

Silver Anniversary Edition

Gender Focus

Semestral Publication of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women

January-March 2000

We're 25!

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women is 25 years this 2000.

From a fledgling organization trying to grapple its way in the women's movement, the Commission is now at the forefront of the struggle for women's empowerment. It has secured a niche for itself as a leading advocate for gender and development.

The Commission, to be more responsive to the concerns of Filipino women, has redefined its mandate from direct organization of women in its inception in 1975 to putting gender equality at the core of government thinking, planning and action. An upcoming book on its "herstory" notes that it "has evolved from a staid first decade of research, conferences and organizing community women for self-help to a dizzying second decade of reorienting staff, realigning structures, partnering women's nongovernment organizations and daring government to think women in a big way: in laws, budgets, policies, programs and projects."

NCRFW's efforts through the years have been guided by its mission of "making government work for gender equality." This means, according to its term report for 1992 to 1998, "a government that recognizes gender as a crosscutting factor when it formulates policies, implements programs and projects, allocates resources, and evaluates and monitors the impact of its decisions and actions on people's lives. The aim is to make government respond to the concerns and issues affecting women."

The NCRFW's mission has provided the direction it needs to make a difference in the lives of women. It promotes its commitment to women's empowerment by being the focal point for gender concerns in government. Aside from advising the President and the Cabinet on matters affecting Filipino women, it also works with agencies to enable them to be more efficient and sensitive in responding to their needs. This is done through technical assistance, training, workshops, seminars and consultations, among others, so agencies can better their skills and capability in addressing gender concerns. The NCRFW also maintains a strong partnership with women advocates in the civil society, the private sector and academe in moving forward the women's agenda. Because of its pioneering efforts in gender and development, it has become a model for other developing countries on how a national machinery for the advancement of women "engenders" government and the development process.

Not bad for an organization that is just on its 25th year.



The women and men behind the NCRFW

NCRFW's Two Decades of Empowering Filipino Women

1975 to 1986:

Organized women for community projects on such concerns as education, health and economic productivity

1986 to 2000:

Made government "think women" by integrating gender in its processes through such activities as training in gender sensitivity and gender responsive planning, setting up GAD focal points in agencies, and putting in place a critical mass of gender advocates in the bureaucracy


Strengthened the capabilities of agencies through close partnership with them and developing tools and mechanisms to help them respond to gender issues in their sectors

Instituted the development plans for women that translated the women's agenda into doable actions agencies can adopt and the GAD budget that allocates resources for programs, projects and activities for women

Initiated efforts to involve the legislative and judicial branches of government in gender mainstreaming as well as subnational offices of agencies in the regions and local government units



The NCRFW at 25: Renewed Excitement, A Sense of Purpose



An anniversary is always a time for looking back and looking forward. More so, if that anniversary marks 25 years of an organization's existence. It has never been an easy twenty-five years, but we celebrate today confident that we have been able to face all the challenges that have been coming our way. Today we stand proud of our achievements, wiser from the lessons of past mistakes, convinced in the rightness of our mission to advance gender equity, and committed in turning our vision of gender equality to reality.

Influencing government

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women owes its existence to the reawakening of the women's movement in the '70s. It was created in 1975, the year the United Nations declared as the International Year for Women. The Commission's first 10 years were spent organizing women for health, nutrition and livelihood projects, traditional women's concerns, so to speak. But by the second half of the '80s, it went beyond these concerns and began focusing on women's role in national development. The Commission believes that women are not just passive beneficiaries of development but are active participants in achieving it as well. To make this possible, society's mainstream must be transformed to enable women to fulfill this role. The challenge is to make society's institutions and its sectors respond to the needs and concerns of

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women and to break the barriers that frustrate them from attaining equality, development and peace. The Commission has to influence government, the most dominant institution of society, to take up the women's cause and be among its leading advocates. Gender and development, the paradigm that puts women and their concerns at the center of all development efforts, has to be integrated into government's planning process. This means that GAD must be a consideration when government plans, allocates budgets for, implements, monitors and evaluates policies, programs and projects.

Solid Gains

It is fair to note that the Commission has succeeded in doing this at the executive, and to a certain extent, at the legislative levels of government. It is now in the process of making its advocacy felt in the judiciary, at the subnational level of regional offices, and among local government units. There is widespread awareness of GAD at all levels, even its continued and sustained integration by a number of government offices in their work and priority programs. GAD is beginning to make its impact felt by government, with the initiatives of the past evolving into today's strategic efforts. This has resulted in government becoming more sensitive to the concerns of women, more responsive to their needs, more serious in advancing their status in society.

