



Child Malnutrition & Stunting: Our Silent Crisis

Cielito F. Habito
Chairman & Founding Partner



The (could be) good news

Jun 20, 2024

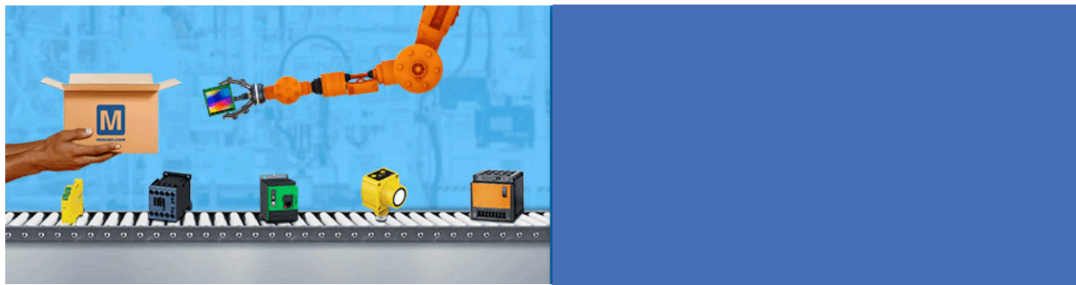
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Today's Paper

ECONOMY

Recto says Philippines to be 14th biggest economy by 2050

By: **Charie Abarca** - @inquirerdotnet INQUIRER.net / 02:21 PM March 13, 2024



MANILA, Philippines — Finance chief Ralph Recto sees the Philippines' potential to be the 14th biggest economy in the world by 2050.

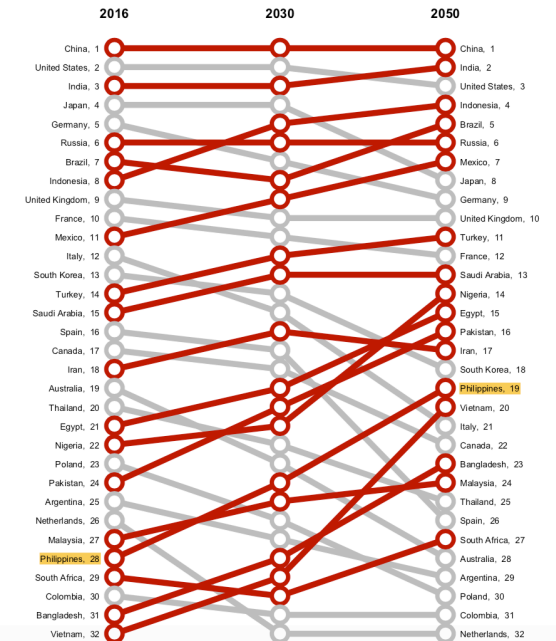
EDITORS' PICK MOST READ TECHNOLOGY



The World in 2050

falling to 10th place, while Indonesia could rise to 4th place by 2050 (see Figure 2). By 2050, six of the seven largest economies in the world could be today's emerging economies in PPP terms according to our projections.

Figure 2: Projected GDP rankings (at PPPs)



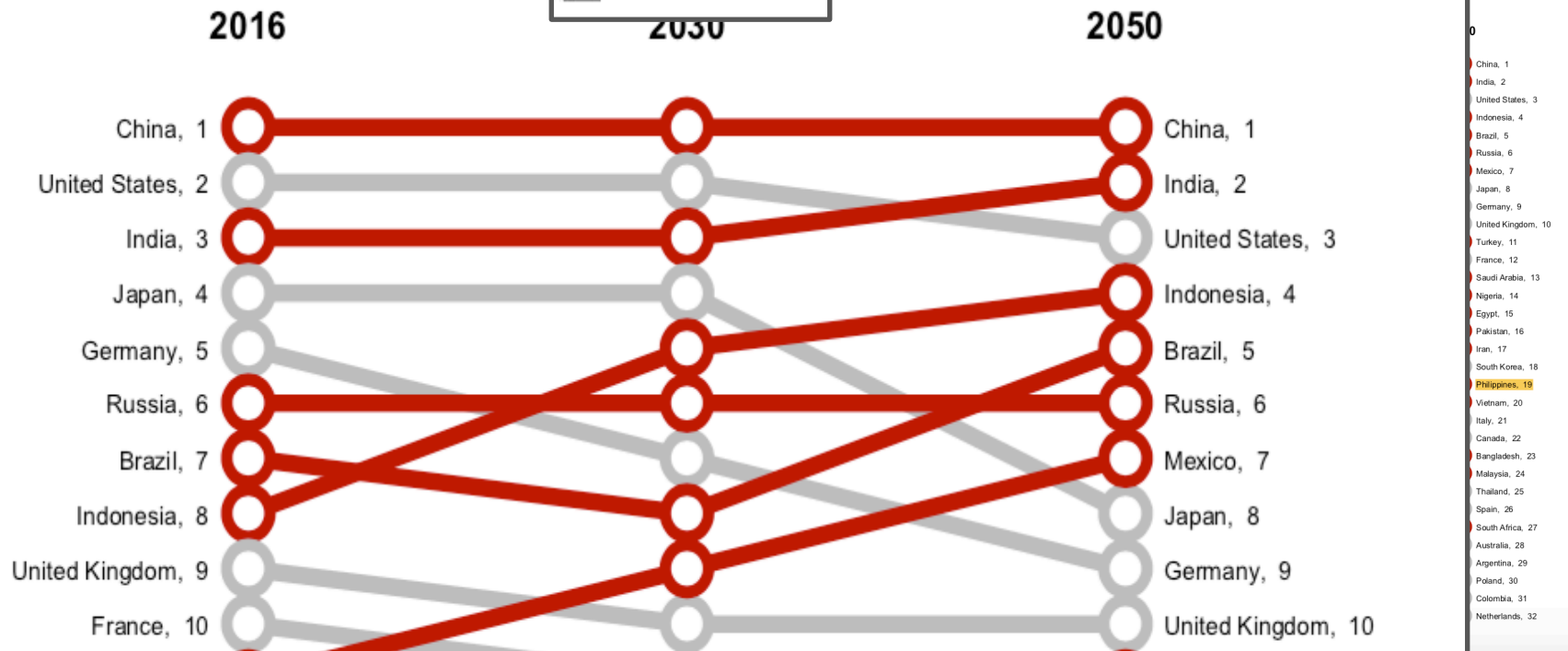
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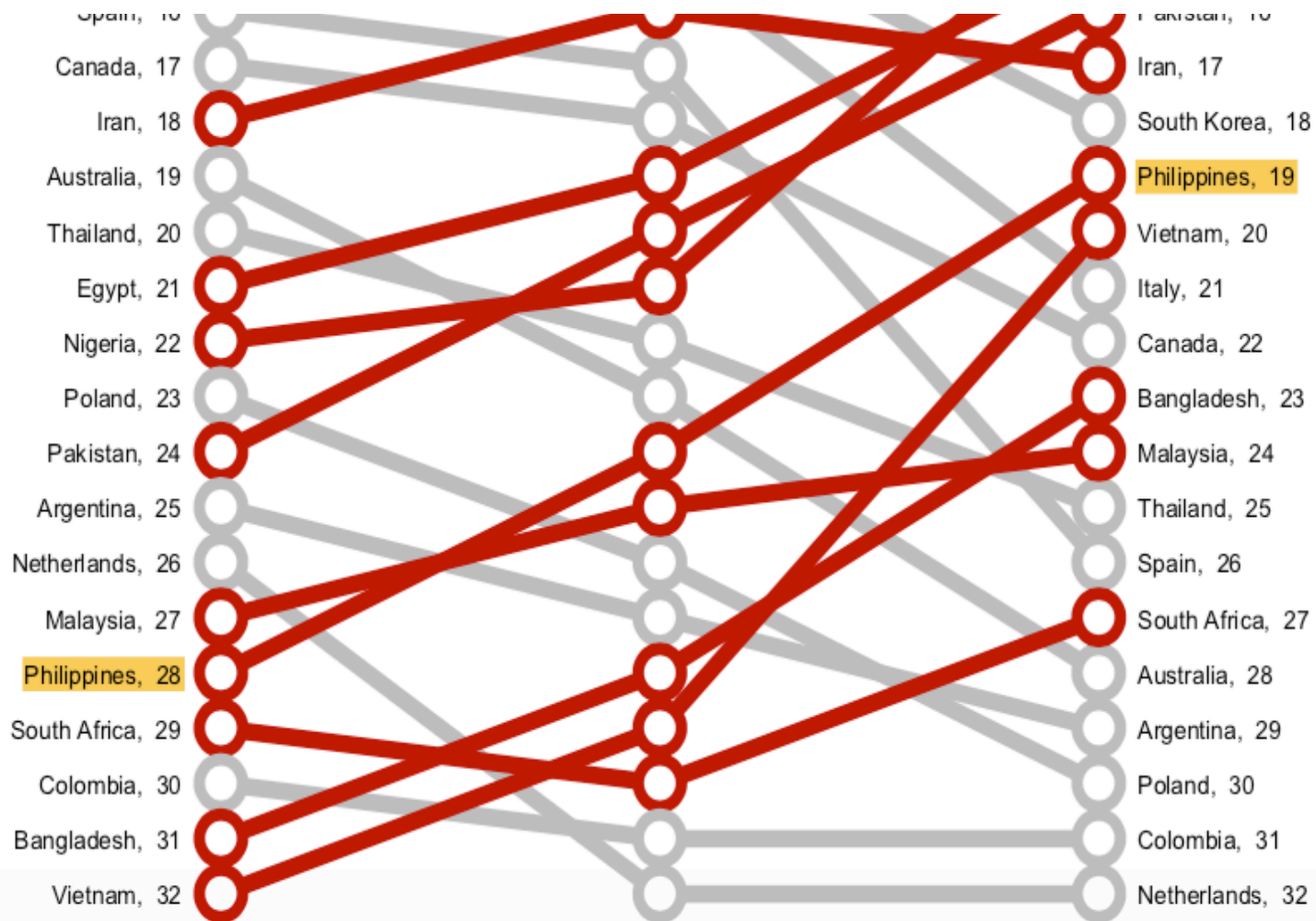
By 2050, six of the seven largest economies in the world could be today's top 10.



