

# Situation of Children in the Philippines 2017

*This Brief presents the highlights in the Situation Analysis of Children in the Philippines Report.*

The Philippines is an ethnically diverse, middle-income country with a young and rapidly urbanizing population. More than half of the population of 101 million is under the age of 25 years.

The 2017 National Situation Analysis of Children in the Philippines identifies a range of gaps in the fulfilment of children's rights. Despite progress in many areas, the most disadvantaged and marginalized children struggle to survive, develop and thrive.

## Health

Deaths of young children have significantly declined in recent years. Between 1990 to 2015, deaths per 1000 live births of infants dropped from 41 to 21 and from 59 to 27 among children under five years. While this represents huge progress, more work will be needed to reach child mortality targets of 15 and 22 respectively.

There are very high levels of stunting (33%) and underweight (21.5%) among children under five, which have actually increased in recent years. However, the Philippines has successfully halved the rate of maternal anaemia from over 50% in 1998 to 25% in 2013 and lowered childhood anaemia among infants.

Worryingly, childhood immunization rates dropped sharply from 80% in 2013 to 62% in 2015. The Philippines also has one of the fastest-growing HIV epidemics in the world: HIV infections rose by 230% among at risk groups of young people between 2011 and 2015.

A high proportion of people (90.5% in 2015) have access to basic drinking water and sanitation has improved in recent decades. However, as of 2017, 6.66% of the population continues to drink from unimproved water sources and only 75% of people use basic sanitation services. 5.74% of people also practise open defecation and a large number of schools, 3,819, lack adequate water and sanitation facilities.



Young students practise handwashing in Madrasah Nururrahman Al-Islamie in Pobalcion Muslim, Titay, Zamboanga Sibugay.

©UNICEF Philippines/2016/Rasul Abdullah

## Child Protection

A 2015 national study found that children and youth aged 13-24 years are affected by high levels of violence in the Philippines. 2 in 3 experience physical violence, 2 in 5 experience psychological violence and 1 in 4 experience sexual violence. About 40% children aged 6-10 years and 70% of older children suffer from bullying or peer violence.

Child marriage, exploitative child labour and the absence of universal birth registration are among other child protection risks. Cyber violence has also emerged as a serious threat: online sexual abuse of children is the leading cybercrime in the Philippines.

## Social Inclusion

Despite rapid economic growth and declining poverty, the poverty situation remains extremely challenging for children in the Philippines. Children with disabilities, children from rural and indigenous communities are more vulnerable to social discrimination. They are also likely to be more deprived of social services.

©UNICEF Philippines/2011/Giacomo Pirozzi



## Education

There has been some encouraging progress in children's education. Between 2005 to 2013, enrolment in kindergarten doubled, with the largest increases within the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society. Literacy rates also continue to improve, with 90.3% of people aged 10-64 years functionally literate (2013).

However, the Philippines has some way to go to achieve universal access to quality primary and secondary education. In 2013, less than half (42%) of children aged 3-4 years were enrolled in day care centres, and in 2015, the net enrolment rate at primary school level was 91.05% and 68.15% at secondary school.

As of 2015, 83.4% (primary) and 73.9 % (secondary) of enrolled children actually completed their schooling, reflecting a fluctuating rise in completion rates from 2010. Around 2.85 million children aged 5-15 years were also estimated to be out of school.



Children fleeing the Marawi conflict participate in psychosocial activities supported by UNICEF in Balo-i, Lanao del Norte.

©UNICEF Philippines/2017/Bobby Lagsa

## Barriers to fulfilling children's rights in the Philippines

A number of barriers prevent the full realization of children's rights in the Philippines:

- National laws and policies are not effectively disseminated, interpreted or enforced
- Coordination at all levels of government hampers the delivery of essential services to children
- Inadequate financing of essential sectors affects the quality of health, education and other services for children
- Management and integration of national and local information systems contribute to gaps in data on children
- Sociocultural norms, practices and beliefs violate children's rights
- A shortage of well-trained, qualified professionals at the local level hinders the delivery of services to children
- The absence of quality social services in remote and isolated areas puts children and families at risk
- Natural disasters and armed conflicts can have severe and long lasting consequences for children