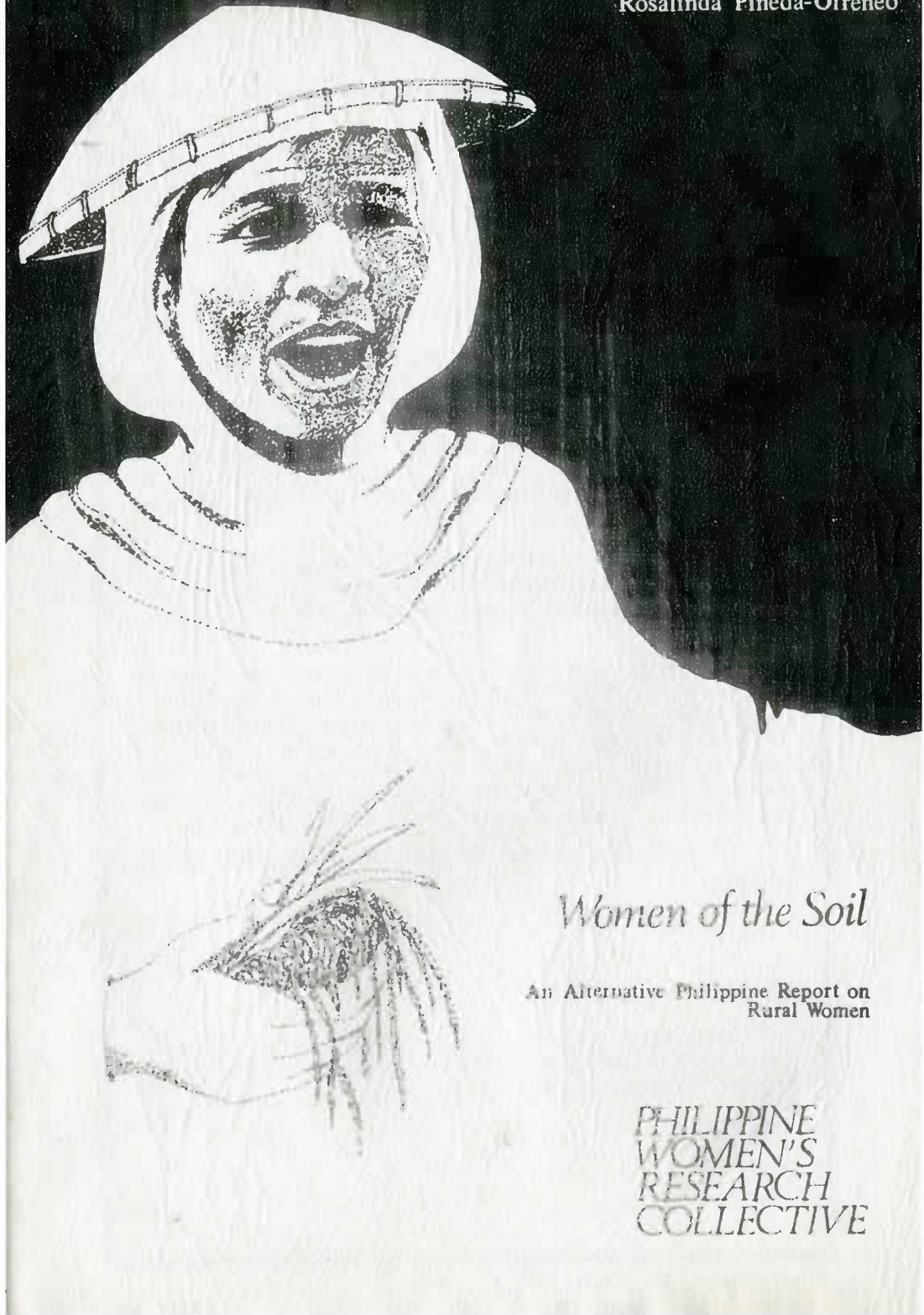


Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo



Women of the Soil

An Alternative Philippine Report on
Rural Women

PHILIPPINE
WOMEN'S
RESEARCH
COLLECTIVE

The Author

Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo is a writer, teacher, researcher and sometime poet, who has been into women's issues for the last decade or so.

Her researches on rural women, subcontracting and domestic outwork, and the problems of women workers in export-oriented industries have been published in local and international journals. She is an active member of two mass-based women's organizations, the *Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina* (Association of the New Filipina) and the *Samahan ng Kababaihang Manggagawang Pilipino* (Association of Filipino Working Women).

As a proponent of women's issues, she has attended and spoken at women's conferences, seminars, and study tours in Denmark, Australia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic.

Right now, she works as a researcher at the International Studies Institute of the Philippines (ISIP), which is part of the UP Law complex. She is also a lecturer at the graduate level of the UP Institute of Mass Communications. Her masteral thesis in this Institute, *The Manipulated Press: A History of Philippine Journalism since 1945* was published in 1984. Likewise, her award-winning poems on women's themes have seen print in literary collections both here and abroad.

She is married to Rene Ofreneo, with whom she has three children.

The Artist

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1913

Women of the Soil

An Illustrative Philippine Report on Rural Women

The Philippine Commission, Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Plant Industry, in cooperation with the Bureau of Forestry, have prepared this report on the condition of rural women in the Philippines. The report is based on a series of surveys conducted in various parts of the country during the year 1912. The surveys were conducted by a number of agricultural experts and by a number of women themselves. The results of the surveys are set forth in this report, which is intended to serve as a guide for the improvement of the condition of rural women in the Philippines.

1913

Rosario Pineda Ordoñez

INTRODUCTION

They hailed from various fields and disciplines, these women who heeded the call of PILIPINA, a national women's organization, to discuss an issue that has been haunting them for sometime; what exactly is the woman's question and how did it affect, or was affected by, the UN Decade for Women?

The two-day workshop held at a suburban university in late 1984 bristled with insights and analysis as the participants groped and waded through their own experiences and perspectives on the issue. Thus, while the main task was to prepare the Alternative Country Report for the Non-Governmental Organizations' Forum in Nairobi, the workshop likewise resulted in the growth of perception and clearing of doubts among the women present.

Among the points the women agreed upon early on was that (1) the report would document the experience of women from the grassroots as they comprise the majority and most disadvantaged, and would ultimately be the measure of the Decade's gains; (2) it would have a feminist framework; and (3) it would consider as fundamental and integral the three dimensions of women's oppression:

a) national oppression since women comprise half of the Filipino people still victimized by imperialist powers in the economic, political and cultural spheres;

b) class oppression, because women bear the brunt of an exploitative system dominated by foreign corporations and the local elite, as industrial and agricultural workers, as peasants, landless poor and other marginalized sectors;

c) gender oppression, because outting across class lines is inequality between the sexes which intensifies the sufferings of grassroots Filipino women.

A Collective Report

With the time constraint, the women decided to share available materials and to work with their sphere of specialization to be able to validate their findings more easily. This sharing and swapping of ideas informally gave birth to the Philippines Women's Research Collective (PWRC). The collective is composed of women coming from research and development, law, journalism, health, film-making, banking, community development, anthropology, and sociology. Each member tackled areas within her competence, with the whole group discussing and criticizing each sectoral report as it come in. Thus, the Alternative Country Report is probably the only collective report on women ever done in the country.

While collective analysis did not present a problem, the initial gathering of data did. The group was stumped by the dearth of women-specific research materials and had to do some primary research on women where time and budget constraints allowed. This was true with the reports on rural women and feminist consciousness; the other sectors mainly used blanket percentages and statistics that included men.

The economic upheavals of the past decade (which will be discussed in detail by each sector in relation to the individual reports) has trapped the Philippines in a development model development on foreign capital and oriented to foreign markets. This model has reduced the country to a producer of raw materials, components and labor-intensive manufactured goods needed by developed market economies. It has also pushed the country deeper into foreign debt, amounting to \$26-billion as of 1984. Coupled with this tight financial squeeze is the growing repression and militarization unleashed by the martial-law regime of President Ferdinand Marcos since September 1972.

