

The Women's Decade in the Philippines

**Analysis of Significant Changes
in Women's Role and Status**

Executive Summary*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Precolonial Philippine history recounts the significant position of women in the family and the community. During the Philippine Revolution, women fought alongside the men and even led some of the troops against the enemies. The change in the Filipinas' legal status as a result of colonial rule did not hamper their participation in the affairs of the country. Thus, the Decade found them involved in almost all aspects of national life despite the existence of some legal and attitudinal barriers towards their complete integration in the mainstream of development.

Filipino women were known to have played important roles in the initial efforts for the universal recognition of women's rights to equality of treatment. The 19th session (1966) of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) which approved the Draft Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women was chaired by a Filipina — Helena Z. Benitez who also became the first Southeast Asian Chairman. The 25th Session (1974) was chaired by another Filipina — Leticia Ramos Shahani who was subsequently appointed Secretary General of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women in July 1985. Rosario Gonzales Manalo was in 1984 and 1985 elected Chairman of the UNCSW acting as preparatory body for the World Conference. This body drafted the Conference Agenda which was subsequently endorsed by the UN General Assembly.

Filipino women also took part in the world conferences on women held in Mexico in 1975 and in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1980. In the forthcoming world conference which will mark the end of the Women's Decade in 1985 in Kenya, the Philippines is again expected to take an active role.

A. Changes in Status and Roles

New policies and expansion of roles are the most significant gains to Filipino women during the decade. The country's poor economic and political situation reinforced by traditional attitudes, however, either gave rise or defeated efforts to combat some of the most acute problems concerning women such as prostitution, poor working and health conditions, and inadequate representation in decision making responsibilities.

The creation of a national machinery for women in the Philippines is probably one of the Decade's most significant achievements for it spawned a lot of interest in women's issues. Related mechanisms for women such as the Bureau of Women and Minors of the MOLE and the Department of Women of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) and the increased involvement of women NGOs helped in bringing to focus the problems concerning women as workers, as mothers, citizens, recipients of health and educational services and as agents of change.

In the field of legislation, the Philippines ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and by so doing legally bound itself as have other States Parties to take positive measures for eliminating all forms of sex discrimination whether in law or in fact.

Other significant legal measures adopted include:

- Repeal of the Civil Code provision which deprived a widow of her parental authority over children with the deceased husband, if she remarried, unless the latter had by testament any provision allowed her retention of such authority upon marriage.
- Amendment of the law providing for the termination of service of women in the armed forces upon their contracting marriage.
- Integration of maternity leave benefits provisions in the Social Security Act.
- Issuance by the President of Letter of Instructions No. 974 which directed all ministries, bureaus, offices and other agencies of government including government-owned and controlled corporations to implement provisions of the Constitution, legislation, international treaties and conventions giving to women equal rights.
- Statement of the Minister of Labor that the provision for terminating the employment of female flight attendants upon marriage as in the case involving collective bargaining agreements with the Philippine Airlines violates the Constitution and the Labor Code.
- Changes in the Philippine Development Plan which now contains specific provisions for women in employment, health, population and social services.

Recently, a Parliamentary Bill which aims to establish equal status and rights of women was filed at the Batasang Pambansa.

Although it is premature to assess the impact of these new policies, they provide the necessary fallback to women's struggle to advance their status. They also remove some of the barriers to their exploration of new roles.

Services for women also increased during the Decade. These come in the form of training opportunities in work, leadership skills, educational specially nonformal, health and support services particularly for the working women. Health indicators point to improving health status of women. Stereotyping of sex roles was recognized as a barrier to women's full participation and efforts to eradicate this were started during the period.

The decade also witnessed the expansion of women's roles. In addition to their homemaking responsibilities, women have also become economic providers, helping their husbands battle the economic crisis. Increments in

the labor force during the decade were known to have come from the women population, particularly from the married group.

Women workers obtain support from government thru legislation which prohibit discrimination against them, and lately with the increasing popularity of community day care centers which are taking some of the child caring responsibilities of mothers to enable them to engage in paid work. Programs, including training opportunities for women also proliferated during this period.

Although most of these women flock to traditionally-feminine areas of work like the service types, there are encouraging signs that they are also beginning to enter male-dominated vocational and technical courses. This expansion of alternatives for women may also be viewed positively in the light of the vast outmigration of men workers to better-paying countries. Women could take the place of these outgoing workers and therefore could ensure the continuous supply of human resources for domestic operations. The NMYC and other government and private groups continue to promote women's entry into vocational and technical training of the nontraditional variety.