More than claiming the gains of the past, this celebration is also an opportunity for the Commission to look forward—and inward—and discern the kind of organization it wants for itself in the years ahead. It may be way too ambitious for the Commission to envision itself as the authority for gender mainstreaming in the country, and at the same time, see itself as government's oversight agency for women's concerns. But that is precisely what it is aiming to be. Beyond discussing GAD concepts and talking about gender



NCRFW exec. dir. Ermelita V. Valdeavilla

mainstreaming, this is the time for the Commission to connect GAD and its impact on ordinary people's lives. To achieve this, the Commission needs to strengthen its capacity to give technical assistance, disseminate public information and develop practical tools on gender mainstreaming. It must bring GAD down to the level of the *barangays* and local government units and enable ordinary people to realize how it matters in their daily living. It should also reach out to civil society, especially to women groups and nongovernment organizations, and forge a deeper partnership with them. The Commission, as a government agency, needs the perspective and inputs of women groups and NGOs for it to come up with balanced, well-defined and responsive policies and recommendations on various issues confronting women. *(Page 9, please)*

"The Commission has to influence government, the most dominant institution in society, to take up the women's cause and be among its leading advocates."

“A stronger, more responsive, and capable national machinery on women”

The change in administration also brings with it a change in leadership in the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women. Educator Amelou Benitez-Reyes is appointed new chairperson of the NCRFW Board. As the Commission marks its 25th anniversary, she reflects on the role of the Commission and its direction during her term. Below is an excerpt of her interview:

Q: What are the priority issues confronting Filipino women today?

A: Poverty continues to be the most urgent concern of Filipino women. In this country, poverty continues to wear a woman's face. But this is just one side of the coin. The other is gender inequality. Filipino women still suffer from various forms of discrimination, exploitation and abuse on account of their gender. These two issues feed on each other to perpetuate women's secondary status in society.

Q: What is this administration's women's agenda?

A: Our women's agenda would focus, obviously, on poverty eradication and gender equality, the attainment of which would result in women's empowerment. Specifically, it would push for women's economic empowerment, address the adverse effects of globalization on their conditions, promote decision making at

various levels of governance, and respond to the problems brought about by violence against women and trafficking of women and children.

Q: What is the NCRFW's role in promoting this women's agenda?

A: The Commission will continue to see to it that government, through its various agencies and at all levels, carries out a national and concerted effort to address the women's agenda. It will give technical assistance to agencies so they can better develop their GAD (gender and development) plans and utilize their GAD budget. It will continue to work with government institutions so they can improve their capacity to respond to gender issues, especially those pertaining to poverty eradication and gender equality.

Q: In terms of direction and priorities, how different is your term from the past term?

A: The NCRFW's advocacy of integrating gender concerns into society's mainstream, particularly in government's development planning process, will continue. The Commission is now taking this one step further by bringing its advocacy to the level of subnational agencies in the regions and the local government units. Previous administrations have mainly

concentrated on improving the status of women through GAD plans and gender-responsive policies. During my term, I hope to implement these through a concrete action program on gender mainstreaming to empower women. Toward this end, the

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NCRFW's New Thrusts and Priorities

Decentralization. The NCRFW shall vigorously push that national laws and policies and international instruments on women are implemented in the regions, provinces, cities and municipalities.

Media and Publicity. The power of media will be tapped to support the gender mainstreaming strategy, influence public opinion and perception on critical issues, and articulate NCRFW's positions on them.

Education, Culture, Training, Information Technology and Herstory. The initiatives on database development will be sustained. Systems will be instituted for efficient management of information for gender policy development, planning and the overall work of gender mainstreaming.

Legislation and Policy Advocacy. NCRFW will ensure that policies and laws are enacted to support gender mainstreaming and directly confront the critical issues confronting women.

NGO and Civil Society Participation. NCRFW will enhance its capacity to meet the needs of partner NGOs for gender training, technical assistance and information support. Women NGOs will continue to be represented in the NCRFW Board, serve as resource experts or consultants in various aspects of its work, and be partners in advocacy at the national and field levels.

International Advocacy. The leadership of the Philippines in GAD advocacy shall be strengthened. This will be carried out through the setting up of a pool of international experts in fields significant to the country's GAD work and promoting cross-country study tours to exchange experiences and insights in pushing the women's agenda.

Sustaining Implementation of Core Priorities. NCRFW will initiate its own organizational strengthening by putting in place adequate and more effective structures, improved systems, tools and procedures and carrying out capability building for its top officials and staff.



Three women and a summit, left to right, NCRFW chair Benitez-Reyes, exec. dir. Valdeavilla and commissioner and foreign affairs undersecretary Rosario Manalo during the '99 APEC meet in New Zealand

Still Making Progress

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women and its partners continue to make progress in implementing the Institutional Strengthening Project II, a joint undertaking of the Philippine government and the Canadian International Development Agency.