How the continuing ferment of the previous decade has affected Filipino women in the rural areas, in the factories

and industrial sector, and how it has pushed women to seek employment abroad as migrant workers or as prostitutes, drafted into the trade by aggressive tourism policies, are probed in this Alternative Report. The influence of media's stereotypes of women, the inadequacy of government initiatives especially in the area of health services, and the lack of feminist consciousness even among organized women are other factors that mark the Decade as particularly harrowing for the Filipino women.

This report hopes that by tracing and exposing the roots of the Filipina's particular oppression and exploitation in the past ten years, solutions and strategies can be effectively shaped and mapped out.

For purposes of fuller treatment and accessibility, the entire report is being serialized into a pamphlet series that would tackle each section separately. The consolidated of complete version is also available at the PILIPINA Office at No. 12 Pasaje de la Paz Street, Project 4, Quezon City.

It is safe to presume that the vast majority of Filipino rural women -- barely literate, entrapped in their own limited world, living and struggling way below the poverty line -- have not even heard of the Decade for Women. The worthy aims of International Women's Year should have reached them first, being the most disadvantaged, the poorest of the poor among women, but these aims have hardly made a dent in their lives. In fact, rural women have mostly been ignored by both government and the larger public. Evidence shows that in the last ten years or so, their conditions have worsened in the wake of the ever deepening Philippine crisis characterized by zooming inflation (officially estimated at 50.3 percent in 1984), massive unemployment, and rapid impoverishment of large sections of the people especially those situated in the countryside.

The latest demographic statistics (1980) show that rural Filipinas, at almost 14.8 million, comprised 62 percent of the total female population.¹ This is a bit less than 67.5 percentage recorded in 1975, which indicates a drift towards urbanization. Figures for the first quarter of 1984 reveal that out of a total female population (15 years old and over) of 16.341 million, 9,671 million² or 59 percent were found in the countryside. Rural women, therefore, are clearly still in the majority and even for this reason alone, deserve to be the focus of any study or report on the general conditions of Filipino women.

Who then are included in the somewhat hazy category "rural women"? By far, the most numerous are the "landless rural poor" who have no ownership or tenurial rights to land. Since they have no access to land, they have to work for others with land, be these peasant producers in the rice and corn areas, so-called "coconut planters", the hacienda owners in sugarlandia, ... the large corporations running giant banana and pineapple plantations in Mindanao. They may also be wage workers in rural factories engaged in mulling, processing and canning agricultural products. There is a growing sector of domestic outworkers sewing and embroidering garments or producing handicrafts largely for export. Some are employed as domestic servants, laundrywomen and other service workers. There are wives or daughters working for free on the land belonging to their peasant husbands or fathers, and

who are thus classified as "unpaid family labor." Many rural women are vendors; they sell vegetables, fruits, legumes, etc. which they produce themselves, or fish in the case of fishermen's wives, or snacks and other prepared food items carried from place to place in big native trays (bilaos) or displayed in makeshift stalls. The more fortunate are teachers, sari-sari store owners, cottage-industry operators or petty businesswomen. On top of the totem pole are the wives and daughters of rich landowners and rural industrialists who can choose their own professions, dabble in local politics, and/or pursue a life of leisure because they can hire a battery of lower-class women to carry the burden of domestic drudgery for them.

Obviously, rural women are not homogeneous lot. They are stratified into sectors of different poverty and income levels, varying access to wealth, education and opportunity, diverse lifestyles and interests. The poor, who are many, are worst off; the rich, who are few, are still the most privileged; in between, there are many rungs, shades and combinations.

The fact is most rural women have to do some form of productive work, whether income-substituting or income-generating, to ensure their own as well as their family's economic survival. What they cannot buy because they do not have enough cash, they collect or produce themselves -- e.g. fuel and water; fish, small game, frogs, snails, plants from their surroundings; vegetables and fruits from their backyard gardens; chicken and pork from their poultry and piggery. They can also choose to sell whatever they collect or produce to earn cash for their other daily needs.³

It is therefore unfair that more than half of rural women are considered merely as housewives who do not "work". In fact, most of them combine taking care of children and maintaining the home with many unrecognized productive activities. This injustice is still reflected in the way Philippine labor force statistics are conceptualized and obtained.

More than Housewives

In the first quarter of 1984, there were some 9,671,000 rural women 15 years old and over. Of this, more than one-half, or 54 percent (5,224,000)⁴ are "not in the labor force," meaning

that "they are not at work or without jobs and not wanting work or wanting work but not looking for work." These women are classified as housewives, most of whom are performing economic activities not duly recognized or measured by conventional census-taking mechanisms.

In terms of proportion, rural women "not in the labor force" seems to have decreased by more than 13 percent from 67.4 percent (6,461,000 out of a total of 9,589,000) in 1975.⁵ In keeping with this trend, the number of rural women in the labor force increased proportionately to 46 percent of the total, up from 33 percent in 1975. This percentage is almost equal to the overall female labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 45 percent for the whole country.⁶ In comparison however, to the 84 percent LFPR of rural men, the proportion is rather low.

About 40 percent of rural women in the labor force are employed in the agriculture (down by 14 percent from 54 percent in 1975).⁷ It may be surmised that millions of housewives and farmers' daughters classified as "not in the labor force" should have been placed in this category and thereby considered as engaged in agricultural production. They are actually working to produce food for their families by cultivating vegetables, raising poultry and hogs, and paying field hands, as well as cooking for them. They also do some processing activities inside the home. These, however, are generally not considered agricultural work, which is equated to field-work or cultivation of products the value of which must be measured in monetary terms. To make things worse, rural women who have no regular cash income are understandably inclined to say they are just housewives to census takers, when in fact they are engaged in a variety of economic activities, regular or seasonal, permanent or temporary, singly or simultaneously agricultural or non-agricultural, on or off the farm.

The difficulty of categorizing rural women's work can be surmised in the following explanation:

Indeed in the rural sector one cannot really speak of cultivators and non-cultivators in clear-cut terms. Poor rural households have to make do with whatever employment and work they can find. A rural household generally will engage in several farm and non-farm activities, ranging from some

cultivation on their own farm if they have land, to wage labour outside the farming season, regular or irregular wage labour for the landless, petty trading, petty employment, buying and selling food, working in a factory, workshops and working as semi-wage labour in the putting-out system, where the owner of capital provides all the necessary material, including tools, to the women in their homes. In the last case, they assemble the materials in a way designed by the employer or the owner of capital, in return for extremely low wages.^{8-a}

From a limited survey of Filipino rural women in seven provinces (January 1985),^{8-b} it seems that quite a number have double and even triple roles. Wives of peasants with land rights do unpaid family labor; at the same time, they work in the neighboring fields in exchange for wages. When they harvest and sell fruits, vegetables or legumes from their plots, they become vendors. When there is not much to do on the farm of season, some turn to sewing, embroidery or crocheting. The more desperate even perform laundry services for better-off households.

