



## ***“The Personal is Political”***

Throughout the world, women are a minority in politics. Consider the following statistics:

\*Although women constitute 50 per cent or more of the world’s population, female representation in the highest circles of government is less than 10 per cent.

\*In 1990, only 3.5 % of the world’s cabinet ministers are women.

\*Women occupy less than five percent of the top positions in international organizations including the United Nations and the European Community.

In the Philippines, more women vote than men yet they occupy only 11 per cent of elected positions. Why? Because of the stereotype that women should stay home and take care of the children; or that politics is a man’s game.

### **How is this stereotype manifested in politics?**

1. Men make the laws.
2. Low priority for sectoral representatives for women.
3. No logistics for women’s political campaign.

### **What are the gender issues in Philippine politics?**

1. Elected women are not taken seriously.
2. Sexual harassment or condescension in Congress.
3. Laws favoring women not enacted.

### **How can we increase women’s participation in politics?**

Through quotas, NGO legislative advocacy — monitoring and lobbying, training and mentoring, raising funds.

### **How different are women-centered politics?**

At the first congress of Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, a new political paradigm was arrived at — politics that is both transformed and transformational. It uses power to create change in a participatory manner; not to dominate but to serve.

Each individual woman counts. Her personal battle when linked to other women with similar concerns, if articulated and disseminated becomes political.

1984 US vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro said, “What we need are not just a few women who make history, but many women who make policy.” (women: challenges to the year 2000, UN, 1991).

## women and politics



**Politics is about power.** And power is about being able to participate in decision-making and planning any aspect that affects one's life. But in many societies, women are often excluded from exercising this power.

Is there democracy in the home? Does the homemaker have decision-making powers when it comes to her own life? Many women live their lives for the family, unable to develop their natural abilities. Some women even earn a master's degree but are not allowed to work. Often, women are dependent economically.

Before a woman can aspire for political power, she must have self-confidence. More often than not, self-esteem comes from economic independence.

For economic power to take place, higher education and skills are needed. Women in the Philippines are generally not discriminated against when it comes to education. But in many rural poor families, girl children are not sent to highschool but sent to Manila to become domestics, while boys get at least a highschool education for better employment as they are expected to be heads of households later on.

For purposes of this primer, we will concentrate on political power — how women can prepare for politics, get into positions of power and exercise that power.

But first, women have to know the laws and what strategic tools are available to them. Some shortcuts to power are appointive positions with quotas and elective sectoral positions in local government.

No other sector or gender can work for a women's agenda. The women should get into power themselves.

### **What is the current participation of women in the lawmaking body?**

Only 21 of the 200 representatives to the current Philippine Congress are women. That's 10.5%. Of 24 elected senators of the Republic, 16.7% are women. But the figure translates into only four lawmakers. (Dr. Socorro Reyes, *Women's Participation in Politics: A Conceptual Framework*, Congressional Research and Training Service, Inc., 1993).

### **Are women better represented in local government?**

Only seven of the 76 provincial governors in the Philippines are women. Five are women vice-governors. Throughout the country there are only 77 women provincial board members: 11.85% of 650. (Comelec figures as of May 1993) There are now three more provinces — Sarangani, Biliran and Guimaras. Gov. Emily Relucio-Lopez was appointed governor of Guimaras by Pres. Fidel Ramos in 1993.

Of the 60 cities (Mandaluyong, Makati and Pasig have been added), only three have women mayors; that's even less than the number of women city vice-mayors - six. As for our 1,542 municipalities, 116 have women mayors or 7.52% of all the town mayors. There are 135 municipal vice-mayors at 8.75%.

Total average of women's participation in elected positions is 11%. (Table 1)

**Table 1**  
**Elected Women Candidates 1992 Elections**

Positions	Total No. of Seats	Total Seats Won by Women	Percentage of Total
Senators	24	4	16.7%
Representatives	200	21	10.5%
Governors	73	7	9.59%
Vice-governors	73	5	6.85%
Prov. Board	650	77	11.85%
Mayors			
City	60	3	5%
Municipal	1,542	116	7.52%
Vice Mayor			
City	60	6	10%
Municipal	1,520	135	8.75%
Councilors			
City	674	72	10.68%
Municipal	12,378	1,572	12.70%
*Total Average			11%

Source: Comelec



**What do the figures add up to? What is the root of the problem?**

There is a stereotype prevalent in Philippine society that women are only for the home. It presupposes that "a woman's primary duty is to her household under the vigilant gaze and subject to the approval of her husband. Boxed-in expectations limit her growth and stunt her maturity by denying valuable participation in decision-making processes." ("A Woman's Guide to the 1986 Draft Constitution," The Manila Chronicle, Feb. 2, 1987; reproduces part of the primer by Lakas ng Kababaihan, a women's organization).

In 1991 then Comelec Commissioner Haydee Yorac also cited "centuries of factual and psychological domination (of the country) ... which produced an outlook ... that women are somehow second-class citizens (who are) less intelligent,

less courageous and less competent than the male of the species" and the expectation that if women were more intelligent, courageous and competent, (then it is) not feminine to be assertive of these traits."

**How is this stereotype manifested in politics?**

- Because women are under-represented, men make the laws which are frequently discriminatory to women.
- Sectoral representatives for women get low priority, despite the 1987 Constitution's transitory provision that for the first five years, representatives of important but marginalized sectors will be appointed by the President.

