



EMBARGOED TILL 1400 ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 29TH

PHILIPPINES: Teenage pregnancy will rob 300,000 girls of their childhoods in 2019

Steady economic growth over twenty years has not translated into improvements in childhood indicators, says Save the Children

MANILA, May 29 – Teenage pregnancy in the Philippines affects 5.99 percent of girls aged 15-19 years, the second highest rate in Southeast Asia after Laos (6.33 percent). This means this year alone, an estimated 300,000 girls aged 15-19 will either give birth or have already done so.¹

Malnutrition among children is also a critical public health concern in the Philippines with 33.4 percent – or 3.8m – children under five years not getting enough daily nutrition.²

Infant mortality is high too, with nearly three percent – or 322,000 – of children in the country dying before their fifth birthday from preventable causes.³ These factors are preventing many Filipino children, especially the most vulnerable, from getting the best possible start in life.

Save the Children's annual *Global Childhood Report 2019*, examines how key factors are robbing children of their childhoods around the world. The report evaluates 176 countries based on children's access to healthcare, education, nutrition and protection from harmful practices like child labour and child marriage. The report also ranks all 176 countries based on how they perform on key childhood indicators and this year the Philippines ranks 102nd. Over the past twenty years the country has only moved 37 points, from 763 to 800 (top score is 1,000). The Philippines moved up two notches from 104th place in 2018, but did not recover from being 96th two years ago despite the steady economic growth. This year, the Philippines lags behind other Asian neighbors such as Singapore in first position, China (36) Brunei Darussalam (63), Malaysia (71), Thailand (86) and Vietnam (95).

Alberto Muyot, Save the Children Philippines CEO, said:

"Pregnant teens and their children are at a higher risk of exploitation, ill-health and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Existing laws make matters worse, for example the age of consent is just 12 years old. Save the Children is calling for the age of consent to be raised to 16. Yet another law makes prohibits minors from accessing contraception without parental consent."

"Malnutrition among children has life-long and devastating consequences on their cognitive and intellectual capacities. It's a silent killer among children below five years old and we must do all we can to ensure children grow up healthy, happy and protected. We must reach every last child, especially the most vulnerable, with access to basic healthcare that ensures they survive and thrive."

¹ Based on official [data](#) projection for 2019, there are 4,942,000 girls aged 15-19 years.

² Based on official [data](#) projection for 2019, there are 11,456,000 children aged 0-59 months.

³ See point 2 above.

Last year Save the Children Philippines advocated for the passing of the Republic Act 11148, known as the Kalusugan ng Magnanay Act, to strengthen the government's integrated strategy for maternal and child health and nutrition in the first 1,000 days of a child's life.

Mr Muyot continued:

"The steady economic growth of the Philippines over twenty years has unfortunately not translated into the lives of many Filipino children. We must invest more on children to ensure they grow up healthy, educated and protected."

Our report finds that the Philippines has made some progress on access to education, increasing school enrollment by 45 percent over the past 20 years. In 2008, the percentage of out of school youth is at 11.7 per cent, dropping to 5.3 per cent in 2017. But still, 3.8 million children and young people remain out of school, according to official data from 2017.

Singapore tops the rankings as the country that best protects and provides for its children, with eight Western European countries and South Korea also ranking in the top 10. The most dramatic progress was among some of the world's poorest countries, with Sierra Leone making the biggest improvements since 2000, followed by Rwanda, Ethiopia and Niger. The Central African Republic ranks last, with Niger – despite recent progress - and Chad rounding out the bottom three countries where childhoods are most threatened

Launched ahead of International Children's Day on June 1st, Save the Children's *Global Childhood Report* includes the annual *End of Childhood Index*, which finds that circumstances for children have improved in 173 out of 176 countries since 2000. This means today there are:

- 4.4 million fewer child deaths per year
- 49 million fewer stunted children
- 130 million more children in school
- 94 million fewer child laborers
- 11 million fewer girls forced into marriage or married early
- 3 million fewer teen births per year
- 12,000 fewer child homicides per year

Of the eight 'childhood enders' examined in the report, displacement due to conflict is the only one on the rise, with 30.5 million more forcibly displaced people now than there were in 2000, an 80 percent increase.

(END)

SAVE THE CHILDREN PHILIPPINES ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Website: www.savethechildren.org | Facebook: [SaveTheChildrenPH](#)

Instagram: [savethechildrenph](#) | Twitter: [SaveChildrenPH](#)

MEDIA CONTACT:

Lei Tapang | Campaign and Media Coordinator | **Save the Children**

3/F Midland Bldg., 1040 EDSA Magallanes, Makati City 1232, Philippines

Tel. No: +63 (2) 853 2142 ext. 141 | Mobile No: +63 917 8733448

Lei.Tapang@savethechildren.org

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- Save the Children implements maternal and child health and nutrition services for children and pregnant and lactating mothers in deprived areas in the capital Manila and conflict-affected areas in Mindanao to address malnutrition.
- Save the Children Philippines implements the Heart to HEART program (Healthy, Empowered, Responsible Teen) that fosters open communication between parents and their 10-14-year-old children to learn about puberty, reproductive health and sexually transmitted infections.
- Save the Children provides education to children in the most hard to reach areas and those missing out on schools due to poverty, natural calamities and armed conflict. Save the Children's Literacy Boost program has reached 31,560 girls and 33,080 boys in the Philippines in 2018 alone. The program is a play-based activity to develop children's literacy skills and habits, implemented in seven cities and provinces.
- Today, nearly 31 million children have been forcibly displaced from their homes. Millions more – an estimated 420 million children in total – are living in conflict zones, more than double the number in 1995. Conflict-affected countries have the highest child mortality rates, a disproportionate number of the world's stunted children and a rising share of out-of-school children globally. Rates of child marriage and child labor are also increasing in many of these contexts (e.g., Syria, Yemen). For more, see pages 35-39 in Save the Children's *Global Childhood Report*.