

PHILIPPINES - INFORMATION SHEET

BACKGROUND

The Republic of the Philippines is a nation of 7,107 islands. There are no land boundaries. The country is bordered on the west by the South China Sea, on the east by the Philippine Sea, on the south by the Celebes Sea, and on the north by the Luzon Strait. The Philippines has been influenced by Malaysia, Indonesia, China and India, as well as 300 years of Spanish colonisation and over fifty years occupation by the North Americans. People from the Philippines are referred to as Filipinos.

The need for social acceptance is strongly felt by Filipinos and part of this acceptance means that education is valued. Skin colour and money also determine a person's social class with lighter colouring viewed as a sign of intelligence and attractiveness.

LANGUAGE

The National language is Filipino, a language based on Tagalog, a South Asian language that has been influenced by Spanish, Chinese, Malay and Arabic. Most Filipinos also speak English. Sometimes a combination of English and Tagalog words appear in speech and writing, known as 'Taglish'.

RELIGION

The Philippines is the only officially Christian country in Asia with about 90% Christian population. Of those 85% practise Catholicism. Islam is the second largest religion with about 5% of the population and Buddhism and Taoism take up the remainder.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

CARIBAU FESTIVAL - is celebrated in May. It honours the country's national animal, a kind of water buffalo with curved horns that is valued for its usefulness in agriculture. At the Caribau Festival the animals are washed and decorated with ribbons and flowers. A race is run, after which the animals are paraded in front of the local church where they are blessed.

Filipinos celebrate **CHRISTMAS**, **NEW YEAR** and **HOLY WEEK**.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

SLEEPING: Filipino children are often not put to bed prior to adults, and in some households the care of children extends to not being alone in a bed.

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE: The view of not losing face is commonly held and Filipinos will go to great lengths to keep things going smoothly. It is considered unacceptable to correct another person in public. In keeping with this, the desire to always please means that Filipinos will often say 'yes' even when they mean 'no' or 'maybe'. Filipinos will walk hand in hand or arm in arm with relatives and friends of either sex as a sign of affection or friendship. Filipinos are incredibly hospitable people and will go out of their way to be polite. The use of correct names and titles when referring to people is seen as essential. Non-verbal language, such as pointing to an object with one's lips, is a key element in communication. One greets friends by lifting the eyebrows. A longer lift can be used to ask a question.

CHILD REARING PRACTICES: The family is the foundation of the Philippines' society and often embraces three generations. The Filipino child is pampered for the first four years of life. Physical contact in the form of hugs, kisses and cuddles is the norm. Children are not pressured to become toilet trained or to learn to eat at the table. They are spoon fed or eat from a parent's plate, rather than having their own, up until the age of six. Spoon feeding continues until about the age of three or four years.

Respect for ones elders is instilled in Filipino children from a very young age. Gestures such as kissing the hands of elders are commonplace. Whilst doting on a child is routine, parents are also, generally authoritarian. They have an expectation the children will be docile, submissive and obedient. The final decision falls to the father who is regarded as the head of the family, yet the mother's responsibility for budgeting and running the family home is similarly valued.

Traditionally child care was the province of the females in the extended families. With more and more Filipino women joining the workforce, particularly in the cities, young girls were employed as live-in helpers, however, even this has changed and particularly with the more affluent families, child care centres are operating within the Philippines. In rural areas the traditional child rearing practices continue with women being the primary carers.

EDUCATION: Education is compulsory at the primary level and free until the end of high school, and so the enrolment rate is close to 100%. Their education begins with Filipino and later English is introduced. Most Filipinos are bilingual or trilingual.

CUISINE

Filipino cuisine is a blend of Malay, Chinese, Arabic, American and Spanish elements. The staple food is rice which is served at every meal and features in many desserts. Mid-morning and mid-afternoon tea is a custom common in the Philippines and is also known as *meriendas* at which time cake is served.

REFERENCES

1. The Filipinos, A People of Many Cultures, A D Mello, VICSEG 1990.
2. <http://www.everyculture.com/No-Sa/The-Philippines.html>