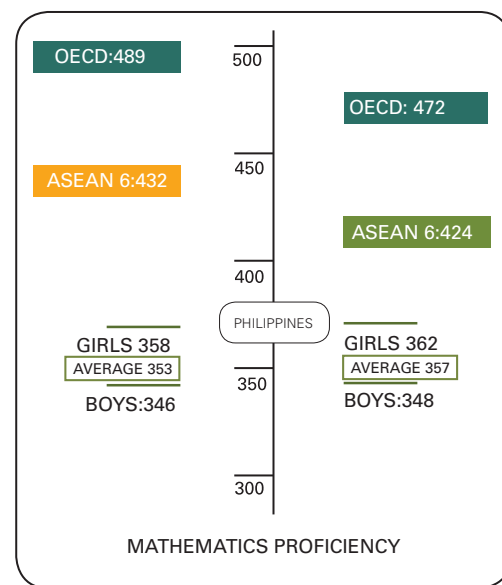
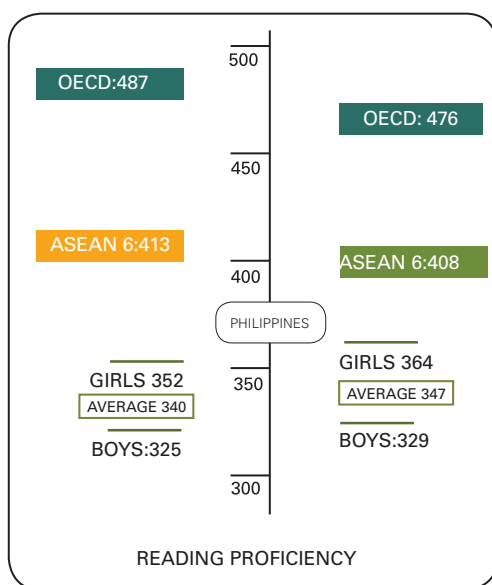
Children who have had no ECE experience are likely to repeat grades than those with one year or two years of ECE experience. Based on a 2019 assessment of Grade V students, 44 per cent of repeaters did not attend ECE while only 30-31 per cent had attended one or two years of ECE.



Meanwhile, Filipino students continue to perform poorly in reading and mathematics proficiency. In the 2018 and 2022 rounds of PISA, the country's mean scores in reading and mathematics proficiency among secondary school students rest below the average scores among participating OECD and ASEAN countries. In the 2019 SEA-PLM, three of every ten Grade V students

in the country were found to have the lowest proficiency level in reading. Similarly, two out of ten students could only reach the lowest proficiency level in mathematics. Only one other country among the six participating ASEAN member countries performed worse than the Philippines in both subjects.

Mean scores of secondary school students in Reading and Mathematics proficiency



LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The 1987 Philippine Constitution lays down the foundation of the current Philippine education system and protects and promotes the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels. Among the key laws that paved the way for the current education system and program include:

- Republic Act No. 10157 making Kindergarten mandatory for all 5-year-old children; and
- Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 further restructuring the sector by transforming basic education into 13 years of compulsory schooling.

Basic Education Development Plan 2030.

The BEDP 2030 currently guides the country's education system and the work of the Department of Education in the country.

The BEDP 2030 is the first long-term plan for basic education, covering both formal education (5 to 18 years) and non-formal education for youth and adults, including the Alternative Learning System, toward the improvement of the delivery and quality of basic education in the country. It is also designed to address the immediate impacts of the pandemic on learning, participation, and education delivery, address remaining gaps, improve the quality of education, and build a more resilient education system.

BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

Demand

- Lack of awareness of available services.
- Low appreciation of ECE and ALS at the community level.
- Perceptions that children under five are too young for education.
- Perception older children are expected to provide for the family and support younger siblings instead.
- Lack of interest in education among boys
- Disability among children.
- Absence of parents either due to work at home or abroad, or for any other reason.
- Poverty/insufficient income of households.
 - Limited capacity to afford costs of education (school fees, transportation, food, etc.) including ECE.
 - Boys are often encouraged to augment family income at the expense of school attendance.
 - Older children, especially girls, are often tasked with taking care of younger children, as parents go to work.

Supply

- Lack of daycare centers and child development workers (CDWs) in poor municipalities.
- Early childhood development profession not yet fully professionalized.
- Limited provisions for pupils who do not speak English or Tagalog particularly for some indigenous peoples.
- Limited resources and capacities for children with disabilities (CWDs).
 - Limited capacity of CDWs to support CWDs.
 - Limited number of schools with SPED or the proximity of SPED schools.
- Lack of financial support to help CWDs from poor families attend school.
- Inadequate infrastructure such as roads and public transport pose a challenge for CWDs to attend school.
- Lack of data on CWDs and relevant resources and services.
- Decreasing supply of quality teachers due to necessity or lure of better salary abroad
- Lack of senior high schools in some communities.
- Heavy teacher workload (including administrative work) affecting teachers' motivation and efficiency.

