

# PHILIPPINES

## Communication Tools as Social Binders in Public and Private Spheres



..... **The ICT Environment  
and Infrastructure**



..... **How Intermediary  
Groups Use  
Communication Tools  
for Grassroots  
Women's Empowerment**



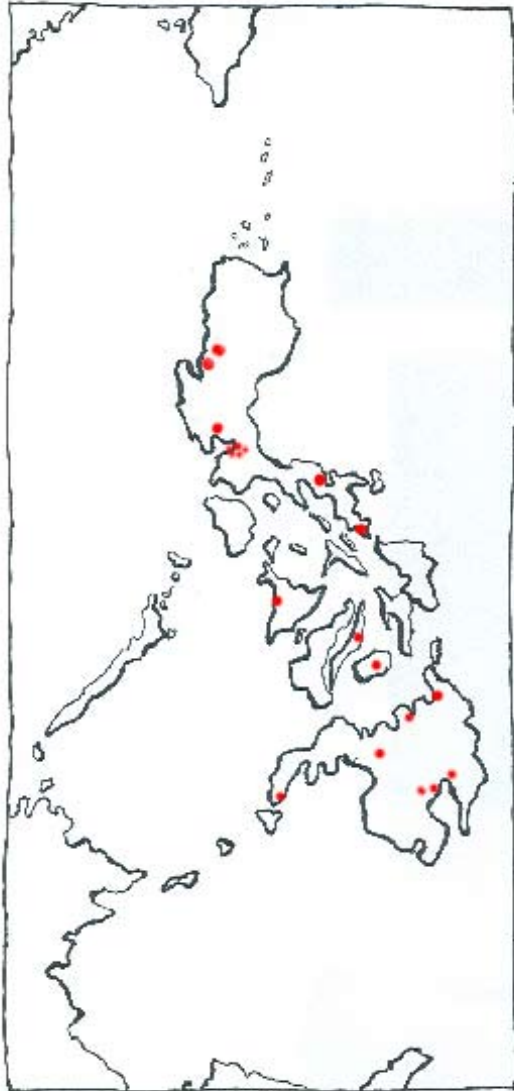
..... **How Intermediary Groups  
View Empowerment and  
Communication**



..... **How Grassroots Women  
View Communication Tools  
and Empowerment**

"What we do is teach them how to  
face other people, so they themselves  
can ask for their needs."

PATAMABA, PHILIPPINES



### **LUZON**

1. Ilocana Development Foundation
2. Inang Makababaying Aksyon (IMA) Foundation
3. Igorota Foundation
4. ASCODE
5. LIKAS

### **VISAYAS**

6. PROCESS
7. Lihok Pilipina
8. Antique Development Foundation

### **MINDANAO**

9. FORWARD
10. Al-mujadilah Development Foundation
11. Balaod Mindanaw
12. Tagum Cooperative
13. Saligan-Mindanaw
14. Talikala
15. Lumah ma Dilaut

### **NCR**

16. PETA
17. Kanlungan Center Foundation
18. GABRIELA
19. PATAMABA
20. Center for Women's Resources



## CHAPTER 7

# THE ICT ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE PHILIPPINES

### ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

As a heritage of its American colonisation, the Philippines is the world's third largest English-speaking country (Pasadilla, 2005). This has made foreign cable companies look at the Philippines with interest. It is also why many international call centres outsource their business to the country.

### GENDER GAP

The Philippines ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the recent gender equality survey and is the only Asian country holding a place in the top 10. Good performances on all four categories lead to the Philippines' high position in the rankings: economic participation and opportunity (4<sup>th</sup>), educational attainment (1<sup>st</sup>), political empowerment (22<sup>nd</sup>), and health and survival (1<sup>st</sup>). The Philippines is the only country in Asia to have closed the gender gap on both education and health and the only among five in the world that have done so (World Economic Forum, 2006)

Women constitute 39% of the total labour force in the country and are ahead of men in some occupations, such as professional and technical (64%), clerical (57%), sales (67%), and services (56%).

### THE PHILIPPINES' MEDIA PROFILE

“Although the Philippine Press is deemed the “freest in Asia,” it still bears the legacies of its authoritarian past. Hence, even if it lives the democratic promise of “freedom of

the press,” it is still under a semblance of control (and manipulation) by the government.” Licensing media operations and several media guilds are manifestations of this government control and manipulation (Seamedia.org, 2006).

## **SOCIAL ROLE**

The media is also a widespread source of popular culture, with television programs becoming entwined with the lives of their Filipino audiences. There is more or less enough freedom to run programs as long as they “do not infringe on the policies protecting decency, reputation, and over-all public welfare” (Seamedia.org, 2006). Philippine media, whether in newspapers, radio or TV, have also succeeded in relaying information to different sectors and far-flung areas of a nation divided in terms of geography, ethnicity and language.

However, the Philippine media, as a manifestation of the country’s culture, also aid in factionalism, as well as in the sensationalisation of news and politics (Seamedia.org, 2006).

The media’s key role in both popular culture and politics also becomes increasingly apparent. The rising economy and the lack of constraints on media resulted in the expansion of advertising and in the creation of new media outlets. With this rapid growth, intense competition and sensationalism also increased (Coronel, 1999).

## **PRINT MEDIA**

### **NEWSPAPERS**

The National Capital Region (NCR) is the center of print activity with 22% of print publications in the country originating from this region. There are 13 major broadsheets in the region, 17 tabloids, 32 magazines, 39 comics and 5 Chinese dailies (Seamedia.org, 2006).

The provinces produce 441 local newspapers and 13 magazines. Most of them are published weekly, a few are published monthly and daily, while a number are published in various time intervals such as bi-monthly, tri-weekly and fortnightly, while some are published on a semestral basis or as special issues (Seamedia.org, 2006).

The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* has the widest reach with a daily circulation of 257,416.

### **OWNERSHIP**

Newspaper ownership follows the changing face of Philippine business. Apart from the Spanish mestizos and native elites, Chinese-Filipino entrepreneurs, although wary of calling attention to themselves, now own many media conglomerates (Coronel, 1999).

Emilio Yap, for example, owns the *Manila Bulletin* newspaper, while John Gokongwei, owner of the Robinson's Malls and Sun Cellular, owns the *Manila Times* newspaper.

## INQ7

INQ7 Interactive Inc. is updated daily and is a joint venture between two giants in Philippine media -- the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the country's most widely circulated broadsheet, and GMA Network Inc., the most awarded broadcast company in the Philippines (Inq7.net, 2006). INQ7 also attracts the most Filipino "netizens" (Internet citizens) as it garners an average of 12.4 million page views per month, as of June 2002 (Lallana, 2006).

## WOMEN'S ACCESS TO NEWSPAPERS

Men continue to reign in terms of their sheer number and the key positions that they hold in most workplaces. This also appears to be true for the Philippine print media industry where men continue to dominate top level positions even if an increasing number of women are joining the media profession (Tolentino, 2004).

Research undertaken in the 1980s provides data on the dominance of men in newspapers and magazine publications. Based on this research, there appeared to be more men in newspaper boardroom and editorial positions. It also appears that there were more men who worked as publishers, editors and managers even in three women magazines surveyed (De la Cruz, 1988). In 1986, courageous women journalists joined the ranks of publishers and editors, with their publications printing stories about the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. and its aftermath. The alternative press, in particular, was dependent on women's labour and courage. At least three women held top-level positions in newspaper publications during this period: Eugenia Apostol, Betty Go Belmonte and Letty Magsanoc (De la Cruz, 1988). However, although there are more female editors now than there were 10 years ago, women still remain a minority (Azarcon, 2004).

In all four newspapers, there were more males than females in board and editorial positions. However, the ratio of female to male reporters appeared to be equal. What this points to is the apparent difficulty that women reporters encounter in rising to the rank of editor or board member (Tolentino, 2004).

## COMMUNITY PAPERS

Community papers are also becoming more and more prevalent in the country. In 1998, there were 408 community papers, most of them published on a weekly basis. These papers play watchdog roles regarding issues that affect a journalist directly in his

or her community. Since they write about issues and concerns that affect them directly, community journalists are also more prone to turn into crusaders (Rimban, 1999).

## **TABLOIDS**

Tabloid publications experienced a considerable increase in the year 2000 with a total daily circulation of 3,347,744. Among these tabloids, *Bulgar* has the highest daily circulation with 448,450 daily circulation, followed by *People's Journal* and *People's Tonight*, with daily circulations of 382,200 and 365,811, respectively (Seamedia.org, 2006).

## **MAGAZINES**

In addition to the *Manila Times*, the Gokongweis also owns Summit Media, which is one of the leading consumer magazine publishers in the Philippines, in both number of titles and circulation per category (Summit Media, 2006). It started in 1995 with *Preview*, a fashion magazine, but has since then expanded its line with titles such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*.

