

POSITION PAPER

COMMITTEE : SOCIAL CULTURAL AND HUMANITARIAN
AGENDA : DISCUSSING THE ADOPTION OF A GLOBAL
FRAMEWORK TO PROTECT THE
RIGHTS OF LINGUISTIC MINORITIES
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COUNTRY : THE REPUBLIC OF PHILIPPINES
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‘Language rights’ and ‘linguistic rights’ are human rights that have an impact on the language preferences or use of state authorities, individuals and other entities. Language rights are usually considered broader than linguistic rights and this guide uses both terms to discuss both the necessary minimum and possible extra measures that should or can be taken to effectively implement the rights of linguistic minorities. Up to the present the term to use in referring to linguistic or cultural minorities of the Philippines has not been settled. In the 1903 Census of the Philippines, the population was divided into Christians and non-Christians, the Christians being considered civilized while the non-Christians who composed the minorities were referred to as wild [sic]. In the 1918 Census, the anthropologist Beyer (1921) classified the minorities into pygmies, Malays, and Indonesians. By the time the 1939 Census was taken, however, the main identification of the inhabitants was in terms of their languages or ethnic groups.

“LANGUAGE IS THE ROAD MAP OF A CULTURE. IT TELLS YOU WHERE ITS PEOPLE COME FROM AND WHERE THEY ARE GOING”. Ethnic groups in the Philippines are popularly typed into three categories based somewhat on religion. The largest category, primarily Catholic or 'Christian', is composed of the lowland groups comprising approximately 85 percent of the population. Muslim groups make up approximately 8 percent of the population. Their primary provenance is Mindanao, Sulu, and southern Palawan. Upland or tribal groups are those who adhere to animistic beliefs, or traditional religion. This last category has generally been referred to as the cultural minorities or ethnic minority language groups

The Language provision in the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines which are embodied in Article XIV, Sec. 6 and 7 provide the legal basis for the various language policies that are being implemented in the country. Section 6: The national language of the Philippines is

Filipino. As it evolves, it shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages. Consistent with the 1987 constitutional mandate and a declared policy of the National Board of Education (NBE). The policy was first implemented in 1974 when DECS issued Dept. Bilingual education in the Philippines is defined operationally as the separate use of Filipino and English as the media of instruction in specific subject areas. As embodied in the DECS Order No. 25, Pilipino (changed to Filipino in 1987) shall be used as medium of instruction in social studies/social sciences, music, arts, physical education, home economics, practical arts and character education.

The Constitution of Philippines provides for the use of the vernacular languages as official auxiliary languages in provinces where Filipino is not the lingua franca. Filipinos at large are polyglots; In the case where the vernacular language is a regional language, Filipinos would speak in Filipino when speaking in formal situations while the regional languages are spoken in non-formal settings. This is evident in major urban areas outside Metro Manila like Camarines Norte in the Bikol-speaking area, and Davao in the Cebuano -speaking area. As of 2020, the case of Ilocano and Cebuano are becoming more of bilingualism than diglossia due to the publication of materials written in these languages. The diglossia is more evident in the case of other languages such as Pangasinan, Kapampangan, Bikol, , Hiligaynon, Waray and Maranao, where the written variant of the language is becoming less and less popular to give way to the use of Filipino. Although Philippine laws consider some of these languages as "major languages" there is little, if any, support coming from the government to preserve these languages. This may be bound to change, however, given current policy trends.