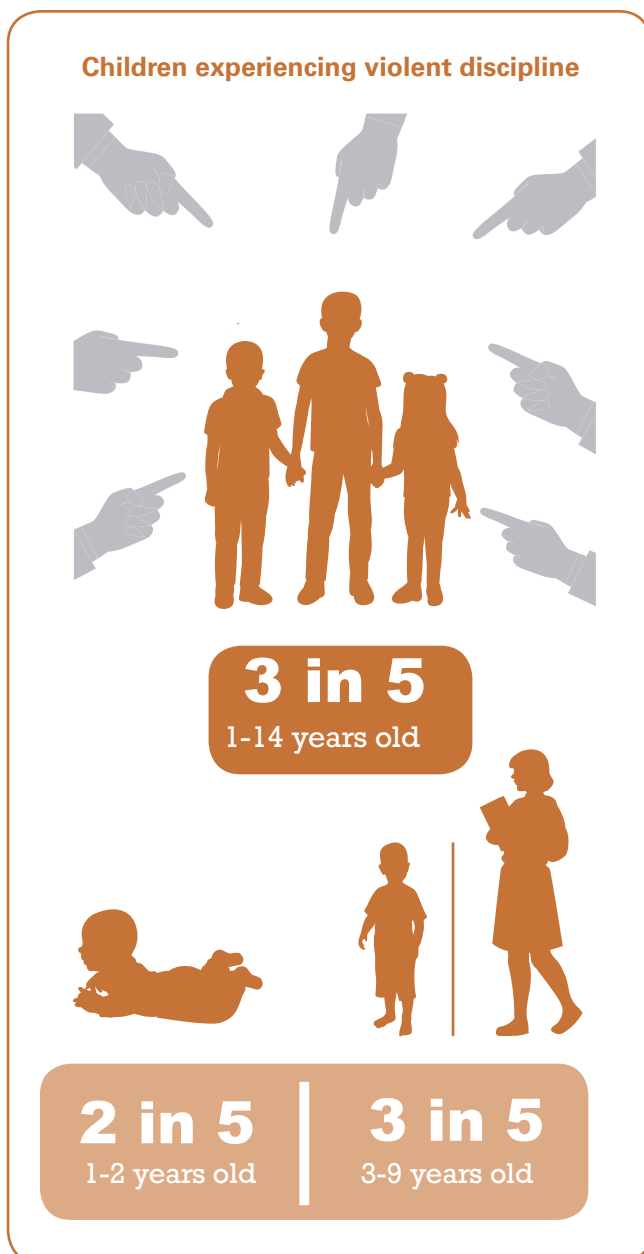
Enabling Environment

- Limited access to ECE, potentially impacted by COVID-19.
- Inadequate policies and strategies to encourage participation in ECE.
- Shortage of teachers and budget shortages at the national and subnational levels, including budget for ALS.
- High student-to-teacher ratios across the country, especially worse for SNED/SPED
- Inequities in teacher allocation and retention, particularly in smaller communities and geographically isolated areas.
- High rates of bullying in school.

PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, NEGLECT, AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

CHILD RIGHTS AND EQUITY ANALYSIS

Any instance of violence or harmful practice against children, including abuse, exploitation, and neglect, regardless of its severity, is one instance too many. Given the limited information and challenges in reporting and monitoring such cases, it is likely that these numbers provide only a small glimpse of the true magnitude of children that go through such ordeal.



Violent discipline among children appears to be widespread in the country. In 2022, three in five children aged 1-14 years, or 58.8 per cent, experienced at least one form of violent discipline. Half of these children suffered from physical aggression while 39.1 per cent were subjected to any form of physical punishment. A small percentage of children, 3.4 per cent, received severe physical punishment.

Even the youngest children are not spared from violent discipline. Although the highest prevalence of violent discipline is seen among children aged 3-9 years, with three out of every five children affected, more than two out of five children aged 1-2 years also experienced similar forms of discipline, both physical and psychological.

Most of reported child abuse cases each year involve sexual abuse, assault, or exploitation, happening both physically and online. An alarming seven out of ten cases of child abuse reported through the Women and Children Protection Units in 2021-2024, are sexual in nature. In general, child abuse cases of all types have been increasing with the total number reaching 10,270 in 2023. Eight months through 2024, total cases have breached 7,000 cases or 71 per cent that of the previous year.

Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) is rapidly escalating. Available data shows a 264.6 per cent increase in online sexual

abuse and exploitation (OSAEC) cases between 2019 and 2020. Cyber tip line reports of OSAEC indicate a similar trend, increasing by 138 per cent between 2020 and 2021. According to a 2022 study, 20 per cent of internet-using adolescents aged 12-17 years were victims of grave OSAEC in the past year. In 2022, nearly half a million children in the country were estimated to have been trafficked to produce new child sexual exploitation materials. All this reinforces a key finding of a 2016 UNICEF study that the Philippines is the global epicenter of “live-stream sexual abuse trade”



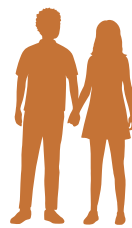
Bullying in schools remains a significant issue.

