

***From the margins  
to the mainstream***

Six years of advancing  
gender and development  
in government

National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women  
1992-1998



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***From the Margins  
to the Mainstream***

## Message from the Chairperson

*President Ramos adopted "gender and development" as one of his administration's priority programs*



### **"We claim our legacy...."**

**S**ix years ago, when President Fidel V Ramos came into power, he launched his vision of Philippines 2000. National development was to be pursued guided by the vision of a newly industrializing country by the beginning of the new millennium, of sustained social and economic growth, and an improved quality of life for every Filipino.

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) rallied behind this vision. After all, if Philippines 2000 foresees a nation empowered to confront the challenges of the new century, the Filipino women, half of this country's population, must be at the front and center of this effort. As the national machinery for the advancement of women, the Commission is tasked to ensure this. It advises the President and the Cabinet on concerns and issues affecting Filipino women. Through its initiative, the President adopted gender and development (GAD) as one of his administration's priority programs.

This means a government that takes into account the gender perspective when it plans, implements, allocates resources, monitors and evaluates programs and projects. It also means recognizing gender as a crosscutting consideration in all government decisions and actions since its impact is different for women and men. The Commission thus adopted during the term the mission of *"making government work for gender equality"*.

Through GAD, the Commission was able to impress upon government officials and staff the crucial link between women and development. Women's status is a basic issue in dealing

with the problems of underdevelopment and poverty. Their role and participation at all stages of development on an equal basis with men must be recognized and supported. After all, as the United Nations pointed out, *"development, if not engendered, is endangered."*

The effort of gender mainstreaming in government, started during the term of President Corazon Aquino in 1986, made significant gains. Some thought that the Commission only needed to continue and sustain this momentum. But we felt differently. Much still need to be done. With the full support of President Ramos, we institutionalized those measures already in place and initiated innovative programs. These ranged from such initiatives as integrating GAD training in all government training institutes to the so called "women's" or GAD budget.

The latter is a pioneering and trail-blazing act adopted during our term -- the inclusion of a specific provision on GAD in the General Appropriations Act or the national budget. It mandated all agencies to allocate at least five per cent of their annual budget to programs, projects and activities directed to address women's concerns. This "GAD budget", perhaps one of the few of its kind among governments in the world today, signified the Philippine government's firm commitment to GAD.

The GAD budget became a tool within the bureaucracy so that gender would be an integral part of governance. Gender and how it affects the lives of women and men must be considered when government agencies undertake their budgeting process: from the

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budget hearings with the Department of Budget and Management to the hearings of the Committee on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress. Legislators who were GAD advocates looked assiduously into its implementation and monitoring. Even nongovernment organizations watched the progress of the GAD budget with vigilance and great concern. Without doubt, this measure is one of the more lasting legacies of this administration.

This term also marked the time when NCRFW chose to take a journey from within. The aim was to reach its full potential: to consolidate and affirm the learnings gathered from more than two decades of working with and for women and nurturing them so that the Commission could evolve into a new, more integrated organization. What emerged from this inner journey was a Commission more secure of its role in the bureaucracy, more confident of its expertise, more prepared to take on the unfinished business of women empowerment well into the new administration. Many of the elements of this "exploration" had been documented so we could share them not only with Filipino women but with women everywhere.

The past six years have been an incredible time for the Commission. True, it had its share of setbacks and frustrations, when efforts aimed at transforming the hearts and minds of Filipinos toward a more enlightened perspective of women seemed not to make any headway at all. But there were also significant, substantive gains during the term, the result of critical collaboration and collective actions among gender advocates and activists

in government, women groups and nongovernment organizations, the academe, and the ordinary women in communities all over the country.

This term report presents a chronicle of the Commission's accomplishments as well as a general assessment of the women's agenda during the six years of the Ramos presidency. It is also our way of expressing our heart-felt gratitude to our partners and allies, both women and men, in government, to the Philippine civil society, academe, the international community and the countless Filipino women who gave us in the Commission their unquestionable support, who kept the faith and trusted in our capability to keep the women's agenda alive.

It is likewise a tribute to the NCRFW staff who carried on its mission and tasks over and beyond the call of duty.

We, in the NCRFW Board, are passing on this report to our successors. We hope that they will glean valuable lessons, build on our gains especially in "gender mainstreaming", successfully meet the challenges ahead, and experience the same joy we had all these years in working for an equal, just and humane society.

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**Imelda Nicolas**  
*NCRFW Chairperson*  
1992-1998

## A Message from the Executive Director

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*I*f the vision of Philippines 2000 foresees a nation and people empowered to face the challenges of the new century, then the Filipina must take an active role in it. She should not stay behind the scenes. Rather, she must stand beside the man as a partner in development, as an empowered citizen ready to contribute her share to build a country. Women Empowerment is not about women taking over but women and men together fulfilling their full potentials, neither superior nor inferior, but as partners-gender equality at work.

We at the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women has made this our mission: to make government work for gender equality. This means a Commission that will be the national machinery for the advancement of Filipino women. And a government able to adopt policies, programs and projects that would have critical and invaluable impact on their lives.

The Commission embarked on its journey of working for a gender-responsive development, and discovering the perspective of women and men regarding issues and concerns about development.

It is able to build its own skills on development planning, implementation and monitoring, and to share this expertise with other government agencies. It forms alliances with these government offices as well as with women's groups, non-government organizations, the academe and the rest of the private sector. Together with them, the Commission explores this new field of gender and development, and sets out new directions and goals for a more equal society where the contributions and participation of both women and men are equally recognized and valued.

As the country faces the many challenges of Philippines 2000, we at the Commission have taken it upon ourselves to ensure that the link between women and development is not overlooked in this national effort. The problems of poverty and underdevelopment are not separate for the problems of women's low status and participation in society. Improving the lives of every Filipino means addressing the burdens that women shoulder as they struggle to secure a decent life for themselves and their families. This is what our journey is all about.

This midterm report chronicles our journey. It is our response to challenges that have confronted us and our claim to the gains that we have achieved so far.

It also affirms our commitment to the women's cause, despite the many failures and obstacles that frustrate us as we fulfill our mandate and work toward our goal. In these pages, we share you how the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women has been working to place women in the mainstream of development, and to make gender equality a priority program of the government.

Our accomplishments in NCRFW for straight six years pay tribute to the dedication of its staff in making government work for gender equality.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'T. Castillo'.

**Teresita S. Castillo**  
*NCRFW Executive Director*  
1992-1998





**T**he National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women is an agency under the Office of the President. It is the national machinery for the advancement of women. As such, it advises the President and the Cabinet on matters affecting Filipino women. It sees to it that women are integrated in all sectors of social, economic, political and cultural life on a basis of equality with men. The Commission formulates policies for programs and measures that would empower women to participate in national development.

The Commission's policies are set by its Board of Commissioners, the members of whom are secretaries of key government departments, and representatives from a cross-sections of women's groups and nongovernment organizations. Its Executive Director administers its day-to-day operations.

The Commission was created by Presidential Decree 633 in 6 January 1975, in time for the International Year of Women and the Decade of Women, 1975-85. Thus, its first decade was devoted to initiating programs and projects that reflected the theme of the UN Decade for Women: education, health and employment, or as the Commission termed it, economic productivity. Its most singular accomplishment was organizing *Balikatan sa Kaunlaran* where women's councils were set up in local communities nationwide for income generation and microenterprise endeavors.