Services by women NGOs intensified during the Decade as a result of the linkage between the national machinery with the CAWP and its initiation of the *Balikatan sa Kaunlaran* movement. Women went into all kinds of projects – from leadership training to livestock production involving huge amounts and benefitting millions. Other groups also focused their services to women and their increased access to opportunities for training and economic production.

On the other hand, a new group of Filipino women emerged in the early eighties and who have since then become very much involved in national issues. Several women's organizations of this category have been organizing marches and protest rallies, conducting fora and seminars and have been enlisting the media in drumming up issues which they vehemently espouse. This political consciousness is very much attuned to the latest developments where at least three women were at the core of the discussions concerning the presidential candidacy in the 1987 elections. Hopefully, this could presage the beginning of a more active women's participation in the political arena.

The situation of Filipino women in the four areas studied is therefore summarized in the following pages.

1. In Education

- a. Philippine law provides for an educational system that is equally open to both sexes.

The Constitution of 1973 provides that the "State shall maintain a system of free public elementary education, and in areas where finances permit, establish and maintain a system of free

public education at least up to the secondary level." (Art. 15, S. 8, no. 5). The Constitution also stipulates that the "State shall provide training to adult citizens and out-of-school youths, and create and maintain scholarships to poor and deserving students." (Art. 15)

The Education Act of 1940 made primary education for children of school age compulsory and provides penal sanctions for non-compliance.

- b. That the Philippine educational system is an equal-opportunity social system is borne out by data trends concerning literacy, gross enrolment rates (GER) and participation rates.

From a high 89 percent in SY 1970-71, female GER on the elementary level increased further to 96 percent during SY 1982-83. Participation rates during the period continued to show a very minimal differential based on sex (49.1% female vs. 50.9% male during SY 1970-71 and 48.8% female vs. 51.2% male in SY 1983-84).

This pattern of no discrimination is repeated on the secondary level of schooling with participation rates showing less than one percent (49.96% female vs. 50.04% male) difference between males and females in 1970-71 with an improved picture for the females during SY 1983-84 as they slightly exceeded the 50 percent parity enrolment indicator (50.6%). In terms of GER, secondary level schooling of females also improved from only 43.5 percent in SY 1970-71 to 55.8 percent in 1982-83.

Tertiary and post-college enrolment for SY 1977-78 show the predominance of females in the higher educational levels: 54.23% in all college courses; 63.99% in graduate school; and 64.69% in the post graduate level. Data on professionals for the year 1983 indicate women's gradual entry into the traditionally-masculine courses.

As of 1980, actual literacy figures are placed at 83.9 percent for males and 82.8 percent for females, relatively high figures compared to those of neighboring countries.

- c. Positive trends during the decade include women's entry in non-traditional fields of study and training programs, increased efforts at counteracting sex role stereotypes, decentralization of educational resources to benefit rural population, and the proliferation of women's studies.

Women's entry in non-traditional areas, although very gradual, is an indication of women's and government's efforts to overcome

attitudinal barriers to women's search for new roles and better opportunities. NMYC's efforts to attract, train and even place women graduates in nontraditional areas of occupation is indicative of the slowly becoming accepted notion that women can function as well as men in those traditionally male-occupations. Women engineers and technicians who have been hired to replace men who leave for better-paying jobs abroad have been reported to do as well as the men, thereby, opening a rich area for women to get trained for.

Women's entry into nontraditional professions is best illustrated by their increased representation in engineering courses between 1975 and 1983: from eleven to 23 percent in agricultural engineering; six to 16 percent in civil; six to ten percent in electronics and communications and eight to 15 percent in sanitary engineering. While in 1975, there were only 12% and 5% female foresters and geologists, respectively, in 1985, there were already 22% and 21%, respectively.

Curricular innovations to counter stereotyping of sex roles took the form of introducing Practical Arts subjects such as Work Education and Home Economics as common learning areas for boys and girls. A joint NCRFW-MECS study very recently established the possibility of integrating sex-role concepts in the school syllabus thereby encouraging the heads of both the elementary and secondary level bureaus to integrate such concepts into their respective level curriculum.

The massive decentralization program of government known as PRODED or Program for Decentralized Educational Development starts off the process at the elementary level schooling with program areas covering educational resources, teacher development and instructional materials development. Together with the move toward converting exclusively male/female schools into co-educational institutions, both men and women from the rural areas will be afforded better access to educational services.