Some Socio-Economic Indicators

Mass poverty has always been a fact of life in the Philippines, especially in the rural areas. As many sources have pointed out, the trend has been towards a deepening and widening of poverty levels in the last decade or so. USAID reports, based on 1971 data, that 69 percent of the population in rural areas, 39 percent in Manila, and 44 percent in other urban areas were below the poverty line. "Classified by main source of family income, the highest poverty incidence rates were found among those families relying mainly on farming (79%) fishing, forestry, hunting, (77%), and agricultural wages and salaries (71%)"⁹

As researchers concluded from the 1976 Family Expenditure Survey of the National Census and Statistics Office:

The gap between income and expenditures appears to grow every year presumably as a result of inflationary pressure and other related factors. In 1971, average income of rural families was given at

₱2,818 while average expenditure was ₱3,474, which means a dissaving of ₱656. This dissaving figure rose to ₱798 in 1975 as average rural family income was recorded at ₱4,745 and average expenditures at ₱5,543.¹⁰

Income distribution has worsened considerably, meaning that the rich have gotten richer, and the poor, poorer. According to one report, "the poorest 60 percent of total households, which received only 25.0 percent of total income in 1971, suffered a further decline of their share to 22.5 percent in 1979 while the richest 10 percent of households increased their share of total income from 37.1 percent in 1971 to 41.7 percent in 1979."¹¹ Income gaps have widened particularly in agriculture, where there are more farms (there was an increase in number from 2.4 million to 3.4 million from 1971 to 1980) but these farms are smaller (there was a decrease from 3.6 to 2.6 hectares in average size) and presumably have less output per unit compared with the number of people each farm must support. The number of the poorest of the poor -- the agricultural wage workers -- has dramatically increased 75 percent from 8000,000 to 1.4 million from 1971 to 1983, while the equally impoverished small fishermen doubled from 1970 to 1980.¹²

The gap between what rural households can actually earn and what these households must actually spend to meet their basic needs -- food, clothing, shelter, education, medical service, etc. -- has become appealing in the wake of hyper-inflation triggered by the more than 100 percent devaluation of the peso imposed by the International Monetary Fund beginning June 1983. The legislated minimum wages for agricultural workers -- ₱34.42 for plantation and ₱25.90 a day for non-plantation -- amounted to ₱869.10 and ₱653.98 respectively a month as of early 1984. These earnings were way below the poverty threshold for rural households estimated by one researcher at ₱2,171.74 and by the World Bank itself at ₱2,613.12 a month as of the same period.¹³ For food alone, which then demanded a monthly outlay of ₱1,163.40 a month for family of six, the earnings of agricultural workers were obviously inadequate. Worse, a great number of seasonal workers do not earn the legislated minimum wage and do not have work the whole year round! For example, the January 1985 survey showed that 73 percent

of female agricultural workers earned less than ₱25 a day (and in provinces like Nueva Ecija where there is a large labor surplus, the norm was as low as ₱15); furthermore, 81 percent had work from three to six months only.^{13-a} Presumably, most rural families are among the 4.8 million households estimated to fall below the food threshold. This is more than half (51.18%) of the total number of households in the whole country! The poverty threshold, which takes into account other basic needs, was ₱1,939 a month or ₱64.63 a day in early 1984. Families falling below this numbered 6.6 million.¹⁴

The most number of respondents (42%) in the January 1985 survey of rural women said that total income of their households fell in the ₱700-₱1,000 category. If those who stated earnings ₱1,001-₱1,600 were added, the percentage would rise to 56 percent. The household referred to would fall way below any conceivable threshold, and would tend to support the general observation that many rural families are going hungry. The burden on many rural women, who must collect, produce and/or prepare food, is therefore a lot heavier since they obviously do not have enough means to buy what they need. An aggravating factor resulting from the use of farm chemicals is the dwindling if not disappearing supply of free protein sources like snails and fresh-water fish which used to exist in abundance in their immediate environment. The rural diet, in many places, is now confined to rice, vegetables and/or salt/bagoong fermented shrimp).

Not only poverty but also unemployment and underemployment have increased dramatically over a short span of time. The underemployed, or those already working but wanting additional work, "rose three times from 10.2 to 29.0 percent of the labor force, or grew by 25.5 percent annually during the same period" (1978-83).¹⁵ Given the increasing marginalization of many small farmers due to the skyrocketing costs of farm inputs, the growing landlessness among the rural masses coupled with rising land concentration in the hands of corporate interests and the rural elite, the rapid displacement of many rural workers by machinery and other new technology, and the disastrously low demand for major export crops like sugar and bananas in the world market, there is no doubt that the countryside is now full of people in dire need of jobs.

Many of these people are women.

At this juncture, it may be useful to point out that the proportion of rural women engaged in farming seems to have declined from almost 60 percent in 1974 (54% in 1975) to about 40 percent in 1984.^{15-a} The most plausible reason for this is the increasing loss of jobs, especially for women, in the agricultural sector.

In Rice and Corn Areas

Most women engaged in farming (some 77 percent at the latest count) could be found in the rice and corn areas, where they do much of the transplanting, weeding, fertilization, harvesting and threshing. Their fate, along with their men, hangs on policies and programs brought in from outside and instigated by foreign vested interests represented by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The harmful effects of these policies and programs are by now obvious especially to the rural masses themselves.

For example, the Green Revolution technology purportedly designed to increase agricultural productivity in the rice-growing areas created a huge market for the fertilizers, pesticides, tractors and other machinery being peddled by the transnational corporations based in the United States, Japan and Western Europe. Most of these farm inputs are imported; with the recent series of drastic devaluations of the peso imposed by the IMF, the prices of these inputs skyrocketed far beyond the reach of many farmers.

Foreign interests through the World Bank have insisted on "deregulation" in Philippine agriculture, which means removal of all government subsidies and price controls meant for farmers. Irrigation cost per hectare during the dry season in 1976 was a mere ₱35; today, the figure is ₱650, a phenomenal increase of 1,757%.¹⁶

A NEDA study showed that due to the series of peso devaluations, farmers must pay the equivalent of 4.5 kilos of rice in exchange for one kilo of nitrogen (fertilizer) compared to only 2.5 to 3 kilos for the same product in the early 1980s.^{16-a}

A limited sample of rural women married to peasants with land rights confirmed certain observations about rice farming today:

96 percent said their husbands tilled land they did not own under the leasehold system; 77 percent occupied land whose size falls under the category two hectares of below; 69 percent had access to irrigation, making it possible to harvest twice a year; and 54 percent earned ₱10,000 and below a year from rice farming. Informal interviews with them revealed that the cost of rice production per hectare was a steep ₱5,000; net income per hectare per harvest, as a result, would only amount to ₱1,500-₱2,000. The fact that technological change did not bring prosperity is graphically described by one informant in this manner:

In 1974, irrigation commenced and we began using machinery and new seeds. Yet despite the changes in farming, there seems to be no change in our economic situation. We are as poor as ever. First, because the farm inputs - gasoline, fertilizer, hired labor, etc.-are very expensive. A big portion of the harvest goes to these inputs. Even if there are many ways of planting rice today -- for example, sabog tanim (direct seeding), if one can't sustain this with enough fertilizer, the harvest will not be big. Thus, there are no real changes in our lives. Up to now we still depend on the little that we harvest, as well as the fruits and vegetables we are able to sell from our backyard.

Another peasant woman airs almost the same complaint:

Modern developments in farming brought about great changes in preparations for production. I felt intense hardship in coming up with the needed amounts. There was a steep rise in payment for the new seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, land preparation (this alone increased from ₱200-₱800), hired labor for planting, harvesting, hauling and drying, irrigation, and land rent. The use of tractors and threshers has a big effect on both peasants and workers because these represent a big loss in their incomes. Out of such large costs, the biggest profits go to the capitalists. What the actual producers earn cannot provide them an adequate livelihood ... An additional

problem is the danger of exposure to harmful chemicals used in modern farming.

Farmers strapped by the ever-rising cost of farming are naturally highly indebted and therefore default on their loans acquired from the rural banks. The extent of the problems is shown by the fact that in 1973, there were 800,000 farmer-borrowers under the Masagana 99 rice credit program. Today, only 80,000 such borrowers are in good standing.^{16-b} Many are forced to borrow from non-bank sources (propertied or better-off rural lenders who are accessible) at 40 percent interest to buy the necessary farm inputs whenever the planting season commences. Under the weight of the current crisis, those who could have benefited from land reform just have to give up their dream of owning the land they till because of inability to keep up with the amortization. No wonder that not even 3 percent of the targeted beneficiaries of Operation Land Transfer actually received their emancipation patents. Total land area turned over to the former tenants was a mere 13,690 hectares (as of September, 1983).¹⁷

In contrast, about 195,000 hectares of rice land were released between 1980-82, meaning that many rice farmers were opting out of rice production, finding it unprofitable.¹⁸ Conversion of rice lands to subdivisions, piggeries, or to fields planted to commercial crops less in need of female labor is of course prejudicial to rural women previously engaged in rice production.

