

The Children of the Philippines:

From Susan Quisel (RE Director of the UUCP):

Here are some things that you can share to your children about our Filipino Children's especially in the island of Negros.

Children's in the rural areas usually live in big families. They are breastfed babies. Pre-school kids are always sent with their mother to the center. At school age, those can afford families/parents will send their children to school. They used to carry big bag-packs with books and packed lunch.

They used old books-books that were handed down from previous school years. Schools are walking distance that they have to walk not less than 3 to 5 kilometers to reach school and sometimes barefooted and sometimes crossing rivers. Weekends we can find them helping their parents in the small corn or sugar cane farm.

For children who were not able to go school, most of their times will be helping their parents. Girls usually take the household chores and the boys will go with their parents in farms, taking care of their farm animals like water buffalo, cows, horse, pigs and chickens, fetching water and gathering firewood.

At a very early age, they learn to take responsibility.

From conversations with Nihal and Rebecca:

Children love to climb trees , explore the sea, make sand castles, play marbles. If the parents can afford their education, they must start in preschool if they want to advance. The cost of tuition is only about \$6, however the cost of uniforms and supplies increases this cost to about \$20 a month. Most of the UUs of the Philippines are very poor so this is beyond their means. But that doesn't mean that they don't yearn for education and a way to escape their poverty. Even the children of the parents that can afford their education must walk 2 to 4 miles each way to their school buildings. Once they are in their classes, they have the usual subjects and values classes. Unfortunately many of the children are able to advance in school only until the middle grades. Their parents can then no longer afford to pay for their education and rely on

them to help with the difficult chores of their agricultural lifestyle. The parents also grow unable to help the children with their school work because they were uneducated themselves and feel helpless to help their children move on. They feel stuck and question whether their efforts will ever pan out.

I also frequently heard during my visit that parents dreamed for a better life and education for their children.

Urban children love to ride their bicycles, visit internet cafes, play basketball, softball, volleyball, play music (especially guitar) and text on their cell phones. Those with access to TV love to watch cartoons and wrestling. Paint ball is a big sport in the Philippines.

Teenage pregnancy is a huge problem and battered wives are very common. Their conservative culture spreads an attitude of "hands off of family affairs" and this attitude helps the abuse continue.