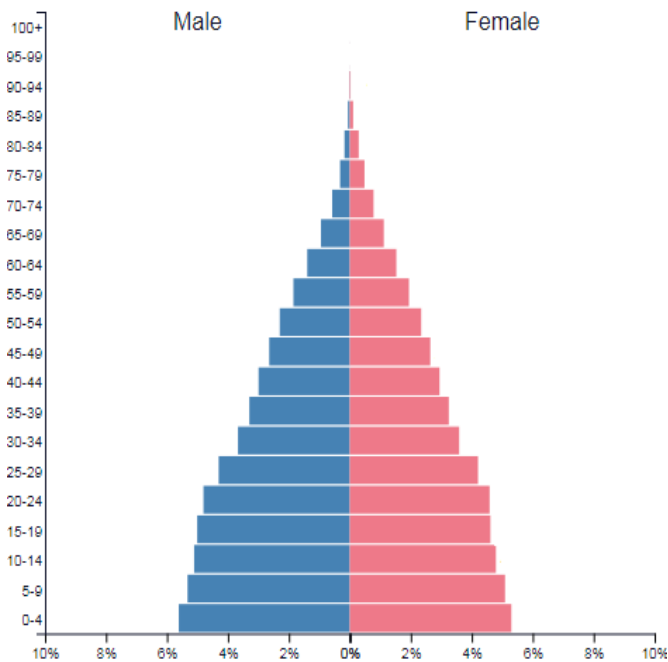


## Case Study on Youth Issues: Philippines

### Introduction

The Philippines has one of the largest populations of the ASEAN member states, with 105 million inhabitants, surpassed only by Indonesia. It also has a relatively a high population growth rate of 1.5 per cent. A total of 19.2 per cent of the population is classified as youth aged 15-24, a figure 25 per cent higher than that of the Asia-Pacific region. Older

**Figure 1: Population Pyramid, 2017**



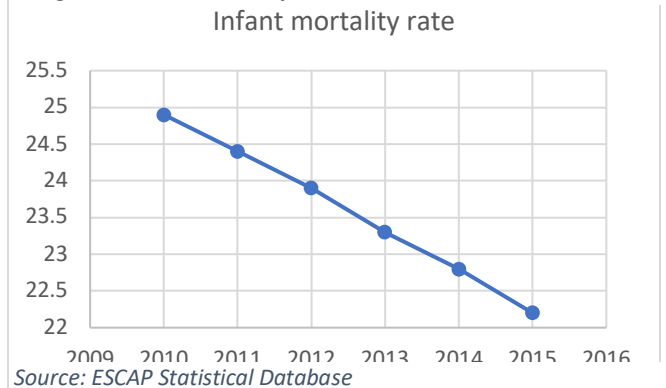
Source: PopulationPyramid.net

persons constitute a mere 5.0 per cent of the population resulting in an expansive population pyramid (Figure 1) with just over 50 per cent of the population being under 25 years old. This large youth population is due to the country's relatively high fertility rate of 2.9 live births per woman – a figure that has decreased only around 10.0 per cent since 2010. The infant

<sup>1</sup> UNDP, Human Development Reports, 2015

mortality rate has seen a larger decrease, see Figure 2. Total life expectancy is 69.2 years and differs significantly for females and males; women on average live to 72.8 years, while for men the figure is 65.9 years. The Philippines is currently still able to benefit from the demographic dividend brought about by a youthful population, but needs to invest in education, especially that of girls, employment opportunities for youth and social protection in order to ensure that as the population ages prosperity continues to increase. A key challenge is realizing a more equitable distribution of wealth. When considering the Gini Coefficient, in the Philippines income equality is similar to other ASEAN countries at 40.1 in 2016. The Philippines is currently ranked 114<sup>th</sup> in the Human Development Index with an HDI value of 0.68 – a figure representing medium human development.<sup>1</sup> In terms of the country's economy, there has been significant growth, with a 6.7 per cent increase in real GDP from 2017 to 2018, the average for the Asia-Pacific region being 5.5 per cent. In 2018, GDP per capita is USD 3,100,<sup>2</sup> putting the country in the lower-middle-income category. Given this figure, it is not surprising to see that 14.3 per

