

A SITUATION ON ASIA'S CHILDREN

MINA M. RAMIREZ

1. INTRODUCTION

To present a situation on Asia's children covering the different areas of life is an overwhelming task and a study that cannot be exhaustive. Asia constitutes 3/5 of the world's population of 6.4 Billion people (2005 estimate, World Facts). Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea are known to have fully developed economically. Other countries struggle with high population growth rates, chronic poverty, inadequate health care, largely underemployed work force and rapid degradation of the environment. Moreover Asian societies are diverse in relation to history, political system, religion, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic situation, topographical characteristics and climactic patterns. All the foregoing factors have their influence on any issue in question. On the issue of 'vanishing youth' and the way societies view children, I base myself first of all on the statistical information of the Human Development Report 2002 related to the situation of children. This information will have to be interpreted from the interplay of social factors in the light of our belief in the dignity of every human person and his/her well being to be promoted by family, community, the national and global society.

Some qualitative information was extracted from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among Asian Social Institute's graduate students from the following countries: Japan, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Timor Leste, Indonesia and Thailand and available data from Internet. Understandably, I can know more about my own country, the Philippines, especially because children-in-need is part of Asian Social Institute's (ASI's) concern in its academic, research and social development departments. In fact, the Asian Social Institute (ASI) graduate school of social transformative praxis which I head, is currently engaged in a participatory action research on intergenerational

solidarity, an offshoot of a pilot study that I had reported in the Plenary Session on the same theme in Year 2001 under the title, 'Duty of Parents Towards Teen-Agers' (PASS, *Intergenerational Solidarity*, pp. 113-136).

2. SOCIAL FACTS

2.1. Birth Rate and Demographic Trends

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS.

Country	Population		Birth Rate		Under 15		Aged 65 +	
	2000	2015	2000	2015	2000	2015	2000	2015
	(In Millions)		(%)		(% of total)		(% of total)	
High HDI								
Japan	127.1	127.5	0.5	(.)	14.7	13.3	17.2	25.8
Hong Kong	6.9	8.0	1.8	1.0	16.3	13.9	16.3	13.9
Singapore	4.0	4.8	2.3	1.1	21.9	14.0	7.2	12.9
Korea, Rep. of	40.7	50.6	1.1	0.5	20.8	17.2	7.1	11.6
Brunei	0.3	0.4	2.9	1.6	31.9	23.0	3.2	6.4
Medium HDI								
Malaysia	22.2	27.9	2.4	1.5	34.1	26.7	4.1	6.2
Thailand	62.8	72.5	1.7	1.0	26.7	22.0	5.2	7.8
Philippines	75.7	95.9	2.4	1.6	37.5	29.6	3.5	4.9
Sri-Lanka	18.9	21.5	1.3	0.8	26.3	22.5	6.3	8.8
China	1,275.1	1,410.2	1.3	0.7	24.8	19.4	6.9	9.3
Vietnam	78.1	94.4	2.0	1.3	33.4	25.1	5.3	5.5
Indonesia	212.1	250.1	1.8	1.1	30.8	24.7	4.8	6.4
Mongolia	2.5	3.1	2.2	2.3	35.2	25.9	3.8	4.2
India	1,008.9	1,230.5	1.9	1.3	33.5	26.9	3.5	4.3
Myanmar	47.7	55.3	1.8	1.0	33.1	25.3	4.6	6.0
Cambodia	13.1	18.6	2.5	2.3	43.9	38.6	2.8	3.4
Low HDI								
Pakistan	141.3	204.3	2.8	2.5	41.8	38.4	3.7	4.0
Bhutan	2.1	3.1	2.3	2.6	42.7	38.8	4.2	4.5
Nepal	23.0	32.1	2.2	2.2	41.0	37.2	3.7	4.2
Laos	5.3	7.3	2.2	2.2	42.7	37.3	3.5	3.7
Yemen	18.3	33.1	3.9	3.9	50.1	48.9	2.3	2.0
Bangladesh	137.4	183.2	2.4	1.9	38.7	32.9	3.1	3.7

Source: HDR 2002.

Birth Rate. It is evident from Table I on Demographic Growth Trends that there is a significant relationship between Birth Rate and Ranking in Terms of Human Development Indicators. The lowest birth rate is Japan (0.5%) which ranks highest in terms of HDI. The highest birth rate is in Yemen (3.9%), one of the Low HDI countries. In the Medium HDI, the lowest birth rate is in Sri-Lanka and China (1.3%). Comparing the average birth rates among High, Medium and Low HDI countries, one notes that the average birth rate in each category is inversely related to the rank in HDI: in High HDI countries, the average rate is lowest -1.7%; in Medium HDI countries, the average birth rate is 1.9%; and in the Low HDI countries, it is 2.6%. High HDI countries range from 0.5% (Japan) -2.9 % (Brunei) and are projected to be from .0 % (Japan) to 1.6 % (Brunei) by 2015. In Medium HDI, the range is from 1.3 % (Sri-Lanka and China) to 2.5% (Mongolia) and is projected to be from 0.8% (China) to 2.3% (Mongolia) in 2015. In Low HDI countries the growth rate ranges from 2.2% (Nepal and Laos) to 3.9% (Yemen) and is projected to be 1.9% (Bangladesh) to 3.9 (Yemen) in 2015.

Percentage of Children under 15 and Percentage of Elderly 65 and above. Observing the percentage of children 0-15 years and that of the aged 65 years and above, one sees the same pattern. The High HDI countries generally have less proportion of children to total population than the Low HDI countries. The lowest percentage of children to total is 14.7% in the most highly developed country in Asia – Japan – and is projected to be even less in 2015 – (13.3 % of total population). The highest percentage of children is in the Low HDI countries, specifically, Yemen with 50.1% projected to be 48.9% in 2015.

In Medium HDI countries, the percentage of children to total ranges from 19.1% (China) to 43.9% (Cambodia). On the other hand, the percentage of the elderly to total population is highest in the High HDI countries and lowest in Low HDI countries. The highest percentage is in Japan again, 17.2% to the total and will increase to 25.8% to the total by 2015. In the Low HDI countries, one finds the lowest percentage of elderly to the total (2.3%) in Yemen and will still decrease to 2.0%. In Medium HDI countries, the percentage of the elderly is lowest in Cambodia (2.8%) projected by 2015 to be 3.4%. The highest percentage of elderly in the Medium HDI countries is highest in China with 6.9% to increase in 2015 to 9.3%.

Comparing High, Medium and Low HDI Countries, one sees the average percentage of children to total in an ascending order, as follows: in High

HDI countries, the average is 21.1%; in Medium HDI, the average is 32.7% and in Low HDI, it is 42.8% (Year 2000). In year 2015, the same ascending average percentage of children to total is as follows: in High HDI = 16.3%; in Medium HDI = 25.1% and in Low HDI = 38.9%.

Comparing High, Medium and Low HDI countries, there is a descending average percentage of the elderly to total. In the year 2000, High HDI had an average percentage to total of 10.2%; in Medium HDI, it is 4.6% and in Low HDI, it is 3.4%. In the year 2015, the projection is that High HDI will have an average percentage of elderly to total of 14.1%; in Medium HDI, it will be 5.8% and in Low HDI, this will be 3.7%.

2.2. Health Condition of Children

2.2.1. Natal and Post-Natal Care of Children

Immunization of One-Year Olds. In terms of immunization of one-year olds against tuberculosis, the following countries have the highest percentages (in the order of highest to the lowest, 99%-90%): Malaysia, Singapore (99%) Brunei, Thailand (98%), Sri-Lanka and Mongolia (97%); Vietnam (95%), China (92%), Bangladesh (91%) and Bhutan (90%). Those who have average percentages (in the order of the highest to the lowest, 89%-75%) are the following countries: Myanmar (88%), Philippines (87%), Nepal (86%), Indonesia (85%), Pakistan and Yemen (78%) and Korea (75%). Those who have the lowest percentages (in the order of the highest to the lowest, 74%-50% are the following: Cambodia (71%), India (68%) and Laos (63%). Surprisingly India being one of the most industrialized countries of the world has one of the lowest percentages of immunization against tuberculosis.

In terms of immunization of one-year olds against measles, the following countries have the highest percentages (in the order of highest to the lowest, 99%-90%): Thailand (99%), Sri-Lanka (95%), Japan and Brunei (94%), Singapore, Vietnam and Mongolia (93%), and China (90%). Those who have average percentages (in the order of highest to the lowest, 89%-75%) are the following: Malaysia (88%), Republic of Korea and Malaysia (85%). Those with the lowest percentages (from the highest to the lowest, 74%-50%) are the following countries: Yemen (74%), Nepal (73%), Indonesia, Laos and Bangladesh (71%), Cambodia (55%) Pakistan (54%) and India (50%). It is good to note that India, a most populous country is one with the lowest percentage of immunization against measles.

TABLE 2. IMMUNIZATION OF CHILDREN AND BIRTHS ATTENDED BY LOCAL PHYSICIANS.

Country	One-Year Olds Fully Immunized		Contraceptive Prevalence (%)	Births Attended by Skilled Health Staff (%)
	Tuberculosis (% 1999)	Measles (% 1999)	(1995-1999)	(1995-1999)
High HDI				
Japan	-	94	100	100
Hong Kong	-	-	100	100
Singapore	98	93	100	100
Korea, Rep. of	75	85	80	100
Brunei	98	94	99	99
Medium HDI				
Malaysia	99	88	-	96
Thailand	98	96	72	85
Philippines	87	79	46	56
Sri-Lanka	97	95	-	-
China	92	90	84	89
Vietnam	95	93	75	70
Indonesia	85	71	57	56
Mongolia	97	93	60	97
India	68	50	48	42
Myanmar	88	85	33	-
Cambodia	71	55	24	34
Low HDI				
Pakistan	78	54	24	20
Bhutan	90	76	-	-
Nepal	86	73	28	12
Laos	63	71	-	21
Yemen	78	74	21	22
Bangladesh	91	71	74	12

Source: HDR 2002.

What is striking is that the Republic of Korea which belongs to the High HDI countries relatively has lower percentages in relation to immunization than medium HDI countries and that some medium HDI countries have higher percentages of immunization of one-year olds than high HDI countries and that quite a number of Low HDI countries except for Pakistan have higher percentages than some medium HDI countries... and that India, which is considered one of the highly industrialized countries in the world, has the lowest percentage of immunization of one-year olds.

Contraceptive Prevalence. It is very clear from Table 2 that the High HDI countries which get to have fewer and fewer children and an increasing number of elderly (except for the Republic of Korea where the contraceptive prevalence is 80%,) have a 99% to 100% of use of contraception.

In the Medium HDI countries, the highest percentage of contraceptive prevalence is China (84%) and Vietnam (75%), both socialist countries and Thailand (72%). However, the contraceptive prevalence in the rest of the Medium HDI countries is quite low: Mongolia (60%), Indonesia (57%), India (48%) and Philippines (46%), Myanmar (33%) and Cambodia (24%)

In the Low Income countries, the percentages of contraceptive prevalence are very low, except for Bangladesh (74%) and correspondingly they have the highest rate of population growth. The percentages to total are as follows: Nepal (28%), Pakistan (24%) and Yemen (21%).

Births Attended by Physicians. In this field, it is clear that all births or almost all births as in the case of the Republic of Korea (99%) in the High HDI Countries are attended to by physicians. In Medium HDI countries, the percentages range from 97% in Mongolia to 34% in Cambodia. One notes that in the Low HDI countries, the percentages range from 12% in Nepal and Bangladesh to 22% in Yemen.

2.2.2. *Nutritional and Health Crisis Information*

Underweight and under-height problems among children are presumably a function of nutrition.

Underweight Children Under 5 in 1995-2000. It is remarkable that all the High HDI countries seem to be adequate in nutrition except that Japan reports 7 infants of 1000 at birth as underweight.

In Medium HDI countries, the lowest ratio of incidence of underweight children is in China (10 out of 1000); the highest ratios are in India (47) and Cambodia (46). Then follow the other countries of this category: Mongolia (13), Malaysia (18), Thailand (19), Indonesia (26), Philippines (28), Vietnam and Myanmar (33).

In Low HDI countries, it is clear that, except for Pakistan (18) and Bhutan (19), the four other countries in this category (Yemen, Laos, Nepal and Bangladesh) have an incidence of underweight children that ranges from 40 to 48 out of 1000.

TABLE 3. HEALTH CRISIS INFORMATION.

Country	Underweight Children (% under 5) 1995-2000	Under-Height Children (% under 5) 1995-2000	Infants with Low Birth Weight 1995-2000	Children 0-14 With HIV-AIDs 2001
High HDI				
Japan	-	-	7	160
Hong Kong	-	-	-	<100
Singapore	-	-	-	<100
Korea	-	-	-	<100
Brunei	-	-	-	-
Medium HDI				
Malaysia	18	14	9	
Thailand	19	16	7	21,000
Philippines	28	30	18	<10
Sri-Lanka	33	17	17	<100
China	10	17	6	2,000
Vietnam	33	36	9	2,500
Indonesia	26	36	9	1,300
Mongolia	13	25	6	420
India	47	46	26	170,000
Myanmar	36	37	16	28,000
Cambodia	46	46	9	12,000
Low HDI				
Pakistan	18	42	21	2,200
Bhutan	19	40	15	30,000
Nepal	47	54	21	1,500
Laos	40	41	21	<100
Yemen	46	52	26	<100
Bangladesh	48	45	30	310

Source: HDR 2002.

With reference to under-height children, the High HDI countries do not manifest this as a problem. Understandably therefore the Medium and Low countries still have much to do in raising the nutritional level of children. This is truer still for Low HDI countries whose incidence of underweight out of 1000 children is ranging from 41 in Bhutan and Nepal, having 54.

Incidence of HIV-AIDS Among Children from 0-14 Years. Despite the fact that High HDI countries have adequate nutritional levels as manifested by almost nil underweight and under-height children, there is incidence of 0-14 with HIV-AIDS in the 5 HDI countries except in Brunei which perhaps has not made a report. With less than a hundred in three countries, Japan tops the list with an incidence of 160 among High HDI countries in year 2001.