2. *In Employment*

- a. By law, the Philippines is an equal opportunity employer. De jure equality exists in the area of employment.

The Constitution of 1973 contains provisions to "afford protection to labor, promote full employment and equality in employment, ensure equal work opportunities regardless of sex, race or creed"

Philippine public policy not only promotes women's employment but also gives special protection to women workers as befits their unique role as childbearers. Thus, the Updated Philippine Development Plan 1984-1987 stressed the protection of women in the labor market: "Women's participation in the labor market will be increased through the provision of greater opportunities for employment and the development of concomittant support systems, i.e., day care centers". This specific provision is a result of continued representation of the NCRFW and is a breakthrough particularly for the rural women for which the Plan expressed a most serious concern.

- b. With 8 million Filipina workers, the ratio of female workers to male workers is now 2:3.

The Philippine labor force of over 20 million in 1983 counts two female workers to every three male workers.

As of 1983, 8 million women have joined the country's labor force, up by 30.0% from the 1978 figure of 6 million. The female rural labor force grew by 36.2% within this five-year period and, at 5.27 million, is double the number of their urban counterparts (2.66 m) which grew by only 20% within the same period.

Fortunately, the countryside was able to absorb its additional labor force, maintaining an employment rate of 96% (total) and 93% (female). The urban employment picture was more bleak, as total unemployment grew from 6% in 1978 to 9.3% in 1983. The proportion of unemployed women rose from 8.7% in 1978 to 10.9% in 1983.

As of 1983, therefore, 360 thousand rural women and 290 thousand urban women were looking for jobs. These 650,000 jobless women include 348 thousand single girls, 15 thousand widows, and 9 thousand separated/divorced women; in addition, 278 thousand married women are looking for work to augment the income of their husbands.

The decade saw an 18% growth in the proportion of married women in the labor force – from 42.7% in 1978 to 50.4% 1983.

- c. Most Filipina workers are either unpaid family workers (mostly in agricultural work) or government wage or salary workers; they dominate the wholesale or retail trade, and community, social and personal services. Male workers dominate all other classes of workers, all other occupations, and all other industries.

Among unpaid family workers in 1983, females have a slight "edge" over males (54:46), and among government wage and salary workers, females may soon catch up with males (45:55 in 1983). But in all other classes of workers, the ratio is one female to every two male workers (self-employed, wage and salary workers in private or own family enterprises). The ratio is lowest among employers: for every six employers, only one is a female.

Growth in female employment was experienced in all types of industries either male or female-dominated, notably in electricity (now 14.1% F), finance and related services, and agriculture, or an over-all increase of 8% between 1978 and 1983. Construction, transportation/storage/communication, mining and quarrying have admitted 2.6%, 4.4% and 6.9% females, respectively. Women continue to dominate the wholesale and retail trade (66%) and community, social and personal services (57%). In manufacturing, however, where 47% of workers are women, working conditions are often hazardous to health.

- d. Female workers, on the average, earn less than male workers.

Women earned P1741 a quarter in 1983, up by 73% from the 1978 figure of P1006. Significant increases were noted for wage and salary workers, as well as for transport and related business. These increases in monetary income served to narrow the gap between the earnings of men and women but could barely counteract the effects of inflation and high prices.

The income situation in 1983, in terms of real earnings, is worse than in 1978 – the downward trend is true for all classes of workers, both men and women.

Women workers in agricultural establishments continue to be worst hit, with a quarterly income of only P552 in 1983.

- e. Positive trends during the decade include adoption of new policies/legislation, entry of women in nontraditional areas as training and work opportunities expand, and participation in overseas employment.

The adoption of new policies/legislation concerning women workers during the decade is a manifestation of continuing efforts to afford women equal opportunities in the world of work. The transfer of the maternity leave benefits for working women from the employer to the Social Security System provides additional security to married women's health and work tenure. LOI 974 is

particularly directed to women's participation in decision-making positions in both private and government entities. The special emphasis on welfare and participation of women in employment in the Updated Philippine Development Plan is very much indicative of the country's recognition of women's talents and potentials. And the Philippine ratification of the UN CEDAW signifies the government's seriousness in making a national policy an international commitment.