This is the overall observation made by the Performance Assessment Team that evaluated ISP II's current implementation in a report submitted to the NCRFW and CIDA. The PAT is a three member team of two Canadian consultants and a Filipino expert.

"(The) NCRFW management and staff demonstrate continued commitment to the project's goals and to effective use of project resources to achieve (them)," the report says.

The PAT notes that the "broad involvement of NCRFW's divisions in managing the various components of the project" also contributes to the project's capability building aspect, "resulting in tools and methodologies for gender mainstreaming that will be useful to agencies."

Progress is also evident in the piloting of gender mainstreaming at the subnational level, the PAT's specific focus. At the Subnational Partners' Congress that the PAT attended, "(C)ommitment was clear from the level and quality of participation — partners wanted to both inform the group of the approaches they had taken and to learn from the experience of others to refine strategies and resolve problems."

The PAT also visited some of the sites at the subnational level where the pilot projects are being implemented. It observes how the NCRFW's partners are able to "mobilize others, build understanding of gender mainstreaming and implement new approaches. Through the process,

a number of different strategies are being tried out and new tools and methodologies developed."

The NCRFW and the PAT, however, also identified "a number of issues" to be addressed. These are:

- stronger links between national and subnational partners, particularly in terms of issuing executive and administrative orders from central offices to facilitate the implementation of gender mainstreaming in regional offices and stronger links between ISP II-supported initiatives at the national and subnational levels;
- possible links between the initiatives of the NCRFW and the needs of the subnational partners, among which are initiatives on indicators, monitoring and evaluation, and GAD budgets;
- support of NCRFW to subnational partners, including strategies to overcome difficulties in getting local consultants, making gender mainstreaming "real" to implementors, providing further opportunities for the exchange of experience among subnational partners, and further monitoring and followup of particular strategies by each partner; and
- consideration of strategies for drawing conclusions from the piloting experience both at the level of the subnational partners and the catalytic role of NCRFW.

In its report, the PAT recommends two more performance assessment missions for ISP II: one in April-May 2000 that would focus on the line and statistical agencies' implementation of their project components and an end-project mission in April 2001.



ISP II Holds 2nd Partners' Congress

The Institutional Strengthening Project II held its Second Partners' Congress, described by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women's executive director as "a celebration of harvests among partners."

The Congress' highlight focused on the progress reports of the project's implementation presented by the partner agencies according to clusters, instead of according to agencies. The process was a departure from the previous Congress where reporting was based on the activities undertaken by specific partner agencies.

Objectives of the Congress were:

- to set up mechanisms for building lateral linkages among partners at different levels and from different sectors;
- to have a holistic sense of project status and accomplishments among partners;
- to facilitate sharing of tools, best practices, learning and insights among partners; and
- to resolve specific issues that directly affect ISP II implementation.

Participants also held an open forum to surface strategies and mechanisms that help better the status of women in the workplace, among which were:

- improving processes and systems, including review of policies, survey of women's special needs, orientation workshop on gender sensitive values, and staff development;
- supporting education and training, such as masteral scholarships, skills training on information technology, deepening awareness of gender and development, review classes for Bar examinees, and career advancement programs for employees;
- addressing women's multiple burden through such schemes as flexitime and day care facilities; and
- addressing women's health, including health insurance, psychiatric treatment for battered women, physical fitness, regular pap smear and prostrate testing, and clean toilet with running water.



ISP II's Partners by Clusters

- **Oversight agencies:** the National Economic and Development Agency (NEDA), Department of Budget and Management, Department of Interior and Local Government, and Civil Service Commission
- **Line agencies:** Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Trade and Industry, and Department of Agriculture
- **Statistical Agencies:** National Statistics Coordination Board, National Statistics Office, Statistical Research and Training Center
- **Government Training Institutes:** University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies
- **Subnational Agencies:** NEDA offices in regions I, VI, VIII and X, and provincial governments of regions XI and Caraga

All these agencies implement pilot projects as components of ISP II.

Project Updates

First Regional Partners' Congress

Gender and development must affect all levels of society for it to truly transform people's lives. This is the reason why agencies at the regional level and local government units are included as partners of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women in implementing the Institutional Strengthening Project II, which is supported by the Canadian International Development Agency.

To provide updates on how the ISP II is being implemented at this level, the First Regional Partners' Congress was held recently.

Regional partners are categorized in two ways: cluster A, which is composed of the regional offices of the National Economic and Development Authority in regions I, VIII and X; and cluster B, which include the provincial governments of Davao del Norte and Agusan del Sur in regions XI, and Caraga. Each subnational partner has developed its own framework and strategies on how to integrate GAD into its respective regional or local development plans.

