Along with other contentious contemporary issues tackled in the landmark three-week XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World in October 2015, the topic of poverty and how it impacts families were high on the agenda.

In an earlier gathering, the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, on the theme Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization, poverty was recognized as an urgent concern: “In such cases of extreme and increasing poverty, the family has to struggle for subsistence, a struggle to which the family has to devote most of its energy. Some observations call for the Church to raise a strong prophetic voice concerning poverty which puts a strain on family life. A Church which is ‘poor and for the poor’ must not fail to make her voice heard in this area” (#73).

In this issue of the Intersect Quick Facts, we present indicators of poverty affecting millions of Filipino families and the urgent challenges that beg for deeper reflection and immediate action by everyone.

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MILLIONS OF FILIPINO FAMILIES CONSIDER THEMSELVES POOR AND HUNGRY.

Due to the limitations of the survey, annual poverty data are not available for Batanes and Leyte. Apart from these areas, the economic crisis resulting from Typhoon Yolanda is reflected in the 2014 poverty estimates. The poverty threshold for a household of five is Php 8,778 per month.

- **11.0 MILLION FAMILIES**
  - Considered themselves “poor”.

- **3.5 MILLION FAMILIES**
  - Experienced involuntary hunger at least once in the past three months.

- **7.8 MILLION FAMILIES**
  - Considered the type of food they eat as “poor”.

Based on a nationwide poll conducted by the Social Weather Stations in September 2015:
POVERTY AFFECTS THE FILIPINO FAMILY IN MANY WAYS...

MALNUTRITION IN CHILDREN REMAINS A PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN.

7.36 MILLION FILIPINO CHILDREN BELOW AGE OF 5 ARE MALNOURISHED.

19.9% of children 0-5 years old are underweight

30.0% of children 0-5 years old are stunted or too short for their age

7.9% of children 0-5 years old are wasted or too thin for their age

Households that cannot consume nutritious foods due to income poverty are at risk of malnutrition and serious diseases. Malnutrition is related not only to inadequate dietary intake, but also to lack of access to health services and poor health education. The highest prevalence of underweight, stunting, and wasting in children is among those in the poorest quintile.

SOURCE: 2013 NATIONAL NUTRITION SURVEY, FOOD AND NUTRITION RESEARCH INSTITUTE - DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (FNRI-DOST)

CHILD MORTALITY RATES HAVE DECREASED...

IN 1991, FOR EVERY 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS

57 DIE BEFORE REACHING 1 YEAR OF AGE.

80 DIE BEFORE REACHING 5 YEARS OF AGE.

... BUT LARGE GAPS IN EQUITY FOR NEWBORN DEATHS BETWEEN THE POOREST AND THE WEALTHIEST HOUSEHOLDS STILL EXIST.

The Philippines is one of the top 10 countries in the world with the greatest gap in equity for newborn deaths, between poorest and wealthiest, and between rural and urban households. Babies born to the poorest and hardest to reach groups are most at risk of dying within a few days after birth.

“Ending Newborn Deaths: Ensuring Every Baby Survives
Save the Children
2014

SOURCE: 2011 FAMILY AND HEALTH SURVEY
THE PHILIPPINES' MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE — OR THE NUMBER OF MATERNAL DEATHS PER 100,000 LIVE BIRTHS — HAS WORSENED.

From 209 in 1990 to 221 in 2011. 

THE UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING IS SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER AMONG WOMEN CONSIDERED POOR THAN AMONG NON-POOR WOMEN.

Data show that Filipino women desire fewer children but only half of them practice any form of family planning.

The unmet need for family planning (defined as the proportion of currently married women not using any method of family planning who want to limit their children or prefer to space births) remained high at 19.3%—10.5% for birth spacing and 8.8% for limiting births.

THE RATE OF TEENAGE PREGNANCIES HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED THE PAST DECADE.

Early pregnancy poses serious health risks to young mothers and to their children, including complications from induced abortions. It also results in poor life outcomes for teenagers, who usually drop out of school to take care of their babies.

IN 2002, 6.3% of girls 15-19 years old were either pregnant or already mothers.