On its second decade, the Commission focused on gender mainstreaming. According to the UN Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the mainstream is a place where decisions affecting the economic, social and political options of a large number of people are made. It is also largely controlled by men. Gender mainstreaming, therefore, is an effort to achieve women's full participation with men in decision making, putting women on a par with men in the process of development and enjoying its outcomes.

Gender mainstreaming started in 1986. By the end of the term in 1992, training in gender sensitivity and gender responsive planning had been held for policy makers, focal points in gender and development in departments and agencies were in place, and a critical mass of gender advocates within the bureaucracy was gradually developing. A Philippine Development Plan for Women was adopted as a companion document to the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan for 1986-92. Republic Act 7192, or the Women in Development and Nation Building Law, was signed. One of the provisions of this landmark legislation directed that women equally participate with men in government projects and programs and benefit from them as well. It also provided that portions of overseas development assistance from foreign donors be allocated to projects and programs benefiting women.

The next term, 1992 to 1998, focused on continuity and sustainability of the gender mainstreaming effort. It faced the challenge of translating the concepts developed during the previous term and implementing the policies into concrete actions.



## *On Firmer Grounds: Gender Mainstreaming and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (1992-1998)*

### COMING INTO ITS OWN

**O**n the first of July, 1998, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women will open a new chapter in its history. As it awaits for this day, it looks back to an incredible six years. It was during that period when the NCRFW came into its own, no more an organization in transition, but one that had a clear idea of its mission in society in general, and its role in government in particular. It was no longer on the banks, poised to swim into the mainstream, but had actually plunged into it, navigating its currents and undertows.

The course had not been easy. Obstacles, miscalculated directions, mental and physical fatigue were common. Despite this, the Commission pushed on, pausing for breath once in a while, detouring sometimes, but steadily moving forward, always moving forward.

This is the story of the gains of those six years.

### THE MISSION

**M**ake government work for gender equality - this is the NCRFW's mission. This means a government that recognizes gender as a crosscutting factor when it formulates policies, implements programs and projects, allocates resources, and evaluates and monitors impact of its decisions and actions on people's lives. The aim is to make government respond to concerns and issues that affect women. The burdens that women shoulder as they struggle to secure a decent life for themselves and their children must be addressed. They must be able to fulfill their potentials as human beings, and side by side with the men, contribute to

development and participate in nation building.

President Fidel Ramos saw the value of NCRFW's mission early on in his administration. He identified gender and development as one of his government's priority programs. Through this, the NCRFW had the unequivocal support of the highest official of the land. Cabinet secretaries included GAD in their key result areas, making them personally accountable to the President for GAD's implementation in their respective departments. Agencies continued to have focal points to ensure that gender and its impact were considered when agencies make decisions and implement actions for their sectors.

The NCRFW provided leadership in a number of inter-agency bodies formed to respond to urgent national concerns. The NCRFW served as member of the Social Reform Council, the policy making body of the Social Reform Agenda, a centerpiece program drawn up by government and the basic sectors to uplift the conditions of people who are in the margins of society, including disadvantaged women. Gender issues, especially violence against women and poverty, were among those addressed by the SRA. The NCRFW helped draft a program under the SRA that would grant comprehensive social services to disadvantaged women. It also served in the Presidential Fact Finding and Policy Advisory Commission, formed to recommend measures to protect migrant workers, majority of whom were women in low-skilled jobs. It assisted government training institutions, including state colleges and

universities, in incorporating GAD in their training programs. It helped the Philippine National Police set up Women's Desks in its precincts, staffed by police officers who underwent gender sensitivity training. The Women's Desk handles crimes involving women, especially violence against women and children and other domestic cases.

In all these, the NCRFW was a committed partner of the agencies, providing technical assistance and training, conducting workshops and consultations, among others, so they could develop their capabilities and skills in addressing GAD concerns. At the same time, it also maintained a strong partnership with women advocates in the civil society and academe, collaborating in actions that moved forward the women's agenda.

**President Fidel Ramos saw the value of NCRFW's mission early on in his administration. He identified gender and development as one of his government's priority programs.**





Adoption and Launching of the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD), 1995-2025, a 30-year blueprint that outlines the policies and strategies, programs and projects that government must adopts to enable women to participate in development and benefit from it.



**NCRFW Redux**  
**Three terms of empowering Filipino women**

- 1975 to 1986:** Organized women for community projects in concerns such as livelihood, education and health
- 1986 to 1992:** Made government "think women" by integrating gender in its processes through such activities as training in gender sensitivity and gender responsive planning, setting up of GAD focal points in agencies, and putting in place a critical mass of gender advocates in the bureaucracy
- 1992 to 1998:** Strengthened the capabilities of agencies through close coordination with them and developing tools and mechanisms to help them respond to gender issues in their sectors

**SETTING DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

In 1995 President Ramos adopted the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development, 1995-2025. Discrimination on the basis of gender, class and ethnicity still exists in Philippine society so that not all sectors are benefited by development. The PPGD addresses gender discrimination and focuses on women as a disadvantaged group. It is a 30-year blueprint that outlines the policies and strategies, programs and projects that government must adopt to enable women to participate in development and benefit from it. The Plan was a collaborative effort among women advocates and activists in government, the civil society and academe.

The basis of gender discrimination is deeply rooted in society. It will actually take a generation to transform the hearts and minds of people so that women can achieve equal status with men. This is the reason why the PPGD is a long-term plan, covering the last years of the '90s and extending up to the first quarter of the next century.

**PPGD's concerns:**

- Human development
- Economic and industrial development
- Infrastructure and technology
- Special issues of migration, prostitution, violence against women, the family, indigenous people, peace, politics and governance

**FUNDS FOR WOMEN**

An oft-repeated phrase is a plan is only as good as its implementation. So is implementation only possible if funds are allocated for it. With this in mind, the NCRFW started to develop a mechanism for a Women's Budget. First introduced to agencies during the 1995 budget call, it has been one of the sections of the General Appropriations Act since 1996. The GAA directed all government agencies to set aside an amount of their annual budget to be used to address gender issues. This meant allocating at least five per cent of the total agency budget to fund programs, projects and activities for women. The NCRFW, together with the Department of Budget and Management and the National Economic and Development Authority, issued guidelines to help agencies implement this provision.

In 1996, the bulk of the GAD budget was spent on direct services and programs in the areas of health, education, housing, credit facilities, livelihood projects, and marketing and training assistance to poor women. The second biggest share went to policy researches for the formulation and review of gender responsive policies and plans. For 1997, the GAD budget totaled P2.93 billion, almost double of the P1.5 billion allocated in 1996. The amount represented allocations from 71 agencies, a great improvement from the 15 agencies that submitted a GAD budget in 1996.

**FACTS AND FIGURES**

"As long as women remain statistically invisible, their work, their lives, and their disadvantages will remain invisible to policy makers and leaders." So says the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

The NCRFW, with funding support from the Asian Development Bank, addressed this gap by setting up a gender-disaggregated data base system. It provided benchmark information for effective planning, policy making and evaluation of the status of women. The data base could also be used to draft legislation and measures to correct gender inequalities. Together with the ADB, the NCRFW was able to publish a *Philippine Statistical Handbook on Women* composed of the following: *Filipino Women Issues and Trends; Trends in Women Employment in the Regions, 1991-1994; Filipino Women Migrants: A Statistical Factbook; and Filipino Women: Facts and Figures.*

**"As long as women remain statistically invisible, their work, their lives, and their disadvantages will remain invisible to policy makers and leaders."**



One way to tell the story of women's lives is through data and numbers. The NCRFW collects these data and numbers through close coordination with statistical agencies. Statistical projects, most of which were first ever efforts, were pursued with partner agencies. Among them were aimed at generating statistics on violence against women and children, developing a framework to measure women's contributions to the economy, including quantifying housework, and formulating a training program on statistics to help local governments draft a gender responsive development plan. Another project aimed to strengthen the capability of the National Statistics Office to provide the much needed figures and data on women to support policies on gender equality.