In Medium HDI countries, the incidence ranges from less than 10 in the Philippines and 170,000 in India which has to be taken in relation to its vast population of more than a billion. However comparing this with China with the same population, the incidence of the same disease is very much lower, only 2000. Relatively high in relation to population are Thailand (21,000) and Myanmar (28,000). The rest have an incidence ranging from 420 (Mongolia) to 12,000 in Cambodia.

In Low HDI countries, the incidence is relatively low ranging from less than a hundred in Laos and Yemen, 310 in Bangladesh, 1,500 in Nepal, 2,200 in Pakistan and surprisingly 30,000 in Bhutan.

2.2.3. *Survival Rates of Children*

Life Expectancy at Birth. It is very clear that HDI influences the life-expectancy in the countries. In High HDI countries, the life expectancy ranges from 74.3% in Korea to 80.5% in Japan. In Medium HDI countries the range is from a low of 56.5% in Cambodia to 71.9% in Malaysia and 71.6% in Sri-Lanka. In the Low HDI countries, it ranges from as low as 52.5% in Laos to 60.7% in Bhutan.

Per 1000 population the mortality rate at birth in High HDI countries ranges from 4 in Japan and Singapore to 6 in Brunei and Hong Kong (Year 2000 figures). In Medium HDI countries, it ranges from 8 in Malaysia to a high of 95 in Cambodia. In the Low HDI countries, it ranges from 54 in Bangladesh to 90 in Laos.

Per 1000 mortality rate of infants below 5, in HDI countries, this ranges from 4 in Japan and Singapore to 6 in Hong Kong and Brunei. In Medium HDI countries, it is as low as 8 in Malaysia and 135 in Cambodia. In Low HDI countries, it is ranging between 82 in Bangladesh to as high as 117 in Yemen.

TABLE 4. MORTALITY RATES OF CHILDREN.

Country	Life Expectancy at Birth 1995-2000	Infant Mortality Rate Per 1000 live births 2000	Under-five mortality rate Per 1000 live births 2000
High HDI			
Japan	80.5	4	4
Hong Kong	79.1	6	6
Singapore	77.1	4	4
Korea	74.3	5	5
Brunei	75.5	6	6
Medium HDI			
Malaysia	71.9	8	9
Thailand	69.6	25	29
Philippines	68.6	30	40
Sri-Lanka	71.6	17	19
China	69.8	32	40
Vietnam	67.2	30	39
Indonesia	65.1	35	48
Mongolia	61.9	78	78
India	62.3	69	96
Myanmar	55.8	78	110
Cambodia	56.5	95	135
Low HDI			
Pakistan	59.0	85	110
Bhutan	60.7	77	100
Nepal	57.3	72	100
Laos	52.5	90	105
Yemen	59.4	85	117
Bangladesh	58.1	54	82

Source: HDR, 2002.

2.3. Children's Education

2.3.1. Public Spending in Education of Children

Ratio of Public Expenditure on Education to Total Budget from 1995-1997. In High HDI countries, the mean ratio of public expenditure to Total Budget is 16.98% or about 17%. In Medium HDI countries, the average expenditure in education is 13.5%; in Low HDI countries, the average public expenditure

TABLE 5. EDUCATION PUBLIC SPENDING.

Country	As % of Total Government Expenditure 1995-97	Pre-primary & Primary (as % of all public education expenditure on all levels (1995-1997))	Secondary (as % of all public education expenditure on all levels (1995-1997))
High HDI			
Japan	9.9	30.9	30.8
Hong Kong	17.0	21.9	35.0
Singapore	23.3	25.7	34.6
Korea, Rep. of	17.5	45.3	36.6
Brunei	17.2	22.6	32.0
Medium HDI			
Malaysia	15.4	32.7	30.6
Thailand	20.1	50.4	20.0
Philippines	15.7	56.1	23.3
Sri-Lanka	8.9	14.6	74.8
China	12.2	37.4	32.2
Vietnam	7.4	43.0	26.0
Indonesia	7.9	43.0	73.0
Mongolia	15.1	19.9	56.0
India	11.6	39.5	26.5
Myanmar	14.4	47.7	40.3
Cambodia	19.9	51.7	26.4
Low HDI			
Pakistan	7.1	51.8	27.9
Bhutan	7.0	44.0	35.0
Nepal	13.5	45.1	19.0
Laos	8.7	48.3	30.7
Yemen	21.6	48.3	30.7
Bangladesh	13.8	44.8	43.8

Source: HDR 2002.

in education is 11.95%. In terms of average public expenditure on pre-primary and primary education in relation to total public spending, it is 29.28 in High HDI countries; 39.6% in Medium HDI countries and 47% in Low HDI countries. In terms of average public expenditure on secondary education in relation to total public spending it is 33.8% in High HDI countries; it is 39% in Medium HDI countries; and 31% in Low HDI countries.

2.3.2. Literacy and Net Enrolment Rate

TABLE 6. LITERACY AND NET ENROLMENT RATE.

Country	Net Primary Enrolment Rate 1998	Net Secondary Enrolment Rate 1998	Children Reaching Grade 5 1995-1997
High HDI			
Japan	100	100	100
Hong Kong	95	85	99
Singapore	95	85	99
Korea, Rep. of	97	73	98
Brunei	100	100	100
Medium HDI			
Malaysia	98	93	86
Thailand	77	55	89
Philippines	78	76	89
Sri-Lanka	100	82	96
China	91	50	94
Vietnam	97	49	94
Indonesia	97	49	88
Mongolia	85	53	88
India	79	39	75
Myanmar	81	57	90
Cambodia	100	20	49
Low HDI			
Pakistan	50	21	49
Bhutan	16	5	49
Nepal	88	23	49
Laos	76	27	55
Yemen	61	35	55
Bangladesh	100	35	55

Source: HDR 2002.

It is assumed that the average net enrolment of children in the primary and elementary schools is an indication of literacy.

Net Primary Enrolment Rate. In the High HDI countries in the Year 1998, the average net primary enrolment rate is 97.4% with Japan and Brunei exhibiting a 100% enrolment rate, Singapore and Hong Kong with 95% and Korea with 97%. In Medium HDI countries, the average net

enrolment rate is 80.5%, Sri-Lanka and Cambodia having the highest (100%) and India (79%), Philippines (78%) and Thailand (77%) being on the low side of the average net enrolment rate. In the Low HDI countries, the average net enrolment rate is 65% with Bhutan (16%) having the lowest and Bangladesh amazingly having 100% net enrolment rate.

Net Secondary Enrolment Rate. In the High HDI countries in the Year 1998, the average net secondary enrolment rate is 88.6%, with Japan and Brunei exhibiting a 100% enrolment rate and Korea having the lowest (85%). In the Medium HDI countries, the average net secondary enrolment rate is 61% with Cambodia having the lowest (20%) and Malaysia having the highest (93%) In Low HDI countries, the average net secondary enrolment rate is 24.3% with Bhutan having the lowest (5%) and Bangladesh and Yemen having the highest (35%).

Children Reaching Grade 5, 1995-97. Children reaching Grade 5 in High HDI countries are 99.2%. In Medium HDI countries, it is 85.3% and in Low HDI countries, it is 52.

Recommendations

1. It is a fact that lack of income (monetary poverty) is a threat to the lives of a great many children in Asia especially for the Low and Medium HDI countries. Thus, any program for children, such as formal, non-formal and informal education, nutrition programs, and primary health care, should be family and community-based. It is movements among families, communities and institutions that should converge to influence the policy of the government towards making the whole country conscious of children's rights and of their being vibrant contributions not only now but for the future.
2. In High HDI countries, what people may suffer is isolationism and lack of quality of relationships. The elderly are increasing fast and children are decreasing which leads to a new kind of 'poverty' in the quality of relationships across generations. To bring together atomistic individuals becomes a great problem in societies that should be fostering sound human relationships. The intermediary groups – youth and young adults – should delve into understanding the dynamics of their respective societies and should creatively help out in bridging gaps – generational, economic, political, cultural, social and digital. To fire the youth with a vision and mission will lead to self and social transformation in whatever level this is going for the balanced support of children and the elderly.

3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH ASIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTE¹ (ASI) GRADUATE STUDENTS²

The focus group discussion from graduate students (from Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and China and India) who are in the graduate programs of Asian Social Institute (ASI) yielded the following insights:

1. Only in China is there a strict one-child policy being implemented. Especially in the cities, there is a rather strict implementation. A second child will not have the normal benefits from the State. Or, the family could be sent to the rural area. In Indonesia there is a three-children policy. In the Philippines, there is the encouragement to keep to 4 children per couple. However, in most countries of Asia, there is practically no sanction when one violates the family planning rule.
2. In most countries of Asia, whether there is a policy or not, women would want to limit the number of children only because of the high cost of living these days.
3. It is the poorest populations who have the tendency to have more children. It is observed that during a visit to the slum communities, one will be immediately surrounded by a hundred children. However, in rich villages and subdivisions, one finds big homes that do not seem to be inhabited by children.
4. In the rural areas of developing and underdeveloped countries in Asia, families would like to have more children as free labour in the fields or for cottage industries.
5. In Cambodia, there is no law that sets a policy for the number of children. It is also not selective of any gender. A Buddhist country, people are present-oriented. This may have implications for the non-practice of family planning.

¹ Asian Social Institute (ASI), a Manila-based Graduate School of Social Transformative Praxis was established in 1962 by a Dutch Scheutist Missionary of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM), the late Rev. Fr. Francis Senden, Ph.D. Started with the blessings of the late Rufino Cardinal Santos, D.D. of the Archdiocese of Manila, ASI's purpose was to form and train social science based social development managers for Asia and the Pacific in order to implement in different socio-cultural religious contexts the social teachings of the Church.

² The graduate students are taking up the master's program of studies in any one of the courses of ASI – economics, social work, sociology, pastoral sociology, social services and development. They are expected to return to their respective countries as social educators, researchers, or social development managers or facilitators and socio-pastoral workers.

6. In Myanmar, there is also no strict policy and no preference as to gender.
7. In Timor Leste, there are less than 1 million inhabitants. In some communities, there is patriarchy, in others matriarchy. Children are considered as wealth.
8. Religion generally has not too much influence on government policies. The Philippines is the only country where religion plays a big role in shaping the conscience of the families with regard to family planning. In the Philippines the Catholic Church is against all contraception and promotes only the natural methods for family planning. There is condemnation of abortion and contraceptives.
9. In terms of the use of contraceptives: China seems to use all contraceptives except the natural methods. There is rampant abortion and sterilization. In Vietnam, the most commonly used contraceptive is the IUD; there is also the practice of abortion, sterilization, and the natural method. In Indonesia, there is prevalence of the use of the pill and the condom. One priest in Indonesia spoke of Family Centres in Flores and the way they educate the people towards the use of the natural method in family planning that sustains healthy, wholesome families. Yet there seems to be a high incidence of abortion. This is a practice in Myanmar and Thailand, In Myanmar, the pill and condoms are used in family planning. In Thailand, there is the use of the condom, the pill and sterilization. In Japan, the pill and the condom are used as well as the practice of sterilization. In the Catholic Church of the Philippines, there is an advocacy to use only the natural methods as an effective method to build families with close ties. Yet in most countries, there is a relatively high incidence of abortion although this is difficult to assess. However below is a news item from Dr. Vu Nhi Cong,³ Member of the Committee of Pastoral and Social Activities of Saigon Diocese and lecturer in social work and community development in some universities in Vietnam.

³ Dr. Vu Nhi Cong completed his doctorate in Applied Cosmic Anthropology in ASI. He entered ASI first as a student of the Diploma International Summer Course in Community Development, then took up his Bachelor's Degree in Social Work, then Master's Degree in the same discipline and then took up his doctorate. He was for a time with Radio Veritas Asia. He is now a correspondent of United Catholic Asia News (UCAN). In Vietnam Dr. Cong is appreciated by the NGO circles. He was working for some years prior to his entrance in ASI among children and youth groups in Vietnam.

17 January 2006

Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City (AsiaNews)

RISING RATE OF ABORTION

By Vu Nhi Cong

Young women top the list. Many have abortions without telling their families. There are important repercussions from a psychological point of view.

In Ho Chi Minh City, hundreds of women go to state hospitals or 'private rooms' to have abortions, many of them under the age of 18 and their number keeps growing.

Here is a statement from Dr. Phuong, head of the hospital's Family Planning Department, 'in every case, whether in early or late phases of pregnancy, women remain psychologically scarred for a long time, sometimes for life'.

Vietnam currently has one of the highest levels of abortion in the world. Its best known hospitals – Ho Chi Minh City's Tu Du Hospital – reports some 33,000 abortions per year. And five per cent of those cases involve patients under the age of 18 in late phases of pregnancy.

Recently, hospitals in HaNoi, NamDinh, Hoa Binh and Ho Chi Minh City surveyed some 1800 women who had abortions. Their results indicate that 50% suffered bacterial infections as post-abortion consequence, 47 per cent had abortions that were dangerous to their health, 11 per cent had abortions without pre-surgery care and 57 per cent did not receive post-surgery follow-up. Finally 10 per cent experienced catastrophic consequences after the abortions.

10. From two Indians – a priest and a religious sister – from Kerala (where there is a relatively significant number of Catholics) it is found out that families of India seldom practice divorce; people prefer an equal number of boys and girls in the family. To have all girls in the family means that the family concerned will be burdened with payment of the dowries. However, it has to be noted that marriages in India seldom fail. Because most marriages are the result of matchmaking, love between husband and wife is fostered after marriage.
11. In the Philippines, romantic marriages have been a heritage of the West. In former times, it was the male fiancée who had to live for six months in the house of his future wife to merit the girl he was going to marry. There is no particular bias either for a girl or boy, although most prefer boys so that the name of the family will be preserved for future generations. In fact, Filipino languages are non-sexist. There is a bilateral kinship system in the country. Children are considered as gifts of God, wealth and as

investments for the improvement of the quality of life of the family. Filipino Overseas Workers (now present in about 190 countries) work not just for personal advancement but primarily to help support their respective families.

12. It is speculated that the contraceptive mentality may affect favourably the incidence of pre-marital sex practice.
13. It is also true that mothers who commit abortion have a difficult time to free themselves from guilt feelings.