## **COMICS**

The Philippines has had a very rich history in comics. In the late 1800s, national hero Jose Rizal created what would be the very first Filipino-made comic strip entitled *The Monkey and the Tortoise* (Kean, 2006). In the 1960s, most of the comic books read in the barrios were in Tagalog, with only 17% of the titles being in English (Young, 1962). Alamat Comics founder Budjette Tan stated that comics used to be a thriving industry back in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the 1970s saw the decline of Philippine comics due to migration and to the declaration of Martial Law. The Marcos administration's restrictions forced many artists to leave the country or retire altogether. Although comics remain popular and financially rewarding up until today, their quality has suffered a marked decline (Kean, 2006).

## **RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING**

By virtue of the ease by which the radio and TV are acquired, broadcasting through these media is deemed to be the most common and far-reaching way of communicating with the public. The extent of radio and TV's reach is substantiated by the results of the 1994 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey. Based on this study, 81.22% of the total households in the country own radio sets while 44.93% owned TV sets (Seamedia.org, 2006). Both radio and television were introduced to the Philippines during the American occupation.

## RADIO

The first Philippine radio station known as KZKZ was set up by Henry Mann in Manila in 1922. This was followed by the institution of two stations, namely KZRM and KZEG, both of which generally featured news and entertainment. In 1929, radio stations were installed in the provinces. In the same survey as above, it was discovered that 81% of the over 50 million Filipinos in 1994 had exposure to the radio. Also notable is the finding that 81.6% of those who were exposed to the radio reside in urban areas (Seamedia.org, 2006).

According to the 2002 Annual Report of the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), as of December 31, 2002, there exist 369 AM and 583 FM stations broadcasting in the Philippines that are registered in the NTC (National Telecommunication Commission [NTC], 2003).

The fact that few barrios have electricity limits the use of radio, in spite of the presence of some battery-operated sets. The influence of radio is more widespread than ownership would indicate, since many listen even though they do not own radio sets. Since the houses are placed close together and the radio usually runs at full blast, there may even be the equivalent of a “captive” audience (Young, 1962, p. 73). Commercial FM and AM radio stations in the Philippines are also known to be driven by advertising and business groups.

## COMMUNITY RADIO

Community radio is starting to become a very empowering mode of communication, especially in remote areas. Unlike commercial radio whose content is largely shaped by advertisements, community radio allows a community to determine and deliver the content which it deems more appropriate and relevant to its own context. In a landscape largely driven by what *Tambuli* project coordinator Louie Tabing refers to as “Profit, Propaganda, Power and Privilege” or PPPP, small but important projects like *Tambuli* or CATs (Community Audio Towers) are making a difference (Dagron, 2001). At the heart of both projects is the support for rural communities to use this *narrowcasting* technology for community communication and social development.

## TELEVISION

### OWNERSHIP

Over the last few decades, the television has grown to be the medium with the widest reach and consumer base in the Philippines, aside from the radio (Santos, 2003). Television ownership is most dense in Metro Manila, where 96% of the population own a TV set. As for the rest of the country, television remains to be a common appliance in most households.

TV ownership is evident in 73% of the houses in Luzon (the country's largest island in the northern region), 60% of the houses in Visayas, and 63% of homes in Mindanao.

The large and relatively young Philippine population provides a desirable market for the film and television industries. Aside from young people, low-income earners (Classes C, D and E) are also viable target markets (Pasadilla, 2005). Metro Manila has 13 major television stations, most originating from Metro Manila (Seamedia.org, 2006).

As early as the 1950s, much of the content of Philippine television was imported from the United States because of their low costs and their large following among local viewers (Tuazon, 2006a). The success of these foreign shows eventually allowed local television companies to produce their own programs. However, these kinds of shows remained within two types: minimal adaptation and format re-versioning. Minimal adaptation refers to the alteration of foreign genre and programme narratives. Examples of minimal adaptation include the dubbing of programmes into the lingua franca and the addition of a local host. On the other hand, format re-versioning concerns format adaptation and is undertaken through the transformation of a foreign programme into a new local version, whether licensed or cloned (Santos, 2004). *Telenovelas* and children's shows are only minimally linguistically altered to make them understandable to local viewers. Although western colonial influence still dominates, Mexican and Korean *telenovelas*, as well as Japanese anime dubbed in the lingua franca are also on the rise (Santos, 2004).

#### FILIPINO OWNED

All mass media establishments are 100% Filipino owned as required by the Philippine constitution, a situation unparalleled in Southeast Asia (Santos, 2003).

However, "local media companies have sought to either circumvent this provision to access foreign funds or to support the campaign to amend the constitution" (Santos, 2004, p. 166). Although print advertising has dropped, advertisers are discovering the power of the popularity of Philippine television's reach and nature. Aside from its audio visual capacity, local marketing research groups all confirm that it is the most cost effective (Santos, 2003).

#### QTV

QTV (Quality TV-1) is GMA Network's sister station, which the network markets towards women with claims such as, "The carefully produced shows are angled to coincide with women's daily routines and will contain programming that highlight what is most important to women nationwide" (QTV Channel 11, 2006). According to their website, understanding women lie at the centre of the station's programming plan, which they seek to implement by appreciating the different aspects of womanhood from married working mothers to homemakers to young adolescent girls.



## CABLE TELEVISION

The first cable television, both in the country and in entire Asia, was established in 1969 in Baguio City (Seamedia.org, 2006) at a time when terrestrial television was rapidly gaining audiences and markets. In 2000, the number of cable stations rose considerably with a total of 217 cable stations throughout the country. Region VI (in the Visayas) has the most cable stations with 84 stations, followed by Region II (Cagayan) (Seamedia.org, 2006). In the Philippines, the popularity of cable TV is growing especially in rural areas where TV signals are weak. Cable television has gained patronage from subscribers outside of Metro Manila as these subscribers seek to enjoy clearer access to their favourite local programmes, which are inadequately provided by producers whose focus lies in the cable market (Santos, 2004). Similar to the trend with terrestrial television during the 1960s, access to cable television among the lower-middle class and grassroots sectors appears to be on an upward trend (Santos, 2004).

## FILM

With a total seating capacity of 172,022 in 381 movie houses in Metro Manila's 12 cities and 5 municipalities, the National Capital Region (NCR) has the most number of movie houses among all regions. Region IV is a far second with a total seating capacity of 69,780 in 150 movie houses (Seamedia.org, 2006).

Out of the 373 screens in the country, 215 or 57.6 percent are found in Metro Manila and the rest are spread in areas outside NCR (Pasadilla, 2005). Cinemas in Metro Manila are usually found in a shopping mall such as the Ayala Cinemas, the Robinsons Cinemas, Powerplant Cinemas and others (Pasadilla, 2005). These cinemas serve as effective channels for local producers to feature their films. In 2003, the Philippines produced 109 feature films (Pasadilla, 2005). Nonetheless, US films have dominated the global film industries and this is no different in the Philippines (Pasadilla, 2005). In 2003, more than half of the films screened were foreign-produced films.

## TARGET MARKET

Because of the sheer size of its population, the Philippine market makes available a large consumer market, composed mainly of young people. Young people, aged 45 years old and below, compose 83.76% of the total Philippine population. Of this percentage, 42.44% are male and 41.32% are female. This population provides a viable market as young people tend to be avid moviegoers (Pasadilla, 2005).

## TRADITIONAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNICATION TOOLS

### FIESTA

Like the later forms of entertainment that would succeed them, local fiestas are a hybrid of indigenous and foreign influences. Fiestas play a significant role in Filipino culture and society, due in part to the position of religion in the country's history and daily life. Because of the Philippines' history as a Spanish colony, Catholicism is the predominant religion. Although Protestants, Muslims and other sects exist in the country, 83% of the Philippine population is Catholic (Seamedia.org, 2006). Fiestas are a manifestation of the Philippines' unique folk Catholicism and a testament to how friars from the Spanish century negotiated rule through covering up Filipinos' love of festivity and pomp by integrating it into a "Christian" ceremony. It is a practice that has endured from the Spanish era and is still widely practiced up until today (Joaquin, 2006). Fiestas reflect the collective nature of Philippine society, which emphasises blending in and celebrating with the community.

### CHANNELS OF PERSONAL INFLUENCE

Research undertaken by Young (1962) found out that word of mouth appears to be the preferred channel of information in the barrio. The barrio lieutenant is deemed to be the best source of information, with over 45.7% of the informants attesting to this. This is followed by neighbours (14.4%), school teachers (6%), *sari-sari* (variety) store keepers (2.3%) and school children (1.5%). What is striking is the apparent low ranking attained by the *sari-sari* store keepers, in spite of the status of the *sari-sari* store as a favourite hangout for barrio men. Also notable is the predominance of women store clerks and store operators.

