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### **Poverty in the Philippines, Risk of Food Insecurity**

Every nation faces different issues and problems, it might be in terms of changes in economy, rapid growth of population or it might also be pollution, but the most common problem faced by people is the food security. Food security happens when people have access to sufficient and enough food, safe and secured meal and foods that satisfy the needs and proclivity to have a healthy life.

Philippines, a lower-middle-income country which is located in South East Asia, in the middle of the Pacific have been experiencing risks and threats for food insecurity. Food and poverty remain as the top problem faced by the country. These are also one of the reasons why Food insecurity arises. It was said that the progress of the economy in this country is a 'boom and bust' cycle as Philippines faces natural calamities, adverse domestic political factors, energy shortages, and external shocks such as the Asian currency crisis. In 1988 the gross national product (GNP) reached a peak of 7.2% and then declined to less than 1% in 1991. The economy started to recover in 1992, and the GNP peaked at 7.2% in 1996. The Asian financial crisis, compounded by the drought in 1998, led to a fall in the output of the agricultural sector by 6.6%. A stronger world economy, however, in 1999 helped the Philippine economy to recover. And up until this moment, Philippines is still facing the changes in the status of economy.

Experiencing food insecurity can lead to malnutrition. This is the reality in the Philippines. Many Filipinos suffer from hunger and malnutrition which also arouse due to poverty and low income and salary. Hunger and malnutrition relate closely with the state of food security, when "all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an

active and healthy life.” The definition underscores the multi-dimensionality of food security, including the interaction between food systems, nutrition, and health. Unfortunately, food security especially among the poor, has been weakened primarily by restrictive trade policies and low farm productivity and income. (Briones, et al 2017)

Surveys in the past few years appealed that the top reasons cited for food insecurity in the country’s poorest areas include inadequate income and lack of a regular job, among others. Many studies yet said that there is no food shortage in the Philippines, but the fact that the prices of foods and stuffs in the country are too high, just too high for many people living in the Philippines. Other than poverty, lack food supply in families in the unfortunate provinces in the country is also a byproduct and a factor of natural calamities such as floods and landslides that led for the farmer’s crops unusable. Economy in the Philippines is actually dependent to the country’s agriculture, which is why when farmers and fishermen will have troubles, will leave a macro effect in the food security. Another factor is natural calamities. Because of the location of the Philippines, natural disasters and calamities occur. The country often experiences typhoons and droughts, some of those does might just be normal but other events are devastating. In the year 2016, Philippines experienced the El Nino phenomenon which destroyed a \$95 million worth of crops, 349,630 metric tons of crops to be exact . And according to the Borgen Magazine in the Philippines, the string of typhoons that ravaged the country at the end of the year notably slowed down the national agricultural growth rate.

For the reason that we can’t prevent the disasters to come, organizations and authority addressed one of the main risk in Food insecurity, Poverty. Many organizations are trying to put an end and stamp off this dilemma. The Government is getting involved and also one of those is the World Food Programme, Sustainable Development Goal. This says that The Philippines seeks to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. This is a commitment that the country made during the adoption of the global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which involves attaining, where applicable, 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) and accompanying 169 targets during the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. Specifically, SDG No. 2 targets, by 2030, the end of hunger and ensuring access by all people, in particular the poor and people in

vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round; as well as the end of all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons. In practice this will involve approximating developed country outcomes for hunger and malnutrition, i.e. at most 10% stunting and 2% wasting among children aged 0 to 5. (Briones, et al 2017)

The National Food Authority (NFA) or Pambansang Pangasiwaan ng Pagkain made a way for many Filipinos to afford buying rice by producing staple grain-rice with a very low price. It has been a great help for the poor yet NFA received a lot of criticisms for this because after all, it's a "Cheap" rice. Many proclaimed that they get stomach aches eating the rice.

Feeding programs are also being implemented in selected regions, provinces and schools in the Philippines. It was done with the partnership of the Department of Education (DepEd) and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The feeding program kicked-off on the year 2010 and the said organizations allocated 2,000 Philippine Peso per kids for 120 days of feeding. These organizations have the same mission and vision which is by helping each other out, no child will go hungry.

The Department of Health (DOH) also helps out through food fortification which encourages manufacturers to fortify the foods that they produce. They also conduct "Operation Timbang" (Timbang- Weighing) to monitor the health of kids.

DSWD also built a project called "Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)" which aims to help Filipino families by giving them cash quarterly to start business and for the Filipino Children to attend school. Nutri-pan sa Eskwelahan managed by Nutrition Center of the Philippines started bakeries at school and sell those breads at a low and affordable price.

Other than this, there are also small organizations in the community who do feeding and outreach programs to help the poor. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local government units (LGUs), private sectors, individual donors, volunteers, and local

communities are part of this.

Today, the government focuses on the stability of foods and the needs of the people in the society. Addressing the Food Problems and threats of insecurities is one thing that they do in order to know the process needed to accomplish to stamp off the risks. Natural disasters cannot be prevented. Yet farmers and locals try to do something for the crops and agriproducts for them to save those. Another risk said is poverty. Philippines is a country with a huge number of population. Because of the rapid growth, people are experiencing a hard time coping up with the needs of their family and themselves. Also, due to the number of population, unemployment is really possible. Not having a job means not having salary and income. Lack of income might lead to poverty and end up having improper nutrition. Organizations, big or small who have the same vision which is to help the less fortunate people are considered big deal as they help those people rise from the bottom, with the help of these organizations we can alleviate the effect of the Food Insecurity which is malnutrition.

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