In 2022, three out of every ten students reported being frequently bullied, a slight improvement from four out of ten in 2018. Despite the decline, the Philippines still recorded the highest rate of bullying among students in the eighty countries that participated in the 2022 PISA study.

Violence against adolescent girls, including domestic violence, has dropped but persists.

One in every ten girls aged 15-19 experienced physical or sexual violence 2022. Among ever-partnered girls aged 15-19, nearly two out of ten experienced violence from a husband or intimate partner. Emotional or psychological violence remains the most common form of domestic violence, occurring nearly four times more frequently than physical or sexual violence. It is important to note that cases of violence of this nature are deemed lower than what

are actually reported due to many factors including stigma and fear of reprisal from the perpetrator of violence.



73k

girls married or in a union with a partner before 15 years old.

Child marriage among girls has declined, but still persistent.

In 2022, some 460,000 girls were married or in a union with a partner before turning eighteen years old, with around 73,000 of them doing so before their fifteenth birthday.

Majority of working children are child laborers.

Nearly three in every five working children were engaged in hazardous, exploitative, unhealthy, or unsafe work in 2022, equivalent to some 828 thousand children. Region II, CAR, and BARMM have the highest share of child labor. Child laborers aged 5-17 years dropped sharply from 68.4 per cent of working children during the pandemic in 2020-2021 to 56 per cent in 2022. However, the number and proportion of working children have been rising since 2020, reaching 1.48 million, which is almost five per cent of the total child population in the country in 2022.



828k

child laborers

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC). The 4th NPAC is the latest strategic framework aimed to “level up protection of the rights of children in the Philippines, including the most vulnerable” toward improving their lives. It provides a roadmap for the design, implementation, and monitoring of child rights policies and programs.

The 4th NPAC builds upon key international and national frameworks and plans, including the CRC

and SDGs, Child 21, Ambisyon Natin 2040, and the PDP 2023-2028.

Child Protection is among three key priority areas in the 4th NPAC, along with child participation and climate change. The child protection aspect of the NPAC primarily aims to establish robust protection systems across the country focusing on creating a safe, nurturing environment for children with: (a) effective laws and policies, (b) good governance, (c) preventive and response services, (d) clear standards and checks, (e) sufficiently trained staff, and (f) adequate funding.

BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

Demand

- Hesitancy to report incidences of violence against children, especially gender-based violence, due to victims’ fear of repercussions.
- Fear, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, stigma, and affordability of child protection and mental health services affecting help-seeking behaviors.
- Poverty, which induces norms and ways that push children to work subjecting them to risks of exploitation through child labor, online sexual abuse, and exploitation (OSAEC), and other harmful practices.

Supply

- Inadequate data and reporting on violence against children, including GVB and grave child rights violations (especially in specific areas such as BARMM), and harmful practices.
- Limited access to child protection services for victims of VAC.
- Inadequate adolescent-friendly health services, including those for mental health, at health care facilities.
- Challenges in mobility/ transportation, especially in rural areas.
- Limited knowledge on the protection of children with disabilities.

Enabling Environment

- Fragmented Child Protection System leading to gaps and bottlenecks in supply and demand.
- Limited budget and poor long-term budget planning and strategizing to implement legislation and policies on anti-VAC/VAW, including those that address social norms and practice.
- Limited data on violence against children, including early and forced marriages and OSAEC.
- Changes in leadership among LCEs and barangay officials affecting priorities and commitments to implement anti-VAC/VAW laws and policies.
- Limited number of Women and Child Protection Units nationwide resulting to low access to child protection services particularly in hard-to-reach communities.
- Limited number and capacities of the social service workforce on child protection particularly, social workers and mental health professionals
- Limited legislation to inform effective mental health service provision.
- Social norms and practices that perpetuate violence and harmful practices against children, especially child labor and early and forced marriage.
- Challenges with birth registration especially in BARMM and indigenous communities
- Insufficient monitoring and evaluation of anti-VAC/VAW programs.

SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

CHILD RIGHTS AND EQUITY ANALYSIS

The Philippines faces significant risks particularly from climate change and other natural hazards disasters, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and pollution. According to the 2024 World Risk Index, the country continues to have the highest disaster risk globally due to complex and intense exposures.

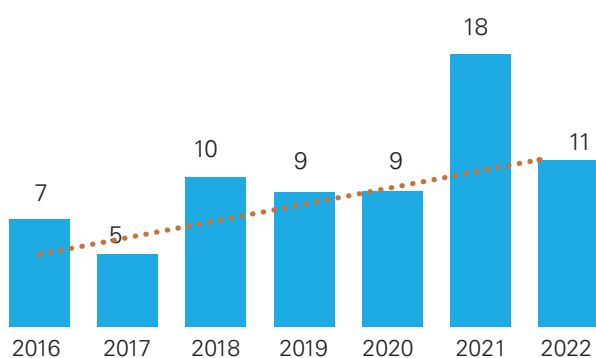
These risks disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, especially children, who are more susceptible to diseases and death from extreme events and lack of access to health facilities, WASH services, and other essential services.