### THEATRE

Contemporary Philippine theatre draws its themes from Filipino life, finding inspiration in social realities, various rural and urban situations, poverty, exploitation, and many others. Though there is little monetary gain in Philippine theatre, it remains a thriving and fertile field (Fernandez, 1996). The Philippine Educational Theatre Association, or PETA, is the Philippines' foremost semi-professional theatre company (Fernandez, 1996). In addition, there are several other companies. One of the theatre groups that represent how theatre can be a way to question society and be a force of change is actress/director Monique Wilson's New Voice Company. As one of the Philippine's premiere theatre companies, the New Voice Company is known for its innovative, socially provocative and feminist orientation that deals with issues ranging from women's rights, sexuality, incest, globalisation, gender inequality, sexual harassment, homosexuality, poverty, oppression and violence against women, among others (New Voice Company, 2006).

## **NEW ICTS**

### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

The Philippines is the SMS capital of the world. At the end of 2003, there were close to 22 million mobile phone subscribers. Mobile phone ownership has risen to more than 25% of the population, six times higher than landline penetration. This can be attributed to intense competition among telecommunication companies, continuous innovation, and the Filipinos' predilection towards the cellular phone (Lallana, 2006). Based on a 2003 survey by Pulse Asia, a commercial news and intelligence company, 94% of Filipino cellular phone users send text messages everyday, with 70% of these texters sending as many as 10 messages a day (Lallana, 2006).

In addition to its social networking purposes, texting allows access to many public service, medical and governmental functions, in a way linking this form of technology to state infrastructure. For example, citizens can report pollution violations, crime and other illegal activities through text (Lallana, 2006). Citizens who wish to convey their concerns to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo can also do so through their cellphone with a service called TXT GMA. The Civil Service Commission also launched TXTCSC to provide citizens with a channel to complain, suggest, commend or inquire with the CSC (Lallana, 2006).

Texting also holds important opportunities for non-state organisations. Tambuli text, a service developed by a Filipino intermediary group called Foundation for Media Alternatives, aims to boost community building and reinforce networking among civil society organisations through an SMS communication platform (Lallana, 2006). The advent of texting also revolutionised political protest, as evident in EDSA 2, the massive rally which led to the ousting of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

### **INTERNET AND OTHER NEW ICTS**

The Philippines' first connection to the Internet occurred in March 1994, through a consortium of universities. It took some time before the use of Internet became prevalent in the Philippines, owing to its high cost. Nonetheless, some groups, including intermediary groups, began to tap these new information resources. These groups began using bulletin board systems and eventually electronic mail through the services of an E-mail Center set up by Roberto Verzola, and later on, by the Caucus of Development NGO Network and the Foundation for Media Alternatives (Pabico, 1999). Moreover, although 90% of Internet traffic in the Philippines goes to the USA, Philippine news and mass media organisations provide the bulk of local content available on the Internet (Lallana, 2003). The majority of this content is available in English.

Within the ICT sector, numerous developments have taken place since 1994 -- many of these covering the regulatory implications of new tools and services such as voice over Internet protocol (VOIP), short messaging services (SMS), wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) and third generation mobile technology (3G), to name a few. ICT policies have also been formulated to maximise the opportunities offered by the “information society” and at the same time address the socio-economic gaps which the emergence of ICTs has engendered. Teledensity, which pertains to the number of computers, and Internet penetration measure the digital divide between certain groups of people in different areas (Lallana and Uy, 2003).

According to the International Telecommunications Union, the country had 2.7 personal computers (PC) per 100 inhabitants in 2001. This figure slightly increased the following year with 2.77 in 2002. However, based on the data from the National Statistics Office, collected through the Family Income Expenditure Survey, the country’s PC penetration has increased from 2.79% in 2000 to 3.87% percent in 2003. Households with female heads also appear to have better access to PCs, with 5.90% of female-headed households owning PCs as compared to only 3.48% of male-headed households.

**TABLE 1. HOUSEHOLD OWNERSHIP OF PERSONAL COMPUTERS, 2000 AND 2003**

National Income Decile	Percentage of Households	
	2000	2003
Lowest	0.0	0.0
Second	0.0	0.0
Third	0.0	0.11
Fourth	0.5	0.22
Fifth	0.5	0.26
Sixth	0.27	0.63
Seventh	0.73	1.36
Eight	1.64	3.15
Ninth	4.43	7.51
Tenth	20.27	30.18
National	2.79	3.87

*Source: NSO as quoted by FMA (2006a)*

However, access to ICTs, as well as ICT policy development is conditioned by larger issues concerning access, particularly those related to basic resources and services such that only people who belong to higher income deciles and who have attained a higher level of education have the privilege of using and appropriating ICTs.

## WOMEN'S ACCESS TO NEW ICTS

The United Nation Human Development Reports cite that in some fields of the information technology industry, “Filipino gender egalitarianism” is confirmed by the relatively high rate of female labour force participation. A survey of the Philippine information technology industry conducted in 1999-2000 found that 40% of the workforce (excluding data encoders) is composed of women. This figure appears to be the highest in the Southeast Asia region (Formoso, 2000 as cited in Saloma-Akpedonu, 2006). As such, the greatest usage of ICTs for women in professional, technical and other related occupations appears to occur at work or is work-related. Among academics and career executives, communicating by electronic mail seems to be a regular activity, coupled with occasional downloading of information. A limited number of women may also be surmised to engage in TV or on-line shopping (Lopez, 2001). However, even with ICT use becoming more prevalent and trendy, it remains questionable whether Filipino women professionals’ use of certain ICTs such as cellular phones, pager, fax machines and personal computers contribute to making them more politically aware (Lopez, 2001).

## FACTORS AFFECTING MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION TOOLS

### PRINT

The Philippine media traces its roots from liberal and revolutionary traditions, even as there were a number of newspapers which predated the publication of *La Solidaridad* and *Kalayaan* by the Propaganda Movement and the *Katipunan* respectively. Jose Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, which is said to have heavily influenced the revolution against Spain, set the trend for Philippine revolutionary literature.

The post-war period witnessed the reemergence of different publications and the establishment of new ones. Although this period is considered to be the golden years of Philippine journalism, this period also set the phenomenon of concentration of media ownership as the country’s richest families acquired media outfits to expand their political and economic machineries. The “freedom” enjoyed by the press since 1945 was suddenly put to an end with the declaration of Martial Law on September 21, 1972. The Marcos regime was not only responsible for the arrest, incarceration, torture, disappearance and deaths of media practitioners but was also accountable for the decline in the country’s reading culture.

Another factor that appears to impact on print media relates to pressures emanating from advertising and business groups, and even from the government. Given the intense competition and the huge financial resources needed to manage a publication, newspapers appear to be vulnerable to these pressures. Furthermore, as Dornilla (1990, p. 4) contends, “it is known that while the government has been tolerant of criticism, it is not above

passing messages to proprietors that it disapproves of some of the critical stances of the press.”

Currently, the spate of killings of journalists certainly contradicts the freedom that Philippine media is supposed to enjoy. Since the restoration of “democracy,” more than 80 media practitioners have been killed but not a single perpetrator was ever convicted (Reuters, 2006). Post-EDSA killings of journalists have intensified during the current Macapagal-Arroyo administration, which also sanctioned killings and other human rights violations against dissenters as well as innocent civilians, particularly in the President’s effort to clamp down the Communist Party of the Philippines (Lorenzo, 2006)

## **RADIO AND TELEVISION**

As in the case of print media, radio and television are also affected by the concentration of media ownership, which often results in the absence of content-diversity as it is the logic of the market that dictates the production of programs. Moreover, news, in the sense of public information, becomes increasingly veered towards the so called “infotainment approach” as they are packaged not merely to inform but to capture the public’s pique and eventually generate high ratings (Rimban, 1999, p. 51). In a 1999 interview, ABS-CBN chair Eugenio Lopez III remarked, “we’re pretty much a marketing-driven corporation, so we pay attention to the ratings. That’s probably the most fundamental reason why ABS has done so well” (Romualdez, 1999, p. 55).

## **OWNERSHIP**

Malacañang recently pushed for the opening of mass media to foreign ownership as one of the proposed changes to the Constitution. Their cited reason is to boost the standards of Philippine newspapers and broadcast stations and put them at par with global leaders (Philippine Daily Inquirer Editorial, 2006a). As PDI argues, even with foreign entities owning 60% Philippine media companies, Filipinos could still continue to have a strong voice in deciding media content, while also benefiting from the cutting-edge technology and state-of-the-art equipment that a better funded media company could provide, (Philippine Daily Inquirer Editorial, 2006a). However, intermediary groups and concerned civil society groups see this argument as quite problematic, as the media could reflect foreign viewpoints and interests.

## **POLITICS**

The business interests in public utility of owners of media outfits also constitute a challenge to balanced reporting. The media has also been involved in the backdoor operations during the election season. Chay Florentino-Hofilena writes (2004), “the

buying of the media in order to influence coverage is not new. But the form it takes and the amounts involved depend on what is at stake for the parties concerned, the 'purchasing power' of those who want to buy media influence, and on the particular vulnerabilities of individual journalists as well as of the media profession as a whole" (p. 1).

