

## LGUs need strong national leadership in population management

*Aniceto C. Orbeta Jr.\**

In a recent pronouncement made by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo regarding the government's policy on population, she indicated that the "family planning program was not the main responsibility of the national government, but rather the local government units which have been given the authority to decide [on] the methods that they will push in their communities."<sup>1</sup> In effect, this translates into an expressed national policy of leaving the population concern to local government units (LGUs). The question is: Is this strategy generating the desired results as envisioned in the Philippine Population Management Program (PPMP) and the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP)? Are the LGUs even interested in managing their own population?

This *Policy Notes* dissects the implications of this policy stance at the conceptual and empirical levels. It notes the varied responses that LGUs have to the population problem as a result of this national policy stance and

offers some conceptual reasons on why many LGUs may not be interested in managing their population. Finally, the *Notes* identifies what need to be done.

### LGUs' varied responses

As a consequence of the expressed national policy of having LGUs push for their own population management programs, LGUs have responded in different ways that are not consistent with one another. For instance, one city (Tagum) is doing a frontier program in having male involvement through the promotion of vasectomy (Box 1). Recently, two mayors in Pangasinan (San Miguel and Asingan) have promoted ligation.<sup>2</sup> Another city (Muntinlupa) embarked on a serious effort at recording and managing migration (Box 2). On the other hand, there are some cities like Manila where artificial contraception is banned and where only natural family planning method is promoted. And in many other LGUs, the population problem has apparently not even caught the attention of their officials thereupon resulting in their doing nothing significant.

\* The author is Senior Research Fellow, Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).

<sup>1</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 26, 2004, p. A7.

<sup>2</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, December 8, 2004, p. A13.

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### Box 1. Promoting male involvement

Between 1995–2000, Tagum City’s population grew at about 2.93 percent annually, higher than the national (2.34), regional (2.62) and Davao del Norte’s (2.22) population growth rates. The city’s crude birth rate stands at 271 and its average rate of natural increase is about 23 persons per 1000 population for the years 1995–1999. While migration played a significant role in the city’s rapid urbanization in the early 1980s during the gold rush in the Davao region, the relatively high population growth today is no doubt mainly attributable to the high birth rates. The relatively high rate of population increase presents an overwhelming challenge for the city government in supplying adequate basic services to its constituents. Realizing that resources can hardly keep up with the growing demand, the local government embarked on population management programs to influence the tempo of population growth. Aside from pre-marriage counseling and making artificial family planning devices available at the City Health Office (c/o a DOH-USAID project), the city government at one time (2001–2003) offered financial incentives for males who would voluntarily undergo a vasectomy. The City Health Office was tasked to administer the program while the surgical procedure was carried out by the Davao Provincial Hospital, charged against the city’s annual contribution to the provincial hospital. Those who have successfully undergone vasectomy received P5,000 from the local government. No information regarding the number of volunteers who availed of the incentives, however, is available due to the improper turnover of files when the nurse-in-charge of the records resigned from the City Health Office.

Source: Gerochi, 2004. Tagum City: development at the crossroads. Case study prepared for the POPCOM-PIDS Population, Urbanization and Local Governance Project.

The latter responses are hardly the kind that the PPMP has envisioned to happen given the urgency of the population problem and the effects it has on the poverty alleviation program, in particular, and on the development efforts, in general, as explained in earlier PIDS *Policy Notes*.<sup>3</sup>

### What explains the general lack of interest?

The seeming lackluster pursuit of LGUs in managing their population programs stem from inherent conceptual reasons. Professors from the School of Economics at the University of the Philippines, for instance, have argued that leaving the adoption of population policy and implementation of family planning programs to LGUs is “ill conceived and is doomed to fail.” They put forward several arguments to support this conclusion. One, LGU leaders typically wait for clear directions from the national gov-

ernment on important policy objectives and instruments. There is no reason why the population issue would be any different. Two, the national policy on IRA allotments says 50 percent weight should be given to population size as seen in Box 3. Three, population constitutes the political base of a politician. These two latter reasons mean that the larger the population is, the better it is for LGU executives. Finally, better population management that would result in good performance in service delivery may lead to an influx of transients availing of locally-funded services, in the process frustrating efforts at improving local services delivery through better local popu-

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<sup>3</sup> Orbeta (2003), Population and the fight against poverty, PIDS PN 2003-04; Herrin (2003), Lack of consensus characterizes Philippine population policy, PIDS PN 2003-03; Pernia (2003), Population: does it matter? Revisiting an old issue, PIDS PN 2003-02.

