

NCRFW Silver Jubilee

JANUARY 7, 2000 • NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE ROLE OF FILIPINO WOMEN

NCRFW: Gov't conscience on women turns 25!

The mission to make government work for gender equality sums up in one sentence the work of this government agency under the Office of the President. Celebrating its silver jubilee today, NCRFW has been largely instrumental in weaving the threads of advocacy that now bind government, NGOs, donors, academe and civil society partners in a continuing quest for gender equality.

The NCRFW was created in 1975, in response to nearly a decade of advocacy by women NGOs and the United Nation's declaration of the International Women's Year. Its birth and transformation have been closely linked with the women's movement and with political developments in the country.

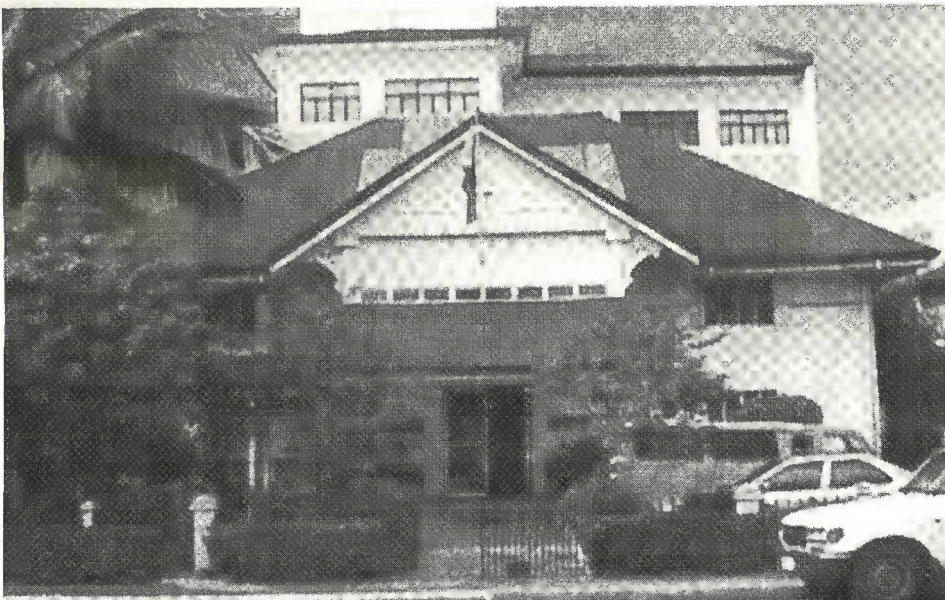
Formal organizing among Filipino women may be said to have started in

the 1920s when the elite and educated banded together to put up welfare projects with women as primary beneficiaries, and to build support systems for themselves as professionals. It was during this time when efforts of suffragists prospered and eventually won for Filipino women the right to vote in 1937. Organizations active in the movement included the National Federation of Women's Clubs, Women Citizen's League of the Philippines and the Philippine Association of University Women.

Later, women organizations federated into the Civic Assembly of Women of the Philippines or CAWP (now called the National Council of Women of the Philippines). It was the CAWP which led the lobby for the creation of the NCRFW, a national machinery for women.

On January 6, 1975, Leticia Ramos-Shahani, then chairperson of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and several other women leaders held a women's rally with then First Lady Imelda Romualdez-Marcos as guest of honor. The event led shortly to the issuance of Presidential Decree 633 on January 7, 1975 which set up NCRFW. The birth of the Commission was also in response to the declaration by the United Nations of 1975 as International Women's Year and the decade following it as the UN Decade for Women.

Through the years, the NCRFW has evolved from a lone handmaiden in government to a "nagging conscience" whose views have been sought in the development of national legislations, policies, budgets and programs. A small office with a big mission, fuelled by an undying commitment to work for better life for everybody, NCRFW shall continue to count on all of you to attain its vision, onward to the new millennium. ♦



The NCRFW office today, located at 1145 J. P. Laurel St., San Miguel, Manila.