Figure 2: Projected GDP rankings (at PPP)



Jun 20

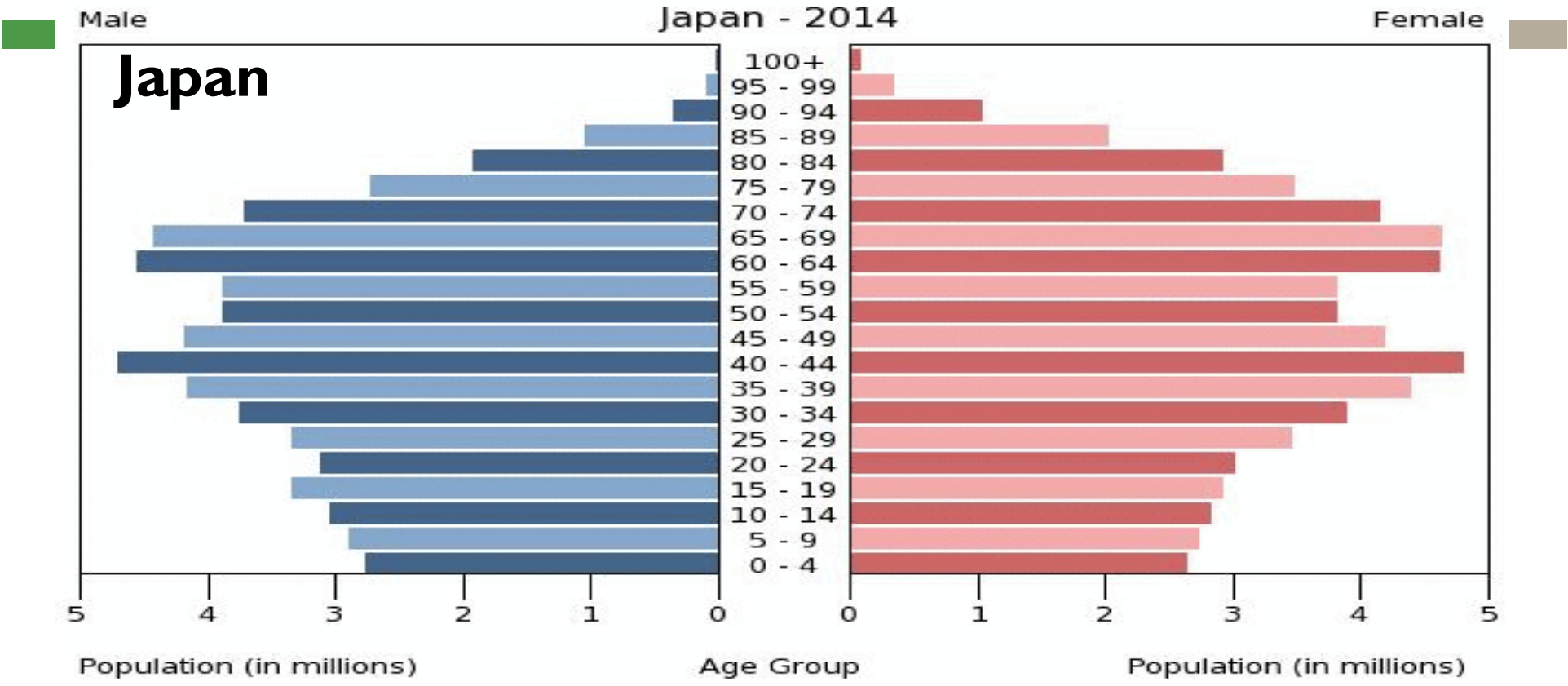


...six of the seven
...ing to our projections.