The Congress was an opportunity for them to exchange information and experiences with regard to their gender mainstreaming strategies, to surface issues, concerns and problems related to the project's implementation and explore possible interventions or mechanisms to address them, and to define and clarify GAD concepts. The role of subnational partners in other ISP II components, such as the GAD Resource Center, the regional research and development consortia, and the development of tools for gender mainstreaming, was also discussed.

After the Congress, NCRFW officials and the CIDA Performance Assessment Team met with each of the subnational partners to get updates of their specific implementation of the project.

GAD Resource Center

The effort to integrate gender and development at the subnational level, supported by an expanding network of GAD trainers and experts based there, is beginning to take root. To sustain this, ISP II has set up GAD Resource Centers in five of the regions covered by the project.

The GAD Resource Center is envisioned to be an accessible facility for GAD information exchange in the region and a base for a network of individuals and institutions who are GAD advocates, trainers, researchers and service providers. It carries out the following programs and services: GAD training, information exchange, technical assistance, and research and development.



A regional GAD Resource Center is all set to be opened

The GAD Resource Center established so far are in region I, based at the University of Northern Philippines and the Pangasinan State University, region VI, at the University of the Philippines in Iloilo, region VIII at the University of the Philippines in Tacloban, region X at the Central Mindanao University, and region XI

"The GAD Resource Center is envisioned to be an accessible facility for GAD information exchange in the regions and a base for a network of individuals and institutions who are GAD advocates, trainers, teachers and service providers."

at the University of the Philippines-Mindanao, together with the Ateneo de Davao University.

Orientation Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming toward the Formulation of Agency GAD Plans

Gender and development is not possible if agencies do not have a GAD plan to guide its implementation. Agencies, however, do not have the same level of understanding of GAD concepts nor skills in gender mainstreaming. Because of this, the quality of the GAD plans submitted by agencies leave much to be desired. At worse, some agencies do not even comply with the requirement of developing their respective GAD plans.

The NCRFW addresses this challenge through a series of orientation workshops on gender mainstreaming to help agencies formulate their GAD plans. Specifically, GAD concepts, the national gender mainstreaming strategy, and how to develop an agency GAD plan were presented to the participants. Agencies with GAD plans already shared their strategies in gender mainstreaming. Participants were asked to formulate a preliminary GAD plan

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Govt Cites Gains, Obstacles in Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

In 1995, during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, nations pledged their commitment to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the women's agenda approved during the summit. For the Philippine government, according to Dr Amelou Benitez-Reyes, chair of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, this means translating its commitment to "a policy of governance that considers both gender and poverty."

Benitez-Reyes' observation is part of a report presented to the intergovernmental ministerial meeting to review regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action held in Bangkok recently. She was head of the Philippine delegation.

"The centerpiece program of the Estrada administration of poverty eradication cannot be effectively pursued without a consideration of gender and development, where women actively participate in governance to achieve effective poverty eradication," she adds.

Gains

According to the report, the Philippines also made "significant gains" in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. These are:

- instituting measures to ensure that gender equality would survive the uncertainties of political transition. A 30-year Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development has been adopted to serve as the framework for carrying out the provisions of the Beijing Platform for Action. A GAD budget policy is also in place that allocates five per cent of the agencies' yearly budget for the implementation of their respective GAD Plans;

- instituting enabling mechanisms to integrate GAD in all stages of the development planning process. This includes data base and indicator systems, GAD focal systems and networks, GAD tools and modules, the integration of GAD policies and programs in the Philippine Medium Term Development Plan, capability building of oversight agencies to institutionalize efficient GAD management systems, developing processes and models for GAD planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and monitoring in selected line agencies, with assistance from the Canadian International Development Agency, awareness raising at the village level, and piloting strategies for wider participation of women in decision making at the subnational level;

- initiating measures to address the 12 areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, five of which are given priority because of their profound impact on the lives of Filipino women. These areas of concern are women and poverty, violence against women, women and the economy, women and power and decision making, and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; and

- continuing the partnership between government and NGOs in the women's movement. An effective national machinery for women is not relevant without the steadfast support of the women's movement, civil society and the private sector.

"Poverty, violence against women, and the impact of globalization and the financial crisis in 1998 are the major obstacles confronting government's efforts to advance women's status."

Obstacles

The report cites poverty, violence against women, and the impact of globalization and the financial crisis that hit the region in 1998 as the major obstacles confronting government's efforts to advance women's status.

To address the issue of poverty, the report says, the national anti-poverty campaign adopted a policy to pursue poverty eradication with a gender perspective and allocated a seat for a women's sector representation in the National Anti-Poverty Council. The Philippines also helped develop a framework for integrating women's concerns within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation that recognizes how regional economic policies affect women and men differently. The framework was adopted by the APEC leaders recently.