Highlights of 1999 Accomplishments

- Launching of P4 billion loan windows for women entrepreneurs in partnership with the Development Bank of the Philippines, Land Bank, women business organizations and private financing institutions. It aims to enhance the economic opportunities for women through accessible and women-friendly loans and entrepreneurial technical support.
- Completion of the Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC processes and its eventual adoption by

the APEC leaders. The framework recognizes the differential impacts of economic policies and programs on women and aims to address them in various APEC fora through the use of gender analysis, sex-disaggregation of data, information sessions and the documentation of best practices on GAD mainstreaming. The adoption of the Framework led to the creation of the SOM Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Gender Integration which was tasked to provide the necessary gender

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1975 to 1985 (Marcos Administration)



Imelda Marcos, Chairperson

During the entire Decade of Women from 1975-1985, the NCRFW rallied NGOs and local government units

around a movement called *Balikatan sa Kaunlaran* (shoulder-to-shoulder for

progress), bringing women and resources together to address women's practical gender needs through projects along the Women Decade's sub-themes of education, health and employment.

Vice Chairperson Irene Cortes (whom Chairperson Imelda Marcos designated to act on her behalf) and Executive Director Leticia Perez de Guzman led the NCRFW in fulfilling its mandate, rallying local government executives to support the *Balikatan* movement and ensuring the ratification by the Philippine government of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN CEDAW), a landmark instrument that compelled States to eliminate laws and



Dr. Leticia de Guzman
Executive Director

practices that disadvantage or discriminate against women. To pursue CEDAW's provisions, NCRFW initiated a massive

review of national laws for the purpose of eliminating discriminatory provisions therein. The national Clearinghouse and Information Center on Women was also set up within NCRFW during this period. ♦

1986 to 1992 (Aquino Administration)

Insights of the Women's Decade brought to fore a fresh analysis of the underlying roots of women's difficulties: **unequal gender relations**. This, and the election in 1986 of first woman President Corazon Aquino, propelled NCRFW



Leticia Shahani, Chairperson

into new heights, leaving *Balikatan sa Kaunlaran* on its own as a private foundation, and pushing a strategy to make the entire

government work for gender equality.

Three prominent women, former Senator Leticia Shahani (who served for a while as Chair), Dr. Patricia Licuanan (who replaced Chairperson Shahani when she ran for Senator) and veteran



Dr. Patricia Licuanan
Chairperson

organizer Remedios Rikken brought in a lot of fresh perspectives and dynamism upon which NCRFW's directions were anchored.

The term of President Aquino positioned the principle of gender equality in the Philippine Constitution and launched a strategy called gender mainstreaming. This is founded upon a vision of a future where empowered Filipino women and men equally contribute to and benefit from development. GAD mainstreaming aims to make GAD a second reflex in the work of the government.

During this period, NCRFW continued to advise the President and his Cabinet on policies affecting women. Its Board of Commissioners held regular en banc meetings with President Aquino to

apprise her on the progress of its work and share perspectives on how women's agenda could be further advanced.

President Aquino's term put in place strong policy mandates supporting women, a development planning system for women, institutional mechanisms for GAD coordination and implementation, and a critical mass of advocates in government. The country's first woman President left behind a clear vision and strategy of how agencies should position gender concerns in the agenda of the government. The Philippine Development Plan for Women, which she adopted through Executive Order 348,



Remedios Rikken
Executive Director

has been widely acclaimed around the world as one model worthy of replication. The Women in Development and Nation Building Act (RA 7192)

was enacted during this period. ♦

1992 to 1998 (Ramos Administration)

During his term, President Fidel V. Ramos ensured that what women

gained during the previous term could be strengthened and sustained. He further made sure that the GAD mainstreaming



Imelda Nicolas, Chairperson

thrust shall survive political turn-overs. One of his first acts was to reorganize NCRFW, creating two more divisions, adding



Teresita Castillo
Executive Director

plantilla staff positions and providing more budget for its operations.

Through Chairperson Imelda Nicolas and Executive Director Teresita Castillo,

the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD) was adopted. The PPGD is a 30-year perspective plan that serves as the main mechanism to implement the Beijing Platform for Action in the Philippines. The Ramos government instituted the GAD budget policy to ensure that laws, policies, plans and programs on women are implemented. Landmark laws such as the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act and the Anti-Rape Law were also adopted and more women were appointed to top government positions. In all these, NCRFW was an invisible architect, moving institutions and people to set in place the skills, systems and technologies that support gender equality. ♦