- China, 1
- India, 2
- United States, 3
- Indonesia, 4
- Brazil, 5
- Russia, 6
- Mexico, 7
- Japan, 8
- Germany, 9
- United Kingdom, 10
- Turkey, 11
- France, 12
- Saudi Arabia, 13
- Nigeria, 14
- Egypt, 15
- Pakistan, 16
- Iran, 17
- South Korea, 18
- Philippines, 19
- Vietnam, 20
- Italy, 21
- Canada, 22
- Bangladesh, 23
- Malaysia, 24
- Thailand, 25
- Spain, 26
- South Africa, 27
- Australia, 28
- Argentina, 29
- Poland, 30
- Colombia, 31
- Netherlands, 32

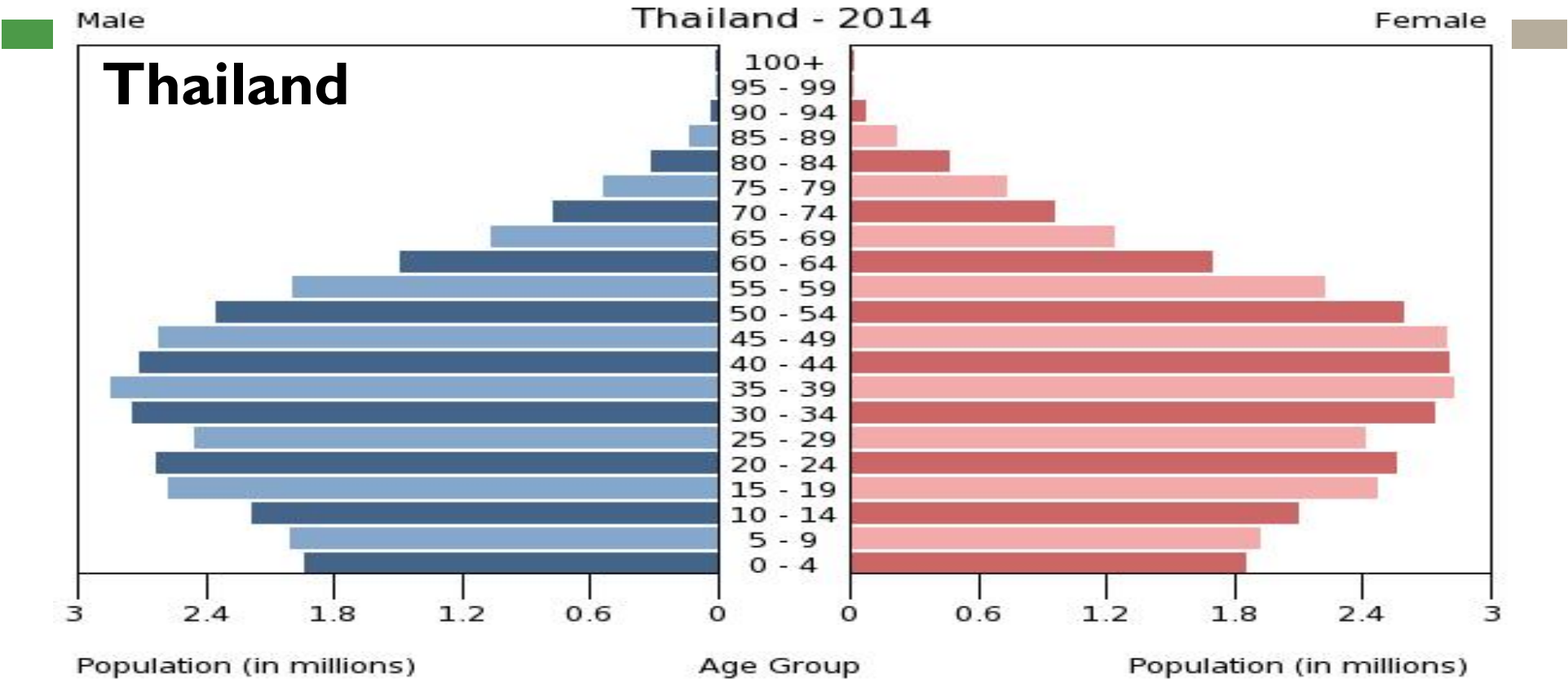
Our “Demographic Sweet Spot”

