

Editor's Notes

Population, reproductive health, family planning and other related issues hogged the headlines in 2005. The Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Bill, whose earlier version stirred a hornet's nest of passionate debate the moment it was introduced in the Lower House of the Philippine Congress in July 2004, was filed in February 2005 by no less than 111 members of Congress. The Department of Health launched the "Ligtas Buntis" (Safe Pregnancy) campaign in the first quarter of the year; while the campaign succeeded in delivering family planning services closer to the communities, it too had its fair share of critics, some of whom came from within the ranks of the department itself. In April, Pope Benedict XVI was elected the new Roman Pontiff; like his predecessor, the new pope holds conservative views vis-à-vis the population-reproductive health-family planning debate, a fact not lost on critics. In September, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, in her statement at the United Nations' plenary meeting of world leaders, made headlines when she included natural family planning among the pressing issues of global terrorism, the oil crisis and the debt burden of developing countries. Also in 2005, a series of regional dissemination workshops on the results of the 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) was conducted throughout the country. It was, in a word, a very good year for population and related issues in terms of media coverage.

The Philippine Population Association (PPA), in its own modest way and true to its vision of promoting scientific population and related studies towards a better understanding of problems besetting our society, conducted a scientific meeting during its annual general assembly in February 2005. Four papers were presented during the meeting, two of which are being published in this issue of the **Philippine Population Review**, the PPA's peer-reviewed journal. The paper of Prof. Jones, which served as the keynote address, discussed urbanization, mega-cities and urban planning issues in Southeast Asia, with focus on the Philippines. While acknowledging the problems of inter-country comparisons due to varying definitions of urban areas, Prof. Jones provides a very instructive and interesting analysis of four mega-urban regions in Southeast Asia, the mega-urban region of Manila being one of them. The other paper presented at the same meeting, authored by Dr. Cabaraban and Dr. Linog, is a qualitative study of the reproductive health and risk behavior of male and female adolescents, coming from urban and rural areas, and of Christian, Muslim and Lumad origins.

The link between fertility transition and the achievement of millennium development goals from the perspective of age-structural transition is the subject of Dr. Gultiano's paper. Using census data and other secondary sources, Dr. Gultiano describes the Philippine experience where fertility decline has been slow and the numbers of children and adolescents continue to rise, especially in the poorer segment of society, thereby making it difficult for the country to meet the dietary, educational and reproductive health of the people, as well as to provide jobs and adequate income for its working-age population.

Contraceptive use is the common topic in the papers of Dr. Lee and Mr. Manalastas. Dr. Lee describes a case study, ReachOut Foundation's three-year family planning radio campaign promoting the use of modern contraceptive methods, and analyzes the impact of the campaign on awareness and behavior of the listeners using survey data from eight rounds of Social Weather Station surveys between 2000 and 2002. The author comes to this conclusion: impact on awareness of family planning methods was significant but impact on behavior change, i.e., contraceptive use, was minimal. For its part, the paper of Mr. Manalastas is a breakthrough because it is the first study to be published by the PPR which utilizes the male sub-sample in the 2003 NDHS, which is the first round of such survey to have ever included Filipino males among its respondents. Drawing upon data from the male sub-sample of the NDHS, Mr. Manalastas explores condom use of sexually active young Filipino men during their most recent heterosexual sexual episode. The author finds that condom use by young Filipino male is low and its use is significantly related to the type of sexual partner and whether condom was used the first time a man had heterosexual sex.

Finally, PPR is pleased to publish a special report prepared for the University of the Philippine Alumni Association Council Meeting. This report of Dr. Tan et al discusses the disturbing brain drain phenomenon of the country's nurses and doctors who have become nurses. The value of this report, beyond painting a grim evidence-based scenario, is its 10-point strategic proposals which require action at the international and the national levels. These proposals make eminent sense and need urgent action by everyone concerned now, because the consequences of inaction are much too serious to contemplate.

Population discourse is alive and thriving in the Philippines. The PPR is happy to be part of this discourse.

The Editor