*Recommendations*⁴

1. Discussions among professionals and would-be professionals with regard to the situation of children is one way of awakening the leaders and potential leaders to the significance of children, whether male or female, and the role of families, communities, institutions and the state in educating children in a holistic understanding of harmony between body, mind, and spirit, joy and learning, developing all their intelligences and nurturing a sense of justice, equity, peace and well-being.
2. The professionals and would-be professionals have the potential to have a comprehensive understanding of the issue of 'vanishing or flourishing youth' and should be able to form their values and organizing principle(s) of life, train themselves in skills/art, and processes of caring for the survival of both children and mothers – protection, development and participation.

⁴ The recommendations here are to be applied to students who are in social science to be able to understand comprehensively a specific situation and would like to get involved as social development managers in their respective countries. I consider the 'focus group discussion' as part of a participatory action research which contributes to the awareness of a problem. In fact, due to this focus group discussion, one Chinese religious sister made a study as a paper for her research class. Sr. Niu Jinfang (a medical doctor studying Master of Science in Social Work at ASI) titled, 'The Attitude of Young Couples Towards Implementing Family Planning in Xiliulin Village, Taiyuan City, China' submitted to the Research Class, January 10, 2006. Through the help of her friends in the village she administered a survey on a sample of 42 couples (Buddhists, Catholics and 'no religion/atheists'). Some of her findings, I used in this paper.

4. FOCUS ON SELECTED COUNTRIES

I attempted to focus on 4 countries to elaborate further on specific areas revolving around children. I chose the most populated countries – *China* and *India* whose cultural and religious influence on other Asian countries is remarkably great due to their religions and/or philosophies some of which are rooted in their respective ancient civilizations. I touch here also on *Japan* being the most developed country in the Far East. The *Philippines* has also been chosen for the following reasons: the Philippines is different from other Asian countries because it is known to be predominantly Catholic and has inherited the democracy of the West and yet one of the economically poor countries in Asia. Moreover it is the country I know best since I come from there. Due to limited secondary information, I zero in on a specific aspect(s) about children particular to each country. I consider that the treatment of the situation on children should be further validated among social practitioners in the country where the phenomenon on children and youth unfolds. Since I am the president of a social science graduate school of social transformative praxis, I am more confident about the recommendations I am giving for the Philippines since these stem from what are already starting to be implemented in the country especially by NGO groups (Church, Academy, other NGOs and People's organizations)

According to the Human Development Report 2002, most countries of Asia have adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On November 12-14, 1998, delegations of government leaders and international organizations convened in Bangkok, Thailand to review the progress towards achieving the goals agreed upon by the 1990 World Summit for Children. The result was a call for decisive and urgent actions on specific areas of child survival, protection, development and participation. In terms of official policy towards children, the Philippines may be considered as having one of the best, if not the best, in terms of a well thought out and well planned policy and program. However, the Philippines is poorest in terms of implementation of national policies due to lack of political will especially on the part of the national governments and funding support⁵ (Child 21, p. 10, Existing Laws Suffer From Weak Enforcement). Nevertheless a sig-

⁵ Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children, 2000-2025: Child 21, a Legacy to the Filipino Children of the 21st Century, adopted for implementation by Former President of the Republic of the Philippines under Executive Order 310, on November 3, 2000. This document is to be referred to as *Child 21*, 2000.

nificant number of social practitioners (NGOs in collaboration with Local Government Units – LGUs) have been able to succeed in a highly creative way to facilitate the self-empowerment of children and youth. Indeed, given a very good policy, initiatives for implementation rest on the thousands of Non-Governmental Organizations operating in the country to respond to the whole array of social problems related to children in Philippine society. Hopefully, these initiatives will result in a major breakthrough for the economy and politics in the country.

4.1. *China*⁶

General Information. Citing UNICEF Statistics, the total population of China is 1.2 Billion with 378 million population under 18. According to HDR 2002, total Fertility Rate is estimated to be 1.3% and Infant Mortality of 32 per 1000. Under-five mortality rate is estimated to be 40 per 1000. Primary School Enrolment is estimated to be 94%. Children reaching Grade five is 94% and secondary school enrolment is 50%. UNICEF estimates adult literacy for male as 90% while for female, it is 73%.

China makes up almost 1/5 of the World's Population (19%) if the population of the world according to 2005 estimate is 6,446,131,400 (World Facts. July 2005 estimate) One out of every 4 children in the world is Chinese. China's government is still socialistic but its economy has opened up to liberalistic capitalistic system especially with the integration of Hong Kong into its republic. Being a communist country, it is a highly 'rule-driven society' (Carroll, *et. al.*, 1999)

4.1.1. *China's One Child Policy*

This policy dates back to 26 years ago. Deng Xiaoping, the former president, approved the family planning legislation in 1979. This has remained a law in China up to the present.

⁶ Sources for this section are the following: Jessica Carroll, Kirsten Joy Eby, Daniel Gonzales and Man Rigberg, 'Children in China' a paper written by students in a university course in *Children and Society* under the tutelage of Professor April Brayfield of Tulane University; Interview of Sr. Niu Jinfang, who wrote a paper 'The Attitude of Young Couples Towards Implementing Family Planning in Xiliulin Village, Taiyuan City, China' ...(see footnote 4); and a website on China; Time Magazine, March 27, 2006.

Sr. Niu Jinfang (2006) reports:

The family planning policy consists of a set of regulations governing the approved size of Chinese families. These regulations include restrictions on family size, late marriage and childbearing, and the spacing of children (in cases in which second children are permitted). The State Family Planning Bureau sets the overall targets and policy direction. Family planning committees at provincial and country level devise local strategies for implementation. Despite its name, the one-child rule applies to a minority of the population, for urban residents and government employees. The policy is strictly enforced, with few exceptions. The exception includes families in which the first child has a disability or both parents work in high-risk occupation (such as mining) or are themselves from one-child families.

In rural areas, where approximately 70 percent of the people live, a second child is generally allowed after five years, but this provision sometimes applies only if the first child is a girl (a clear acknowledgement of the traditional preference for boys). A third child is allowed among some ethnic minorities and in remote under-populated areas. The policy is operating on a system of rewards and penalties, which are largely meted out through the discretion of local officials and substantial fines, confiscation of belongings, and dismissal from work for non-compliance (Niu, 2006, p. 5).

4.1.2. *The Impact of Artificial Human Reproduction Technologies on the Culture of Childhood*

The policy of China depends on virtually universal access to contraception and abortion which is legal but can be practiced only in hospitals or in family service stations. Use of contraception is practiced by 87% of women. There is a heavy reliance on long-term contraception, with intra-uterine devices and sterilizations together accounting for more than 90 per cent of contraceptive methods since the mid- 1980's. China is able to produce and provide effective contraceptive medicine, and a national service network set up on six levels – state, province, city, county, township, and village (*ibid.*, pp. 6-7).

China is a patriarchal society. The boy is preferred because he can continue the family line. The one-child policy in this context leads to doing away with the baby when the child is a girl. In rural areas most couples are permitted to have a second child, especially if the first is female. But if the second child is female, the 'pregnancy often 'disappears', allowing the cou-

ple to have another child in an attempt to have a son. What happens to all the missing girls is a matter of speculation. Sex-selective abortion after ultrasonography accounts for a large proportion of the decline of female birth. Although sex-selection is illegal, it is known to be widely carried out. In fact the shortage of girls after a time made China carry out campaigns promoting girls. Even some advertisements would carry the message 'There is no difference between having a girl or a boy; the girl can also continue the family line' (*ibid.*, pp. 3-4).

The one-child policy also gives the worry on what happens to an only child with 4 grandparents, and two parents to attend to him/her. This might make the child spoiled. In order to prevent this, the child is trained to be highly disciplined. This is what is called the 4-2-1 phenomenon. (Niu, 2006, p. 3; Carroll, *et. al.*, 1999)

4.1.3. *Material needs of Children and Young People*

In the year 2000, 57.6 % of the population (earning below 2 US dollars a day) are below the poverty line. However, as far as the national poverty line is concerned, it is only 4.6%. (HDR 2002, p. 157). Per 1000 population, 38 has adequate sanitation facilities (2000 figures), 75 has improved water resources (2000), 90 to 94 has access to essential drugs (1999), 92 have one-year olds fully immunized against tuberculosis, 90 percent against measles (1999). The country has 29% of oral rehydration therapy use rate (2000), 84% of contraceptive prevalence (2000), 89% of births attended by health staff (2000), US \$40 per capita expenditure in health (1998). (*ibid.*, 167)

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of children live in rural areas. But most families in the rural areas are poor. It is therefore understandable that Child-Labour is rampant in China.

Child Labour is one major social problem in China. Children in China are an abundant source of labour. In some areas Chinese children make up ten to twenty per cent of the work force. Many companies prefer child labour because children are cheap, obedient and agile and can adapt themselves in small machine-cramped work areas.

The Compulsory Education Law of the Chinese constitution states that all children under the age of 16 must go to school and are not allowed to hold full-time jobs. However, the government does little to prevent privately owned industrial or commercial firms from hiring children. Up to ten per cent of Chinese children hold full time jobs instead of going to school each year.

Parents allow their children to work because many Chinese feel school doesn't provide skills that have immediate or realistic advantages. Many poor families cannot afford the expenses of school, and the children go to work in order to support the family. Work is often seen as more beneficial than school.

The Chinese government sees child labour as one way to combat poverty and does little to enforce the laws against it. The companies are more interested in their economic investments than the status of their workers. So far these have not been any convincing signs that the situation will improve or that the issue has become a priority for the Chinese government.

4.1.4. *Psychological Needs of Children*

Traditionally, children are taught to respect the authority in the family and in the State (Confucian ethics) Today, children are influenced by the political structure to be highly conformist and traditional in their respect for authority especially the State or the Party. Traditional respect for parents and teachers is maintained although according to Chinese novels, written by Chinese authors on the former Communist regime, the only authority that mattered then was the Party even taking priority over respect for parents and elders or for Church authority. In these societies the state is equated with the people. To work for the State is to work for the people. It is important 'to be cautious, inhibited and self-discipline'. Dependency and conformity to the State thus become values of citizens.

The quality of relationships affects the quality of relationships with the family and the community. Although children, according to the paper of Carroll *et al.*, experience a relaxed day of school, of chores and of spending time with friends and family, the state's concern for children who are economically productive in society makes for a significant number of children balancing their time with family and community with an eight hour shift in a local factory or field.

Likewise, children from one-child families, have to be disciplined in school especially those who are in the urban areas. The children there live highly structured lives and are expected to do heavy school work before playtime Unlike rural children, urban children play by themselves because of their only child status and the dangers of the city. School work can last eight hours for a child after school. Urban children must learn to look after themselves at an early age. They must independently clean and dress themselves as soon as possible. They have bedtimes and specific chores. Success

in school is the way to get ahead in the city. Children in the middle class especially are expected to fulfil the dreams of their parents.

An article in *Time Magazine*, March 27, 2006, titled, 'Asia's Over-Scheduled Kids' by Liam FitzPatrick (pp. 48-55), asks the question, 'Are we pushing our kids too hard?'. There is an observation that Asia is trying to forget playtime for their children. Shanghai's program for Elementary Management Business Administration, (E.M.B.A.) at the heart of its financial district runs a curriculum for kids to train future business leaders of China. Children get courses in economics and communications. When they get too taxing, the students who are still children respond by a good cry or by asking for their mommies (*Time Magazine*, 2006, p. 49).

Evidently, the children need joy in learning, time to play, and to think and do things creatively. They need to develop the affective aspect of their lives.

4.1.5. *Relational Needs of Children and Young People (the Structures of their Families and the Primary Networks in which Children Live)*

One may infer from the above description of the Chinese situation with regard to children that a holistic way of relating to children by elders is much needed. To make the child feel loved by the family, not just for what he or she can do for the family name and society as a productive individual but for what he or she is – a unique individual. China can reclaim their profound values and wisdom rooted in their Confucian ethics, Taoist philosophy and Buddhism to guide their aspiration to be an economic giant in the East and in the world. Education in science and technology needs to be harmonized with a humanistic philosophy based in its ancient civilization and culture.

4.1.6. *Educational Needs of Children*

Early childcare in China ranges from ages 2-6. While Kindergartens teach children basic skills, like simple mathematics, language, music, physical education and science, the most important role of these institutions is to instil good moral values like honesty, discipline, cooperation and politeness.

Because of the stressful atmosphere in the schools, children are more prone to earn a living than continue schooling towards the tertiary level. Understandably college studies do not appeal to many poor children in the urban and the rural areas. Thus only 5.7% of students will go for tertiary studies. Moreover there are poor facilities in the schools and the lack of

funds for adequate equipment and salaries for teachers. Even when the State Education Commission tried to regulate the assignments, there was little remedy to this state of affairs. This situation prevents the child to involve himself/herself in important extra-curricular activities for his/her all-around development.

4.1.7. *Role of Local Communities*

There has been a worry that the one child policy might produce spoiled children since one child will have to be attended to by four grandparents and two parents. However, the Chinese family sees to it that their children are disciplined and obedient to authority and are oriented to the good of the State. The socialization for disciplined and respectful parents is instilled also in nursery schools and day-care centre programs.

There are cases when families abandon children due to social and financial pressure. Abandonment is a punishable crime, but most are overlooked and go unpunished. Many Chinese children end up in orphanages or are adopted either within China or by families overseas.

4.1.8. *State of Religious Formation*

Japan is 'officially atheist' (BBC News, March 2003). Whatever this means, I believe that anybody naturally orients himself/herself to certain intangible realities. China's moral formation is sourced from Confucian ethics and Taoism. However, there seems to be some pressure from the government to make the moral and religious formation functional to State goals geared towards material and economic development and for the advancement of science and technology.

4.1.9. *Influence of the Media on Children and Young People*

The exposure of children to international media must have had an effect on the aspirations of society, family and children. They wish to reach the level of development and progress enjoyed by most so-called developed societies. The effect can be seen in a spirit of competition in schools and hard work expected from them and commercialized entertainment. In fact, China has a policy of encouraging youth to study in the West.

4.1.10. *Children's Rights*

According to the Human Development Report 2002, China has endorsed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and one of two conventions against Child Labour. A question, however, comes up with regard to gender equity related to the right to exist, survive, be educated, protected and be developed.

4.1.11. *Public Expenditure for Children vis-à-vis the Elderly*

Expenditure for children as percentage of total public expenditure is ranging from 30%- 37% (1998), I think that what is spent for elderly 65 and above may not be more than what is being spent for children.

