

Philippine Implementation of the FWCW Platform for Action

ONE YEAR AFTER BEIJING



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE ROLE OF FILIPINO WOMEN

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INTRODUCTION

It was a historic event, and a milestone for women. For a little less than two weeks in September, the world's attention was focused on the realities and dreams of half of humanity's population, its women.

The occasion was the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. It was undoubtedly the largest global summit to date, with 17,000 participants, including 6,000 delegates from 189 member States of the United Nations, over 4,000 representatives of accredited non-government organizations, a host of international civil servants, and about 4,000 media representatives. The parallel NGO Forum had even more participants, some 30,000 women advocates and activists from all over the world.

But more than the numbers, the conference was significant for bringing the concerns and issues of women out front. The NGO Forum got it right when it called on everybody to "Look at the world through women's eyes." And having done just that, it was realized that over 20 years after the declaration of the International Women's Year in 1975, and the subsequent decade of women from 1975 to 1985, there is no country yet in the world where women and men enjoy complete equality.

This is also the revelation of the *1995 Human Development Report* produced by the UN Development Program. While significant advances have been made, women's concerns are still not a priority for many societies. Countless of them face discrimination, many of them are disadvantaged and powerless to do something to improve their lives. Fully 70 percent of them constitute the world's poor. Experience has shown that poor women are reliable borrowers, yet they lack access to credit. Their unpaid work totals US\$11 trillion annually, a staggering amount unaccounted for because so much of women's work is not part of the national system of accounts of governments. Violence against women continues to destroy women's lives but too few women are in positions of power and authority to do something about it.

The FWCW Platform for Action



The conference was clear on what it wants for women for the next 10 years or so -- actions for equality, development and peace. In spite of the diversities in culture, aspirations, politics, and national priorities, the conference was able to forge consensus among countries to adopt the Platform for Action, a framework to put gender equality to the top of global interest.

Then UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Gali described the Platform for Action as “a powerful agenda for the empowerment of women.” It integrates the gender perspectives in all policies and programs and sets concrete measures to address the critical areas of concern confronting women worldwide. In approving it, the women agenda up to the early years of the next century have been firmly set in place. Governments also adopted the Beijing Declaration, affirming the principles that would govern future actions and strategies for women.

The Beijing conference happened in a very critical time, when the international community is confronted with complex issues arising from a New World Order. Compared with it, the past three conferences happened when the world was at the height of the Cold War. Nations were divided at that time into two main blocs, capitalism and socialism, so that issues were dictated by the period’s political and economic realities. Beijing, however, was convened in the context of a multipolar world. Alliances had shifted according to national or regional interests so that a country was not assured of automatic support for its issues even among fellow members of the bloc to which it belonged. Beijing went beyond political and economic concerns, but dared to deal with social, cultural and family matters, issues that were once considered private and were not brought out into the open, issues that were close to hearts and hearths.

12 Critical Areas of Concern

- **Women and poverty**
- **Education and training of women**
- **Women and health**
- **Violence against women**
- **Women and armed conflict**
- **Women and the economy**
- **Women and power and decision making**
- **Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**
- **Human rights of women**
- **Women and the media**
- **Women and the environment**
- **The girl child**

The Beijing summit broke new ground for women. It asserted once and for all that women's rights are human rights. Equality in all spheres of society, once a dim vision, is now an attainable goal for which nations must strive. All forms of violence against women, once a subject of private concern, now become a matter of public policy and international concern. Women's unremunerated work at the home, in the workplace, and in communities has been acknowledged and the development of methodologies for its inclusion in national accounts is being encouraged. For the first time, the rights of the girl child are fully recognized, and their survival, protection and development become a global issue.

Balancing interests in Beijing: the Philippine experience

Like other countries with a vibrant and dynamic women's movement, the Philippines embarked on its journey for Beijing with serious preparation and great expectations. The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, the country's national machinery for the advancement of women, coordinated this effort.

The Philippine delegation was headed by Senate President Pro Tempore Leticia Ramos-Shahani and co-chaired by Secretary Lina Laigo of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Aside from officials from the national government and legislators from both Houses of Congress, representatives from women NGOs and groups were also part of the delegation.

Sen. Shahani was the first to speak in the plenary session on 5 September, calling on delegates to make Beijing a conference of commitments. "We are gathered here to participate in a conference that should go beyond empty rhetoric," the senator urged, "a conference of commitments where delegates have their feet firmly planted on the ground yet have their eyes sharply focused on the beckoning stars - a global consensus which could empower women to widen their choices throughout the various stages of their lives."

The Philippines also had the added responsibility of chairing the Group of 77, a bloc of 132 developing countries plus China. It had the dual and complicated task of building consensus among G-77 members, a difficult task considering the diverse cultural, political, social and economic background and interests of member countries, and representing the bloc in negotiations with other regional groupings.

In assessing the results of the conference, there were those who fell into the trap of seeing it as a point of contention between two opposing forces in society: the liberals, who advocated for fundamental changes in traditional values and structures, and the conservatives, who sought to preserve these same traditional values and structures. The Philippine delegation, however, did not regard itself as

partisan to either of the two forces. There were those who thought that the Philippines was quite slow in advancing women's interests. There were also those who thought that it was going too fast. The reality may be somewhere in between. The Philippine delegation tried to find the right balance in the debates on women's advancement -- taking into consideration both the advancement of Filipino women in society on one hand, and the Filipinos' strong foundation of and adherence to traditional values and culture.

Such a stand was helpful, for example, in introducing language in the FWCW Platform for Action, that was subsequently approved, balancing parental responsibility with the right of an adolescent to information and services regarding her or his sexuality, with the best interest of the child as the primary consideration. Another instance where the Philippines did another balancing act was in the drafting of the paragraph that recognizes women's critical role in the family, yet calls on parents, both women and men, to contribute their equal share in fulfilling family responsibilities. The Philippine delegation also made it possible for the inclusion of text earlier approved in Copenhagen during the World Summit on Social Development that balanced the concern of Western countries for human rights and the issues of social development and social justice advocated by developing countries.