The report also states that as a response to cases of violence against women, women's desks have been set up in police precincts and family courts have been established to try family-related cases. To help women who fell prey to trafficking and prostitution in their quest for overseas employment, the report says gender awareness training is given to staff and officials of diplomatic posts in countries with many Filipino workers.

"The centerpiece program of the Estrada administration of poverty eradication cannot be effectively pursued without a consideration of gender and development, where women actively participate in governance to achieve effective poverty eradication."

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Budget cuts, due to the financial crisis, threaten the GAD budget which has been operating for the past five years. Strong lobbying spared the social sector from severe budget cuts, the report adds.

New initiatives

The new administration, according to the report, "remains resolute in implementing the commitments made in Beijing," particularly the following initiatives:

- the pursuit of South-South cooperation among developing countries by establishing a capability-building institute for systematic sharing of learning and development of skills among officials and staff of national women's machineries;
- development of a GAD Plan for 2000 to 2004 with a women's agenda for empowerment and gender equality and poverty eradication as its underlying basis;
- operationalization of the poverty eradication program within the context of gender mainstreaming;
- strengthening of government institutions toward a greater capacity for gender equality while responding to gender issues in poverty eradication through programs and projects. This is expected to generate positive changes in the lives of women in terms of improved welfare, greater access to resources, higher levels of conscientization, meaningful participation in decision making, and better control of their lives.

"Government's renewed commitment to the women's agenda of equality, development and peace would lead to positive results for the empowerment of the Filipino women."

- use of the GAD budget for specific measures for women empowerment, oversight and policy bodies of government to check on accountabilities, and Commission on Audit to administer a gender audit scheme;
- special attention to specific groups of women such as girl children, women victims of prostitution and trafficking, and overseas women workers, the pursuit of more relevant programs for rural women, urban poor, and indigenous women, and strengthening of measures to promote the mental health of vulnerable groups of women;

• launching of a P1 billion lending window for women entrepreneurs, with assistance from banks and financial institutions; and

- continued campaign for the passage of a bill transforming the present women's commission into a development authority on women with stronger clout, mandate and organizational structure, and setting up a P1 billion perpetual trust fund whose interest earnings will be used in assisting subnational, national, regional and international pursuits to advance gender equality.

Government's renewed commitment to the women's agenda of equality, development and peace, stresses Benitez-Reyes, would lead to "positive results for the empowerment of the Filipino women."



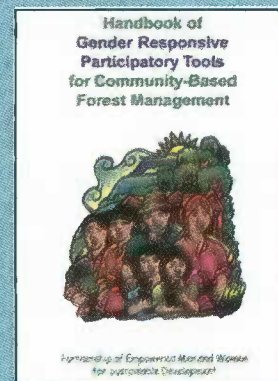
Off the Press:

Handbook of Gender Responsive Participatory Tools for Community-Based Forest Management: Partnership of Empowered Men and Women for Sustainable Development

A timely guide to strengthen the participation of women and men in various stages of the Community-Based Forest Management program of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The tools presented by the handbook promote gender responsive approaches that development workers, people's organizations and other stakeholders can use to realize their vision of sustainable development.

The handbook is a product of the Development of Tools for Mainstreaming Gender and Development in CBFM project, a joint undertaking of the DENR and the Institutional Strengthening Project II of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women and the Canadian International Development Agency.

The CBFM strategy strongly supports local communities and government toward sustainable forest resources management. It is anchored on the DENR's gender and development vision of "partnership of empowered men and women for sustainable development."



A handbook of gender responsive approaches toward sustainable development

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for their agencies and an action plan on how they would introduce GAD in their respective offices.

For 1999, three sessions were held, with 50 participants from different agencies attending each session.

2nd GAD Assembly

GAD planning and budgeting, even if already implemented by a number of agencies, are processes that still need to be fully understood and internalized by agencies.

The NCRFW addressed this gap through the GAD Assembly where agencies come together to share their gender mainstreaming experiences. It was a venue where the NCRFW clarified operational concepts and issues of gender mainstreaming. Problems and obstacles in implementation were identified so that possible solutions and responses could be worked out. A seminar workshop was also held to assess and enhance the agencies' respective GAD plans.

This activity was part of NCRFW's intervention to provide technical assistance to agencies in their gender mainstreaming efforts. Three batches of GAD Assembly were held for 1999.

