



EPF Study Tour to The Philippines

27-31 January 2025

ACTIVITY REPORT

Contents

EPF Study Tour to The Philippines	1
ACTIVITY REPORT	1
INTRODUCTION.....	2
PARTICIPANTS	2
NARRATIVE OF ACTIVITIES.....	3
Day 1 (January 27, 2025)	3
Day 2 (January 28, 2025)	8
Day 3 (January 29, 2025)	11
Day 4 (January 30, 2025)	12
Day 5 (January 31, 2025)	14
KEY FINDINGS ON SRHR POLICY AND THE GLOBAL SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES	16
Legislative Framework and Policy Gaps	16
Maternal and Reproductive Health Trends	17
Family Planning and Contraception.....	17
HIV and AIDS and Vulnerable Populations	17
Funding Landscape	18
Persistent Barriers	18
SUGGESTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS	19
Legislative Advocacy in Donor Parliaments.....	19
Strengthening Collaboration with Philippine Stakeholders	19
Advocacy for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (in donor-country).....	20
CONCLUSION	20

INTRODUCTION

From January 27 to 31, 2025, a delegation of ten parliamentarians representing eight donor countries (Finland, France, Sweden, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Italy) and the EU participated in a Study Tour to the Philippines. Organised by the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (EPF) and hosted by the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), this visit aimed to:

1. Provide first-hand exposure to the realities of advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in a predominantly Christian country.
2. Exchange knowledge on policymaking, program implementation, and financing mechanisms related to SRHR, maternal health, family planning (FP), adolescent pregnancy, and other issues.
3. Foster closer collaboration among parliamentarians from donor countries toward strengthening SRHR in the Philippines through development aid, international partnerships, and improved legislative strategies

The Study Tour took place at a critical juncture in the Philippines Bills tackling adolescent pregnancy prevention by providing minors access to contraception and institutionalising comprehensive sexuality education were (and remain) under legislative review. At the same time, the country is experiencing strong conservatist and anti-gender opposition, adding political complexity to SRHR advocacy. Against this backdrop, PLCPD served as guide and host, providing detailed insights into current developments, existing legislation, and the challenges to advancing comprehensive SRHR policies.

PARTICIPANTS

PLCPD

- Nenita Dalde, Director, National Advocacy and Partnerships
- Rom Dongeto, Executive Director
- Maureen Ana Palacios, Admin & Logistics Officer
- Roi Vincent Merca, Advocacy and Partnerships Officer (documenter)
- Kisterjay Llever, Multimedia Officer, photo and video documenter
- Aurora Quilala, Deputy Executive Director
- Andrei O Villamor, Executive Assistant

EPF

- Laura Cohen, Project Officer
- Saskia Pfeyffer, Policy Officer

Parliamentarians

- Eva Biaudet, MP (Finland)
- Guillaume Gouffier Valente, MP (France)
- Pia Hiltunen, MP (Finland)

- Lotta Johnsson Fornarve, MP (Sweden)
- Marilou McPhedran, Senator (Canada)
- Joanna Scheuring-Wielgus, MEP (Poland)
- Baroness Elizabeth Grace Sugg, House of Lords (United Kingdom)
- Mia Katarina Margareta Tolgfors, MP (Sweden)
- Vanessa Weenink, MP (New Zealand)
- Ylenia Zambito, Senator (Italy)

NARRATIVE OF ACTIVITIES

Day 1 (January 27, 2025)

EPF article: [EPF Delegation Visits the Philippine House of Representatives | EPF](#)

9:00 to 9:45 / Briefing and Introduction of Participants

Novotel Araneta City, Manila

3rd floor, Gauguin Room



Joanna Scheuring-Wielgus, MEP and Senator Marilou McPhedran, Canada © 2025, EPF

Following a general tour de table, PLCPD’s Executive Director, Mr. Rom Dongeto, introduced the organisation’s 30+ year history of SRHR advocacy and its role in championing key legislation such as the 2012 Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health (RPRH) Law.