In 1989 NGO worker Teresita Quintos Deles was appointed after a long and bruising process of nomination by most of the women's organizations of the country. She declined to undergo scrutiny by the Commission on Appointments on the grounds that the majority who had been elected had needed only the approval of their constituencies. (Pauline P. Sicam, "Deles' constituents aren't second-class," Heart and Mind, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 1989.)

Deles went to the Supreme Court for a ruling on the principle of sectoral representation. Her co-petitioners, 100 women who saw the insistence of Congress



on her confirmation as "an affront to women of the Philippines and on the right of sectoral representatives to discharge their mandates without the need for prior approval from their peers in the legislature."

The Court did not uphold her plea but Deles was soon invited by the United Nations to help monitor the compliance of member states with the Convention against All

Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in recognition of her excellent work in and dedication to women's issues.

The first woman sectoral representative was Estelita Juco, appointed by President Aquino. She also represented the disabled. Juco died in office and the position was left vacant for a long period.

In 1993, the year before the transitory provisions shall have become obsolete - retired Justice Leonor Ines Luciano and civic leader-educator Minerva Laudico were appointed by Pres. Fidel Ramos as the sectoral representatives for women. Both have always been at the forefront of the struggle for women's rights but have only half a year (as of November 1994) to implement their programs of action.

The way that the provision on sectoral representatives for women was finally carried out is quite instructive for those who believe that obtaining women's rights is a breeze.

■ No logistics for a women's political campaign. A women's party has always failed in the Philippines, history shows: from the League of Women Voters to the Kababaihang Rizalista to the National Political Party for Women in 1951 to the Kababaihan para sa Inang Bayan (KAIBA) which had an all-women ticket in the 1987 elections but produced only one winner: Rep. (now Sen.) Anna Dominique "Nikki" Coseteng in the third District of Quezon City. (Pennie Azarcon-dela Cruz, "Why there is no women's vote," Philippine Daily Inquirer, April 30, 1992.)

The reason for KAIBA's loss was logistics, the same reason that Coseteng reportedly decided to join the senatorial slate of then presidential candidate Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco in 1992 and won. "According to a supporter, Mitra's boys had asked her to contribute at least P3 million before she could join the ticket (LDP leaders now say they rejected Nikki as a senatorial bet). When Nikki asked him how much she was expected to contribute Danding reportedly told her 'not to worry about it.'" (Rina Jimenez David, At Large, PDI, 2-7-92.)

The need for logistics confirms the power of "The Three G's in Philippine Politics: Guns, Gold and Goons." (Philippine NGO Report on the Situation of Women, NGO National Conference, 11-4-93).

### ***Why is it important to have women in politics? Is it a numbers game?***

As pointed out earlier, there are only four women senators and 21 women members of the Ninth Congress. And so a minority cannot ensure the passage of pro-women legislation, even assuming that all the women legislators are committed to address women's issues.

But still, it is not necessarily true that an increase in the number of women in Congress will change the status of women for the better. There are many women leaders who do not have a feminist orientation and espouse traditional politics. "Trapos in skirts" was the term used by Rina Jimenez-David, columnist and NCRFW commissioner.

So it is important to put enough qualified women leaders with the kind of politics "which seeks to serve the general good and welfare of the people" in decision-making positions.

### ***What are the gender issues in Philippine politics?***

■ Even if women are elected, they are not taken seriously. Last year the 21 women legislators "took over" Congress on National Women's Day on March 8. An eyewitness report says: "Most of the male solons were chatting among themselves as lady solons delivered speeches on women's issues. Some openly joked that the females' 'takeover' of the House and their free run of privilege speeches was like the observance of Boys and Girls Week."

■ South Cotabato's Rep. Lualhati Antonino cited various examples of harassment of women in the workplace. She also cited manifestations of sexual harassment in the session halls of Congress like their male colleagues' "mysterious smiles, brooding stares, or sleight of hand, condescending language and sexist remarks." One example she cited is a common remark among male solons that their female counterparts are able to get more funds for their districts by using their charms. They fail to credit us with competence and capabilities, she complained." (Belinda Olivares-Cunanan, Political Tidbits, PDI, 3-10-93.)

■ Women make up half the population but since they are not represented proportionately, it has been very hard enacting laws to correct inequalities before

women and politics

the law and to protect women and children from violence such as battering, incest and rape. The most recent example is the rough sailing of the "Sexual Harassment Act of 1994" after more than two years of debate before it became law RA 7887. The anti-rape bills (S.B. 1413 and H.B. 4228) was still pending when the Ninth Congress closed.



**Are women's issues in the Ninth Congress a non-agenda?**

Out of the 303 bills and resolutions filed by the Ninth Congress, only two on women were passed; representation in the Social Security System Board and the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (RA 7887). In contrast, the Eighth Congress filed 103 bills and resolutions and passed six on women.(Dr. Reyes, CRTS).

According to a survey of 187 senators and congressmen, women and child welfare issues are the least priorities of lawmakers. Only three percent listed women issues among their top five priority areas, reports the Philippine Legislative Committee on Population and Development Foundation. However, majority were willing to sponsor bills addressing "human development concerns" which include protection of the rights and welfare of contract workers, a ban on discrimination against women in employment and increasing the penalty for child abuse and wife beating.(Jerry Esplanada, PDI, 12-2-94)

**Can men represent women's legislative agenda?**

It was male legislators in 1987-1992 who introduced most of the 104 bills and resolutions on women. However, it is better for women, who know and are affected by the issues to initiate and sponsor bills to correct gender inequities and other laws for women's empowerment.