**Figure 2: Infant Mortality Rate**



<sup>2</sup> IMF, DataMapper, 2018 Available at:

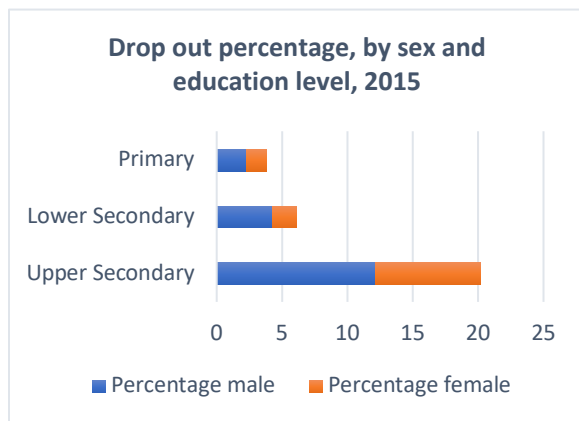
[http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDP\\_C@WE/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/APQ/PHL](http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDP_C@WE/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/APQ/PHL)

cent of the population are classified as working poor<sup>3</sup>

### Education:

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Despite many challenges, the Philippines is making steps to satisfy the SDG 4 prerequisites. Literacy rates in the Philippines are high, with 98.8 per cent of young females and 97.4 per cent of young males considered literate. The dropout rate is lowest in primary school, see Figure 3; however, the 3.8 per cent dropout rate for primary school is high compared to other countries of similar income in the Asia-Pacific region. Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia

**Figure 1: Education level dropout rates, 2015**



Source: UNESCO, <http://data.uis.unesco.org>

and Sri Lanka have rates of 0.6, 0.5 and 0.9 per cent, respectively.<sup>4</sup> Upper Secondary is the area of concern, as 20.2 per cent of young people drop out of school, detrimentally affecting their opportunity to either pursue further education or secure fruitful employment. It is also evident

that males constitute the majority in dropouts across all levels of education. This is a trend that has existed for quite some time; for instance, census and labor force survey data from various sources show that the proportion of the adult population with college education has been higher for girls than boys since 1975.<sup>5</sup> According to the 2014 APIS Survey, the top reasons for which the young male population dropped out of upper secondary education were employment or looking for work, 31.0 per cent, and high cost of education or financial concerns, 23.8 per cent. However, amongst females in the same age group the figures for these were only 19.3 per cent 21.8 per cent, respectively. For females the most significant reason was marriage or family matters at 30.2 per cent.<sup>6</sup> Examples of efforts to lessen the dropout rate, especially that of upper secondary education, include La Consolacion College-Bacolod, a private, co-ed, Catholic school in Bacolod, which has launched the Free Night High School Programme. The programme is in line with the Department of Education's (DepEd) aims to provide quality education that is accessible to all and lay the foundations for life-long learning and service. The programme is run by the school using their facilities to accommodate the students. The night school is free to attend and the teachers and teaching materials are also provided by the college. There have been difficulties as ability levels differ throughout classes, which creates obstacles in producing a homogenous education level amongst graduating students. From 1993 to 2011, the programme had a total of 474 beneficiaries.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> ILO, Employment by economic class, 2017

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, UIS data available at:

<http://data.uis.unesco.org>

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, "Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities: Philippines", 2010

<sup>6</sup> Philippines Statistics Authority, "Annual Poverty Indicators Survey", 2014

<sup>7</sup> Menes, C. C., et al. (2011). Free Night High School in a Private Catholic College: A Vehicle for Social Transformation. *Development Education Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*.