PLCPD emphasised the “Adolescent Pregnancy Bill” that had reached advanced legislative stages yet faced vehement conservative backlash, particularly the “Project Dalisay” (Purity) movement, which misrepresents WHO guidelines on age-appropriate sexual education.

Aurora Quilala, PLCPD Deputy Executive Director, gave an overview of the week’s activities, highlighting the need for cautious public messaging due to local anti-gender activism.

Discussions also touched upon the composition of the bicameral legislative body: in the Senate, only one member from the opposition serves among 24 senators; Rep. Risa Hontiveros, who also chairs PLCPD, while in the House, although 27% of legislators are women, dynastic politics often dilute the effective representation of women’s interests.

10:00 to 12:00 / Setting the scene

Novotel Araneta City, Manila

3rd floor, Gauguin Room

Participants and delegates were introduced to major stakeholders in the Philippines.

NGOs/INGOs

- *Community and Family Services International*
- *Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights*
- *Filipino Freethinkers/Philippine Safe Abortion Network*
- *Family Planning 2030*
- *Likhaan Center for Women's Health*
- *Médecins du Monde*

NGAs

- *Commission on Population and Development*
- *Philippine Commission on Women*

Development partner & Embassy

- *UNFPA Philippines*
- *Delegation of the EU to the Philippines*



© 2025, PLCPD

This meeting aimed to introduce the main actors active in the Philippine SRHR landscape, providing delegates with a broad yet significant overview of the national situation, from multiple perspectives. Delegates were encouraged to leverage the diverse national and international insights to support progressive reforms, enhance legislative processes, and translate policy into effective on-the-ground improvements in SRHR services across the Philippines.

Key Points:

1. Demographic Trends:
 - The country has experienced a significant decline in its Total Fertility Rate (TFR), dropping from 5.2 in 1973 to 1.9 in 2022, although disparities remain, particularly in lower-income and less-educated groups.
 - Urban areas, especially Metro Manila, have seen sharper declines, while regions like BARMM still exhibit relatively high fertility rates (TFR of 3.6).
 - The national population continues to grow, albeit at a slower pace, with projections indicating an ageing population by 2030.
2. Family Planning and Contraceptive Use:
 - Modern contraceptive use among married women has increased significantly (from 25% in 1993 to 42% in 2022), though unmet needs persist particularly among unmarried women (42% unmet need).
 - While some FP services are provided free of charge, significant out-of-pocket costs still pose a barrier for many.
3. Adolescent Fertility and Teenage Pregnancies:
 - There is a decreasing trend in teenage pregnancies among older adolescents (15-19 years old), with increasing numbers of live births among very young adolescents.
 - Repeat pregnancies among older adolescents further underscore the ongoing challenges in addressing early childbearing.
4. Legislative Challenges:
 - The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill, pending in the Senate since August 2024, is a focal point, encompassing key provisions on SRHR services, CSE, and social protection for parents and their children.
 - Conservative backlash remains strong, with groups like “Project Dalisay”, stoking opposition to progressive reforms, particularly on CSE.
5. Policy and Programme Environment:
 - The Philippines has several key laws and executive orders in place to support SRHR (e.g. RPRH Act of 2012, Magna Carta of Women, and policies on FP), yet implementation gaps persist, especially at the local government level.
 - Existing CPD-initiated programmes aim to improve adolescent health and reproductive rights, but challenges remain in ensuring consistent, on-the-ground delivery of services.
6. Role of Civil Society and International Advocacy:
 - NGOs, INGOs, and development partners (UNFPA and the EU Delegation) are active in advocating for SRHR, yet they face significant challenges from conservative forces and political resistance.

Foreign MPs play a crucial role in strengthening local efforts, challenging anti-gender narratives, and advocating for best practices that translate legislative progress into concrete improvements in SRHR services

14:00 to 16:30 / Visit to the House of Representatives
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

The delegation was officially acknowledged on the House floor. A photo opportunity took place with the House Speaker.