Electing more women representatives will give more voices to women. For now, Geraldine Ferraro, US ambassador to UN Commission on Human Rights suggested that women convince the male legislators who are the majority. Another is to get more women to vote. "You'll get the laws changed because legislators, male or female, understand the way to get elected is by pleasing the electorate." Ferraro said in a USIA Worldnet interview. She further urged more women to run for office. (Rina Jimenez-David, PDI, 3-1-95)

**What comprises women's political participation?**

■ Voting appears to be the most common if not the only political activity of the majority of Filipino women. Records at the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) show that from 1946 to 1987 the average turn-out among women was 79.15% compared to 78.66% for men and that only an average of 4.98% of elective posts were occupied by women for the same time period. (Dela Cruz, 4-30-92)

In the 1992 elections, there were 75.97% female voters who actually voted while 74.96% of the men voted. (Table 2)

**Table 2**

**Number of Registered Voters, Actually Voted & Percentage of Voting By Sex**  
May 11, 1992 Synchronized Elections

	Registered Voters	Voters Who Actually Voted	Percentage of Voting
Male	16,197,666	12,142,079	74.96%
Female	15,943,413	12,112,834	75.97%
Both Sexes	32,141,079	24,254,954	75.46%

Source: Comelec

Similarly, a survey by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) and the University of the Philippines College of Education revealed that of the 500 women sampled, 62.2% considered voting as their main political activity; only 32.4% attended political rallies and meetings; 15 campaigned; and lower

than 10% served in rallies in various capacities. (Proserpina Domingo Tapales, "Expanding the Public Domain," paper read at the Eighth Meeting of the ASEAN Women's Programme, Manila, May 24-26, 1989). (Table 3)

women and politics



Very few women run for political office because it is considered men's turf. Women consider politics "dirty". For those who want to be a candidate, they have had to ask permission from their husbands to run for office. There was an actual case when the husband chose to run and ride on the popularity of his wife instead. Hopefully this will change with the New Family Code and the Women in Nation-Building Act (R.A. 7192) which grants women the right to sign contracts without the consent of

**Table 3**

**Survey on Women's Main Political Activity**

Voting	62.2 %
Rally	32.4 %
Campaign	15.0 %
Others	10.0 %

Source: (NCRFW/IUP)

spouses. However, it is always better to have the family's consent and support.

Peru's First Lady is a case in point. She wanted to run against her husband, President Fujimori. He barred her from the palace, threw her out of her office and divorced her. Recently she formed her own party but was disqualified because her party could not fill up all the slots with candidates.

**What other forms of political activity do women engage in?**

Year after year, public school teachers, most of whom are women, have been registering voters, giving out ballots, counting the votes and delivering the returns to municipal halls.

Women formed the majority of the computer tabulators who had walked out rather than rig the presidential elections of 1986. Lastly but certainly not the least, women from all sectors have volunteered to be poll watchers, sandwich makers, water girls and runners for the Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL).

**Are women elected on their own merits?**

Unfortunately no. Women get into power as relatives of male politicians, usually when they are widowed while the husband was in office or on the campaign trail.

The example that readily comes to mind is former President Corazon Aquino who had had no elective post before being elected to the highest office of the land due to public sympathy for the assassination of her husband, the late Sen. Benigno Aquino, Jr.

A study showed that her assumption into office hardly changed the personalistic nature of local politics. Higher elective positions are opened to women only in the absence of recognized male politicians in the family. Women (who landed top positions) are members of established dynasties in the country and are mostly seen as substitutes (for) either their fathers or their husbands." (Luzviminda Tancangco, quoted in Dela Cruz, *ibid.* Philippine Daily Inquirer, 4-30-92)

As for substitutes for male relatives, President

**Table 4**

**Representatives with Spouses who are Politicians**

NAME	NAME OF SPOUSE	POSITION HELD/ ASPIRED FOR
1 Abines, Crisologo	Priscilla O. Abines	Mayor-Santander
2 Amante, Edelmiro	Rosario Amante	Mayor - Cabadbaran
3 Amatong, Ernesto	Juanita Dy Amatong	Finance Undersecretary
4 Antonio, Lualhati	Adelbert Antonio	Congressman/Mayor Candidate for Governor - Masbate(1988,1992)
5 Aspiras, Jose	Amparo M. Aspiras	Vice-Governor- LaUnion
6 Bakunawa, Luz Cieta	Manuel Bacunawa	Candidate for Governor - Masbate (1988,1992)
7 Chiongbian, James	Priscilla L. Chiongbian	Governor-Saranggani
8 Cojuangco, Jose	Margarita R. Cojuangco	Governor-Tarlac
9 Ecleo, Glenda	Ruben Ecleo Sr.	Mayor-Dinagat - deceased
10 Estrella, Conrado, III	Sandra Estrella	Candidate for Mayor-Rosales
11 Fajardo, Rico	Leonora C. Fajardo	Mayor - Paliyan City
12 Fuentes, Daisy Avance	Wilfredo Fuentes	Chief Inspector, CAPCOM
13 Garcia, Pablo	Esperanza F. Garcia	Judge - RTC, Cebu
14 Garin, Oscar	Nimfa Garin	Mayor - Guimbal
15 Gordon, Katherine	Richard J. Gordon	Mayor - Olangapo Chairman, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA)
16 Lagman, Edel C.	Ma. Cielo Lagman	Candidate for Mayor - Tabaco
17 Locsin, Carmelo	Ma. Victoria Locsin	Candidate for Mayor - Osmoc
18 Palma-Gil, Ma. Elena	Teodoro Palma-Gil	Assemblyman (1978-84) - deceased
19 Plaza, Charito	Figurado O. Plaza	Mayor (1980-86)
20 Reyes, Carmencita	Edmundo M. Reyes	Commissioner-Immigration and Deportation
21 Romualdo, Pedro	Araceli M. Romualdo	Mayor - Mambajao
22 Singson, Eric	Grace Singson	Mayor - Candon
23 Tupas, Neil	Myma C. Tupas	Mayor - Barotac Viejo