### AN ADVOCATE TO CONGRESS

The NCRFW may belong to government's executive branch, but this does not stop it from trying to influence legislators to author bills that address gender concerns. It organized a gender sensitivity training for staff members of legislators and the Congress Secretariat. At the same time, it developed *Guidelines for Gender Responsive Legislative Analysis and Development*. The guidelines helped them formulate bills and amend laws that would promote gender equality. These measures are examined using the so-called gender lens so that discriminatory provisions are corrected. The NCRFW also submitted inputs and recommendations on proposed bills that addressed the interests and needs of women, especially those bills sponsored by the Committee on Women and Family Relations of both Houses.

The active role of the NCRFW in legislative effort was not just confined to evaluating the merits of a bill or legislation for women. It followed this up by lobbying legislators for a bill's passage or a law's amendment. Such was the case with Republic

Act 8353, or the Anti-Rape Law that redefined rape, expanded its classification, and made the penalties more severe. Once a bill was enacted into law, the NCRFW also helped advocate for its implementation by concerned government agencies. When RA 7877 penalizing sexual harassment was passed, it organized a gender sensitivity training for male managers and executives in the bureaucracy. This was done together with the NGO group Hasik, the Civil Service Commission and the Department of Labor and Employment. The NCRFW, CSC and DOLE drafted their respective implementing rules and regulations on how to deal with instances of sexual harassment in their offices. These were circulated among other government agencies to help them develop their own guidelines to address the issue.

### INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

The NCRFW enjoyed significant support from foreign governments and international organizations in its thrust of gender mainstreaming. The German and Canadian governments helped test processes and mechanisms to promote gender responsive development at the subnational levels. The NCRFW, with funding support from the UNIFEM, published the sourcebook *Gender and Development: Making the Bureaucracy Gender Responsive for planners and implementors in government*. It also published, together with Germany's GTZ, *GAD Mainstreaming for Local Development Planners*.

The International Labor Organization tapped the NCRFW to conduct a seminar on women, the environment and the world of work. Its outcome was used to design a framework on gender and sustainable development and a training program for women agricultural workers and those in indigenous communities.

As a member of the Women's Program of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the NCRFW implemented a skills training project with two components: a training forum to enhance women's participation in decision making; and an entrepreneurship training for returning overseas Filipino women workers.

Violence against women was one of the more critical issues that the NCRFW focused on during the term. Together with the women's NGO WEDRO and the Ateneo de Manila University, the NCRFW participated in a pilot project against trafficking in women that received funding support from the Belgian government. The NCRFW and the United Nations Population Fund also carried out a project on policy development and advocacy for women's health. Violence against women is considered a health issue, and one of the components of the project was to recommend measures on how various government agencies could help victims and survivors of VAW.

Toward the end of the term, the second phase of the NCRFW's institutional strengthening project with the Canadian International Development Agency was implemented. The project aimed to improve the capabilities of oversight government agencies, their offices and local government units in priority regions to undertake efforts on gender mainstreaming.

#### ISP, take two Expected outcomes

Tools and systems for gender responsive development planning and policy making

Technical assistance to priority partners to strengthen their implementation of GAD

Transfer of gender training capacity to appropriate training institutions

Strengthened capacity and management system of the NCRFW



## INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Aside from its efforts at the national level, the NCRFW also took on a leading role in international forums for women. In December 1994, it hosted a meeting of national machineries for the advancement of women in the Asia-Pacific region. This meeting had a special meaning for the NCRFW as it recognized the Philippines' pioneering effort to have a strong institution within government that addressed gender concerns.

The NCRFW coordinated the country's participation in the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Sen Leticia Ramos-Shahani led the Philippine delegation composed of government officials and NGO leaders. The Philippines had the added responsibility of chairing the Group of 77 and China, an international bloc of developing countries. As chair, it harmonized and reconciled the varying, if not opposing, views of the 132 member nations of the group to build consensus on key issues. NCRFW commissioner Patricia B Licuanan, on the other hand, was chair of the Main Committee that finalized the conference's Platform for Action.

### Beijing conference Priority Philippine commitments

Expand training and credit assistance to rural women

Provide employment within the country to Filipino women migrant workers

Forge bilateral agreements with receiving countries to protect migrant women, majority of whom are women

Enact legislation to impose more stringent penalties to those who engage in trafficking in women and girls

Integrate the Beijing Platform for Action in the key result areas of all heads of government agencies

Make the GAD Budget an annual feature of the government budget process

Support government-NGO collaboration

Increase Philippine contribution to UNIFEM from P15,000 to US\$5,000

Provide technical assistance on women advancement to other countries under the existing program for South-South Cooperation

The NCRFW helped government agencies come up with their respective plans to carry out these commitments as well as the Beijing Platform for Action, the women agenda for the rest of this century and up to the next one. In 1996 it held a GAD Mainstreaming Assessment to evaluate how agencies drew up their GAD plans, allocated resources, implemented and monitored them. It aimed to help agencies enhance their implementation plans of the Beijing Platform for Action and the PPGD.

Also in 1996, the NCRFW again organized a UN-sponsored expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers. It brought together sending and receiving countries, gave them an opportunity to extensively discuss the issue, and recommend measures to protect the rights and welfare of women migrant workers.

One of the offshoots of the trend toward globalization and trade liberalization was the creation of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation in 1992, a group of 18 economies in the region, including the Philippines. In 1996 the Philippines hosted the annual APEC summit. Prior to this, some member economies, particularly Canada and the Philippines, initiated the move to put gender considerations into the APEC agenda. A Women Leaders' Network (WLN) from APEC Economies was held in Manila that urged member economies to recognize gender as a crosscutting concern in all

processes and structures of APEC. The NCRFW served as the organizer and secretariat of this regional meeting.

The 1996 APEC Leaders' Declaration in Subic supported the WLN's Call to Action by directing ministers "to put special emphasis on the full participation of women and youth" in the implementation of the economic and technical cooperation agenda. A joint proposal by the Philippines and Canada to hold an APEC Ministerial Meet on Women in October 1998 was also approved. This would highlight the role of women in economic development and their integration into the mainstream of APEC activities. It would be held in Manila, with the NCRFW serving as conference secretariat.

In the meantime, while preparing for the APEC meet on women, the NCRFW and the Department of Trade and Industry held a series of forums to sustain the advocacy in the business sector, the most recent of which was the Women's Business Leaders' Forum. This resulted in the birth of the Women's Business Leaders' Council which is now lobbying with the Central Bank of the Philippines, the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Development Bank of the Philippines to assist women engaged in micro and medium enterprises.