## REGULATION: LEGAL AND ILLEGAL

According to Santos (2003), the regulation and manipulation of Philippine TV news and public affairs programs by the government and traditional parties and politicians are undertaken through concealed, unofficial, semi-legal or even illegal efforts. Current and aspiring politicians alike exploit their connections with TV station owners and managers in order to gain media exposure through hosting or starring in their own programs. Political parties and candidates also engage in bribing or buying off members of the media in exchange for favourable media exposure (Florentino-Hofilena, 2004).

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA

The media is also seen as a conduit in promoting national identity and consciousness and this is perhaps the reason why the government prohibits foreign ownership of Philippine media companies. Attempts have been made though to amend this rule given the country's cash-strapped condition and the increasing convergence of technologies. For instance, the Philippines' economic framework, the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan for 2004-2010, advocates for the removal of so-called protectionist media policies as a means to accumulate much needed revenues for poverty reduction and job generation. However, this measure has been opposed as its end result is largely dependent on transparency and accountability, which have been a perennial problem in Philippine governance processes.

## **WOMEN, COMMUNICATION, MEDIA, AND NEW ICTS**

During the American period, a number of women tried their hands on both creative and journalistic writing. Among the pre-war writers whose works gained critical acclaim were Angela Manalang-Gloria, Carmen Guerrero-Nakpil and Estrella Alfon. Women were also involved in mainstream radio production with the likes of Tiya Dely Magpayo, Lina Flor and Genoveva Edroza Matute, all of whom have been credited with the development of the broadcast arts. Many more followed their footsteps after the war albeit men still dominated the print and broadcast media.

Although women were likewise involved in the television and film production, their participation was largely due to the orientation of these media to mimic the Hollywood genre. This encouraged the selection of actors who had fairer skin and generally, the

reinforcement of a colonial mentality which remains prevalent up to this day despite the entry of dark-skinned actors, most notable of whom was Nora Aunor.

The period from 1970s until the 1980s was a shining moment for women writers, including the wives of incarcerated journalists who courageously published their works which openly criticised the Marcos dictatorship. These women include Eugenia D. Apostol, Betty Go-Belmonte, Arlene Babst, Sheila Coronel, Melinda de Jesus, Ceres Doyo, Marra PL Lanot, Jo-Ann Maglipon, Letty Magsanoc, Malou Mangahas, Ninez Cacho Olivares, Tina Monzon Palma and Domini Torrevillas.

Although more women are now entering mass communications, gender-sensitive news reporting and programming still remains to be desired. Part of the reason behind this problem lies in the few women who manage to penetrate leadership positions in print, broadcast, and online media (Los Banos, 2001). As of 1995, only 18 women occupied editorial positions in Philippine newspapers out of some 80 editorial posts (Los Banos, 2001). Women's perspectives are also concentrated in features and entertainment sections. But more importantly, a male consumerist culture remains to be the prime determinant of the end product that comes out in public. As Letty Magsanoc explains, it is advertisements, rather than the news which reinforces and perpetuates gender stereotypes (Los Banos, 2001). The persistent gender stereotyping and the urgent need to develop more relevant content on, for and by women have led to the formation of intermediary groups which specifically address these concerns.

## **WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AND THEIR ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

### **WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

Academics and civil society discourses describe the Philippines as having the most vibrant, visible and dynamic women's movement in the Southeast Asian region. Filipino women's political activism became highly visible when thousands of women from all walks of life participated in the protest movement against the Marcos dictatorship. Women from both the grassroots and the middle class found themselves uniting to fight the oppressive and decadent state (Salidumay, 2006). Within this stream, writings in radical feminism and lesbian activism had likewise caught the political imagination of many Filipino women and newly-formed women's organisations (Salidumay, 2006).

### **MEDIA: DOUBLE EDGED SWORD**

Feminist groups are also wary of conventional media for its gender insensitivity and shallow treatment of issues. Nonetheless, women's groups are trying to harness the



power of media to mainstream their issues and advance their causes. They recognise that media mileage of a legal case, for example, can motivate the courts to be more careful and thorough with a case before passing judgment (Cedana, Javier & Villanueva, 2004). A good example of this is the recent landmark Subic Rape Case. In one of the testing grounds of the US-Philippine Visiting Forces Agreement, a woman who goes by the press name “Nicole” accused a US soldier of raping her. To support the case and to mobilise actions that support Nicole and the case, Task Force Subic Rape, a broad alliance of women’s organisations and other concerned groups, was created (Task Force Subic Rape, 2006). The group sent out email and text brigades to encourage rallies, fundraisers and other events in support of “Nicole.” It also wrote press releases on the highly publicised issue. An online petition in support of Nicole was also established. In its own way, the Task Force helped gain justice for “Nicole.”

## **KALAYAAN**

KALAYAAN or “*Kalayaan ng Kababaihan, Kalayaan ng Bayan, sabay nating ipaglaban!*” was created in July 1986 by activists of the First Quarter Storm. KALAYAAN signaled the birth of one of the earliest openly feminist organisations based in the Philippines. KALAYAAN showed how the woman question has gone beyond the realm of economy and into the private spheres –entering the personal realms of intimacy, identity and desire.

While some of the KALAYAAN members sought to extensively document the sufferings of women political detainees under Martial Law, other members actively produced creative work through music albums and poetry and story books to raise awareness on these cases (Evasco, 1988).

## **GENPEACE**

A highly innovative project, GENPEACE aims to develop functional literacy and advocates continuing education for both men and women. Central to this project is the importance of women’s participation in the development and promotion of a culture of peace. GENPEACE’s main apparatus includes the radio as a tool for communication and community mobilisation. GENPEACE also aims to integrate peace education and gender development in its activities, most notable of which is its maintenance of community-based radio stations in selected areas in Mindanao (Margallo, 2005). In 2002, the project was expanded to promote gender-sensitive and community-based peace education. This project expansion also allowed for the launch of community-based projects aimed towards enhancing economic activity and improving the delivery of basic services for both men and women (Margallo, 2005).

## **GABRIELA (GENERAL ASSEMBLY BINDING WOMEN FOR REFORMS, INTEGRITY, EQUALITY, LEADERSHIP AND ACTION)**

GABRIELA's goals include the creation of programs aimed towards uplifting the conditions of women and the organisation of efforts geared towards the elimination of unjust, unequal, oppressive and discriminatory practices that deter the full development of Filipinas as persons. For more than 20 years now, GABRIELA continues to form networks among local and international women's organisations to foster understanding and solidarity towards common issues in view of improving the conditions of women. Starting out as an intermediary group, GABRIELA has since expanded to become a party-list group (Cedana et al., 2004). GABRIELA utilises newspapers, tabloids, television and radio to issue press releases and statements. It also publishes books by women, an example of which is *Pangarap at Hinagpis: Mga Awit ng Kababaihang Maralita*, a compilation of poems about grassroots women edited by Aida Santos.

## **KANLUNGAN**

KANLUNGAN aims to provide quick response and remedies to the immediate needs and problems of prospective and returning overseas Filipino workers. Moreover, KANLUNGAN aims to educate female migrants regarding their rights (Cedana et al., 2004). It caters primarily to lower and middle class migrant workers by providing them with legal assistance and media projection. Wishing to inform the public against issues regarding Filipina migrant workers who are increasingly vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation, KANLUNGAN uses the media to mainstream its issues (Cedana et al., 2004).

KANLUNGAN uses broadsheets, tabloids, television and radio for its advocacy. It also uses the Internet, email and cellular phones to communicate with members, clients and partner intermediary groups. It also has a website which allows them to announce their activities and to make available relevant articles to the public (Cedana et al., 2004).

## **WOMENLEAD**

WomenLEAD is a feminist legal resource institution dedicated to advancing and protecting the human rights of women and girl-children. WomenLEAD is also very active in child rights advocacy. It aims to challenge the legal system for its role in perpetuating the subordination and marginalisation of women and girl-children. Moreover, WomenLEAD provides feminist counseling and legal services and makes research, publications and library resources available to the public (Cedana et al., 2004). WomenLEAD has its own publications and releases other materials such as primers, handouts and posters. It also utilises emails and has a website although this has not been updated since its creation. However, WomenLEAD does not have a monitoring system that allows it to study the

effect and influence of their publications (Cedana et al., 2004). Although they are open to being tapped by mainstream media as resource persons and are amenable to the use of conventional mass media and new communication technologies primarily in information dissemination and education, they are still wary of using it, especially when it comes to their legal services.

### **THE WOMEN'S MEDIA CIRCLE FOUNDATION, INC. (WOMEDIA)**

The Women's Media Circle (Womedia) Foundation is a non-stock, non-profit organisation of women whose main goal is the empowerment of women through education, training, media advocacy and communication. It remains the only women's organisation in the Philippines involved in media production dedicated to the promotion of gender justice. In order to do this, Womedia initiates programs that inform women and girls about their human rights and options towards growth and self determination. In addition to this, Womedia also aims to raise the consciousness of the public regarding gender issues, allowing them to understand, support and mobilise action for the promotion of gender justice.