The gains for Filipino women

The country's participation in Beijing resulted in significant gains for Filipino women. Before going to the Chinese capital, the Philippine delegation, through a series of consultations and discussions with various sectors, identified three priority concerns of the country: the status of rural women, protection for women migrants, especially women migrant workers, and the elimination of trafficking in women and children. The first concern is inextricably linked with the next two: it is often rural women who, because of their poverty and lack of opportunities in life, become migrants who risk going to foreign lands for jobs and who become victims of trafficking.

The Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that most women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty and it is particularly acute for rural women. It identifies the major causes for this as absence of economic opportunities, lack of access to economic resources such as land, credit and technology, lack of access to education and support services, and their minimal participation in decision making processes. Strategies within the framework of people-oriented and sustainable development are presented by the Platform to enable women to overcome poverty and to reduce gender inequality. Among actions agreed by governments are to mobilize new and additional resources, including credit, conduct gender analysis of the impact of policies, and reallocate public expenditure to address basic social, educational and health needs of women.

As the G-77 chair, the Philippines led the negotiations for the inclusion of text in the Platform that would enable developing countries to get support from other countries and international agencies as they combat poverty. The approved text includes a section on paragraph 5 that calls for the "adequate mobilization of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available mechanisms...." Another section is on paragraph 59(c) urging the world community to "find effective development-oriented and doable solutions to the external debt problems...and invite the international financial institutions to examine innovative approaches to assist low-income countries with a high proportion of multilateral debt, with a view to alleviating their debt burdens."

Migrant women also figure significantly in four of the 12 areas of concern of the Beijing Platform: the sections on poverty, violence against women, economic opportunities, and human rights. In the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies of 1985, references were made to "women migrants" since the issue of "women migrant workers" did not yet acquire status as a major international problem. The Beijing Platform moves one step forward by recognizing women migrant workers as among the disadvantaged groups of women. In fact, whenever reference is made to women migrants, the phrase "including women migrant workers" is added to it. The Platform has a specific paragraph that could serve as basis in advocating for the rights of women migrant workers. This is paragraph 58(k) that asks governments to "ensure the full realization of the human rights of all women migrants, including

women migrant workers, and their protection against violence and exploitation; (and) introduce measures for the empowerment of documented migrant women through greater recognition of their skills, foreign education and credentials, and facilitate their full integration into the labor force.”

The Beijing Platform also addresses the country’s concern on the elimination of trafficking in women and children. It calls on countries to ratify and enforce international conventions against trafficking, enact legislation to protect the rights of women and children, and work for the enforcement of stringent penalties on traffickers, among others. Rehabilitation of victims and training on humanitarian and human rights laws of officials dealing with victims must also be priority efforts.

One of the major concerns of the Platform that has a significant impact on Filipino women is women’s health and reproductive rights. It upholds women’s rights of access to affordable health care, including reproductive health services, in all stages of their life cycle. Their reproductive health and sexual rights, as agreed earlier in Cairo during the International Conference on Population and Development, are also safeguarded with the approval of the following paragraph: “The human rights of women include their rights to have control over and to decide freely and responsibly in all matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.”

The Platform for Action already achieved immediate gains for Filipino women. It was also able to advance the Philippine agenda in the conference by addressing the country’s priority issues. But this is only one side of the coin. Aside from the gains, there is also the matter of transforming the country’s commitments in Beijing into concrete, specific actions that would make a difference in the lives of Filipino women.



ACTIONS FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

The commitments made by the UN member States in Beijing has been described as a "bridge between the Platform for Action and full implementation of national plans of action." Under the bridge, however, is a deep abyss - the abyss of inaction where countries face the danger of falling, and with it the dreams and hopes of millions of women. The national plans of action, reflecting the aspirations, realities and priorities of respective countries, would ensure that this danger would not happen.

In the Philippines, the national plan of action is the effort to carry out the commitments made by the country in Beijing. There are actually two sets of these commitments. One is a set of 14 specific actions falling under three categories: actions to strengthen government structures and mechanisms to implement the Beijing Platform, actions to ensure resources for it, and actions on specific issues having serious impact on Filipino women. The second one are actions addressing the Platform's 12 areas of concern.

14 Specific Actions to Implement the Country's Commitments in Beijing

- **Actions to strengthen government structures and mechanisms**
 - Adoption of the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development, 1995-2025
 - Integration of its implementation in the key result areas of agency heads

- **Actions to ensure resources for the Platform for Action's implementation**
 - Inclusion of the Women's Budget Statement in the national budget
 - Allocation of at least 20 percent of the national budget to social programs and services

- **Actions on specific issues in the Platform for Action**
 - Availability of credit facilities for rural women
 - Negotiation of bilateral agreements with receiving countries to protect the rights of women migrant workers
 - Legislation of more stringent laws against trafficking, illegal recruitment and undocumented migration and laws shifting criminal liability from the prostituted women to their pimps and procurers
 - Setting up of support services for women migrant workers, especially victims of trafficking
 - Access to health services addressing the various stages of the life cycle of all women
 - Affirmation of couples' reproductive rights
 - Rejection of abortion as a family planning method
 - Increase in the Philippines' yearly contribution to UNIFEM from a little less than \$600 to \$5,000
 - Technical assistance to neighboring countries in the field of women's advancement
 - Support to government and civil society cooperation

Right after Beijing, the government got into the serious business of implementing these actions. One year later, there are already initial outcomes of what have been accomplished so far.

Strengthening government structures and mechanisms

Governments are a major stakeholder of the Platform for Action, what with the many initiatives and measures that it is urging governments to do. For this purpose, the very nature of governments, their structures and mechanisms, must respond to the concerns of women.

It was no coincidence that while the country was in the midst of discussions and negotiations in Beijing, the President back home signed Executive Order 273 approving the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD), 1995-2025. The Philippine delegation presented the PPGD to the women summit as the main mechanism that would implement the Platform for Action.

The PPGD's Vision of Development

Women have a positive self-concept, are free from gender stereotypes and are able to achieve their full human potential.

