



**ENSURING RIGHTS
AND CHOICES FOR ALL:
UNFPA PHILIPPINES' 8TH
COUNTRY PROGRAMME
2019 - 2023**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message From the Country Representative	02
The 8th Country Programme	05
Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights	06
Gender-based Violence	12
Population Dynamics	14
Mindanao	16
Way Forward	19



A JOURNEY OF PROGRESS: FIVE YEARS OF RIGHTS AND CHOICES IN THE PHILIPPINES

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Over the past five years, UNFPA Philippines proudly partnered with the Philippine government, legislators, development partners and civil society to advance the rights of women, girls, and youth. Guided by the Philippine Development Plan, UNFPA Strategic Plan and the 8th Country Programme for the Philippines, our journey has been one of shared commitment and unwavering dedication.

Through interconnected outputs and accelerators rooted in human rights, innovation, and partnerships, we have supported the development of crucial policies, ensured access to quality sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) services, and empowered young people to make informed choices. Our initiatives have addressed barriers to access, particularly during emergencies and for survivors of violence.





In Mindanao, we have partnered with stakeholders to address unique SRH and GBV needs and promote protection in conflict-affected areas. We have responded to humanitarian emergencies, providing immediate assistance and fostering resilience.

This booklet serves as a testament to the collective spirit that drives our work. It is a celebration of the progress we have made together, and a powerful reminder of the transformative potential that lies ahead. Let us continue to walk this path together for our next 9th Country Programme, building a future where every woman, girl, and young person can live with dignity, agency, and a sense of possibility.

Dr. Leila Saiji Joudane

UNFPA Philippines Country Representative





THE 8TH COUNTRY PROGRAMME

Through its 8th Country Programme (8CP) implemented from 2019-2023, UNFPA Philippines aimed to accelerate and maximize the benefits of the demographic dividend, a period when a large proportion of the Philippine population is of working age. The Philippines can maximize the first and current window of opportunity that is expected to close by the year 2041. Meanwhile a second demographic dividend because of investments on human capital may extend this window to beyond 2100.

Supporting Key Development Goals:

The 8CP was closely aligned with the mid- and long-term development goals of the Philippines, as detailed in the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 and Ambisyon Natin 2040, as well as the global agendas including the ICPD Plan of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 8CP focused on the following key areas:



Sexual reproductive health and rights: UNFPA supported the implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act and the National Family Planning Programme, aiming to reduce maternal mortality and meet the unmet need for family planning. UNFPA also assisted the Department of Education for operationalization of the comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) curriculum.



Gender equality and ending violence against women and girls: The 8CP prioritizes strengthening policies and actions to address gender-based violence, both in normal settings and in the aftermath of emergencies. It also supports the full implementation of the Magna Carta of Women and promotes the rights of women with disabilities.



Harnessing the demographic dividend: UNFPA works to strengthen demographic intelligence and help the Philippines maximize the benefits of its young population. This includes a 15-year longitudinal cohort study that tracks the lives of 5,000 Filipino youth to inform policy-making and development planning.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

UNFPA aims to contribute toward developing and implementing policies that prioritize access to information and services for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), as well as reproductive rights for those furthest behind, including in humanitarian settings. We aim to empower every adolescent and young person, in particular adolescent girls, to have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

National Indicators



42%

contraceptive prevalence rate for modern family planning methods (from 40.4% in 2018).



30%

percentage of young women and men (15-19 years old) who correctly identify both ways of preventing sexual transmission of HIV and reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission (from 14.5% in 2018).



25 per 1,000 women adolescent birth rate

Decrease from 47 per 1,000 women (aged 15-19) in 2018.



144

maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.



42%

Unmet need for family planning among unmarried women and 12.7% among married women.



18%

of women who had a husband/intimate partner report having experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their most recent intimate partner.



Health (and Hope) on Wheels

Typhoon Rai surged through Southern Leyte in late 2021, forcing thousands of people to evacuate from their homes. Thirty-year-old Mariel, who was seven months pregnant at the time, suddenly found herself without access to maternal health services amidst damage to health infrastructure. However, with the support of the Australian government, the Mobile Women's Health on Wheels (WHOW), an emergency mobile maternity modular facility, was deployed in her area, providing basic emergency obstetrics and neonatal care for Mariel and other pregnant women in the typhoon's aftermath. Mariel delivered her baby in the care of skilled health providers and with access to modern medical facilities in the middle of a disaster zone. She named her baby Heart Eunne Fae, a tribute to UNFPA and a symbol for a fresh start and hope amid the chaos.