Should the present trend of female participation in the labor force continue, both men and women can share the responsibility as family breadwinners. But the gap between the earnings of men and women can be reduced only if women are able to shift to nontraditional technical jobs which are better-paying, especially in transportation, storage and communication; finance, insurance, real estate and business services; electricity, gas and water; construction; mining and quarrying. Opportunities must be expanded for women to participate in decision-making positions in government and private corporations as employers (1 F : 5 M in 1983) or in administrative, executive and managerial posts (1 F : 3 M in 1983).

Overseas employment, for both men and women, affords them great opportunity to contribute to family income. Female share in the overseas labor market is currently 18.3%, predominantly as service workers (59%) and professional/technical workers (36%). The policy on manpower export, however, needs clarification in light of its impact particularly on Filipino women — as solo parent when a husband works abroad, and the tarnished image of the Filipina as entertainer or domestic worker.

3. *In Public Affairs*

- a. Philippine law guarantees Filipino women equal footing with men as regards political and civic rights.

The Constitution of 1973 grants to men and women the right to vote and to run for and hold public office. Article VI states that "Suffrage shall be exercised by citizens of the Philippines not otherwise disqualified by law, who are eighteen years of age or over, or who shall have resided in the Philippines for at least one-year and in the place wherein they propose to vote for at least six months preceding the election. No literacy, property, or other substantive requirements shall be imposed on the exercise of suffrage."

Article V Sec. 4 of the Constitution further made it the duty of every qualified citizen to register and cast his vote.

- b. Generally, the status of women in politics and decision-making positions hardly changed during the decade.

On the national level, no perceptible increase happened in terms of women's representation in the Batasan National Assembly ; in fact, the Batasan was one woman representative-less in the 1984 election. Women MPs (Members of Parliament) comprised at most 5.4 percent (10 of 184 seats).

In local elections, minimal increase in the count of women officials in the provincial/municipal and city level was noted, or from 5.5% in 1971 to 7.6% in 1980. Women barangay officials registered a small 11.3% participation rate against an 88.7% for the men between the two barangay elections in 1971 and 1982.

Women's token representation holds true in appointive ranks.

Among the three Constitutional Commissions (COMELEC, COA and CSC), only CSC has a woman commissioner (1 of 8). In the Cabinet, only two of the 18 ministers are women. The diplomatic service is perhaps one area where women have attained a relatively fair representation. Between 1979 and 1984, an improved picture for female diplomats was observed, or an increase from 24.1% to 27.5%. In the Judiciary, the presence of women jurists has improved slightly from 6.4% in 1981 to 7.5% representation in all judicial positions in 1984. The percentage of women in the third and highest level of positions in the civil service shows a brighter picture — it rose from less than 15% in 1974 to 26% in 1980 and 36% in 1983. But when compared to the number of women in the career service, they constitute only less than one percent. Also, women formed less than one-fifth (16.5%) of the 983 CESOs (those appointed by the President to various ranks in the CES) in 1984.

- c. Analysis and observations brought to the surface the other angle of women's political participation through their role in the bureaucracy, as a potent force in the community, their decisiveness in elections, political awakening and their pivotal role in the households.

The other side of women's political participation which was proposed in a doctoral dissertation is their role in the bureaucracy. According to the study, the bureaucracy is the center of policy making where public policies are initiated and implemented and therefore performs a political function. "Women stay in the bureaucracy because of their feeling of potency in the decision-making process, but are not aware that the action is political."

Women are potent force in the community. When it comes to civic work and community services, they are always in the forefront. To wit: majority of barangay health and rural workers are women (80%). In 1980, there were about 200 registered women's organizations and in the late seventies and early eighties, about 120 women's organizations were formed in Metro Manila alone.

There are two types of women's organizations observed: one concerns activities of women's groups directly extending socio-cultural, economic, educational and political services to specific target groups. These are typified by CAWP, the umbrella organization of 74 women affiliates and the BSK, Inc., a governmental-initiated but privately run organization; the other one is focused on the recent wave of militant women's groups which espouse economic and social reforms in addition to extending community outreach services.

In five elections held during the decade, women exhibited a consistently higher voters' turn-out rates (68% to 90%) than the men (66% to 89%). Therefore, when they decide to support a particular candidate, they could be a strong force (49.4% of the voting population). Like for instance in the recently held national election, in areas where women candidates won, they obtained the highest or second highest number of votes.

Women activist groups who have become more vocal of their plight as well as of the country's welfare is a manifestation of women's political awakening. Also the fact that women's voices are being heard in the decision for the candidates in the 1987 presidential election could presage the beginning of a more assertive women's voice in public affairs.