Population Age Profiles, 2014



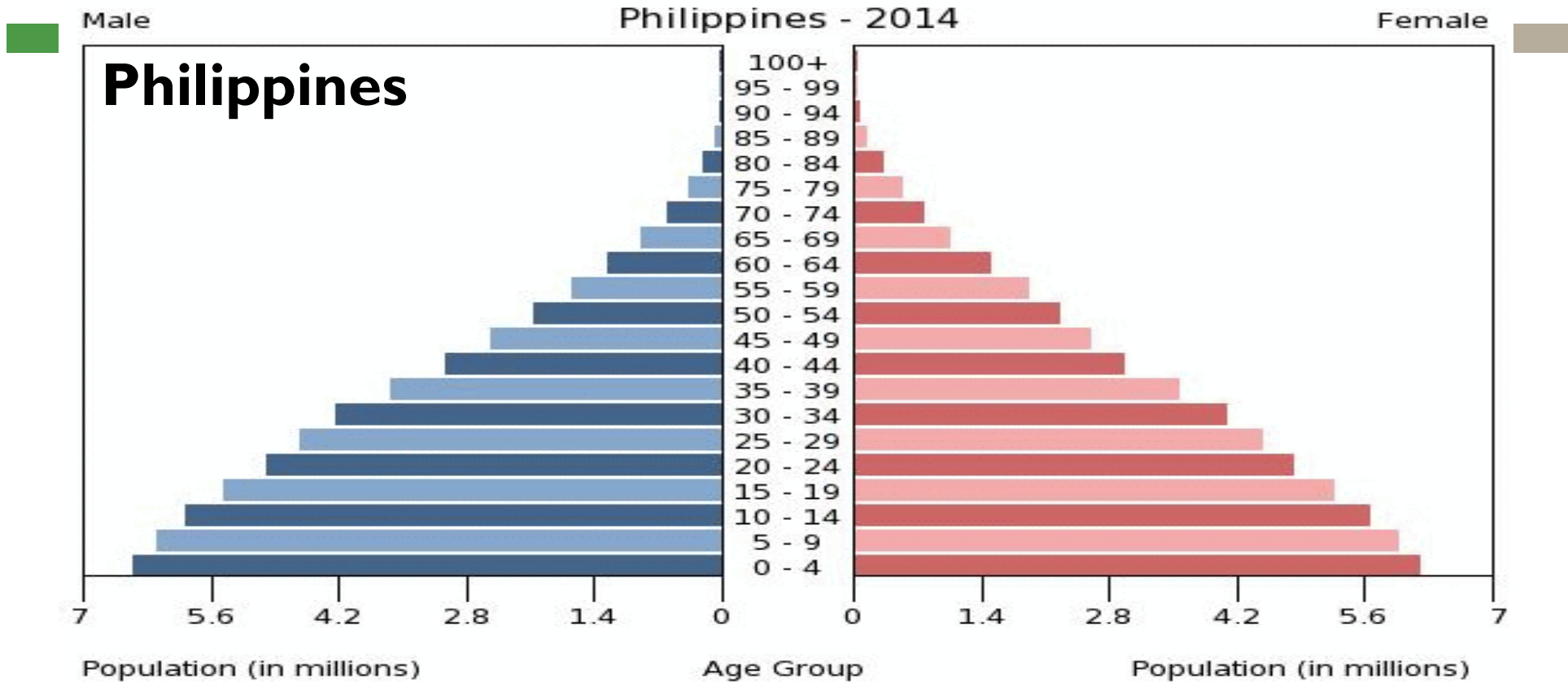
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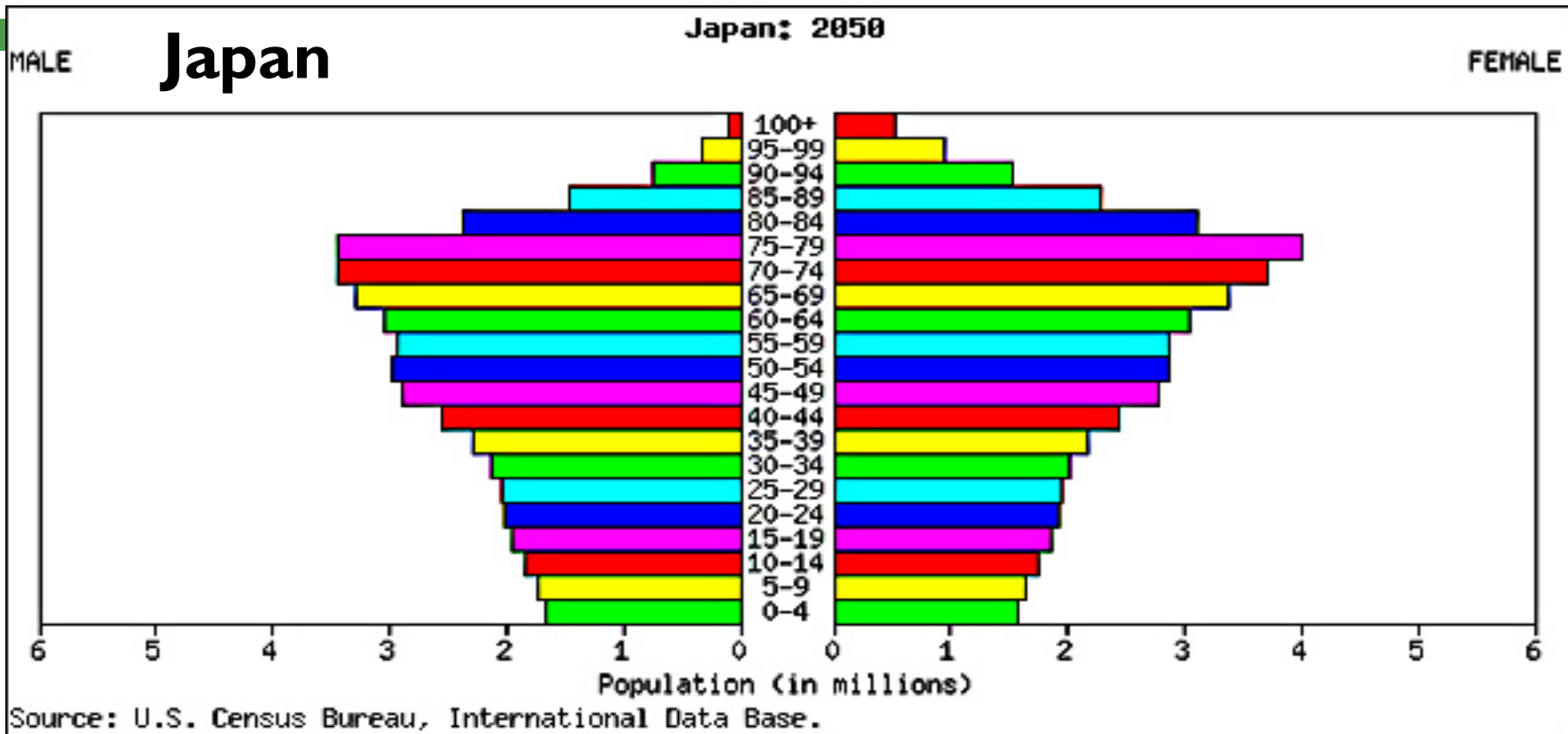
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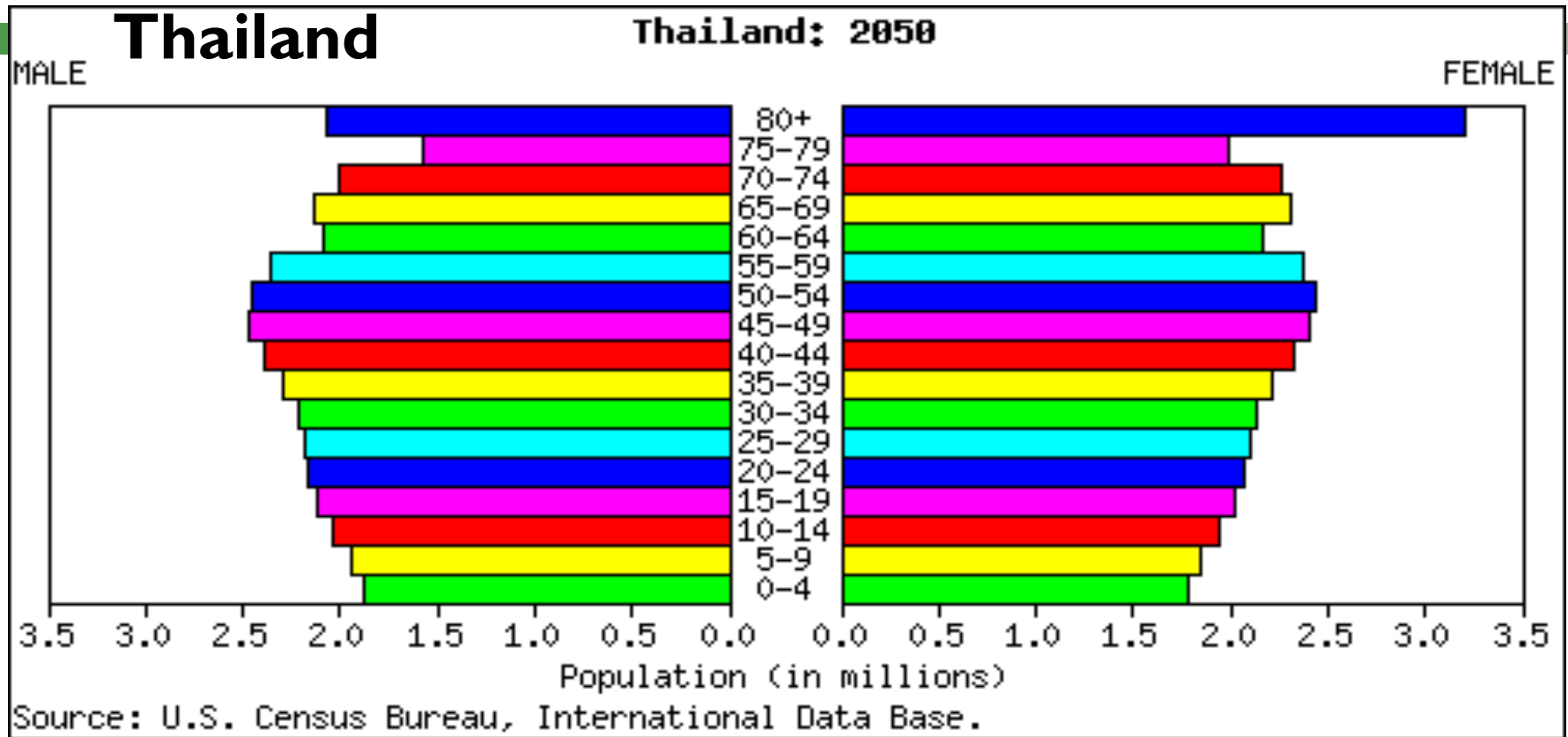
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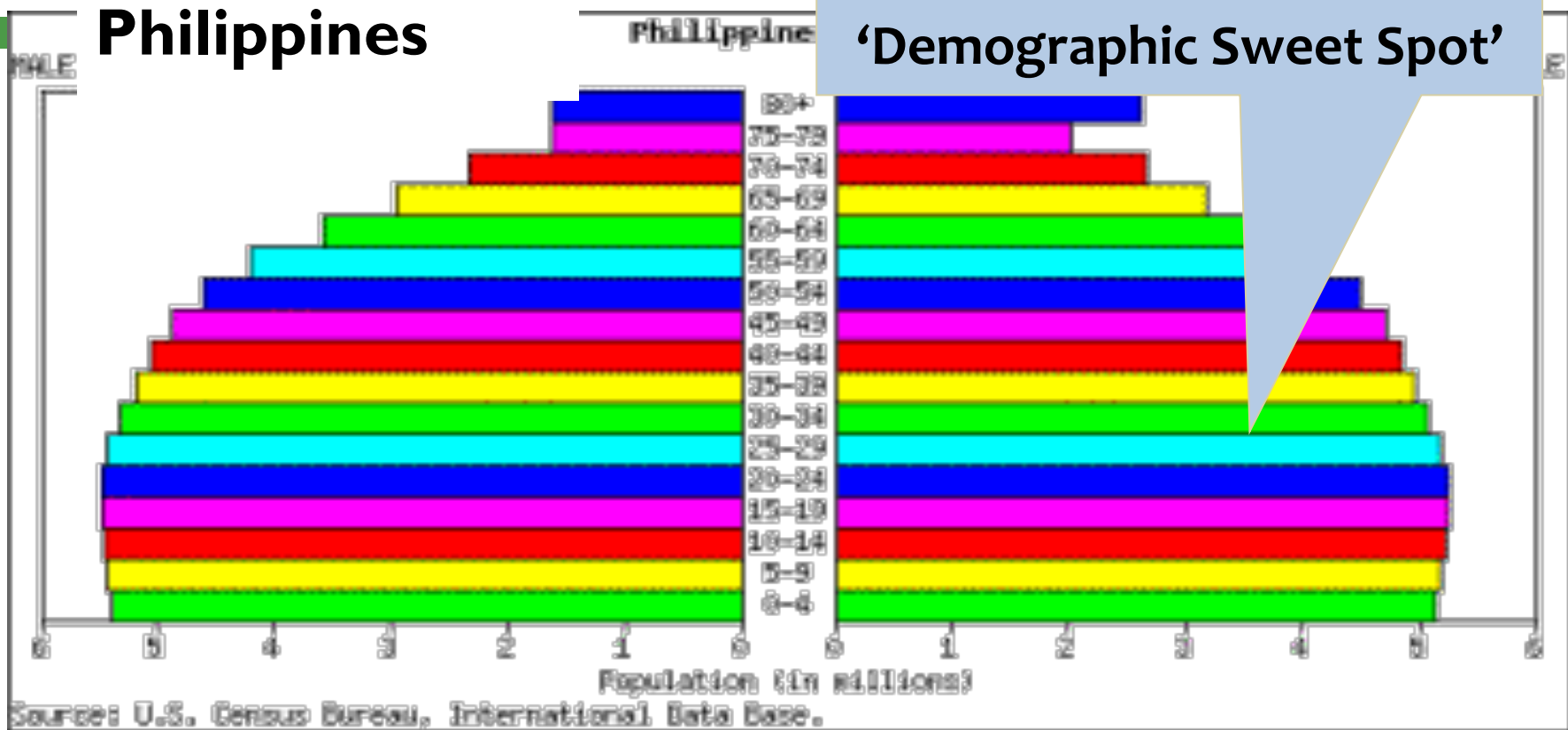


