

Committee: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3)

Issue: Tackling the issue of social stratification in the Philippines

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Position: Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Chrysanthi Dellas-Grivas and it is an honor to serve as the Main Chair of the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA3) in this year's American College Greece Model United Nations Conference. I am currently an 11th-grade student at the German School of Athens and looking forward to studying law in the future.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you all on your appointment as delegates in the 5th session of ACGMUN. I believe that you will enjoy this year's conference, especially if you participate in the debate and pose crucial questions to the other delegates.

Secondly, I would like to mention how important Model UN is. After four years of being an MUNer and having attended multiple conferences, as a chair, delegate, judge, and advocate, I can say with no doubt that MUN is one of the best extracurricular activities a high school student can undertake. Hence, one can make new friends all around the world with similar interests. But most importantly, through MUN adolescents are being educated about ongoing significant issues of our world and trying to find solutions.

This Study Guide will try to answer questions concerning the issue of social stratification of the Philippines, as well as give you a clear overview of the issue in order to comprehend the topic at hand. Therefore, I strongly suggest that you include it in your in-depth research for the Conference.

Last but not least, should you have any further questions or anything of the sort do not hesitate to contact me directly via email (chrysanthidellas@gmail.com).

I am looking forward to meeting you all and having a fruitful debate at this year's ACGMUN Conference!

Sincerely,
Chrysanthi Dellas-Grivas

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The Republic of the Philippines is a country in Southeastern Asia composed of 7,640 islands. The stunning nature of the Philippines and the unique cuisine attract thousands of tourists every year. However, its citizens face many problems that tourists, generally the rest of the world, are not familiar with. The points at issue are the unending “Drug War”, police brutality, political killings and threats, Freedom of Media, the death penalty and of course the Covid-19 pandemic. All these problems were caused, amongst other things, by the social stratification in the Philippines. But what is social stratification in the Philippines?

The official definition of “social stratification” is “the allocation of individuals and groups according to various social hierarchies of differing power, status, or prestige.”¹. In the Philippines individuals are allocated in three different social classes, namely: the Upper class/High Income Class, the Middle class, and the Lower class.

These classes are the cause of the enormous social gap in the Philippines. More than half of the population belongs to the low-income class (58,4%).² Meanwhile 40% of the Filipino population are part of the middle class and only 1.4% are upper class.

A question that arises from these shocking facts is, what determines a person’s social position? Of course, one's family position in society and money play a substantial role when placing someone in a social class. Furthermore, skin color and beauty, as well as the possession of a vehicle and a house are vital criteria.

All in all, the social stratification in the Philippines is a current issue which leads to the already enormous social gap in the country and a matter of ongoing debate.

¹ “Social Stratification” - Robert Andersen, *Oxford Bibliographies*, 25 October 2018
<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0053.xml>

² “Defining and profiling the middle class” *PIDS Policy Notes*, December 2018

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Colonization

“Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another.... The term colony comes from the Latin word “*colonus*”, meaning farmer. This root reminds us that the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin.”³

Lower Class

“The “lower class” is thought to have the lowest standing in society, mainly due to their lack of income...The “lower class” lives at or below the poverty line. It consists of people who work but earn relatively little income (usually minimum wage or slightly higher) and people who don't work...The “lower class” usually consists of people who don't have adequate skills or education to earn higher paying jobs and people who aren't able to work.”⁴

Middle Class

“The middle class is a description given to individuals and households who typically fall between the working class and the upper class within a socio-economic hierarchy. They have more income available for consumption, and may own property. Those in the middle class often are employed as professionals, managers, and civil servants.”⁵

Social Gap

“Typical social scenario of under-developing countries caused by economic inequality.”⁶

³ “Colonialism” Margaret Kohn, Tue Aug 29, 2017
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/>

⁴ “Definition of Lower Class”, Dave Manuel, <https://www.davemanuel.com/investor-dictionary/lower-class/>

⁵ “Middle Class”, Adam Hayes, June 25, 2020 <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/middle-class.asp>

⁶ “What is Social Gap?” - IGI Global <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/brazil/41209#:~:text=1..countries%20caused%20by%20economic%20inequalit>
y.