IN 2013, 13.3% of girls 15-19 years old were either pregnant or already mothers.

POVERTY HAS EXACERBATED THE PROBLEM OF CHILD LABOR IN THE COUNTRY.

3.03M FILIPINO CHILDREN WORK IN HAZARDOUS ENVIRONMENTS.

Most of these children work as laborers and unskilled workers in industries such as mining, fishing, pyrotechnic production, and garbage scavenging. A significant number are also employed as domestic workers in the informal sector of the urban economy, or as unpaid family workers in rural agricultural areas.

POVERTY IS ONE OF THE RISK FACTORS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery, which, as defined by the United Nations, involves the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat, use of force or other forms of coercion, for the purpose of exploitation.” The Philippines remains a major source of trafficked individuals coerced to work as prostitutes, low-wage laborers, or drug mules.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT OF FILIPINOS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING, AT LEAST

300,000 ARE WOMEN.

60,000 ARE CHILDREN.
HOW IS POVERTY BEING ADDRESSED?

**BY GOVERNMENT**

**CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER**

Also known as the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program*, the CCT Program is the government’s flagship project to cut intergenerational poverty in the country. Using the conditional cash transfer scheme, the program helps parents invest in their children’s health and education in exchange of cash grants.

- **4.4 M** households considered “poorest of the poor” assisted by the program as of June 2015
- **P62.3 B** budget earmarked for the implementation of the program in 2015

**MONTHLY GRANT ENTITLEMENTS:**

- **P500** health grant per household
- **P500** education grant per high school student for 10 months
- **P300** education grant per elementary school student per month for 10 months

**CO-RESPONSIBILITIES OF BENEFICIARIES:**

- Pregnant women must avail of pre- and post-natal care, and be attended during childbirth by a trained professional.
- Parents or guardians must attend the family development sessions, which include topics on responsible parenting, health, and nutrition.
- Children aged 0-5 must receive regular preventive health check-ups and vaccines.
- Children aged 6-14 must receive deworming pills twice a year.
- Children-beneficiaries aged 3-18 must enroll in school, and maintain an attendance of at least 85% of class days every month.

**SOURCE:** DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT, GOV.PH

**BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**PONDO NG PINOY**

Started by the Archdiocese of Manila, Pondo ng Pinoy is a movement launched in 2004 by the Catholic Church in the Philippines to encourage Filipino Catholics to save as little as 25 centavos daily in plastic bottles. When these improvised piggy banks are full, these are turned over to the parish. The collected donations are used for various Church-sponsored “corporal works of mercy.”

- **P325 M** worth of donations collected by the program from 2014 to 2015.
- Almost a third of this amount came from the Archdiocese of Manila.

- **1.5 M** children fed by HAPAG-ASA

**HAPAG-ASA** is a supplemental nutrition program of Pondo ng Pinoy that aims to feed undernourished children 6 months to 12 years old, once a day, five days a week for six months. This is carried out in more than 30 dioceses.

**SOURCES:** VERITAS846.PH, HAPAGASA FEEDING.COM, ROMAN ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA

**BY CIVIL SOCIETY**

**MICROFINANCE**

Microfinance has been a popular strategy by NGOs and cooperatives to help the poor access credit that will enable them to put up small enterprises or sustain existing livelihoods. By reaching poor farmers, fishers, and micro-entrepreneurs, including women, who otherwise would not access financial services from formal banks, microfinance institutions aim to help them gain higher incomes and to promote financial inclusion.

- **68.8%** NGOs extending microfinance services accounted for the bulk of total active borrowers in 2011. This is equivalent to **2.5 M** individual borrowers.

- **14%** penetration rate of microfinance loans among the poor

**SOURCES:** ADB, CITED IN “THE MICROFINANCE INDUSTRY IN THE PHILIPPINES: STRIVING FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN THE MIDST OF GROWTH” BY R. HABARADAS AND M. UMALI, CENTER FOR BUSINESS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (SEPTEMBER 2013), AND “MICROFINANCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2000: SECTOR PERFORMANCE AND CLIENT WELFARE” BY ADB (SEPTEMBER 2012)