Development of a Gender Responsive Monitoring and Evaluation System in Employment Facilitation

Employment has always been an urgent concern of Filipinos. The Department of Labor and Employment sees to it that government is able to address this concern. One of the mechanisms it has set in place is the creation of Public Employment Service Offices nationwide. Under the supervision of the Bureau of Local Employment, the PESOs primarily assist job seekers find work for which they are qualified. They also



Participants in one of a series of workshops on gender mainstreaming

provide employment counseling, career guidance and information on the labor market.

Because PESOs facilitate employment, their monitoring and evaluation system has to respond to gender concerns so they can assist more women workers effectively by reducing gender bias in the hiring system.

The ISP II being implemented by the NCRFW is thus helping DOLE develop a gender responsive monitoring and evaluation system for the PESOs. This will be done by identifying and adopting gender sensitive indicators, pilot testing them, and eventually institutionalizing them through the existing monitoring and evaluation system of the DOLE.

This PESO-focused project will have four components: (a) a workshop to review its monitoring and evaluation system; (b) a gender sensitivity training and validation of the gender sensitive indicators; (c) pilot testing of the identified indicators; and (d) assessment workshop of the pilot test and adoption of validated indicators.

DA-NCRFW Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Project

The country's agriculture sector is readying itself to face globalization through the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997. But the AFMA has to address as well the interests of women farmers and

fisherfolks so that they can equally avail of the opportunities provided by this new world order.

This is the reason for this joint project of the Department of Agriculture and the NCRFW. The AFMA will be reviewed and assessed to determine its impact on gender needs and concerns in the agriculture sector. The project hopes to build the capacities of AFMA program implementors so they can respond more effectively to the gender needs of rural women and men. It will also pilot test the appropriateness of the DA GAD Guidelines developed earlier and institutionalize its use as a planning tool.

Expected outputs of the project are a documentation of the review and analysis of the AFMA's gender responsiveness, setting up of a core of GAD trainers in the DA, including its regional field units, to act as advocates and catalysts for the implementation of a gender responsive AFMA, an enhanced gender training module customized for the agriculture and the fishery sectors, a revised DA GAD Guidelines, and case analysis of AFMA's implementation in key regions.

Pilot Time-Use Survey

Measuring women's contribution to the economy is a current gap that government seeks to address. The NCRFW, together with the National Statistics Office and the National Statistical Coordination

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After 25 years, the Commission may well be past its growing pains. This anniversary presents the perfect opportunity for it to once again affirm its commitments to Filipino women and to a more equal, developed and peaceful nation. It is also a time to be thankful — to the early feminists who were responsible for its birth, to its partners in government, civil society, the academe, the private sector, and international organizations who continue to support it, to the women and men who have spent time and effort and shared experiences as members of the Commission. Because of them, it has evolved

into an organization able to exercise the power granted it as the national machinery for women. It is now more secure of its position as a credible source of knowledge and technical know-how on gender mainstreaming. These are solid gains indeed that mark the two decades and a half of its existence. Still, the Commission is a work in progress, an organization that continues to transform society and be transformed by it. For us in the Commission, this thought gives us renewed excitement and a sense of purpose as we enter the threshold of the new millennium.



Q & A with the Chairperson . . . from page 3

Commission has presented to the President three measures for his approval: one, the creation of a National Coordinating Committee on Women Empowerment; two, the establishment of a Philippine Development Fund for Women as an irrevocable trust fund, a Gender and Development Commission as trustee and fund manager, and a Philippine Gender and Development Foundation as the implementing agency; and three, approval of the proposed legislation transforming the NCRFW into the Philippine Development Authority for Women (PDAW) as a priority bill of the President.

Q: What is the significance of these three measures?

A: The National Coordinating Committee on Women Empowerment will accelerate women's access to economic resources. There is now a P3 billion fund set aside by the Development Bank of the Philippines, the Land Bank and other financial institutions for women entrepreneurs. However, they

cannot utilize this lending window unless program activities providing direct access to resources, credit, technology, training, markets and information are made available. The proposed committee will address this gap. The Philippine Development Fund for Women is a proposed P1 billion trust fund that can be made available to support the programs and projects of women involved in poverty eradication. The PDAW bill redefines the national machinery for the advancement of women and strengthens its mandate so it can respond more effectively to gender issues and institutionalize women concerns as a cross-cutting consideration in achieving development. The PDAW bill has some innovative provisions: the appointment of the chairperson as a Cabinet secretary, its status as a corporation attached to the Office of the President so that it can raise resources to fund programs and projects for women in both the public and private sectors, and the setting up of regional and local offices.



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Board, is in the process of addressing this issue through the conduct of a Pilot Time Use Survey (TUS) project.