Technological changes brought in by the Green Revolution are labor-displacing and have harmful effects on the environment. As one researcher explains:

Making seedbeds, uprooting seedlings, transplanting, weeding have been largely eliminated on well drained and irrigated land because of the interaction of mechanical cultivation, direct-seedling and chemical weedicides. Pesticides cut down free protein sources. Winnowing, then threshing, have been replaced by machines. Labor in field preparation is much reduced by hand tractors.¹⁹

The most adversely affected are the women belonging to house-

holds with no land or insufficient land and who consequently have to work as wage laborers in the fields of others. They are the most numerous. For the more fortunate whose households can afford the new machines, the men are usually the ones in control of the new technology, while the women are relegated to "non-technological work."²⁰

Sugar Turns Sour

It is no exaggeration to say that the Philippine sugar industry, which used to pride itself for being one of the country's largest dollar earners, is now in desperate straits. In fact, it is on the verge of collapse, endangering the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of sugar workers, the women first of all.

There are many factors behind this terrible situation. The world market price of sugar is at an all-time low -- less than four US cents per pound, really rock-bottom when compared to the local cost of production which is about 12 US cents per pound.²¹ Indeed, "a bag of sugar costs less than a bag of sand."²² The world sugar surplus is about 40 percent more than the annual world consumption. Large industrial users of sugar have shifted to substitutes. Worse, attempts to stabilize the world market price through an International Sugar Agreement have been hamstrung by the refusal of some Western countries to join in.²³ The most important factor is the fact that international sugar trading is controlled largely by American importers and a few other foreign traders.²⁴

Expectedly, there is a steep decline in local sugar production. Output for crop year 1984-85 is expected to decrease by 21.3 percent to just 1.81 million metric tons, alongside a drop too in sugar hectarage.²⁵ The prevailing mood of pessimism in sugarlandia, however, has prompted planters to predict as much as a 50 percent fall in sugar production.²⁶

In early 1980, it was estimated that some 580,000 workers were employed in the sugar industry, of whom 70 percent were agricultural workers; 20 percent were industrial workers; and the rest were farm lessees and small owner-cultivators.²⁷ Most of them were concentrated in Negros. Expected to lose their jobs as a consequence of the current crisis are some 150,000 sugar workers. An estimated 70 percent of some 304,500 sugar farm and mill

workers in Negros will be ultimately affected, meaning that they will either be unemployed or underemployed.²⁸

Truly an aggravating factor is displacement by rapid mechanization, a relatively new phenomenon, victimizing primarily women and youth. As described by one researcher:

Operations which require from 8-60 workers under the conventional scheme now require only one operator per machine. Thus the reduction in labor requirement ranges from 87.5 to 98 percent. The most severe displacement has occurred in the weeding operations where as much as 59 workers have been made redundant by the weeder rake. The trash rake and fertilizer applicator have also made redundant from 24 to 39 workers. In the case of the planting machine, labor requirement has been reduced by 70 percent.²⁹

A study done in the early 1980s showed that prior to mechanization, women comprised as much as 33 percent of the labor force in sugar haciendas.³⁰ Women and youngsters together counted for as much as 30 percent of household income,³¹ aside from their traditional role in income-substituting activities such as food-gathering and production for subsistence. In exchange for very low wages, they did the weeding between cane stalks, fertilization, sharpening of cane points and planting them. Employed during some 155 work days during the cultivation period (May to August), "women handle two or three kinds of bladed instruments, squat in the fields and walk through the stalks as they remove the weeds; or how low as they plant the canes."³² For this work, they received (in mid-1984) ₱16.50-₱19.50 per day, which is way below the legal standard of ₱22.33.³³

In many areas, however, this meager income has already become a thing of the past as a result of mechanization. "The tractor furrows, plants, applies fertilizer and covers the planted cane with soil all in one operation. Two workers can do the same operations as some 20 women working without it."³⁴ Women's work is now increasingly "limited to cutting of cane points and planting in between cane stalks."³⁵ The competition for scanty employment is heart-breaking. Every day, during the early morning, the women line up, hoping to be selected by the encargado for even just on

or two hours of work, but often they come home empty-handed.³⁶

Obviously, "women's loss of wage work on the hacienda will mean a loss of income that their households can hardly afford."³⁷ Many have resorted to hawking, domestic service and even prostitution. Since they are not covered by protective Collective Bargaining Agreements due to the fact that their total work days do not amount to 200 the unions (where the "major decisions are still made by men"³⁸) are in no position to prevent or cushion their displacement.

To sum up, the sugar industry is in a real bind. Sugar planters must embark on mechanization in order to make local production more efficient and therefore more competitive under world market conditions. However, even the most highly mechanized sugar farms, like those in Australia, are in danger of collapse as depressed sugar prices show no signs of improving. Meanwhile, Filipino sugar workers already displaced by mechanization have nowhere to go and have become increasingly restive. The ironies of having to rely on a highly unstable world market are now painfully apparent. What used to be the sweetest source of fabulous wealth for the sugar barons has now turned sour.

The Situation in Other Plantations

Comparable data on the situation of rural women in coconut and other plantations are either non-existent or difficult to find. What are available are studies on general trends affecting various agro-industries and their workers, from which may be inferred some implications for women.

The coconut industry is export-oriented and therefore subject to the vicissitudes of the world market. It is important to the overall health of the economy because it is one of the biggest dollar earners. In 1977, it supported some 14 million people by employing some one million farm workers, about half a million tenants and some 50,000 owner-farmers.³⁹ Many women are employed in the gathering and piling nuts, as well as in removing the coconut meat from the shells, on piece-rate basis.

The prices of coconut products fluctuate depending on the conditions in the international market-place. When there is a glut, a situation compounded by the competition posed by alternative products like palm oil, the prices take a nose dive along

with the incomes of the people dependent on the industry. The fact is, "Philippine coconut products do not exercise price leadership in the world fats and oil market; world prices for coconut oil and copra are based on the supply of all major oils and fats (with soybeans taking the lead), a substantial portion of which are produced by advance capitalist nations such as the US, Canada, Australia and several Western European nations."⁴⁰

Local earnings are also dependent on the volume of production, which is subject to adverse weather conditions like the severe drought of 1983 and the typhoons of 1984. Thus, even when the world market price is high, if output is low, the opportunity to earn more is not maximized.

In Mindanao, there are huge pineapple and banana plantations which are either owned by or tied to foreign interests taking advantage primarily of the cheap labor here.

Del Monte, for example, phased out its pineapple production in Hawaii and concentrated on its Philippine subsidiary primarily because of the following reasons: "while Hawaiian plantation workers earn \$2.64 an hour, Del Monte pays its Philippine plantation workers 15 cents an hour. Hawaiian cannery workers get paid \$2.69 an hour compared to the 20 cents an hour Del Monte pay Philippine workers for the same job."^{40-a} The wage differential even today is just as wide, with the legislated minimum wage for Filipino plantation workers set at less than two dollars a day. The cannery workers, many of whom are women, are paid just as poorly when compared to their counterparts abroad.

In the mid-70s, there was a tremendous expansion in banana hectareage and production in Mindanao, catering mostly to the Japanese market. Filipino contract growers took charge of the local plantations but were bound to transnational corporations like Dole, United Brands and Del Monte which controlled credit, transportation and marketing facilities. They made a killing during the boom days, but the bust days have come because the Japanese are tired of Philippine bananas!⁴¹ Affected by the downtrend are the women workers who take care of sorting, washing and packing the fruits for export. Their problems are not only economic; studies have shown the effects of pesticide poisoning among the workers in banana plantations, which in extreme cases lead to abortion and

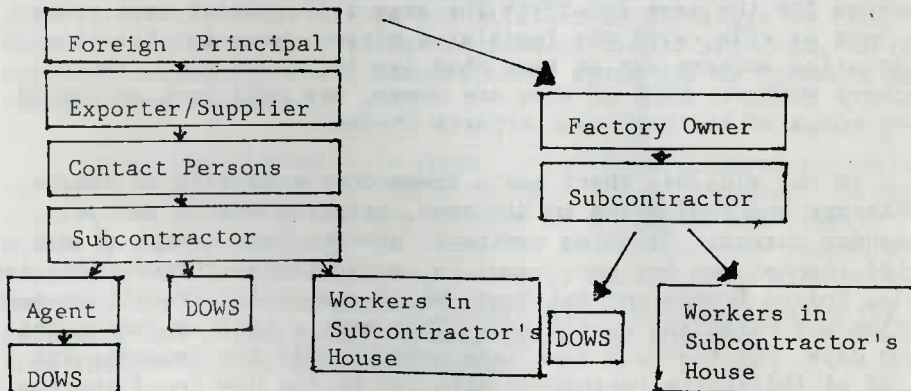
sterilization.