Official recognition of visiting EPF delegation in the House of representatives © 2025, EPF



© 2025, House of Representatives

Delegates then met with key legislators, including Rep. Jude Acidre (Deputy Majority Leader), Rep. Arlene Brosas of the Gabriela Women’s Party, Rep. France Castro of the ACT Teachers Party List, and Rep. Raoul Manuel of the Kabataan (Youth) Party List to discuss the Pregnancy Prevention Bill, currently under review in the Senate but which was approved by the House of Representatives a year earlier. Despite differing views on social issues such as divorce, the discussions underscored the shared commitment to addressing unmet SRHR needs through bipartisan cooperation, proper implementation, and sufficient budgeting.



© 2025, EPF

Rep. Raoul Manuel detailed the main provisions of the adolescent pregnancy bill, while Rep. Acidre remarked on the youthful nature of the parliament, suggesting a promising capacity for progressive reform. Further debates included the importance of CSE in empowering children against fearmongering, and the role of divorce in enhancing women's rights. The session also highlighted the necessity of coordination between the Senate and the House to ensure legislative success, as well as the challenges posed by traditional gender roles and limited budget allocations for gender equality initiatives.

By the end of Day 1, participants gained an overview of the legislative environment, main SRHR players (CSOs, government agencies, donors), and the socio-political barriers to implementing progressive reproductive health measures.

Day 2 (January 28, 2025)

**EPF article: [EPF Delegation Meets with Youth and Progressive Philippine Senator | EPF](#)
9:30 to 12:00 / Site Visit: Community and Family Services International
Pasay City, Metro Manila**



© 2025, PLCPD

In the morning, the delegation visited the Community and Family Services International (CFSI) sub-office in Pasay City, where they were welcomed by Project Coordinator Genesis Faderogao and representatives from CFSI. The visit aimed to showcase adolescent-friendly SRHR services.



© 2025, EPF

A community walk through Barangays (Villages) 90, 91, and 92 provided delegates with first-hand exposure to the realities of young people's SRHR needs. Youth community volunteers guided the delegation through their neighbourhood, sharing their lived experiences and the impact of CFSI's work. The walk included stops at a public mural, which reflected local youth perspectives on SRHR, and market spaces, where informal discussions often take place. The walk ended at a local SRH clinic, where free services are provided to adolescents. Throughout the visit, young people spoke about how CFSI has supported them, how they became volunteers, and the outreach work they now do to support their peers. They also shared testimonies about the stigma they face when accessing family planning, the shortage of no-cost contraceptives, and legal hurdles that prevent minors from receiving contraceptives without parental consent.



© 2025, PLCPD

The site visit concluded with a dialogue at the *Youth Activity Center*, where representatives from key health and education organisations provided insights into existing adolescent health programs:

- Dr. Annabelle C. Sucuano, SRHR Program Lead, from Médecins du Monde discussed their work in expanding access to reproductive health services.
- Dr. Rechel Reyes, Representative from the Department of Education Division of Pasay, presented the adolescent SRHR programs implemented in schools and communities.

- Dr. Vlademire Domingo, Adolescent Health Coordinator at the City Health Office / Adolescent Health and Development Council – Pasay City, outlined current initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access for young people, including the enactment of a city ordinance on ASRH with corresponding funding, which is a result of the efforts of young people of Pasay City.

**14:00 to 16:00 / Dialogue with Senate Champions
Pasay City, Metro Manila**



© 2025, EPF

In the afternoon, delegates were welcomed at the Senate where they observed a short hearing where UNFPA presented data on adolescent birth rates and the necessity of cross-sector approaches to reduce teen pregnancies.

The delegation then met with Senator Risa Hontiveros, one of the most progressive voices in the Philippine Senate and a strong advocate for human rights and gender equality. Senator Hontiveros is committed to advancing key legislative measures, including the CSE bill and policies addressing adolescent pregnancy. The discussion touched on the opposition and challenges faced in pushing forward SRHR legislation in a highly polarised political environment.

The day provided a deeper understanding of the political and social landscape surrounding SRHR in the Philippines, reinforcing the importance of strategic advocacy, cultural sensitivity, and sustained engagement in policymaking - particularly in ensuring that young people have access to essential information and services.