The survey will develop a framework for measuring women's and men's contribution to the economy. It will also yield survey data on how Filipino women and men spend their time doing such activities as paid work, housework, nonmarket work and free time activities. The pilot TUS will serve as the basis for developing a methodology for conducting a nation-wide TUS. The data to be generated from the TUS will

be used to formulate estimation procedures and standards for the valuation of unpaid work of women and men.

The project has just completed pretesting the survey instruments and modes of data collection. Debriefing sessions are ongoing for survey enumerators to prepare them for the field enumeration to be conducted on 15-29 February 2000.



Lending Windows for Women Entrepreneurs

For the longest time, men have always ruled the business world. Still, women have not stopped trying to claim their place in it. The new millennium starts with a significant number of them seriously involved in the business of making business. Their number is expected to increase as conditions in owning and running a business are gradually being transformed to make them more women-friendly.

This drift for change is shown once again during the launching recently of lending windows for women entrepreneurs and those who own or manage small and medium enterprises. A program implemented by government financial institutions and private banks, the lending windows provide women with access to financial services and credit. It was initiated by the Women's Business Council Philippines, a private organization composed of women executives and entrepreneurs, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the Department of Trade and Industry and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women.

According to Isabelita Palanca, WBCP's president and NCRFW commissioner, "Women entrepreneurs in the country have identified access to credit as one of the more critical concerns that confront them. The lending windows, therefore, is the answer to their need for financing and credit."

Lending program

Women entrepreneurs with assets of at least P1.5 million, the minimum amount defined in the Magna Carta of SMEs, can avail of credit through lending windows established by GFIs and private banks.

Lending programs launched by the GFIs are the (1) Land Bank of the Philippines' PINAY or *Puhunang Inilaan sa mga Pinay*, a P1 billion facility targeted for women-owned and women-led enterprises in rural and nonrural areas; (2) Development Bank of the Philippines' P1 billion credit for women in SMEs; and (3) Small Business Guarantee Finance Corporation's P100 million credit packages for women entrepreneurs not covered by the Landbank's and DBP's lending programs. The People's Credit and Finance Corp offers group credit to conduits such as rural banks and cooperatives which, in turn, lend to micro borrowers. Private banks participating in the program are Equitable Bank, Banco de Oro, Planters Development Bank, and Asiatrust Bank.

Palanca is quick to point out that the idea of a lending window for women is not just to address gender inequality in business nor establish an even playing field for women in business. The aim, according to her, is to create a "market niche for women, and because they are a market, banks will

eventually compete among themselves to tap it by developing a range of services that specifically cater to their needs."

The WBCP president compares this market niche for women as similar to what has been developed for yuppies, for example, where financing schemes have been created to meet their need for housing, for acquiring a car, or even for financing their vacations in the country or abroad, among others. Once women are recognized as a market, it will not be long before banks and financial institutions see the wisdom of providing them also with lending services that address their business requirements.

Windows of opportunity

The lending window program is not limited to providing credit for women. "More than anything else, its overriding goal is for GFIs and private banks to review their lending processes so that they can improve them and adopt changes that would make them more accessible to women borrowers. It directs bank and credit officers to undergo training on the special needs of women borrowers, taking into consideration their gender specific concerns. At the same time, it calls for women borrowers to be trained on fiscal management and the basic values of honesty, transparency and responsibility," Palanca explains.

To sustain the program, the WBCP will market it to other banks and financial institutions nationwide, install a monitoring system to assess its progress, and continue its advocacy for banks and financial institutions to simplify their lending processes. "It is not enough that women can now own or manage businesses. This has to be sustained and supported through a package of programs that would give them a chance to prove their worth as honest-to-goodness entrepreneurs who can run and expand profitable enterprises," she notes. An observation not to be taken lightly, considering that it comes from the woman president of a holding company for nine successful business ventures.



NCRFW chair and commissioners, other government officials, and program partners from banks and government financial institutions during the launching of the lending windows for women in Malacanang



Anti-Prostitution Bill: Another Landmark Legislation in the Making

Prostitution, under Philippine law, is a crime. But while the law does not define prostitution, it is explicit in identifying prostitutes as women.

Women who get caught engaging in this sex for sale are the only ones penalized. Never mind if they are actually victimized by prostitution, and should be the ones protected and supported by government, instead of being treated as criminals.

This injustice and sexual exploitation of women and children, however, may be a thing of the past if a pending bill against prostitution is passed into law. Its most significant provision is to decriminalize women in prostitution and to shift the penalty for it from the prostituted women to their pimps, procurers, and customers.

The explanatory note of the Senate bill maintains that "prostitution is a system where the major players are mostly men or their representatives, and where women and children assume the functional role of delivering sexual services" in exchange for cash or profit. It adds that "men are allowed to escape responsibility for using women (and children) in prostitution."