Another major accomplishment for the NCRFW in the international arena was the successful presentation of chairperson Imelda Nicolas of the third and fourth reports of government's implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

**A Women Leaders' Network (WLN) from APEC Economies was held in Manila that urged member economies to recognize gender as a crosscutting concern in all processes and structures of APEC.**



These were presented to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW). The UN CEDAW cited the reports for its comprehensive assessment of how the provisions of the Women's Convention were being carried out in the country and for its frank analysis of the gaps in its implementation. The reports, according to the CEDAW, were "an excellent model to help other countries follow reporting guidelines."

### The Next Chapter

It was during the term of President Corazon Aquino that gender mainstreaming was started in government. However, it was a one-step-at-a-time effort. While the vision and the mission were clear, the way to attain them was not as no models existed at that time to guide the NCRFW. But it forged ahead - planning, testing, piloting, training, lobbying, advocating - discarding strategies that did not work and maintaining the ones that did.

By 1992, when it was the term of President Ramos, gender mainstreaming and GAD were no longer esoteric concepts among the bureaucracy's officials and staff. For its part, the NCRFW found time to reflect on its own structure. It lobbied the President to reorganize it and broaden its structure to meet the growing need for its expertise and services, a move that resulted in the signing of Executive Order 208. Under this EO, the Commission's functions was expanded to include policy analysis, monitoring and coordinating the development plan for women. Membership to the Board of Commissioners, which previously was limited to women leaders from the civil society, was broadened to include secretaries of line agencies. A victim of its own success and overwhelmed by demands for its interventions, a bill was also submitted to Congress expanding its mandate and transforming it to a Philippine Commission on Women.

The period was also a time for consolidation. Banking on its rich and enlightening experience, it began the task of giving order to a large stock of learnings gained from six years of gender mainstreaming work. It developed tools and frameworks, institutionalized mechanisms, refined training designs, tested initiatives at the local levels, among others. Its officials and staff recognized that to carry out its mission, efforts must be exerted to enable it to evolve into an effective and efficient organization. This was addressed through organizational development, team building and career management sessions that sought to transform attitudes and enhance the skills and knowledge of officials and staff. The NCRFW's Management Committee met regularly to identify priority concerns that need to be attended to immediately, provide focus and direction to various strategies and initiatives, and discuss issues and draw up collective decisions on urgent matters brought before it.

A restructuring of the Commission was also done. Since its inception in 1975, it had been operating with three divisions: administration, programs and research. But its present work could no longer be contained in just these three divisions. A new structure was thus developed that was more attuned to its organizational needs and growth. The original three divisions were replaced by five new ones: policy analysis, program development, monitoring and evaluation, information resource, and administration and finance.

The NCRFW during the term of President Ramos affirmed its mission of making government work for gender equality. It succeeded in enabling government to "think women" at all stages of the development process. It gained a new confidence in claiming its role as the leading authority on gender concerns in the bureaucracy.

Despite the change in administration, the thrust of the NCRFW for the next six years is basically the same. However, it needs to face the challenges of

**Filipino women have come a long way in their quest for equality, development and peace, and the NCRFW has been with them all the way. In the same manner, Filipino women have still a long way to go in their quest for equality, development and peace.**

continuity and sustainability. It must also be vigilant so that the gains and achievements of the past terms are not reversed in the new administration. The NCRFW has to connect with subnational agencies and local government units, and introduce GAD to them so that they could appreciate its impact on development efforts at the field and sectoral levels. There is also the matter of institutionalizing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate all the initiatives and strategies that agencies have been implementing in the name of GAD. An agency can have the most creative, most effective ways of integrating GAD but these are wasted if there is no mechanism to assess them and their impact.

For the next term, the Commission will focus on enhancing its four functions: policy analysis, advocacy, monitoring and technical backstopping on gender issues and concerns. It envisions itself to evolve as the national resource center for GAD, a one-stop shop for all information on women and gender mainstreaming. These efforts will parallel the intent and structure of the future PCW, even as the bill mandating it remains pending in Congress.

The NCRFW looks forward to the incoming administration, knowing fully well that its mission of gender mainstreaming is not yet done. Filipino women have come a long way in their quest for equality, development and peace, and the NCRFW has been with them all the way. In the same manner, Filipino women have still a long way to go in their quest for equality, development and peace. Hopefully, the NCRFW will continue to be with them in this effort.



# *The women's agenda at the crossroads*

Advancing  
the women's cause  
during FVR's term  
and beyond





Signing of Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 Malacañang Palace, February 14, 1995



## Introduction

Six years ago, at the height of the campaign for the national election, Filipino women presented to the seven presidential candidates a women's agenda. The agenda described the urgent concerns they expected the next president to address.

This may be the first time that Filipino women as a group was able to come up with such an initiative. This was hardly surprising. The drafting of the agenda happened during the term of this nation's first woman president Corazon C. Aquino. Those were exciting - and challenging - times for the women's movement. Filipino women not only found their individual and collective voices to articulate the pressing concerns they faced in their everyday lives, they were also able to come together and influence government to respond proactively to them. Government's national machinery for women, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), under the helm of its chairperson Patricia B. Licuanan and executive director Remedios I. Rikken, was at the forefront of this effort. By the end of the Aquino administration, substantial gains had been made for women. At the same time, they realized that there was still a lot to be done. The overriding concern then was for the next administration to secure and build on these gains and to resolve the other issues that were not sufficiently addressed or overlooked when Aquino was president.

Thus, the agenda for, by and of the women themselves, to guide the next president.

Candidate Ramos adopted the agenda, and by so doing, entered into a covenant with the women. When he won the

presidency, this agenda formed the cornerstone of his administration's commitment to improve the lives of Filipino women. Aside from giving him a clear knowledge of the women's expectations from him, the agenda also gave directions on how to advance further the cause of women. It also guaranteed that from then on, President Ramos could count on the support of women constituents just as their ever vigilant, and often critical, eyes would be upon him to see how he moved this agenda forward.

That was in 1992. Now we are soon to elect a new president who would govern this country for the next six years. As we approach another crossroads of our life's journey as Filipino women, it would be wise for us to take stock of where we are now, how far we have traveled, or even if we are still following the right direction. We have made a choice six years ago to let President Ramos accompany us, and in many instances, lead us in this journey. Now is the time to assess if his administration provided a boost that made us advance further down the road of equality and development, or if it had been just an added burden that hinder our progress. Now is the time as well to look over our agenda and calibrate it so that it is more attuned to the realities we face everyday. The new administration is an opportunity for us to be assured that the women's agenda continues to be an integral part of the national agenda. We must be ready for it just as we were ready for the Ramos administration back in '92.

The next pages present an overview of the efforts of the Ramos government to advance the women's agenda as

perceived by the NCRFW. This is a limitation since the commission is government's main agency that responds to women's concerns. Also, there are still no existing mechanisms to specifically assess how presidents served the interests of women. As such, this overview can form one part of a multifaceted picture that is the situation of women's lives. They feature situationers of a number of critical concerns confronting women, the initiatives adopted by government to address them, and assessments of their impact. The assessments invariably surface the gains and weaknesses of these initiatives. Recommendations on how to address the weaknesses could form the "new" women's agenda that could be presented to the next president. An effort worth pursuing as a follow-up to this overview is to convene a multisectoral committee that would review the impact of the decisions and actions of the Ramos administration on the lives of Filipino women.

As an overview, this paper is limited to the priority concerns the Ramos administration chose to focus on during the six years it was in power. This was not to say that some issues were less important. It was just that there were other political, economic and social factors that came into play that precluded government from adequately addressing them. Such oversights could also be part of the next women's agenda.



