

Working for a human, environment-friendly and peaceful society

The BMI as organization

The Bethlehem Mission Immensee (BMI) is a Catholic missionary organization with its headquarters in Immensee (Switzerland). In cooperation with other religious and civil society organizations, it is engaged worldwide on behalf of disadvantaged in society. It provides specialists for specific and temporary assignments in the projects of partner organizations and promotes the processes of international solidarity.

Its motivation is the vision of a just and peaceful world and the desire to work together in partnership with people from other cultures and religions. The basic necessities of life for all and dignity and rights for every person are its most important concerns.

The specialists consciously lead a simple lifestyle and thereby share the life and are fully present with the people of the area. They make careful use of the means at hand in order to avoid a dependence on them.

A general view

The Republic of the Philippines consists of more than 7,000 islands. The population of 88 million people inhabits about 870 of them. The political situation of the country is instable, the economic growth very limited, the foreign debts enormous. There are 8 to 11 million Filipino migrant workers worldwide with half of them working illegally. The economy of the Philippines would collapse without their financial support. The society of the country is marked by enormous social disparities. The access of poor children to higher education, food and medical treatment is very limited. In the South of the Philippines an armed conflict that has been going on for many years between Muslim rebels and the army and the civil population has brought tremendous suffering to the civilians. In addition to the destruction of infrastructures and the basics of human existence, relationships between the people are also suffering. Throughout the whole country the natural resources, above all of the indigenous people, are endangered by massive exploitation, utilization and destruction through neoliberal-orientated politics that also endanger the ecological balance.

Religion plays an important role in the daily lives of many Filipinos and the influence of the Catholic Church in the Philippines is not to be underestimated. A small yet strong minority within the Church works without compromise for social justice and a healthy and intact environment. The BMI has actively been engaged in the Philippines on their side since



1985. For 12 years specialists from Switzerland and Germany worked in projects of Integral Pastoral Work in the Diocese of Malaybalay in Mindanao. In 2004 the BMI transferred the emphasis of its work to Northern Luzon, in the Apostolic Vicariate of Bontoc-Lagawe, and in 2005 they began to work in cooperation with the Diocese of Alaminos. Since 2006 the BMI is also working in Metro Manila.

Thematic priorities and targets

The country program of the BMI for the Philippines consists of the two thematic priorities:

Integral Pastoral Work and the Basic Essentials of Life, and the geographical priorities consist of the Mountain Province, Ifuago, Pangasinan and Metro Manila. The objective of the engagement in the Integral Pastoral Work is to strengthen communities in their cultural and religious identities and in their awareness of their social responsibilities. The BMI supports the local Church in its effort to promote indigenous traditions and to build out social networks. The specialists are active in projects in which the members of different religions and confessions work together to reduce poverty and corruption and strive for a peaceful life. The objective in the field of providing the basics of life is to strive for access to primary medical care and food and a sustainable approach to preserving the environment in the form of organic farming and protection of forests.



Country program Philippines

Bethlehem Mission Immensee

Target groups

The local people of the Mountain Province, Ifugao, und Pangasinan as well as those engaged in the interreligious peace work in Metro Manila.

Partnerships and networks

The most important partner of the BMI in the Philippines to date is the Catholic Church. In addition to the Diocese of Alaminos und the Apostolic Vicariate of Bontoc-Lagawe, a local partner is also Binhi Ng Kapayapaan, Inc. an interreligious peace work NGO. The BMI coordination and specialists are additionally engaged in various local networks

The BMI in the Philippines

The BMI is represented locally by a coordinator who is the contact person for the partner organizations, guides the specialists and is responsible for assuring the quality of the assignments.

The partner organization bears the responsibility for the project and provides the necessary framework for the specialists to work within. A local responsible person oversees the work of the project together with the coordinator.

It is the duty of the specialists to work in the project according to the quality criteria mutually agreed upon.



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Facts

Area	300 000 km ²
Population	88 706 000
City population	59%
Life expectancy	70 years
Population below the poverty line	60%
Literacy rate	92,6%
BIP pro head	3 400 US\$
Main export goods	electronics, machinery, transport means, textiles, copper, petrol, coconut oil, fruits
Main export countries	USA 17%, Japan 14,5%, Hong Kong 11,5 %, China 11,4 %, Holland 8,2 %, Singapore 6,2 %, Malaysia 5%, Germany 4,3%
Foreign debts	54,06 Billion US\$

Facts: Basic information from www.cia.gov und National Statistic Organization Philippines (NSO, www.census.gov.ph/data/quickstat) and Handbook Philippines (HbP), Edition 2007

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