SOURCE: Eric Gutierrez, "THE TIES THAT BIND" PCJ/IPO 1994

Two out of three representatives have at least one close relative in office, according to "The Ties That Bind". This table limits the officials to spouses of which one or both were either candidates or officials in government.

Aquino encouraged Rosario Antonio Velasco, widow of slain mayor Octavio Velasco of Ternate, to run in his stead and even proclaimed her as her party's candidate in that town of Cavite.

In the 1970s the widow of Sen. Gaudencio Antonino, Mrs. Magnolia Antonino, took over his candidacy upon his death in a plane crash - and won. (Table 4)

### **Are there parallels in other Asian countries?**

**Sri Lanka:** In then Ceylon, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike became the first woman prime minister of the world with the assassination in 1959 of her husband Solomon. Thirty-four years later (1994) her daughter Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, a widow, was sworn in as prime minister of renamed Sri Lanka. Last August 16 Chandrika won the narrowest of victory over the United National Party (UNP) which had been in power for seventeen years. (Asiaweek, August 31, 1994).

Chandrika, 49, scored her first victory in the 1993 provincial council elections, became chief minister of Western Province, and won the general elections in 1994.

**India:** The late Indira Gandhi replaced her father Jawaharlal Nehru as prime minister upon his death in 1964. Previous to that she was his host at official functions.

**Pakistan:** Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, 41, now on her second term, is the daughter of revered Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was executed during the regime of Gen. Zia-ul Haq. In August 1988 Gen. Zia's martial law regime ended with his death in an air crash. Within months Benazir was prime minister as her party won a general election.

But in August 1990 Benazir was discharged by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on charges of corruption and maladministration. In 1993 she ran as MP of the Bhutto hometown of Larkana (in Pakistan's southernmost province of Sind), won and came to replace Nawar Sharif as prime minister. This year she was absolved of all the charges against her. (Arjuna Ranawana, Asiaweek, July 16, 1994).

**Bangladesh:** Khaleda Zia led the opposition party to victory after the death of her husband and is now the prime minister of her country. (Rounaq Jahan, "Women

in South Asian politics," *Third World Quarterly*, pp. 838-870; published by the Third World Foundation, New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, London)

**Myanmar:** Nobel Peace Laureat Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Burmese independence hero Aung San, who was assassinated in 1947, won the elections in 1988 but has been held prisoner in her home in Rangoon's University Road since 1989 by the generals of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). (James Walsh, *Time*, October 3, 1994).

**Yet throughout the world, women are a minority in politics.** Golda Meir was prime minister of **Israel** for many years; Margaret Thatcher left her mark on **England** as its prime minister. For a time Edith Cresson headed the government of **France**. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro became president of **Nicaragua** with the help of the memory of her assassinated husband. In 1991, Norway, Dominica, Iceland, Ireland had women heads of state. In 1993 women were elected prime ministers in **Turkey, Canada and Rwanda**.

Despite this, only one politician in ten is a woman and women's share of seats in the world's parliaments has fallen from 13% to 10% when the Inter-Parliamentary Union last assessed the worldwide situation in 1991.

Today ten countries do not have any women member of parliament and 44 have parliaments that are 95% male. (United Nations Children's Fund, *The Progress of Nations*, 1994) See Table 5.

### **What laws advance women's political participation?**

■ The 1987-1992 Congress passed six laws promoting the interest of women: prohibiting discrimination against them in the workplace, banning of the mail order bride business, setting up of daycare centers in every barangay, increasing maternity leave from 45 to 60 days, designation of March 8 as National Women's Day, and integrating women in development and nation-building as equal partners of men.

■ On August 4, 1988 the New Family Code took effect. It has many provisions that are supportive of women. Article 73 states that either spouse may exercise any legitimate profession, occupation, business or activity without the consent of the other; the latter may object only on valid, serious and moral grounds.

■ The Local Government Code of 1991 mandates elections for sectoral representatives in municipal and city boards and in special local bodies as provided for in Art. X, Sec.9 of the 1987 Constitution. A women's sector forms part of these local bodies. (See leaflet on Politics and the Law)

Table 5

**Only one politician in ten is a woman**

Women's share of seats in the world's parliaments has fallen from 13% to 10% since the worldwide situation was last assessed in 1991, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Top 10 % Women MPs 1993		Zero Rated No Women MPs	
Seychelles	46	Antigua/Barbuda	
Finland	39	Belize	
Norway	36	Bhutan	
Sweden	34	Djibouti	
Denmark	33	Jordan	
Netherlands	29	Kiribati	
Iceland	24	Kuwait	
Cuba	23	Mauritania	
Austria	21	Papua N. Guinea	
China	21	Saint Lucia	
		U. Arab Emirates	