Established in 1985 during the Marcos era, Womedia was initiated to be a cooperative radio venture by women from different women activist groups but only gained formal structure in 1986. Its first project was a weekly radio program called *WomanWatch*. This eventually became a daily program on DWIZ-AM in 1990. *Radyo WomanWatch* ran until 1993. In 1995, after the release of the declarations referring to girl-child and to young women's reproductive rights and sexual health from the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (United Nations, 1994) and the United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing (United Nations, 1995), Womedia decided to focus its efforts on the empowerment and enlightenment of young women and girls. For this reason, Womedia began the XYZ Multi-Media Advocacy Campaign on mainstream venues. This year, Womedia aims to step up its communication and empowerment initiatives through the following efforts: 1) the development of audio-visual modules on sexual health, self-esteem and sexual harassment; 2) the institution of a provincial leg of the XYZ-KALAKASAN Campus Tour in Southern and Northern Luzon; 3) the creation of a bolder series of TV programs on reproductive health; and, 4) the organisation of a series of training workshops on gender issues for media practitioners.

### **THE KABABAIHAN LABAN SA KARAHASAN FOUNDATION, INC. (KALAKASAN)**

The Kababaihan Laban Sa Karahasan Foundation, Inc. (KALAKASAN) is a women's intermediary group working for the empowerment of victim-survivors of gender violence.

KALAKASAN'S main goal is to support and empower victims of gender violence, especially women and girls, and to promote justice, specifically gender justice, through advocacy, training and legislative action. In order to achieve these goals, KALAKASAN has become involved in activities and programs that provide information, counselling and referral services on human rights and legal options to victims of gender violence. KALAKASAN also envisions to increase the awareness of the general public about violence against women through nationwide seminars, public information campaigns and special events.

KALAKASAN is the country's first public service project on domestic violence combining tri-media public information with direct service (Salidumay, 2006). KALAKASAN, through its networking component, began negotiations with the Quezon City Local Executives for the establishment of a Pilot Policewomen's Desk. One of its most significant advocacy work resulted in the issuance of a Presidential Directive by President Fidel Ramos on March 1993 that led to the establishment of Policewomen's Desks in key cities in the Philippines (Salidumay, 2006).

### **CAN'T LIVE IN THE CLOSET, INC. (CLIC)**

CLIC is a non-stock, non-profit duly registered corporation conceived on October 1993. CLIC is a lesbian institution working for the empowerment of lesbians and societal recognition of their human rights (Salidumay, 2006). CLIC conducts discussions and seminars for lesbians and non-lesbians for purposes of education, research and advocacy, with the aim of increasing public awareness and understanding of lesbian existence. In its initiatives, CLIC ties up with government agencies, non-government organisations, academic institutions and the media, among others. CLIC also initiates lesbian-only activities such as video showings, DykeChats and skills workshops (Salidumay, 2006).

### **WEDPRO**

WEDPRO is a feminist organisation that gives special attention to prostitution and trafficking as well as to reproductive and sexual rights (The Association of Foundations Philippines, Inc., 2001). It engages in research, training and community-based education. WEDPRO also documents, publishes and popularises important research on women.

### **WOMEN'S FEATURE SERVICE (WFS PHILIPPINES INC.)**

The Women's Feature Service aims to inform the public and to influence policy makers through the presentation of women's issues in mainstream media. WFS gives voices to women who, otherwise, would never be interviewed, such as urban poor or rural women. Moreover, WFS reports and analyses issues from a progressive women's perspective (Salidumay, 2006). WFS is the only all-women international news service producing over

400 features a year from a network of 125 women journalists from 60 countries with special focus on issues and trends that shape women's lives in every corner of the globe (Salidumay, 2006).

### **LAGABLAB**

The Lesbian and Gay Legislative Advocacy Network-Philippines (LAGABLAB) is a broad, non-profit, non-partisan network of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) organisations and individuals working towards achieving a society free from all forms of discrimination, particularly those based on gender and sexual orientation (LAGABLAB, 2006). It also links up with other LGBT groups in the region through the Asia-Pacific Rainbow (APR). At present, its main project involves the passage of the Anti-Discrimination Bill, a proposed legislation that criminalises a wide range of policies and practices that discriminate against Filipino LGBTs (LAGABLAB, 2006).

### **ANG LADLAD - THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION OF FILIPINO LESBIANS, GAYS, BISEXUALS AND TRANSGENDERS (LGBT)**

Ang Ladlad is a national organisation of Filipino lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered committed to fighting discrimination and providing support for one another (Ang Ladlad, 2006). The group, which also aimed to run for party-list position in 2007, also offers legal assistance, media monitoring, counselling and public awareness of issues relevant to the community (Ang Ladlad, 2006). The group has a strong media presence, appearing in radio and TV shows like *Dong Puno Live*, *Saksi*, *Unang Hirit* and others while also being visible in print through articles written about them in *Star*, *Inquirer* and other international publications.

### **ISIS INTERNATIONAL-MANILA**

Isis International Manila is a group that is changing the face of feminist cyber-activism. Despite the many obstacles and unfavourable conditions that restrict their access to electronic media, women have shown themselves to be excellent networkers, extending solidarity across national and global boundaries via electronic mail, print and real face-to-face encounters (Bautista, 2003).

Holding no illusions that cyberspace is utopian, Isis International Manila wishes to engage in the ICT battleground by challenging existing gender prejudice online, closing the digital divide and arming people to be more critical of technology. Isis is dedicated to catering to women's information and communication needs, creating channels of communication and networking, as well as building links among other organisations advocating for women's causes.

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## CHAPTER 8

### HOW INTERMEDIARY GROUPS USE COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

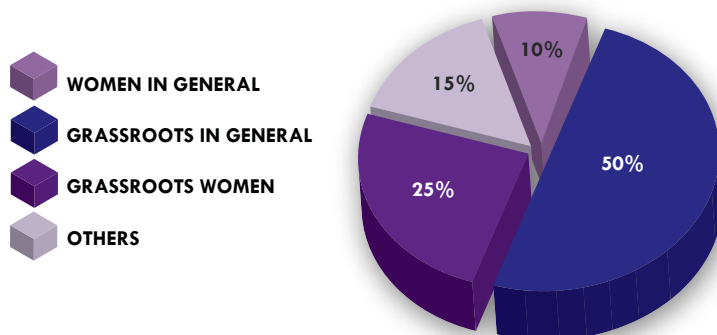
**A** TOTAL OF 20 organisations from all three major regions of the Philippines were interviewed for this study. The following are the major findings from these key informant interviews. The first two sections of this report were based on a content analysis of data gathered from the Organisational Information Sheets submitted by all the respondents while the subsequent sections were based on a content analysis of the key informant interviews. For a complete breakdown of the statistics per category, please see the annex.

It is important to note that many respondents seemed to answer the questions with all their grassroots beneficiaries in mind and not only the grassroots women who were the focus of the current study.

#### TYPE OF INTERMEDIARY GROUP

Based on the content analysis done on the Organisational Information Sheets (OIS) that the respondents filled out, the majority of the organisations in the sample (10 groups or 50% of the sample) provide services to and take on the issues and concerns of grassroots communities in general. Only 5 groups (25%) were focused on grassroots women. Three groups (15%) said they cater to women in general. The remaining 2 (10%) were broader in their target beneficiaries but nevertheless include grassroots women. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of groups in terms of beneficiaries.

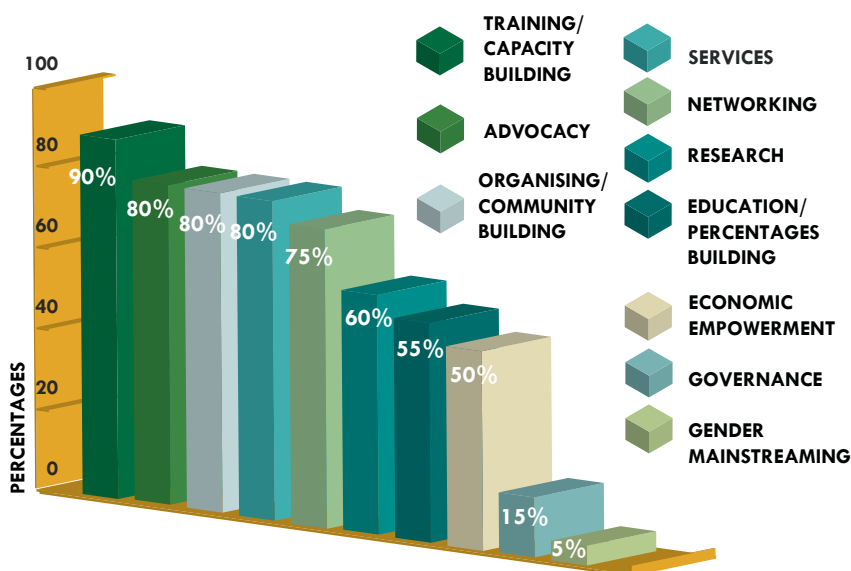
**FIGURE 1. TYPE OF ORGANISATION (BASED ON BENEFICIARIES) (N=20)**



**MISSION/THRUST OF THE ORGANISATION**

The content analysis of the OIS revealed that most organisations’ mandates involved capacity-building or training (90%). Many were also set up for advocacy purposes (80%), organising or community-building (80%), and providing services that include referrals (80%). There were also quite a number of groups whose thrust includes networking (75%) and research and publication and documentation (60%). Only a small number were into governance (15%) and gender mainstreaming (5%).