4.1.12. *China's Child Organizations*

There are two international children's organizations operating in China:

1. *Save the Children*. It works to help families and communities meet their essential needs. Basic education for children, empowerment for women and children, economic opportunities to meet basic needs, and a continuous supply of nutritious food and potable water. This organization strives to provide immunization for all children.
2. *UNICEF*. Founded in 1946, UNICEF works for the protection of children's rights, and to help the young meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Chinese youth and young adults should strive to collectively understand themselves, their history, their situation and the significance of children in their society. By doing so, they will be able to direct their family and community towards the basic human rights and critique their present policies vis-à-vis the human rights approach to resolving social problems. The 'one child policy' certainly has to be re-visited if this causes a sense of uneasiness on the part of parents and families.
2. In working for the well-being of families and children, approaches to child-rearing and educational practices, questions as to how to balance self-discipline and desire for achievement with values of joy, spontaneity and creativity need to be thought out by community and society towards a balanced growth and development of children and youth.

3. With regard to responsible parenthood, let us listen to a Chinese religious sister in her recommendation after making a study of the attitudes of a hundred people in her village – Christian, Buddhists, and ‘atheists’ – towards family planning.

(It is to be noted that the religious sister is living in the context of a socialistic society where a strong central government operates)

The Chinese government should accept the feedback from people then adjust its direction and approach, for instance, how to deal with one-child policy, how to address those who have extra kids, and how to make family planning campaigns. The government should address people’s need from the micro-level and then we can then talk about national family planning policy at the macro-level. We can further think about social and economic development, based on the inspiration of people and through a certain process ...

The government should focus on the population quality, not only reduce or resolve the problem of overpopulation, but also should consider respect for people themselves such as respect for their faith, human rights, decision and planning in the process of implementing policies (underscoring mine).

No doubt there is the challenge of diverse sub-cultures in the country. These differences in the finest expressions of culture should be celebrated. The different ethnic groups in China are Han Chinese (91%), Zuang, Uygur, Hui, Hi, Tibetan, Mongol, Buyi, Korean, and other nationalities constituting 8.1%. The adaptation of educational content, methods, processes and medium of expression should be a recommended policy.

4.2. *India*⁷

General Information. India with a million people, like China, is one of the most ancient and highly populous nations in the world. While India remains one of the world’s poorest countries, it is also very rich in cultural and religious diversity. There are many divides in India based on the caste system, ethnic and cultural background, religion, age, and gender. Poverty is an

⁷ Sources for this section: HDR Report 2002, Matthew Cardinale, Amanda Gitlin, Linsey Hollister, students of Tulane University, ‘Children in India’, a class project for Professor April Brayfield’s Sociology 119 on *Children Around the World*, a class project for Professor April Brayfield’s Sociology, 1999 *Children and Society*; *Children Around the World Webpage*; and two key informants from India; BBC News, March 14, 2003.

acute and widespread condition for most of India's 395 million children. As of 1986, 50% of India's total population live below the poverty line. Children are taught to endure in life. Hence, there is also an acceptance of their reality. Poverty continues because the children are taught to accept things as they are. Two-thirds (63%) are living in poor rural areas. Due to India's large families, child labourers make up a significant number of poor rural areas. India has the highest number of child labour in the world, and furthermore, a low level of educational achievement. Not all of India are poor, however. Many factors create a gap between the rich and the poor. The upper classes have greater access to wealth, health care and education. In fact India is considered to be one of the most industrialized countries of the world.

4.2.1. Birth Rate and the Prevailing Attitudes Towards Babies and Child-Rearing Families

According to the HDR 2002, the birth rate of India is 1.9%. It has a population of about a billion people. Thirty-three per cent (33.5%) are below 15 and 3.5% are elderly 65 and above. According to UNICEF (1999), sixty-four percent (64%) of adult males and 35%, adult females are literate.

That boys seemingly are more valued than girls is quite evident from the Indian culture. It is said that there is a clear distinction between the traditional socialization of Indian boys and Indian girls. Parents teach their daughters to be passive, dependent and subservient so that they will grow up to be obedient wives. In contrast, Indian parents prepare their boys to be independent caretakers and providers.

4.2.2. The Impact of Artificial Human Reproduction Technologies on the Culture of Childhood

India does not have as rigid a policy for population control. There is certainly an encouragement to have smaller families but this is not too much pronounced in its goals. There are about 1015 'Baby Friendly' hospitals. Unlike China, India does not have a radical policy towards family planning. Throughout India, the government uses its network of hospitals and clinics for family planning. Family planning efforts, including the encouragement of voluntary sterilization of both male and females, have met with mixed success. According to HDR 2002, contraceptive prevalence is only 47 % (1999%) One wonders whether this attitude is rooted in India's positive attitude towards life propagated by different religious persuasions especially Hinduism.

4.2.3. *Material Needs of Children and Young People*

Many Indian children suffer from poverty. India does have almost 200 million people who are classified by the government as middle class, yet India also has about 500 million people who do live quite under the poverty line. In India, there are children living in slums and on the streets, child labourers, and child construction workers. Over 50,000 children are abandoned in the country every year. About 50% of India's total population live below the poverty line, and more than 40% of this population are children. Reasons for this are embedded in India's social structure: first children are taught to accept their poor conditions. Unconsciously this attitude prevents them from initiating changes in their life. They are however tenacious people. Poor people will do everything to make themselves survive. Could it be that the deeply spiritual character of India which has been present in them since 6th century BC, and propagated by the religions founded in the country, speaks of primarily a non-material content of a state of well-being?

India has about 160 million family units and a large population is very young. The line between an infant, child and teen-ager or young adult is extremely thin. To be born in India is a big challenge, especially for kids whose parents cannot afford even the basics, like housing, food and education.

India's health system seems to be in a far worse state than other developing countries. The average life expectancy at birth has risen by 25 years since World War II. Death from starvation has become rare; yet, many Indians suffer from malnutrition. Forty-seven per cent (47%) of children under 5 years of age are underweight (2000 figures, HDR 2002) Most of India's population lacks access to safe drinking water, seasonally if not the year-round. Dysentery and other diseases caused by waterborne organisms kill many children. Poorly treated and improper disposal of sewage poses serious health problems. India may have conquered one or another disease; yet the quality and quantity of medicine remains low (Matthew Cardinale *et al.*, 1999).

4.2.4. *Psychological Needs of Children and Young People*

Girls are subject to neglect from their families. This double-standard of treatment between boys and girls may be seen in the realm of health care and nutrition. Indian villages show that male children are fed higher quality food than female children. Even in families where that there is adequate food, girls are given a smaller amount. Mothers and girls eat last, when at times even an

adequate amount of food is not available, and so therefore they sometimes do not eat at all. Families do this in order to delay girls' physical development so parents can gain time to look for a groom and collect enough resources for dowry. Besides having a lower allocation of food within the family, families spend less on girls' healthcare. Parents see boys as old age insurance and thus boys are well fed and protected from illness. Finally, adolescent girls have fewer opportunities for recreation, healthy physical exercise and even exposure to fresh air. If a family does have enough money for educating its children, available funds will be allotted to the male children to go to school first. The female children, instead, will be expected to stay home and help with household chores and with raising their siblings. Once girls reach age nine, their parents see them as economic resources and send them to work for wages either in or out of the house. There are nevertheless quite a number of feminist movements struggling to prevent gender bias in favour of men. More and more males are becoming feminist and with the girls strive to protect the basic rights of the girl-child (*ibid.*).

While so many children live under conditions of poverty, the children work in order to survive. In this sense they form their character of industry and must be helped in their emotional and spiritual growth. Because they do not have schooling they might have a poor image of themselves, a problem that should definitely be addressed. Still among Indian children one may find them persisting in their struggle to work, attend school and develop strong ties with the family and community. Perhaps over time, organizations will empower Indian mothers, fathers, and children to attain more land, a better standard of living, and the vision of a better future (*ibid.*).

4.2.5. *Relational Needs of Children and Young People (The Structures of Families and the Primary Networks in Which Children Live)*

Through the family the Indian culture is transmitted to younger generations. Parents believe that children do not need rules, and therefore, they allow children to initiate all of their activities, such as feeding, sleeping and play. At an early age, however, children are believed to be capable for assisting in their own survival. While in his way children are autonomous, such autonomy is ambiguous because parents also teach their children to be obedient to their culture.

Indian children live in extended families and in a paternalistic society. Children are educated to be loyal, obedient, and respectful to their elders.

Today, India has one of the highest numbers of children working for meagre wages for families to just survive. Working children prevents them to have time for home to interact with their parents. Likewise, there is less time for focusing on being in school to learn the basic skills of reading, writing or mathematics and the art of singing, dancing, music and sports.

The caste system is something that divides India into different classes. In fact, there is a class which Gandhi called 'children of God' apparently to make the so-called 'untouchables' the Harijans in Indian society feel their sense of dignity. The caste system might prevent children of the lower castes to be able to think on their own especially the girls. To many an Indian, the caste system is not a way to divide the society. The caste system according to them is a way to classify society into various functional groups. Their caste is a community, as well as a socio-economic status, that they are born into. The suppression of women, children, and lower class Indians significantly limits the actualization of the human potential that India is gifted with.

4.2.6. Educational Needs of Children

Education seems to be a privilege rather than a right for the children of India. There are schools available to the wealthy. The majority of Indian children, however, live in poverty and are not given this opportunity. It is true that many children are enrolled in school. Net primary enrolment rate is 79%; net secondary enrolment rate is 39%; and children reaching grade 6 is 75% (1998, HDR 2000). The children absentees in school are many. Many children can only attend school when they are not working. Education among lower-class children is neither consistent nor secure. School teachers are typically landowners who tend to their land before focusing on their students' learning needs. Some headmasters who run schools demand bribes from poor parents who are unable to give.

4.2.7. Influence of the Media on Children and Young People

This is quite evident in all Asian countries. Entertainment, sex and violence are in national and international media although I believe that India has always been demonstrating restraint in projecting cheap sex in its local movies. India tried to preserve its culture and sub-cultures. Ethnic fights, however, cannot be avoided.

4.2.8. *The State of Religious Formation and the Education of Children and Young People*

Two major religions in Asia have had its origin in India – Hinduism and Buddhism. It is also true that Catholicism, some Protestant groups and Muslims are present in the Indian sub-continent.

Indian families place tremendous emphasis on religious and cultural tradition. Indian civilization has survived because it has been successful in passing on through hundreds and thousands of years the complex, perpetual socialization practices. Children in this process are taught to accept the values of their ancestors. From the families, children learn the rituals and ideas that bring meaning to life, such as the notion of Karma and rebirth. Children are believed to be gifts of God. And the Indian greets others through ‘Namaste’. With hands joined together, one utters the word ‘Namaste’ which means, ‘The Deity in me greets the Deity in you’. This spirituality premised on ‘Namaste’, is a rich cultural tradition that may bring about a God-empowered society with possibilities for contributing to the nation’s growth and poverty alleviation.⁸

4.2.9. *The Socialization Patterns in Families*

The Indian Family System is quite stable. Indians would say that though their marriages are most often arranged through match-makers and thus not based on the Western concept of romantic love, they maintain that their system is much more stable and successful. Husband and wife who did not know each other prior to marriage learn to love each other after the marriage. However, due to the dowry system, families would have preference for boys or to have an equal number of girls and boys in the family. In the dowry system, the girl pays a dowry to the husband’s family. Hence to have all female children in the family becomes very costly for the family concerned.

⁸ I mention this Indian greeting, ‘Namaste’ because in 1991, the Ramon Magsaysay Awards Foundation, the Asia counterpart of the Nobel Prize Awards gave a Ramon Magsaysay Award to an old Indian guru who did community development work where the people’s value premise for building communities in rural villages is the social imperative of the greeting, ‘The God in me greets the God in you’.

4.2.10. *The Major Difficulties in the Transition to Later Stages of the Life Cycle*

After childhood is the stage of young adulthood. Children who have reached the stage of life after high school, the decision to continue with further education takes into consideration the cultural gender bias for boys in the family. The girl normally would have to give place to a brother to continue schooling on the tertiary level. Parents teach their daughters to be passive, dependent, and subservient so that they will grow up to be obedient wives. In contrast, Indian parents prepare their boys to be independent caretakers. Yet, it must be said that change has taken and is taking place in India of today. Yet it is always difficult to eradicate a practice rooted in an ancient civilization.

4.2.11. *Children's Rights (Child as Citizen)*

India has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Child Labour. Yet it is known that the Child Labour is difficult to eradicate. Children whose families do not have enough money to pay for school fees can work to pay their own way, thus enabling some of them to an opportunity to attain an education that would have otherwise been out of their reach. Education is the key to freedom and economic well being.

Poor children in India begin working at a very young age. Many children have to work to support their families and some families expect their children to continue the family business. Children perform a variety of jobs: some work in factories, making products such as carpets and matches; others work on the plantation, or in the home. Based on a survey there are over 44 million child labourers in India. However, it is difficult to estimate how many children are actually working because many work without pay in assisting their parents or are working for employers that do not report it to the census. This makes it difficult for the government to regulate the type of work children are doing and limits its ability to ensure them a safe environment (Cardinale, 1999.)

There are rigid roles for girls and boys. Normally girls are expected to work in the fields, in the household and in unorganized industry. Studies indicate that the burden of household duties fall largely upon the female child. In rural areas girls are responsible for looking after younger siblings, cooking, cleaning, fetching, and carrying, which releases adults for more profitable and productive work. Evidence suggests that girls in the unorgan-

ized sector are engaged in low-paid, or unpaid, unskilled occupations, which do not necessarily lead to skill formation. The jobs that boys do, on the other hand, are closely related to apprenticeship training and skill formation.

The government has made efforts to prohibit child labour, including the 1986 Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act that stated that children under fourteen years of age could not be employed in hazardous occupations. This act also attempted to regulate working conditions in the jobs that it permitted, and put greater emphasis on health and safety standards. However, due to cultural and economic factors, these goals remain unmet. For instance, the act does nothing to protect children who perform domestic or unreported labour. In almost all Indian industries girls are unrecognized labourers because they are seen as helpers and not workers. Therefore, girls are not protected by the law. Children are exploited and deprived of their rights in India. Until further measures are taken, many Indian children will continue to live in poverty.