Women's rights are respected as human rights. Basic needs are affordable and accessible to all.

There is gender equality and equity where women and men participate in and benefit equally from development processes and their outcomes, and where 40 to 60 percent representation of either women or men in any sector or area is the prevailing norm.

The legal system affords women and men full protection of the law and guarantees equal rights between them.

Women are active participants in sustainable development, in the care of the environment and in the country's economy.

PPGD Chapters

Human Development

Education and training
Women's health
Urban development and housing
Social welfare and development
Media
Arts and culture
Justice and peace and order
Labor and employment

Economic and Industrial Development

Agriculture
Natural resources and environment
Agrarian reform
Trade, industry and tourism
Infrastructure and technology support

Special Concerns

Migration
Prostitution
Violence against women
Family
Indigenous cultural communities and ancestral domain
Peace
Politics and governance

Plan Implementation

The Plan was a product of extensive consultations, debates and dialogs among government, nongovernment organizations and women's groups, and members of academe. It looks at the situation of Filipino women and how it figures in the overall development goals of the country as spelled out by the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan. Hence, it follows the MTPDP's structure. Its main chapters cover human development, economic and industrial development and the special concern sectors. Another chapter spells out the strategies and measures that government agencies could carry out to implement the Plan.

Each chapter of the PPGD starts with the present situation of the women in a specific sector and their needs and concerns that have to be addressed. Goals and objectives for the sector are presented, which are then translated into specific policies and strategies. Finally, programs are identified that could be implemented by the agencies.

The Plan also makes it possible for gender and development (GAD), a priority concern of President Ramos' administration, to be integrated as a major consideration when agencies plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their work programs. Related to this, and an added boost for the FWCW Platform's implementation, would be to include it in the Key Result Areas (KRAs) of all agency heads. The KRAs form the agency heads' performance contract with the President so that including

the Platform in their KRAs make the agency heads personally accountable to its implementation in their respective sectors.

Government agencies recently assessed how GAD is being mainstreamed in their work plans and programs. At the same time, they were also able to review how the FWCW Platform is being implemented through the PPGD.

For this effort, the agencies together with the NCRFW developed a framework that looks at the mainstreaming process as a continuum where actions progress across four stages. These stages are awareness of GAD, installing mechanisms for it, applying it in the agency's work plans and priorities, and enhancing the agency's commitment to it.

Twenty-four national agencies reviewed their respective programs, activities and projects to advance GAD. They then tried to situate where their initiatives are in the gender mainstreaming continuum. Of the 24, four were able to reach stage three, another four the second stage, while the rest were still on stage one.

Ensuring resources for the implementation of the FWCW Platform for Action

A Adequate resources, specifically money to carry out and sustain the actions, have to be available to support the Platform's implementation. In 1995, the General Appropriations Act included a Women's Budget Statement to allocate funds in the national budget for programs, activities and projects benefiting women. For 1996, the GAD budget directed all government offices to set aside five percent of their annual budget for this. As earmarked by 13 line departments and two attached agencies, the budget totaled P1.57 billion. In 1997, the initial allocation of nine agencies amounted to P4.5 billion. The Department of Health posted the highest

GAD budget in 1996 with P548.6 million, followed closely by the Department of Social Welfare and Development with P511.7 billion.

Aside from the GAD budget, government has also committed to set aside at least 20 percent of the national budget to social programs and services. This initiative is another benefit for women since social programs and activities are central to their everyday lives and concerns. Already, 31 percent of the 1996 national budget are allocated for social programs and services such as education, health, housing, and welfare and employment.

The Department of Budget and Management has committed to monitor how the GAD budget is spent by agencies as well as ensure that gender concerns would be a consideration of government in its budgeting system.

Priority actions on specific issues of Filipino women

Because Beijing was a conference of commitments, the Philippine delegation pledged its share of initiatives aimed to respond to issues urgently affecting Filipino women as well as contribute to the collective effort of advancing women's interests. These actions are implemented in partnership with civil society, especially women NGOs and groups. Government has always supported strong collaboration with civil society so that it has involved them in making decisions and policies for the country.

If there is one factor that adversely limits women from realizing their potentials, it is poverty. Rural women are especially disadvantaged. To turn the tide for them, credit facilities are made available to help them improve their lives.

The government also positioned women's concerns at the heart of its Social Reform Agenda, issuing a policy that it will pursue a gender responsive approach to the alleviation of poverty. The NCRFW was made a member of the Social Reform Council and its technical working groups even as women's representation, through two staunch feminists who were former Commissioners of NCRFW, has already been institutionalized.

Women migrant workers are another disadvantaged group. Women continue to dominate the country's labor export. In 1994, 60 percent of deployed overseas Filipino workers are women. This situation reflects women's growing contribution to family survival as income earners, and not just as supplementary earners to men.

Most of them are employed as service workers such as entertainers and domestic helpers. The very nature of their jobs, where their wages are generally lower than the other occupations, make them vulnerable to abuses and exploitation. There are also cases where the legitimate process of migration has been circumvented by trafficking in Filipino workers. Over the years, government has to deal with many cases of trafficking of its nationals, a significant number of whom are women who become victims of sexual exploitation.

Overseas Filipino workers are referred to as the country's modern day heroes. They risk the uncertainties and dangers of working abroad to give their families a secure future, and in the process, contribute greatly to the country's economy. The Philippine government needs to negotiate - and negotiate fast - to forge bilateral agreements with receiving countries to protect the rights and welfare of Filipino workers, including women migrant workers. Its embassies and consular missions abroad continue to lobby for an international conference on migration and development, with an offer to host it, and urge countries to sign the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families. As a result of this active role in advancing the interests of migrant workers, the country hosted the UN Expert Group Meeting on Violence against Women Migrant Workers, with participants from both sending and receiving countries. The experts came up with recommendations addressing the plight of women migrant workers that were submitted to the 51st General Assembly meeting of the UN.