### Youth Employment:

SDG 8 aims to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. This goal is specifically targeted at ensuring vulnerable groups - such as young people, women and persons with disabilities - enter the labour force

For decades, sizeable numbers of Filipinos have left home in search of permanent settlement or temporary work overseas, trends long attributed to the fragile economy and exacerbated by frequent natural disasters. Today, more than 10 million Filipinos, roughly 10 per cent of the population, are working and/or living abroad.<sup>8</sup> Large, steady flows of remittances have become one of the country's lifelines. The Philippines ranks third after India and China as major recipients of remittances. In 2016, the country received US\$26.9 billion in remittances, according to the Central Bank of the Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

In the past two decades, an annual average of 172,000 Filipino women migrant workers have been deployed overseas.<sup>10</sup> Currently, female migrant workers still outnumber men, but their proportion of the total deployment has considerably decreased. Occupational sex-segregation characterizes the job categories of men and women migrant workers. While most male overseas Filipino workers are typically production workers, women are predominantly service workers. Domestic work dominates the job categories of female migrants among the low-skilled. Nurses rank first as a job category

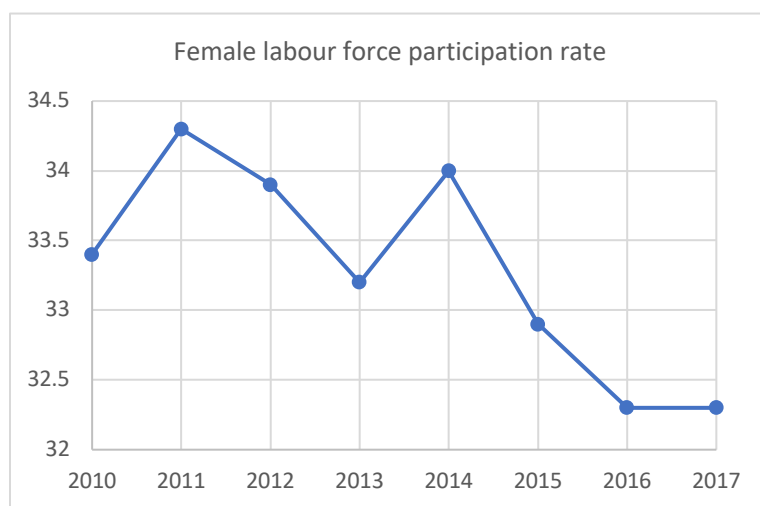
<sup>8</sup> Migration Information Source, available at [www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

<sup>9</sup> Migration Information Source, available at [www.migrationpolicy.org](http://www.migrationpolicy.org)

among the professionals. Filipino women are also leaving as marriage migrants and au pairs.

In the context of women's empowerment, low levels of labour force participation play a role in perpetuating gender inequalities.

**Figure 2: Female youth labour force participation rate**



Source: ESCAP Statistical Database

Figure 4 shows that female youth labour force participation has decreased over recent years, resulting in only 32.3 per cent of young Filipino women participating in the labour market.

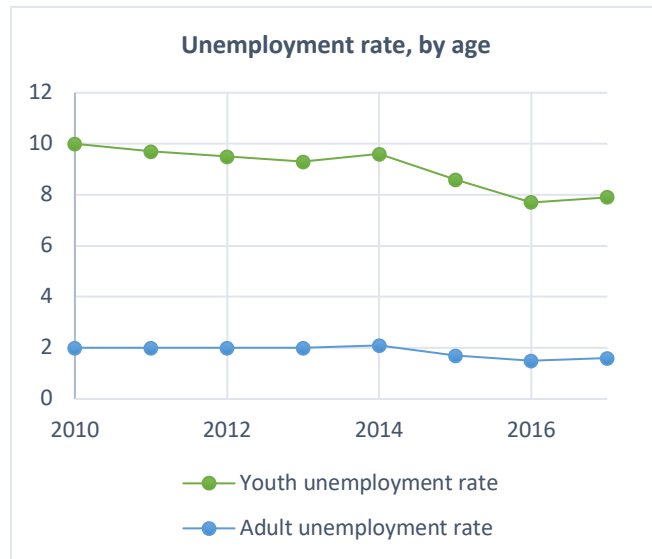
The only data available for informal employment is from 2008, but it states that 70.1 per cent of employment is classified as informal employment.<sup>11</sup> Another worrying trend is that the youth unemployment rate in 2017 was 7.9 per cent, a high figure when compared to similar lower-middle income countries such as Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia and Myanmar at 1.7, 0.4 and 1.7 per cent

