

Rampant poverty in the Philippines

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Contents

- [Poverty eases little from \(...\)](#)
- [Philippines failing to tackle](#)

Poverty eases little from 2006 to 2012, becomes harder to escape - NSCB

MANILA - Poverty incidence in the Philippines has eased little over the last seven years, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) said on Tuesday, adding that the main difference between being poor last year and being poor in 2006 is that it's become harder to escape poverty as of 2012.

NSCB Secretary-General Jose Ramon Albert on Tuesday told reporters that poverty incidence among Filipino families eased from 23.4 percent in the first half of 2006 to 22.9 percent in the same period of 2009 and 22.3 percent in 2012.

Still, on average, 28 in every 100 Filipinos were poor over the last six years.

Worse, a family of five needed P2,292 more last year than in 2006 to move itself out of poverty. The same family required only P1,681 in 2006 and P2,042 in 2009 to leave the ranks of the impoverished.

To meet basic food needs, a family of five needs P5,458 every month. To stay above the poverty threshold - that is, to meet basic food and non-food needs - it would require P7,821.

Albert said eradicating poverty required P79.7 billion last year, up from P63.1 billion in 2009. This was higher than the government's conditional cash transfer (CCT) budget of P39.4 billion for last year.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said the poverty statistics were "not the dramatic results that we wanted."

He expects poverty statistics in the second half of 2012 to improve, citing the CCT program of the government.

Balisacan said the government is still targeting to reduce poverty incidence to 16 percent by 2016.

Darwin G. Amojelar, InterAksyon.com

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<http://www.interaksyon.com/business/60085/poverty-eases-little-from-2006-to-2012-becomes-harder-to-escape---nsch>

Philippines failing to tackle rampant poverty, census says

The Philippines has failed to make headway in cutting rampant poverty, with more than one in four citizens deemed poor despite the country's economic growth, according to census figures released Tuesday.

The July 2012 poverty rate of 27.9 percent is practically unchanged from 2006 and 2009 data, according to the National Statistical Coordination Board.

Filipinos forced to live on less than US\$0.62 a day are considered poor, according to the government's poverty threshold.

Economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said under-employment in rural areas, security problems in provinces facing insurgencies and warlords, and the falling price of a number of commodities such as sugar were mainly to blame.

"If the problem of visible under-employment in agriculture is addressed, then incomes of farmers would increase, poverty incidence would decrease, and we would not be compromising food security," Balisacan said in a statement.

The nation of about 100 million people posted 6.6 percent economic growth last year, and this year obtained its first-ever investment-grade rating from Fitch Ratings.

However the January 2013 jobless rate stood at 7.1 percent, with a further 20.9 percent under-employed, or working fewer than 40 hours a week.

About 41.8 percent of the under-employed are in the farming sector, it said.

Norio Usui, Senior Country Economist for the Manila-based Asian Development Bank, said the government must solve the problem of jobless growth if it hoped to reduce poverty.

"I am not surprised at all. The benefits of strong economic growth have not spilled over to the people because they still cannot find a job," he told AFP in a telephone interview.

He said the Philippines' economic model depended on consumption, strong remittances from its large overseas workforce and the outsourcing industry, which employs highly educated workers.

However, the Philippines, with its weak industrial base, has stood out in the region, he added.

"Why do you need a strong industrial base? To give jobs not only to the highly educated college graduates, but also to high school graduates," Usui said.

The government put the annual per capita poverty threshold at 9,385 pesos (227.24 dollars).

The state census board found that at least 28.6 percent of the population was considered poor in both 2006 and 2009.

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<http://www.interaksyon.com/article/60111/philippines-failing-to-tackle-rampant-poverty-census-says>