EPF Delegates and Sen. Hontiveros © 2025, EPF

Day 3 (January 29, 2025)

EPF article: [EPF Delegation Visits HIV Clinic in the Philippines | EPF](#)

Focus: accessibility of SRH and related services for underrepresented groups

13:00 to 15:00 / Dialogue with grassroots organisations (under Chatham House Rules)

Novotel Araneta City, Manila

3rd floor, Gauguin Room

Sex workers and delegates engaged in a roundtable discussion that provided an insightful overview of the challenges and practices within the sex work sector in the Philippines. Eva, serving as spokesperson, facilitated dialogue with representatives from Voices for Sexual Rights, the Philippine Sex Workers Collective, and other key figures.

The conversation addressed the diverse nature of sex work, highlighting the necessity for improved access to health services, security, and supportive infrastructure, including dedicated clinics offering HIV testing and treatment. Participants noted several challenges, including police harassment, societal stigma, funding shortages, limited legal recognition, and the conflation of sex work with trafficking issues. The discussion also underscored the intersection of HIV prevention, violence, and criminalisation, stressing the urgency of legal protections through the pending SOGIESC Equality Bill and ongoing decriminalisation efforts. Conservative narratives often equate sex work with trafficking, neglecting the nuance that many sex workers seek safer working conditions rather than forced “rescues” that jeopardise their livelihoods. The presence of foreign MPs was recognised as an opportunity to integrate an international human rights perspective, which could contribute to ensuring that policies and programmes respect the rights, dignity, and safety of sex workers.

16:00 to 17:30 / Site visit: Klinika Bernardo

Quezon City, Metro Manila

In the afternoon, EPF delegates visited Klinika Bernardo, a “sundown clinic” in Quezon City. The clinic provides free and confidential HIV counselling, testing, and treatment and operates at night to ensure accessibility for those who may not be able to seek services during the day. Alongside medical care, the clinic also offers sex education, particularly on STI prevention and safer practices, helping to fill gaps in comprehensive sexuality education. Clinic staff shared their experiences of engaging with communities, addressing stigma, and the importance of creating a safe space where people feel comfortable seeking support. They also noted a rise in reported HIV cases but pointed out that this increase may be partly due to improved testing and diagnosis, as well as easing of restrictions to counselling and testing for minors¹, rather than an actual surge in new infections. The delegation also exchanged insights on different national approaches to sexual health education, comparing models in their own countries with the Philippines’ approach.

¹ A recently enacted law now allows mature minors (15-17 years old) to have access to HIV counselling and testing without the written parental consent requirement. [PG-15: Parental Consent Not Required - LoveYourself Inc.](#)

Discussions touched on the role of local government support, funding challenges, and best practices for improving outreach and awareness efforts.



© 2025, PLCPD

Day 4 (January 30, 2025)

[EPF Delegation Explores Maternal Health in the Philippines | EPF](#)

**9:30 to 11:30 / Site Visit: Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital
City of Manila**

Focus: Maternal Health and Family Planning

The delegation visited Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital, a renowned facility specialising in maternal and newborn care. The maternity ward had recently been moved, showcasing significant improvement from previous conditions, where new mothers were up to 8 sharing the same bed.

The tour included an in-depth look at the maternity wards, neonatal units, and family planning services, allowing delegates to speak



directly with both healthcare providers and mothers. A particular highlight was the Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) ward, where premature and low-birth-weight babies receive continuous skin-to-skin contact with parents. This practice facilitates better temperature regulation, breastfeeding, and overall bonding, significantly improving health outcomes for vulnerable newborns.



© 2025, PLCPD

The hospital also offers consultation dedicated to young adolescents offering counselling and a whole range of free contraception methods, including natural contraception methods, as modern contraception requires parental consent.

During the visit, delegates also learned about the hospital's dedicated ward for cases officially classified as spontaneous abortions. Hospital staff, mindful of the strict legal context, did not discuss induced abortions, an issue that remains highly sensitive given that abortion is illegal in the Philippines. Although the subject was addressed in a non-confrontational manner, it underscored the broader challenges of providing comprehensive reproductive healthcare within restrictive legal frameworks. Overall, the visit reinforced the importance of ensuring access to high-quality maternal health services and enacting policies that prioritise safe pregnancies and childbirth.