**Where parliaments are 95% male**

% women MPs 1993			
Fiji	1	Tajikistan	3
Korea Rep.	1	Tonga	3
Morocco	1	Barbados	4
Pakistan	1	Belarus	4
Yemen	1	Cambodia	4
Azerbaijan	2	Haiti	4
Egypt	2	Liechtenstein	4
Japan	2	Maldives	4
Lebanon	2	Mongolia	4
Lesotho	2	Romania	4
Mal	2	Samoa	4
Malta	2	Singapore	4
Moldova	2	Thailand	4
Nigeria	2	Tunisia	4
Turkey	2	Argentina	5
Iran	3	Botswana	5
Kenya	3	Cote d'Ivoire	5
Marshall Is.	3	Malaysia	5
Mauritius	3	Sri Lanka	5
Nepal	3	Sudan	5
Paraguay	3	Turkmenistan	5
South Africa	3		

\*MP - Member of Parliament Source: Progress of Nations Report UNICEF 1994

**What pending bills give more opportunities for women in politics?**

The Women Empowerment Act of 1993 (H.B. 12430) was filed by Rep. Roilo Golez of Paranaque to reserve for qualified women a third of Cabinet positions; positions as undersecretaries, assistant secretaries and bureau directors in every government department; divisions chiefs; in government-owned and controlled corporations, financing institutions, state colleges and universities, and local government units.

The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) has made a New election Code (NEC) to replace the Omnibus Election Code (OEC) and guard against registration frauds, dynasties, undue interference by religious groups, etc.

Unfortunately not all the bills were passed despite having been certified as an urgent measure by Malacanang (H.B. 10911 and S.B. 1427) for the synchronized May 1995 elections.

The party list system, which gives minority parties at least 3 seats in congress would benefit women but takes effect in 1998 elections. Absentee voting which would give OCWs who are mostly women the right to vote is still pending. (For more details, see leaflet on Politics and the Law.)

**How do lawmakers help to politicize women and the public?**

In 1988 several members of both houses of Congress held PARLCON '88 - the Parliamentarians' Conference on Population and Development - to ensure an atmosphere conducive to the integration of population concerns in development matters. The Conference gave rise to the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation, Inc. (PLCPD).

One major activity of PLPCD is multi-sectoral briefings across all regions on population, environment and sustainable development. Another is publishing Advocacy Alert bi-monthly to monitor the status of selected legislative measures pending in both houses of Congress, including those on the role and status of women.

**What are the women legislators doing for women?**

The 21 women members of the Ninth Congress have constituted themselves into a bloc called POWER (Philippine Organization of Women Elected Representatives) to be able to promote pro-women legislation. For their part the female employees have formed the Women's Congressional Caucus of the Philippines.

**What are government efforts to prepare women for politics?**

The NCRFW spearheaded the government's efforts to educate and mobilize women for the election of sectoral representatives originally scheduled for 1994. NCRFW produced information materials in collaboration with women NGOs, specifically Women's Political Empowerment in the Grassroots, A Primer on the First Elections of Women Sectoral Representatives for 1993.



NCRFW has also initiated consciousness-raising sessions for women councilors on gender issues, networking mechanisms, realistic programs of action, and performance upgrading. (NCRFW Term Report 1986-1992). In 1991 NCRFW convened the "Consultation on Women in Public Policy and Politics" to firm up a four-point agenda for women in the bureaucracy, the academe, the nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and electoral politics. NCRFW spearheaded briefings for women officials on what their sisters in government hope to accomplish and how they could be supported. Together they decided to list down women qualified for top level positions in government and even in international agencies like the United Nations.

***In terms of policy, what steps has the government taken?***

■ Since political participation covers elective as well as appointive office, the government is striving to increase the number of women in decision-making posts. NCRFW also filed Resolution No. 3, series of 1993, petitioning Pres. Ramos to appoint more women sectoral representatives in Congress and in key decision-making positions.

Sec. Ma. Nieves Roldan-Confessor is the first woman appointed to head the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). Career officials like her have been appointed to head the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in the person of Atty. Rosario Lopez; the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Ms. Alma Corazon de Leon; and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Patricia Sto. Tomas. Undersecretary Josefina Lichauco is a career official of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC).

At the eighth Congress it was a woman who was appointed sectoral representative for labor, Rep. Adelisa Raymundo from the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP). And one of the commissioners of the NCRFW, Ms. Jurgette Honculada, represents the National Federation of Labor women's desk.

■ The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has instituted Equality Advocates (EQUADS) to hear and pursue cases of discrimination based on sex, ethnic reason, religious or political affiliation, and physical disability.

CSC is also reviewing its policies and guidelines for hidden discrimination against women, who are only 31% of career executives in government even if

they form 51% of the work force (723,789 out of 1.41 million). (Ibon Facts and Figures, 8-15-93.)

This figure can only mean that women are still not active participants in decision-making nor guaranteed equal participation in the bureaucracy. (Proserpina Domingo Tapales, Women in the Philippine Bureaucracy: Comparison of 1983 and 1989 Administrative Leaders, quoted in "GO Women Strive for Equality" in NEWSWINGS, NCRFW.)

