

Family Planning: Philippines to offer free contraception to millions of women living in poverty

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President Duterte believes families should be restricted to three children to help reduce poverty.

Over six million women living in poverty-stricken areas of the Philippines are to be given free contraception to reduce unplanned pregnancies, according to President Rodrigo Duterte.

A drive by the Filipino government to improve family planning services is a crucial step in its attempt to cut poverty to 13 per cent over the next five years, economic officials said.

An executive order approved by President Duterte said two million women living in dire conditions will be offered contraception by 2018, and the rest soon after.

During his election campaign last year, the president repeatedly expressed his belief that three children should be the maximum number for families. At the same time he outlined plans to make birth control options more readily available to all.

Mr Duterte's decision is likely to be strongly opposed by the Filipino Catholic Church. Around 80 per cent of the Philippines' 103 million residents are Roman Catholic, according to the Pew Research Center.

The government has been engaged in a legal battle to extend the use of contraception since 2015, when the country's Supreme Court put a temporary restriction on the distribution of contraceptive implants.

Every day more than ten Filipino women living in poverty die from pregnancy-related complications, the government argued. It said the greater availability of contraception would also significantly reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

Meanwhile Filipino schools have been asked to provide gender sensitive and rights-based sex education to children, the department of education confirmed. The Philippines is the only country in the Asia-Pacific region where the teenage pregnancy rate has risen over the past twenty years, according to the UN [\[1\]](#).

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P.S.

* The Independent Online. Thursday 12 January 2017:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/philippines-offer-free-contraception-millions-poor-wo-men-living-poverty-rodrigo-duterte-three-a7523726.html>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.usnews.com/news/news/articles/2016-07-07/philippines-only-country-in-asia-where-teen-pregnancy-rising>