Last Mile Solutions

UNFPA and the Australian government addressed the challenges faced by pregnant women in isolated Philippine islands post-Typhoon Rai by providing a custom sea ambulance. The ambulance, operational since July 2022, significantly reduced travel time to mainland hospitals from 2 hours to 30 minutes, saving lives during emergencies. It supported 53 patients, including 5 high-risk pregnant women, ensuring timely access to essential medical care and safer deliveries.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Women and girls have unique needs further magnified during emergencies. UNFPA provides support in responding to humanitarian emergencies and in helping communities build back better. To address immediate needs, we provide life-saving SRH services and reproductive health kits, emergency cash assistance, dignity kits, maternity kits and others. We also improve access, safeguard and support survivors of GBV through protective measures and responsive interventions.

Results Achieved



16,020 pregnant and lactating women served

during humanitarian response, of which 2,898 were safe deliveries.



Four regions adapted UNFPA's service delivery models including the:

- **Women's Health on Wheels**
- **Women's Health on Water**
- **Reproductive Health (RH) bikes**

We also introduced SRH Watch, a tool that helped monitor maternal mortality.



17.6 million audience

reached by RH-care.info, a UNFPA-supported website that supported women's continuous access to sexual and reproductive health and family planning info and services, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Key Plans and Programs

Supported the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DepEd), and pilot provinces in drafting the Costed Implementation Plans for Family Planning, Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), and Minimum Initial Service Package, respectively. UNFPA also supported the development of the National Condom Strategy.



Alternative service delivery models

Supported addressing barriers to access lifesaving SRH/GBV services during humanitarian settings, including COVID-19, natural disasters and conflict-affected contexts, through cash and voucher assistance and SRH alternative service delivery models (Women's Health on Wheels, Women's Health on Water, RH e-bikes).



Rebuilding Life After Typhoon Odette

In early 2022, Typhoon Odette's devastation in the Philippines crippled Rural Health Units (RHU) in Surigao del Norte. In just a few weeks, the UNFPA (in partnership with the Australian government) deployed an Emergency Maternity Tent Facility (EMTF) and Women-Friendly Space (WFS) tents, providing crucial reproductive health aid to affected women like Joymie. Pregnant with her fifth child, Joymie and her children evacuated from their home near the sea, losing their belongings. However, UNFPA offered maternity packs and family planning options for Joymie. One of 5,549 women helped by UNFPA's 117 missions, Joymie represents resilience in the face of loss, echoing UNFPA's aim to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights, even in the midst of natural disasters. The support by USAID also enabled access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services through innovative interventions such as cash and voucher assistance in response to Typhoon Odette.

Reproductive Health on Wheels

The RH Bike Patrol was an electric tricycle that aimed to provide marginalized men and women from Laguna and Rizal access to reproductive health services amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Supported by Canada, ten RH Care Bike Patrol teams were formed, one team per local government unit, with the goal of providing 4,000 women with their preferred family planning needs, and 100 men with No-Scalpel Vasectomy services.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

UNFPA is at the forefront of promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of adolescents and youth. Through comprehensive initiatives, UNFPA with its partners addresses the unique needs of this demographic by focusing on education, access to healthcare, and empowerment. By fostering informed decision-making, advocacy, and inclusivity, UNFPA strives to ensure that young people in the Philippines can lead healthy, fulfilling lives and contribute to sustainable development.

Results Achieved



Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

- **8,706 schools implemented**
- **209,541 teachers trained**
- **1,144,821 learners reached**



For out-of-school CSE, UNFPA and its partner implemented a **cash and voucher assistance programme**

in select areas in Metro Manila to enable access to sexually transmitted infection (STI) and HIV services for adolescent cisgender and transgender girls from poor urban communities whose sexual behaviours – such as unprotected sex, having multiple sexual partners, engaging in transactional sex, or taking alcohol and using drugs – expose them to the risk of STIs or HIV.



50 LGUs

adopted the Youth Leadership and Governance Programme through the Sangguniang Kabataan to develop plans for reducing adolescent pregnancies.



Community support network

for OSEA survivors was established.



Inter-generational dialogues

facilitated to increase awareness of adolescents, youth, and duty-bearers on ASRHR issues.



Making an Impact Through Project BRAVE

Project BRAVE (Building COVID-safe Responses And Voices for Equity) – part of a joint effort supported by the Australian government and jointly implemented by UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO – aimed to ensure that mental health and psychosocial support were embedded in health and social services, making these readily accessible at the community level. Twenty youth-led groups across the country were supported to raise awareness on mental health and gender-based violence. From educating communities in Maguindanao on women’s rights, to creating GBV and mental health support groups in General Santos, to healing creatively through music in Bulacan, Project BRAVE offered young people an opportunity to make a tangible and positive impact on their communities, while exercising their creative and innovative spirit.

Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy

In a joint initiative with the Republic of Korea, through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the programme “Accelerating the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy in Southern Leyte and Samar in the Philippines” was launched to improve the adolescent’s population’s access to SRH service and information. The programme also aimed to raise adolescents’ self-awareness on SRHR, as well as enhance leadership and governance on ASRH.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

UNFPA plays a pivotal role in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) across diverse settings, including emergencies, through comprehensive initiatives focused on prevention, protection, and response. UNFPA supported the government to develop a survivor-centered approach in its work addressing GBV. This entails prioritizing the needs and rights of survivors by providing tailored support services, fostering empowerment, and ensuring a comprehensive response. Through survivor-centred initiatives, UNFPA supported its partners to promote prevention, response, resilience, and long-term recovery for gender-based violence survivors.

Results Achieved



Online GBV Reporting Portal

UNFPA supported the CHR in setting up an online reporting portal, the **e-Report sa Gender Ombud**. Online technologies played a role in promoting gender equality and human rights, and have been especially valuable during the pandemic.



Mental health and psychosocial services

Through Project BRAVE, supported by the Australian Government, an online chat support platform was set up under rh-care.info. This allowed GBV survivors access to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services during the pandemic through trained volunteers who also linked them to other services as necessary. Advanced psychosocial support was also provided under the same project.



Strengthening of Bantay Karapatan ng Kababaihang May Kapansan (BKKK) or Women with Disabilities GBV Watch Group

Through the BKKK organization, a community-based peer monitoring among women with disabilities was conducted to identify their specific needs during the pandemic. This was followed through by a continuing capacity building and mentoring of the BKKK members.



National Gender and Inclusion Assessment (GIA) on COVID-19 in the Philippines

UNFPA coordinated a nationwide inter-agency study to examine the gendered experiences, capacities and needs of women, men, girls and boys within marginalized communities during this COVID-19 pandemic.



GBV Sub-Cluster

Supported and led the establishment of a functioning **inter-agency GBV coordination body** for humanitarian preparedness and response.



138 Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) frontline personnel

from provinces with high disaster risk graduated from online MDT Training including physicians, social workers, police officers, nurses and other Women and Children Protection Units (WCPU) personnel.



75 youth change agents

capacitated under the youth-led community mobilization model to address child marriage in IP and Moro communities in BARMM. They led and facilitated community influencing sessions and intergenerational dialogues to raise awareness on the negative impacts of child, early, and forced marriage.



345 GBV survivors

supported through cash for protection with different Humanitarian responses for Typhoon Odette.



Mother and Daughter Advocate for Women's Rights Amid Child Marriages

Mimah was 17 when she discovered that—as part of a long-running family tradition—her uncle was marrying her off to an older man. Her new husband used drugs, but Mimah remained in the marriage for a year before leaving to seek a better life. UNFPA's Women Friendly Spaces, which were launched in Marawi's temporary shelter sites with support from the Australian government, provided a safe place for Mimah and her mother, Calima, where they volunteered and eventually trained as WFS facilitators. They spoke with religious leaders on the topic of Islam and women empowerment, and worked to advocate women's rights amidst the practice of child marriages.



POPULATION DYNAMICS

UNFPA brings together national government agencies, the academe, and other stakeholders to generate evidence on the state of population dynamics. This information allows us to support advocacy for (1) legislation of policies that advance human capital development; (2) crafting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the government's programmes of action and interventions in key areas that contribute to attaining the sustainable development goals on gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and overall wellbeing; in the ICPD programme of action and in maximizing opportunities to harness the Philippines' demographic dividend.

Results Achieved



Longitudinal Cohort Study on the Filipino Child (LCSFC)

Conducted with support by the Australian government to provide timely data and analysis to inform government response to issues that affect young Filipinos, including during the COVID-19 pandemic, through a 15-year study.



Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill

Supported the drafting and approving of the bill by providing evidence to legislators, advocates, and other stakeholders.



Prohibition of Child Marriage Law

Provided technical advice and support in the consultation, drafting, and finalization of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of this law.



National and Subnational Population Projections

Provided technical assistance to the Philippine Statistics Authority in developing population projections, in partnership with the US Census Bureau.



Research and policy development

Generated evidence on country's demographic landscape, in collaboration with NEDA and Country Programmes, and looked into policies needed to maximize the benefits of this demographic transition, including the Demographic Dividend.