Women maintain a pivotal role in the family where she is involved in major decision-making in the household while they straddled between their dual roles as homemakers and career women.

- d. Lack of significant progress in politics and decision-making is still traceable to traditional attitudes.

Poor representation of women in higher levels in the government still stems from the traditional attitude of men and women that "politics is man's game." while women dutifully cast their votes, they do not necessarily vote for the women candidates and even if they decide to elect women candidates, not enough of them run for public office.

The notion of dual roles and traditional attitude towards women also hinders appointment of women to higher positions.

4. *In Health*

- a. The health program of the country under the Philippine law is designed for both men and women but specific concern for the health of children, pregnant and lactating mothers is also stipulated.

The Constitution of 1973 provides that the "State shall establish, maintain and ensure adequate social services in the field of education, health, housing, employment, welfare and social security to guarantee the enjoyment by the people of a decent standard of living." (Art. II Sec. 7)

It also stipulates that "It shall be the responsibility of the State to achieve and maintain population levels most conducive to social welfare." (Art. XV Sec. 10)

Further, the Updated National Development Plan, 1984-1987 in its statement of broad programs and projects stressed that: "The implementation of programs to minimize problems related to pregnant women, lactating mothers, children and other vulnerable groups will be pursued."

- b. The health status of all sectors of the population showed a gradual but steady improvement.

From 1972 to 1984 improvements in the conditions of the population can be gleaned in the following health indicators: IMR went down from 82.0 to 48.0 per 1000 live births while MMR decreased from 1.7 to 0.8 per 1000 live births during the period. Most of the maternal deaths occurred among the ages 30-39 with postpartum hemorrhage and toxemias of pregnancy infections as the common causes.

The number of births per 1000 population (crude birth rate) was reduced from 37.4 in 1974 to 31.6 in 1984. Total fertility rate decreased from 5.2 in 1975 to 4.5 in 1980. On the other hand, the number of people dying from all causes for both men and women was smaller in 1984 (7.6/1000 population) than in 1972 (9.8/1000). Also, people expected to live longer in 1984 than in 1972, with the life expectancy increasing from 59.3 to 62.8 years.

- c. Filipino women are acknowledged and recognized as primary beneficiaries of some major health programs because of their unique biological functions.

A review of the major health programs implemented by the Ministry of Health and related agencies reveals that women are accorded high priority in the programming of health services. This is

indicated by the attention and support given to three major programs that are directed towards the welfare of women: maternal and child care, family planning and nutrition programs.

1. Maternal and Child Health Care efforts are designed towards giving special care and supervision to pregnant and lactating women and to children to minimize known risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth. To make this possible, five program priority components were implemented such as: maternal care; training of 39,558 health workers; perinatal and 0-6 child care; expanded program on immunization, and promotion of breastfeeding.
2. The Nutrition Program shows its concern for women as primary beneficiaries through its major activities:
 - Health Protection calls for preventive and curative actions for severely malnourished children and pregnant and nursing women. Some of the facilities and services under this project include: establishment of 160 hospital-based nutriwards; construction of 177 nutrihuts to supplement the services of nutriwards; operationalization of 159 Under Six Clinics which in 1980 attended to some 268,910 preschoolers; distribution of free vitamins and medicines to 376,200 recipients; implementation of school health guardian program which provides immunization, dental and other medical and nursing services; and provision of iron supplements to anemic pregnant women; distribution of iodized salt and administration of iodized oil injections to goiter cases in endemic areas.
 - Food Production and Food Assistance seeks to augment family income and increase food availability as well as to improve the nutritional status of malnourished persons, with children, pregnant and nursing mothers as priority beneficiaries.
 - Information, Education and Communication is pursued to increase the level of nutrition awareness and knowledge and to promote the adoption of proper dietary practices through the incorporation of nutrition education in the activities of implementing agencies. A total of 12,365 nutrition classes in 1980 were conducted with an outreach of 339,157 homemakers (note that the women are the primary targets of IEC campaigns).

3. Family Planning

Concern for women under this program is shown by the program's goal to minimize maternal and child mortality and unwanted pregnancies especially the high-risk ones.