Government has set in place initiatives and measures that would respond to the needs and problems experienced by overseas Filipino workers. It adopted the Magna Carta for Migrant Workers, providing, among others, assistance and services to overseas Filipino workers. Some of them are the following: setting up of a Replacement and Monitoring Center that would develop livelihood programs for returning workers; installing a Migrant Workers and Other Overseas Filipino Resource Center that extends legal counseling, welfare assistance, human resource development, and coordinates programs to promote social integration and registration of undocumented workers. Another significant initiative is the setting up of support services for victims of trafficking to help them recover from their trauma and ease their eventual reintegration in society.

Health and population is yet one area of concern for Filipino women. Health services addressing the various stages of women's life cycle are being set up so women could avail them. This includes family planning services to help couples make free and informed choices on matters regarding their fertility. The couples' reproductive rights are also upheld so that they could decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children, and have the information and means to do so. Every child, therefore, of couples who practice this is a wanted child who is assured of proper care and nurturance from the parents. Government also rejects abortion as a family planning method. Abortion is considered a public health issue that society must address, mainly because some women opt to undertake it, and risk their health and their lives in the process.

Aside from the various services for women, legislation could also promote women's welfare. Bills have been submitted calling for more stringent measures against trafficking, illegal recruitment and undocumented migration, as well as those that would shift criminal responsibility from the prostituted women to their pimps and procurers. Congress, however, has yet to pass these bills.


In terms of collective efforts for women, the country will continue to provide technical assistance and host study tours on gender mainstreaming to its neighbors in Asia and the Pacific. It also supports other countries, through the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Women's Program, strengthen their strategies in gender mainstreaming. The country has also increased its yearly contribution to the UN Fund for Women from a little less than \$600 to \$5,000.

Actions on the Platform's 12 areas of concern

The Platform for Action identified 12 areas of concern that are critical to improve women's lives and the strategies and measures that the world community must do to address them. It seeks to remove remaining obstacles to women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life, protect women's human rights, and integrate women's concerns in all aspects of sustainable development.

The Philippines is implementing its own set of priority measures addressing the concerns of the Platform. One year after Beijing, visible gains have been achieved and gaps have been recognized in their implementation. In this regard, they affirm what government is doing right and what it still has to work on so that the spirit and intent of the Platform for Action could make a difference in the lives of Filipino women.

Women and poverty



Among the 12 areas of concern, government focus is greater on programs to fight poverty, and increasing women's participation in them, including women from indigenous communities. This is not surprising since the flagship program of this administration is the Social Reform Agenda (SRA), designed mostly to help the basic sectors and those from the so-called SRA priority areas to free themselves from the crippling effects of poverty. There is also an effort to incorporate the gender perspective in carrying out the SRA. Initiatives formed to alleviate poverty include livelihood projects, credit facilities, and marketing and training assistance so that poor women can have access to capital and resources, and ultimately realize savings, that could help them avail of economic opportunities.

Actions on Women and Poverty

- Adopted the Social Reform Agenda for poverty alleviation
 - Advocated for the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program and the Urban Development and Housing Act to enable poor households, including those headed by women, to own properties
 - Promoted community-based income-generating activities for women
 - Formulated adjustment measures for agriculture workers, including women farmers and fisherfolk, to cushion the adverse impact of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade
 - Allocated interest-free credit for livelihood projects through the Self-Employment Assistance Program for Women
 - Created support mechanisms to enable women to address problems on water and sanitation through the First Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project
- Assisted women in the informal sector through the implementation of Women Workers Employment and Entrepreneurship Program

While there are a number of initiatives addressing poverty, government still has to assess their impact on the lives of poor women and to determine whether they are able to enhance women's economic empowerment. Relevant actions advocated by the Platform must also be implemented in indigenous communities and SRA priority provinces, cities and towns. Concrete actions are needed to reflect the following objectives of the FWCW Platform: review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty; revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources; and develop gender based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty.

- Assured continuing economic opportunities for returning overseas workers through the *Kabuhayan 2000*
- Influenced national policies on women in the informal sector through a policy paper on homeworkers and a study on the migration of women workers and its psychosocial impact to families
- Assisted some 80,000 small and medium-scale women entrepreneurs through the *Tulong sa Tao para sa Kababaihan* project of the Department of Trade and Industry
- Provided skills training for employment to some 10,000 marginalized and disadvantaged women
- Improved skills and capabilities of women for entrepreneurship and livelihood through home-based enterprises through the training program of the Cottage Industry Technology Center
- Implemented *Tulay 2000* which provides vocational training and employment for women with disabilities
- Provided seed capital to some 82,000 mothers for income-generating projects through the Credit Assistance for Livelihood program of the Philippine Plan of Action for Nutrition

Education and training of women

Education is one area in Philippine society where women and men enjoy almost equal status. In 1994, literacy rates among Filipinos stood at 94 percent for men and 93.2 percent for women. Slightly more boys entered elementary grades, 50.4 percent as compared with 49.6 percent for the girls, and went on to high school.

But more women, 50.6 percent as against 49.4 percent of the men, went to college and earned academic degrees. In 1989, more women were in postgraduate studies at 60.3 percent.

The FWCW Platform's concerns in terms of education are thus generally supported by government actions. The same goes with training, where women are participants of training on livelihood skills, integration of gender concerns in training module for farm systems, nontraditional jobs for women, gender skills for government officials and workers, among others.

