

## **ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE PHILIPPINES**

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Series of national surveys in the Philippines contributed to the understanding of the nature, level and socio-psychological aspects of young people's sexual practices that had grabbed the attention of Philippine media, agencies and organizations concerned with youth, and decision makers. This has brought the issue to the public policy arena in a society that has long been regarded as a conservative Catholic population. The increasing practice of risky sexual and related behaviours and the attendant consequences faced by young people are now being presented and discussed although not without critics making the establishment of appropriate intervention difficult and slow. The debate on sex education in school has been a long drawn discussion creating rifts among sectors as well as disturbances to public programs. The issue of protection from early and unwanted pregnancy as well as prevention of STIs are embroiled in the debate such that almost nobody among the policy makers want to talk about it. This difficult socio-political situation where young people's reproductive health is concerned is seen to aggravate the risks of sex practices among them in the years to come.