4.2.12. Social Expenses Devoted to Children vis-à-vis other Generations (Especially the Elderly)

It can be hypothesized that India spends more on children rather than for the elderly. If indeed it is true that Public Educational Expenses is about 40% of total Public Expenditure, then one can say that the public expenditure is biased towards children. BBC News on South Asia, May 14, 2003, reported that while the elderly is fast increasing in Asia in absolute numbers, the pension plan does not cope with this social fact. In India, less than 10% of the population are covered by the formal pension scheme in the mid 1990's. The government introduced a national old age pension scheme in the mid-1990,s which gives a handout of \$1.50 a month. This is designed as a safety net for those below the poverty line. It was found out that only about one in five of those eligible for the payments actually receive them. Many do not realize the scheme exists or, given that three out of four people over 60 in India are illiterate, and thus cannot cope with the paper work such as getting their age certified by the doctor or getting certification that they are below the poverty line.

4.2.13. Role of Local Communities in Providing Care to Children and Child-Raising Families

In an attempt to make health care available to the people of India the Indian government created hospitals and healthcare facilities. Unfortunately,

there is a shortage of doctors for these hospitals, and many Indians do not have access to them. There have been numerous programs directed against specific diseases in addition to a considerable expansion in the number of union and state-maintained hospitals. There are also rural primary health centres, which are poorly equipped and are run by minimally trained para-medical personnel. A government-trained doctor visits many of the rural primary health centres each week. Private medical practitioners supplement the government services, a great many of whom follow a variety of traditional medical systems.

At times girls in India are subject to extreme health-care actions. Often, Indian families give girls less than adequate healthcare when they do become sick, if they receive healthcare at all. A report from Narangwal Punjab states that 48% of girls versus 65% of boys receive health care in the first 24 hours of a terminal disease. Reports from other parts of India confirm these statistics. In Punjab, 55% of children who die between 7.36 months of age are girls from underprivileged communities. Of those, 69% suffered from malnutrition. Because parents in Indian society do not value female children, their response to nutrition and health care for third or fourth daughters is often to let them die (Cardinale, 1999.)

Since independence there has been an increase in the number and type of welfare services. Many programs target specific sections of the population, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, nomadic populations, women, children, and the disabled. The resources for such services, however, are inadequate, and a large proportion of the budgets for specific programs goes toward maintaining the service staff and their generally meagre facilities (*ibid.*).

4.2.14. *Children's Organizations*

1. *Akanksha Foundation*. For underprivileged Indian children so that they 'learn, play, lead healthy lives' by offering them an education that is tailored to fit their needs. The children are given the opportunity to enrol in regular schools or to enrol in an Akanksha school. The organization also teaches children lessons to help them in life, such as health, hygiene and self-confidence.
2. *CRY India*. Child Relief and You (CRY) is a non-profit organization that uses its resources and donations to provide assistance to other groups

working in India to benefit children. CRY offers both financial assistance and physical help to the organizations as they are needed. CRY works hard to assure that the projects it supports are accomplishing all that they can to benefit the lives of underprivileged children. CRY monitors the project that it supports by checking on the projects regularly and working with the project partners and provides them with support. CRY ensures that donations given by people will be used to positively and effectively impact the lives of children in India.

3. *Kinder in Indien, e.V.* This is a non-profit organization based out of Germany that works with local Indian doctors to give free vaccinations to impoverished children in Bombay, India. The service is available for children ranging from birth to eighteen years of age. Parents must bring their children to the doctors in order to receive the vaccination, and the doctors attempt to give each vaccinated child a toy to help ease the pain associated with the shots. This organization is making major strides in India by giving children an opportunity for a healthy childhood.
4. *Voice*. Voluntary Organization in Community Enterprise (VOICE) is dedicated to giving street children in Bombay, India, a chance to attain an education so that they will have a chance to make something of themselves. VOICE has developed a curriculum that is tailored to the needs of street children. They offer a formal education as well as vocational and life skills. VOICE takes schools to the places that children work, thereby making education a real possibility for working children.
5. *The Churches' Council for Child and Youth Care*. The Churches' Council for Child and Youth Care (CCCYC) is a religious group that offers a variety of programs to benefit the lives of underprivileged children in South India. The programs range from giving children an education or vocational and life skills in programs for disabled children, for children of AIDS victims and children of prisoners. CCCYC also offers day care programs that have been designed with the intent to alleviate older siblings of this responsibility and allow them to go to school. CCCYC offers a variety of ways for people in other countries to help make a difference in the life of an underprivileged child.

4.2.15. *Multi-Cultural Ethnicity and Multi-Ethnicity*

Countless social and cultural differences exist in India. Countless indigenous groups thrive. Thus, it is difficult to generalize on situation of children in India. The same challenge as in China and for any country for that matter is being called for.

Recommendation

1. The differences in India should be celebrated on different levels, sectors and religions. Cultural festivals are an education in itself and a way to peace. For when people can share each other's food and the finest expressions of their respective ethnic tribes, (their dance, song, ritual, music, art, etc), the boundaries of culture for a moment disappears – there is collective self-esteem of one's tribe. This is an education in itself, a way to peace. When one celebrates life, energies are renewed for a next organic phase of a process.
2. The two important issues to be resolved by Indian Society are: Poverty and The Gender Issue. In paradoxical⁹ India, only the Indian Government and Civil Society will be able to know the culturally appropriate approaches on how to deal with children and youth. Would they be able to tap into their profound religious values to source the energy to work for children's rights? The work of the late saintly Mother Theresa who was given a state funeral in India may be an inspiration to many groups towards a reflection on how to guarantee the well-being of India's families and future generations through organized care for children and youth of today.

4.3. *Japan*¹⁰

Some critical comments of Ms. Reiko Aioki¹¹ (an Intellectual and Social Activist in Japan) about Children in Japan is hereby presented below:

⁹ India is indeed paradoxical: it is one of the industrialized countries of the world, yet, monetary poverty is prevalent especially in the rural areas. It is the home of major religions, yet, one finds the practice of the caste system as a reflection of the exclusiveness and discrimination in the society; it practices democracy, but prevents a significant number (the poor, the untouchables, the women and the vulnerable in society) to meaningfully participate in issues which touch their lives.

¹⁰ Sources: Ms. Rieko Aoki's response to my e-mail; Joanna Boyle, Rachel Riezman, Hannah Walad, and Ellen Vallmera, 'Japanese Values. Values that Affect Raising Children',

4.3.1. *State/Government*

The main concern of the Japanese government is population reduction. Every woman has 1.54 children in the year 1990 and 1.29 in 2004. The number of deaths (1.77 million) is more than the number of children (1.67 million) in 2005. As a result, Japan's population has decreased remarkably since the first population census in 1899 (Yomiuri Newspaper, Dec. 28, 2005).

Statistics based on 2005 data (Internet) is as follows:

Total Population	126,505,000
Percentage of Population under 5	4.9%
Percentage of Population under 18	18.5%
Infant Mortality Rate	4 in 1000

Sixty-seven per cent (67%) live in the rural areas and 33% in the urban areas.

4.3.2. *Policy*

The policy of the Japanese government on children revolves around *Population Reduction*. In November 2005, a new position was created in the cabinet. The Minister of Population Reduction had also the responsibility to work for equal participation of men and women in the present cabinet which started in November 2005 (Yomiuri Newspaper Jan. 4, 2005) Children have the right to receive compulsory education for 9 years but children of

as a collaborative effort of the first year writing seminar on *Children and Society*, under the tutelage of Professor April Brayfield, Tulane University; HDR 2002, UNICEF 1999, Liam Fitzpatrick, 'Asia's Overscheduled Kids', *Time Magazine*, March 27, 2006.

¹¹ Ms. Rieko Aoki is a graduate of Bachelor's Degree and Master's in Social Work at the Asian Social Institute (ASI). In the Philippines, as a student, she immersed herself in the life of small fisherfolk in a rural area for three months. She had also involved herself in the issue of BATIS Center for Women that worked for the rights of children and women who as entertainment workers in Japan married Japanese husbands who later abandoned them. Social workers both from the Philippines and Japan tried to work for the rights of the children under Japanese Law. Back in Japan, she was very much involved in social issues as a member of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Kyoto. Later, she has herself established a Japanese NGO that is involved with the rights of women migrants in Japanese society. I present almost verbatim the answers of Ms. Aoki to the questions I e-mailed her based on the guideline that was given to the presentors with regard to making a situationer on Asia's children.

foreign nationals are not entitled to this same benefit. Foreigners do not have the right to compulsory education. They are not excluded but there is no special effort made to assure foreign children who need language support and other psychological care. There are cases of foreign children who have dropped out of school since they lack support which they need for them to be able to understand the lessons in school and become friends with their other schoolmates.

Budget for Social Security including medical, welfare, elderly support, in the national budget for the fiscal year 2006 is 44% of annual expenditures. The large part of Social Security is for the elderly population which consists of 70.4%. On the other hand, the budget for Population Reduction and family is only 3.8% (Yomiuri Newspaper Jan. 4, 2005).

1. *Services.* Service for support of working parents is not enough. The plan to develop child care centres for all working parents was announced as early as 1994. This was announced again in 1999, then 2001 and 2004. In reality, women have to make a decision to rear a child or pursue their profession since the support system for working mothers is not sufficient. Financial support for working parents is almost negligible considering actual expenses needed for a child. The educational fee is the largest expense in the family budget.

2. *Education.* It is a fact in Japan that while mothers teach their children values of 'group life', the schools on the other hand are where they imbibe the spirit of competition to respond to high expectations for achievement on the part of the family, education being the guarantee for a highly remunerative job and employment. The schools give a lot of homework. A ten year old may have to spend daily 8 hours of doing his/her assignments. (Joanina Boyle, *et. al.*, no. date.; Liam Fitzpatrick, *Time Magazine*, March 27, 2006, pp. 49-55)

Gaining importance in contrast to 'group life' in Japan is that of raising academically superior child. In methods of teaching especially in pre-school, there is an emphasis of autonomy of children. The belief is that children can understand right from wrong, of learning to have good behaviour and capable of keeping the peace between their friends by acting as negotiators and peace-makers. According to their thinking, children will naturally act properly if they understand and believe in the rules rather than being told ... Teachers learn to argue to the

point of fighting without trying to stop them. They hope that the children will recognize the consequences of their behaviour (Joanina Boyle, *et al.*).

The purpose of pre-school is not to educate the children too heavily but to emphasize the importance of being a positive part of group life (*ibid.*).

In 1980's, educators proposed for the elementary school in Japan a lower level of rigidity. It tried to lower the educational level that both children and adults at that time saw as too high. While some would find this lowering the standard of education, in 2002, there were more reforms for more flexibility in the curriculum. The students according to this reform took up only 350 of hours of classes as compared to the former 628 hours (*ibid.*).

High school in Japan, however, places the expectations on the extreme. For students who are attending private junior high schools, the screening is stiff with rigorous entrance examinations. The performance in high school determines the kind of job they will obtain or what university they will attend after graduation. To career and jobs are attached varying degrees of status and prestige. It is here that the 'group life' has to combine with high degree of competitive attitude in order to succeed (*ibid.*).

To succeed in high school means that the families at extra cost on their part will have to demand from the students to be tutored and to submit to some more extra examinations. However, this prevents many Japanese families who do not have the financial means, from succeeding to be given entry to the universities and eventually to desired jobs (*ibid.*).

In the face of a situation Japan and other countries in ASIA (China, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore) see the stress given to education towards the achievement of high material gains in life so that students tend to cram, Japanese Hirohito Komiyma (author of several books on the Japanese educational system) explains:

Students who undergo mindless cramming tend to have a low EQ (a measure of emotional intelligence), and those who do not learn to socialize or communicate with others cannot succeed in the current corporate world, which increasingly seeks well-rounded individuals (Fitzpatrick, p. 55).

4.3.3. *How Does the Environment for Children Affect Them?*

a) *Changes in Family Structure*

As Japan started to urbanize and industrialize, with economic development as a priority concern, family structure changed from that of the multi-generational families to nuclear family, which consists of a couple and children. The change of family structure limits interaction of children with people of other generations. Children do not experience aging and death of their family members as they do not live with their grandparents. It is typical that children with all their gadgets play by themselves.

Parents are the only adults around children in the nuclear family unlike before when grandparents, aunts, uncles, and others were in the house. The multi-generational family members then were around to oversee and guide children.

The Japanese Family especially in the cities live highly structured lives. When women marry, they belong to the husbands' family.

b) *Detachment from Nature*

Industrialization in Japan changed the environment for children not only in cities but in rural areas as well. Livestock are not around in their environment. Dirt road and fields have been converted to cement and housing subdivisions or industrial sites. Children do not feel that other living beings (the plants and animals) are like human beings and are a part of creation and develop according to the natural cycle of life. Detached from nature, children learn to grow up to think that human beings are superior to other living things losing respect and care for the natural environment and other people as well.

c) *Crime and Protection of Children*

The incidence of criminality has happened where children have become victims of kidnap, murder, sexual assault, etc. Every time crime is reported, communities and schools discuss what actions to take to prevent crime by placing more control on children and monitor their environment for suspects. Provisions such as providing school buses, distribution of emergency alarms, and setting monitoring cameras are chosen for prevention. Control and monitoring around children's environment limits their encounter with other people and new experiences.

d) *Influence of Information Technology (IT) Culture*

The influence of IT especially computer games and internet in the past decade changed the environment of children drastically. Many games that children play in computer are violent, racist, sexist, and treat the human being as objects. In computer games, the children play with figures who get killed and given life again. There is a very thin line between reality and illusion.

e) *Influence of Material Culture*

The environment of children is surrounded by material things for their use. Children have their own rooms with their own TV and computer games, their own cellular phones. They do not have to negotiate with their family members over a TV channel, and win over their friends for a toy. Children do not play outside in a group, but rather play with a small number of friends inside their own room through the computer. Children who do not have close friends or material things lack a sense of belonging. Two million Japanese sequester themselves in their own room. Fifty-four per cent (54%) of them being between ages 30 to 40 years old. Seven per cent (7%) have not related with anybody over the course of 10 years. The incidence of suicide is high and most of those who had committed suicide never consulted anybody before they killed themselves. Most women, however, consult somebody (interview with Tokiko Tagami, a Feminist). This is partly due to isolation as a result of materialism and partly due to male superiority. The males are made to believe that they have to be strong and in control of everything all the time.

f) *Multiculturalism and Multiethnicity*

Multi-culturalism and multi-ethnicity is not encouraged in children's environment. There are 76 Brazilian schools in Japan, populated by 285,000 Brazilians (Mainichi Newspaper, Jan. 7, 2006). However, the Ministry of Education does not recognize these ethnic schools are legitimate schools. Thus, the Brazilian schools do not receive any subsidy.