Illiteracy, however, remains a problem, mainly for those who live in far-flung areas and those

Actions on education and training for women

- Guaranteed free education up to the secondary level
- Awarded scholarship and financial support to deserving but poor students
- Set up child minding centers in the province of Ifugao so older children, mostly school-aged girls who take care of younger siblings, can attend school
- Adopted the Female Functional Literacy Program in the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Ifugao, home to significant numbers of indigenous communities. The project aimed to reduce the wide gender gap in literacy rates in the 6 most depressed provinces of the country. It involved interagency collaboration in training and development of materials based on the needs of the students and their cultural norms and practices
- Expanded alternative non-formal education systems for indigenous communities such as the *Magbasa Kita* that teaches women and girls and parents of working children to read

who cannot afford to go to school. This is a challenge for government to spend more resources and expand its programs, especially to the SRA priority areas, particularly the indigenous communities. Reforms are also needed to make education less sexist in its orientation. A present undertaking is the review of textbooks and school

- Reviewed continuously textbooks and instructional materials and teaching methods for gender biases and stereotyping
- Continued accepting women to the Philippine Military Academy
- Formed linkages with the Women's Studies Association of the Philippines, an NGO of 50 school members and over 300 teacher advocates all over the country, that engaged in teacher training and curriculum development in women's studies

Government actions on women and education

- Instituted affirmative action policy in the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority so that women can enrol in industrial courses traditionally dominated by men
- Provided women with vocational training in nontraditional trades through the National Vocational Training and Development Center for Women

curricula to weed out stereo-typical references to gender relations and expectations. The mindset and consciousness of teachers and academic mentors, and even parents, have to be transformed to enable them to fully appreciate and accept the principle of gender equality. There is also the issue of gender tracking, where certain fields of study have either more women students, or more men students. Women outnumber men in education and the health sciences, but men dominate in engineering courses and law. More men also attend the training programs of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority for executives, managers and supervisors. More women, on the other hand, graduate from programs for professionals, clerical personnel and services and sales workers.

Women and health

Data from the Department of Health report that the overall health situation of Filipinos is improving. Life expectancy has increased from 62 years in 1990 to 63 years in 1992 for males, and from 66 years to 68 years during the same period for females. Infant mortality rate has decreased from 59 to 57 per 1,000 livebirths from 1985 to 1990, with female infants tending to survive better than male infants. Maternal mortality rate has also gone down - from 10 per 10,000 livebirths in 1985 to eight per 10,000 livebirths in 1990.

As in education, government's program on health generally affirms the Platform's strategies. This consists of health, nutrition, and population services, training, making health infrastructure available, and information dissemination on women's health in various stages of their life cycle. The DOH is pursuing a Women's Health

Actions on women and health

- Adopted the following policies in the Philippine Family Planning Program:
 - Rejection of abortion as a family planning method
 - Improvement of family welfare, with focus on women's health, safe motherhood and child survival
 - Freedom of choice in what family planning methods to use
 - Promotion of family solidarity and responsible parenthood
- Adopted the Maternal Health Care Program to improve women's health through a comprehensive package of preventive, promotive and curative care to ensure safe pregnancy and delivery and reduce maternal death
- Set up mother- and-baby-friendly hospitals to encourage mothers to breastfeed their babies from 0-6 months and continue breastfeeding them up to 2 years
- Implemented the Women's Health and Safe Motherhood Program to provide and strengthen delivery of services and promote community partnerships with local governments and organizations to enhance effective and sustainable health interventions for women

and Safe Motherhood Project, with the following objectives: (1) to improve the quality and range of women's health services and to make these services address their gender needs; (2) to improve its capability to provide policies and for local governments to provide women's health services; (3) to improve community partnership for women's health; and (4) to conduct researches on women's health.

With the prevailing trend of decentralization of government functions, one challenge for the health sector is to develop the capabilities of local governments to carry out the devolved functions that were previously the responsibilities of the national government. More resources have to be provided so that health programs could be expanded and be carried out in areas where they are still not implemented. There is also a need to document the specific effects of these programs and services on the well-being of women.

- Initiated the Nutrition Program to improve the nutritional status of women and children, especially preschool children, pregnant women and lactating women
- Adopted the National AIDS/Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention and Control Program to prevent the spread of AIDS/STDs prevalent among women, especially those working in the sex and entertainment industries, and cushion their psychological impact on the patients, their families and communities
- Implement the Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program aimed at detecting the diseases early and managing treatment or pain relief for those afflicted
- Addressed the health needs of elderly women through the national program on the Health for Elderly Women
- Developed modules on the Self Care of Women, covering such topics as puberty, menstruation, pregnancy, child birth, and detection of health disorders common to women
- Extended medical services to women who used to work as entertainers in the former US bases, including giving scholarship to children of HIV-positive/AIDS-afflicted former women entertainers

Violence against women

Some of the most common forms of violence experienced by Filipino women are domestic violence or wife abuse, rape, including marital rape, incest, sexual harassment, sex discrimination, forced prostitution and international trafficking, pornography and abuse of women portrayed by media, and custodial abuse when the woman is a patient, a ward or a detainee.

There is a growing consciousness that violence against women is not a private matter anymore, and government has to intervene to eliminate it. Most of government's efforts, however, focus on services such as medical assistance, counselling, legal services and even livelihood training to enable victims of domestic violence to become economically independent should they opt to separate from their partners.

Actions on violence against women

- Established Women's Desk in police stations nationwide
- Put up substitute homes for women in especially difficult circumstances in selected cities to provide shelter, rehabilitation and livelihood skills to women victims
- Directed government hospitals to set up crisis centers within their institutions
- Organized Equality Advocates in the bureaucracy to attend to complaints of gender, political and sexual harassment in government service
- Implemented the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law that penalized those who commit the act in workplaces, schools and training institutions and conducted fora to sensitize the public on the issue of violence against women in the workplace
- Enforced provisions in the Family Code that give legal relief for battered spouses, including citing

At the very least, government actions on violence against women is inadequate. There has to be a holistic response to it involving policy makers and legislators, doctors and social workers, law enforcement officers, lawyers, fiscals and judges, who all must be gender sensitive and possess the necessary gender perspective in dealing with the victims. Strong laws must be enacted and policies adopted supporting the victims. This includes redefining existing laws and changing established policies to reflect women's experiences of violence. For example, rape is still considered an offense against chastity when women have long clamored for a new definition of it as a crime against person. The House and Senate versions of

domestic abuse as manifestation of psychological incapacity, one of the grounds for legal separation

- Continued lobbying for the passage of a new anti-rape bill redefining rape as a crime against person from an offense against chastity
- Piloted a community-based Center for Domestic Violence in one of the country's regions

Violence against women

- Set up Women's Help Desk with a 24-hour hotline to provide immediate response and assistance to women victims of violence
- Initiated *Hotline sa 9*, a TV public service program, assisting women and children victims of abuse and exploitation
- Extended legal assistance to victims of violence through the Metro Manila Development Authority's program for women victims

the bill redefining rape, although already approved, have still to be consolidated into a single bill before it is enacted into law. Anti-VAW mechanisms and support services must also be made available at the community and local levels where most of the violence occur. Local officials need to be trained on how to handle VAW cases. More studies on the causes and consequences of VAW and the effectiveness of present measures addressing it must be conducted.