Globally, children in the Philippines are among the most vulnerable due significantly to exposure to severe climate and environmental factors. According to a 2021 UNICEF report, the Philippines ranks 31st out of 163 countries on the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI). While the country has medium scores on child vulnerability, it is among the top four countries globally with the highest exposure to extreme climate and environmental hazards.

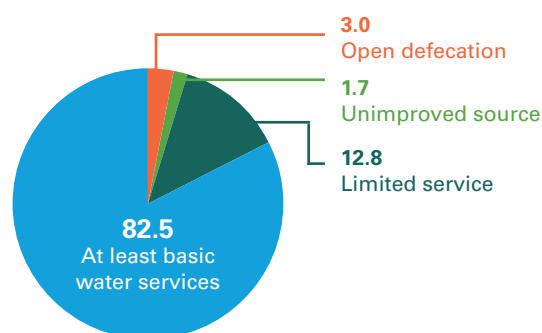
Every year, over 10,000 individuals per 100,000 population are directly impacted by disasters.

Between 2016 and 2022, the annual average number of people affected by disasters ranged from approximately 5,000 to 18,000 per 100,000 population. In 2021, Typhoon Odette (Rai) alone affected more than eight million people in the southeastern part of the country. In 2022, fifteen major natural extreme events and disasters- the average number of disasters since 2012- impacted 11.7 million people or three million families.

Number of persons affected by disasters per 100,000 population (thousand)



Proportion of population with access to sanitation



Families across all regions are largely unprepared with basic emergency supplies.

In 2022, only 18.2 per cent of families, or roughly one in five, had disaster preparedness kits (or Emergency Go Bags). Among those prepared, about 70 per cent had medical kits and flashlights, while more than half had stored important documents, clothes, and food.

More than three million people still lack access to at least basic drinking water services. In 2022, 97 per cent of the population had access to at least basic drinking water services, while less than one per cent relied on limited services, and 2.1 per cent had to get water from unimproved sources. In BARMM, 80.2 per cent of the population had access to at least basic drinking water services.

Open defecation remains a health hazard for people, including children, in many areas. In 2022, around 19.1 million people, or 17.5 per cent of the population, lacked basic sanitation services, with 3.3 million or 3 per cent practicing open defecation. Over 80 per cent of the total population had access to at least basic sanitation, but in BARMM, only 55.3 per cent had access, and 17.8 per cent still practiced open defecation, the highest among regions.

More than half of basic education schools in the country have limited, unimproved, or no water services. According to the 2024 WHO/UNICEF JMP Progress Report for WASH in Schools, 19 per cent of primary and secondary schools had no water

service, while 34 per cent had only limited water services. Consequently, less than half of all schools had access to at least basic water services that year.

Almost three quarters of schools have at least basic sanitation services. The same JMP report

indicates that, 85 per cent of basic education schools had at least basic sanitation services, up from 52 per cent in 2017 due to a significant number of schools that transitioned from limited to at least basic sanitation level (insufficient data for remaining 15 per cent).

1 in 5
families with basic emergency
preparedness kits

71% Medical kits

69% Flashlight

57% Important documents

56% Clothes

53% Food

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). The Philippines is a signatory to the Paris Agreement, which aims to combat climate change. This commitment translates into various efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions, enhance climate resilience, and promote sustainable development. Young people have been active in the Philippines' international climate negotiations.

National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) 2011–2028. The NCCAP is the country's strategy to address climate change formulated in accordance with the Climate Change Act. It outlines the country's agenda for adaptation and mitigation efforts on food security, water sufficiency, ecological and environmental stability, human security, climate industries & services, sustainable energy, and knowledge and capacity development.

National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2023-2050. The NAP, a collaboration between the CCC and the DENR, provides a country-driven, gender-sensitive, participatory, and transparent approach to facilitate adaptation planning toward "a low carbon, inclusive, sustainable, and transformative development path for the Filipino people." It provides guidance to prioritize actions and investments in building a more climate-resilient Philippines by 2050.

National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan (NDRRMP). The NDRRMP sets out the country's strategic directions and action plan to achieve "safer, adaptive, and disaster-resilient Filipino communities towards sustainable development." The Plan defines the expected results, activities, indicators, and timelines, and stakeholders to meet targets in four areas: disaster prevention and mitigation; disaster preparedness; disaster response; and disaster rehabilitation and recovery.

Comprehensive Emergency Program for Children (CEPC). The CEPC was prepared in accordance with Republic Act (RA) No. 10821 or the 'Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act', which mandates national and local government agencies to execute and maintain a comprehensive emergency program to prioritize the protection of children, and pregnant and lactating mothers during disaster and emergency situations.

National Environmental Health Action Plan (NEHAP) 2030. NEHAP outlines plans for various environmental health sectors, namely: safe water supply, sanitation, and health; air quality and health; solid waste management and health; chemical safety and health; food safety and health; occupational safety and health; and climate change and health (as a cross-cutting element).