In the northern provinces of Luzon where there are tobacco fields and warehouses, women do a lot of the labor-intensive work; planting, picking the leaves, stringing them up to dry, taking the seeds out, and packing.^{41-a} The tobacco industry in the Philippines, like other sectors, is characterized by a strong foreign presence. This is most obvious in the cigarette manufacturing stage, wherein many companies undertake production under license from transnationals.

Rural Piecework in Garments and Handicrafts

Rural pieceworkers who are at the very bottom of the subcontracting ladder are a much exploited lot. They are found in many areas of the country, with large concentrations in Bulacan, Rizal, Batangas, Laguna, Negros and Cebu. Since all they see are the agents from their areas who distribute the jobs to them, they are hardly conscious of the fact that their labor redounds to the immense profits being raked in by the foreign principals abroad and by the large Manila-based manufacturers-exporters.

For a multi-level subcontracting system involving a rural community, the following pattern (taken from a barrio located in the northeast tip of Bocaue, Bulacan) is a typical example:⁴²



The exporter/supplier, who sells his wares to foreign principals abroad, is usually a factory owner generally based in Metro Manila. Through a contact person, he gets in touch with subcontractors who can handle the work for him and provides them

with the clothing materials and the designs to follow: The subcontractor can buy or rent machines, hire workers directly and make them work in his home. In addition, he can fan out other jobs to domestic outworkers down or ask an agent to do this for him. At peak season (September to December), workers who sew earn about ₱9.00 a day, while those who embroider can get as much as ₱50.00 (Figures are of 1983). However, this may mean working up to 15 hours just to meet the heavy demand. Off season, work load (and therefore income) may drop to one-third its former level or down to zero. A limited survey in January 1985 showed 80% of the sample earning ₱15 and below a day, and only for a few days a week.^{42-a}

The higher the placement in the subcontracting ladder, the bigger the take. The foreign principals, the exporters/suppliers and the big subcontractors extract the most advantages from the system. They can reduce production costs to a minimum, principally through cheaper labor supply and lesser capital requirements. They have maximum flexibility, because they can increase or decrease production depending on fluctuations in demand. When the demand is high, workers can be made to produce more and when low, they can be made to produce less or not at all.

The ones at the lowest rung understandably suffer the most. They are not registered as employees; they do not receive the minimum wage and yet they work very long hours; and they are not entitled to vacation or sick leave, medical and retirement benefits. Worse, they have no job security, essential in times of heavy demand but the first to suffer in case of recession.⁴³

The intensity of exploitation is underscored by the fact that in 1982 Catton sold a baby dress at a US department store for \$15 while the village girl who sewed the dress received even less than ten US cents (50-80 centavos)!⁴⁴ Even in 1985, one can still find rural women sewing and embroidering baby dresses for as little as 70 centavos per piece!

Separate interviews conducted with sewers and embroiderers in the province of Bulacan unearthed the reality that conditions are worsening. For example, two sisters who had been sewing baby dresses for almost 25 years observed that the payment per piece in real terms had declined. In 1981, the predominant figure was 50 centavos (roughly six cents) when in 1962, it was 30 centavos

(roughly eight cents at the exchange rate then), a much bigger sum considering the steady erosion in the value of the peso. The most that a sewer can finish was a dozen baby dresses a day, for which she got paid between ₱6.00 to ₱9.00 (\$0.73 to \$1.10) at 50 to 75 centavos per piece. However, work was available only about two and a half to three weeks a month so total monthly earnings only amounted to ₱102.00 to ₱189.00 (\$12.43 to \$23.05). In 1985, average weekly earnings were placed at only ₱50.00.^{44-a} an extremely small figure considering the more than 100 percent devaluation of the peso since June 1983 and the resultant skyrocketing inflation. From these earnings were subtracted the cost of the thread and the transport going to and from the agent.

Income derived from sewing was thus only supplementary in nature because the main source was still farming. In fact,, when it was planting or harvesting season, the sisters preferred to work in the fields because they earned more -- at the rate of about ₱15 to ₱18 a day (\$1.83 to \$2.20). It is significant to note that as regards the subcontracting ladder, the sisters were aware only of the fact that they were sewing baby dresses for export and that the agent in the next barrio, with whom they had been dealing for almost 20 years, supplied an Indian exporter. They said this agent was not really better of and likewise provided labor because she did the cutting.⁴⁵

A separate interview with a group of embroiderers together with their respective agents revealed many problems and contradictions. These women had given up farm work altogether to concentrate on embroidery. They claimed that conditions had deteriorated instead of improved in the last few years. For example, in 1975, an embroiderer could earn as much as ₱150 (\$21.34) for two to three days' work; in 1981, she was lucky to get ₱70-80 (\$8.54 to \$9.76) a week. In 1975, she was paid about ₱27 (\$3.89) for working on one Maria Clara (an elaborate national costume); in 1981, her labor was worth only ₱13 (\$1.59) and the design was even more intricate!⁴⁶ Today, the problem is even worse; for many embroiderers, there are simply no orders, and therefore no work because of fluctuations in demand.

The export-oriented handicraft industry is another sector which has exhibited phenomenal development in recent years, giving

employment to hundreds of thousands of women workers. Recently renamed "the gifts and housewares sector" and now covering 17 product groupings (housewares, bags and handbags, toys and games, gifts and decorative accessories, china and glasswares, imitation or costume jewelry, lighting and fixtures, linens, Christmas decorations, fashion accessories, stationery items, picture frames, bath items, carpets and floor coverings, fine or precious jewelry, wall coverings and notions), the handicraft industry is expected to hike its earnings to more than \$1 billion yearly by 1987 with implementation of the "Integrated Export Development Strategy" of the Ministry of Trade and Industry.⁴⁷

The Filipino handicraft exporters, whose ranks have understandably multiplied, are at the mercy of their foreign buyers who are concentrated mainly in the United States, and to a lesser extent in the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and Australia. "Since the major demand comes from institutionalized importers-distributors abroad," explained one official source, "the increasing number of exporters has resorted to price-cutting to stay in business, and this terrific competition, played up even more by buyers matching one exporter against another, has caused a startling phenomenon: "although demand is rising, prices are coming down"⁴⁸ In this case, not only the exporters suffer but also the subcontractors and the workers dependent on the industry.