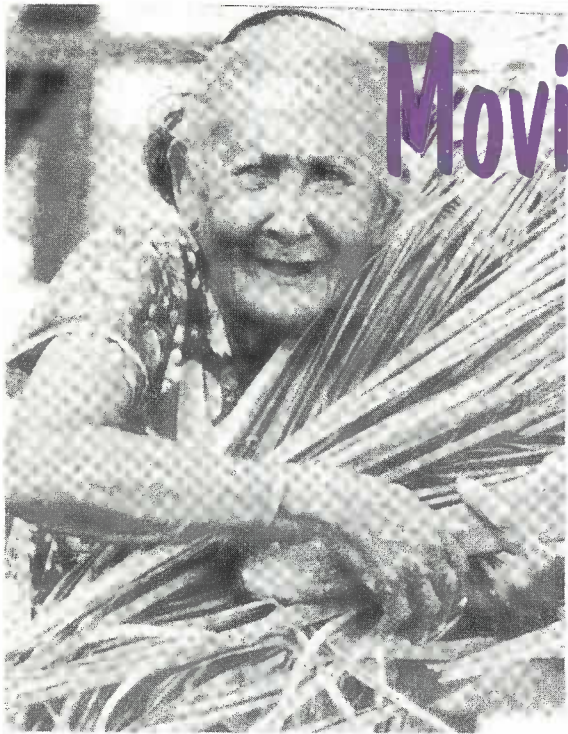
Glimpses of our silver journey...



... I became a woman
Under those vehement stars.
For it was there I heard
For the first time my spirit
Forging an iron rule for me,
As though with slow cold hammers
Beating out word by word:
“Only yourself can heal you,
Only yourself can lead you,
The road is heavy going

And ends where no man knows;
Take love when love is given,
But never think to find it
A sure escape from sorrow
Or a complete repose.”

From “Day’s Ending”
Sara Teasdale



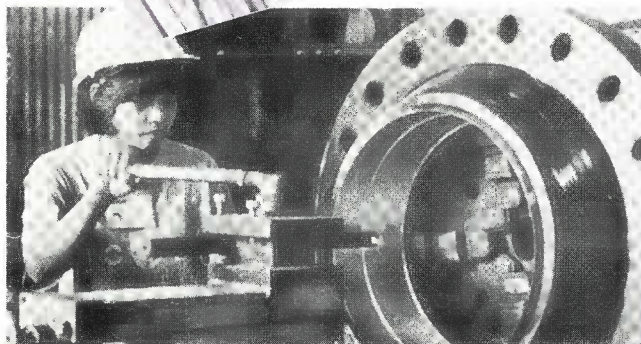
Moving onward...

Vision for the Society:

Empowered Filipino women and men equally contributing to and benefiting from development.

Vision for the Bureaucracy:

A dynamic and transformative government enabling women and men to realize their full potentials, and attain a full and satisfying life.



And you learn to build all your roads today, because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans.

And you learn that love doesn't mean leaning and company doesn't mean security.

And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts and presents aren't promises.

And you begin to accept your defeats with your head up and your eyes open, with the grace of an adult, not the grief of a child.

After a while you learn the subtle difference between holding a hand and chaining a soul.

After a while you learn that even sunshine burns if you get too much.

So plant your own garden and decorate your own soul, instead of waiting for someone to bring you flowers.

And you learn that you really can endure . . . that you really are strong, and you really do have worth.

—Anonymous



1998 to 2004 (Estrada Administration)

The current administration of President Joseph Estrada commits to build upon the gains of the past. His thrust of poverty eradication



Dr. Luisa Ejercito Estrada
Honorary Chairperson

recognizes that poverty has a woman's face and that corresponding measures must assume a bias for women and the other basic sectors like youth, indigenous people and elderly, whose

members are also fifty percent women. The current administration is set to adopt a four-year GAD action plan that draws from the 30-year perspective plan of the previous administration.

In concrete terms, this means that the Philippines will continue to pursue its commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, but this time, with a stronger bias for implementation and monitoring. Gender and its underlying principles and concepts shall be operationalized through



Dr. Amelou Reyes
Chairperson



Ermelita Valdeavilla
Executive Director

partnership with local government units, peoples' organizations and the academic community. Concretely, it will give greater

focus at improving welfare, access, conscientization, participation, control and empowerment of women. This will be sustained by a twin focus at transforming traditional bureaucratic beliefs and practices, re-engineering structures and processes, creating GAD tools, and devising new patterns of resource allocation that will fast track the attainment of gender equality. ♦

Highlights of 1999 Accomplishments (cont. from p. 1)

expertise that will enable APEC bodies to implement the Framework during the two-year critical period.