The Story of Nina

Based on the findings of the Longitudinal Cohort Study on the Filipino Child, while teenage boys in the Philippines exhibit higher rates of risky behavior during their early years, girls face unique challenges later in adolescence. The ongoing study revealed that by age 15-16, girls are more likely to experience early pregnancy and cohabitation, and spend significantly more time on household chores compared to boys. This shift highlights the impact of ingrained gender norms and stereotypes that limit opportunities and hinder girls' potential.

Investing in girls' well-being, including access to comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services, can empower them to make informed choices and contribute to a stronger, more equitable future.



MINDANAO

UNFPA partners with the government in addressing the unique sexual and reproductive health and protection needs of women, girls and young people in disaster-prone and conflict-affected areas, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized sectors. We focus on addressing social, cultural and political barriers and protection risks that limit their full, equal and meaningful participation toward achieving lasting peace and sustainable development.

Results Achieved



867 former female combatants

of the Bangsamoro Islamic Women's Auxiliary Brigade (BIWAB) capacitated as social service providers and gender and peace champions.



42 BIWABs

engaged by the BARMM Ministry of Social Services and Development (MSSD) as para-social workers and VAW Desk officers in local government units in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur.



5 Women-Friendly Spaces

established in the province of Maguindanao. The Australia government-supported project involves training of WFS facilitators who assist the rural health units in coordinating and delivering services related to maternal health, sexual and reproductive health and rights and prevention and response to gender-based violence.



Regional Guidance Note on the Prevention of and Response to Gender-based Violence

Formulated and implemented by the Philippine National Police (PNP) in all provinces in the BARMM.



Development and pilot-testing of **community mobilization models** to reduce child marriage.



From Combatant to Para-social Worker

Norkisa is a 48-year-old former member of the Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade (BIWAB). For five years, she was part of the all-female supplementary force that constituted part of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), providing medical and basic needs for combatants. However, Norkisa found a new purpose after encountering UNFPA's Women Friendly Spaces (WFS). She trained as a WFS facilitator in Cotabato, where she gained new confidence to facilitate conversations on women's rights and freedom from violence in her community. Norkisa takes great pride in her work as a WFS facilitator. UNFPA's WFS - with support from Australia, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, Japan, New Zealand, and Norway - continues to empower women and support their roles in contributing to post-conflict recovery and peace-building.



UNFPA, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), and SM Cares kicked off the 18-Day Campaign to End Violence Against Women in 2023 with an SM Mall of Asia (MOA) globe lighting ceremony.

WAY FORWARD

As we reflect on progress made in the last five years, there are miles to go before we sleep.

UNFPA would like to thank its partners for their support for the 8th Country Programme. Thanks to you, UNFPA was able to expand rights and choices for all and reach the most vulnerable women, girls and young people across the Philippines. Together we made great strides towards zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths, and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices.

In the spirit of its mandate – every pregnancy wanted, every childbirth safe, and every young person’s potential fulfilled – UNFPA will continue its work through the 9th Country Programme (9CP) from 2024 to 2028. The 9CP will highlight transforming social norms towards gender equality, improving access and delivery of services, strengthening resilience programming across the humanitarian-development continuum, and enhancing capacity and accountability of institutions/actors at national and sub-national levels. UNFPA Philippines will continue to build on existing successes and work towards achieving the three transformative results for a better future for the Filipino people, especially women and girls.



UNFPA Philippines and partners at the closing activity of the 8th UNFPA Philippines Country Program



WAY FORWARD



Leave no one behind. By 2030, we aim to achieve the following transformative results:

- ✦ End unmet need for family planning
- ✦ End preventable maternal deaths
- ✦ End gender-based violence and harmful deaths

Guided by UNFPA's Strategic Plan 2022-2025, six interconnected outputs are the roads we need to travel and the areas we need to invest in now:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Policy and accountability | 4. Population change and data |
| 2. Quality of care and services | 5. Humanitarian action |
| 3. Gender and social norms | 6. Adolescents and youth |

Six accelerators will help us to achieve the outputs:

1. Human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches
2. Innovation and digitalization
3. Partnerships, South-South and triangular cooperation, and financing
4. Data and evidence
5. Leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first
6. Resilience and adaptation, and complementarity among development, humanitarian and peace-responsive efforts





15F North Tower, Rockwell Business Center
Sheridan, Sheridan cor. United Sts.,
Highway Hills, Mandaluyong City,
Philippines 1550

www.philippines.unfpa.org