

EDITORIAL BOARD
Mercedes B. Concepcion
Peter D. Garrucho
Alejandro N. Herrin
Ernesto M. Pernia
Ma. Socorro Camacho Reyes

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Virgilio F. Lacaba

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Cynthia Alberto Diaz

GRAPHIC ARTIST
Dario B. Noche

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Roderick Toledo
Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Wilma V. Lacaba
Raymond Lim Toledo

WRITERS
Perla Aragon-Choudhury
Bernard Supetran
Roberto C. Navarro
Haydee U. Parras

PROJECT ASSISTANTS
Jocelyn Ladisla
Frederico Salvania



News
& Features
Service
for the
Mass Media

*Email: vflacaba@yahoo.com
Tel. (02)6350247 Fax: (02)6319765
PDMS-8 / 2004
ISSUE EDITOR: Cynthia Alberto Diaz*

CONTENTS

PDMS-8/2004

Release Date: June 22, 2004

What if the Philippines had been like Thailand?

by Perla Aragon-Choudhury

How the Philippine economy could have done if population had not grown so fast.

Step on the brakes! Now!

by Cynthia Alberto Diaz

Population momentum will continue to sustain population growth for many years more.

COMPLEX POPULATION ISSUE

Oscar Lopez: Collaboration is possible among gov't, private sector, civil society

by Waldo Vera-Luz

The country's huge population is dragging down development.

The saga of Paliparan

by Anthony T. Lim

Poor urban youth learn life skills through livelihood, sports, and reproductive health.

Helping parents befriend teenagers

by Pinky Aragon

Parents and their teenage children can be friends.

COMMENTARY

A time to listen

by Antonio Ortiz

Bishop Antonio Ledesma's pastoral letter provides some common ground.

/...more

EDITORIAL BOARD
Mercedes B. Concepcion
Peter D. Garrucho
Alejandro N. Herrin
Ernesto M. Pernia
Ma. Socorro Camacho Reyes

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Virgilio F. Lacaba

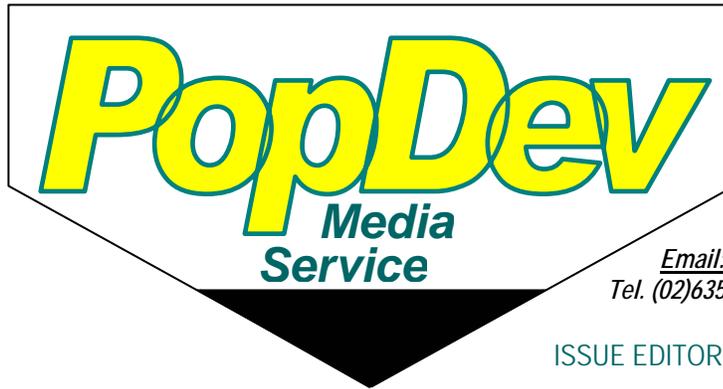
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Cynthia Alberto Diaz

GRAPHIC ARTIST
Dario B. Noche

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Roderick Toledo
Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Wilma V. Lacaba
Raymond Lim Toledo

WRITERS
Perla Aragon-Choudhury
Bernard Supetran
Roberto C. Navarro
Haydee U. Parras

PROJECT ASSISTANTS
Jocelyn Ladisla
Frederico Salvania



News
& Features
Service
for the
Mass Media

*Email: vflacaba@yahoo.com
Tel. (02)6350247 Fax: (02)6319765*

PDMS-8 / 2004

ISSUE EDITOR: Cynthia Alberto Diaz

The Philippines and Thailand had about the same population and economic levels 30 years ago; now the Philippines has a much bigger population but has fallen way behind in economic growth.

What if the Philippines had been like Thailand?

By Perla Aragon-Choudhury
PopDev Media Service

If the Philippines, like Thailand, had successfully brought down its population growth, every citizen would have had more income, and poverty would have been much reduced, as in Thailand.

Back in the 1950s, these two countries had almost the same population size. As late as 1975 they had the same figures for per capita gross domestic product (GDP), indicating the same level of economic development.

But by 2000, Thailand's per capita income had increased eight times the 1975 level while the Philippines' increased only 2.6 times.