Interviews with an exporter/businessman, a subcontractor and workers in Lucban, Quezon, a town south of Manila famous for its woven buntal hats and other handicrafts, revealed the following relations:

The Manila-based exporter established business ties with foreign buyers, mostly manufacturers/importers based in the United States or Australia, who gave orders followed by letters of credit or through simple cables with or without pre-payments. He scouted for reliable subcontractors (as many as four in one municipality), to whom he provided cash equivalent to 30 percent of the projected production cost. The subcontractors bought the production materials on a weekly basis and fanned them out to semi-skilled and skilled hat weavers who were almost entirely women. The hat weavers took home the materials and wove the hats at their own pace, but the most efficient managed to finish one hat in two-to-three

days. Then they delivered their output to the subcontractors who examined the quality of the work to determine the labor cost. If the hat was well-done, the workers received about ₱17 to ₱18 (\$2.07 to \$2.20); if it was of average quality, then the payment was ₱16 (\$1.95); if it was classified as a "reject", then the equivalent wage was only from ₱15 to ₱16 (\$1.83 to \$1.95). When they delivered the goods to the subcontractors, the workers got a new set of raw materials for take-home work.⁴⁹

Follow-up inquiries, however, underscored the instability of such employment and vulnerability of the handicraft workers to sudden loss of income. In Lucban, Quezon, buntal hat production suffers from periodic slumps, due to low international demand and market competition from similar products produced more efficiently and with higher quality by neighboring countries. The Philippines is at least a decade behind China, Taiwan, and South Korea, according to Leo M. Diapo, Jr., President of the Chamber of Cottage Industries, in 1980. As he explained: "Most of our equipment are primitive. One handicraft worker, for instance, still has to slice and refine bamboo slits using one knife or an improvised machine, while his Taiwanese counterpart uses a machine which can produce 24 high-quality, uniform slits at the push of a button,"⁵⁰

Little Attainment and Opportunity

Adverse socio-economic conditions in the countryside have placed rural women in a more disadvantaged position vis-a-vis their urban counterparts in terms of attainment and opportunity. Census data in 1970 showed that their literacy rate was lower, since 28 percent of them never went to school. From their ranks, only 17 percent finished elementary schooling, and only 7 percent ever entered or completed high school. The 1973 National Demographic Survey revealed that only 2.3 percent of all married women had any vocational training; the percentage was even less (1.1 percent) for married rural women. The median years of schooling of rural Filipinas was 4.6 years, lower than the 6.9 years of urban women. As one source stressed:

Taken together, the proportion of rural women without schooling (28%) or with some elementary education only (44%) totals 72%. As may usually happen, these women may go through their life

with very limited opportunity either for continuing education or to practice very limited skills acquired in school. This implies that while those with some elementary education are counted among the literate, the extent to which this education is functional would be highly questionable.⁵¹

A statement by no less than the former Minister of Education and Culture that 45 percent of Grade VI pupils could not read and write lends even more credence to the above observation.⁵²

Needless to say, the much vaunted increase in the national literacy (from 75 percent in 1970 to 87 percent in 1980) as well as in the female literacy rate (from 77 percent in 1970 to 82 percent in 1980) should not be taken at face value because there is no guarantee that such literacy is functional.

In fact, a recent UNESCO analysis of 1980 NCSO data points out that "the high Philippine literacy rate -- as compared with other developing nations -- fails to mask the fact that 5.8 million Filipinos are unable to read and write, with majority of them rural dwellers." Of this number, 2,950,615 were females, slightly more than the 2,869,618 males.⁵³

Because of their low level of education and training as well as other reasons (e.g., less occupational opportunities, few household conveniences, higher birth rates and more conservative attitudes), rural women are less likely to be employed on a wage basis than urban women. Many of them are classified as unpaid family workers, yet their involvement in farm work is not given due recognition by government whose agricultural programs are geared towards men. Their participation in the cooperative development program is minimal (In 1976, only ten percent of samahang nayon members were women).⁵⁴ They do not share in decision-making as regards farm production, which is usually the prerogative of their husbands, although they may help manage certain farm operations like the hiring and paying of field hands.

Division of Labor within the Home

The low status of rural Filipinas is reinforced in the cultural sphere, where prevailing concepts still support the traditional notion that the home is still the only rightful place for wo-

men. The sex-role differentiation starts from childhood when girls are urged to develop an interest in cooking, sewing, cleaning and other "feminine" preoccupations. In schools, females take home economics while males take practical arts. The effect in later life is that women still do most of the housework. A 1977 study made by the U.P. department of sociology showed that only 35 percent of Filipino husbands help in the household tasks regularly; 61 percent help under special circumstances; and four percent do not help at all.⁵⁵ For rural women in 1980, the finding was they "have a high time allocation/utilization for domestic chores or non-income home production functions, put against a low income-time devoted to on-farm production activities." In some areas, men do share in the housework, specifically in marketing and housecleaning, and shoulder the heavier tasks, such as fetching water, gathering/chopping firewood, gardening, house repair and maintenance. However, females do most of the cooking, preparation of food, laundry, ironing and sewing, and generally spend more time on household chores.⁵⁶

These findings are supported by another study on male/female time allocation for household work (1980). The gist of the study is this: "husbands devote only one-third of their wives' time in housework." Furthermore, "husbands of working wives are shown to devote closer to half (43 to 46%) of their wives' time to housework, compared to the fourth or the fifth (19-26%) that husbands of unemployed wives devote to housework."

Since many rural women are considered unemployed and "not even in the labor force," it may be assumed that they would be included in the latter category. Differentiated results by community showed that in the rural one, married males engaged in household work for only 14.7 hours per week on the average, compared to 50.8 hours on the part of married females. The male role in the rural community was prominent only in two chores: Fetching water, and gathering/chopping firewood. Although relatively many husbands were engaged in cooking, cleaning the house/ and child care, they did so in less than half the time their wives devoted to the same tasks.⁵⁷

Given such a division of labor, how does a rural women spend her day? Some case studies of peasants, agricultural workers, sellers and vendors in the rice and corn areas (Bulacan, Nueva Ecija and Isabela) provide a rough pattern.⁵⁷ The rural woman wakes up

very early -- between 4 to 5:30 a.m. She cooks and eats breakfast, then washes the dishes. Usually, before 7 a.m. she cleans the house/yard, feed the animals, waters the plants, prepares what her husband will bring to the fields (if she herself does not take this to him) and/or what her children will need in school (if they are of school age). From 7-11:30, she herself works (in the fields, in the home sewing, or in the streets vending). From 11:30-12:30, she cooks and eats lunch, then washes the dishes. Laundry time is from 12:30-2:00 p.m., which is followed by work time again (2:00-5:00 p.m.). Five to six p.m. is reserved for feeding the animals and cooking dinner. After eating and washing the dishes, there is a little free time for listening to the radio and family interaction. Bed time is from 8:00-9:00 p.m.

The rural women's double day is indeed very long; her physical burden is very heavy, with hardly any rest during peak season. If she has children of breastfeeding or carrying age, the demands on her are even more strenuous. It is not unusual for her to age before her time.

There seems to be, however, a positive trend. The total average number of children of rural women (with ages 45-49) dramatically declined from 6.4 in 1973 to 3.7 in 1980.⁵⁹ There are many plausible reasons for this: economic constraints and increasing landlessness might have made it extremely difficult for most families to support large numbers of children; the officially-endorsed family planning campaign might have finally made an impact, and/or abortion, already an open secret in the rural areas (where herbal and mechanical methods prescribed by the hilots are resorted to by many mothers) might have become prevalent. Needless to say, fewer children give rural women more time and opportunity to transcend the confines of home and family.

Role Perceptions and Responses

A study on the role of women in rural development had the following observations regarding the prevailing cultural values: "it was almost categorical that the women have to operate around the home ...Almost equally categorical was the reaffirmation of the women's basic role as a wife and mother." One effect of these values was that "The type of programmes the women were involved in were greatly determined by what the agencies had to offer and these

were very traditional in outlook, such as home management technology, nutrition, health and environmental sanitation, mother's class, to name a few." In addition, "Participation of the women in terms of holding leadership positions in mixed organizations for both men and women was very low." ... "Almost everybody wished they had more say in community affairs/activities, implying they were being denied the chance to do so."⁶⁰

There are many governmental and non-governmental agencies working with rural women, including the Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina, the Civic Assembly of Women of the Philippines, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Philippine Business for Social Progress, the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction, the Rural Improvement Clubs and the Kapisanan ng Kababaihan sa Pilipinas. From available literature however, it is possible to discern that many of these organizations concentrate on income-generating, nutrition and other welfare-oriented projects on the community level.

The government sector, through the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) and the movement it spearheads (Bali-katan sa Kaunlaran), is particularly set on propagating the Kilusang Kabuhayan at Kaunlaran among rural women, exhorting them to engage in cottage and light industries "such as the manufacture of garments and toys, bakery and food processing."⁶¹ This dovetails with the subcontracting pattern being encouraged by the World Bank primarily to serve the export market, and therefore foreign needs and interests. It consigns rural women to the role of cheap manpower or marginal entrepreneur.