<sup>10</sup> UN Women, Filipino Women Migrant Workers Fact sheet, 2016

<sup>11</sup> ILO, Informal Employment, available at <http://www.ilo.org>

respectively.<sup>12</sup> Figure 5 shows a great inequality between the youth unemployment rate and the adult unemployment rate, with youth 79 per cent more likely to be unemployed.

**Figure 3: Unemployment rate, by age**



Source: ESCAP Statistical Database

A possible explanation of such a trend could be the education system in the Philippines as it is the last country in Asia and one of only three countries worldwide with a 10-year pre-university school curriculum. A 13-year programme is found to be best for acquiring a basic education and is also the recognized standard for students and professionals globally. Although there are many programmes providing extra support to students such as the K to 12 programme, which adds two more years to basic education, many still struggle with the school-to-work transition. A successful venture has been the JobStart Programme, a government employment programme implemented by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), with funding support from the Government of Canada and technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The programme's primary aims are to

provide school-to-work transition assistance, specifically for youth aged 18-24 years old, and to increase the chance of an individual securing employment to 80 per cent, whilst reducing time spent searching for work. Graduates are kept up-to-date on employment opportunities and the skills required for specific occupations in which they are interested. If they lack the skills necessary for their career path of choice, JobStart provides training and workshops to equip individuals with skills valued by employers.

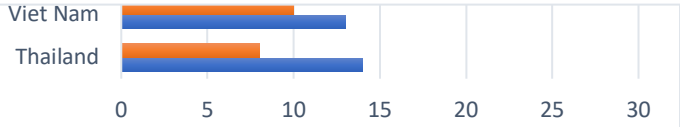
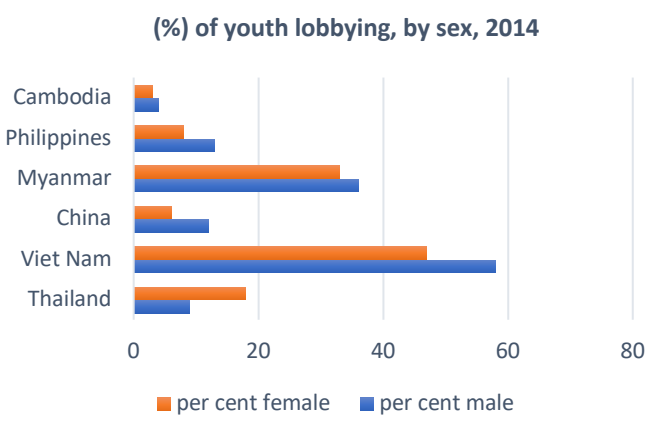
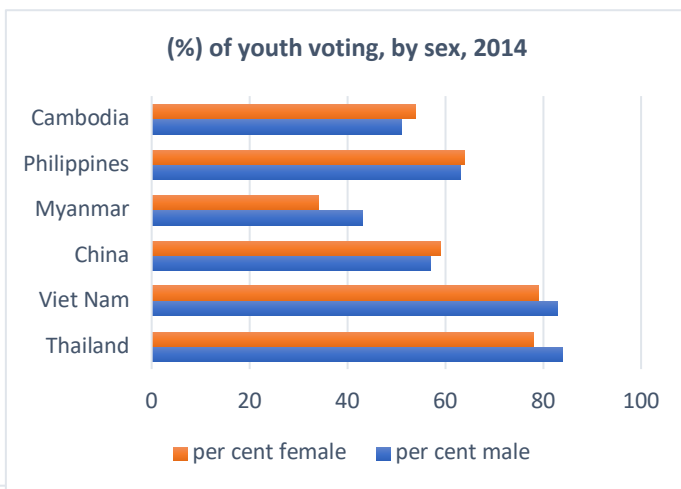
With the aim of assisting vulnerable youth into full-time employment, DOLE provides a stipend of PHP 200.0 (US\$ 3.9) a day to each job starter and PHP 1000.0 (US\$ 19.4) to their partner employers for administration costs. As of August 2015, the JobStart initiative has produced over 601 graduates, 168 of which completed the full programme and 433 of which were hired prior to completion of the programme. In cooperation with Local Government Units around the country, JobStart has also been launched in many cities throughout the Philippines.