## ISSUES AND ACTION

**F**ilipino women have covered great distances in their quest for equality, development and peace. Education is one area where women have achieved considerable progress .

The literacy rate for women were slightly higher than the men, 94 per cent compared with 93.7 per cent. One of the efforts of government to sustain this was to implement a nonformal education system and literacy programs for women and girls in indigenous communities. This aimed to reduce the wide gender gap in literacy rates in the most depressed provinces in the country. To make the educational system gender responsive, textbooks, instructional materials and school curricula were reviewed to correct sexist biases and stereotypes. It was also during President Ramos' term that the first batch of women cadets of the Philippine Military Academy were graduated and were commissioned as officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Health is another area where women's conditions had been improving through the years. Women's mortality rate is 4.2 deaths per 10,000 population, while the men's mortality rate is 6. A Philippine Family Planning Program was adopted that featured the following: rejection of abortion as a family planning method in keeping with the mandate of the Philippine Constitution; improvement of family welfare, with focus on women's health, safe motherhood and child survival; freedom of choice in what family planning methods to use; and promotion of family solidarity and responsible parenthood. Hospitals were

**To make the educational system gender responsive, textbooks, instructional materials and school curricula were reviewed to correct sexist biases and stereotypes.**

urged to be mother- and baby-friendly that encouraged mothers to breastfeed their babies. The Department of Health also carried out various programs to address the health needs of women at all stages of their life cycle.

Such progress in education and health is not surprising since past administrations had long been addressing women's concerns in these areas. There are, however, some areas that the present government chose to focus on as priorities of this administration. These were gender mainstreaming, poverty, violence against women, power and decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, and human rights.

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING

**O**ne of the gains of the Aquino administration was to start integrating gender considerations into the economic, political and social mainstream, including government. President Ramos continued the effort of engendering government, the one institution that is in a strategic position to correct the disadvantages confronting women. He adopted gender and development (GAD) as the framework to enable Filipino women to claim their place in the development process, thus engendering development as well. The NCRFW, this time led by its chairperson Imelda M. Nicolas and executive director Teresita S. Castillo, was in the frontline helping government integrate GAD in its development agenda.

In adopting GAD as a policy framework, government recognized that women and men have different needs and interests. Programs and projects for development affect them differently as well. Government had since considered these

differences when it drafted its development plans, implemented them, allocated resources for them, and evaluated their impact. This gender responsive planning sought to make women and men contribute equally to development and benefit equally from it.

In 1995 the Philippines joined the rank of countries that approved the Beijing Platform for Action. This document, crafted during the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, firmly established the women's agenda for equality, development and peace for the rest of the '90s to the next century.

It was no coincidence that at the height of the women's conference, President Ramos issued Executive Order 273 that approved the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD), 1995-2025. This long-term blueprint for women's advancement is the main mechanism to implement the platform for action in the country.

These two documents, the Beijing Platform for Action and the PPGD, guided agencies in developing their respective GAD plans. The agency GAD plan outlined the programs, projects and activities an agency would undertake in a specified period to respond to the gender issues of its clientele or sector. An accompanying GAD budget was allocated to ensure that the





GAD plan was carried out. Since 1996, the General Appropriations Act mandated all government agencies to set aside at least five per cent of their annual budget for GAD programs, projects and activities. In 1997, 71 agencies had GAD budgets, with 26 of them meeting or exceeding the minimum level. The total GAD budget of government rose from P1.5 billion in 1996 to P2.9 billion in 1997.

In 1996, the biggest share of the GAD budget went to direct services and programs in the areas of women's health, education, housing, credit facilities, livelihood projects, and marketing and training assistance to poor women. This amounted to P1.4 billion. The second biggest share, totaling P86.4 million, was spent on policy researches that supported the formulation and review of gender responsive policies and plans.

The amount comprising the GAD budget may be impressive. But it would also be interesting to find out how much of the total national budget was actually allocated for GAD. The kinds of programs, projects and activities funded by the GAD budget must also be improved. It was observed that activities such as aerobics and ballroom dancing exercises for women employees of some agencies were funded by the GAD budget. While these activities indirectly benefited women, they were not at all strategic in dealing with the gender issues the agencies must address.

Aside from the GAD budget, government set aside at least 20 per cent of the national budget to social programs and services that were central to women's lives. Thirty-one per cent of the 1996 national budget were allocated for programs and services on education, health, housing, welfare and employment.

## Poverty

President Ramos is credited as the architect of the country's economic recovery.

The state of the economy was relatively sound so that the country emerged less bruised from the currency crisis that buffeted the region during the latter months of 1997. Yet, poverty remains the single biggest factor that limits the opportunities of most Filipinos for a better life. And more often, poverty in the Philippines has a woman's face. This is especially felt by rural women. It is often rural women, who, because of their poverty and lack of opportunities in life, become migrants, and risk going to urban areas and foreign lands for jobs. Because of their limited education and skills, most of them are employed as service workers such as entertainers and domestic helpers. The very nature of these jobs make them vulnerable to abuses and exploitation.

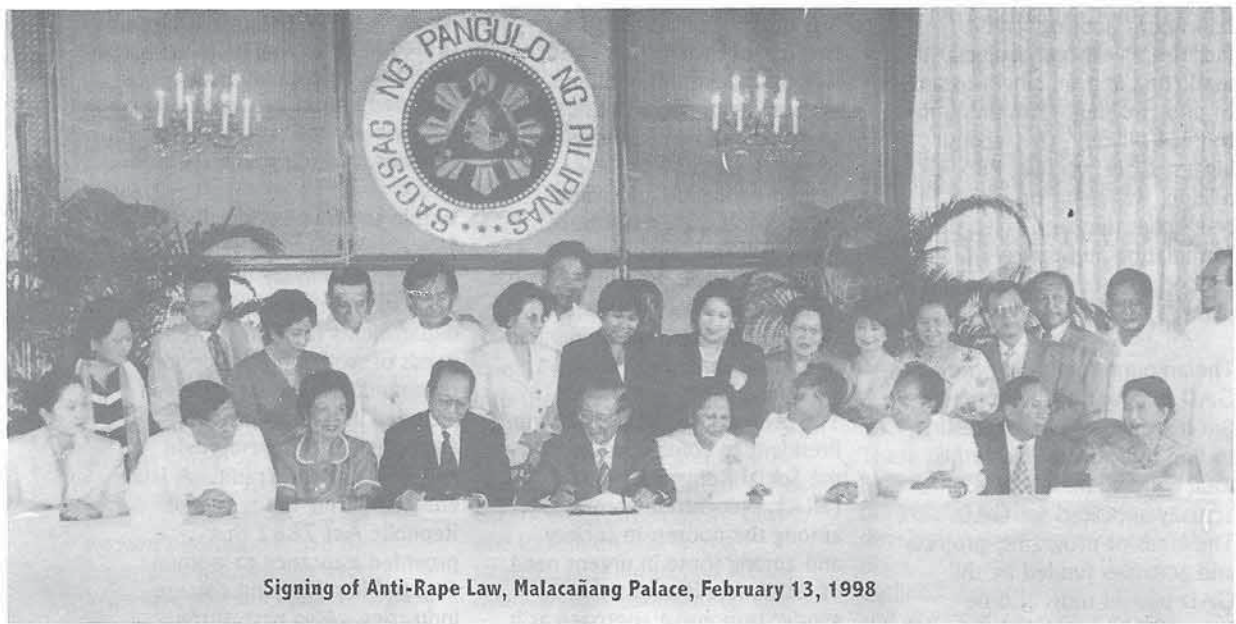
The centerpiece program of the President to combat poverty, the Social Reform Agenda (SRA), recognized women as among the poorest in society and among those in urgent need of assistance. It adopted a gender responsive approach as it worked to liberate marginalized Filipinos from poverty. The SRA identified measures to fight VAW, to make access available for economic resources such as capital, information, training, technology and marketing assistance, and to promote their representation in positions of power and decision making. The Social Reform Council (SRC), SRA's policy making body, included representatives of women and the NCRFW as among its members.