What could have happened? One sure thing that happened within that interval was that the Philippine population had bloated to 75 million while Thailand's remained fit at 62 million. During the period the number of Filipinos continued to grow at an almost unchanged rate while Thailand's population growth fell considerably. And while Thai women now have on the average only two children (total fertility rate of 1.9), Filipino women still have three to four (total fertility rate of 3.6).

/...more

And while all these were taking place, Thailand's per capita GDP rose significantly while the Philippines proceeded with snail-paced increments. World Bank figures also show that while the number of Thais living below the poverty line had gone down to 2 percent in year 2000, still 14.6 percent of Filipinos subsist below that level, which is only US\$1 per day!

Experts speak of the foregone benefits, primarily income and rates of economic growth, that a country misses when it has a big, fast-growing population.

"The Population-Poverty Nexus: The Philippines in Comparative East Asian Context," a report prepared by Arsenio M. Balisacan and Charisse J. Tubianosa for the Asia Pacific Policy Center (APPC), with contributions from Dennis S. Mapa, Leonardo A. Lanzona and Rosemarie S. Edillon, discusses such foregone benefits for the Philippines. The pioneering study, done with the support of the Philippine Center for Population and Development (PCPD), was the subject of a recent forum sponsored by APPC and PCPD.

"Using simulations and actual data, we studied 80 developed and developing countries for the determinants of population growth and for the direct effects of population growth on economic growth, labor force participation and social services," Mapa, teaches at the University of the Philippines (UP) School of Statistics, reported.

The study showed that if the population of the Philippines had grown at the same moderate rate as Thailand's, substantial additions in per capita GDP translating to a 22 percent increase in the average income of each Filipino could have been realized by year 2000. In actual cash that would have meant a per capita GDP of US \$1,210 instead of only US\$993 for Filipinos.

The resulting reduction in poverty incidence would mean that more than one million families would not have been counted as poor that year, according to Dr. Balisacan, a fellow of APPC and its former president.

The study does not point the finger to population as the only reason for the poor economic performance of the Philippines. It also cites other factors—savings rate, openness to trade, and quality of public institutions. But population contributes significantly to economic development, and if left unchecked, it could worsen poverty.

How much would the Philippines have saved in terms of the cost of education and health services if the country had the same population growth rate as Thailand? The study estimates that some P128 billion from the education sector from 1991 to 2000 and some P52 billion from the health sector from 1996 to 2000 could have been saved.

Rural poverty makes up about $\frac{3}{4}$ of national poverty, according to the APPC study. But with slower population growth, a rise in incomes, and greater investments in the agricultural

/...more

sector from the savings in basic services, rural poverty could have decreased by about 70 percent, and national poverty by 60 percent.

“So does population growth cause poverty? I think the answer is obvious.” Balicasan said.

How then should the Philippines, which used to be one of Asia’s brightest stars, slow down population growth? The APPC report says that “the opinion is strong that governance and having moral leadership in matters of population policy is crucial to success.”

Political will, in other words. During the open forum, some of the participants called for a stronger role by local government units (LGUs) in addition to renewed leadership of the national government in setting the tone and actually executing programs for reducing population growth.

The APPC report explains that Thailand, Indonesia and Korea have a common denominator when it comes to population matters—a policy that the state does not undermine choices and that modern methods are available. It also quotes researchers urging the Philippine government “to make a strong case regarding the consequences of continued rapid population growth and the goal of moderating it as soon as possible.”

PCPD president Ma. Socorro Reyes affirmed this need for government leadership. Noting that many countries in Southeast Asia actually just look after the Philippines' population efforts in the early 1970s, she said, “We know what to do after 25 years of the population program. But Thailand has improved on what they had learned here and then added political will.” — *PopDev Media Service*

EDITORIAL BOARD
Mercedes B. Concepcion
Peter D. Garrucho
Alejandro N. Herrin
Ernesto M. Pernia
Ma. Socorro Camacho Reyes

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Virgilio F. Lacaba

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Cynthia Alberto Diaz

GRAPHIC ARTIST
Dario B. Noche

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Roderick Toledo
Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Wilma V. Lacaba
Raymond Lim Toledo

WRITERS
Perla Aragon-Choudhury
Bernard Supetran
Roberto C. Navarro
Haydee U. Parras

PROJECT ASSISTANTS
Jocelyn Ladisla
Frederico Salvania



News
& Features
Service
for the
Mass Media

Email: vflacaba@yahoo.com
Tel. (02)6350247 *Fax:* (02)6319765
PDMS-8 / 2004
ISSUE EDITOR: Cynthia Alberto Diaz

Even if everybody practices family planning now, the population will continue to grow for many years more because of momentum.