The economic and cultural subjugation of Filipinas in the countryside generally prevent them from having a concrete awareness of their own reality. More often than not, they will attribute hunger, material hardships and death to fate or the supernatural. Very few are organized in groups that have a clear direction and which they themselves control. Despite the general reluctance of rural women (except for the highly visible elite) to involve themselves in politics "not only because of cultural reasons but also because of high degree of alienation and lack of confidence in their own political efficacy",^{61-a} there seems to be an awakening in some areas. In Mindanao, for example, focused group discussions

involving peasant women unearthed "five basic problems confronting their communities: livelihood, militarization, community problems, entry of big corporations to the countryside and the lack of social services." Their responses to these identified problems were already political in nature. For example, "In answer to increasing militarization, women participate in petitions and demonstrations and follow up detained community and family members."⁶²

In Luzon, the Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina (KBP) distinguishes itself as a non-governmental organization. With a membership of 18,000, mainly rural women, it devotes a lot of time and effort on seminars, study meetings, literacy and other mass campaigns with political content, over and above involvement in community services and projects. Such campaigns include protest actions against the IMF-imposed devaluation, the oil price increases, the Bataan nuclear plant and the US military bases in the Philippines. KBP has also held rallies, festivals, conferences and numerous village meetings explaining the need for peace and disarmament. Consumerism, which can serve as a defense against the reckless profit-making activities of the global firms, is also one area where the KBP is quite active. In particular, it has promoted breastfeeding and campaigned against the use of powdered milk propagated by transnational corporations; it has stressed the importance of herbal medicines as substitutes for expensive drugs marketed by foreign companies.

The primary programmed activity of the KBP is an educational drive aimed at a step-by-step training of rural women, from the level of no particular qualifications to progressively more responsible roles as leaders, trainers and managers in organizational and community affairs as well as in economic projects. Methods employed include role-playing, case studies, reading and writing assignments, skits, audio-visual presentations and speech-making

In all its training programs and mass campaigns, the KBP has extensively used the national language. It has translated a lot of materials originally written in English which would otherwise not be understood by the masses. In this way, it is progressively raising the capability of the rural women, and indirectly, the rural people as a whole.

From Organized Rural Women:

Some Impressions on the Decade

When asked about the impact of the Decade for Women on their lives, respondents belonging to the KBP62-a showed a certain pattern in their answers. In terms of livelihood, 60 percent said conditions did not improve, they were as hard up as before (39 percent) or were even worse off (26 percent). Those who said there were economic improvements (21 percent) frequently cited homes made of more durable material and household appliances acquired on credit during the 1970s when money was still easy to obtain and the crisis was not so acute. Majority complained of skyrocketing prices and the woeful inadequacy of their earnings. Some looked back to better days when there was little money but this could buy more goods. The following is a typical story told by an agricultural worker:

Today, I intensely feel the weight of a hard life. It is not at all like the years when the wage was a low ₱1.50 a day for planting, but this was enough to buy more goods. One salop (ganta) of rice cost 50 centavos to ₱1.00. A bar of soap was just ten centavos, one can of bagoong was just 15 centavos, a box of matches cost three to five centavos, sugar and other necessities were cheap. Today, wages range from ₱15 to ₱20 for working in the fields or laundry service but I feel that is thrice as difficult to stretch meager earnings. For rice alone, we must spend ₱15 a salop, and this does not include the viand yet. I think the capitalists and the businessmen are profiting from our hardships because I see that they are still enjoying a measure of prosperity.

No wonder 80 percent of respondents said their foremost problem today is inadequate family income.

Nevertheless, 71 percent claimed there had been an advancement in the situation of women in the last ten years, citing their own experiences as examples. They said they were able to get involved in women's organizations; they realized the importance of women's participation not only on a national but also on an international level; they acquired knowledge on the situation, rights and

rights, and aspirations of women; they participated in elections, demonstrations and other political activities; and they attained some measure of equality in the home.

Some rural women wrote down the following observations:

Before, women were for the home only, serving their husbands and children. Today, quite a number go out of their homes to involve themselves in the problems of the people. They have become conscious of the fact that women can do a lot in the interest of our country. In their involvement in seminars, there has been a lot of change in their knowledge and awareness.

Some women are beginning to have equality with the men in the home. They are able to have the freedom to make decisions. The decade had a positive effect because women found the voice by which they could be heard and recognized.

Women learned how to struggle against the economic and political crisis. They became aware of the role they have to play as citizens, wives and parents.

If before, women had no say in the community, now they have. They are also able to free themselves from too much domination by the menfolk.

Yet they themselves are the first to admit that a lot more has to be done. Their advancement is hampered by the economic crisis and the resultant need to concentrate their efforts toward ensuring family survival. Some 30 percent also perceived lack of equality in the home as a continuing problem which women must confront.

Some Conclusions and Recommendations

In the 1981 National Conference on Equality, National Independence, and Peace, a resolution on rural women as passed. Its contents deserve repetition:

That the campaign to raise the consciousness of rural women be broadened so they will fully

understand the goals of International Women's Year and the Decade for Women declared by the United Nations, as well, as the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women;

That literacy and other training programs which can help rural women improve their own situation be made available to them;

That equality inside the home should be given greater stress so that men will share in the housework and thus enable women to participate in affairs outside the household;

That rural women should involve themselves in organizations, cooperatives, community work, consumerism, economic and political activities to broaden their perspectives and cultivate their potentials;

That a broad and real land reform be implemented in conjunction with the strengthening of the cooperative movement wherein women will really play a meaningful and equal role!

That rural women should unite among themselves, especially those working in plantations and export-oriented industries, to protect and advance their interests, in cooperation with working women in the cities; and

That rural women should relate and cooperate with other sectors working for equality, development, national independence and peace.⁶³

More specific objectives amplifying the above general thrusts may be derived from an ILO seminar on rural women and development in Asia:

Policies for the modernization and commercialization of agriculture must recognize the actual role of rural women, especially those of poor households, as producers, and seek to strengthen and support that role.

There should be explicit mention of women as

a target group in all agricultural development programmes (including credit, training, irrigation, reforestation, small farmer programmes, livestock improvement, etc.) and this should be reflected in the design and activities of the programmes.

Priority should be given to the development and provision of infrastructure service in rural areas such as accessible water, fuel, housing, primary health care and child care centres as well as extension services for non-agricultural activities (such as fisheries and sericulture), for poor communities, under their own control. Rural women must participate in the management of common facilities which are set up to benefit them.

Priority should also be given to the creation of remunerative employment opportunities for poor women in rural areas, with consideration to increasing the regularity of employment, while ensuring that women workers receive equal pay for work of equal value, and that the economic returns to women's work accrue directly to them.

Effective measures, laws and controls should be developed to assure that women in rural areas working in home-based industries under the putting-out system obtain minimum wage earnings and social benefits.

The growing phenomenon of young rural women as a source of cheap and unorganized labour being drawn into production, particularly for export, by national and multinational companies, must be re-examined, with a view to ensuring that they obtain at least the minimum wage, fair terms and conditions of work, social benefits, and the right to organize in associations of their own choice.

Trade unions and other rural workers' organizations, including co-operatives, should contain

special women's units or wings at all levels to ensure that the issues of particular interests to women workers are given prominence and priority, along with the interests which are common to women and men.

Categories of workers (such as small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, artisans, fisherfolk, etc) by sex should be represented at all levels in their organizations, trade unions, co-operatives and local self-governing bodies according to their proportion in the workforce.

