

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Gov't-Catholic Church alliance in promoting family planning urged**

Although the government cannot expect the Catholic Church hierarchy to promote artificial contraception, there are opportunities for working closely in the areas of population policy and family planning.

This was suggested by Dr. Alejandro Herrin, professor at the UP School of Economics, in his paper with the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) titled "Lack of Consensus Characterizes Philippine Population Policy."

According to Herrin, it is possible for the government and the Catholic Church Church to work together in promoting social and economic policies that can influence fertility indirectly in the long run.

Herrin alluded to the Pastoral Letter by Bishop Antonio J. Ledesma entitled "Natural Family Planning—A Pastoral Approach" as an indication that a church-government collaboration on family planning is workable. Bishop Ledesma suggested the possibility of moving from the Church's earlier position of critical noncollaboration with the government to one of principled collaboration with respect to family planning.

"The other area wherein the Church and the government could work together is in promoting modern natural family planning methods, the only methods that the Catholic Church hierarchy considers as morally acceptable," Herrin noted

He cited the joint implementation of a Natural Family Planning Program by the Catholic Church and the local government in the province of Pangasinan as a framework for such collaboration. He explained that this church-government collaborative partnership was formalized

by a Memorandum of Agreement among the Family Life Apostolate of the Lingayen-Dagupan Archdiocese, the Kapihan sa Kumbento and the Province of Pangasinan with the concurrence of Archbishop Oscar Cruz of the Lingayen-Dagupan Archdiocese.

Meanwhile, Herrin lamented that the single most important factor influencing Philippine population policymaking since its formulation in 1969 is the opposition of the Catholic Church hierarchy to the government population policy of reducing population growth as well as its promotion of artificial contraception methods. He also maintained that this partly explains why government's policies on population has been shifting focus over time.

Likewise, Herrin advised the government to consider the views of the general public regarding population growth and family planning as indicated in National Demographic Surveys and opinion polls of the Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia. These surveys concluded that the general public is generally favorable to the policy of reducing population growth and the promotion of a wider range of contraceptive methods, including modern artificial contraception. "It appears, however, that such views have not been influential to public policy decisions as those of the Catholic Church hierarchy," the researcher noted.

"While organized stakeholders are more vocal in their views regarding population growth and fertility reduction, there is a need to listen to the larger, albeit, unorganized silent constituency—the married couples with unmet needs for contraception—whose consistent views are well documented in nationally representative demographic surveys and opinion polls," Herrin recommended. ###