Step on the brakes! Now!

By Cynthia Alberto Diaz
PopDev Media Service

A car weighing 1.5 tons is going at the speed of 100 kilometers per hour. The driver sees a warning—"Road construction 500 meters ahead. Slow down." But the driver does not slow down; the construction site is not yet in sight anyway. When the roadblock at the point of detour suddenly appears 30 meters before him, he slams on the brakes. Too late. He smashes right through the roadblock and tumbles over the excavated pavement several meters before coming to a full stop, causing extensive damage to himself, his passengers, the car, and the objects that lay in the way.

Now consider the Philippines with a population size of 84 million growing at a high speed of 2.36 percent annually. Experts have warned of the dire consequences of unchecked population growth. But their warnings have been downplayed, at times contradicted outright, by some quarters. Government has been ambivalent and inconsistent in its support to efforts to slow down population growth.

Thus, almost 35 years since the country's population program began, the population is still growing very fast—about 2 million people added every year!

/...more

The speeding car continued to move ahead after the brakes had been applied because of momentum. Momentum is the force that drives a moving body in continuous motion even after action to stop it has been taken. Momentum is proportional to the size (or weight) of the moving object and its speed. The heavier the object and the faster it is moving, the stronger the momentum.

In population, there is also such a thing as momentum. University of the Philippines professor Dr. Alejandro N. Herrin explains this unavoidable eventuality called population momentum. Because couples had high fertility or gave many births in the past, a very large number of young people, particularly women, have already been born and are now of childbearing age. Because of their great number, even if each one of these women “bears only one daughter (to replace themselves as future mothers) their total number of births could still exceed the total number of deaths in the population.” Hence, the number of people added will still be more than the number subtracted, and the population will continue to grow. And if women bear children at an early age, it means they will be replacing themselves faster, and the population will grow even faster.

“Over time,” Herrin explains, “if women continue to bear only one daughter, the proportion of women of childbearing ages will decline and a point will be reached when their total number of births would equal the total number of deaths in the population.” That is the time population growth will be zero.

From the time the country achieves replacement fertility—when women have only one daughter each (which is not even happening yet at this time), it will take several decades more before the Philippines reaches zero population growth. By that time, the country’s population will be more than double its present size.

That is, if an effective family planning program had been pursued and will be achieving replacement fertility shortly. But such is not even within the foreseeable future yet.

The comparison with the speeding car is not even that simple, because people are not machines, like a car that can be stopped anytime. The success of the population management program depends on the decisions of millions of people, each with his or her own thinking, and circumstances to consider. Thus, reaching that point when population growth will be zero can take even longer.

Population growth actually comes from a number of sources, says Herrin. Population momentum is one. A desire for many children, which still prevails especially among rural families, is another. The third is unwanted fertility, or births that are not intended but happen

/...more

anyway because of accidents, lack of planning, or lack of knowledge of and access to family planning services.

At present, women on the average still bear around four children. Many of them would have wanted only three, but for various economic, health and social reasons, are unable to employ the contraceptive means to limit the number of their children.

Meanwhile, the population continues to grow at an alarming rate. At the rate it is growing now, the population will be a staggering 169 million by year 2034!

The negative consequences of rapid population growth that the experts have warned of are already becoming apparent—environmental degradation, crowding and congestion in the cities, gross inadequacies in basic services resulting in deteriorating quality of human resources (like malnourished children, sickly mothers, unskilled labor force), exploitation of women and children, rising unemployment, and worsening poverty.

Yet, many still refuse to heed the signs. The measures being taken to address the population problem still lack urgency, perhaps because the situation is still tolerable. But like the speeding car that refused to stop immediately when braked, the population will not just stop growing the minute the government decides to take serious measures when it finally sees the damages resulting from an already bursting population.