14:00 to 16:00 / Feedback session and press briefing preparation

Novotel Araneta City, Manila

3rd floor, Gauguin Room

On the fourth day, delegates convened for a debriefing to clarify outstanding questions and reflect on the Philippines' legislative and implementation challenges. One recurring theme was the gap between protective laws covering issues such as child abuse, trafficking, and violence, and their actual enforcement. While formal mechanisms exist (for instance Republic Act 7610 or special protection against child abuse and anti-trafficking laws), narrow definitions and limited accountability weaken their impact, especially in family settings. Participants also discussed child abuse by priests, sex tourism, and adolescent pregnancy prevention, noting the powerful influence of the Catholic Church, as well as a lack of dedicated children's ombudsman structures.

Questions arose about the absence of robust checks on institutions tasked with implementing laws. Civil society organisations (CSOs) often fill this gap but cannot directly propose new legislation. Meanwhile, topics like abortion remain taboo for legislators, rendering serious policy debate politically risky.

Delegates expressed highly positive feedback on the study tour, describing it as an energising and motivating experience that reinforced their commitment to advancing SRHR. Many noted that the program provided valuable insights and strengthened their resolve to push for greater action in their own countries. Some participants suggested minor adjustments to enhance future study tours, such as increasing opportunities for direct engagement with local stakeholders, diversifying visit locations beyond urban centers, and ensuring earlier distribution of participant lists. Additionally, they reflected that it would have been beneficial if participants had prepared a brief introduction on their work and the state of SRHR in their own countries, facilitating more meaningful exchanges throughout the tour.

18:30 / Solidarity Dinner
Novotel Araneta City, Manila
“Versailles tent”, 7th Floor

Hosted by PLCPD, this dinner brought together civil society organisations, development partners, and national representatives from Canada and the United Kingdom. In addition to expressing gratitude for the week’s collaborative efforts, the gathering facilitated valuable networking. Attendees shared reflections on the study tour’s key insights and explored possibilities for sustained engagement on SRHR, including future joint initiatives and expanded donor partnerships.



© 2025, PLCPD

Day 5 (January 31, 2025)

EPF article: [Study Tour in The Philippines Concludes with Press Conference | EPF](#)
Press Briefing and Wrap-Up

EPF delegates concluded the week with a joint press event with PLCPD, UNFPA, and Forum for Family Planning and Development.



© 2025, PLCPD

Speaking at the briefing were Rom Dongeto (PLCPD), Juan Antonio Perez (Forum for Family Planning and Development), Dr. Charl Andrew Bautista (UNFPA Philippines) Joanna Scheuring-Wielgus, MEP (Poland) Guillaume Gouffier-Valente, MP (France) and Baroness Liz Sugg (United Kingdom), and moderated by Aurora Quilala (PLCPD). They shared insights from their respective countries, discussed the importance of CSE in preventing teen pregnancy, and addressed the wider challenges of misinformation and opposition to reproductive health policies.

Media in attendance:

- [Signal TV on One News](#)
- [UNTV Network](#)
- [Rappler](#)
- [Philippines News Agency](#)
- [Women Writing Women](#)
- [ABS-CBN](#)
- [GMA News](#)

Key Takeaways:

- MPs highlighted their experiences with CSE, reinforcing its proven impact in reducing teen pregnancy and countering misinformation.
- UNFPA and FFPD stressed that adolescent pregnancy is a national emergency, with an increase in pregnancies among 10- to 14-year-olds, despite legal reforms, drawing attention to pregnancies among 10-to-14-year-olds resulting from sexual violence.
- Delegates emphasised shared global challenges, particularly opposition to CSE, and called for stronger implementation of laws to protect young people.

The briefing concluded with a call for urgent policy action to ensure better protection, education, and health services for young people.