Social Inequalities

“Social inequality refers to relational processes in society that have the effect of limiting or harming a group's social status, social class, and social circle. Areas of social inequality include access to voting rights, freedom of speech and assembly, the extent of property rights and access to education, health care, quality housing, traveling, transportation, vacationing and other social goods and services.”⁷

Social Stratification

“Social stratification means the differentiation of a given population into hierarchically superposed classes. It is manifested in the existence of upper and lower social layers. Its basis and very essence consist in an unequal distribution of rights and privileges, duties and responsibilities, social values and privations, social power and influences among the members of a society.”⁸

Upper Class

“a social group consisting of the people who have the highest social rank and who are usually rich”⁹

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The influence of the Spanish colonization on the social stratification

Before the Spanish colonization many native-Filipinos were living close to nature as well as trading rice with the Chinese and the Japanese. During that time native-Filipinos were over 200 ethnolinguistic groups, who had their own settlements and spoke their own language. Some examples of such groups are the Tagalog people and the biggest ethnolinguistic groups, the Visayan people. The Spanish colonized the Philippines on the 13th of February 1521. Spanish navigator and governor Miguel López de Legazpi and his fellow expeditioners came from Mexico and conquered Cebu, a Philippian province. The first political structure of the Philippines was created during that time, since many islands, which belong to today's Philippines, were occupied.

During the Spanish colonization, the religion of Christianity was introduced to the different ethnolinguistic groups. Furthermore, the Spanish built different buildings in the Philippines such as the first modern university in Asia (University of Santo Tomas)

⁷ Science Daily https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/social_inequality.htm

⁸ “What Is Social Stratification?” – NKU, sociologist and humanistic scholar Pitirim A. Sorokin, <https://onlinedegrees.nku.edu/articles/sociology/what-is-social-stratification.aspx#:~:text=%22Social%20stratification%20means%20the%20differentiation,upper%20and%20lower%20social%20layers.>

⁹ Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/upper-class>

and the Intramuros. The Intramuros used to be the seat of the Spanish government, but today it is a top tourist attraction.

All these western/European elements shaped Filipino society. These factors melted together with the ones of the Pre-Spanish Colonization era and created a new culture which today is the Philippines. However, these elements also brought Europeans with them, as well as social stratification. The Europeans were regarded as the high upper class who lived in enormous houses and had a western, expensive lifestyle. Meanwhile many Filipinos were farmers, servants, and later factory workers, who lived in small houses under poverty and belonged to the lower class.

The Philippine Revolution

The Spanish had colonized the islands for over 300 years and even named them the Philippines after King Philip II of Spain. The cause of the Spanish-American War was America's support for the Filipino community, who had struggled for over 300 years and the explosion of a U.S. battleship. The war ended in 1898 and the United States of America won. Therefore, a peace treaty was created, where the US took over sovereignty of many states, including the Philippines.

Before the Spanish American War, Spain had started to weaken as a state; they had lost many colonies and therefore, increased development in the Philippines. In 1872 three Filipino priests were executed on grounds of agitation and alleged aid in the Cavite mutiny. The Cavite Mutiny was a protest from many workers, who were unhappy with their salaries. However, the Cavite Mutiny did not end in favor of the Filipino workers and therefore these priests were accused of helping them create this commotion. During this time different societies were (re)created in the islands, who wanted to participate in the reform and written documents, called the Anti-Spanish pieces, were read more and more. One of these societies was the Katipunan, who would play a vital role in the revolution with their leader Andrés Bonifacio. The organization rose to fame amidst the deportation of the Filipino nationalist and writer Jose Rizal in July 1892. In the following years the Katipunan would constantly grow and receive financial and military support from different groups across the world. On the 19th of August 1896, the Spanish government recognized the Katipunan as an organization and started arresting hundreds of supporters on the grounds of treason. The leader Andrés Bonifacio declared the revolution against Spain by attacking the capital Manila on August 29th. The specific attack failed, but other attacks in nearby provinces were won by the organization. Meanwhile, some conflicts concerning power and leadership were created but solved due to the execution of Andrés Bonifacio in 1897. Emilio Aguinaldo was the new leader of the Katipunan and some months later the Pact of Biak-na-Bato was signed, in order to reduce tensions. Some Filipino nationalists, who participated in the revolution exiled themselves to Hong Kong. However, the hostilities were never reduced and on June 12th 1897, Aguinaldo

declared the Philippines as an independent state. This Declaration of Independence was neither recognized from Spain nor from the United States of America, who were in the Spanish-American War during that time.

After the United States took over sovereignty of the Philippines in 1898, one year later, on February the 4th 1899, the Battle of Manila commenced where Filipino fought against Americans. This was the start of the Philippine-American War, which would end in 1902 in favor of the United States. The Philippines became an internationally recognized independent in 1946.

The Postwar period - The Creation of the Three Social Classes

After the Philippines became an independent state in 1946, many different ethnicities were living in the Philippines. Some Spanish people whose families had come over 300 years ago in the islands had become Filipinos belonging to the upper class. Furthermore, the middle class was created as well, with lawyers, teachers and businessmen with small companies. Lastly, the lower class consisted of workers and farmers who lived under the minimum wage.