There has to be allowance for population momentum. That's why the brakes have to be stepped on now, decidedly, relentlessly and hard. To dally another day would be to head closer for the bleak scenario awaiting a poorly managed, overpopulated Filipino nation. — *PopDev Media Service*

EDITORIAL BOARD
Mercedes B. Concepcion
Peter D. Garrucho
Alejandro N. Herrin
Ernesto M. Pernia
Ma. Socorro Camacho Reyes

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Virgilio F. Lacaba

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Cynthia Alberto Diaz

GRAPHIC ARTIST
Dario B. Noche

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Roderick Toledo
Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Wilma V. Lacaba
Raymond Lim Toledo

WRITERS
Perla Aragon-Choudhury
Bernard Supetran
Roberto C. Navarro
Haydee U. Parras

PROJECT ASSISTANTS
Jocelyn Ladisla
Frederico Salvania



News
& Features
Service
for the
Mass Media

*Email: vflacaba@yahoo.com
Tel. (02)6350247 Fax: (02)6319765
PDMS-8 / 2004*

ISSUE EDITOR: Cynthia Alberto Diaz

Business tycoon Oscar Lopez is convinced that the country's huge population is dragging down development but believes that tri-sectoral collaboration can save the day.

COMPLEX POPULATION ISSUE

Oscar Lopez: Collaboration is possible among gov't, private sector, civil society

By Waldo Vera-Luz
PopDev Media Service

A huge population isn't necessarily good for business.

That sounds counter-intuitive coming from Oscar M. Lopez, the 73-year-old chairman of the Lopez group of companies that counts under its umbrella the media giant, ABS-CBN and the power monopoly, Meralco. After all, isn't business a numbers game?

Not quite, in the case of the Philippines, says the Harvard-educated former newspaper publisher in an interview with the PopDev Media Service. "It drags down everything like an albatross around our necks," he explains, his penchant for drawing metaphors surfacing. "Because it's the poor that reproduce, poverty increases at a faster rate than we can solve it." The situation reminds him of a child playing at the beach trying to contain the waters of the ocean in a small pail.

Lopez enumerates the price the country pays for overpopulation: congestion in the cities, squatters, unemployment, crime, pollution, deforestation, depletion of aquatic resources. In fact,

/...more

the Lopez group—known for its strong commitment to the principle of corporate social responsibility handed down by his father, Eugenio Lopez, Sr.—has begun to address some of these problems. The ABS-CBN Foundation, for instance, has been actively supporting environmental causes like clean air and reforestation, as well as social issues like child abuse-intervention primarily through the use of the broadcast media.

Another key area of involvement is education, where the Knowledge Channel Foundation—run by Lopez’s daughter Rina Lopez-Bautista—tries to fill the gap brought about by the lack of resources in the public school system by providing curriculum-based programs on cable TV to elementary and high school students.

“Every year is a crisis year in education,” Lopez says. “There’s a lack of classrooms, teachers, textbooks. That’s why the quality of education has deteriorated as shown in the test results of our students especially in the sciences. And former education secretary Brother Andrew has pinpointed our rapid population growth as a culprit.”

At the Asian Forum for Corporate Social Responsibility in Bangkok last year where he was one of the speakers, Lopez compared himself to a passenger in the infamous ship “Titanic” warning that the Philippines might be headed for a demographic disaster if it does not reverse its course.

“If we can’t reduce our (annual) population growth rate of 2.36 per cent, there will be an estimated 150 million Filipinos in 20 years’ time. Where are we going to put all those additional millions?” he asked in his speech. “This is no longer just a religious problem. It will be a problem of physical survival.”

What compounds the problem, he says, is the fact that the present government—toeing the stand of the Catholic Church—leans toward natural, rather than artificial, means of contraception.

“This population problem was accentuated after EDSA (I and II) because of the Church’s significant role in toppling down Marcos and Estrada. The beneficiaries of the revolt, Aquino and Arroyo, are beholden to the Church so they do what the Church wants,” Lopez observes.

He also decries what he calls a conspiracy of silence regarding the population issue: politicians shy away from a discussion of the problem for fear of offending the Catholic hierarchy and possibly affecting their election chances.

Still, based on their own foundations’ experience, Lopez believes there can be collaboration among government, the private sector and civil society in dealing with a complex social issue such as population. “Bantay Bata,” for example, owes part of its success to the

/...more

effective working relationship it has with the Department of Social Welfare and Development along with local government units and community-based organizations.

