

STATEMENT

Family Planning Organization of the Philippines
Universal Periodic Review Pre-Sessions 41
August 30, 2022



The Family Planning Organization of the Philippines (FPOP) is a provider of quality sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services to all Filipinos especially the poor and marginalized sectors of the population. FPOP has been engaging in the 2nd and 3rd UPR Cycles and convened various CSOs and stakeholders to gather robust knowledge and evidence and wider participation in the UPR processes.

SLIDE 2 (Issue 1)

The maternal mortality rate (MMR) in the country, while decreasing, remains high at 90 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹ The latest National Demographic Health Survey (2017), revealed that one of the barriers to SRH information and services is access to health care, which was a concern for 54 percent of women aged 15 to 49 years. The most common barrier was “getting money for treatment” (45 percent).² Inadequate food, care, and nutrition of pregnant and lactating mothers impact the MMR in the country.

The lack of access to sexual and reproductive health care is exacerbated by multiple crises and emergencies that the country faces such as the public health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis, poverty and other crises brought by the lack of commitment to and fulfilment of human rights obligations.

SLIDE 3

During the 3rd UPR cycle, the Philippine government only accepted 103 recommendations out of the 257 recommendations it received. Four of the accepted recommendations were related to the advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) such as increasing access to modern contraceptives (Brazil) including rural and indigenous communities (Denmark), universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (Sweden), and implementation of the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health (RPRH) Act (New Zealand). These are crucial recommendations that have supported some of the progress in access to SRHR. For instance, during the pandemic, more Filipinos have used modern contraceptives, marking an increase of 6 percent from 2019 to 2020, according to the Commission of Population. However, the country is still far from fulfilling the SRHR obligations, which puts the lives of Filipinos at risk and violates their human rights.

¹ Department of Health, [The 2019 Philippine Health Statistics](#), 2019, page 78

² Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and ICF, [Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey](#), 2017, 136

SLIDE 4 (Recommendation 1)

In this 4th UPR Cycle, FPOP recommends to:

Fully implement the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health (RPRH) Act and the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Reproductive Health Law to "grant free care and services to indigents" (Section 7, RPRH Act) especially prioritizing access to SRH information and services such as family planning, contraceptives, maternal health care, among others for all Filipinos.

SLIDE 5 (Issue 2)

Pre-pandemic issues continue to wreak havoc in the lives of women and girls. Independent studies revealed that the country had experienced an increase of unsafe abortions, from 560,000 in 2008 to 610,000 in 2012.³ The criminalization of abortion in the country, which is stipulated in the Revised Penal Code of 1930, hinders women to access safe abortion care in all circumstances, even in the cases when a woman life is in danger or when the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest. As the Committee against Torture (CAT) recognizes, in cases of rape and incest, a woman is constantly exposed to "the violation committed against [her] and [experiences] serious traumatic stress...".⁴ This reality remains a grave human rights issue in the Philippines.

SLIDE 6 (Issue 2)

The prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence is on the rise. During the pandemic GABRIELA reported that search queries related to violence against women climbed to 63%.⁵ In the consultation of FPOP with local government units, agencies and communities, they revealed that rape cases within the households during the lockdowns and community quarantines take place. This reality, and its impact on women and girls' health, was certainly not addressed when the Revised Penal Code was ratified almost a century ago. It is high time to listen to the experiences of the underserved, of the marginalized, of the survivors of violence, and make the law reflect the modern and urgent issues of the day.

SLIDE 7

The recommendation to "*Take immediate steps to permit abortion in cases where a woman's or a girl's life or physical or mental health is in danger, where the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest and in cases of fetal impairment, with a view to decriminalizing abortion in the near future*" (Netherlands)^[6] was one of the 154 "noted" recommendations received by the Philippines, which constitutes a cornerstone of FPOP advocacy and a priority issue for SRHR advocates in the Philippines.

³ Center for Reproductive Rights, "[The Center's Work in the Philippines](#)," February 2, 2022.

⁴ CAT Committee, Concluding Observations: Nicaragua, para. 16, U.N. Doc. CAT/C/NIC/CO/1, 2009; CAT Committee, Concluding Observations: Peru, para. 23, U.N. Doc. CAT/C/PER/CO/4, 2006; cited in Center for Reproductive Rights, "[Law and Policy Guide: Rape and Incest Exceptions](#)"

⁵ Gabriel Baron, "[COVID-19 pandemic worsens violence against women, girls—GABRIELA](#)", Manila Bulletin, November 2021

SLIDE 8 (Recommendation 2)

FPOP recommends to:

Decriminalize abortion by amending the Revised Penal Code and ensure access to safe abortion is permitted, at a minimum, when the pregnancy presents a threat to the health or life of the woman, when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or when there are fetal malformations and implement policies and programs for safe abortion and post-abortion care.

SLIDE 9

Thank you!