Nowadays, this social gap still exists. The Filipino society are loving people who have not forgotten their country's past and are proud to be an independent state. The Philippines are a democratic country and a member of the United Nations. Furthermore, the two official languages are Filipino and English; Filipino being the national language and English a language for higher education. The Philippine's colonial history is not only evident in the languages but also in the religion since most Filipinos are Christian (88%).

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

UN Country Team (UNCT)

The United Nation Country Team (UNCT) exists in the Philippines where it has more than 11 programmes and specialized agencies who try to ameliorate the social environment as well as diminish the social stratification in the country. The UNCT is "supporting state institutions to respect, uphold and implement the international treaty obligations" as well as bring "normative policy support, technical assistance and advocacy, but most importantly, its ability to convene, coordinate and mobilize stakeholders from across the political spectrum in support of the country's development agenda." ¹⁰

¹⁰ "Philippines", United Nations, [https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/philippines#:~:text=The%20UN%20Country%20Team%20\(UNCT,OCHA%2C%20UNIC%20and%20UNDSS\)](https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/philippines#:~:text=The%20UN%20Country%20Team%20(UNCT,OCHA%2C%20UNIC%20and%20UNDSS))

United Nations Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC)

The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations Economic & Social Council belong to the 2030 Agenda. These 17 goals were set in 2015 and try to solve humanitarian, environmental and social issues, in order to make the world a better place.

One of these Sustainable Development Goals is “Reducing Inequalities” (SDG 10). The Social Stratification in the Philippines is a prime illustration of our society’s inequalities. Therefore, the United Nations strive to reduce the social gap in the Philippines and in other countries across the globe by having already created 25 events that try to tackle this SDG.

UN Civil Society Advisory Committee

The UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC) is the advisory body of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The CSAC is the UN’s development agency, whose main goal is to aid all member states achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, they inspect if the member States who have signed the SDGs follow them.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
13 February 1521	Beginning of the Spanish colonization
10 December 1898	The US wins the Spanish-American War. Therefore, the Philippines became US territory.
9 August 1896	The Spanish government recognized the Katipunan as an organization
29 August 1896	The leader Andrés Bonifacio declared the revolution against Spain by attacking the capital Manila.
12 June 1897	Aguinaldo declared the Philippines as an independent state - not recognized
4 February 1899	The Battle of Manila commenced where Filipino fought against Americans.
1899-1902	Philippine-American War
1946	The Philippines became an internationally recognized independent.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (PFSD)

The first attempt was in November 2018, when the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) signed an agreement with the Filipino government. This agreement was the Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (PFSD) and would be kept from 2019-2023. The PFSD is not providing development assistance rather creating a collaboration for a strategic partnership. Needless to say, the UNCT is taking the government's capacities into consideration.

United Nations Civil Society Advisory Committee (UNSCA)

The second attempt to solve the issue was the Establishment of the UN Civil Society Advisory Committee (UNCSAC). As previously mentioned, (in the Major Countries and Organizations Involved- Section) it is a consultative body to the UN Country Team. The UNCSAC will review the countries actions concerning the agenda 2030 and try to aid them.

Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (PFSD)

The third attempt to solve the issue of social stratification in the Philippines is the Establishment of the Philippines UN Youth Advisory Board (UN YAB). The UN YAB was created in 2018 and represents voices of different adolescents across the world. Furthermore, the UN YAB was established by the UNCT, so it focuses on the 2030 Agenda as well and helps the Philippines reach these goals.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The issue of social stratification in the Philippines has been a big debate for many decades now, but unfortunately a solution has not been found yet. It is a common belief that the United Nations and the Philippines themselves should take vast and realistic actions against social stratification.

One possible solution to this issue is that the government of the Philippines take action. Firstly, fair and equal rights should be provided for everyone, no matter their appearance or their economic situation. This will be possible if access to education is facile for all Filipinos. Today, many Filipino children work as farmers or in factories. They usually do not know how to read or how to write and therefore are unable to get a better job than they already have (in factories for example). However, their income is so low that they live in poverty and belong to the lower class. If education for all were mandatory, more children would go to school and get a degree which would help

them find a high-paying job. This would lead to social mobility, meaning the ability to change classes.

Another solution to the issue of social stratification in the Philippines would be if the upper class were to pay more taxes than the low-income class. This would create a balance in the Filipino society, where no one has to live in poverty and starve but no one who has an enormous amount of money for personal entertainment.

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