For tri-sectoral collaboration to work despite areas of disagreement, Lopez told his Bangkok audience: “ Let us not get bogged down in manipulation or confrontation. The resources of the three sectors are very limited compared to the social demands at hand. Alliances and partnerships will be more beneficial.” — *PopDev Media Service*

(30)

/...more

EDITORIAL BOARD
Mercedes B. Concepcion
Peter D. Garrucho
Alejandro N. Herrin
Ernesto M. Pernia
Ma. Socorro Camacho Reyes

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Virgilio F. Lacaba

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Cynthia Alberto Diaz

GRAPHIC ARTIST
Dario B. Noche

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Roderick Toledo
Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Wilma V. Lacaba
Raymond Lim Toledo

WRITERS
Perla Aragon-Choudhury
Bernard Supetran
Roberto C. Navarro
Haydee U. Parras

PROJECT ASSISTANTS
Jocelyn Ladisla
Frederico Salvania



News
& Features
Service
for the
Mass Media

*Email: vflacaba@yahoo.com
Tel. (02)6350247 Fax: (02)6319765
PDMS-8 / 2004*

ISSUE EDITOR: Cynthia Alberto Diaz

Poor urban youth in a resettlement area learn life skills through livelihood, sports, and reproductive health.

The saga of Paliparan

By Anthony T. Lim
PopDev Media Service

Instead of being an airfield, as its English translation suggests, “Paliparan” probably got its name for being a place “where dead bodies were made to fly” when they were dumped there. The morbid revelation from old-timers being that Paliparan Site III in Dasmarinas, Cavite used to be a sugarcane field that was used as a dumping ground for “salvage” (summary execution) victims.

Living in Paliparan

Nowadays, Paliparan is a far cry from what it used to be. It is now home to some 70,000 “very much alive” individuals.

In 1993, the National Housing Authority (NHA) and the Public Estates Authority (PEA) relocated about 6,000 squatter families or some 45,000 individuals to Paliparan from the reclamation area in Pasay City. Residents who have found employment in the area work mostly in factories for garments, electronics and food products.

/...more

After more than a decade, the population has almost doubled due to increase in family size, high incidence of teenage pregnancies, and in-migration of relatives and other new settlers who rent housing space.

“There is a high incidence of early teenage pregnancies in Paliparan,” says Brother Francisco Tanega, FMSI, M.D., executive director of Pangarap Foundation. Numerous out-of-school and unemployable teenagers who lack supervision from parents, who are out trying to earn a living, tend to go into early amorous relationships. He also identified the “hyper-sexed” media as one of the causes of the youth’s exploring sexually intimate behavior.

Pangarap in Paliparan

Most of the settlers of Paliparan from the Pasay City reclamation area were beneficiaries of Pangarap Foundation—a Gospel-based integrated ministry catering to children in need of special protection, as well as their families. Founded in 1989 by the Sons of Mary, Ina-anak, Inc. and the Ladies of Charity of Pasay, Pangarap Foundation has continued its community development work in Paliparan.

Two years ago, Pangarap built the 4-storey “Paliparan Community Development Center” to serve as its office and resource center. The Consuelo Foundation provides funding for the community development work of Pangarap in Paliparan. Trained local volunteers supplement the five salaried full-time staff of the development program.

A key entry point of Pangarap’s community development work in Paliparan is reproductive health (RH). Orientation seminars for youths, adults, and couples are conducted. The seminar covers such topics as human sexuality, gender rights, reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases.

The Institute of Reproductive Health, a partner nongovernment organization (NGO), handles the orientation on natural family planning (NFP). Brother Francisco said that while their family planning service is focused on NFP, they also give information on other contraceptive methods to couples. If a couple opts for a method other than NFP, the community center staff refers the couple to the rural health unit (RHU).

Through reproductive health, the youth learn how to protect themselves from the risks of reckless sexual activity, and exercise care and responsibility in their relationships.

There are about 50 youth gangs in Paliparan. To rechannel their energy, Pangarap has networked with various NGOs and people’s organizations (POs). A key partner is the Rotary Club of Paseo de Roxas “Kalinga” Project. They conduct courses on health and nutrition,

/...more

livelihood and youth development. The summer sports festival includes tournaments in basketball, volleyball, dama, chess, and other youth activities.

Some youths are also sent to vocational technical training in the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for high school graduates; and in the Don Bosco Technical Institute-Manpower Training Department in Makati City, under Brother Elmer Rodriguez, for high school undergraduates.

Pangarap has even set up a jewelry-making cooperative in the community for out-of-school youths currently undergoing or have completed training in TESDA.