■ Since 1991 NCRFW has instituted a system of focal points in every department to integrate women's concerns in the planning and implementation of development programs. It has had regional exercises and published how-to manuals for this process

■ NCRFW has also been holding regular congresses among women in government service since 1991. Three congresses had been held tackling the areas of hiring, training, promotion and retirement. In 1994 the theme was combatting sexual harassment in the government bureaucracy. The fourth congress is on the disproportionate representation of women in decision making positions in the bureaucracy. (NCRFW)

***What were some of the strategies mapped out by women in government?***

Women tend to lag behind in getting ahead in the bureaucratic ladder due to some constraints:

■ They could not participate in out of town training because of mostly male participants; multiple roles and gender biases in the workplace (e.g. fieldwork is for men); and lack of data to accurately describe the situation of women in various sectors.

At the fourth congress of women in government service, the participants approved a resolution to adopt a program for ensuring that by 1998, not less than 40% of all top level positions should be occupied by women; part-time/job sharing work arrangements without the loss of security rights.

At a special informal gathering of key women in government, Patricia Santo Tomas, retired Civil Service Commissioner, urged top women officials to mentor actively at least three women successor in the agency.

### **What about NGOs? How have they promoted women's political empowerment?**

As early as the summer of 1991, the Women in Nation-Building (WIN) had trained some 100 women candidates to acquire and eventually develop consciousness of women's issues and to learn how to run and win a campaign in the 1992 elections. (Imelda Nicolas, "The making of women candidates," *Malaya*, April 15, 1991 and interview with Ms. Erlinda Tagle, WIN head, May 31, 1993.)

The training included dealing with the media; choosing one's campaign staff; raising funds; speaking in public; and protecting one's vote before, during and after elections. (See pamphlet on Women NGOs and Politics.)

**PILIPINA**, an NGO working for women's full participation in leadership and governance hosted the first Asia-Pacific Congress of Women in Politics in June 1994. The congress was organized by the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) which tackled strategies to increase women's participation in politics. Former NCRFW executive director Remy Rikken is National Coordinator. PILIPINA with the support of Hasik and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, held a National Conference on Vote for Women's Issues and Empowerment (Vote-Wise) April 3-5, 1995. Participants issued a resolution "not only to select and vote for candidates who support the women's agenda, but... to endorse women running for public office themselves." (Jimenez-David, PDI 4/95)

See list of NGOs and their political activities in the leaflet "Women NGOs and Politics".

### **Is there a women's vote?**

Although more women vote than men, there is no women's vote to speak of. Sad to say, many women still follow the political choices of their husbands. But there were efforts by women NGOs to create a women's vote during the 1992 presidential polls.



■ **Women's Vote for Health and Family Planning** was formed by a number of women's rights and health-oriented NGOs. They drew an agenda for responsible parenthood and women's health and presented it to presidential and senatorial candidates. They announced the endorsers at a rally at the Liwasang Bonifacio and launched a signature campaign in support of this agenda. (Interview with Ms. Anna Leah Sarabia, Women's Media Circle Foundation; 15 May 1993.)

■ **Women's Choice** counts women from the academe, the arts and cause-oriented groups as members and aimed to make women conscious of the importance of their choices in the elections. ("Women's group decries women politicians," PDI, 5-11-92.) The group pointed out that women form half of the electorate, can therefore make a difference at the polls, and should opt for changes that will help uplift women's conditions. The group says that gender should not be the sole criterion for candidates to garner the women's vote, citing Pres. Aquino as proof that a woman head of state does not automatically advance women's interest. Government policies on the debt, land reform and civil strife have only made life harder for women.

■ **Ugnayan ng Kababaihan sa Pulitika (UKP)**: This alliance of over 40 women's organizations from all over the country said that its members would vote for candidates supporting day-care services, a woman's right to decide the number of her children, and more severe laws on rape, incest and other sex crimes. (Stella Ruth Gonzales, "Daycare, sex laws in women's agenda," PDI, 5-1-92.)

### **What happened to the election of sectoral representatives?**

The next election that should have taken place was for sectoral representatives at the municipal and city board levels. As early as July 24, 1992, when the COMELEC called for the First Multi-sectoral Consultation, women's organizations all over the country had conducted information drives and set into motion the accreditation of women's organizations within the rules and regulations of COMELEC.

Specifically, a National Accreditation Committee for Women's Organizations (NACWO) was formed by five representatives from the National Council of Women in the Philippines (NCWP), Group of 10 (G-10), Women's Action Net-

work for Development (WAND), the NCRFW and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) with UKP as the organization in charge of the women's sector in the coordination of the information drive.

The NACWO issued Guidelines for the Accreditation of Women's Sectoral Organizations and finished the accreditation of women's organizations across the country but there have been no date or funds set for the sectoral elections

On February 3, 1993 representatives of NCWP, WAND, G-10 and UKP met with Pres. Ramos to reiterate their hope and expectation that he would sign into law the enabling law certifying to Congress the date and the conduct of the elections.

Almost two years have passed but there is still no law despite a courtesy call on House Speaker Jose de Venecia by the NCRFW and the NCWP in July 1993; the promise of the principal sponsors of this enabling law at a symposium held by the NGO called PILIPINA that the elections would be held before 1993 ended; and the petition filed with the Supreme Court by eight NGOs and POs to compel the COMELEC to hold the elections even without the enabling law.

The elections for sectoral representatives which was scheduled this May was again cancelled with the approval of RA 7887 which provides that Comelec shall promulgate rules and regulation to implement the provisions of the law.

