

PRESS RELEASE

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Gov't urged to set clear, consistent policy on population control

Given the controversial nature of the issue of population growth, there is a need for the government to state clearly its position with respect to family planning alternatives and its role in fertility decisionmaking of couples.

Dr. Alejandro Herrin, professor at the UP School of Economics, stated in a Policy Note with the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) titled "Lack of Consensus Characterizes Philippine Population Policy" that the lack of stable consensus on Philippine government's policy on population control during the past three decades has been the reason behind the country's high population growth.

He noted that compared to neighboring countries like South Korea and Thailand, the country's fertility decline has been the slowest. As a result, the Philippines did not have the advantage of a more favorable age distribution that these countries had which contributed to their sustained economic growth and higher standards of living.

Herrin explained that from the Marcos Administration in 1967 to President Arroyo's Administration, the national population program has been characterized by shifting objectives of fertility reduction, upholding of reproductive rights and promoting maternal health.

"The Marcos Administration emphasized the negative consequences of rapid population growth and advocated a small family size norm while the Aquino Administration emphasized the rights of couples to determine the number of their children and promoted family planning more as a health intervention than as a demographic intervention," he stated.

The Ramos Administration, on the other hand, recognized the adverse effect of rapid population growth on economic growth and adopted family planning in the context of reproductive health. Subsequently, the Estrada Administration adopted family planning to help couples achieve their desired fertility and to promote health. “Contraceptive mix scenarios” were also promoted during the Estrada Administration to achieve faster fertility reduction.

At present, the study noted that family planning policy of the government focuses on promoting modern natural family planning in assisting couples achieve their desired fertility. As to the provision of artificial contraceptives, President Arroyo was quoted as saying that in the event that donors such as the USAID would stop funding the purchase of contraceptive supplies for distribution to public health facilities, she expects the NGOs to fill up the void rather than the government.###