**The centerpiece program of the President to combat poverty, the Social Reform Agenda (SRA), recognized women as among the poorest in society and among those in urgent need of assistance.**

The SRA was able to articulate a clear policy on freeing Filipinos from the cycle of poverty and lack of opportunities for a better life. This paved the way for government agencies to set in motion their own interventions. But because poverty is deeply rooted in Philippine society, it would take time before the intended impact of the SRA is felt by poor and marginalized Filipinos, including women.

Within the framework of the SRA, a Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services was undertaken by departments to address the needs of women in the poorest communities. Assistance given included livelihood projects, entrepreneurial development and training, and credit. A law enacted during the term was Republic Act 7882 that provided assistance to women engaged in micro and cottage industries. Also part of the CIDSS was the setting up of day care centers in all the barangays. Under the Day Care Service Law (RA 6972), day care centers would give care and social learning opportunities to preschool children while their parents engage in economic activities. As of December 1997, the Department of Social Welfare and Development reported that 33,665 barangay day care centers had been set up, some 71 per cent of the total target.







## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Cases of VAW, as reported either to law enforcing authorities and in media, rose alarmingly during this period. This cloud of violence, however, had a silver lining. On one hand, it indicated that more victims and survivors were no longer afraid nor ashamed to report such cases. On the other hand, VAW had become a national concern that policy makers and program implementors must address. The DSWD reported 41,667 cases of VAW from 1991 to 1997. More than half of these, 59.8 per cent, were battery cases. The rest were cases of illegal recruitment, rape, involuntary prostitution, victims or survivors caught in armed conflict, incest, and women in detention. The DSWD also maintained halfway homes in various regions and women's help desks with 24-hour hotlines in all their regional offices.

Congress passed the landmark Anti-Rape Law (RA 8353). It amended what was once considered as a private offense against chastity to a public crime against person. This means that the victim is not the only one who can file a rape case. The law allows virtually anyone who knows of the crime, such as parents and persons of authority, to file a complaint. Rape was redefined to include other acts of sexual assault that may be committed against a woman or a man. It also implicitly recognized the concept of marital rape when it stated in one of its provisions that the crime of rape is extinguished if it happens within a marriage and the wife forgives the husband.

The struggle to amend the anti-rape law to make it more reflective of the experiences of women victims and survivors took almost a decade. Through all this, women groups and NGOs were at the forefront, patiently engaging the legislators, explaining, discussing and debating with them, as to why it was important for women

to have a new law penalizing rape.

A companion measure to the Anti-Rape Law was the Act Providing Assistance and Protection to Rape Victims (RA 8505). It called for the setting up of women's crisis centers in all the provinces that would extend such services as legal and medical aid, counseling and temporary shelter to rape victims. The Family Court Act (RA 8369), on the other hand, created the special court whose jurisdiction included cases of domestic violence. The Institute of Judicial Administration of the University of the Philippines trained newly appointed executive judges on the proper handling of VAW cases.

Another mechanism of government that acted decisively to fight VAW was the Philippine National Police. It continued to establish women's and children's desks in all its precincts staffed by policewomen who went through gender sensitivity training and orientation programs. These were conducted by the NCRFW and women NGOs and were geared toward a more sympathetic and careful handling of women and children victims of violence.

The absence of legislation against domestic violence prompted President Ramos to issue a directive to all government heads of agencies to take action on it. They, in turn, responded by setting up VAW desks or focal points in the work place, conducting awareness raising, and initiating innovative approaches to existing frontline services given to victims and survivors. An inter-agency project, together with the Women's Crisis Center and funded by the United Nations Population Fund, was started to develop a model for crisis centers based in government hospitals. Services and protocols of frontline agencies handling VAW cases were also reviewed to make them more responsive to the needs of victims and survivors.

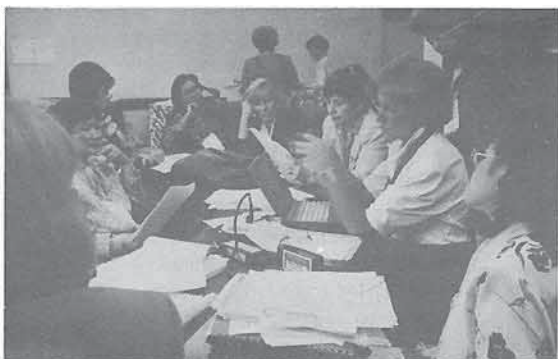
## POWER AND DECISION MAKING

Women continue to be a minority in the area of power and decision making. In elective politics, there were only around 10 per cent women legislators in the House of Representatives and 16 per cent in the Senate during the 10th Congress. The 22-member of the President's Cabinet had seven women. The equal sharing of power in the bureaucracy is still a distant reality. While more than half of the 1.32 million civil servants were women at 54.32 per cent, only 34 per cent of them occupied the third level positions. Most of them, 72.14 per cent, were in middle ranked positions. In the judiciary, just 17.77 per cent of the judges and justices were women. The 14-member Supreme Court had one woman justice, while the Shari'a Court had none. Still, the 1997 Human Development Report of the UN gave the country the highest score in its gender empowerment measure (GEM) for the whole of southeast Asia. It was ranked 35th from among the 174 member countries of the UN for the same category.

The impending national election has a new feature that seeks to enable small parties, organizations and coalitions to be represented in the legislature. It carries out for the first time the party list system that allows under-represented sectors to elect their parties to the House of Representatives. Women were identified as one of these sectors. Six women parties are now vying for three seats in the Lower House under the party list system.

The Ramos government also made a conscious effort to see to it that women are represented in various decision making bodies, especially at the local levels. The Department of Interior and Local Government, for example, issued an administrative order that encouraged a minimum 30 per cent representation of women in barangay assemblies and in mandatory consultations with







local and national governments. However, like other well-intentioned government directives, monitoring of its actual implementation was wanting.

The Civil Service Commission, together with the NCRFW, drafted a policy framework on gender equity that is still to be issued to enable more women to occupy third level positions. The target is to reach 40 per cent representation of women executives by 1998. The Career Advancement Program for Women in Government Service (CAPWINGS) was initiated during the term. It still needs to be pursued more vigorously by agencies.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Government strongly supports human rights, including the rights of women. The country had ratified 22 international human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. President Ramos created an Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee on Human Rights to integrate the efforts of various implementors as well as prepare the Philippine reports to the UN.

The rights of migrant workers, 60 per cent of whom were women, were a main focus of government. Although government declared that labor migration was not a long-term policy, it had to set in place measures to respond to the pressing needs and problems of overseas workers. It adopted the Migrant Workers Act (RA 8042) that provided for a higher standard of protection and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers and their families and other overseas Filipinos. Some of its initiatives are the setting up of various centers for monitoring purposes; developing livelihood programs for returning overseas workers; extending legal counseling and welfare assistance; and support services for victims of trafficking and sexual abuses. The Department of Labor and

Employment issued a policy on the deployment of female household workers and performing artists, requiring them to have basic literacy skills, experience and training demanded by the job, and deploying them only to countries that provide protection to foreign migrant workers. The Philippines also continued to push for a convention on the rights of migrant workers and their families in the international community.