<sup>12</sup> ESCAP statistical database

### Civic Engagement

In 2017, only 29 per cent of the seats in national parliaments in the Philippines were held by women. Although, this figure is much lower than the desired 50 per cent, it is still 34 per

**Figure 4: (% of voting, lobbying and activism, by sex, 2014**



Source: UNDP, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia, 2014*

<sup>13</sup> UNDP, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia, 2014*

cent greater than the ESCAP average of 19 per cent. This may explain why, in terms of voting, young women are marginally more likely to vote than their male counterparts, see figure 6. The Philippines has a relatively high voter turnout among young people compared to other countries of similar income status. However, in terms of lobbying, young people in the Philippines are 80 per cent less likely to participate in lobbying than their counterparts in Viet Nam or 69 per cent less likely than those in Myanmar. There is also a greater variation between the sexes. Nevertheless, it is also clear that, although youth in the Philippines are more engaged in political activism than other countries in the region, there is a great disparity between male and female activism. Female youth are 44 per cent less likely to engage in political activism than young men. Other variables also affect interest in politics such as geography; in urban areas, 66.8 per cent of young people are interested in politics, whereas only 52.8 per cent of young people in rural areas show an interest, a 20 per cent difference.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2017 which scales countries from 0, being highly corrupt, and 100, being very clean, the Philippines, with a rating of 34, scores low, coming 111<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries. In an attempt to increase youth civic engagement and to lessen the perception of corruption the National Youth Parliament (NYP) was formed in 2005 by the National Youth Commission. This gathering of over 300 youth leaders and youth sectoral representatives represent, discuss and propose resolutions to pressing issues that affect them. The young people chosen to represent all regions of the Philippines and bring regional issues to the national stage. However, an issue noted with the NYP has been

the need for the young parliamentarians to finance their travel from their local area to the conference, the location of which varies each year. This creates a barrier between those who can afford such travel, and those who cannot.

## Recommendations

### *Education*

Drop-out rates across all levels of education are higher than the regional norm, especially for those going to primary school. Another issue is young males sacrificing education for work to support families. The Government could alleviate such dropout rates by providing financial incentives for families to ensure young people complete all tiers of education.

Vocational training could also be provided in schools to provide students with a broader skill set, setting them up for employment following secondary education.

### *Employment*

The main concern is the low participation of young women in the labour force, having a negative impact on women's empowerment. In terms of a disparity female workers face, many of the gendered norms that eventually morph into constraints to labour demand originate in the family unit, are built on in the education system, and are cemented into place in society. In this regard, there is a critical need to remove attitudinal and societal bias towards traditional gender roles. There is also a very high youth unemployment rate for both sexes when compared to that of the adult population. Vocational education, on-the-job training and opportunities to gain work experience are all greatly needed. The education system does not effectively equip students with the tools to partake in the job market, often leaving employers unable to hire young people as they lack the requisite qualifications or experience.

### *Civic Engagement*

While the National Youth Parliament is bringing more young people into contact with politics and governance, a greater emphasis could be placed on the participation of young women especially from rural areas. Financial incentives should be provided to encourage those from lower-economic backgrounds to become involved. If young people are at the core of decision-making which affects them, the corruption perception is likely to decrease among the younger generation.