### **Aside from elections, where else can women exercise political empowerment?**

Legislative advocacy is a relatively new field in the Philippines but it is a promising one. The women's network GABRIELA has assigned liaison officers with Congress and with the Senate; the Congressional Research and Training Service, Inc. (CRTS) has been established; and women's groups have banded together into an initiative popularly known as SIBOL. See "Women NGOs and Politics".

### **Is there a center where women can train to be political leaders?**

The Philippines hosts the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) which was founded last 1992 with the goal of creating a critical mass

of competent, effective and committed women politicians holding elective and appointive posts who will exert influence on national and regional decision-making.

Before the barangay elections of May 1994, CAPWIP conducted a series of seminars on transformational politics for the members of the Kababaihang Barangay of San Miguel, Bulacan. The Center thus helped them firm up a decision to go into politics after 17 years of success in micro-enterprises. None of the three women candidates for barangay captain won but 31 of the 84 for councilors did. (M.M. Lorena Tariman, *The Women of San Miguel in Local Politics*, Philippine Women's University; June 1994).

Last June 1994 the Center sponsored an Asian-wide seminar on women in politics in which the president of the association, Emma Sta. Ana, briefed the 200 participants from 27 countries about the candidacy of their 87 members. (The First Asia-Pacific Congress of Women in Politics, June 21-23, 1994)

### **How do governments and parties in other countries empower women politically?**

Political parties or constitutions have set quotas for women in the party leadership, election slates and number of parliamentary seats. (Cecilia Hoffmann, Issue Brief on Quota Systems for Women's Political Participation, Quezon City: Women in Politics Program, Congressional Research and Training Service, Inc., 1994, p. 4.)

Austria's Green Party has a policy that women must comprise 50% of its members, party officials and party candidates.

Germany's Social Democratic Party has a 40% quota for women in party leadership and election slates. In Norway all parties say that their objective is to include 40-60% of women in legislative elections.



In Sweden most parties have quota regulations; in the 1988 elections women won 35% of parliamentary seats.

In the 1991 elections in Switzerland 57% of the Green party's successful candidates were women; the party has a 50% quota for women candidates.

The United Kingdom has a 40% quota for women members and targets a 50% women's share of party seats in Parliament by 2000.

Japan's Social Democratic Party has a 15% quota for women.

Among the developing countries, Argentina has a compulsory 30% quota for women candidates; Angola reserved 15% of seats in its People's Assembly for women in 1986; and the 1990 Constitution of Nepal provides women 5% of party membership.

### ***Is there a Philippine quota for women in the labor force, in government both appointive and elective?***

The Golez Bill allots a third of appointive positions in national and local governments. Political parties should reserve a third of its party slate of candidates and requires the Philippine National Police at least 30% of all items in each rank to women.

### ***But wouldn't a quota create a mediocre crop of women ?***

There is a mine of outstanding women waiting to be discovered. With a quota system, women, showing their best foot forward, will form a beeline to the top. It is necessary to maintain a roster of qualified women for positions in government, political parties and trade unions. The best way to form a critical mass of women leaders is by encouraging women in power to serve as mentors for endless number of understudies. (Women Challenges to the year 2000, UN 1991).

### ***Aside from quotas, how else do other countries empower women?***

Educational campaigns in Austria, Ireland and Sweden have encouraged female enrollment in branches of education that can lead to political life. (Women

in Politics: Still the Exception? United Nations Department of Public Information, November 1989).

Other countries have pushed for the recruitment of women in public service so they may develop political skills. And still others have invested in education, health care and income generation to complement political empowerment.

The former Soviet Union's Supreme Soviet had a Committee on Women, Family, Mother and Child Protection, the first such committee to give a legal basis for dealing with problems of women and the family - and which in 1990 was instrumental in the adoption of a nationwide program of immediate action to improve the status of women and protect mothers and children.

In South America, Brazil took cognizance of the work of the National Council for Women's Rights and incorporated in the country's new constitution most of the demands of the group. (Women... 2000, UN 1991)

### ***What are UN initiatives to increase women's political participation?***

■ The United Nations has established a separate Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to monitor covenants and coordinate initiatives like the Decade for Women (1975-1985) which brought women to the fore as part and parcel of development. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies is one of its outcomes; another is the creation of national machineries for the advancement of women like our country's NCRFW.

■ The UN System has installed gender desks or offices in specialized agencies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the regional units of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in addition to the Dominican Republic-based International Training and Research Agency for Women (INSTRAW).

■ Three recently-concluded UN conferences have highlighted the need to advance the status of women: the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development; the 1993 International Conference on Human Rights ("Women's rights are human rights" - NGOs said at a parallel forum and at the official meeting); and

the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Social Development Summit.

■ A meeting of parliamentarians was held parallel with the ICPD and Sen. Leticia Ramos-Shahani was elected rapporteur-general. The Declaration issued had a section on gender and development which emphasized political equity as an important end by itself. (PLCPD, People Count, September 1994).

### Are there any conferences relevant to women and politics in the near future?

Preparations are feverish for the 1995 World Conference on Women (September 1995). Preparatory documents emphasize the political rights of women. For instance, the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit on Social Development, held in Manila last Oct. 12-18, 1994, underscored the need for gender equality in ten major areas of action and in the enabling mechanisms for social development: good governance and political development among others. (Agenda for Action for Social Development in the ESCAP Region, UN Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific (UN ESCAP); Manila, Philippines, Oct. 12-18, 1994.)