The Commission on Human Rights, for its part, developed a GAD implementation plan that ensured that its interventions would be gender responsive. Its investigators and lawyers were oriented on women's rights and how to handle such cases. It also included a chapter on women's rights in its Philippine Human Rights Plan.

## INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The NCRFW continues to lead government's efforts on gender mainstreaming. It provided technical assistance and training on GAD to both executive and legislative offices. During the Aquino administration, the NCRFW was extending training mainly on gender sensitivity and gender responsive planning to government workers. The aim was to establish a "a GAD cadre" who would eventually comprise the critical mass of GAD advocates and champions within the bureaucracy. President Ramos, on the other hand, instructed all government training institutions to include GAD in their programs and curricula as well as develop GAD modules to further enhance them.

The commission also reviewed legislative proposals to integrate gender concerns in such bills on poverty alleviation, amendments to the family code, anti trafficking, and women empowerment, among others.

Stronger coordination with the technical staff of legislators was initiated. A gender sensitivity training was held for some of them. A guidebook was also developed by the NCRFW and some women advocates and lawyers on how to draft gender responsive legislation.

Agencies also conducted their own researches and studies to formulate policies and programs on GAD. Data were enhanced through initiatives like the development of methodology to generate statistics on violence against women and children; refinement of existing GAD indicator system; conduct of a pilot time-use survey toward the development of a framework for measuring women's contributions to the economy; and the formulation of a training program on the use of statistics for gender responsive development planning and publication of statistical documents. Disaggregation of data was undertaken that resulted in more gender responsive indicators in such agencies as the Departments of Agriculture and Environment and Natural Resources and the National Economic and Development Authority.

President Ramos also supported international initiatives that were organized by the NCRFW together with other government agencies. These were the regional meeting of national machineries on the advancement of women, the conference on violence against women migrant workers, and the first conference of the Women Leaders' Network from countries of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation. Government would also be hosting the first ever APEC ministerial conference on women which would involve not only the national machineries of member economies, but also their economic and financial ministries. In all these, government affirmed its leading role as a gender champion among the countries in the region.



## AN UNFINISHED BUSSINESS

By the 30th of June 1998, the Ramos administration is over. A new president assumes power, with her or his own program of government. Despite this major change, however, the women's agenda is an unfinished business that must be continued by the next administration. The NCRFW identified some of the challenges that must be high on the new administration's list of priorities for women.

The first order of business would be for the next president to issue a clear policy statement that unequivocally supports GAD as a key program of her or his government. The commitment is to sustain previous efforts to implement it through policies, laws, programs and projects initiated in the past. The goal is to establish a gender responsive administration, and the PPGD must be the reference to realize this.

Thanks to the commitment and efforts of the past administrations of Aquino and Ramos, GAD is no longer an esoteric concept to national government agencies. But the same could not be said for local government units (LGUs). The continuing implementation of the Local Government Code enacted in 1991 shifted the locus of power from the national government to the LGUs. But there is still a great number of LGUs that have to be oriented on GAD. They need assistance on how to draft their GAD implementation plans and GAD budget. Technical resource bases for GAD, such as training pool information centers and referral networks, must be expanded at the regional and local levels. Gender mainstreaming models, tools, frameworks and expertise need to be harnessed so GAD can be applied at the field and sectoral levels. Field offices and LGUs

are usually the ones with direct contact with the ordinary women whose lives we aim to improve. The next president, therefore, must ensure that their capabilities to respond to their gender needs are strengthened. A major challenge to the next government would be its response to trade liberalization and globalization. These twin trends would undoubtedly continue to influence economic decisions and directions of this government. They would produce winners and losers among the country's economic players, including the workers who would be affected either favorably or adversely by them. The new administration must be prepared to put in place safety net measures to assist those who would be adversely affected. These may in the forms of retraining programs, skills training, job alternatives, or credit assistance, among others. The SRA must also be continued, especially its poverty alleviation programs that benefit marginalized women.

The next president also needs to come strongly as a firm ally of women victims and survivors of violence. It is now impossible to put back the shroud of silence surrounding VAW. Yet, there are no laws that would redress this basic violation of women's rights. There must be more stringent legislation to penalize those engaged in trafficking of women and children, illegal recruitment and undocumented migration. The law on prostitution must be amended to shift criminal liability from the prostituted women to the pimps or procurers. Specific measures should also be legislated to address domestic violence. These must not protect not only the legal spouses of the batterers but all abused women in intimate relationships. The implementation of existing

laws must also be reviewed. The law penalizing mail order brides is seldom, if ever, carried out by concerned agencies. It may also need to be amended considering that advertisements for brides are now conducted through the Internet, something that this current law does not cover. The Anti-Sexual Harassment Act should be expanded to include harassment among peers and those whose perpetrators are lower in the workplace hierarchy or are students of the victims. At the same time, acts of sexual harassment must not be limited to workplaces and educational institutions but must include all places and environment where women and men interact together.

Another area where presidential commitment is needed is power and decision making. While the party list system is a window of opportunity for women to participate directly in politics and governance, political realities are perceived to have suborn it. There are organizations, including a number of women groups, vying for sectoral seats that are actually satellite parties of the major political parties banned from the party list. If only for this, this law has to be critically reviewed and amended to make it truly a vehicle for underrepresented sectors to be elected to Congress. The new administration must also have a direct hand in implementing the policy on gender equity in the bureaucracy so that more women civil servants could occupy executive and managerial positions, including the appointment of qualified women to the Cabinet, and not



only as secretaries of departments traditionally headed by women .

Finally, the new president needs an institutionally stronger and more effective NCRFW that would be adequately provided with the resources required for its expanded mandate and growing demands of its constituents. As always, she or he needs a decisive and dedicated leadership in the commission who can harness its potentials and inspire its staff in their work. In view of this, the new president must refile the bill reorganizing the NCRFW into a Philippine Commission for Women, and certify it as an urgent administrative measure. This would strengthen the commission as the national machinery for the advancement of women. It would be more able to support gender mainstreaming efforts in the entire government and develop effective monitoring mechanisms to review how government carry out its commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action and implement the PPGD. The reorganization would also place the commission in a strategic position in the government structure, and provide adequate staff and sufficient resources with which to carry out its mandate.