Women and armed conflict

Armed conflict has ceased to be a major problem for the country. Just recently, government and Muslim rebels signed a peace agreement that ended the decades-long fighting in southern Philippines. Negotiations are ongoing, on the other hand, between government and leftist rebels.

An existing program in this area is the assistance given to women caught in armed conflict or in especially difficult circumstances. It is provided by the Women and Children Internal Refugee Assistance Center.

Women have always been at the forefront in fostering a culture of peace. This contribution must be recognized and maximized. To secure lasting peace, government has to promote nonviolent forms of resolving conflicts and avoid human rights abuses at all cost. Women refugees and displaced women have to be provided protection and training that would present them with options in life. Actions must also be adopted to address the following Platform objectives: to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision making levels and protect women living in situations of armed conflict; and to reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.

Actions on women and armed conflict

- Directed the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police to reaffirm their adherence to international humanitarian law and human rights agreements in the conduct of military and police operations
- Adopted the Social Reform Agenda as the major mechanism for reform toward peace and identified women as among the critical groups in society who need to be addressed by it
- Set up the Women and Children Internal Refugee Assistance Center for victims of armed conflict
- Assisted 6 of the 9 Peace Zones and an indigenous community as Special Development Areas which were granted P5 million each for development programs. Women in the zones and NGOs working in the communities coordinated with government in implementing the program

Women and the economy

Government programs responding to this concern overlap with those addressing women in poverty. The focus is on livelihood assistance, investment and marketing assistance, technologies for women, employment opportunities, and programs on family welfare, among others. The programs reflect the Platform's objectives of promoting "women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources." They also facilitate "women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade."

Actions on women and the economy

- Adopted various lending schemes that granted loans to women beneficiaries payable within 5 years or more and with no collateral requirement. An example of this is a Grameen Bank-type of scheme mostly for rural women that had some 20,000 recognized members, 18,182 of whom availed loans amounting to P80.4 million, and with savings totaling some P8.9 million as of 30 June 1996
- Ensured women's equal access to land and other agricultural resources through an administrative order entitling farm workers, who are husband and wife, 3 hectares each of land and

awarding a separate Certificate of Land Ownership Agreement to each spouse

- Implemented industrial and skills training programs for entrepreneurs and would-be entrepreneurs
- Hosted a conference of the Women Senior Leaders' Network from APEC Economies which came up with recommendations integrating gender concerns in the agenda of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
- Conducted a nationwide occupational wage survey of nonagricultural establishments to address the undervaluation and underremuneration of women's work
- Conducted seminars on the employment equality law and its implementing rules

There is an observation that some economic programs tend to duplicate each other. This may be so because no single agency could adequately cover this area of concern. In this case, agencies have to strengthen their coordination and information exchange with each other regarding their respective economic programs for women. The livelihood assistance programs must also be assessed to determine their impact and whether they are able to respond to the gender needs of their targeted beneficiaries. There is a need as well to intensify actions on the following Platform objectives: to provide business services, training, access to markets, and information technology, particularly to low income women; to strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks; to eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination; and promote harmonization of work and family responsibility for women and men.

Women in power and decision making

Filipino women generally enjoy equal rights in terms of participation in political and public life. The reality, however, does not reflect this as women themselves are generally averse to politics which they perceive as “dirty” and basically a man’s domain. They are a strong voting force, 50.3 percent of them voted in the 1995 election. But very few of them run as candidates. As a result, there are only four women senators out of the 24. The lower House has 21 women legislators, some 10 percent of the total number of seats for Congress representatives. The same trend applies for the President’s Cabinet. Out of the 22 Cabinet positions, only four are occupied by women. They head the departments of health, social welfare and development, tourism, and youth commission, all traditional women concerns. The judiciary also has less women judges and justices, just 15.3 percent of the total. The 14-member Supreme Court has only one woman justice.

Actions on women in power and decision making

- Adopted the Career Advancement Program for Women in Government Service to enhance their capability to break the glass ceiling and advance to decision making positions through measures that would promote time, support and opportunities for professional growth and development
- Promoted equal participation of women in the development, design, installation and maintenance of water infrastructure
- Pursued a policy on equal participation in management down to the provincial level at the Philippine Information Agency
- Conducted gender sensitivity seminars for women and men in the bureaucracy
- Negotiated for a training on mentoring for women in the bureaucracy between VICTRIX, an Australian human resource development firm, and the Civil Service Commission. The effort was envisioned to facilitate the attainment of 40% representation of women in government decision making positions by 1998
- Conducted regional Congress on positive actions to promote equal employment opportunities
- Appointed women members in the TESDA Board representing employer/ industry organizations, labor, and the vocational education and training institutions, respectively

- Adopted administrative measures to push for equality in women's participation in public and private life:
 - Directed the CSC to develop and implement programs institutionalizing support mechanisms and provide women with adequate time and opportunities for career advancement
 - Included the NCRFW as member of the Social Reform Council to act as its technical adviser in ensuring the integration of women's concerns in the SRA's programs
 - Considered women nominees to the Board of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights. At present, the PCHR's chair is a woman, so is one of the four commissioners.
 - Promoted women's participation in environmental management and ecology programs and their participation in supervisory training in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources
 - Directed that only women could represent the women sector in the water districts' Board of Directors

Government is trying to help women break the glass ceiling in the bureaucracy. Initiatives are underway to enable more women to handle key positions in the bureaucracy through training on leadership, communication, negotiation and assertiveness, among others. A program is also in place aiming to have 40 percent of key positions in the bureaucracy occupied by women by 1998, although this has still to be fully implemented.