- Ensuring implementation of the GAD budget policy, a unique approach in ensuring resources for women and gender equality policies. This approach has become an interesting model for other countries. The GAD budget policy is a provision under Section 28 of the 1999 General Appropriations Act (GAA) which required government entities to set aside at least 5 percent of their 1999 appropriations for projects which address gender issues. For the period, a significant increase in the number of agencies complying with this policy rose dramatically from 69 in 1998 to 134 in 1999. The budgetary allocations of complying agencies also increased from P2.69 billion in 1998 to P3.42 billion in 1999.
- Participation in the 43rd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women on March 1 to 12, 1999 in New York. The NCRFW headed the Philippine delegation, who among others, drafted a resolution on Women and Mental Health, acted as resource person on the forum titled "From Platform to Action: Strategies for Achieving Equality Through Institutional Mechanisms", and prepared the Philippine Statements on Institutional Mechanisms for Women's Advancement and follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.
- Implementation of NCRFW-Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Institutional Strengthening Project (ISP) II which develops tools and systems for gender-responsive development planning and policy-making, renders technical assistance on GAD to selected

partners, transfers gender training capacity to appropriate training institutions, and builds the capability of the NCRFW as an oversight agency for GAD. During this period, NCRFW convened the Second Partners' Congress which served as a venue for CIDA-ISP II partners to share their experiences and insights on the project. The officials of the NCRFW and selected partner agencies also participated in the Study Mission to Canada to enhance their capability for top-level advocacy on GAD. Some of the NCRFW officials also attended the conference on "Designing Research, Policy and Action Approaches to Eliminate Gender Inequality" in Nova Scotia, Canada to learn how subnational interventions on GAD are carried out. Among others, the Mission resulted in a plan to introduce gender audit through the Commission on Audit to ensure better use of the GAD budget by government agencies.

- Implementation of the Pilot Project Against Trafficking in Women (PPATW), a bilateral project between the Philippines and Belgium which aimed to eradicate and train the public on preventive actions against trafficking in women, and provide social and legal assistance to victims of this crime.
- NCRFW reviewed 118 bills, which among others include: Women Empowerment, Anti-Domestic Violence, Anti-Trafficking in Women and Minors, Anti-Prostitution, Solo Parents, Anti-Abuse of Women in Intimate Relationships, Marital Infidelity, Population, Divorce, Mother's Day and Women's Crisis Center. Proposals for the comprehensive revision of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act and Family Code were also submitted.
- Measures to promote more women to decision-making positions were

adopted, such as the Civil Service Commission's Memo Circular No. 8, series of 1999. This is supported by a "Directory of Women on the Move", a reference in the identification of women who are promotable to various positions in government.

- A "Legislative Guidebook Toward a Gender Responsive Legislation, Volumes 1 & 2" was launched in April as a tool to help Congressional staff and legislators develop laws with a gender perspective. In progress is the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on the Institutionalization of GAD in the House of Representatives between the NCRFW and Speaker Manuel Villar with a GAD plan for Congress as an integral part.
- The NCRFW also developed tools for effective GAD planning and budgeting. Among the tools developed were "GAD Mainstreaming in the Philippines", "Gender-Responsive Planning Towards the Proper Implementation of the GAD Budget Policies", and "GAD Mainstreaming at Subnational Level." NCRFW, NEDA and DBM formulated the Joint Memorandum Circular on the Guidelines for the Implementation of the GAD Budget Policy.
- Six batches of GAD assemblies were conducted for government agencies to assist them in developing sound GAD plans for which budgets for the Year 2000 shall be allocated.
- The Management Information System of NCRFW has been installed. The system facilitates the systematic classification, storage and retrieval of administrative data of the NCRFW and GAD related information and statistics. ♦

Our partners speak . . .

Filipino women have made many strides in the past of a century, in the political as well as socio-economic spheres. Much of the achievement is not only in the country, but worldwide. To a major extent, this has been facilitated by the work of NCRFW, which has worked very closely with the framework of the major UN Conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the World Conferences (Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing).

Mabuhay, NCRFW!

TERENCE D. JONES
UNDP Resident Representative
and UN Resident Coordinator

We are a country that prides itself on having been the first to give women the vote, and which currently has an elected woman Prime Minister and woman Leader of the Opposition. We look forward to a continuing close working relationship with the NCRFW in the years ahead.