Our “Demographic Sweet Spot”

Population Age Profiles, 2050

Philippines

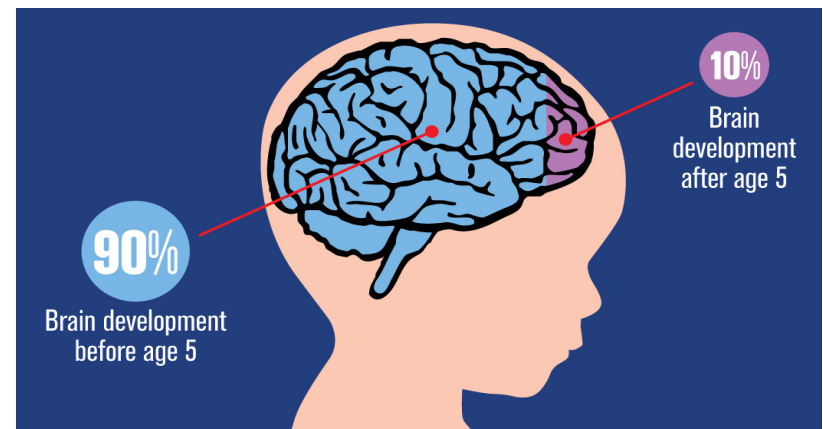
‘Demographic Sweet Spot’



But will all this really happen?

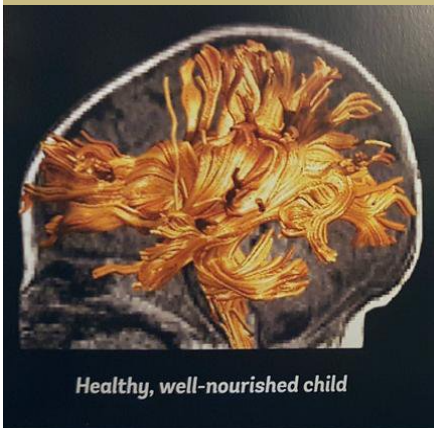
Our Fundamental Threat

- ❑ *Fact:* One out of 3 Filipino children 5 years old & below is severely malnourished, manifested in stunting (2 standard deviations or more shorter than the median height for their age)
- ❑ *Fact:* 90% of brain development happens before age 5 (most critical stage in a person's life)
- ❑ *Fact:* A severely malnourished/stunted child will grow up with lowered cognitive & learning ability, memory & intellect, and will never reach his/her full mental and physical potential



Why it may not happen:

- Incidence of **child stunting** at 5 years old & below in PHL remains too high and higher than in most of our neighbors
- Height is not the real issue, but **brain development**; thus, a **child stunted at 5 years old is damaged for life** and will end up with much lower