Employers' and workers' organizations and governments should encourage and facilitate the development of rural industries based on local materials and skills, and aimed to meet local needs.⁶⁴

These general thrusts and specific objectives are no doubt meritorious. However, their attainment presumes certain changes in power structures and relations which determine policy directions on both the rural and national levels. This is essentially a political question which depends on the strength of the popular forces for both national independence and social justice. It is imperative that rural Filipinas look at their problems in to the conditions of the larger society and strive to remove the fetters which hinder not only their own development as women but also that of their sector and country as a whole. Otherwise, they may be caught up in palliative socio-civic and income-generating projects which barely scratch the surface of the fundamental reality of mass poverty and deprivation, merely the results of a patently inequitable social order dominated by foreign corporations and a few wealthy Filipinos.

Rural women should work hard, together with others, to secure not only for their children but also for their people, the most fundamental of human rights: the right to life, food, clothing, shelter, education, health and equal opportunity. Improving the quality of life, meeting the basic needs of all through social awareness and democratic participation -- this is the real meaning of development and this is the only sense by which the hundreds of millions of rural women all over the world, including the 16 million Filipinas in the Philippine countryside, can understand the term.

FOOTNOTES

1. Philippine Statistical Yearbook 1984, Table II - Population by Age Group and Sex by Region, Urban-Rural, 1980, pp.38-39.
2. NCSO (National Census and Statistics Office) Special Release (June 8, 1984), "Labor Force in the Philippines: First Quarter 1984," Table 1, Household Population 15 Years Old and Over by Employment Status Based on Reference Quarter by Province, Urban and Rural, First Quarter, 1984.
3. Virginia Miralao, "Women in the Economy", Diliman Review, 33,3-4 (May-August 1984) p. 61 A more generalized discussion on the same topic may be found in Martha F. Loutfi, Rural Women - Unequal Partners in Development(Geneva: International Labor Office, 1980).
4. NCSO Special Release, *op. cit.*
5. National Sample Survey of Households Bulletin, Series No. 46 (August 1975), Table VI-2 Rural Household Population 15 Years Old and Over, by Employment Status and Sex. August 1975, cited in Isabel Rojas-Aleta, et al, A Profile of Filipino Women (Manila: Philippine Business for Social Progress, 1977) p. 206.
6. NCSO Special Release (June 8, 1984), Table II, Household Population 15 Years Old and Over by Employment Status, By Sex, by Industry and by Region, First Quarter 1984.
7. Aleta. et al., *op. cit.*, p. 207.
8. See Magdalena Leon, "Measuring women's work: methodological and conceptual issues in Latin America," IDS (Sussex) Bulletin, 15, 1 (January 1984) pp. 12-17. See also Alejandro N. Herrin, "Economic Activities of Married Women in the Philippines: Conceptual and Measurement Issues," Philippine Social Science Council Seminar Workshop on Development Planning and the Role and Status of Women in the Philippines, 10-11 September 1981.
- 8a. Rural development and women in Asia, proceedings and conclusions of the ILO Tripartite Asian Regional Seminar, Maballeshwar, Maharashtra, India, 6-11 April 1981, p. 23.
- 8b. This limited survey had a sample of 100 rural women from the provinces of Nueva Ecija, Laguna, Pampanga, Bulacan, Isabela, Rizal, and Bataan, and included respondents engaged in farming, agricultural wage work (e.g. planting, harvesting) vending, sewing, crocheting and embroidery, in the main. The questionnaires were administered by leaders of an organization or rural women, the Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina (Association of the New Filipina).
9. US Agency for International Development Field Mission,

Philippines: Country Development Strategy FY 1982 (January 1980), Annex A, pp.1-3.

10. Lorna Makil and Patricia Fermin, Identifying the Landless Rural Workers: A Documentary Survey, Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1978, p. 50.

11. Emmanuel S. de Dios, ed., An Analysis of the Philippine Economic Crisis - A Workshop Report (University of the Philippines Press, June 1984) p. 20

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid, p. 25

13a. This is based on the answers of 62 respondents classified as agricultural workers (may also be wives of peasants with tenuous rights) to a questionnaire administered by the Association of the New Filipina.

14. NASSA News (July 1984), p. 21, citing Business Day (May 25, 1984) and NCSO income statistics.

15. De Dios, op.cit., p. 22

15a. NCSO Special Release (June 8, 1984) Table II, see note 6; Aleta et al, p. 207, see note 5.

16. Rene E. Ofreneo, "Capitalist Transformations in the Philippines", paper read at the 6th National Conference on Local, National History, December 14-22, 1984, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

16a. "1984 difficult year for fertilizer industry," Business Day (March 14, 1985).

16b. There were 58 respondents classified as rural women married to peasants with land rights in the January 1985 survey.

16c. Carol E. Espiritu, "Peso devaluation triggers rice boom crash in 1984," Bulletin Today, January 7, 1985).

17. Ofreneo, op. cit., p. 3

18. Ibid, p. 10

19. Brian Fegan, "Land Reform and Technical Change in Central Luzon: The Rice Industry Under Martial Law," Philippine Sociological Review, 3, 1 & 2 (January-June 1983) p. 83, See Also Emmanuel S. Santiago, Women in Agriculture: A Social Accounting of Female Workshare, Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University (January 1980) p. 28.

20. Some general conclusions along this line may be found in Rural development and women in Asia, proceedings and conclusions of the ILO Tripartite Asian Regional Seminar, Mabaleshwar, Maharashtra, India, 6-11 April 1981, specifically in the paper of

Govind Kolkar, "The Impact of the Green Revolution on Women's Work Participation and Sex Roles," p. 107.

21. Chito Parazo, "Mass layoffs feared in Negros Occ.," Bulletin Today (February 22, 1985) p. 1

22. Joe Joseph, "Sugar faces bitter future," Business Day (January 15, 1985).

23. Vicente B. Foz, "the rise and fall of sugar industry." Bulletin Today (February 22, 1985).

24. LUSSA Research Staff, Countryside Report Focusing on Five Major Industries: Rice, Coconut, Sugar, Fishing and Abaca (1982) pp. 131-132.

25. "Philsucom confirms output fall," Bulletin Today (December 13, 1984).

26. "Look at this Island Now," A Special Report, Veritas (January 27, 1985).

27. LUSSA Research Staff, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

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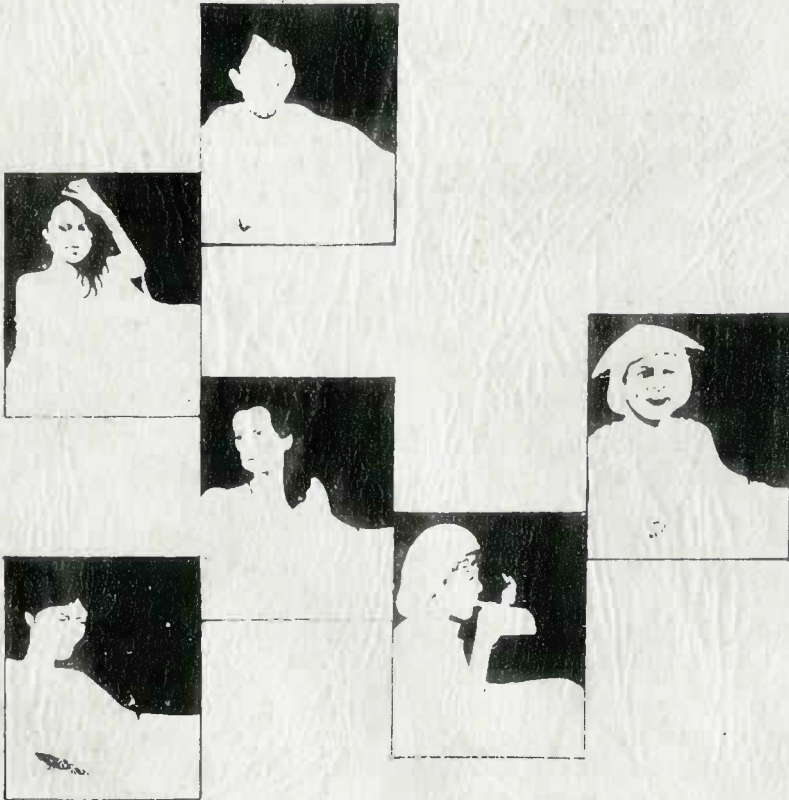
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