Paliparan Site III has definitely come a long way from what it used to be. A place that used to be associated with death, the community now teems with life and the endless challenges of safe, productive and responsible living. — *PopDev Media Service*

(30)

/...more

EDITORIAL BOARD
Mercedes B. Concepcion
Peter D. Garrucho
Alejandro N. Herrin
Ernesto M. Pernia
Ma. Socorro Camacho Reyes

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Virgilio F. Lacaba

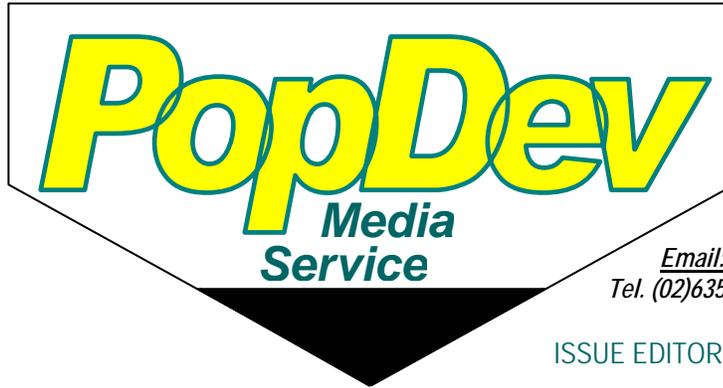
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Cynthia Alberto Diaz

GRAPHIC ARTIST
Dario B. Noche

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Roderick Toledo
Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Wilma V. Lacaba
Raymond Lim Toledo

WRITERS
Perla Aragon-Choudhury
Bernard Supetran
Roberto C. Navarro
Haydee U. Parras

PROJECT ASSISTANTS
Jocelyn Ladisla
Frederico Salvania



News
& Features
Service
for the
Mass Media

*Email: vflacaba@yahoo.com
Tel. (02)6350247 Fax: (02)6319765
PDMS-8 / 2004*

ISSUE EDITOR: Cynthia Alberto Diaz

For parents to succeed in guiding their sons and daughters through the challenges of teen-age life, it takes listening and understanding—and being their children's friend.

Helping parents befriend teenagers

By Pinky Aragon
PopDev Media Service

Most Filipino youth find it hard to share problems with parents. Especially on sex matters, teenagers would rather get information from friends, siblings, cousins or even teachers.

But parents, more than any other person, are the ones who feel most responsible for what become of their children. So how can parents provide proper guidance if their sons and daughters do not want to open up to them?

The thing to do, according to a psychologist and an expert in parenting, is to be friends with them. Araceli Gonzales – psychologist, HRD expert, housewife and mother of a son and two daughters – was the resource at a forum for parents conducted a few months ago at the Juan Sumulong High School of Arellano University. The theme of the forum: "*Magulang at Anak... Magkaibigan*" (Parent and Child...Friends).

The forum was part of the program "Empowering Parents on Adolescent Health, Sexuality and Development" which the Foundation for Adolescent Development (FAD) is offering at cooperating high schools in Metro Manila.

/...more

Know your teeners

“When was the last time you talked with your kids?” Gonzales asked her co-parents at the forum. “Do you understand them? My son looks at me, rolls his eyes and sighs, ‘Duh, Ma.’ I believe kids have a language of their own, whether we like it or not.”

Drug addiction, sexual harassment and premarital sex are happening even if parents close their eyes to reality. These all make parenting today beautiful yet difficult, says Gonzales. “Why? Though we’d rather not have our babies grow up, our goals should be to raise responsible, happy and productive individuals—nurture their potentials and provide for their needs.”

But since every individual is unique, parenting can mean different ways of handling adolescents. The style can be autocratic, laissez faire, democratic or situational, depending on the case and on the risk involved.

“We’re talking about teen-agers in a period of transition,” says Gonzalez. “For one, physical changes—an Adam’s apple, a lower voice pitch, the onset of menstruation, the horror of pimples—could mean the end of the world to some kids.”

Teen-agers also undergo emotional, mental and behavioral changes. Last summer, teen-age boys gelled their hair to spikes but now, they want it straight a la F4 members. As for girls, they check out Vina Morales’ gear on TV and then wear knock-offs.

Gonzales also warns of the risks that teeners face from their exposure to television and the Internet. “How do we shield them when we cannot be there every day to help them decide responsibly on what to watch?”