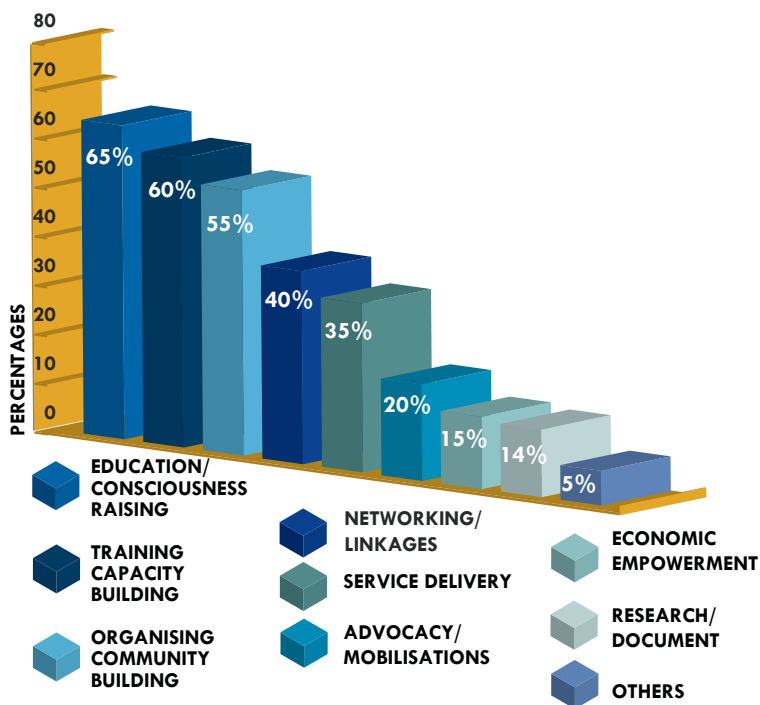
**FIGURE 2. MISSION / THRUST OF ORGANISATION (N=20)**



### STRATEGY IN COMMUNICATING WITH GRASSROOTS WOMEN

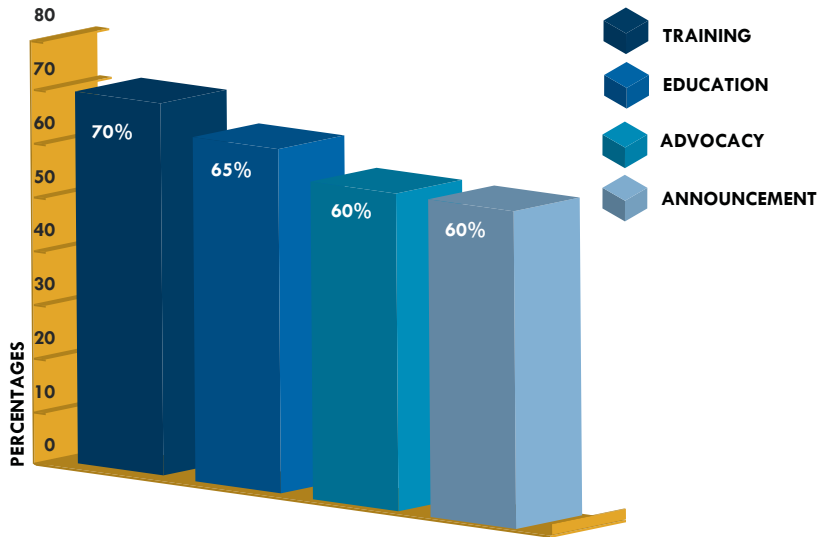
The most popular strategy employed by the organisations in communicating with their beneficiaries, particularly grassroots women, was education or consciousness-raising (65%), followed by training or capacity-building(60%), organising or community-building (55%), and networking (40%). Except for the consciousness-raising strategy, all these were consistent with the top organisational mandates mentioned in the previous section.

**FIGURE 3. STRATEGY IN COMMUNICATING WITH GRASSROOTS WOMEN (N=20)**



### USES OF COMMUNICATION TOOLS

The top uses of communication tools were for training, education, advocacy and announcement purposes. Figure 4 shows the percentages for each use. All 20 organisations mentioned at least one use for the tools they have been using. Interestingly, these top uses were in line with the strategies the groups used when interacting with grassroots women, as expounded above. Additionally, some tools were specifically cited for a particular administrative purpose or for generating publicity for the groups' activities.

**FIGURE 4. USES OF COMMUNICATION TOOLS (N=20)**

Many of the communication tools mentioned were used mainly for training (70%). Some of the tools have afforded them a degree of creativity that helped enliven the trainings:

“Sometimes, we invite theatre groups, theatre to help us explain issues, because when it comes to training and capacity building, creativity and resourcefulness are required as there are still areas that do not have electricity.”

The use of some tools has also allowed them to easily prepare before presentations and to maximize their energy during presentations:

“Quite recently, we have been relying on the PowerPoint because it’s easier to present and you can prepare it even before the training even though you use many words, it’s easy such that you don’t have to take time to write it on the board... it’s already prepared beforehand.”

Another popular use of communication tools is for education (65%). These tools helped introduce ideas or concepts that the group wants to share. One participant remarked, “It would be very nice if you could show them through a film with a big screen and they can... they can see that. There’s so many things that we can show just to broaden their horizons. And we saw that they are... they are ready to embrace new ideas.”



Communication tools in general were also used for advocacy purposes (60%). These tools also served as aid as the groups pushed for an issue, whether among the public or among government officials:

“Um... actually the radio programme is, um, we usually do this when there are special celebrations, ah, like women’s month or the 15 days of action against gender violence, or if not, ah, we usually rely on our, umm, network agencies or organisations.”

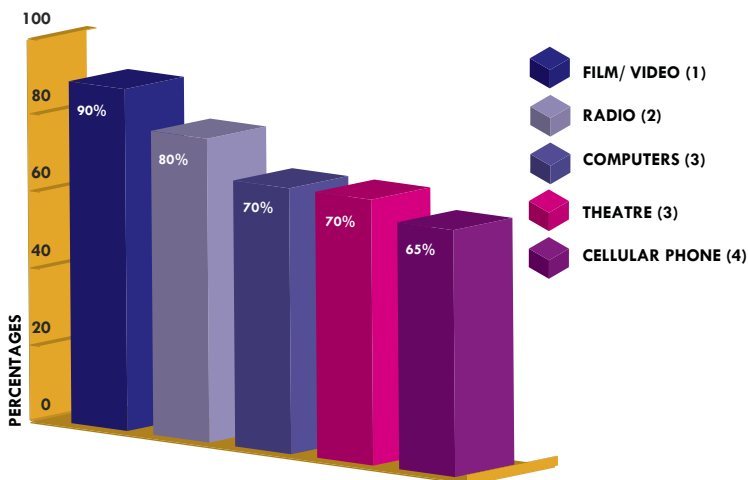
Communication tools in general were also helpful in publicising or announcing important events or activities of the organisation. Some groups expressed satisfaction with how the radio or the cellular phone has helped them spread the word about an upcoming activity or event among their target beneficiaries. As one respondent puts it:

“So, quite unlike before when you really need to go to the community because there are meetings, now this becomes easier through cellphones, through texting you are able get the message across. For example there are meetings or other activities, whatever activities, it’s better when there are cellphones for POs.”

**COMMUNICATION TOOLS USED BY INTERMEDIARY GROUPS**

The top communication tools used by a majority of the groups were film and video, radio, computer, theatre and cellular phone. The top five communication tools and the percentage of intermediary groups using each are seen in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5.** COMMUNICATION TOOLS USED BY INTERMEDIARY GROUPS (N=20)



The groups in the Philippines seem to prefer the audio-visual medium when interacting or reaching out to grassroots women, in particular. Films were mentioned by 18 out of the 20 groups in the sample (90%). Some of them stated that the films they show to grassroots women were either feature films made by local or foreign film companies, or videos produced by intermediary groups. Some were videos that were produced by the respondents themselves, usually in collaboration with other intermediary groups. In some instances, the groups merely act as resource speakers in the video produced by other groups. At other times, they provide the cases to be featured. A few groups, on the other hand, act as distributors by handing out CDs to their beneficiaries.

The films shown to beneficiaries vary in themes, issues and genre. Some groups show video-documentation or documentaries; others present feature films and even animations. Some groups present documentaries about their Gender and Development (GAD) programmes while others speak about Violence Against Women (VAW), prostituted women, HIV/AIDS, and other women's issues.