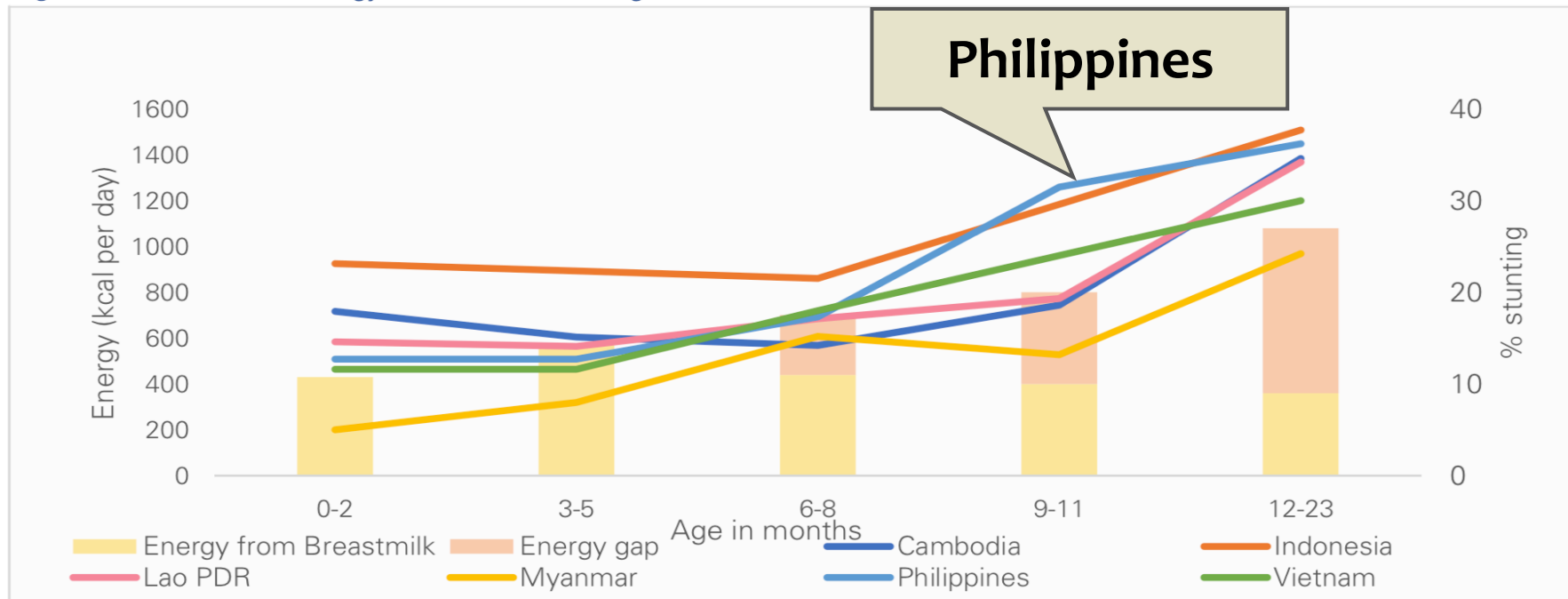


- physical and mental capability, hence much lower earning capacity
- Effect will be mostly felt long into the future thru low workforce productivity and low wages/ incomes



Why it may not happen:

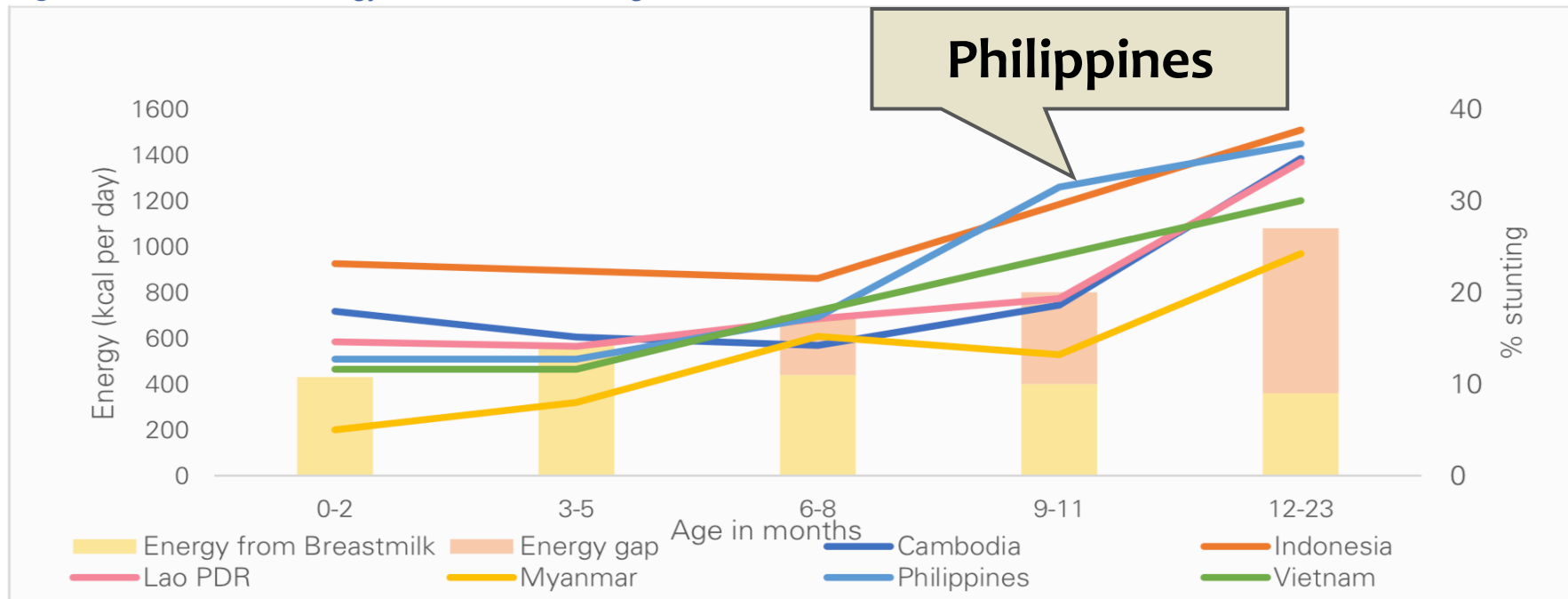
Figure 4. Increase in energy needs and stunting of children in the six countries



Sources: CDHS2014, RISKESDAS 2018, LSIS II 2017, MDHS2015-2016, ENNS 2015, NNS 2017. WHO, Complementary feeding family foods for breastfed children; WHO, Geneva, 2000. *Note: Vietnam stunting data calculated using slightly different age groups based on data availability.

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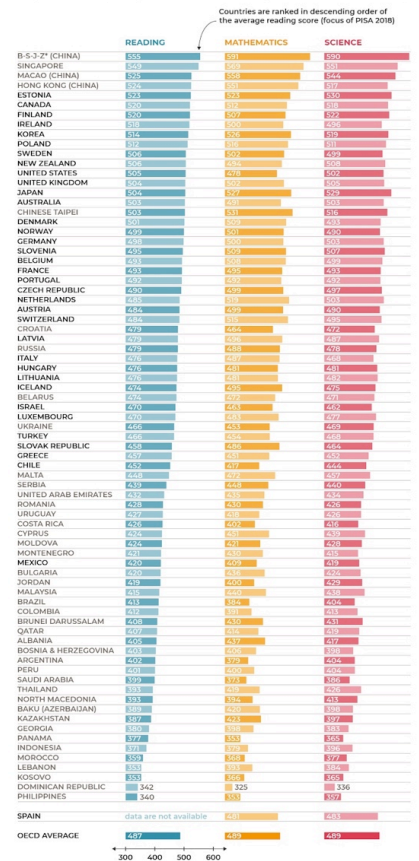
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Philippine education is in crisis.

- PH ranks lowest in Reading, and 2nd lowest in Math & Science

PISA 2018 results

Snapshot of students' performance in reading, mathematics and science



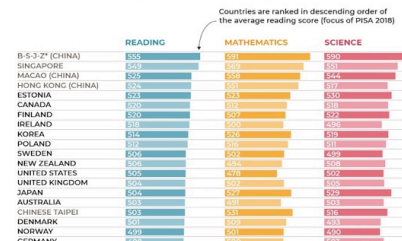
Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database || *B.E.S.Z refers to Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang

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Snapshot of students' performance in reading, mathematics and science



	READING	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE
INDONESIA	371	379	396
MOROCCO	359	368	377
LEBANON	353	393	384
KOSOVO	353	366	365
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	342	325	336
PHILIPPINES	340	353	357
SPAIN	data are not available	481	483
OECD AVERAGE	487	489	489

Source: OECD, PISA 2018 Database || *B.E.S.2 refers to Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang



Our successor generation is in deep trouble.

Less than 1 out of 10
Filipino Grade 3
pupils can read *and*
understand what
they are reading

91%

of 10-year-olds in the
Philippines are not
proficient in reading.

We face severe
learning poverty.