GRAEME WATERS
Ambassador
New Zealand Embassy

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women since its foundation 25 years ago in 1975 has made a great contribution to the cause of gender mainstreaming. Your activities has not only promoted gender equality in the Philippines, but have also served as a **superb role model** for other countries as well. We express our deepest respect for your significant international contribution to the APEC Ministerial Meeting on Women in 1998 and many projects including the APEC projects on the integration of women.

TAMAE ONISHI
Director of the Office for Gender Equality
Prime Minister's Office
The Japanese Government

With the advent of the New Millennium, NCRFW will certainly play a strategic role in highlighting the importance and value of the role of the Filipino women in the society. With the demands of the economic globalization where women are more and more inevitably drawn to be actively involved, we acknowledge and recognize the crucial task of formulating policies that will ultimately affect the lives of women, particularly the working women.

THEO MEYERS
First Secretary for Development Cooperation
Embassy of Belgium

The country of Sweden has long emphasized the need to extend women equal opportunities for growth in the community and society and has identified this as a priority issue in the European Union for the new century.

This is a special newsletter produced for the Silver Jubilee celebration of NCRFW by Ermelita Valdeavilla, Lorenza Umali, Marizon Moral, Pamela Samia, Arnel Orea, Evelyn Baldemor, Joy Capiral and other staff of NCRFW.

We dedicate this special edition to all of you who journeyed with us for the past 25 years. Tumultuous at times, yet enduring, as together, we searched for and held on to the silver lining. It is this endearing partnership that sustained us and it is the same partnership that will keep us energized as we travel 25 more years onward to our golden year.

Board of Commissioners

Honorary Chairperson
Dr. Luisa Ejercito Estrada

Chairperson
Dr. Amelou Benitez-Reyes

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Bernadette E. Arellano	Ma. Lina F. Litton
Regina O. Benitez	Isabelita Sy-Palanca
Teresita B. Camaro	Princess J. Diamond Pangarungan
Teresita S. Castillo	Edith N. Rabat
Aurora J. de Dios	Encarnacion N. Raralio
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Linda S. Pastoral	Esther A. Vibal

Government Organization Members

Ex-Officio Member	Alternate Representative
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Sec. Benjamin E. Diokno, DBM	Asec. Narcisa Santos
Sec. Andrew Gonzales, DECS	Asec. Fe Hidalgo
Sec. Domingo L. Siazon, Jr., DFA	Usec. Rosario G. Manalo
Sec. Ronaldo Puno, DILG	Asec. Remedios Paralejas
Sec. Alberto Romualdez, DOH	Asec. Zenaida Ludovice
Sec. Bienvenido Laguesma, DOLE	Asec. Bernardino Julve
Vice President Gloria M. Arroyo, DSWD	Usec. Belinda Manahan
Sec. Jose Pardo, DTI	Usec. Ernesto M. Ordoñez
Sec. Felipe Medalla, NEDA	Dir. Erlinda Capones

Executive Director
Ermelita V. Valdeavilla

Deputy Executive Director
Mayumi Juris A. Luna

Thus, we find great assurance that through the pursuits of the NCRFW in the Philippines, our nations share a common vision transcending cultural boundaries - one that aims for betterment of women, in both countries and hopefully, throughout the world.

COUNSELLOR PER G. HALLSTROM
Charge d'Affaires
Sweden

It has been an enlightening and rewarding experience working with the NCRFW as a member of the ASEAN sub-committee on women to improve the status of women in Southeast Asia.

Congratulations, NCRFW, on your Silver Jubilee. We wish you every success in your efforts to help the women of the Philippines scale greater heights.

MRS. TAN HWEE SEH
Director
Family Development Division
Ministry of Community Development
Singapore

The government of Australia would like to extend its congratulations to the NCRFW in its 25 years of distinguished service. We congratulate you on the major programs and activities you have undertaken to achieve your vision of making the government work for gender equality.

We hope that through a range of programs and projects, the Australian government has also contributed to achieving the mandate of the NCRFW.

COUNSELLOR BOB MANN
Development Cooperation
Australian Agency for International Development

UNICEF congratulates the NCRFW for the 25 years of leadership in reducing gender gaps and in overcoming the causes of these gender gaps and in breaking new grounds for empowering women. By bringing together government agencies and non-government organizations, by transmitting the voices of women to decision-makers, by bridging the resources and expertise of government to women and women groups, by creating active linkages and networks, we are brought closer to creating a better world for all women, men and children.

DR. TERREL M. HILL
Representative
United Nation's Children's Fund
(UNICEF)