Coverage:

- ✓ [If not through sexuality education, then how to curb teen pregnancy, group asks | GMA News Online](#)
- ✓ [One PH / EU parliament, iginiit ang kahalagahan ng sex ed kontra teenage pregnancy](#)

KEY FINDINGS ON SRHR POLICY AND THE GLOBAL SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Legislative Framework and Policy Gaps

The RPRH Law of 2012 was a major milestone in institutionalising maternal health care, modern FP, and partial CSE. Despite this progress, implementation remains uneven across regions due to varied levels of local support and resources, as indicated by the 2022 NDHS².

Currently, the critical Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill is under review. In addition to expanding direct SRH services and social protection for teenage mothers, the proposed legislation includes provisions for CSE, seeking to provide age-appropriate information. Conservatives, religious and anti-choice movements³, however, argue that it undermines parental authority and promotes early sexual initiation. Hon. Guillaume Gouffier Valente drew parallels between these debates and similar conservative rhetoric recently reported in France⁴, underscoring that the pushback against CSE in the Philippines mirrors challenges observed in different parts of the world, following influences and methods that have been found to originate from faith-based and conservative organisations including Family Watch International⁵, the International Institute for Research and Evaluation⁶, Stop CSE⁷, Protect Child Health Coalition⁸, and Safe Schools Alliance⁹ (UK-based), among others¹⁰.

Beyond this, further legislative gaps persist. The SOGIESC Equality Bill remains stalled, allowing gender-based discrimination and hate crimes to go underreported. The Divorce Bill continues to face resistance in the Senate, limiting recourse for women in abusive marriages. Abortion, fully criminalised, cannot be formally debated, despite unsafe procedures contributing to maternal mortality.

² Philippine National Demographic and Health Survey. [Philippines DHS 2022 - Final Report \[FR381\]](#)

³ Notably the Project Dalisay, an initiative of the National Coalition for the Family and the Constitution – see recent news: [LIST: Project Dalisay's out-of-context claims vs anti-teen pregnancy bill, CSE](#) and event held during EPF visit: [Project Dalisay - Still unsure of where you stand on the... | Facebook](#)

⁴ [Education à la sexualité à l'école : offensive conservatrice contre le premier projet de programme](#)

⁵ [Standing for the Family Worldwide | Family Watch®](#) Family Watch is an american anti LGBTQ hate group, with significant international outreach: [Family Watch International](#)

⁶ [About - Institute for Research & Evaluation](#) – cited for their evaluation of CSE programmes: [Program Evaluation - Institute for Research & Evaluation](#)

⁷ [StopCSE.org | About](#)

⁸ [About Us | Protect Child Health Coalition](#)

⁹ [Homepage - Safe Schools Alliance UK](#)

¹⁰ On antichoice fundings, see: [Tip of the Iceberg: Religious Extremist Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe | EPF](#)

Maternal and Reproductive Health Trends

As of 2022, the total fertility rate dropped to 1.9. Socioeconomic and regional disparities remain wide, with TFR in BARMM at 3.6. The Maternal mortality rate rose from 1,458 in 2019 to 2,478 in 2021, partially due to pandemic-related disruptions in antenatal care, while an estimated 14% of pregnant women do not have regular antenatal visits.

With regards to adolescent pregnancies, the proportion of teenage pregnancies among 15–19-year-olds declined to 5% (NDHS 2022). However, the incidence of births among very young adolescents (under 15) has increased. Approximately 11,479 live births to girls aged 15 or below were recorded in 2023. This is in part a consequence of socioeconomic vulnerabilities, lack of parental consent for minor-friendly FP services, and patchy CSE implementation.

Family Planning and Contraception

The Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate among married women in the Philippines rose from 40% in 2017 to 42% in 2022. However, unmarried women continue to face a 42% unmet need for contraception, highlighting persistent barriers to access. One of the key challenges lies in the country's decentralised system, where Local government units are tasked with funding and prioritising family planning services.

This autonomy has led to uneven resource allocation, with some municipalities, influenced by religious or political factors, failing to adequately support FP programmes. This situation underscores the need for improved coordination and national-level leadership to ensure consistent access to family planning services across the country.

