

## Interfaith dialogues and networking in support of reproductive health and family planning in the Philippines

In the Philippines, since July 2016, Catholics for Reproductive Health (C4RH) demonstrates how to catalyze interfaith collaboration in support of family planning, and leverage faith organizations' wide networks and social and political influence. As a member of Faith to Action Network, C4RH benefited from capacity building in advocacy skills, and seed funds for its local level advocacy.



RoMinEc, planning workshop at Mindoro Oriental, Region IVB (Luzon subregion) 2016

Initial consultations resulted in faith groups' commitments and the subsequent formation of a network called "Interfaith for Dignity & Equality Advancement & Solidarity (IDEAS)". The network is anchored on respectful dialogues and principled collaborations based on common grounds.

It is composed of 32 representatives from 8 regions and 12 provinces representing 8 churches and faith traditions in the Philippines.

These are Ang Iglesia Metodista sa Pilipinas (AIMP), Antiochian Greek Orthodox Church, Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), Iglesia Unida Ekyumenikal (IUE), some individual members of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), United Methodist Church (UMC), United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), the Imam Council of the Philippines, and several ecumenical groups.



IDEAS capacity building & mapping workshop Philippines 2017

Each member organization has developed a plan to carry out discussions on family planning and reproductive health in their communities and to integrate it into their planning and programming.

## Already, C4RH and network members are honoring their commitments.

They have cascaded their new knowledge and consulted 573 faith leaders on family planning during 13 awareness raising sessions. They have built the capacity of additional 208 faith leaders to speak on and advocate for family planning, who in turn have made commitments and plans. In addition, three outreach activities have been reported targeting 393 clients with family planning information and services. In less than 2 years, IDEAS has become a coordination mechanism for advocacy within and outside of member institutions.

## Most notable organizational changes

Iglesia Filipina Independiente has carried out awareness raising activities for its priests, parish councils, and youth ministry integrating gender and reproductive health. An interesting activity was the orientation of Bishops' spouses during the IFI Executive Council Meeting, gaining their commitment to engage their bishop husbands on family planning.

The leadership of the Imam Council of the Philippines gathered its members to discuss the reproductive health law. It also trained imams as well as chaplains of the Philippine National Police, and women police officers.

## About Catholics for Reproductive Health

Catholics for Reproductive Health (C4RH), a national advocacy group in the Philippines and a fellowship of individual Catholics, endeavors to bring Catholics into full harmony with their faith and their right to sexual and reproductive health. C4RH was borne out of a collective inspiration to clarify misinformation and misconceptions about reproductive health among the majority of the Filipinos, who happen to be Catholics. C4RH also recognizes the intersectionality of SRHR with other social justice issues that prevent people from having dignified and fulfilling lives.

United Church of Christ in the Philippines informed its members of the reproductive health law, and organized a consultation among religious leaders and local government representatives. This resulted in a formal question to the City Mayor on why Sorsogon City only offered natural family planning methods and not the full contraceptive method mix. In addition, UCCP pastors offered their church for counseling and educating young people on adolescent reproductive health.



IFI, youth talking about sexuality 2016, UP Parish of Holy Cross, QC



Women celebration opening interfaith prayer, Oct 2016, Manila

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