

Country Handbook: Philippines



Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities and are being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to the Philippines. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We pray that God will bless your time in the Philippines.



Country Information



The Philippines is made up of 7,100 islands, but the majority of the population lives on just 11 of them. Filipinos are known for being warm, hospitable people with a love for family, food and music.

Main languages:

Filipino (Tagalog dialect is most common), English

Climate:

Tropical (hot temperatures, high humidity and heavy rainfall)

Main religions:

Catholic (78.8%), Muslim (6.4%), Protestant (3.9%), Other (10.9%)

Currency:

Philippine Peso



Compassion in the Philippines

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Jesus' name in the Philippines since 1972. Approximately 18% of the population live below the poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children **AGED 3 AND OLDER** attend their local Compassion centre on weekends, usually Saturdays.



For more information on the Philippines, scan the QR code or visit: compassion.com.au/where-we-work/philippines

Compassion assisted children in the Philippines typically attend program activities at their local child development centres. Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

8:00am - A time of prayer and devotion.

9:00am - Spiritual lessons where children sing songs and learn Bible stories.

10:30am - Break time where children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships. A nutritious snack is provided, often bread or soup.

11:00am - Social-emotional lessons that range from conflict resolution to developing healthy self-esteem and a godly character.

12:00pm - Lunch time, which usually consists of fish or meat, vegetables and rice. Many children don't receive regular meals at home due to food scarcity.

1:00pm - Health lessons where children are taught practical health and hygiene tips. For example, how to prevent malaria.

2:00pm - Letter writing and career planning. Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests and set goals for their future.

Children also often have opportunities to join in extracurricular activities such as camps, sporting events and talent shows. Parents can attend general assemblies and orientation, and there are some churches that have initiated activities like Bible studies and care groups. Caregivers are also involved in letter writing.

Cultural Considerations



Clothing

- **Women:** Please cover your shoulders and wear clothes with modest necklines as an indication of respect. Long pants and skirts below the knee are usually acceptable, but please bring at least one long dress or skirt to wear to church.
- **Men:** Please wear long pants and a collared shirt to church and project visits.
- Piercings (other than ears) and tattoos are not widely accepted in churches. Please cover tattoos if possible.

Greetings

- **Men:** Shake hands firmly with Filipino men—both upon introduction and subsequent meetings. It is best to wait for a Filipino woman to initiate a handshake. Please do not hug children or put them on your lap.
- **Women:** You may initiate a handshake with Filipino men and women.
- When introduced to an elderly person, children take their right hand and put it on their forehead—a sign of respect called 'pagmamano' or 'mano'.

Tipping

- Tipping is expected for many services and optional for those where a service charge is included. The standard practice is to tip 10 per cent of the total bill.

Security

- Do not accept food or drinks from strangers.
- Pickpockets are common in some areas. Use normal precautions and avoid carrying valuables or important documents in your day bag.
- Avoid using local moneychangers as they are renowned for taking advantage of tourists.
- **Emergency contact information:**
Local emergency number: 911
Compassion Philippines office: +63 2 8898 2474
Australian Embassy: +63 2 7757 8100

Body language

- Filipinos (especially children) may try to get your attention by brushing a finger against your elbow.
- Raised eyebrows often indicate that you have been understood.
- It is considered impolite to put your hands on your hips when talking.
- Please refrain from pointing or beckoning someone with your finger. Filipinos pout their lips to point.
- Avoid staring as Filipinos may interpret this as a hostile gesture. If you are stared at, it's best to look away or return a nice smile.
- When it is necessary to walk between two people, lower your head with your hands clasped in front of you as you pass them. This gesture confers respect.
- It is considered impolite to lean on your arms when at the table.

Language

- English is commonly spoken in the Philippines, but not always fluently. Here's a few handy Filipino (Tagalog) phrases:
Hello: Hello
How are you? Kamusta ka?
Sorry: Pasensya na / sorry po
Thank you: Salamat / thank you po
Goodbye: Paalam
Yes: Opo
No: Hindi
Older brother: Kuya (use for any male older than you, either in place of or along with their name: Kuya [Name])
Older sister: Ate (as above for any female older than you: Ate [Name])
What's your name? Ano ang pangalan mo?
My name is: Ang pangalan ko ay
Do you speak English? Nagsasalita ba kayo ng Ingles?
I don't understand: Hindi ko maintindihan
- **Language/phrases to avoid:** swear words, 'stupid', comments on someone's accent, size or old age.
- Positivity and politeness are part of the Filipino culture. It's best to avoid any displays of negativity or anger.



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

Online sexual exploitation of children is rampant in the Philippines. Unfortunately, 4 out of 5 children are vulnerable to online sexual abuse or bullying. Please pray for God's protection, and that Compassion's local church partners will continue to act with wisdom as they create safe environments for highly vulnerable children.

The Philippines is particularly susceptible to natural disasters, experiencing an average of 20 typhoons per year. Please pray for the communities devastated by these disasters and for our local church partners who work to meet their immediate and long-term needs.

Many children born into poverty become malnourished during early childhood. 20 per cent of children are underweight and 30 per cent suffer from growth stunting. Please pray that mums and babies will get the support they need to stay healthy.



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