Provisions

Aside from decriminalizing prostitution, the bill also defines it. Its House version defines it as "any act, transaction, scheme or design involving the use of a person, whether woman, man or child, for the sexual gratification, exploitation or

pleasure of another in exchange for cash, profit or other consideration, or any act which promotes or facilitates the accomplishment of the said act, transaction, scheme or design, as specifically defined in Section 4 of this Act." Section 4 enumerates the acts punishable under this proposed law.

Section 5, on the other hand, defines acts that attempt to commit prostitution of a child. In all these acts, the consent of the prostituted person is immaterial and does not exempt the offender from criminal liability.

Another section of the bill provides social services and programs for prostituted persons and children. A National Anti-Prostitution Task Force composed of government agencies and NGOs involved in helping victims and survivors will be created. The Task Force's main responsibility is to develop programs and coordinate efforts that would address the issue of prostitution and the needs of persons and children exploited by it.

The bill contends that to address the problems of women and children in prostitution, policies and programs must "provide them protection, penalize those who control, perpetuate, and benefit from the business of prostitution, and address the factors that perpetuate it."

Prostitution, according to the bill, is a human rights violation. The decriminalization of women in prostitution is the first step to ensure that this right is affirmed.

"The bill's most significant provision is to decriminalize women in prostitution and to shift the penalty for it from the prostituted women to their procurers, pimps and customers."

"Prostitution is a human rights violation. The decriminalization of women in prostitution is the first step to ensure that this right is affirmed."

Time line

Government's move to change the country's law on prostitution started in October 1998 when the technical board of the Social Development Committee discussed the results of a study on prostitution made by Dean Rene Ofreneo of the University of the Philippines. It then instructed the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women to convene a multisectoral consultative workshop to analyze the issue.

The NCRFW held the first consultation in February 1999. Selected leaders from women nongovernment organizations brainstormed on possible strategies to advocate support for a bill decriminalizing prostituted women. A technical working group was set up to lead this effort, identify initial advocacy activities, and organize another multi-agency consultation.

By March 1999, a draft bill had been formulated after various consultations with women organizations and survivors of prostitution. The bill is entitled the Anti-Prostitution Act of 1999.



Gender Focus

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UN Protocol to Back Women's Rights

UNITED NATIONS—At least 18 nations marked UN Human Rights Day last December by becoming the first signatories to a legal protocol to help women fight discrimination.

The protocol will enable women for the first time to submit sex discrimination complaints directly to the UN if they don't get heard in their home countries.

It does not require, however, that countries hand over information about individual cases.

The UN General Assembly adopted the 21-article optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

It decided to open the protocol for signatures on Human Rights Day, observed annually on the 10th of December, to mark the anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

The UN Division for the Advancement of Women said that 18 nations signed the optional protocol at a ceremony at UN headquarters—Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Senegal and Sweden.

In the Philippines, NCRFW executive director Ermelita Valdeavilla says that consultations are being planned to get inputs and support from advocates prior to a more focused initiative of urging the Senate to ratify the protocol.

The General Assembly urged the 163 nations that have ratified the CEDAW to ratify the optional protocol as soon as possible. It will enter into force as soon as 10 countries have ratified it.

The CEDAW, adopted by the General Assembly in December 1979, bars abuses against women. Among other things, it requires that women have equal rights to

work, pay benefits and safe working conditions. It also prohibits discrimination against women in political activism and requires a minimum age for marriage.

But the treaty did not include complaint procedures so women could bring their grievances before the UN if they were not addressed by their own countries.

Twenty years later, women are likely to get that right.

After four years of negotiations, the Commission on the Status of Women approved the optional protocol in March and sent it to the General Assembly for final approval.

The optional protocol will make it possible for women, individual or in groups, to submit complaints about alleged violation of the treaty.

NCRFW Travels the Internet Highway

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women is wired and connected to the world wide web. It is also starting to make full use of a wide range of information technology so it can meet the demands of the information age.

The Commission can now be reached through its web site—www.ncrfw.gov.ph. With its dedicated dial-up connection, it has unlimited access to the Internet through an exclusive dedicated number. It has installed a Local Area Network connecting 22 work stations. Its divisions have their own email addresses where they can conveniently send and retrieve their messages directly using their own terminals. It also acquired a number of hardware equipment and software programs through the Institutional Strengthening Project II it is implementing with the Canadian International Development Agency.

NCRFW's web page contains information about the organization, its structure, division profile, publications available and for sale, news on women, gender and development terminologies, and links to other gender related websites.

The Commission's software development is ongoing with the installation of the ISIS for Windows software developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It also acquired a fingerscan that uses employees' fingerprints in recording their time in-and -out of the office.



We're on the 'Net at
www.ncrfw.gov.ph