The Jakarta Declaration, drafted at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting last June 1994 recognized the "inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels" as one of the critical areas of concern. It noted that "inequality in the public arena is often matched by, and often starts with inequality within the household."

### What other international group works for balance in politics?

Outside of the UN System, the Interparliamentary Council of the Geneva-based Interparliamentary Union (founded in 1989) has brought out a Plan of



Action to Correct Imbalances in the Participation of Men and Women in Political Life (1994). The plan recognizes and supports women's suffrage, the need for balance between candidates by sexes and for women to be represented in party lists, measures for affirmative action, etc. There will be an Interparliamentary Meeting on "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics" before the 1995 World Conference on Women.

### The Philippines has come a long way from 1940 when women first received the right to vote. But what else needs to be done for their political empowerment?

The United Nations recommends that to boost women's political decision-making power, governments, NGOs, political parties, trade unions, the private sector, women's groups and individuals should:

■ Introduce special measures to increase the proportion of women involved in political decision-making; vote, stand for election and hold public or political office;



■ Encourage women to fully exercise the vote, independently, according to their own individual preference;

■ Campaign to promote women's issues on political platforms;

■ Generate support networks so that more women can campaign for public office at the grassroots, state, national, regional and international levels;

■ Maintain rosters of qualified women for positions in government, political parties and trade unions;

- Collect statistical data and publicize participation in high-level decision-making bodies at the national, regional and international levels;
- Promote qualified women to positions of power at every level within political, legislative and judicial bodies with the goal of achieving parity with men;
- Encourage women in power to serve as mentors and otherwise support qualified women candidates in their career development;
- Increase the number of women in leadership positions in public and private enterprise to at least 39% by the year 2000, with a view of achieving parity with men. (Women... 2000, UN 1991)

### **Who are good role models for women in politics and government?**

There are many historical figures like Princess Urduja, Generalas Gabriela Silang and Teresa Magbanua, Katipuneras led by Gregoria de Jesus, women members of Masonic lodges like Trinidad Tecson, the unnamed women of Malolos who dared demand a school from the Spanish colonial government, and others who deserve honor, recognition and documentation. (Fe Arriola, Si Maria, Nena, Gabriela, ATBP. Institute of Women's Studies, 1989)

Fortunately, others can be identified for posterity - Hilaria de la Cruz organized the Damas de la Cruz Roja (Red Cross) primarily to aid Filipino soldiers fight American subjugation. The panuelo activists, as the suffragettes came to be known for espousing the native formal attire for women, were led by Dr. Minerva Laudico, the present sectoral representative for women, the late educators Pilar Hidalgo-Lim and Paz Policarpio-Mendez, among others.

These are but a few of the many role models for women government officials. Hopefully they will inspire the young as well as those already in service to give the best they can to the country. They will then prove that Filipino women truly deserve the right to vote that had taken 30 years to gain: from 1907 when the first measure for suffrage was filed in the Philippine Assembly to 1937 after it was overwhelmingly ratified by women in a plebiscite in 1935.

### **What are the strategies to get more women in politics?**

Statistics documenting the participation of women and men in public and political life must be available. Government should do an inventory of public appointments, disaggregated by gender and the appointing authority, and published regularly as a guide for women NGOs and legislators to put pressure where it is needed



- Nominate as many women as possible to high level government positions; while women who are already in power can influence policies to benefit women and bring more women up the political ladder.
- Create women's networks in business, professions, government, trade unions and women's organizations to share experiences and create solidarity, support groups for women candidates and nominees.
- Encourage the formation of women's organization, where women derive leadership, advocacy and administrative skills. Apart from being good training ground, women's organizations can become a major route for entry of women into public life to advance women's interests.
- Lobby for the incorporation of a women's political agenda in the platforms of political parties and make candidates accountable for the positions they take on key women's issues.
- Identify possible sources of funding support for women candidates and facilitate training on fund raising and preparing budgets. (Asia Pacific Congress of Women in Politics, Manila, June 1994).

*women and politics*

Sources: Center for Women in Politics, Jakarta Plan of Action, CRTS, Unicef, Third World Quarterly, People Count, WEDO News and Views; Women: Challenges to the Year 2000 (UN): "The Ties That Bind", PCIJ: NCRFW Terms Report 1986 - 1992; ISIS' Women in Action, 2/3 1994; DILG, Comelec, UKP, NCWP, Kabapa, SIBOL.

Papers by Prosepina Tapales, Dr. Socorro Reyes; Interviews by Pinky Choudhury of Erlinda Tagle (WIN), Annaleah Sarabia, (WMCF) and Irene Fernandez.

Columns: Rina Jimenez-David and Belinda Cunanan, PDI; Imelda Nicolas, Malaya and clippings from Manila Chronicle, Today, PDI, Asiaweek and Time.

**The NCRFW-WFS Primer Series**

**WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
WOMEN OVERSEAS WORKERS  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT  
WOMEN AND POLITICS  
WOMEN AND POPULATION  
WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

***IN THIS SERIES:***

- Women, Politics and the Law
- Women and Politics - What Can Be Done
- Women and the May '95 Elections

Published by:

**National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women**

1145 J.P. Laurel St., Malacañang,  
San Miguel, Manila  
Tel. No.: 741-5093; 741-5028; 741-7208  
Fax: 712-5262



NCRFW-WFS Primer Series

*Produced under the NCRFW Institutional  
Strengthening Project, with support from the  
Canadian International Development Agency*

Copyright 1995