

# Philippines

## GEOGRAPHY

The Republic of the Philippines is a nation of more than 7,000 islands situated north of Indonesia and southeast of mainland Asia. About 1,000 islands are inhabited and most are mountainous. The hot, humid climate supports lush vegetation. The wettest season is from June to November and typhoons are common during this time. Several cause serious damage each year.

## PEOPLE

The population of 93.6 million is growing rapidly. More than nine million people live in the capital Manila, on the island of Luzon. The national language is Filipino (based on Tagalog), though various indigenous groups speak other languages. English is widely used. Most Filipinos are Christians (predominantly Roman Catholic, with a Protestant minority). There is a small number of Muslims, who mostly live on the southern island of Mindanao.

## HISTORY

Philippine history is characterised by waves of migration. A Spanish expedition led by Magellan arrived in 1521 and claimed the territory for Spain. The islands were named in honour of Felipe (Philip), King of Spain.

Generations of Filipinos opposed Spanish rule, ultimately cooperating with the Americans in the Spanish/American War. In 1898, a defeated Spain handed control of the Philippines to the Americans. During World War II, the islands were occupied by the Japanese. After liberation, the Republic of the Philippines was proclaimed in 1946.



Map courtesy of The General Libraries  
The University of Texas at Austin.



Through child sponsorship, many Filipino children are gaining improved access to essential healthcare and educational opportunities.

In 1986, President Ferdinand Marcos' 21-year rule was overthrown by massive "people power" protests that grew following the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino. Aquino's wife Corazon, who led the "people power" revolution, subsequently became president and served in that role until 1992. In 2010, Corazon's son Benigno Jr was elected as the new Philippines President, ending the nine-year rule of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

## ECONOMY

Economic growth has averaged 4.5 percent since 2001, and despite the global financial crisis, the Philippines' GDP grew nearly seven percent in 2010. However, it will take a sustained growth path to significantly reduce poverty levels, given the Philippines' high annual population growth rate and unequal distribution of income. It also has a large national debt.

Agriculture is still the mainstay of the economy and employs nearly half of the workforce, although most farmers do not own their land. Tenant farmers struggle, since half of their

crop may be paid to the landlord in rent. They need access to credit, storage and seeds, as well as the chance to own land. Effective land reform is resisted by some wealthy land-owning families.

Main crops include rice and maize (for domestic consumption), sugar, coconut, bananas, pineapples, hemp, coffee and tobacco. More than half of the food produced is exported. Fishing and forestry are also important. However, the felling of rainforests, the use of dynamite to “catch” fish and the craze for prawn-farming have all damaged the environment as well as poor people’s livelihoods.

In the countryside, many people can only find seasonal work. Manufacturing, concentrated in the capital city of Manila and southern Luzon, earns one-quarter of the nation’s income.

Filipinos working abroad send home significant amounts of money. Concerns remain about the link between tourism and prostitution, and about exploitative working conditions in some factories and export processing zones.

### LIVING CONDITIONS

The Filipino staple diet consists of rice, with fish the main source of protein. However, incomes have not matched increased food prices, and so many families do not get an adequately balanced diet.

Although many Filipinos still live in rural areas, urban centres are growing rapidly. There is an acute shortage of adequate housing. Many people live in flimsy houses built of planks and tin sheeting, in slums which lack safe water, drainage and waste disposal.

In the countryside, many people do not have reliable access to clean water, while 21 percent of all Filipinos do not have access to proper sanitation, increasing the risk of disease. Since most medical services are located in towns and the poorest families cannot afford to travel for treatment, infant



Improving child nutrition is an important element of our work with families in the Philippines.

## Comparatively speaking...

CATEGORY	PHILIPPINES	AUSTRALIA
Population	93.6 million	21.5 million
Urban population	48.6%	89.1 %
GNI per capita (US\$PPP)	\$4,002	\$38,692
Population with an improved water source	91%	100%
Adult literacy rate	93.6%	99%
Population living on less than US\$1.25 (PPP) a day	22.6%	0%
Under-5 mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 live births)	32	6
Life expectancy at birth	72.3 years	81.9 years

Source: Human Development Report 2010  
United Nations Development Programme

mortality rates in remote areas are double the national average. Health problems include pneumonia, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, measles and malnutrition. Most women still give birth at home, half of them relying on help from traditional birth attendants. The government offers free immunisation of young children, but parents need also to learn about health and hygiene.

### EDUCATION

Education is highly valued, and is legally free and compulsory. School enrolment rates for both boys and girls are high compared to many Asian countries, however, schools in poor areas tend to have fewer teachers and facilities. Many children are not in the appropriate grade for their age. Only about two-thirds of students successfully complete primary school. Most adult Filipinos are able to read and write. Many are eager to take part in community initiatives which can offer a better future for their children.

### WORLD VISION AUSTRALIA IN THE PHILIPPINES

- assists sponsored children and their families with needs such as education, safe water and healthcare;
- empowers communities to identify their skills, increase incomes, care for the environment and access government services;
- provides emergency relief and rehabilitation for people displaced or harmed by typhoons, earthquakes or volcanic eruptions;
- encourages both children and adults to develop a vision, take part in decision-making and to share their learning with others;
- encourages other Filipinos to support World Vision projects through local sponsorship.

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