Philippine Health Facility Development Plan (PHFDP) 2020-2040. The PHFDP serves as the country's overall strategy for infrastructure and medical investment toward ensuring a strong primary care and integrated health system consistent with RA No. 11223 or the Universal Health Care Act of 2019. In July 2023, the Office of the President issued Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 26, mandating the adoption of the PHFDP 2020-2040 by all relevant national government agencies and local government units.

Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan (PWSSMP) 2021. The PWSSMP 2021 is a comprehensive national action plan aimed at achieving universal access to safe, sufficient, affordable, and sustainable WASH by 2030. The plan integrates the 2010 Philippine Water Supply Sector Roadmap and the 2010 Philippine Sustainable Sanitation Roadmap, and outlines priority strategies, policy programs, and projects to achieve these goals.

BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

Demand

- Limited prioritization of WASH, specifically sanitation, among households and families.
- Perception of high costs of building toilets.
- Limited access to financing capital outlay.
- Land tenure or ownership preventing households from building permanent toilet structures.
- Challenges with solid waste and septage management at both community and school levels.
- Social stigma attached to menstruation affecting demand for menstrual hygiene-related goods and services.

Supply

- Limited capacities in updating DRR plans, possibly affected by the pandemic, particularly in BARMM, Region V, and VI, including alignment with national strategies.
- Weak relationships between supply chain actors.
- Lack of suppliers offering complete sanitation solution.
- Limited functional WASH facilities in schools and health care facilities; exclusion of schools from local WASH service delivery and development; limited funds of schools and LGUs to purchase hygiene kits.
- Limited functional sewerage and septage processing systems at community levels, particularly in geographically remote regions.
- Shortage of adequately and professionally trained WASH personnel due to unfavorable employment conditions.

Enabling environment.

- Limited coordination between relevant agencies at the national level.
- Lack of legal mandate to create inter-agency DRR task force to support development and monitoring of DRR plans at national level.
- Varying levels of quality of DRR plans at municipality and barangay levels due to lack of quality assurance mechanisms.
- Limited standardization of DRR management, particularly at barangay and municipal levels.
- Limited use of existing monitoring guidelines, e.g., Gawad Kalasag guidelines to assess DRR systems (NDRRMC MC No. 02, s. 2022).
- Lack of apex body to address the fragmented delivery and regulation of various water and sanitation services across all settings.
- Limited coordination between national and local governments in the provision of WASH services in health care facilities and early childhood education centers; inadequate capacity, financing, human resources, and motivation of LGUs.
- Limited prioritization of WASH in the community among local officials.
- Limited capacity, inconsistent willingness and commitment, and leadership turnover at LGUs to implement WASH interventions.
- Limited design standards for other types of toilets that is culturally acceptable and appropriate to the context, risks profile, and location.
- Lack of budget for WASH in schools, particularly in underserved areas including GIDAs and third to fifth class municipalities; exclusion of schools from local WASH development plans and budgets.
- Lack of a professional workforce at the local government level because of a low salary grade classification for sanitation inspectors.
- Lack of coherent and robust data to inform policymaking, e.g., information systems limited to provincial level data or specific facilities, data from national surveys limited to estimate higher WASH service levels, limited and fragmented climate and environment data, etc.

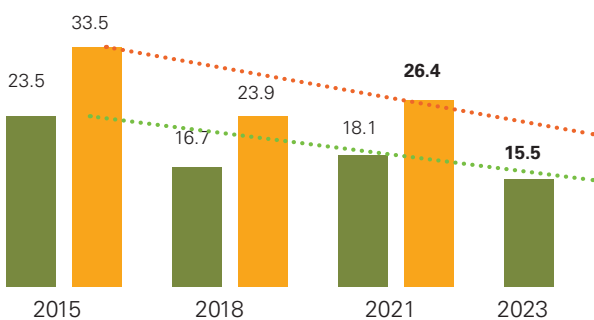
EQUITABLE LIFE OPPORTUNITIES

CHILD RIGHTS AND EQUITY ANALYSIS

The Philippines is back on track to becoming an upper middle-income country with GDP growing at an annual average of 6.3 per cent from 2021 to 2023. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed back major gains on progress made on socio-economic development and today children face risks from the consequences of climate change, high inequalities, regional disparities, and decentralization process, where social services are beginning to be fully devolved to local government units (LGUs).

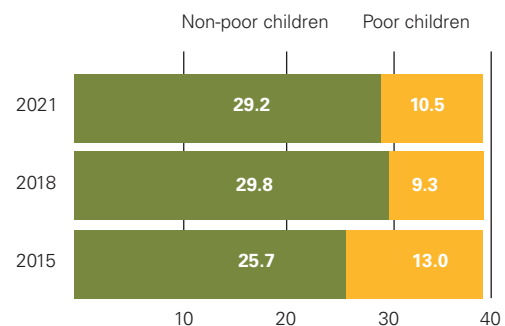
Overall poverty rate dropped to new lows post-pandemic. Overall poverty incidence among the total population declined to 15.5 per cent in 2023 from 18.1 per cent during the pandemic in 2021, and 16.7 per cent in 2018. The improvement in overall poverty lifted approximately 490 thousand families or 2.4 million people out of poverty between 2021 and 2023. Income security is still a concern for over 3 million families or 17.5 million individuals, including children, that are unable to meet their basic needs.