Films and videos are often employed in workshops, seminars, lectures, plays and in various fora where women's agenda are discussed. Films had been cited as a great way to jumpstart discussions, facilitate reflections, make inputs much more understandable, and synthesise points for grassroots women: "It's easier for them to catch-up, then input and then proceed to the deepening." But films can also be effective even without input or discussion. The film's message is at times enough.

Films are also used because they are believed to help widen the perspectives of their beneficiaries, making them see worlds and images different from their own. Such non-traditional visuals shared through films were thought to be powerful enough to touch the viewers, affecting how they perceive things and perhaps even shattering stereotypical depictions about women. As one group puts it:

"For example, in our culture, you don't see women doing male... traditional male jobs, such as construction work or police work. For a woman to be a police or for a woman to be a driver or others. And some would say, maybe with religion, it's not true, but we want to show them films of Muslims, for example, in other parts of the world, like Malaysia, Indonesia, who are into construction work, but you cannot just make a story out of that."

Films and videos are creative ways of connecting these women to the outside world, allowing them to learn more and be inspired.

But while many groups recognise the power of film, there is also some recognition of its limitations. For instance, the film's reliance on electricity makes its use problematic for some groups, particularly in communities that lack sustained electricity. For one group,

plans were afoot to show films as a form of community education but they realized that they would have to carry a mobile generator with them to some areas. In spite of this, films have been recognised as effective not only for women, but for the whole community as well.

The groups also acknowledged radio as a powerful medium, particularly in remote or far-flung areas not reached by television: "...in far-flung areas where there are no televisions, it's mostly the radio that they listen to." The radio's greatest strength lies in its reach. Thus, it is understandable why 16 out of the 20 organisations (80%) revealed this medium as one of the tools they use in interacting with grassroots women.

Some of these groups have their own radio programmes, which they air regularly. They invite resource speakers from other agencies, intermediary groups or from communities to talk about various weekly topics. Other groups, however, use the radio by becoming guest speakers themselves or becoming ad placers. They link up with other groups to be able to guest in their partners' programmes. It is important to note that at least two organisations used to have their own radio programmes, but had discontinued them due to the huge expense needed to sustain their operations.

Thus, the high costs required to operate a radio programme appears to be one of the reported obstacles to the use of radio. For those who don't have their own radio programmes, money was also cited as a problem. For their radio spots to be aired with certainty, groups had to have the sufficient financial resources to pay. Due to this difficulty, some groups needed to rely on their connections or relationships with station owners and managers for their radio spots to be aired. However, this had proven unreliable because the airing of the spots is now at the mercy of other people. Another reported problem was the tendency of some radio anchors to sensationalise an issue.

Despite these hindrances, the radio continues to be an effective medium for information and advocacy for these organisations. Some have even used it to announce the group's activities and the venues for these activities. By doing so, some beneficiaries were able to follow them to areas where the activities were being held. As one respondent related:

"And then what happened was, our training for that specific town was already finished, but she caught up with another training because she heard it from the radio! Even though she wasn't able to train in a certain area, in her own area, she transferred to another town because she heard the schedule of our trainings, so she was able to attend! I said, 'Why are you here?' 'No, I heard from the radio that you were here, I regret that I wasn't able to go to the training before but here I will join this training.'"

Many groups have also observed that the radio is easily accessed and preferred in the communities. Using it therefore would ensure that the organisation's message will get through to more grassroots women: "Of course, the people in the community do not have time to read because they are busy with their livelihood, so sometimes, they bring their radios with them to the garden."

The computer is the third most-mentioned tool among the intermediary groups, with 14 of them reporting it as something they use (70%). Interestingly, most of the groups use the computer mainly for their PowerPoint presentations. With PowerPoint, they are able to present inputs and photos during their trainings and popular education activities. They cited the ease with which they were able to present as a result of using this computer programme:

"Quite recently, we have been relying on the PowerPoint because it's easier to present and you can prepare it even before the training even though you use many words, it's easy such that you don't have to take time to write it on the board... it's already prepared beforehand."

The groups also found computers useful in encoding and in performing financial transactions. Playing computer games has also provided some form of entertainment for others: "Even without the Internet, only with the usage, with the encoding and then you show them the features of the computer, there are the games, then when they look at it, they will say, 'Wow, it is possible to play cards here in the computer!' Those things. (laughs)"

One group emphasised that they use the computer in the communities because the latter no longer finds the traditional way of writing and posting as interesting:

"Yes, they do not like those that are (unintelligible) posted, because we write on those... They dislike that already! It seems that they are disinterested, like when there are meetings, we use laptops, LCDs, it's already in the computer."

For some groups, however, the traditional way remains effective, especially in communities. This difference could be attributed to a difference in framework - the former may be talking about communities where electricity is available, while the latter may still be working in communities where electricity is not regular or even non-existent.

For 13 of the respondent-groups (65%), theatre was also one of the tools used. Many of them present role-plays or stage plays regarding women's issues, particularly VAW. Some of them use tableaux, lighting presentations and "informance" or informative performance. Often, these plays were staged in collaboration with local artist groups or partners such as

PETA, a progressive theatre organisation. With these groups' help, they are able to train their members in theatre skills needed for their advocacy.

These theatre presentations are usually employed in trainings and as part of structured learning exercises. One group even went on tour with their play in schools around the country. At least one group uses it in rallies, where they present lighting presentations or plays that last only for a few minutes.

Theatre allows the groups to work in areas where there is no electricity. It also allows them to be creative and resourceful in their presentation of issues and in encouraging action from partner communities. In other words, it allows them to communicate better with their target audience. In addition, theatre equips their members not just with acting and scriptwriting skills but also with coping skills. As one group revealed:

“And as they say, it's also therapeutic, in the sense that this is where they pour their, their coping with their problems, this is where they dedicate their time. It's like that, they do not think so much more about problems because... it seems that they are... they are entertained during practices, during rehearsals.”

Through theatre, the groups were able to increase the women's confidence and self-worth as reported by grassroots women themselves.

The cellular phone is also being used by 13 of the groups in the sample (65%). According to some groups, most people from the communities are now using the cellphone because it has become easier to acquire as compared to a landline phone:

“Cellphone, yes in communities. It seems that almost all people, mothers who are poor but they have cellphones (laughs out loud). They monitor their spouses. It's for spouses...”

In addition, the wide reach of a cellphone allows it to work even in remote mountainous areas, thus connecting far-flung places with other areas and bridging distances: “Because it can be used even in the mountains, even when you are on top of a mountain.”

The value of the cellphone lies in its short messaging service (SMS) or text. By using text, the relationship between the groups and the grassroots women has become more interactive, because feedback and replies have become more immediate. Grassroots women have been reported to benefit from the use of cellular phones because texting allows them to ask questions and receive immediate replies without having to travel and spend a considerable amount of money on transportation costs.

Some groups also admitted that the cellphone is used mainly for tasks such as informing people about their arrival, verifying the receipt of a sent fax that needed to be

claimed from another office, following up on a loan, coordinating for an activity or for any administrative activities:

“In our view, 80% of the use of our cellphones is more for official use because it is used in coordination, for example in 3 areas, so if there are certain things, they are consulted through cellphones, through text, and then sometimes, our organisers or other staff members, if they will follow-up on participants, they just text, there lies its use.”

However, the cellphone was never used to tell a story or communicate a message in the same way that the other media like film, radio, computer or theatre can:

“Ah the cellphone, the use of cellphones, ‘Oh, how are you? Are you going to pay your debts?’ That’s it. (laughs) It’s straightforward, because when you use cellphone, it’s not complicated. The cellphone is just used for ‘How is my loan? Is my loan OK? When are you going to pay?’ That is the only use of the cellphone for us. We do not use the cellphone as a way to tell a story.”

Some groups also observed that texting and its use of shortcuts have limited women’s ability to be expressive. Texting does not allow for the expression of non-verbal cues and actual feelings. It has even been known to convey the wrong feelings thus leading to miscommunication problems:

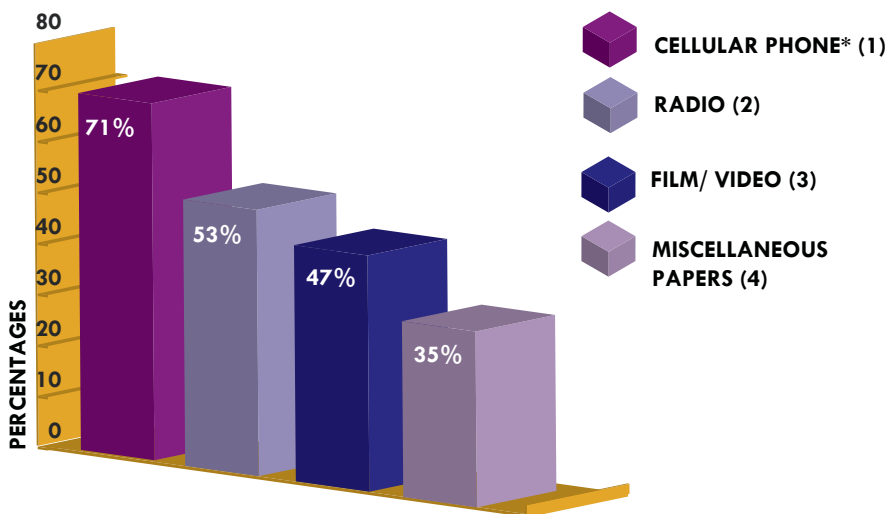
“Ah, you see, because the cellphone, sometimes what you feel, there is no feeling... Though sometimes in the lines, there are some feelings. But at least, when you see face to face, you see the facial expressions, the feelings, it’s more transparent when it’s face to face, and your conversation is more detailed.”