There are more Korean schools and Chinese schools that have existed longer. As a result monoculture and uniformity is considered as the norm and anybody who does not fit the monoculture is considered to be out of the mainstream and sometimes become the target of bullying.

4.3.4. *Reasons why Children are not Recognized as Important Part of Society*

a) *Politicians*

They have no interest in children as they cannot gain votes from minors. They do not consider children as equal to adults who are capable of planning for themselves. Children are never invited to sit in a council or committee to discuss about children's policies and programs.

b) *Bureaucratic Sectionalism of the Government*

There is no department in the present government which takes charge of the welfare of children as a whole. Sectionalism prohibits a holistic approach of support and care.

c) *Mass Media*

Mass media in Japan is a public relations channel for government and as such has lost its capacity for independent criticism of the state. Children's voice is not represented in media and the message given out in media is that children are weak. They are merely to be cared for and protected.

d) *NGO Organizations for Children*

UNICEF in Japan is there to protect children's rights. *Save the Children* focuses on concerns related to education, empowerment of women and children, providing economic opportunities to meet basic needs and a continuous water supply, nutritious food and potable water, immunization, and stable environment.

Recommendation

The Japanese Society should identify key issues regarding children that need to be attended to such as:

1. Imbalance in public expenditure in relation to children as compared with the elderly.
2. Imbalance in the attention given to Japanese children as compared with the attention given to the increasing number of children of migrant workers.
3. Imbalance in the attention given to material (economic and technological) dimension as compared to more emotional and spiritual dimen-

sion of its populations's well-being as shown in the high incidence of suicide even among children.

4. Neglect of children of migrant workers that are fast increasing due to zero growth rate of the population.
5. More importance given to human ecology to the neglect of the natural ecology.

As a High HDI (the highest in rank in Asia), there is a responsibility of Japanese society to provide children and youth the opportunities for social, cultural exchanges. I experience Japanese NGOs assisting financially, materially and technologically other countries while giving their children and youth the chance to experience in other countries values related to family, community, and spirituality.

4.4. *Philippines*¹²

4.4.1. *Policy of the State/Government*

The Philippines, known to be the only Christian country in Asia, has no vanishing youth. It has a flourishing youth. More than a million and a half babies (1.7 million) additional babies are added to the population yearly

¹² Main Sources: Guthrie, George. M. *The Filipino Child and Filipino Society*. Manila: Philippine Normal College Press. 1961. Text of 'The Convention of the Rights of the Child'. Adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations on November 20, 1989; The Child and Youth Welfare Code. Presidential Decree No. 603 (As Amended), December 10, 1974; Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development For Children, 2000-2025, 2000. Caalim, Divine, P, Evita A. Perez, Ma. Saturnina Hamile, Lorna C. Gabad, & John Chaloner. *Laws and Issuances on Children*. Council for the Welfare of Children, Expanding Children's Participation in Social Reform, United States Agency for International Development. 1999. Vicente Pepito F. Yambao. *Compilation of Legal Materials on the System of Justice for Children*. UP Institute for Human Rights. 2002.

Bibliography on Children's Rights and Concerns in Philippines: Leonora S. de Guzman. *Helping Street Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances*. National Association for Social Work Education, Inc. National Joint Project for Street Children (DSWD/NCSD/UNICEF), Manila: Asian Social Institute Printing Press. 1992; P.M. Shah. *Child Labour: A Threat to Health and Development*. 2nd Revised Edition. Defense for Children International, Geneva, Switzerland. 1994. Navarrete-Recina, Aurora. *Special Protection for Children*. Republic Act Nos. 7610 and 7658. Child Rights Center: Commission on Human Rights. UNICEF. 1994; Apit, Alejandro. W. *A Worst Form of Child Labor Discovered and Rescue*. Quezon City: Kamalayan Development Center. 1996. Sunga, Atty. Ana Janet. *Opening Doors. A Presentation of Laws Protecting Filipino Child Workers* A Revised Edition. Q.C. Ateneo Human Rights center in cooperation with International

with a growth rate of 2.36%.¹³ This will mean that the Philippines will have 'to double its efforts in the delivery of basic services like education health and nutrition'. The government's policy leaves it up to the local government units to purchase contraceptives. The stand of the President of the Republic is deemed to have been influenced by the Roman Catholic Church, which claims that using artificial methods is a sin'. According to a 2004 Family Planning Survey, 'only 49.3% of couples use contraceptives while the 2003 National Demographic Survey pegged it at 48.9% (*ibid.*). What is not being said by most policy-makers in the country is that there are many social practices in varied institutions that are not biased for the great majority of people such as: a poor implementation of the Land Reform, a regressive tax system, an unjust salary structure, graft and corruption in government – which keeps power and wealth only in the hands of a few. Because of this situation, some poor women who would like to have less children due to the cost of living are pressured to do family planning through abortion and sterilization. In the meantime, the Catholic Church in the Philippines, holds on to natural methods as the best way to do family planning because this lends to joint decision-making between husband and wife, and a spirit of sacrifice that will in the perspective of the Church bring grace and blessing to the family.

Youth flourishing in the Philippines is borne out by the following population statistics. *Children of 0-17 years constitute 41% of the population; 18-*

Labour Organizatin. 1996. Banaag, Cornelio G. Jr. Resiliency. *A publication of AusAID, National Project on Street Children and UNICEF*. 1997. Alex Apit., *Child Recruitment and some Most Hazardous Forms of Child Labour in the Philippines: a KDF's Experience*. Q. C. Kamalayan Development Foundation. 1998. Romualdez, Alberto G., Jr. *The Philippine Aids Prevention and Control Act of 1998. Implementing Rules and Regulations. Republic Act 8504*. Philippine Secretary of Health. 1998; *Responsible and Effective Parenting for Children in Need of Special Protection*. ChildHope & UNICEF. n.d.; Landey, Deborah. *HIV/AIDs in the Philippines. Keeping the Promise. Primar on the UNGASS DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS*. UNAIDS 2001.; Amihan, Abueva. *Changing Lives. International Conference on Young People's Participation Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*. Marikina City: Philippines, 2000; Caraballo, Maria Elena S. *Medium Term Framework on the Girl Child*. Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF. 2002. RA 9262. *Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004. Implementing Rules and Regulations*. Manila: National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW). 2004. O'Donnell, Dan & Dan Seymour. *Child Protection. A Handbook for Parliamentarians*. Inter-Parliamentary Union & United Nations Children's Fund. Switzerland: Inter-Parliamentary Union & United Nations Children's Fund. 2004.

¹³ Sheila Crisostomo, *RP Population seen to hit 86.7 M in 2006*, Philippine Star, January 1, 2006, pp. 1, 7.

34 years constitute 31% of the population, 35-64 is 22%; and those who are 65 to 80 and above constitute 6 percent.¹⁴

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in its publication together with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Institute of Human Rights University of the Philippine acknowledges the fact that 'children occupy a privileged status under Philippine Law'.¹⁵ Since the 1960s, a sociologist by the name of George Guthrie had said that the *Filipino Family is child-centred*.¹⁶ No less than the 1987 Constitution 'recognizes the twin characteristics of children – as vibrant members of society whose involvement in public and civic affairs must be encouraged, and as inexperienced travellers, must be properly guided and protected from abuse, exploitation and neglect'.¹⁷ Even as early as December 10, 1974, the Philippine Government under former President F. Marcos had promulgated 'the Child and Youth Welfare Code' Presidential Decree No. 603, prior to the 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child', adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989. The General Principles of the 1974 Code declared that 'the child is one of the most important assets of the nation' and that every effort should be exerted to promote the welfare and enhance his opportunities for a useful and happy life. Rightly did it state that 'the child is not a mere creature of the State and 'that his individual traits and aptitudes should be cultivated to the utmost insofar as they do not conflict with the general welfare'. The Code emphasized the family and the home as the 'wholesome and harmonious place' to enhance the child's development and that 'the natural right and duty of parents in the rearing of the child for civic efficiency should receive the aid and support of the government'. The Code likewise compels the 'school, the church, the guild and the community in general' to assist the home and the State to prepare the child for the responsibilities of adulthood.

In the box below, one can glean the soundness of the Code that basically contains the basic rights of the child that has been promulgated by the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

¹⁴ Philippine National Statistics Office, 2004.

¹⁵ Introduction of *Compilation of Legal Materials on the System of Justice for Children. Philippine Laws and Issuances on Children, 2002.*

¹⁶ Guthrie, George M., *The Filipino Child and Society*...cf. Endnote 12.

¹⁷ Yambao, Pepito, p 12, (endnote 12).

The Child and Youth Code of the Philippines, Presidential Decree No. 603, Dec. 10, 1974

Art. 3: Rights of the Child

All children shall be entitled to the rights of the herein set forth without distinction as to legitimacy or illegitimacy, sex, social status, religion, political antecedents, and other factors.

(1) Every child is endowed with the dignity and worth of a human being from the moment of his conception, as generally accepted in medical parlance, and has, therefore, the right to be born well.

(2) Every child has the right to a wholesome family life that will provide him with love, care and understanding, guidance and counselling, and moral and material security.

The dependent or abandoned child shall be provided with the nearest substitute for a house.

(3) Every child has the right to a well-rounded development of his personality to the end that he may become a happy, useful and active member of society.

The gifted child shall be given opportunity and encouragement to develop his special talents.

The emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted child shall be treated with sympathy and understanding, and shall be entitled to treatment and competent care.

The physically or mentally handicapped child shall be given the treatment, education and care required by his particular condition.

(4) Every child has a right to a balanced diet, adequate clothing, sufficient shelter, proper medical attention, and all the basic physical requirements of a healthy and vigorous life.

(5) Every child has the right to be brought up to an atmosphere of morality and rectitude for the enrichment and the strengthening of his character.

(6) Every child has the right to an education commensurate with his abilities and to the development of his skills for the improvement of his capacity for services to himself and to his fellowmen.

(7) Every child has the right to full opportunities for safe and wholesome recreation and activities, individual as well as social, for the wholesome use of his leisure hours.

(8) Every child has the right to protection against exploitation, improper influences, hazards, and other conditions or circumstances prejudicial to his physical, mental, emotional, social and moral development.

(9) Every child has the right to live in a community and society that can offer an environment free from pernicious influences and conducive to the promotion of his health and the cultivation of his desirable traits and attributes.

(10) Every child has the right to the care, assistance, and protection of the State, particularly when his parents or guardians fail or are unable to provide him with his fundamental needs for growth, development, and improvement.

(11) Every child has the right to an efficient and honest government that will deepen his faith in democracy and inspire him with the morality of the constituted authorities both in their public and private lives.

(12) Every child has the right to grow as a free individual, in an atmosphere of peace, understanding, tolerance and universal brotherhood, and with the determination to contribute his share in the building of the nation.

From here on, *the Council for the Welfare of Children* (CWC) as the highest implementing arm of the government was formed. The Board of this organization is composed of the following: the Secretary of Social Welfare as Chairman together with the members – Secretaries of Justice, of Labor, Education and Culture, Health, Judge of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts and two representatives of voluntary welfare associations to be appointed by the President of the Philippines.

Especially after the *Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November, 1989*, many laws have been passed pertinent to children's welfare, some of them focusing on certain contemporary problems:

a) *Child Specific Laws*

1. National Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, Breastmilk Supplement and other Related Products (Executive order No. 51).
2. Authorizing the Ministry of Social Services and Development to take Protective Custody of Child Prostitutes and Sexually Exploited Children (Executive Order No. 56).
3. Creating a Committee for the Special Protection of Children from All Forms of Neglect, Abuse, Cruelty, exploitation, Discrimination and Other Conditions Prejudicial to their Development (Executive Order no. 275).
4. Free Public Secondary Education Act of 1988 (Republic Act No. 6655).
5. Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education Act (Republic Act No. 6728).
6. An Act Lowering the Age of Majority from Twenty-One to Eighteen Years Amending for the Purpose Executive Order No. 209 and for Other Purposes (Republic Act No. 6809).
7. Barangay Level Total Development and Protection of Children Act (Republic Act No. 6972).

8. An Act to Help Poor but Deserving Students Pursue their Education by Encouraging their Employment during Summer and/or Christmas Vacations (Republic Act No. 7323).
9. The Rooming-in and Breastfeeding Act of 1992 (Republic Act No. 7600)
10. Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination (Republic Act No. 7610).
11. An Act Integrating Drug Prevention and Control in the Intermediate Secondary Curricula as well as in the Nonformal, Informal and Indigenous Learning Systems and for Other Purposes. (Republic Act No. 7824).
12. An Act Prohibiting the Employment of Children Below 15 Years of Age in Public and Private Undertakings (Republic Act No. 7658).
13. An Act to Lengthen the School Calendar from Two Hundred (200) Days to Not More than Two Hundred Twenty (220) Class Days (Republic Act No. 7797).
14. An Act Requiring Compulsory Immunization against Hepatitis-B for Infants and Children Below Eight (8) years of age (Republic Act No. 7846).
15. Fair and Equitable Access to Education Act (Republic Act No. 7880).
16. Inter-Country Adoption Act of 1995 (Republic Act No. 8040).
17. Youth in Nation Building Act (Republic Act No. 8044).
18. An Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide (ASIN) (Republic Act No. 8172).
19. An Act Declaring Every Second Sunday of December as the National Children's Broadcasting Day (Republic Act No. 8296).
20. Anti-Rape Law of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8353).
21. Family Courts Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8369).
22. Domestic Adoption Act of 1998 (Republic Act No. 8550).

b) *Proclamations on Children's Concerns*

23. Reaffirming the Commitment to the Universal Child and Mother Immunization Goal by Launching the Polio Eradication Project (Proclamation No. 46).
24. Declaring the 17th Day of October of Every Year as National Children's Day (Proclamation No. 74).
25. Declaring the Month of October of Every Year as National Children's Month (Proclamation No. 267).
26. Declaring the Second Week of February of Every Year as 'National Awareness Week for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation' (Proclamation No. 731).