HIV and AIDS and Vulnerable Populations¹¹

Between 2010 and 2022, new HIV infections in the Philippines rose by over 400%, increasing the estimated number of people living with HIV to around 164,000. These figures should, however, be interpreted with caution, as improved testing may also partly explain the rise, as noted by staff at Klinika Bernardo on Day 3.

People who inject drugs are more significantly affected, with HIV prevalence among this group reaching 29%, compared to 5% among men who have sex with men (MSM) in specific urban centres. Adolescent infections are also rising, contributing to the broader trend.

Factors such as low condom use particularly in non-commercial sexual relations, persistent stigma related to sexual orientation and drug use, and rising rates of intravenous drug use in urban hubs have all played a role in the growing epidemic.

Community-based organisations such as [LoveYourself](#) have launched testing campaigns and provided crucial outreach, but their efforts highlight the urgent need for broader policy support,

¹¹ Source: [Philippines | HIV/AIDS Data Hub for the Asia-Pacific Region](#) (public access) and [Philippines - HIV data - March 2024 \(AP Datahub\) \(1\).pdf](#) (limited access)

including initiatives that ensure consistent access to HIV services for minors and further strengthening harm reduction strategies for drug users. However, those efforts may be severely impacted by the shift in US policy¹² regarding development aid¹³, considering that since 2020 “USAID, through PEPFAR, has contributed to more than Php2 billion (\$34.7 million) to support the Philippines’ HIV response”¹⁴.

Funding Landscape

As previously discussed, international donors play a pivotal role in shaping the Philippine SRHR landscape. The EU Delegation to the Philippines manages a total of €4 million for local CSOs, with roughly €1 million allocated to SRHR-focused initiatives. Canada’s engagement includes a CAD 17.9 million Sexual Health and Empowerment programme in remote regions, which, according to clarification by Senator McPhedran, is part of US\$24.86 million for CSE and SRH services (implemented by Oxfam Canada, Inter Pares, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, and UNFPA) More broadly, total ODA contributions (not solely for health and SRHR) from the United Kingdom, France, Canada, and Italy are estimated at US\$26 million, US\$25 million, US\$24.8 million, and US\$8.6 million respectively.

Meanwhile, UNFPA calculates that closing the unmet FP gap in the Philippines would cost around US\$483 million by 2030, potentially yielding US\$8.7 billion in economic gains by mid-century. Given the country’s vulnerability to natural disasters, humanitarian assistance remains essential for maintaining SRH services, including the distribution of dignity kits and the continuation of maternal healthcare in emergency settings.

Persistent Barriers

Social conservatism and widespread misinformation continue to impede the adoption of CSE and progressive FP programmes, as anti-gender campaigns effectively mobilise public sentiment. Moreover, while decentralisation can bolster local autonomy, it also fragments service delivery if local officials choose not to fund SRHR initiatives.

The criminalisation of abortion, restrictions on distributing contraception to minors further curtail universal access to healthcare. This is exacerbated by the non-implementation of CSE under RH Law, which the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill seeks to strengthen.

Finally, despite some gains, resource deficits in rural and conflict-affected areas, particularly in BARMM, leave many without integrated FP, maternal care, and youth-friendly services. Moreover, the uncertain future of certain US-funded programmes, including constraints on or dismantling of USAID’s SRHR initiatives, adds further instability to funding streams; local NGOs have already reported concerns about sustaining key services in the face of shifting international priorities.

¹² See [Early impacts of the PEPFAR stop-work order: a rapid assessment - Lankiewicz - 2025 - Journal of the International AIDS Society - Wiley Online Library](#)

¹³ [LoveYourself, Inc. | STATEMENT ON THE STOP WORK ORDER At LoveYourself, we want to reassure everyone that our essential services—HIV testing and... | Instagram](#)

¹⁴ [United States, AC Health Launch Partnership to Expand HIV Services in the Philippines - U.S. Embassy in the Philippines](#)

SUGGESTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Legislative Advocacy in Donor Parliaments