(World Bank)



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Learning poverty is not just about schools and teachers, but also traces to malnourishment & hunger in our youngest children

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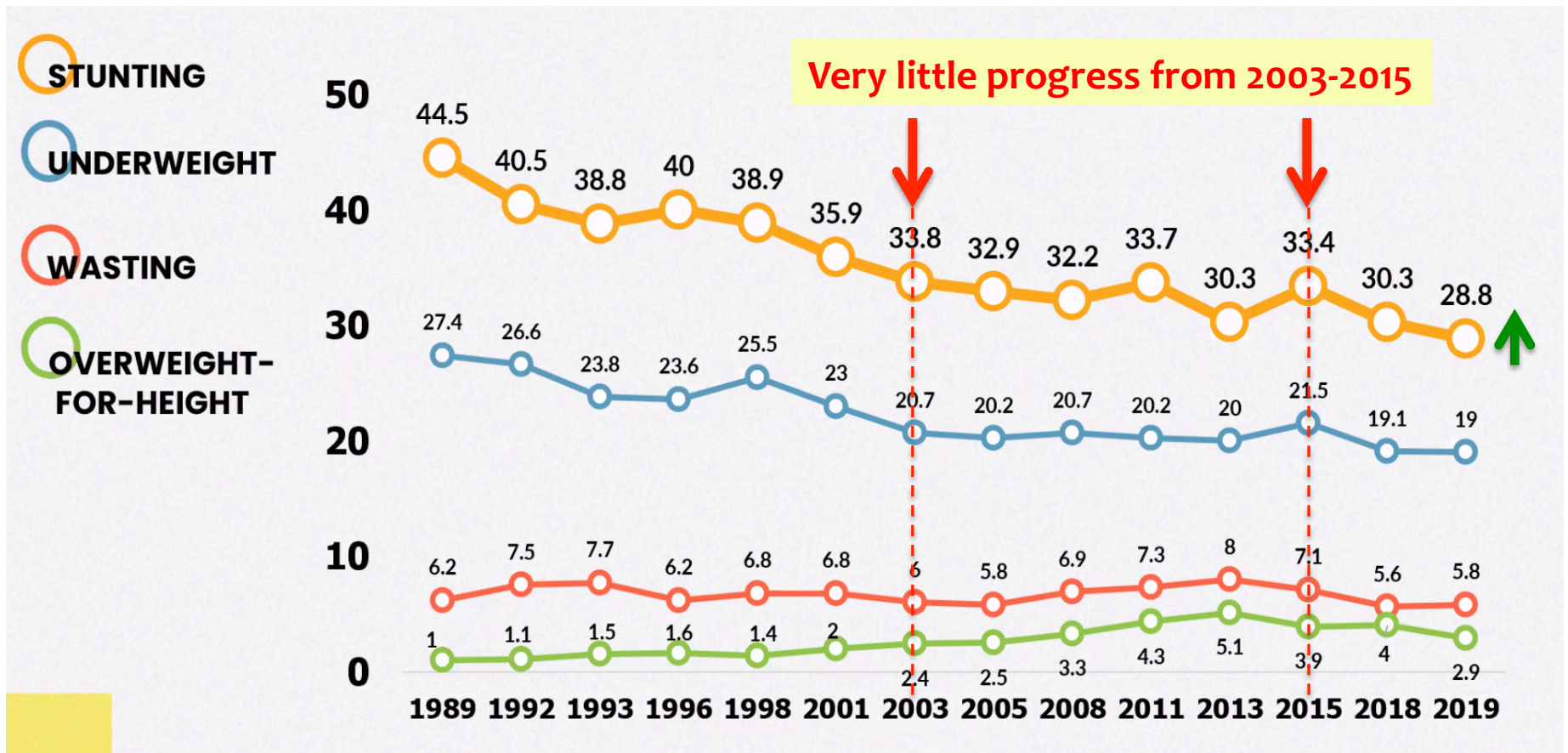


Filipinos: slowest/dullest people in ASEAN?

Country	Ave IQ	Country	Ave IQ
1. Singapore	108	6. Cambodia	91
2. Vietnam	94	7. Laos	89
3. Malaysia	92	8. Indonesia	87
4. Brunei	91	9. Myanmar	87
5. Thailand	91	10. Philippines	86

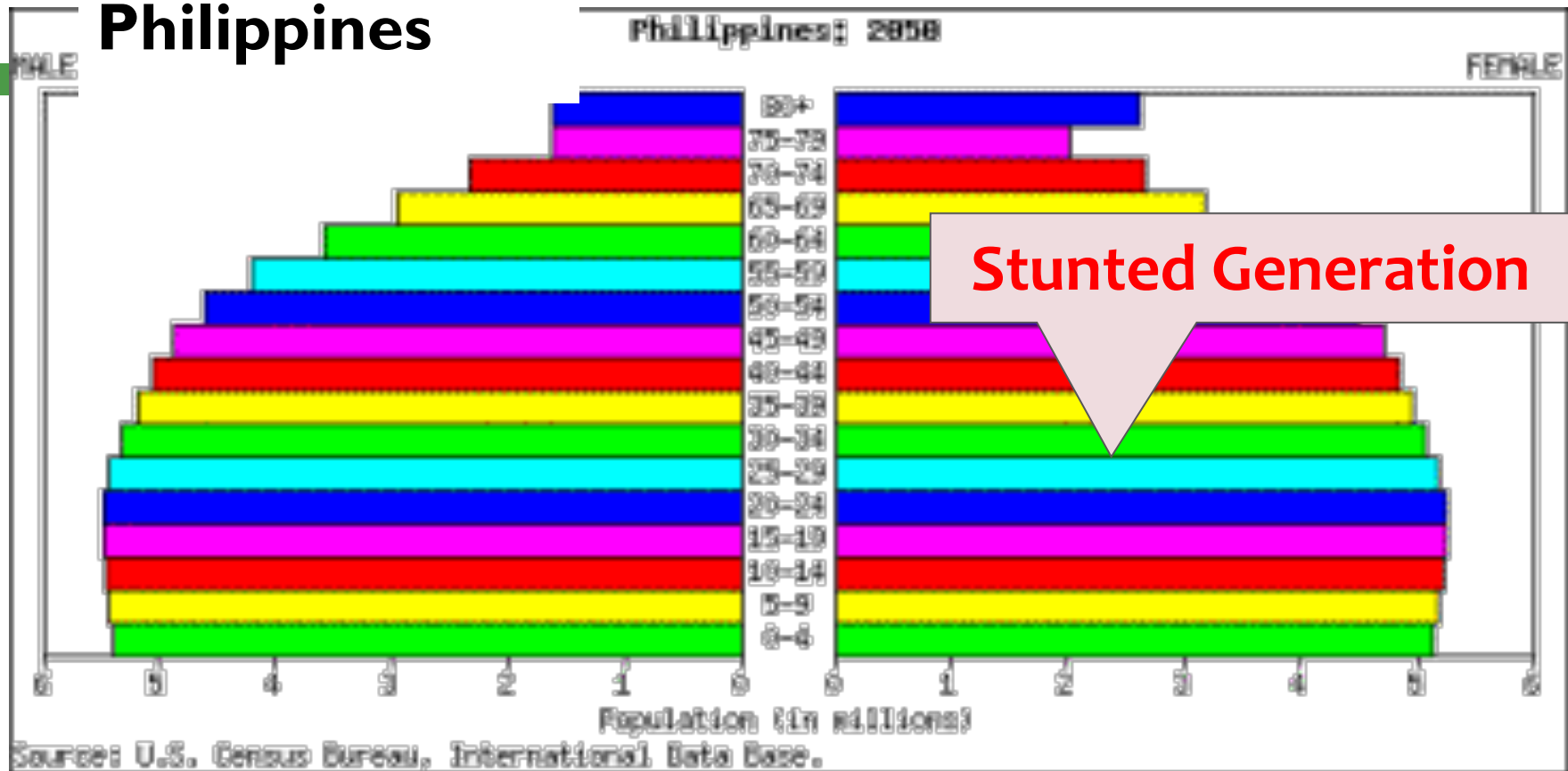
<https://new-iq-test.com/iq-by-country/>

Malnutrition in the Philippines, 1989-2019



Sweet Spot, or Time Bomb?