Poverty incidence among population and children (%)



Children make up the majority of the poor population. In 2021, over half, 52.3 per cent, of the poor were children, or approximately 10.5 million poor children. The proportion of children belonging to poor families was 26.4 per cent in 2021, up from 23.9 per cent in 2018. However, child poverty rates look to decline as poverty incidence among families decreased from 13.2 per cent in 2021 to 10.9 per cent in 2023.

Magnitude of poor children (million)



Child poverty has significantly improved in BARMM. However, disparity remains the largest in this region where more than two out of five children or 44 per cent of all children, lived in poverty in 2021. Caraga Region, with 44 per cent, and Bicol Region, with 39.9 per cent, round up the three regions with the highest poverty incidence among children.

Nearly two in five unemployed persons are youth. There were an estimated 785 thousand unemployed youth aged 15-24 years in 2023. This constitutes 37.5 per cent of the total unemployed population in the country or nearly two unemployed youth for every five unemployed persons.

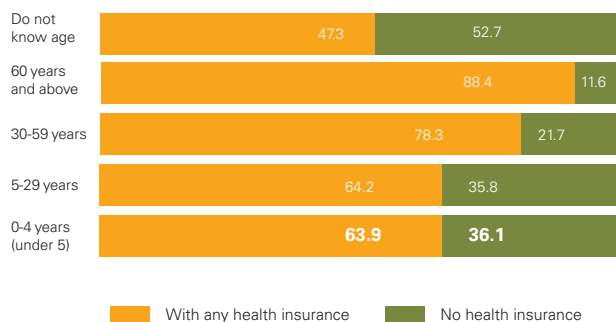
Children benefit from social assistance through the 4Ps. In 2023, 8.7 million children and 18-year-olds from 4.4 million households received social assistance through the 4Ps, covering about a quarter of all households in 99 per cent of all barangays nationwide. Regions V, VI, and MIMAROPA had the highest number of

young beneficiaries, while CAR, Region II, and NCR had the lowest. Most beneficiaries were aged 6-14 years, in elementary and junior high school.

A significant majority of the population are covered by a type of health insurance.

On average, seven in every ten individuals or 72 per cent of the population, had some type of public or private health insurance in 2022. However, only three of every five children aged under five years were covered, leaving two in every five children without health insurance protection. Children under five and those in the age group 5-29 years had the lowest proportion of health insurance coverage at 63.9 per cent and 64.2 per cent, respectively, compared to the older age groups. BARMM had the lowest coverage — less than half of its population at 41.5 per cent with any type of health insurance, way below than the other regions.

Health insurance of coverage of the population (%)



Share of social services spending has changed little in years.

From 2017 to 2023, government expenditure for education averaged 3.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 17.4 per cent of the government budget. Social protection spending was 2.5 per cent of GDP and 11.8 per cent of the budget, while health received the lowest share at 1.1 per cent of GDP and 5 per cent of the budget. Notably, the share of education spending has been gradually decreasing since 2017, while the share of health expenditure has been slowly increasing. Social protection spending has fluctuated but remained largely unchanged.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK



Magna Carta of the Poor.

Republic Act 11291 was enacted in 2020 with the objective that the state should uplift the “standard of living and quality of life for the poor and provide them with sustained opportunities for growth and development.” While the law is not child-specific, all determinations made under each of the declared rights (especially education) are relevant to child poverty.

Social Protection Floor (SPF). In 2023, the Philippine government approved the SPF which are “nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees” aimed at alleviating and preventing poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion among individuals and families in times of need. The SPF for children in particular, will include initiatives to ensure access to nutrition (through supplemental feeding programs), education, and healthcare, including mental health; expand coverage of 4Ps to other eligible children; and provide programs and services

to address teenage pregnancy and support children in need of special protection. The Social Protection Plan 2023-2028 Plan focuses (a) implementing the SP floor; (b) developing Adaptive and Shock-Responsive SP programs; and (c) rationalizing, integrating and modernizing the SP system.

Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). The 4Ps is currently the government’s flagship social protection program specifically designed for poverty reduction and is being managed by DSWD. Started in 2008, 4Ps is a conditional cash transfer program implemented in convergence with other pro-poor programs and services. The 4Ps has become a regular program of the national government in 2019 through Republic Act 11310- “An Act Institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program.”

Local Government Code (LGC) of 1991. RA 7160 set forth the process of decentralization of powers and functions from the national government to the LGUs toward improved local governance and delivery of basic services.

Mandanas-Garcia Ruling. The 2018 Supreme Court decision ruled that the just share of LGUs from national taxes is not limited to “national internal revenue taxes” collected by the Bureau of Internal Revenue but also includes collections of

the Bureau of Customs, and other tax collecting agencies. The expected increase in revenue shares will better equip LGUs to deliver the devolved services as prescribed under Section 17 of the LGC and other pertinent laws.

BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

Demand

- Unemployment within families driving poverty among households, e.g. unemployment rate averaged 7.7 per cent while underemployment was over 15 per cent in 2019-2021 coming down only to around 5 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively, in 2022-2023.
- High vulnerability of households to poverty due to climatic risks, natural disasters and other emergencies, socio-economic shocks.
- Limited access to technology, e.g., low levels of digital literacy impede financial inclusion and access to financial products and services for the poor.
- Unequal access to opportunities for children in minority groups, e.g., indigenous children, children of diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender, (SOGIE), children living in Geographic Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA), children with disabilities, out of school children and youth, and those affected by child labor.

Supply

- Fragmentation of Social Protection mechanisms.
- Insufficient harmonization and coordination of SP service delivery between national and local SP committees, and with disaster response management actors.
- Limited availability and operationalization of shock responsive social protection programs at national and local levels.
- Inadequate coverage of SP programs for other vulnerable groups, e.g., persons and children with disabilities.
- Lack of technical capacity among LGUs in rural areas to carry out social development programs, including complex SP programs.
- Limited rollout and low utilization of the Z Benefit PhilHealth package for children with disabilities.

Enabling Environment

- Limited capacity, inconsistent willingness of local chief executives, and leadership turnover at local levels.
- Weak vertical and horizontal alignment of poverty reduction and social protection plans.
- No measurement and reporting of multidimensional child poverty to inform national policies; child poverty not prominent in national plans.
- Lack of disaggregated data, e.g., PhilHealth data, minority groups.
- Insufficient capacity at national level to provide adequate technical assistance to increase LGUs’ capacity on data analysis and use.
- Insufficient budget to conduct the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) in some LGUs.
- Incomplete population databases to support effective targeting and monitoring of the most hard-to-reach and in-need populations.

CIVIL AND PARTICIPATION RIGHTS

CHILD RIGHTS AND EQUITY ANALYSIS

Identity, participation, equal justice, and non-discrimination of children are among the core principles of child rights which stakeholders, primarily, the government must protect regardless of their (or their families') "race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status."

Ninety-four per cent of children aged under 5 years were reported to have been registered with the civil authorities in 2022. This leaves six per cent or at least 664,000 young children unregistered and at risk of unprotected economic, social, and human rights. There is no significant disparity between girls and boys and between those in urban and rural areas, but the rate increases with wealth status. Around 85 per cent of children possess a birth certificate in 2022, significantly higher than the SDG indicator on officially registered births of under five children in the civil registration system which stood at 71.5 per cent in 2021.

In BARMM, only up to four in every five children under five years old were registered in 2022. The region had the least birth registration rate at 77.3 per cent whereas other regions had rates ranging from 90 to 99 per cent. More notably, a mere 37 per cent of the children had a birth certificate and 40.8 per cent were registered but did not show a certification.

Human rights complaints have increased almost three times between 2018 and 2019. Independent human rights mechanisms reported a 272% increase in complaints between 2018 and 2019, mostly brought forward by or on behalf of girls than boys. While girls may be more affected by human rights violations, boys are more likely to become involved in violent groups exposing them to greater risk of becoming children in conflict with the law (CICL).

Barangay councils for the protection of children (BCPCs) that include children representatives have more than doubled from 2014 to 2018.

The number of BCPCs with child representatives increased from 862 in 2014 to 1,347 in 2018 with BARMM reporting the highest increase between 2017-2018.

Registration of youth organizations has increased sharply by January 2024. The number of youth organizations registered with the National Youth Commission (NYC) Youth Organization Registration Program has more than doubled from 2,425 as of February 2023 to 5,257 by January 2024. The top advocacies of youth organizations are education, active citizenship, and social inclusion and equity.



94%

children aged under 5 years reported to have been registered with the civil authorities in 2022

Region III has the most number of registered youth organizations with 900 compared to BARMM with only 12 registered organizations. Registration in other regions ranges from over a hundred to less than 500 organizations.

Digital connectivity has become essential in facilitating children and young people's social participation and inclusion as well as in their engagement in educational, recreational, and employment activities.

The country has been recognized to have among the highest social network penetration or number social media users, mostly among people, globally. This is despite the generally limited and relatively slow internet access in the country as widely reported. The high and wide exposure to social media has increased risks of victimization of children from online violence which may have contributed to the Philippines being considered as global epicenter of OSAEC and child sex abuse material production.

In the meantime, at least four in every five households did not have access to the internet in 2019. According to the 2019 National ICT Household Survey, 82.3 per cent of households reported having no access to the internet. In BARMM, only a very small proportion of households had internet access as 95.5 per cent reported not having internet access.

Two in five children and adolescents did not use the internet in 2019. Over 40 per cent of children aged 10-17 years did not use the internet in 2019. This means that 60 per cent of them used the internet in the same year more than the overall percentage of individuals aged 10-64 years that used the internet of 47 per cent. The official Philippines

SDG Watch reports a higher proportion of 75.4 per cent of the population aged 10-64 years exposed to the internet in 2019.