1. **Champion Increased SRHR Funding**

- Encourage parliamentary committees responsible for development cooperation to allocate or expand official development assistance (ODA) budgets specifically for adolescent health, family planning, and maternal services in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) such as the Philippines.
- Secure **multi-year funding commitments** for SRHR, particularly for comprehensive sexuality education programs, adolescent-friendly health initiatives, and post-partum FP.
- Secure **stable or increased commitments**, as the anticipated defunding of UNFPA will severely impact countries like the Philippines. The US is currently the largest donor overall to UNFPA and its largest humanitarian donor (US\$230 million in 2024, of which 200 million dedicated to humanitarian aid¹⁵).
- Table parliamentary questions:
 - ✓ What measures does the Government employ, in its international development strategies, to counter anti-gender misinformation campaigns targeting comprehensive sexuality education and family planning?
 - ✓ What actions is the Government taking to ensure that our bilateral and multilateral health aid remains conditionality-free, particularly regarding SRHR programmes, and how will it collaborate with other donor nations to maintain consistent funding flows to key agencies such as UNFPA and WHO?
 - ✓ How does the Government assess the effectiveness of donor-funded SRHR initiatives in the Philippines, and are there mechanisms for civil society and community-based groups to feed back on the impact or challenges of these programmes?

2. **Monitor Global Gag Rule/Conditionality Policies**

- Advocate for policy frameworks that preserve and expand SRHR aid irrespective of changes in US administration policies.
- Coordinate with fellow donor countries to maintain **predictable funding** flows to UNFPA, WHO, and local NGOs focusing on reproductive and sexual health in the Philippines.

Strengthening Collaboration with Philippine Stakeholders

1. **Support Civil Society and Grassroots:**

- Provide direct grants to grassroots organisations that deliver SRH services, especially among marginalised groups.
- Expand capacity-building for youth-led SRHR advocacy, focusing on social media campaigns to counter misinformation about CSE and adolescent pregnancy prevention.

2. **Inclusive, Intersectional Approaches:**

- Encourage synergy between HIV programs and maternal health services to reduce duplication and stigma.

¹⁵ [Trump's anticipated UNFPA defunding will harm millions - The Lancet](#)

- Support programmes on the intersection of mental health, intimate partner violence, and SRHR, especially for adolescent mothers and survivors of gender-based violence.

Advocacy for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (in donor-country)

1. Evidence-Based Best Practices:

- Disseminate data within donor-country parliaments that show how well-designed, age-appropriate CSE reduces teenage pregnancies, lowers STI/HIV rates, and improves gender equality outcomes.

2. Addressing Misinformation:

- Disseminate user-friendly materials clarifying what CSE entails, dispelling myths about “promoting promiscuity,” and highlighting protective benefits.
- Engage Catholic and other religious leaders where possible through dialogues about moral and ethical imperatives to safeguard youth health.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this five-day Study Tour, the EPF delegation observed both impressive strides and significant obstacles in the Philippines’ SRHR landscape. The RPRH Law, a hallmark of legislative triumph in 2012, has driven improvements in modern contraceptive prevalence and adolescent fertility trends. Yet rising maternal mortality, high unmet need among unmarried women, stubbornly high adolescent birth rates among very young girls, and a rapidly growing HIV epidemic underscore persistent gap. Moreover, active opposition threatens to erode the hard-won gains of SRHR advocates.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Momentum:** The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and CSE legal provisions are near-critical junctures, requiring strong cross-party support to overcome entrenched opposition.
2. **Local Government Role:** A decentralised governance structure demands robust local advocacy, capacity-building, and resource allocation.
3. **Donor Collaboration:** Targeted development aid and international parliamentary alliances can tip the balance toward progressive policies, especially by mitigating funding unpredictability and sharing legislative best practices.
4. **Integrated Approaches:** Strengthening SRHR alongside efforts to prevent gender-based violence, tackle HIV, support mental health, and expand social protection leads to more sustainable and effective outcomes, particularly for vulnerable youth and marginalised communities.

Prepared by the European Parliamentary Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Rights (EPF) and the Philippine Legislators’ Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), based on discussions and activities conducted from January 27–31, 2025.