Power and decision making are still largely a man's world in the Philippines. Women who are able to penetrate this world are faced with inadequate coordinating and networking mechanisms to monitor and provide support for them. Potential women leaders have very few opportunities to develop their skills and capabilities. They seldom participate in local and community councils. The Career Advancement Program for Women in Government Service has to fast track measures to respond to the peculiar needs of women workers in all levels of the bureaucracy.

Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

The NCRFW, born in 1975, definitely a child of the International Women's Year, is the national machinery for the advancement of women in the Philippines. There is now a pending bill in Congress reorganizing it into a Philippine Commission on Women, and expanding its structure to make it more effective in its role as the national machinery for women. It is a policy making body under the Office of the President and advises the President and Cabinet on plans and programs that promote the status of women.

Actions on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

- Expanded the members of NCRFW's Board of Commissioners, its policy making body, to include representatives from line agencies aside from the original representatives from women NGOs
- Implemented initial expansion of NCRFW
- Organized focal points for gender and development in government offices to ensure that plans, programs, projects and processes implemented by them respond to gender concerns
- Conducted gender responsive planning workshops with agencies to enable them to incorporate the gender perspective in their policies, programs and projects

- Established direct links with local women NGOs, women advocates in the academe and the private sector, and regional and international institutions that worked for the advancement of women
- Coordinated with Congress on the enactment of bills promoting women's rights and welfare
- Started initial efforts to compile, analyze, and disseminate gender disaggregated data
- Adopted the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development, a 30-year blueprint identifying gender concerns that must be addressed by government in the long-term
- Launched the second phase of the Institutional Strengthening Project of the NCRFW and the Canadian International Development Agency. This would allow NCRFW to develop its partner agencies' institutional capability as lead agencies in GAD mainstreaming
- Continued partnership with and support to the strengthening of national machineries of other countries

Most of the actions in this area are directed at organizing or strengthening mechanisms of national agencies to advance their efforts toward gender mainstreaming. A few have been initiated at the regional level. One of the more significant mechanisms is to establish focal points in the agencies who will serve as gender advocates. They see to it that gender considerations are integrated in their agencies' work plans, programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. At the same time, they may push for internal measures that would benefit the needs and interests of women workers within their agencies. In the legislature, on the other hand, both the House and the Senate have a Committee on Women and Family Relations, concerned with enacting laws and adopting resolutions to address issues confronting women.

Gender mainstreaming is the overarching thrust of institutional mechanisms. The gender mainstreaming continuum discussed earlier points out that agencies find it difficult to manage the effort at its more advanced stage. This implies that focal points have difficulty as well in this matter. Existing data and statistics on gender, indispensable factors in the focal points' advocacy and technical work, are inadequate. So are GAD resource persons and trainers at the field level.

9 *Human rights of women*

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights (PCHR) accorded priority to women's human rights by identifying, as one of its objectives, the advocacy of such rights through information and education campaigns. The Philippine Human Rights Plan (PHRP) carries a distinct chapter for women which is a consolidation of the human rights perspectives of the 30-year perspective plan for women. Thus, the agency commitments on both plans are the same. Concretely, the women's chapter discusses its human rights issues, goals, objectives, policies, strategies and program/project areas. The chapter also stipulates the government's responses and private initiatives, a call to national action for legislative, administrative and program measures and schemes for partnership and collaboration. The NCRFW and the PCHR forged partnership to ensure the full and integrated implementation of the PHRP and the long term plan for women. It identified the following programs: (a) advocacy and consciousness raising, both for gender and human rights advocates; (b) setting up of institutional mechanisms to include support services such as agency focal points for women, desks on women in government, pool of GAD specialists, trainers and advisers, and resource mobilization; (c) legislative agenda for women; and (d) research and data base.

Actions on women and human rights

- Strengthened the implementation and monitoring of UN Women's Convention (CEDAW)
- Initiated the incorporation of gender in the Philippine Human Rights Plan, both as a sector and as a cross cutting concern
- Sustained advocacy for the adoption of laws protecting women's human rights
- Conducted information and awareness raising on women's rights

10 *Women and the media*

Media can be powerful allies of women in their quest for a gender fair and equal society. Issues on women, however, continue to be downplayed in media, although there are already a number of gender advocates among columnists, opinion makers and producers who regularly discuss or feature women issues. Most of the time, women continue to be portrayed in very limited, sexist and stereotyped roles in all forms of media. Media practitioners are also not aware that gender-differentiated language can significantly affect the way readers, viewers and listeners perceive women. Women are still a minority among media practitioners, and still fewer of them are in decision making positions. But some of them cover beats that are formerly the domain of male journalists, like the military and the police, business and the economy, and politics.

Media have the capacity to influence how people look at the world, and because of this, media must promote a balanced and nonstereotyped image of women. They must also provide access for greater participation of women, where women can freely practice their rights to free speech and expression, avail of new communication technologies, or become key decision makers in the news desk or production room.

Actions on women and media

- Coordinated with women advocates in media to help disseminate information and raise awareness on gender issues
- Developed information, education and communication materials on gender issues and distributed them to media, among others, for greater dissemination



Women and the environment

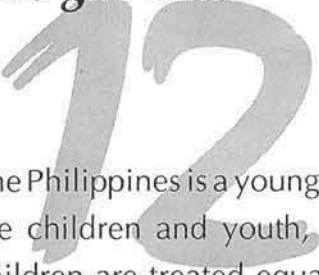
In the Philippines, as in other developing countries, women are the stewards of the environment. They are also the primary collectors and managers of wood fuel, nonwood forest resources and water, the main producers of subsistence food crops, and the primary users of communal lands and forests. As such, their role is increasingly being recognized and various studies are conducted to see how they could participate more in development efforts for the sector.

Their effort, however, is hampered by the lack of information and training programs that would equip them with skills and capabilities for more meaningful participation in environmental programs.