The 4 I’s of teen-age life

During this transition, teen-agers start to ask, “Who am I?” and depend less on their parents for social acceptance and information. They assert themselves on what Gonzales calls the Four I’s—identity, intimacy, integrity and intellectualism.

To establish their *identity*, adolescents engage in experimentation—including testing the limits of sexual freedom. They also want to prove themselves as individuals.

Intimacy means a growing interest in sexual matters and in the opposite sex. It is important for parents to know their children's friends. “Host parties,” Gonzales suggests. “You need not serve expensive food. Chips and fruit juices will do, as long as you get to meet the friends of your teen-ager. Then pass around a sheet of paper and ask them to write their names, phone numbers and addresses. This way you meet them personally.”

/...more

Integrity is the struggle of youth to define what they believe in. Idealistic about society, many of them will go to rallies.

And because integrity is related to *intellectualism*, most teeners will be very sure of their views and dislike parents who follow them around and shield them from the harsh realities. Instead of admonishing them and giving them lectures, parents should strive to become the role models of adolescents.

You can't give what you don't have

"Sexuality-related issues start from friendships and dates," Gonzales warns. So parents must help teeners exercise care as they go through the stages of intimacy.

Gonzales advises parents to research about sexual matters and try hard not to react when teenagers ask about these.

She suggests: "Let's study why teen-agers prefer peers and what their spiritual and sexual relationships mean. What is a condom? What does the drug Ecstasy do? And why is smoking dangerous? But we're effective only when we're confident about what we believe in, know and can do. It is important to check our own beliefs."

Listen with understanding

"How do you talk to your kids?" Gonzalez recommends making solo time with each teen-ager. "It's not expensive," she says. "You can do it even in the market or aboard a jeep as long as it's your special time with your teen-ager. Focus on him or her, and bond. The quality of the talk is more important than anything else."

It's also vital to be a good listener. "And be honest if you don't know the answers to their questions," Gonzales adds. "Don't go around in circles. They'll see through that and sigh, '*Ma, hindi mo ako naiintindihan!* (You don't understand me!)" Let's be alert to their words as well as to non-verbal cues so important in Pinoy culture." It becomes a bond when parent and child research the answers together.

Nurture ambition in the young

On top of all, "let's make parenting deliberate just like our careers or our marketing for the family or our planning for a party," Gonzales urges. "Let's try to put a future for our kids and nurture in them ambition. Let's show that we're confident that our children can make goals and let's remind them how their dreams can end if they get pregnant or addicted to drugs."

/...more

Parents must always be there whenever their children need them, Gonzales says. "We should allow no opportunity for making memories with our children pass us by. Let's start family traditions, make these moments last and spend time together. Let's make it a deliberate effort to raise good kids."

Yes, parents and children can be friends, and together enjoy the good things that come from a good friendship. — *PopDev Media Service*

(30)

/...more

EDITORIAL BOARD
Mercedes B. Concepcion
Peter D. Garrucho
Alejandro N. Herrin
Ernesto M. Pernia
Ma. Socorro Camacho Reyes

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Virgilio F. Lacaba

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Cynthia Alberto Diaz

GRAPHIC ARTIST
Dario B. Noche

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Roderick Toledo
Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Wilma V. Lacaba
Raymond Lim Toledo

WRITERS
Perla Aragon-Choudhury
Bernard Supelran
Roberto C. Navarro
Haydee U. Parras

PROJECT ASSISTANTS
Jocelyn Ladisla
Frederico Salvania



News
& Features
Service
for the
Mass Media

Email: vflacaba@yahoo.com
Tel. (02)6350247 Fax: (02)6319765

PDMS-8 / 2004

ISSUE EDITOR: Cynthia Alberto Diaz

Is there room for respect for one another's beliefs and for principled collaboration between Church and State on the matter of family planning? Bishop Antonio Ledesma's pastoral letter provides some common ground.

COMMENTARY

A time to listen

By Antonio Ortiz
PopDev Media Service

Religion has demonstrated its ability to bring people together. It has also set them apart. Religion is a resource for peace. But then people have declared war in the name of religion—such is the confusion and the tragedy of the human race. But then again, there is also an opportunity here, a chance for us to unite and reach out for the glory that is rightfully ours.

Pray tell, you might say!