27. Declaring the Fourth Week of March of Every Year as 'Protection and Gender-Fair Treatment of the Girl Child Week' (Proclamation No. 759).
28. Proclaiming the Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Program of Action for the Children in the 1990's (Proclamation No. 866).

c) *Related Laws*

29. Directing National Government Agencies and Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations to Provide Day-Care Services for their Employees' Children Under Five Years of Age (Executive Order No. 340).
30. Establishing the Sajid Bulig Presidential Award for Heroism (Executive Order No. 393).
31. Further Amendment Executive Order No. 203 dated 27 September 1994 as Amended by Executive Order No. 356, dated July 1996 (Executive Order No. 421).
32. The Family Code of the Philippines (Related Provisions of Executive Order No. 209).
33. Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Republic Act No. 7277).
34. The Local Government Code of 1991 (Related Provisions of Republic Act No. 7160).
35. Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act (Republic Act No. 8425)
36. Philippine AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 1998 (Republic Act No. 8504).
37. Rape Victim Assistance and Prevention (Republic Act No. 8505).
38. The Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8371).

Another publication, *Philippine Laws and Issuances on Children*. Vol. 2, classified the policies according to the main provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to 1) Special Protection of Children, 2) Children in Conflict with the Law, and 3) Procedural Safeguards for Children in Conflict with the Law.

As of March 26, 2006, the Philippine UNICEF has lauded the Senate and House of Representatives for unanimously approving the *Juvenile Justice and Welfare Bill*.

The bill prohibits the detention of children being 15 and 18 years old from criminal liability unless the prosecution proves that they acted with discernment. The law introduces the concept of restorative justice instead of punitive justice system and diverts the referral of cases for juvenile offenders who may be criminally responsible from the Barangay, police, prosecutor's office and courts to community-based rehabilitation programs.

UNICEF Communication Chief, Dale Rustein lauded the bill. According to him, once the bill becomes law, 'the thousands of children now suffering in Philippine jails will be released from a nightmare experience. Many of the children in conflict with the law just needs love, support and encouragement – not, prison. There are 4000 Filipino minors languishing in jails nationwide with 21 of them on the death row. As soon as the bill becomes law, up to 70% of criminal cases against children will be dismissed outright'. UNICEF underscored the importance of restorative justice that is focused on repairing harm caused by criminal behaviour through the cooperation of all sectors of society. 'In the diversion program, for instance, the child offender would be required to issue a public apology, do civic work as a means of restitution, attend counselling and undergo capability training'.

There is a Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Philippines, 2000-2025. Titled 'Child 21', it is a most important policy document. It is supposed to be a legacy to the Filipino Children of the 21st Century because it provides a broadly held vision for the next generation of the Filipino children. 'It offers not only a clear expressed vision, but is complete with goals and objectives which can be achieved in just one generation to ensure that Filipino children born today will be fully prepared to meet their challenges as responsible adults, heads of families and local and national leaders as the nation embraces the new century' (Dr. Terrel Hill, UNICEF Representative). The then former Vice-President of the Republic of the Philippines and Secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development (concurrently President) under former President, Joseph Ejercito Estrada authorized the adoption and implementation of the Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children, 2000-2025 or Child 21 and its accompanying medium term plan and framework. A product of a multi-sectoral two-year consultation, 'the rights-based life cycle approach' lays the foundation for a uniquely Filipino Child-Friendly Movement which guides partnerships between civil society and government that will revolutionize the quality of life of ...children as they grow to become the leaders of the Philippines in 2025. 'The two-year consultation was participated in by the Legislative Branch, the business sector, the academe, government, the religious group, and from the children sector. The drafting of the framework sought the participation of the indigenous people's group and from the disabled sector. This was the first batch to throw around ideas and provide focus. This activity was then followed by insights in writing the document. The children's involvement ...has been a big factor in ensuring that this document echoes the voices of the Filipino children'.

The former Vice-President Arroyo noted from the consultations the great concern on the state of the education system, the erosion of values and the increasing breakdown of the family. In as much as this document contains substantial information on the imperatives of this presentation, much of what follows comes from the document.

4.4.2. *The Situation on Children*

The bad news is: that all the laws on children are little known on the local government level. The laws reflect the problems of children in the Philippines: monetary poverty with all its attendant evils: malnutrition, school drop-outs, street families, slums and squatter communities, street children, drug problems, child prostitutes and victims of paedophilia, irrelevant school education, non-culturally rooted education especially for indigenous communities, juvenile delinquency, children caught in armed conflicts, and natural disasters, handicapped children, child labour, child trafficking, temporary orphaned children due to out-migration of parents to work for lucrative jobs abroad and children victimized by toxic waste due to industrial mining. It is the many NGOs in the country – UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, Christian Children’s Fund, Catholic Child Bureau, End of Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT), ChildHope, Feed the Children and many others (there are 350 local organizations for street children alone) that strive to do something for the children’s survival, protection, participation and development. The Government’s Department of Social Services and Development (DSWD), and a Council for the Welfare of Children (the highest policy-making body on children), ERDA (Educational Resource Development Association) financially supporting the schooling of out-of-school children and employing professional social workers – are at the forefront of all initiatives. There are international church organizations – Holy Childhood, and Katholische Jungschar Osterreich, Caritas Internationale as well as its branches in different countries of Europe and Japan, the NGOs dealing with handicapped children – and assisted by foreign NGOs such as Christopher Blinden Mission and others – partner with local organizations.

The Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children, 2000-2025 (Child 21, a Legacy to the Filipino Children of the 21st Century, 2000) has reported on some data on children in the Philippines:

- *On Maternal Mortality Rates (MMR) per 100,000 live births, 1990 to 1998:* in 1990, the mortality rate was 290 per 100,000; in 1998, it improved –

172 per 100,000. (Source: National Statistics Coordination Board, 1990 and 1995; Philippine National Demographic Health Survey, 1998).

- *In Maternal Mortality Rate, the Philippines lags behind the following Countries – Thailand, China and Vietnam in 1990-1998* (Sources: ADB Compendium of the Philippine Social Statistics, March 1998, citing NCSB; ADB Key Indicators, 1992; and World Bank, World Development Report, 1997).
- *Teenage pregnancy as a contributing factor to high maternal mortality rate.* Most teenage pregnancies occur between the ages of 15 to 17 years old. One in 25 adolescent females has a child before age 18. Adolescent pregnancy increases maternal and fetal complications. Fetal mortality rate for teenage pregnancies is 1.2 to 1.6 times higher than those of mothers between 24 to 34 years old. There is a greater risk of premature births, low birth weight, in-born defects, mental retardation and blindness. (Source: 1995 Situational Analysis by Plan International Philippines)
- *Infant Mortality Rates (IMR), 1990-1998.* Government efforts have paid off in reducing the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) from 56.69 in 1990 to 35 in 1998. (Source: National Statistics Coordinating Board, 1990 and 1995; Philippine Demographic Health Survey, 1998)
- *The Philippines lagged behind China but did better than Indonesia and Thailand in 1995 in reducing IMR* (Source: ADB Compendium of the Philippine Social Statistics, March 1998, citing NCSB; ADB Key Indicators, 1992 and World Bank, World Development Report, 1997).
- *Immunization of Children by Type of Vaccine, 1995.* TB-BCG vaccination stood at 91% while vaccination for Diphtheria, tetanus,– Polio, Anti-Measles was 86% each. (Source: Ibid.)
- *Under-five child mortality rates (U5MR), 1990-1998.* U5MR was significantly reduced from 79.64 per 1000 in 1990 to 48.9% in 1998. (Source: National Statistical Coordination Board).
- *Philippines is doing slightly better than Indonesia but way behind Thailand, China and Vietnam* (Source: *op. cit.*, Philippine Social Statistics).

- *Malnutrition Rates.* There has been a slow decline in malnutrition for both 0-5 and 6-10 age groups, using Philippine standards. Using international standards, Philippines' malnutrition rate is higher. However, the 1998 level for the 0-5 years age group is higher than the 1996 level. (Source: Food and Nutrition Research Institute, Department of Science and Technology).

One in three Filipinos is malnourished. This remains a major threat to the Filipino child's survival. (Source: ADB compendium of the Philippine Social Statistics, Marach 1998 citing NCSB; ADB Key Indicators, 1992; World Bank, World Development Report, 1997.)

- *Access to Safe Water.* In 1998, 87% of the total households had access to safe water. With a Year-2000 goal of 90% access, the Philippine government would need to fast track the water program in the country. (Source: National Statistics Coordinating Board.)
- *Access to Sanitation.* There was a minimal increase from 71% in 1994 to 81% in 1998. The goal of 86% access is not being achieved. (Source: 1990 and 1995 data are from National Statistics Coordinating Board).
- *Access to Basic Education, 1996-1998.* In school year (SY) 1996-1997; the elementary school participation rate was 94.33% while the survival rate was 67.96%; in SY 1997-1998, the participation rate was 95.09% while the survival rate was 68.56%; in 1998-1999, the participation rate was 95.75 while the survival rate was 69.75%. (Source: Planning Service, Department of Education, Culture and Sports).

The literacy rate has steadily increased from a baseline of almost 90% in 1989 to nearly 94% in 1999. This indicates a positive trend but might not reach the 98% basic literacy goal.

- *Children in Need of Special Protection.* 'Children aged 0-17 comprise one-third of the population. The 1995 Census reflects an estimated 30.9 million children which represents nearly 45% of the total Philippine population. While data remains inadequate, available statistics have shown that a great number of the total child population continue to be under situations needing special protection – and the number continues to increase in greater proportion. These are the children needing special care and attention to ensure their normal development' (Child 21, p. 37).

a) *Child Labour*. A 1995 National Statistics Office (NSO) survey commissioned by International Labour Organization (ILO)-International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC), estimated that three out of 20 children or some 3.7 million, mostly from five to 17 years old are working children. Of this number more than two-thirds are rural working children, 60% are exposed to either hazardous or cruel conditions leaving them malnourished, susceptible to respiratory infections and sexually transmitted diseases, stunted intellectually and physically, and with low self esteem; 409,849 are children living away from home of which 47% are working mostly in households where 65% are females. Some of the worst of child labour include deep-sea fishing, trafficking, mining/quarrying, commercial plantation, and prostitution or commercial sexual exploitation. Government has responded to this problem by ratifying ILO Convention 138 and strengthening its monitoring of businesses that employ children. While there have been rescues made on children who were employed as child labourers, government has yet to strengthen services for these children and their families (Child 21, p. 37-38).

b) *Neglected and Abandoned Children*: In a 1993 survey of households, some 16% of households surveyed have children below 12 years old who are left unattended with no supervising adult in the house. This translates to one in six households where children are without adult supervision.

In the cities, neglected and abandoned children find themselves in the streets fending for themselves and vulnerable to the various evils of the urban jungle such as drug addiction, crimes and commercial sexual exploitation. Children who are neglected or abandoned are easy prey not only to accidents but to illicit transfer, commercial sexual exploitation, drugs, crime and unwanted pregnancies (Child 21, p. 38).

c) *Street Children*. Estimates quoted by reports reflect some 250,000 street children in the Philippines. There are about 350 government and non-government agencies that are responding to street children and their families. Services include health and nutrition, educational assistance, effective parenting sessions, livelihood and skills training, residential care, foster care and adoption. (Child 21, p. 39). However, for as long as there would be squatter colonies sprouting in urban areas and for as long as there are not enough jobs, street children will continue to dominate the streets (Child, 21, p. 40).

d) *Girl Children*. The study on family and household violence undertaken by the University of the Philippines (UP) for Women's Studies in 1996 revealed 96.5% of its child abuse victims were young adults. The Child Protection Unit based on UP Philippine General Hospital (PGH) also reports that almost all victims of sexual abuse that are referred to them are girls. Professor Zarco's study on police reported rape incidents between 1985-1994 in Metro Manila corroborated observations that the girl child is most prone to sexual abuse because of her age and gender. Department of Health (DOH) reports reflect that there are more girl children affected with HIV-AIDS. (Child 21, p. 40)

e) *Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation*. In 1997, estimates on the magnitude and number of child victims ranged from 60,000 to 100,000. A 1995 study by DSWD and UNICEF on the Situation on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) draws a clearer picture. Ninety five percent (95%) of CSEC victims mostly females are out-of-school children. Some seven in 10 of CSEC victims expressed a desire to return to school. Some six in 10 said they need education (Child 21, 40).

f) *Victims of Child Abuse*. Incidents of child abuse is still on the rise specifically child sexual abuse as evident in their number which is from 2,785 in 1994 to 3,216 in 1998 (DSWD). Also on the rise are reports of physical abuse and maltreatment of children, from 311 in 1994 to 1,021 in 1998. *The rise in reported cases is seen as an indication of the growing awareness and advocacy of government, NGOs and the media in the fight against child abuse* (Child 21, p. 41).

g) *Children in Situation of Armed Conflict*. The increasing number of children being recruited by armed groups causes grave concern. The recruited children either become child soldiers, combatants, spies, couriers, guides or informers. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) estimates the number of children involved in armed conflict at 13% of the total rebel population. During the encounters of government military troops and armed groups, casualties and those who were captured were mostly children. It has also been observed that children, especially the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) have become the target of the recruitment campaign by armed rebel groups (Child 21, pp. 41-43).

h) *Children in Conflict with the Law.* A 1998 Situation Analysis of Children in Conflict with the Law and the Juvenile Justice System conducted by the Ateneo Law School provides the following profile of the Filipino Child in Conflict with the Law: usually male, between the ages of 14-17, an elementary graduate, a middle child from a low-income family with 4 to 6 members, charged with property related crimes (robbery and theft), exposed to drugs or gang influence (Child 21, p. 43).