Actions on women and the environment

- Adopted the Philippine Strategy for Sustainable Development that viewed environmental protection and the proper utilization of resources as compatible with economic growth, and called for citizen's participation, including women's participation, in its implementation
- Issued Certificates of Stewardship Contracts that granted land tenure of 25 years and access to training programs to both spouse beneficiaries
- Conducted researches on women's situation and participation in projects on community forestry, mangrove conservation and management, and rattan and bamboo production
- Emphasized the role of women in environmental management through the Ancestral Domain Development and Environmental Protection programs
- Explored policies on the participation of women in environmental programs through studies on the role of women in community forestry, gender roles in small scale mining, and the gender-based analysis of the impact of energy conservation and management policies

The girl child



The Philippines is a young nation. In 1990, 45.8 percent of its 62 million population are children and youth, 27.2 percent of them are female. Generally, Filipino children are treated equally. However, biased treatment favoring boys occur in some families. For example, in cases when parents cannot afford to send all their children to school, they tend to enrol the boys first, and girls have to stop schooling.

Filipino children are no longer stranger to harsh living conditions. There are from five to seven million working children within the 5-14 age group, 3.9 million of whom live in the rural areas. In the garments industry alone in 1987, there were some two million female child workers. Young girls experience working from an early age, combining domestic chores with paid or unpaid family labor and schooling. Between one to three percent of Filipino children in 1993 were street children, children who spend most of their waking hours on the streets, often in gainful though potentially hazardous economic activities such as vending, working as laborers, scavenging, begging and car watching. Some 50,000 to 75,000 of them are in Metro Manila. Filipino girls were also among the estimated 50,000 to 60,000 prostituted children in Asia in 1991. An increasing number of them are victims of incest, rape, sexual abuse and murder.

The country is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As such, it has adopted a national program for children to achieve the goals for children's survival, development and protection for the 1990s. The concerns of the girl child are also addressed by it.

Despite this, however, urgent actions have to be carried out to respond to some problems confronting children. Foremost of these are measures to eliminate the rising incidence of incest and violence against children, especially the girl child. Family services have to focus on the improvement of her status. Existing programs in SRA priority areas and indigenous communities have to be sustained to benefit children in disadvantaged communities.

Actions on the girl child

- Adopted interventions to address the vulnerability and special needs of girls who are in emergency situations of armed conflict, street children, sexually abused children, working children and victims of violence
- Implemented labor assistance interventions for child workers through the *Sagip Manggagawa* Program
- Disaggregated by sex the program data on disadvantaged families
- Declared the fourth week of March each year as the week for the protection and gender-fair treatment of the girl child
- Developed a Philippine Plan of Action for the Girl Child
- Developed an information kit on the girl child for policy makers
- Approved resolutions initiating the empowerment of the Filipino girl child through gender sensitive and quality education and promoting and protecting her rights and welfare to the fullest



REFLECTIONS AND ACTIONS

Even before the Beijing summit on women, government has already been carrying out initiatives and projects for Filipino women that support a number of the strategies of the Platform for Action. This is because they respond to the concerns of GAD, one of government's priority programs.

The NCRFW evaluated present actions with regard to the Beijing Platform. Of the 14 specific actions, two are not sufficiently acted upon by government. One is the inability of department heads to integrate the Platform into their KRAs, with only four of them managing to do so. The other is the lengthy time it takes to pass laws for more stringent penalties against trafficking, illegal recruitment and undocumented migration and a new law shifting criminal liability to the pimps and procurers instead of the prostituted women. In the case of actions responding to the Platform's 12 areas of concern, there seems to be a bias for initiatives on women and poverty, women and the economy, and women and health.

Most government actions are seen to be program or project-driven, maybe because these are easier to implement. While they may benefit women in the short to medium-term, their implementation may not be sustained in the long run. This could happen when a particular agency changes its priorities, or when new implementors replace the present ones.

A more strategic approach is to go beyond programs and projects and ensure that national policies and laws addressing women's concerns be put in place as mandates for future actions. The Beijing Platform has to be integrated as well into the agency's regular functions, rather than be undertaken as special initiatives for the agency's women constituents. This way, programs and projects for women are in line with the agency's own priorities, with clear direction and purpose as to how they are to be implemented. Resources, in terms of funds and staff members who would oversee these programs and projects, are guaranteed. And because they are

now integrated in the agency's work plan, they are also subject to regular monitoring so that their impact is continuously assessed, and their overall effectiveness is strengthened. Hard data and statistics about the realities of women's lives form part of this monitoring system. They provide an objective basis for formulating actions. They can also help identify gaps and limitations in present initiatives so implementors could improve on them.

A challenge for the national leadership is how to make local government units and agencies capable of developing their own initiatives supporting the Beijing Platform. This is crucial since most of the women targeted by the Platform are found in the local levels, rural women or those living in urban slums, poor and marginalized women, women from indigenous communities. A more deliberate and organized effort has to be coordinated so that the Platform could reach them and affect their lives as well.

Despite gaps and issues in implementation, the NCRFW thinks that some gains have been achieved for Filipino women after the first year of the Beijing conference. To sustain these gains and resolve the issues limiting their impact, however, the government needs to ensure a more effective monitoring and evaluation system. There are a number of programs and projects that have already been existing before Beijing, offshoots of earlier efforts on gender mainstreaming, that may or may not be consistent with the Platform for Action. There is the PPGD and the SRA, mechanisms both to translate the Platform into concrete actions that would uplift the status of Filipino women, especially the poor and disadvantaged women in the case of the SRA. It is not enough that these are all implemented. They have to be monitored and evaluated also to correct problems as they occur, to validate new knowledge and learning, and to process realizations experienced during their implementation. This way, initiatives for women may even be redesigned to ensure that they are one with the vision and aspirations of the FWCW Platform. An effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism makes it possible to know the impact of these initiatives on women, bringing to the surface the concrete changes that they have brought to their lives.

This is the core really of the FWCW Platform for Action - transforming, redefining, changing the world through actions for equality, development and peace, so women could finally realize their full potentials as human beings. And in the final analysis, it is the changes that matter.



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