



Impacts on Youth during COVID-19 in the Philippines



Teenage pregnancy

Teen pregnancy is a 'national social emergency' as youth continue to have limited access to SRH services, despite enactment of the Reproductive Health Law, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Health Department issued guidance to ensure continuous access to SRH, provided that youth below 18 have parental consent.



Violence at home

The pandemic has increased cases of violence against women and children. The Commission on Women required relevant agencies to address gender-based violence (GBV) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development included provision of services to victims of GBV in its COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan.



Disruptions to education

Students experienced distress and poor learning outcomes with the closure of schools and the adoption of remote learning. Policies adopted during COVID-19 provided for assistance to selected students through allowances and subsidies, investment in ICT infrastructure, and budget for the printing and delivery of modules.



Mental health concerns

Despite the landmark Mental Health Act which guarantees access to mental health services, young Filipinos have experienced increased anxiety during the pandemic. With mental healthcare under-resourced, youth have limited to no access to mental health services.



Employment challenges

Youth workers are the most vulnerable to lay-offs. While they may have benefited from financial help provided to workers, no special provisions were adopted to address youth unemployment during the pandemic apart from the guidelines issued on alternative work arrangements. The government internship program (GIP) in local government units is beneficial to some unemployed youth.



Exclusion from participation

The pandemic has limited public consultations on policies and legislation, but Filipino youth used social media to raise their voices and mobilize support. With the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act, several youth groups filed petitions to the Supreme Court over concerns on its provisions that may stifle dissent and freedom of speech.



Local government units needed to innovate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tabaco City in Bicol region realigned unused funds from a youth hub project to a learning hub for struggling students when schools shifted to remote learning. The learning hub is a venue where teachers can meet with struggling students face-to-face in small groups and follow health protocols.