To realize this goal, government efforts were directed towards:

- opening of new FP Clinics and services outlets. As of 1981 there were a total of 1,843 MOH service facilities.
- recruitment of acceptors. From 1970 to 1981, a total of 2,651,827 clients were served with use-effectiveness of the method mix reaching a level of 84.4% and births averted estimated at about 2.3 million.
- training and outreach. Outreach family planning personnel servicing clients' in both urban and rural areas are reported.
- family planning information and counselling which includes premarital counselling, referral services and organization of acceptors' clubs.

From the private sector, efforts were directed towards finding alternatives to child bearing such as provision of income-generating programs for women and motivational campaigns to encourage more male acceptors.

- d. Women as agents in the delivery of health services comprise majority of the total health personnel. However although they are the majority, only few women are involved in top-level decision-making functions especially in the regions.

In the different branches of the Ministry of Health (Central and regional offices and hospitals) women comprise 66.1 percent of the 51,993 personnel, and as volunteer field workers of various health programs, they represent 84.17 percent of the total 288,090.

As to the positions they occupy, data show that in the Central office, 54 percent of high positions are occupied by women. This indicates that the higher level decision-making functions on health matters are more or less equally distributed among men and women officials. However, in the regional and provincial health offices and hospitals, decision-making positions are almost in the hands of men.

B. Problem Areas

These promising trends notwithstanding, it would be incorrect to assume that Filipino women have gone far in the continuum of progress. Much more remains to be done as the decade brought to focus the more serious problems which confront women in the field of education, employment, health, and public affairs.

Filipino women's employment situation remains poor as they continue to suffer from lower wages, poor working conditions and exploitative practices. Their concentration in low paying jobs is a result of their low level of education which generally makes them poorly informed, less qualified,

less skilled. Women populate the manufacturing (47%), service (52%) and trade sectors (66%) where working conditions are generally hazardous to health. Studies show that women comprise 70 percent of workers in the export processing zones where conditions are reportedly unjust, oppressive and inhuman. Poor health resulting from poor working conditions reduces productivity which in turn becomes a cause for termination of employment.

The plight of women workers is believed to be strongly correlated with the country's efforts to advance economic growth. For instance, one of the incentives offered to foreign investors is the availability of cheap labor who are mostly women. Prostitution is also known to have flourished with the intensified promotion of tourism by both government and private organizations. The well-known package tours reportedly include women as sex partners for visiting tourists and businessmen.

This situation also brings to focus the incompatibility in national goals; whether to attract more dollars and exhaust the country's brains and brawns or to restrict their outflow to enable them to assist in the national development efforts. This also raises the issue of the preservation of moral values following the Catholic principles considering that 85 percent of Filipinos profess this faith.

Issues concerning groups of women workers are: a) protectiveness toward women workers which is counterproductive when the provisions serve as negative inducement to prospective employers; b) problems in the export processing zone namely low wages, substandard working conditions, low level of awareness of social security/welfare benefits and weak unionism; c) conditions of women in the informal sector, including vendors, hawkers and domestic outworkers; d) protection of women (and children) against exploitation particularly in the tourism and entertainment industries; e) wages, benefits and other working conditions of domestic helpers, both local and overseas, including the issue of exploitation by middle or upper-class women of their less fortunate sisters; f) low recognition accorded the 3 million female rural workers and their limited participation in agricultural development programs including cooperatives, Samahang Nasyon, and production technology training.

There are strong evidences that the rather unhappy situation of women in employment and in other areas for that matter is also brought about by traditional attitudes concerning men and women's roles. Women continue to flock to low-paying, traditionally female jobs which distort the distribution of wages in favor of male workers who generally occupy the high level, better paying positions. While a few women have proven themselves successful in handling decision-making functions, the typical Filipino woman worker has yet to prove her mettle in this area. Hence, the emerging picture of the Filipino worker in the Philippines is very poor: one who works in an agricultural enterprise, is generally an unpaid family worker who lives in a rural area.

There is much unrest among workers. Strikes are more frequent, and workers are marching on the streets in protest. In all these, women are active participants.

For example in 1981, there were a total of 257 strikes, involving 76,555 workers and three million manhours lost. This was said to be 163.69% of the number of recorded strikes since 1971 (Ibon 83). In 1982, there were reportedly fewer strikes involving less workers but which entailed greater loss of manhours. Reports from MOLE and labor unions show manhours lost in 139 strikes, in 1982 totalled 12.2 million (Ibon 112). Foremost among the 1982 strikes was the June sympathy strike of zone workers at Mariveles, Bataan which involved at least 20 firms, 10,000 workers and 566,192 manhours lost (Ibon 109).

