



World Children's Day is an annual day of action to encourage global cooperation toward protecting children's rights and improving their welfare. It was first established in 1954 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the vision that must be realized for every child, as an individual and as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to their age and stage of development.

The Philippines' commemoration of World Children's Day centers on the theme "Kalusugan, Kaisipan at Kapakanan ng Bawat Bata, Ating Tutukan" with a focus on the mental health well-being of a child. This is in line with the growing mental health concern among Filipino children prior to, during, and even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Global School-Based Student Health Survey, 23.1% of students aged 13-17 years seriously considered attempting suicide, and 24.3% attempted suicide one or more times.¹ The National Center For Mental Health also reported that 5.21% of callers in their Crisis Hotline were children referred to a psychiatrist, psychologist, or NCMH hospital services. Suicide-related calls even increased significantly throughout the pandemic, regardless of age.

Children are truly among the most vulnerable population groups in society. According to PSA, 31.4 percent of children belong to poor families², and 872 thousand or 2.8 percent are subjected to child labor.³ On top of this is the continuous violence that children face every day which prevents them from going to school or worst, hinders their overall development. 80% of Filipino children had experienced some form of violence in their lifetime, whether in the home, school, workplace, community or during dating.⁴

¹https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/ncds/ncd-surveillance/data-reporting/philippines/2019-philippines-fact-sheet.pdf?sfvrsn=7e3888af_1&download=true

² <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/children>

³ <https://psa.gov.ph/press-releases/id/165533>

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/reports/national-baseline-study-violence-against-children-philippines>



It is crucial to take care of children's rights, welfare, and development as these are at the center of the nation's social development goals. Physically and mentally, healthy children are more likely to have a better quality of life and can perform effectively at home, school, and in their communities. The celebration of children's rights on World Children's Day gives each of us a motivational starting point for activities and conversations that will improve the world for children. Parents, teachers, government leaders, and civil society organizations all play an important role in making the world a better place for children. A child's healthy development is the responsibility of all of us who serve as their sources of encouragement for independence and leading healthy, fulfilling lives.

We call on the Philippine government to uphold its obligation and accountability to undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the realization of children's rights so that children have access to services, protection from all forms of abuse and violence, and opportunities for personal development to reach their fullest potential.

E-Net Philippines further puts forward the following recommendations:

- Pass the Magna Carta of Children.
- Conduct genuine consultations for the active participation of young people on all issues.
- Pass the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) bill for protection of LGBTQIA+ children from discrimination and violence.
- Implement programs that are specifically designed to get all children and young people back to school so they can get services that are tailored to their needs in terms of learning, health, psychological well-being, and other areas.
- Move to strengthen the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 (RA 9344), as amended by RA 10630, an Act establishing the Bahay Bag-Asa (House of Hope), and its implementation.
- Pass policies that institutionalize a comprehensive and responsive national Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system that produces information on births, marriages, adoptions, deaths, and causes of death of a population.