

## Strengthening communities and improving living conditions

**Context** The archipelago of the Philippines is a multifaceted, multicultural and ecologically rich country in Southeast Asia. Initially populated by indigenous people, most of the country was colonized by Spain for nearly 400 years followed by a period of occupation by the United States of America. However some provinces in the Northern part of the Philippines, namely the areas of Ifugao, Mt. Province and Kalinga, were never colonized. After its independence in 1946 the Republic of the Philippines remained an important strategic military platform for the US. Since the end of Ferdinand Marcos' 20-year rule in 1986, a rule characterized by corruption and brutality, five democratically elected presidents – including two women – have led the country. The state is officially laic but the Catholic Church is a very important player in Philippine politics and society. The country is affected by internal and historic conflicts rooted in socio-political, economic and religious difficulties. The Philippines continues to have the highest unemployment rate in Asia. More than a million Filipinos leave their country every year to work abroad which results in approximately 10% of the population working or residing overseas. In terms of income distribution the poorest 20% of the population accounts for only 6% percent of the total national income, the same as the amount of income generated by the two wealthiest people in the Philippines. The Philippine ecosystems have changed rapidly because of the excessive exploitation of natural resources and the fast growing population: almost all of the country's ecosystems have been significantly transformed or damaged. Moreover its location in the Pacific Ring of Fire (a location with the highest incidence of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in the world) and its archipelagic shape makes the Philippines one of the most vulnerable countries to the impact of climate change.

### COMUNDO in the Philippines

In the Philippines COMUNDO started supporting projects of Partner Organizations in 1985 with the Missionaries of Bethlehem. Since 2001 co-workers from the Bethlehem Mission Immensee have been working in the area of pastoral and social development strongly focusing on the environment, basic health care and good governance. In 2006 the implementation of a co-ordination strengthened the program. COMUNDO aims to work closely together with partner organizations based in the Philippines, deeply rooted in the local and national context.



Simon Czendlik helps the members of reforestation group planting seedlings for setting up the nursery: Philippines, Mangatarem Barangay Pacalat.

Country Program Objectives

The empowerment of marginalized social groups in rural and urban regions of the main island Luzon thus enabling them to improve the quality and conditions of their lives and claim their basic human rights.

Beneficiaries

COMUNDO, through its program in the Philippines, is committed to the most vulnerable and marginalized communities and people in society (indigenous people, very low income families, women and children) in selected rural and urban regions of Luzon.

Partner Organizations and Networking

In the Philippines, COMUNDO counts on a long-standing and rewarding partnership with institutions from the Roman Catholic Church. Numerous projects and activities have been carried out within this framework, always supporting the most vulnerable populations. To reinforce the impact of its action in the Philippines and to enrich its program, COMUNDO has also been establishing partnerships with organizations and social movements in civil society, key players in the struggle for social justice in the country.

COMUNDO in the Philippines wants to support networking with and among partner organizations and with other Filipino, Swiss or international development organizations.

The organization COMUNDO

COMUNDO is committed to social justice and a holistic and sustainable development. Their goal is an improved life situation of people in the South. It focuses on the areas of livelihoods, democracy and peace and the environment. COMUNDO works with the method of personnel development cooperation (PDC). This means on the one hand cooperation with partner organizations in the south, which supports COMUNDO with co-workers from Switzerland and Germany and on the other hand, the awareness raising in Switzerland. COMUNDO is represented in seven countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia with around 100 co-workers. It is represented in each country by a country program manager. The commitment of co-workers to on-site projects is primarily intended to strengthen partner organizations and their work to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged population groups. COMUNDO strives for an exchange on an equal footing in which co-workers and partner organizations contribute their knowledge and experience.

In Switzerland, COMUNDO promotes awareness of global contexts and sensitizes civil society to responsible behavior.

The country program Philippines is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). COMUNDO works with numerous institutions and private individuals for complementary financing.

Statistics Philippines

Population	102.6 millions	CIA 2016
Surface Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	300 000	World Bank 2014
Age structure		
0-14	33.71%	CIA 2016
15-24	19.17%	CIA 2016
25-54	36.86%	CIA 2016
55-64	5.89%	CIA 2016
65+	4.38%	CIA 2016
Life expectancy at birth	69.2 years	CIA 2016
Literacy	96.3%	CIA 2016
People living on less than USD 1.25 (PPP) a day	19%	World Bank 2009



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