Among the complaints of striking workers are the imposition of heavy workloads by means of unrealistic quotas (the major factor in the June sympathy strike initiated by 200 workers of Inter-Asia Container Industries Inc., (Ibon 109), and violation of laws concerning minimum wages. It was reported that of the 283 business establishments inspected by the labor ministry from January to October 1981, 86 percent violated wage-related regulations (Ibon 83). Other factors include job insecurity, unhealthy working and living conditions and other exploitative practices such as forced overtime and harassment.

Remaining as problematic issue in education is women's absorption into the labor market.

While no discrimination exists in terms of access to education, some areas of discrimination are noted in their absorption into the world of work. And even when they are already employed, women still find that they are promoted last and fired first.

An alarming situation concerns the participation of college graduates and professionals in such types of work as entertainment and domestic service. Getting into jobs where they are obviously educationally-over-qualified is wastage of education and therefore underutilization of human capabilities. This situation leads to the problem of the inability of the educational system to meet labor demands which in turn leads to an over-supply of college graduates because they can not find jobs which suit their qualifications. It also stands to question the system's ability to fuel national development efforts through the education and training of its human resources in suitable areas. Recent trends indicate that the importance of education in securing a better status in life is diminished due to the expansion of the overseas market for low-skilled workers.

As educational providers, recent developments particularly affecting the economic and political situation of the country exerted pressures which became too difficult for them to stand. Low salaries and poor working conditions forced some teachers out of the classrooms into the streets to

demand improvements in their status. Such could also be a manifestation of a socio-political awakening of this group of workers who have long suffered an unjust situation despite the magnitude and significance of their responsibility.

Government efforts to meet teachers' demands have not been very successful because the Ministry itself is suffering from budget cutbacks as its allocation drastically dropped from 26% in 1970 to 9.4% in 1975 and then to 10.5% in 1985. Its inability to recover from these financial setbacks has posed other serious problems such as the shortage of teachers due to either the lesser number of entrants or to the departure of practitioners from the profession in favor of better alternatives; and of course, the continuing low pay that it can afford to pay to those who stay.

And while Philippine formal education is largely in the hands of women, decision-making positions in the Ministry still rest with men, a clear manifestation of existing roadblocks (in the form of attitudes and biases) towards the promotion of women to higher level positions.

In the field of health, the country's poor economic situation remains a stumbling block in the country's pursuit of a healthy population. The state of health of the population is directly related to the country's economy particularly the amount that it allocates to its health and welfare programs. Data show that there was a 0.1 percent decrease in the already small budget allotted to the Ministry of Health for the year 1985. From 4.25 percent in 1984, (P2.3B) it went down to 4.16 percent (2.4B).

Such a small budget for such a big program generates other problems and issues which tend to affect negatively the Ministry's performance such as:

- low salaries for medical personnel (especially in the government sector) resulting in more doctors, nurses, dentists, etc. leaving the country in quest of better paying jobs abroad; of only 3 percent of the 15,000 physicians being in public health service to attend to the Filipinos in rural areas;
- a poor quality health care, extent of outreach and health facilities, and;
- poor nutritional condition of the population due to rising cost of food commodities and health services.

Women's dual role, as paid or volunteer workers and at the same time as wives and mothers responsible for the health and welfare of the family affect their own health and welfare. Data reveal the significant roles women play in health welfare and maintenance. They comprise 66 percent of all health

workers in the MOH and occupy 54 percent of the high positions in the central office. In the regional areas, they form the bulk of the field workers both paid and volunteer. At the same time, women are expected to maintain their family's and their own health. In the process, their health suffers.

C. Forward Looking Strategies

Strategies proposed to overcome obstacles to the improvement of women's roles and status focus on educational programs and implementation/review of existing legislations. The latter includes the strengthening of national machineries as coordinating mechanisms for government and private efforts. It also calls for an improvement of data gathering and information dissemination to enable law enforcers to avail of reliable and up-to-date information for monitoring purposes.

Educational strategies include the elimination of traditional attitudes through curricular innovations. They also concern the review of the educational system to enable it to meet national demands. From the informal and nonformal education sector, the greater involvement of media both in values building and in the more positive projection of the Filipina's image is sought. Formal and nonformal education is intended to inform women of their rights and responsibilities as workers and citizens, to encourage them to be more politically conscious, to train them as participants in health care services and to educate them to prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking and exploitation.