There's a story about this very religious young man who married a very religious young woman. Both of them were, you guessed it, virgins when they got married. One month passed, and still the young wife had not conceived. Two months passed, still she hadn't gotten pregnant. Three months passed, and their friends started wondering. When four months had passed and still the young wife wasn't pregnant, the closest male friend of the husband cornered him and asked, "Is there any problem, amigo? It's been four months and still no baby!" The husband answered, "But we pray every night!" The friend said, "And then?" The husband said, "And then we go to sleep, of course."

/...more

The point of the story? The point is that one must walk the spiritual path with practical feet. Prayers, if not acted upon, will get one nowhere.

The Most Reverend Antonio J. Ledesma, S.J., Roman Catholic Bishop of Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay, and head of the Episcopal Commission on Interreligious Dialogue (ECID) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), must have been thus inspired (by the point, not the story) when he wrote and issued the January 14, 2003 pastoral letter entitled, "Pastoral Guidelines on Natural Family Planning and the Standard Days Method."

The letter was addressed to "The People of God in the Prelature of Ipil." Bishop Ledesma did not address the pastoral letter just to the Roman Catholics in the Prelature of Ipil. He wrote to practically the entire Catholic flock, considering that there must be a very negligible number of atheists and agnostics living within that prelature, and even they should not be discounted as people of God. Ipil is the capital town of Zamboanga Sibugay, a new province that used to be part of Zamboanga del Sur.

Since Bishop Ledesma is a high-ranking member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, his written guidance, particularly on "principled collaboration" of the Roman Catholic Church with the Philippine Government on natural family planning (NFP) deserves close study by all individuals and institutions concerned.

The pastoral letter begins with a review of the Church's promotion on NFP over the past three decades and recently of a new method of natural family planning called the Standard Days Method (SDM). Parish-based pilot activities for NFP and SDM promotion launched subsequently, according to the backgrounder, comprise a response to the pastoral needs expressed by married couples themselves throughout the prelature.

Noting some reservations raised by certain quarters of the Church over SDM, Bishop Ledesma conveys four major guidelines in his pastoral letter:

1. Value formation is an essential dimension in our promotion of natural family planning because, more than just being a method, NFP is regarded as a way of life for Catholic couples.
2. The Standard Days Method is an innovation we are introducing in our NFP Promotion—not in order to compete with other NFP methods but simply as an added option.
3. We welcome government's interest in promoting and even mainstreaming natural family planning at this time and are open to entering into principled collaboration with government agencies.

/...more

4. In our promotion of all modern NFP methods, our ultimate objective is to guide and empower Catholic couples to exercise their own freedom of choice according to the dictates of their conscience.

The Philippine Government and the Roman Catholic Church can now dialogue on the specifics of the guidelines.

For example, government and church representatives at various levels—policy, management, field operations—now have the chance to seriously consult one another on the pastoral letter’s statement that "government workers and policymakers in the past have not been transparent nor consistent in their promotion of NFP."

They can also find time to reflect on the following argument: "If government is indeed sincere in respecting the cultural and religious values of Christian as well as of Muslim communities with regard to NFP, it should encourage the attendant value formation that gives the meaning and *raison d’être* for NFP in the first place."

At some point, bilateral talks between the government and the Church will have to be complemented by multilateral consultations involving, as well, co-religionists belonging to other Christian churches, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Bahá’í Faith, and indigenous religions, as well as interested NGOs and business organizations such as the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Makati Business Club.

The January 14, 2003 pastoral letter limits “principled collaboration” to the promotion and practice of NFP.

By way of helping trigger multisectoral and interfaith dialogues, here are additional key excerpts from the pastoral letter:

“In the same manner that we acknowledge the freedom of choice of those with different religious persuasions, so also mature Catholic couples have a right to be respected in their freedom of choice that is consistent with their understanding of their faith and their actual situation in life.”

“The local church cannot act as policeman or as prophet of doom. We are rather asked to be the heralds of God’s love and compassion for all – indeed, that, with the availability of practicable modern NFP methods, today’s Christian family *is* good news for the third millennium.”

We started with talking about walking the spiritual path with practical feet. Given the religious, cultural, economic, social and political diversity of us Filipinos, the matter of principled collaboration in family planning will most likely give rise to a wide range of perceptions.

/...more

Such perceptions need to be subjected to the crucible of principled consultation if we were to come out triumphant as a people, as a vibrant nation—a consultation that recognizes the oneness of Filipinos. Then we will be able to listen genuinely to one another. — *PopDev Media Service*

(30)