**The assumption to office of a new president is generally regarded as a new beginning for government. Though this is not a tabula rasa situation where everything will start on a clean slate, it nevertheless presents another opportunity to sustain the gains and close the gaps of the past, and carry out new initiatives for a more improved future. This is the spirit within which the NCRFW is presenting this women's agenda. The true wealth of a country is its people, both women and men. No nation can claim that it has achieved progress if half of its population is lower in status than the other half. Development, if not ENGENDERED, is ENDANGERED. This is a basic truth that the next president of the Philippines must realize and affirm through her or his actions for women during her or his entire administration.**



MALACAÑANG  
MANILA

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 208

**FURTHER DEFINING THE COMPOSITION, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE  
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE ROLE OF FILIPINO WOMEN**

WHEREAS, Sec. 14 of Art. XIII of the Philippine Constitution provides for the protection of women by providing such facilities and opportunities that will enhance their welfare and enable them to realize their full potential in the service of the nation;

WHEREAS, Presidential Decree No. 633 dated 7 January 1975 created the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, to ensure the full integration of women for economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels and to ensure further the equality between men and women;

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 348 dated 17 February 1989 approved and adopted the Philippine Development Plan for Women for 1989-1992, as prepared by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, in coordination with the National Economic and Development Authority; and tasked the said agencies to monitor the implementation of the Plan;

WHEREAS, with the completion of the Philippine Development Plan for Women in 1992, there is a need to strengthen the mandate of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, pursuant to Republic Act 7192 or the Women in Development and Nation Building Act, which tasks the Commission to provide assistance in ensuring the formulation and nationwide implementation of gender-responsive government policies, programs and projects; and,

WHEREAS, Section 20, Book III of Executive Order No. 292 (Revised Administrative Code), and Section 60 of the General Provisions of R.A. No. 7663 empower the President to direct changes in the organization and key positions in any department, bureau, or agency in the Executive Branch.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, FIDEL V. RAMOS, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby order the further definition of the composition, powers and functions of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women.

SECTION 1. *Composition of the Commission.* The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, hereinafter referred to as the "Commission", shall be composed of twenty one (21) members, as follows:

- 1.1 A Chairperson who shall be appointed by the President;
- 1.2 Ten (10) representatives from the Government, who are heads of the following Departments: Labor and Employment (DOLE); National Economic Development Authority (NEDA); Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Agriculture (DA); Education, Culture and Sports (DECS); Health (DOH); Foreign Affairs (DFA); Interior and Local Government (DILG); Trade and Industry (DTI); and Budget and Management (DBM); and
- 1.3 Ten (10) members from the non-governmental organizations representing the following: Labor; Business and Industry; Science and Health; Education or Academe; Urban Poor; Indigenous Peoples; Peasants and Fisherfolks; Elderly and Disabled; Media and Arts; Youth; and, a representative of the National Council of Women in the Philippines.

SEC. 2. *Status of the Commission.* The Commission shall have the same status as that of a government agency attached to the Office of the President.



SEC. 3. *Nature of the Commission.* The Commission shall be the primary policy-making and coordinating body of all women development programs and institutions in the Philippines: Provided, That in case of women development programs of various line departments, the same shall be formulated and implemented by the respective Departments with the assistance of the Commission within the framework of the Philippine development plans for women that will be adopted thereafter.

SEC. 4. *Objectives of the Commission.* The objectives of the Commission are:

- 4.1 To promote women's empowerment through the policies and programs for women's effective participation and as full and equal partners of men in the social, economic and political development as well as in nation building; and,
- 4.2 To enable Government agencies to effectively address gender concerns in development processes from planning, programming, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in the national and local levels.

SEC. 5. *Functions of the Commission.* The functions of the Commission is hereby re-focused as follows:

- 5.1 Institute the gender responsiveness of national development plans and coordinate the preparation, assessment and updating of the National Plan for Women, ensure its implementation and monitor the performance of government agencies in the implementation of the Plan at all levels;
- 5.2 Undertake continuing advocacy to promote women economic, social and political empowerment and provide technical assistance in the setting-up and strengthening of mechanisms on gender mainstreaming; and
- 5.3 Ensure that the gains achieved by Filipino women due to Philippine culture and tradition shall be preserved and enhanced in the process of modernization.

SEC. 6. *Effectivity.* This Executive Order shall take effect immediately.

Done in the City of Manila, this 10th day of October in the year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and ninety four.

(Sgd.) **FIDEL V. RAMOS**  
By the President:



MALACAÑANG  
MANILA

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 268

**AMENDING EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 208 (S. 1995) ENTITLED "FURTHER DEFINING THE COMPOSITION, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE ROLE OF FILIPINO WOMEN"**

Section 1. Section 1 of the Executive Order No. 208 (s. 1995) is hereby amended to read as follows:

"SECTION 1. *Composition of the Commission.* Consistent with P.D. No. 633, and until otherwise directed by the President, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, hereinafter referred to as the "Commission", shall be composed of the following members:

- "1.1 A Chairperson who shall be appointed by the President.
- "1.2 The Secretaries of the following Departments who shall sit in the Commission as *ex-officio* members: Labor and Employment (DOLE); National Economic Development Authority (NEDA); Social Welfare and Development (DSWD); Agriculture (DA); Education, Culture and Sports (DECS); Health (DOH); Foreign Affairs (DFA); Interior and Local Government (DILG); Trade and Industry (DTI); and Budget and Management (DBM);

The Secretaries mentioned are authorized to designate an Undersecretary to represent them.

- "1.3 Twelve (12) private sector representatives: eleven (11) of whom shall be selected from the following sectors - (a) Labor; (b) Business and Industry; (c) Science and Health; (d) Education or Academe; (e) Urban Poor; (f) Indigenous Peoples; (g) Peasants and Fisherfolks; (h) Elderly and Disabled; (i) Media and Arts; (j) Culture, (k) Youth; and one (1) representative of the National Council of Women in the Philippines.

The incumbent members of the Commission, however, shall continue in office unless replaced or removed from office by the President."

Section 2. Two (2) new sections between Sections 5 and 6 of Executive Order No. 208 are hereby inserted as follows:

"SEC. 6. *New Staffing Pattern.* — The Commission is hereby authorized to review, and with the approval of the Department of Budget and Management, revise its staffing pattern to effectively and efficiently undertake and accomplish its functions.

"SEC. 7. *Funding.* — The initial funding requirements for the implementation of this Order shall be charged against the current appropriations of the Commission. The Department of Budget and Management is directed to coordinate and assist the Commission in identifying and determining the appropriate sources and amounts of the funds to cover deficiencies in the Commission's requirements. Thereafter, funding requirements of the Commission shall be incorporated in the General Appropriations Act."

Section 3. Section 6 of Executive Order No. 208 is redenominated as Section 8.

Done in the City of Manila, this 4th day of August in the year of Our Lord, Nineteen Hundred and Ninety Five.

(Sgd. ) **FIDEL V. RAMOS**  
*By the President:*

(Sgd.) **RUBEN D. TORRES**  
*Executive Secretary*



## **NCRFW BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**IMELDA M. NICOLAS**  
*Chairperson*

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Angelita F. Ago  
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Rina Jimenez-David  
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Trinidad M. Domingo  
Myrna S. Feliciano  
Patricia B. Licuanan  
Jenny R. Llaguno

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Lourdes V. Mastura  
Priscilla E. Ong  
Leonora Protacio  
Nona S. Ricafort  
Nancy Q. Sison  
M. Grace A. Tirona  
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### **Commissioners: Government**

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**Sec. Salvador Escudero**  
Assec. Marinela R. Castillo

Dept. of Budget and Management (DBM)  
**Sec. Salvador M. Enriquez, Jr.**  
Assec. Narcisa O. Santos

Dept. of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS)  
**Sec. Ricardo T. Gloria**  
Usec. Erlinda Pefianco  
Dir. Fe Hidalgo

Dept. of Foreign Affairs (DFA)  
**Sec. Domingo L. Siazon, Jr.**  
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Dept. of Interior and Local Government (DILG)  
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Dept. of Labor and Employment (DOLE)  
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Dept. of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)  
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Dept. of Trade and Industry (DTI)  
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**Teresita S. Castillo**  
*Executive Director*