

Editor's Notes

In 2005, the Philippine population was estimated by the National Statistics Coordination Board at 85.26 million, up from the 76.9 million counted in the 2000 census, an increase of more than 8.3 million. This means an annual average exponential growth rate of 2.05 percent for the period 2000-2005.

Even as the population continues to grow at a rapid pace, the total fertility rate (TRF) decline is exceedingly slow. The 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) calculated the TFR at 3.5, down from 4.1 in 1993 and 3.7 in 1998. A friend pointed out that the TFR issue can be looked at like the proverbial glass: either it is half-full or it is half-empty, that is, the decline is dramatic, or it is sluggish.. There has been a decline, no doubt, but it is no consolation to realize that among Southeast Asian countries, only Laos and Cambodia have higher TFR than ours.

At the same time, a one-child gap continues to exist between wanted (2.5) and actual (3.5) fertility. This gap is reinforced by the finding of the 2005 Family Planning Survey that one-fifth of all currently married women have an unmet need for family planning: 11 percent for spacing and nine percent for limiting.

In other words, the Philippines has a population problem. Millions of Filipino women want family planning to control their fertility and are unable to do so for a variety of reasons. In the face of this reality, the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared in 2006 that the Responsible Parenting Movement, which promotes only natural family planning (NFP), is the answer to the problem. Let foreign donors and local governments worry about providing the contraceptive requirements of Filipino women. This administration will use national government resources for the promotion of NFP and nothing but NFP.

The 2006 edition of the *Philippine Population Review* weighs in on the population debate.

The paper of Dr. Magdalena C. Cabaraban draws up a profile of the Muslims in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in matters of marriage, family and contraception. Conducted after the National Fatwa on Family Planning and Reproductive Health (which allows the use of contraceptives for child spacing, and even sterilization to save the life of mother and child) was developed but before its launching and dissemination, the study reveals the conservative thinking of many of the respondents that family planning is considered haram (forbidden), although the younger respondents are more open to the practice of family planning.

Over in Cebu City, the men have taken to vasectomy. In her study of male involvement in family planning, specifically their acceptance of no-scalpel vasectomy, Dr. Elmira Judy T. Aguilar argues how conceptions of masculinity have shaped the contraceptive choice of the men. A responsible husband and father is a good provider who takes care of his family's

future. For this particular, primarily economic reason, a man will consider vasectomy if all the myths, fears and misconceptions are explained away by a credible, influential other, preferably a health provider.

Nationwide, Filipino women are undergoing induced abortion. The paper of Dr. Josefina Cabigon et al touches on a very hot button in this predominantly Christian country. Using data from the 2004 National Survey on Women, the authors validate earlier findings: majority of women who undergo induced abortion are married, more of them are non-poor, many of them have unintended pregnancies which they want to abort. The study discusses five correlates of induced abortion and concludes that in order to reduce abortion, it is necessary to reduce unintended pregnancies. Hence, the importance of family planning and other reproductive health services.

Two commentaries, delivered at the University of the Philippine (U.P.) Alumni Association Council Meeting in June 2006, present the population-environment relationships. The Abrajano paper opens dramatically with a quotation from the Assyrian Tablet (2800 B.C.) which lamented that the end of the world was fast approaching, then makes the point that doomsayers date back from olden times. However, though Dr. Abrajano points out that even if the Earth is not yet on the brink of extinction, it does not mean that governments and societies must conduct their “business as usual”. He argues that we owe it to the future generations to leave behind a sustainable future. A companion piece, the paper Dr. Merle C. Tan is a case study of the role of the U.P. and its alumni in promoting sustainable development.

The Manalastas piece comprises the Research Notes for this issue. Making use of data from the male sub-sample of the 2003 NDHS, the paper reveals that condom use by men who have sex with men is very low, despite prevalent beliefs that condoms could protect against sexually transmitted diseases. The author argues for further sexuality research directions, including improved assessment of sexual behaviors and more in-depth investigation of social dynamics and contexts of sex between Filipino men.

Finally, the *Philippine Population Review* would like to thank the United States Agency for International Development for allowing the publication of the papers of Drs. Cabaraban and Aguilar, whose research projects on the Muslims and on no-scalpel vasectomy respectively were supported by the USAID project, The Social Acceptance Project – Family Planning, which was implemented by the Academy for Educational Development in 2002-2006.

The Editor