The 1999 data from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology reflects 3747 children in conflict with the law. The report also indicates about 28% have been settled and about one-third of these cases are in the court. National Capital Region (Metropolitan Manila) has the most number of cases. The experiences of these children throughout the stages of the juvenile justice system indicate neglect and insensitivity to their situation by the enforcers of the system (Child 21, p. 43).

i) *Children in Various Circumstances of Disability.* One out of five children in the 0-6 age group has some form of disability or impairment. Children in the 15-19 age group have the highest disability prevalence rate per 100,000 population. Hearing and visual impairments and difficulty in moving are the most common forms of impairment among children. There are more boys suffering from disabilities than girls. Basic Services for children with disabilities and children of indigenous peoples are very inadequate. There is a need for nutritional care and in providing opportunities for an integrated schooling system that is culture-sensitive (Child 21, p. 45).

j) *Children of Indigenous Peoples.* There are some 2.5 M indigenous children. They live in far flung remote communities usually accessible only by foot. Such being the case, they are most often neglected in the delivery of basic services, plagued with communicable diseases, with high malnutrition and mortality rates, and poor environmental sanitation prevail among their children. Their areas are usually affected by armed conflict (Child 21, pp. 45-46).

Throughout the life cycle the following are the threats to the Child in the order of significance based on data (Child 21, p. 47).

TABLE 7.

Threats to Children's Rights	Nature of Right Threatened
1. Poor Maternal Health and Nutrition	Survival
2. Inadequate Primary Health Service	Survival
3. Poor Water and Sanitation	Survival
4. Malnutrition	Survival & Developmental
5. Incomplete Immunization	Survival
6. Non-registration of Birth	Participation
7. Inadequate Access to Learning Opportunities	Developmental
8. Poor Quality of Learning	Developmental
9. Illiteracy	Developmental
10 HIV/AIDS	Protection
11. Homelessness (Street Children)	Protection
12. Disabilities	Protection
13. Limited Participation in Development Process	Participation
14. Child Abuse	Protection
15. Commercial Sexual Exploitation	Protection
16. Substance Abuse	Protection
17. Adolescent Pregnancy	Protection
18. Child Labor	Protection
19. Displacement	Protection
20. Armed Conflict	Protection
21. In conflict with the Law	Protection

– *Emerging Trends, Possibilities and Constraints*

a) *Democratic processes: The Positive Side* – Vibrant democratic processes may strengthen democratic institutions; issues affecting families and children are brought to the fore. Families and children assert their rights in peaceful and responsive forums. Increased and wider participation of civil society in development processes.¹⁸ *The Negative Side*: More mass actions by

¹⁸ While stable democratic processes have been projected in year 2000, the situation now in the Philippines belies such a projection. The main concern of the Philippines national government is just to get the GNP up without thought and concern for the implications of foreign investment like mining on the future of families and children. However, while on national level, the picture of Philippine politics is very bad, there are at the same

disgruntled groups b) Conflicting interests such as human rights activists vs. Crime Crusaders.

b) *Devolution of Basic Services to Local Government Units (LGUs):*
Positive Side – Greater local autonomy and self-sufficiency; families will have better access to basic social services; better enforcement of laws promoting and protecting child rights; Children's representation in local governance. *The Negative Side* – Lack of sufficient funds for Local Government Units (LGUs) who lack capability to source funds; politicalization in allocation and use of resources; greater regional disparity in provision of basic social services; the rapid turn-over of local officials may affect the delivery of health services and their sustainability.

c) *Globalization: The Positive Side* – Basic services will be measured against international standards; access global information; more employment opportunities leading to better living standards; increased access to alternative parental arrangements through adoption and foster care. *The Negative Side* – Currency speculation, currency fluctuation, quick capital flight can cause economic uncertainty for families; family stress arising from job competition and job stress; more child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation; rise in number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) especially females leading to family break-up increase in single-headed households unsupervised children; emergence of new family structures and systems; challenges to traditional family values; increased drug trafficking and drug-use among children.

d) *Changing Demographic Patterns.* This implies an increasing proportion of households made up of nuclear families and single persons. Decline in fertility rates will free more women in child rearing. There will be more demand for day care and related services. *The Positive Side* – New supporting mechanisms will be put in place; More programs for care-givers. *The Negative Side* – Women will be freed from child rearing.

time local government units who are headed by Mayors who demonstrate a just way of governing. The hope of the Philippines is to map out where good is being done and make schools and churches aware of how to re-inforce the local excellence in whatever form this is being demonstrated.

e) *Information Technology and Knowledge Generation and Explosion. The Positive Side* – Flexible learning systems through multi-media systems; Better and faster exchange of information; better monitoring of child trafficking; facilitate data banking on statistics about children at local and international levels; access to information. *The Negative Side* – Internet provides children with access to pornographic materials and facilitates child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children; access to multi-media programs on sex and violence increase vulnerability of children to violent behaviour; diminishes socialization of children and undermines bonding with parents; interpersonal relationships including daily communication are also hampered by electronic advances.

f) *Rapid Technological Advances. The Positive Side* – Change in Market demands for labour will create new jobs. New discoveries in medicine bring new cures and new technology for health care delivery systems. Longer life span. *The Negative Side* – Environmental degradation and pollution; unemployment in traditional jobs; new strains of diseases and increase in respiratory illnesses; increase in man-made diseases.

g) *Frequent Occurrence of Natural Disasters. The Positive Side* – Renewed respect for nature. *The Negative Side* – Death, disease, malnutrition, displacement and disruption in child's life; economic losses affect health status; increased vulnerability.

h) *Increased Evangelization: The Positive Side* – Moral recovery in families and return to spirituality; moral perspective on family problems and issues. *The Negative Side* – Tendency for power and influential groups to exploit the religious sentiments of the people for their own vested interests.

i) *Urbanization: The Positive Side* – Better economic opportunities; access to modern infrastructure, facilities and services. *The Negative Side* – Changing patterns in family life; family violence; perpetuates 'mall' culture among children which encourages consumerism; increase in dehumanizing conditions such as pollution, congestion, squatting, traffic; decreased privacy.

4.4.3. *Approaches to Creating a Child-Friendly Society*

From Child 21, pp. 57-58

General Strategies Towards a Child-Friendly Society.

The following strategies are significant in creating the enabling conditions for a Child-Friendly Society:

1. Strengthen the capability of families to nurture children and provide them with full support for their welfare and development.

2. Advocacy towards a paradigm shift to put children first in the use of resources of the family, community and the State.

3. Institutional transformation that include:

An educational system to be responsive to the learning needs of children including the use of appropriate teaching methods and alternative learning systems appropriate to differently-abled children and children of indigenous peoples.

A health care system including health insurance to be responsive to the unique health needs of children at every stage of the life cycle with prevention of diseases and illnesses as a priority.

A justice system to be sensitive to the conditions of the child at every stage of the juvenile justice system;

A legislative system that puts children first and promises child rights.

4. Transform values and practices in the labour market that would protect children from abuse and exploitation; provide opportunities for their employees to be able to integrate work and family life by providing nursery and day care services for their young children and other activities that promote family togetherness. Philippine-based companies and enterprises must be strongly encouraged to operationalize the required practices.

5. Complete devolution of basic services to Local Government Units to enable them to better

them to respond to the needs and threats to children.

6. Promote convergence of services through linkages and cooperation between and among the different sectors for more effective and holistic response to children.

7. Develop a national data bank and repository of all information regarding children and their situation to enable planners to develop appropriate interventions.

In the ensuing section of Child 21, a more specific strategy scheme is laid out, identifying key players (Families, Local communities, NGOs, Peoples' organizations, Church or private organizations, Schools, Local Government units, National Government, Mass Media and Children themselves with specific strategies and specific outcomes (pp. 59-60)

Another table, (pp. 62-69) identifies the strategies to the child in the major development stages of the child based on the four major rights categories according to the Convention of the Rights of the Child – survival, protection, development and participation. These rights based strategies according to the life-cycle – unborn, 0-2 years, 3-6 years, 6-12 years and 13-17 years – facilitate the convergence of critical services and interventions in pursuit of the shared vision.

There are a great number of schools of social work in the Philippines. These schools train social workers, a number of whom, become consultants in other countries in Asia.

Recommendation

In the Philippines, the issue on children and youth cannot be resolved without considering the following major factors in every society as interrelated: 1) Inner Ecology 2) Natural Environmental Ecology 3) Human Ecology.

From Child 21, p.21.

Our Vision

Our vision is that by 2025, every Filipino child will be –
Born healthy and well with an inherent right to
life endowed with human dignity.

Happy, loved and nurtured by a strong stable and God-loving family
Living in a peaceful, progressive, gender-fair, and child-friendly society.

Growing safe in a healthy environment and ecology
Free and protected by a responsive and enabling government

1. The Inner Ecology refers to the Worldview and Values of Institutional Leaders – Political, Economic, Education, Religion, Health, Media, etc. If all the institutional leaders will converge to work for a culture of Life, sense of wholeness interconnecting all life-forms – this will externalize itself in a passion to recognize and promote the dignity of the person and integrity of creation enhanced by corollary values of various humane philosophies and/or a Faith Life stemming from various religious persuasions as value underpinnings of LAW and institutional policies.
2. Environmental Ecology refers to the balance and sustainability of all elements of life – earth, water, air and light. A tampering of the balance in our biosphere will mean poverty, suffering and eventually self-destruction. Degradation of the natural environment will threaten the future of our children and youth.

3. Human Ecology – A balance in our population structure so that the life cycle of people (with a good proportion of males and females) in relation to other life-forms will create a healthy and life-promoting, peaceful environment enhancing the survival, protection, development and participation of all human beings, the most conscious part of the whole creation to care for a healthy environment for promotion and sustainability of all life and all life forms.

The issue of Vanishing Youth revolves around the issue of Human Ecology that in many countries is being threatened either by the fact that there are so few children and youth to be able to support an increasing population of the elderly (Japan) or an increasing number of babies that cannot be supported by natural and financial resources (Philippines) and/or a discrepancy in a good number of males vs a disproportionate number of females (India and China).

I can only make practical suggestion for children in my own country because many in Civil Society in the Philippines seem to be converging in a holistic understanding of issues that are interconnected calling for an integrated pro-active approach to resolve issues.

I recommend that Civil Society and where possible with Local Government Units implement Child 21 but in the context of a bio-regional community. The concept and program to be implemented is what is called ESCOM – Eco-system based community centred sustainable development management and organization.¹⁹ (A concept introduced by Dr. Sixto Roxas of the Maximo T. Kalaw Institute for Sustainable Development) Because the Philippine Government has devolved powers

¹⁹ ECSOM (Eco-system based community-centered sustainable development organization and management) is being proposed as an appropriate field organization and management system at the sub-provincial level (using a Watershed District) as the unit of production, accounting, planning and analysis) for the implementation of government programs to attain goals of increasing agricultural productivity and real incomes for the farmers and generating complementary, interlinked profitably interesting agro-industrial business opportunities for the farmers and non-tilling land-owners. It is also a scheme for integrating government and private sector projects in the field where they are designed and phased to become mutually reinforcing. The ECSOM therefore is a potent local resource management system that provides a way by which projects that singly might not be self-liquidating, in combination are placed in a cost-recovery mode.

In one of the pilot areas in the Philippines which is an area populated by an indigenous minority, the partners of the community is PLAN International (an NGO for children) and an Agricultural School.

to the local government units (LGUs), it is important to do a trans-sectoral organizing by identifying the different stakeholders in the community – the local government officials, the upland farmers, the indigenous groups, the fisherfolk, the farmers in commercial agriculture, the academe, media, etc. Representatives of the group will have a consultation session in order to bring about an understanding of their bio-regional community assisted in training and formation of community leaders from colleges, schools and universities (who are willing to operationalize the concept) and who in turn will have insights into appropriate cultural approaches rooted in the indigenous wisdom of the people. At the moment there are four pilot areas who had started to understand and implement the concept. They have workshops based on the following process questions such as:

- a) What are your dreams for your children and your children's children within the next five to ten years?
- b) How do you map out your bio-regional community?
- c) Can we examine our infra structure program to find out why revenues are lost to the community? (highways to the city become a priority rather than farm to market roads)
- d) How do we make a feasibility study by assessing the natural capital, the financial capital, the human capital, the physical capital, social and psycho-cultural-spiritual richness of each family in the region.
- e) What are the basic needs of family clusters? How will they be produced in the community.

The Local Government, with Sectoral Groups will then plan for how to answer their needs. Following the principle of subsidiarity, they will strive to root themselves in the wealth of their community prior to depending on outside resources.

In this process, children and youth organizations should participate in ECSOM. They will make Local Government Units aware of the laws on children and laws pertaining to zero waste management. In these bio-regional communities, the Churches may have a way of enhancing families' way of viewing reality rooted in a living Faith ... they will promote the inner ecology or spirituality.

Universities and colleges in partnership with church organizations could support and partner with communities. The organizing principle is love and compassion. The Vision – Transformative Practice towards Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. The expected output of this

process: healthy and creative children contributing to local communities. Financial support for the program could be forthcoming from various local resources of a bio-region (which may attract resources from outside the community and even from foreign funding resources). In this way, the policy of Child 21 being implemented and integrated with a holistic program (ECSOM) will guarantee a healthy environment for children and their families in the future.

Every country can do participatory action research to awaken people to the interconnectedness of problems and then plan out a program which draws different sectors of society to cooperate in ECSOM (ecosystem based community centered management and organization) The actors here could be schools/universities and their respective community partners, organizations within the church and non-governmental organizations.

The Church's role according to *Deus Caritas Est* – the recent encyclical of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI is to shape the social conscience of people. Actions of persons propelled by God's love having the attitude of full trust in our God of life and love will purify the justice work – supposedly a task of the State and lay persons. For justice work is endangered, according to the encyclical, by 'special interests' and 'power' (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, Dec. 25, 2005, no. 28).

I hope the concern for children will eventually break down the divides in society. The children could be the unifying factor in our mission for justice and peace. To work for children is to make whole, to heal our brokenness, and to make holy. To love children is to experience a continual 'love feast' – an 'Agape'.

Overall Recommendation

The PAS could have a website that keeps people and churches updated on the following:

1. International laws on children, youth and families.
2. National laws in each country
3. NGOs – international and national that deal with the issue of children, youth and families.
4. Creative actions and programs locally among churches, schools, NGOs and local government units on everything that pertains to children, youth and families.

5. Convergences of efforts among all societal forces of change and transformation premised on the dignity of the human person and his/her rights.
6. Christian social teachings that offer the profound philosophical value-underpinnings and (for Christians) the gospel values of the concern for children and youth.