Philippines



There is Hope Learn from Peru



- Malnutrition: not just a hunger problem but was treated as a **public health concern**
- Stunting reduction declared as **national priority** ('5x5x5')
- **Sustained** by 4 presidents
- **Cash incentives to parents** (tailored their "*Juntos*" CCT)
- Improved **services provision**
- Revamped feeding programs to **target pregnant mothers and children 0-2 years old**
- **Multisectoral partnerships**

There is Hope

Learn from Brazil (Belo Horizonte)

- **'People's Restaurants'** serve subsidized meals from farmers' produce
- **Food banks** collect and distribute excess fruit & vegetables from markets
- Push for **urban agriculture**; family farmers allotted **prime retail space**
- **City gov't supplies food directly** to public schools, daycare centers, health clinics, nursing homes, homeless centers and other charitable institutions
- Rights are bid out to set up **'ABC' Markets** in choice locations, obliged to:
 - (1) sell 25 specific foods at **below-market prices**, all else at market prices
 - (2) transport & offer produce to **poor neighborhoods** on weekends



What Have Philippine LGUs Done?



Pagkaon 2000 Food Sufficiency Program

Negros Occidental

2000



Barangay Agricultural Development Center (BADC)

Negros Oriental

2004



Diversified Organic Farming System

Magsaysay, Davao del Sur

2005



Tuguegarao City Agricultural and Fishery Modernization Program

Tuguegarao City, Cagayan



Munggo: The Black Gold of San Mateo

San Mateo, Isabela

2007



Good Nutrition through Good Governance and Teamwork

Limasawa, Southern Leyte

2011

What Have Philippine LGUs Done?

QUEZON CITY
GrowQC: Kasama ka sa Pag-unlad sa Pagkain, Kabuhayan, at Kalusugan Food Security Program



PROVINCE OF ALBAY
Albay Farmers Bounty Village (AFBVille)

Empowering farmers, transforming local agriculture through community-based organizing in Piddig



MALABON CITY
Karinderya para sa Kalusugan ni Chikiting



QUEZON CITY
Human Milk Bank
“Sharing Milk, Saving Lives”

Local Citizen Initiatives



Negrense Volunteers for
Change Foundation, Inc.



- Sources produce from local farmers to produce Mingo meals out of rice, *malunggay* and *munggo*
 - Since 2011, NVC has fed underweight children aged 6 to 59 months, covering more than 54,500 children to date
- New Level 2 protocol extends coverage per child to a year; added a conditional cash reward for mothers who attend health check-ups.
 - Added wellness counseling covering health, nutrition and hygiene
 - BHWs/BNSs receive cash rewards when their assigned children meet targets

What Can Business Do?



1. Widen awareness, understanding and sense of urgency on the problem
2. Advocate and pursue strategic policy reforms
3. Foster partnerships and coordinated actions on the ground at the local, community and family levels

Widen Awareness, Understanding & Sense of Urgency Initiatives

- ❑ Widen public discourse on the importance and urgency of the stunting problem, as a major threat to the nation's future
- ❑ Hold public forums and “pledging sessions” where firms, organizations & individuals signify concrete initiatives they will pursue
- ❑ Write op-ed columns & articles for publication in the popular media; use social media
- ❑ Support for research towards fuller understanding of drivers and mitigating measures and on international best practices on stunting

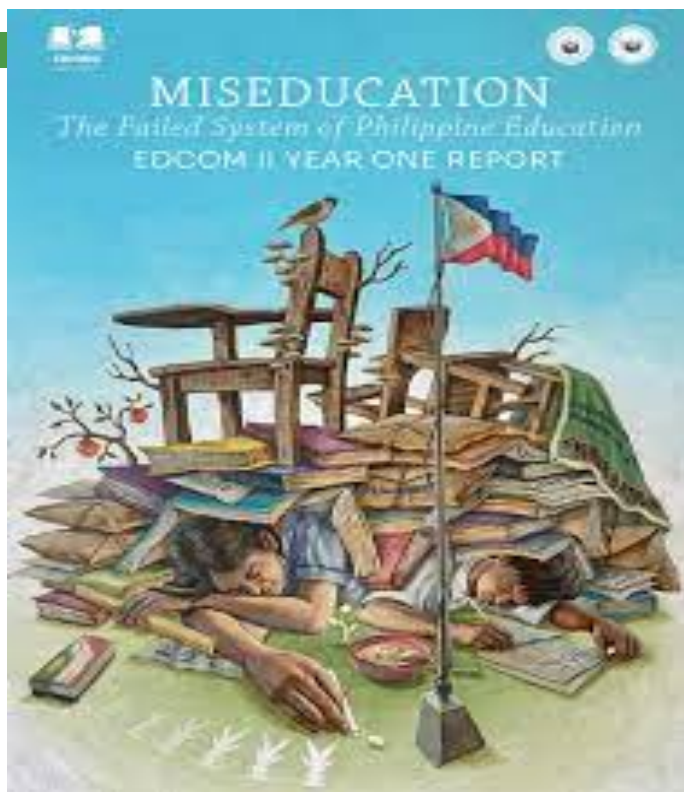
Advocate and Push Policy Reform Initiatives

- Push for higher productivity and wider competition rather than excessive protectionism in agriculture and food value chains, incl. more liberal trade
- Province-led devolution of agriculture & fisheries (DA capacitates provinces to coordinate municipal agri and fishery support services)
- Reform the agriculture bureaucracy and budget
- Shift greater emphasis of feeding programs toward first 1,000 days from conception (including needy pregnant & lactating mothers)
- Take deliberate measures to curb teen pregnancy

Partnerships for Ground-Level Interventions Initiatives

- ❑ Sustained feeding programs targeting the First 1000 Days under “Adopt a Barangay” or “Adopt a Town/City” scheme
- ❑ Material, human resource and technical support for Rural Health Units, Barangay Health Workers, Barangay Nutrition Scholars
- ❑ Investments in the agri value chain (e.g., cold storage) to prolong shelf lives, preserve food quality and safety
- ❑ Breastfeeding campaigns & maternal nutrition programs
- ❑ Food banking initiatives to collect and channel excess food to the needy
- ❑ Support and sustain community pantries

The Way Forward: **Don't Fail Our Children!**



- **EDCOM 2** is seeking critical fixes, but
- Need to protect the **First 1000 Days** of every child, including nutrition of pregnant and lactating mothers (*school feeding is good, but too late to catch stunting*)
- Malnutrition **traces to poverty** and **high food prices** due to our age-old failures in *agriculture and job generation*
- **DA, DTI, and LGUs** are critical in forging the path to our future, along with **DepEd**



Maraming Salamat Po!