

This report is submitted by the Philippine NGO Council on Population Health and Welfare, Inc. (PNGOC) and the Ateneo de Manila University Human Rights Center for consideration and inclusion by the OHCHR in the Summary of Stakeholders' Information for the upcoming Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of the Philippines.

ISSUES CONCERNING THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN THE PHILIPPINES

We raise concern over the still poor Reproductive Health status of women in the Philippines.

No Reproductive Health Policy – Twenty five years since the Philippines signed the CEDAW on July 15, 1980 and ratified it on August 5, 1981 and 13 years after the Philippines signed the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Beijing Platform of Action, the Philippines still does not have a Reproductive Health Policy that guarantees women's right to health services including family planning.

Paragraph 27 and 28 of the Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in its 36th Session in August, 2006 also raised concern over the high maternal mortality rate of the country and the inadequate family planning services especially in rural areas.

Poor and inadequate RH services result in high maternal mortality rate (MMR) – The 2006 Family Planning Survey and the 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey still reveal a high rate of maternal mortality. Although there was a decline in MMR from 179 to 169 per 100,000 live births, this still translate into 10 women dying due to pregnancy and childbirth related complications every 24 hours. Paragraph 775 of the ICESCR Philippine Report reveals that maternal deaths were estimated to be 14 percent of all deaths of women ages 15-49.

According to the ICPD+10 report and based on the country's annual health budget, the Philippines has not spent a single centavo for the purchase of medically acceptable contraceptive commodities over the last 30 years.

Women's demand for family planning services still fall on deaf ears even when a national survey conducted by Pulse Asia reveal that 9 out of 10 Filipinos say that it is important for the government to provide family planning services which include pills, IUD, DMPA and permanent methods of contraception (*see attached Pulse Asia Survey*).

Government preference for ONLY Natural FP Method – The Responsible Parenting Movement (RPM) of the government being implemented by the Commission on Population, an agency under the Department of Health is a campaign for natural family planning. Preference and provision of support to one method of FP violates women's

right to information that would allow her to decide freely and responsibly the FP method that is medically safe and acceptable according to her needs and situation.

Because of this preference and support for only natural family planning, a local chief executive and known ally of President Gloria Arroyo has gone as far as signing an Executive Order which declared that Manila, the Philippine capital and most populous city in the country will only provide and uphold Natural Family Planning. Manila Mayor Lito Atienza implemented E.O. No. 003 banning artificial contraception including the administration of tetanus toxoid vaccine to pregnant mothers. Even when this is a clear violation of women's rights, the Government has not lifted a finger to stop this imposition.

This explains why in paragraph 772 of the ICESCR Report, there was a decline of 12% in mothers who have been given tetanus toxoid. This has also resulted in infant deaths. In paragraph 776, it states that Metro Manila has the highest abortion rate of 33 per 1,000 women. This is due to ineffective if not absent implementation of contraception program. Paragraph 802 says that family planning is one of the four pillars of safe motherhood but this is mostly only natural family planning.

The impact of this EO and the non action of government is documented in a published study entitled *Imposing Misery: Impact of Manila's Ban on Contraception* conducted by three NGOs, the Linangan ng Kababaihan, REPROCEN and Center for Reproductive Rights (see attached study).

We urge the OHCHR to consider our report which gives a voice to women, men, adolescents and children seeking better health services and demanding that our government fulfill its commitments and obligations.