### Box 2. Migration Information Center (MIC)

The City of Muntinlupa Migration Information Center (MIC) project was conceptualized in 1997 through the conduct of a series of advocacy activities until mid-1998 in the city of Muntinlupa that gained both executive and legislative supports. This led to the passage by the City Development Council of Sangguniang Resolution No. 99-025 in the following year which mandated for the establishment of the MIC in all nine barangays. The funding appropriation of the barangay MICs was also provided in 1999.

Communication campaign was done to generate public awareness and support for the project. Relevant MIC information materials were developed, produced and disseminated. From project advocacy in 1997 to MIC's initial operation in 1999, activities were planned and implemented jointly by POPCOM-National Capital Region, the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) and the Muntinlupa City Planning and Development Office (CPDO). Subsequently, it was fully operationalized in year 2000 under the supervision of the CPDO as the overall project coordinator. In year 2000, by virtue of an Executive Order, the personnel composition of the MIC was formed and the responsibilities and compensation of the Migration Information Officers (MIOs) were stated.

The general objective of the MIC project is to increase the awareness, understanding and appreciation of population movement as a demographic event and its impact on the socioeconomic situation of the city. The specific objectives are: 1) to generate information/data that will help policymakers, planners and program implementers in policy and program development particularly on the number, characteristics, needs and origin of in-migrants; 2) to assist new residents in making initial adjustments to their new environment and help them make their stay successful and meaningful by providing the in-migrants with the available services and facilities; and 3) to provide the means to monitor and abate the influx of squatters in the city.

The MIC operates through a three-stage reporting system. The first stage involves a registration that covers all in-migrants to the barangay. The second stage involves the regular reporting to the barangay council of the status of registration of in-migrants. The third stage involves the submission of a regular monthly report by the CPDO. The CPDO, being the overall coordinator of the MIC activities, is the repository of all the data generated from all barangays by their respective MIOs. The CPDO then informs the office of the Local Chief Executive of the relevant findings and provide appropriate recommendations for policy formulation, program planning and project development.

The MIC allows for the establishment of a population database for: 1) monitoring the magnitude as well as the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of in-migrants; 2) planning or setting up an early warning system on expected dysfunction(s) due to population increases and structural changes on account of in-migration; and 3) responding to the information and basic service requirements of these migrants through responsive policy formulation, program planning and project development backed by relevant data.

Source: Philippine Country Report, Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, December 2002, POPCOM.

lation management. This constitutes another negative incentive for managing population at the local level.

So what can be done to address these?

#### Some points to consider

Given the lack of clear motivations for better population management among LGUs, resulting in their current varied and inconsistent responses to the population issue, there is a need to adopt a different strategy if the objectives of the PPMP and the MTPDP are to be achieved.

What is needed is to have a clear and fully-funded **national population program** with LGUs participating vigorously and consistently. The LGUs need to be rallied around a strong national resolve to manage the population. Leaving the management of the population problem to them entirely will result, as already amply demonstrated, in a fragmented or even much worse inconsistent program. Managing population is clearly a national rather than a local issue. Clear national policy objectives and directions are therefore needed before LGUs can be expected to act in a concerted manner. These are also needed to

### Box 3. Population size and IRA allocation of LGUs

#### Share of LGUs

- After the LGC (1991): 40 percent of internal revenue taxes
- Before LGC: a maximum of 20 percent of internal revenue taxes

#### Shares among different levels of LGUs

- After LGC (1991): 23 percent to provinces, 23 percent to cities, 34 percent to municipalities and 20 percent to barangays
- Before LGC: 27 percent to provinces, 23 percent to cities, 41 percent to municipalities, and 10 percent to barangays

#### Basis of allocation


- After LGC (1991): 50 percent population, 25 percent land area, 25 percent equal sharing
- Before LGC: 70 percent population, 20 percent land area, 10 percent equal sharing

#### Note for ARMM:

##### Sharing

- After the amendment to the organic act (2001): 30 percent central government, 35 percent regional government, 35 percent local government, distributed using the abovementioned formula
- Before the amendment to the organic act: 40 percent central government, 30 percent regional government, 30 percent LGUs

Source: Manasan (2003). Decentralization and service delivery study: intergovernmental finance. Report to ADB-WB.

arrest spillover effects from lack of local population management as well as minimize movement of transient population that can frustrate whatever fruits a local good population program generates. 

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#### *For further information, please contact*

The Research Information Staff  
 Philippine Institute for Development Studies  
 NEDA sa Makati Building, 106 Amorsolo Street  
 Legaspi Village, 1229 Makati City  
 Telephone Nos: 892-4059 and 893-5705  
 Fax Nos: 893-9589 and 816-1091  
 E-mail: aorbeta@pidsnet.pids.gov.ph; jliguton@pidsnet.pids.gov.ph

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