Despite the digital divide, four in five individuals aged 10-64 years have used a cell phone in 2019. CALABARZON had the highest proportion with 89 per cent while Regions VII and XII with 64 per cent and 69 per cent, respectively, posted the lowest percentages.

Public schools with access to internet for pedagogical purposes has significantly increased by 2022. From barely half of all public schools at

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012. The implementation of the RA No. 10354 includes provisions aimed at ensuring that every child born in the Philippines is registered. This act supports the government's efforts in providing accessible birth registration services, especially in remote and marginalized areas, to ensure that every Filipino child has a legal identity.

Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) 2023-2028. The PYDP outlines the government's strategy towards youth development and maximum participation of the youth in nation-building as responsible and proactive citizens. The Plan also aims to inform and guide youth leaders and youth-led and youth-serving organizations on initiatives and projects to ensure that there is a unified and harmonized strategy towards shaping a bright future for the youth sector in the country. The National Youth Commission (NYC), with its mandate as the "sole policymaking and coordinating body of all youth-related institutions, programs, projects and activities (PPAs) of the government" (Republic Act 8044), leads the coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the Plan.

National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) 2024-2028. The 4th NPAC is the latest strategic framework aimed to "level up protection of the rights of children in the Philippines, including the most vulnerable" toward improving their lives. It provides a roadmap for the design, implementation, and monitoring of child rights policies and programs. Child participation is among three key priority areas in the 4th NPAC, along with child protection and climate change. The child participation aspect of the NPAC primarily upholds the right of children to express their opinion freely and to participate meaningfully in matters affecting their lives in accordance with their evolving capacity. It also involves freedom to associate with others, and to access information.

any level in 2015, the proportion of schools with internet access has significant increased to 63.3 per cent of elementary schools, 71.4 per cent of junior high schools, and 68 per cent of senior high schools in school year 2022-2023.

BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

Demand

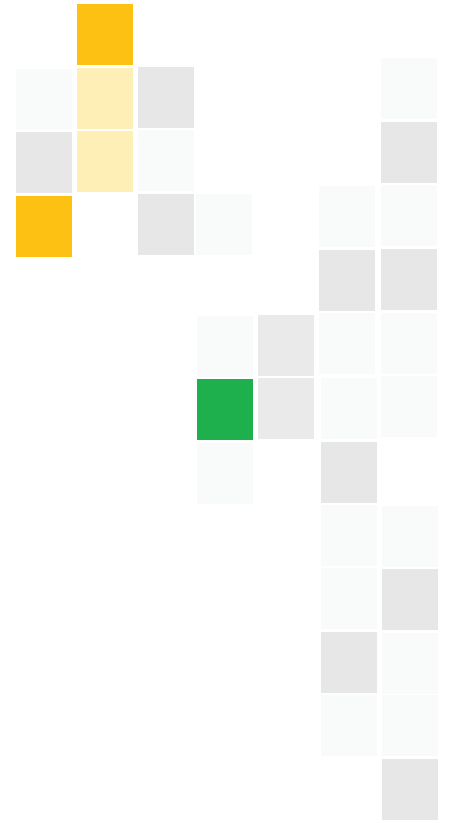
- In emergency contexts, CICL are often not afforded priority
- Limited data on children with disabilities across all child rights dimensions and on the specific reasons for their exclusion or discrimination
- Limited technical capacity and resources to conduct data collection on disability
- Limited use of the criminal justice management information system to report and use data on juvenile justice
- Inability of children to participate in civil and political matters, including voting once they are of age, in BARMM particularly because of high rates of unregistered children
- Poverty limiting digital connectivity, e.g., access to internet

Supply

- Limited robust M&E on child participation plans, e.g.:
 - Limited agreement on effective child participation indicators and how to measure them
 - Huge administrative burden to monitor Sangguniang Kabataan activities in 42,000 barangays across the country
 - Only 75 per cent of barangays submitted reports for the CWC's Seal of Child-Friendly Local Governance
- Lack of infrastructure for internet connectivity limiting the extent to which children and young people can engage on civic issues and other opportunities
 - Weak digital infrastructure in rural locations and communities
 - Weak digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and digital competence among teachers, especially in BARMM, Region V and Region IX

Enabling environment

- Changes in leadership and personnel in the National Youth Commission and partner government agencies limiting institutional growth and effective partnerships



Data Sources

- Child Protection Network /Women and Children Protection Units
- Council for the Welfare of Children
- Department of Budget and Management
- Department of Education
- Department of Information and Communication Technology
- Department of the Interior and Local Government
- Department of Social Welfare and Development
- Department of Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) (US-based)
- National Youth Commission
- Philippine Statistics Authority
- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD)
- Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
- UNICEF
- WHO and UNICEF Estimates of National Immunization Coverage
- WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program Progress Report for WASH in Schools
- 2024 World Risk Index



www.situationofchildren.org/ph