Looking at these top five tools conveys the Filipino groups’ emphasis on the importance of creativity in presentation. It may be noted that the groups’ use of the films/ videos, computer (PowerPoint) and theatre belie this tendency to look for what would make the grassroots women more interested and inspired to listen to the group’s message and ideas. On the other hand, the use of radio and cell phones implies the difficulties faced by people in areas that are either too poor or too remote to experience good services. The wide reach and coverage of these tools have made it possible for the groups to interact with more grassroots women in more areas.

### COMMUNICATION TOOLS MOST ACCESSIBLE TO GRASSROOTS WOMEN

The tools most accessible to grassroots women, as observed by the intermediary groups, are the cellular phone, films/videos, radio, and other paper-based tools like manila paper, primers, manuals and metacards. These top tools and their respective percentages are seen in Figure 6. Note that only 17 groups answered this question.

**FIGURE 6.** COMMUNICATION TOOLS MOST ACCESSIBLE TO GRASSROOTS WOMEN (N=17)



Not surprisingly, the cellular phone appears to be the most accessible to grassroots women according to 71% of the respondents (12 out of 17 respondents). A cursory glance at the local setting would reveal that cellular phones have become a staple among Filipinos, male or female, young or old, rich or poor. As one respondent described it, “In the community, you cannot see mothers who do not have cellphones. I bet you, you go to the community and you will see (laughs).” With people’s organisations (POs) having cell phones, it becomes much easier for the intermediary groups to text the community about news updates and upcoming activities. The reality is that it is much easier, cheaper and faster to acquire a cellular phone than a landline phone in the Philippines: “It’s easier, the cell phone is only cheap. And also, it’s like a basic need for the family, so they have cell

phones already.” Even if there are only two or three people in the community that have a cell phone, they become the conduit for the other people to communicate through text. When people want to send text, they just pay those who own cell phones a certain amount.

The cellular phone is one of the most visible new ICTs in contemporary Filipino life, with many people owning one or at least having access to one. One group admitted that they rely on the cellular phone because many of their beneficiaries or intermediary group partners possess one already: “We rely on the cellphone, because many of them own cellphones or they access cellphones through an NGO that serves as a conduit between us and the grassroots.”

The radio also appears to be accessible to women, according to 53% (9 out of 17 groups) of the respondents. Radio is a tool found in many community households. Whenever a group speaks on the air, grassroots women have been known to text in their reactions, questions or comments. This suggests that the community women easily access the radio, listen to it, and actively take part in the discussion through feedback. Radio programmes about women are particularly supported by community women.

The radio works particularly well in regions and areas not easily reached by mail or letters. Some grassroots women have been known to attend meetings because they heard about them on radio: “Regarding the response of the participants, it’s OK too! At least, there’s ‘Hey, we heard from the radio about this. We heard we have an activity!’ So they go down to join the activity.”

Since films and videos are used by many groups, it is likewise not surprising that these are the ones that are mostly accessible to grassroots women (47% or 8 out of 17 respondents). With the intermediary groups’ collection of videos, the grassroots women are able to access a video tackling an issue relevant to them:

“For example, what we have here is, ah VAW, there’s No More Sabado Nights, and then we have a film on, almost all issues! Women and poverty, women and religion, we have trafficking. So there’s a lot, we also have films on basic women’s orientation, we use these for issues, on gender issue, so that’s what they watch, down to the community.”

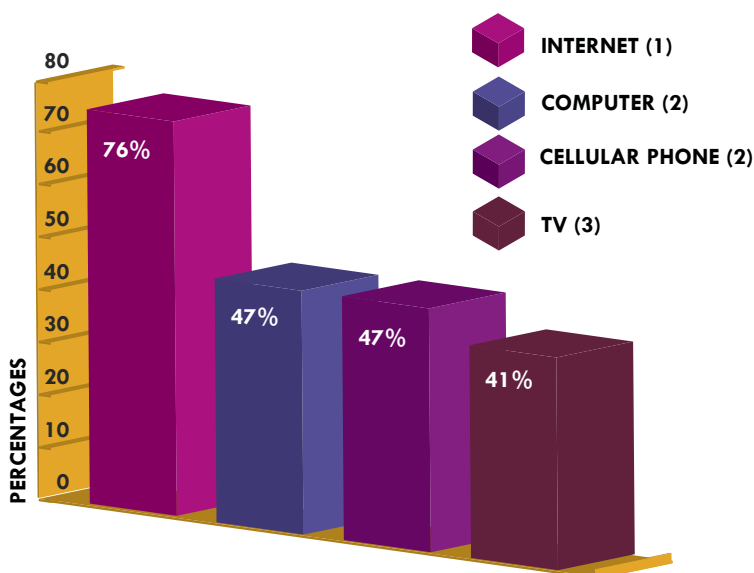
The old-fashioned way of using manila papers, primers, manuals, visual aids and metacards is also something accessible to the women (35% or 6 out of 35 respondents). Even if you go to the remotest areas, one will not be hard-pressed to find or carry such materials, because electricity is not required to operate these tools: “Yeah, manila paper, ballpen, we do not have a projector, because sometimes we go to the barangay level especially the remote areas where they do not have electricity, especially in the most far-flung mountains.”



### COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS LEAST ACCESSIBLE TO GRASSROOTS WOMEN

As perceived by the intermediary groups, the Internet, computer, TV, and interestingly, the cellular phone, are the least accessible tools for the grassroots. These tools and their corresponding percentages can be seen in Figure 7. Only 17 intermediary groups gave answers to this question.

**FIGURE 7.** COMMUNICATION TOOLS LEAST ACCESSIBLE TO GRASSROOTS WOMEN (N=17)



The Internet appears to be the least accessible tool to women (76% or 13 out of 17 respondents) and in fact, to the community in general: “But usually those who use the Internet are not from the base sector, there’s only a few who want to learn about the Internet. Because usually in the community, they’re not very interested in the Internet.”

The main reason behind such difficulty in accessing the Internet is that access to Internet necessitates a lot of expenses. Since Internet requires a computer and a landline phone which are tools the grassroots could not usually afford, this medium is alien to many of them: “... more often than not, they have no telephone, they have no computer in areas in Mindanao so it’s really not possible to access the Internet.” In addition, subscription to Internet connection entails high costs as well. In some provinces, the Internet is only a

recent introduction which could account for its low popularity and access in those areas.

Among the grassroots, it is mostly the youth who are able to access this. The school allows the youth limited access to the Internet. There was also an observation that some grassroots women tend to be shy to go to Internet cafes. The reason is still unknown, and merits further study: "Yes there is, but I think it's very expensive too, and a woman to go to the Internet café, they appear to be shy about it, they are not yet that confident about it..."

Since the grassroots cannot easily access the Internet, it makes sense that the computer is also difficult to access, according to 8 respondents (47%). Computers are a rarity in grassroots communities. One respondent explains, "This is what I'm talking about computers, because first, they do not have accessibility in the community, you see, who owns a computer there?" Another respondent even said in half-jest, "no, that's why we are laughing, we were thinking, how are we going to bring a computer there, if your community hasn't even seen a typewriter? (laughs)"

Like the Internet, the computer requires money and literacy. Few among the grassroots can afford the cost of buying a computer and few have the skills to operate it:

"These tools, for example, in computers, they need to be literate, they need to know how to type, how to use the mouse, this is one of our problems. While this is really good, getting information, networking, and accessing, very few can afford it. Only those that have offices in the government, very few in private have computers, even in small businesses. This is one of the limitations, the computer is expensive, even if you say it's only 30 thousand, that's already expensive for us."

That the computer is not a necessity among the grassroots is an understatement, especially since the disadvantaged communities still struggle for their basic needs. And there seems to be no urgency to learn the skills for this. One group sensed a lack of interest among the women:

"In my view, this is not important for them since their families do not have anything to eat. So what if I don't have a computer, if I do not have work? Usually, in the community, they do manicure, laundry, selling. There was a time when we had a launch where we held a computer training session, but no one came."

While many respondents mentioned the cellphone as the most accessible to grassroots women, it was also reported as one of the least accessible, although by a lesser percentage (47% or 8 out of 17 respondents). One of the reasons cited for the inaccessibility was the lack of signal in some areas: "But only a few have cellphones in that area. Then there are also areas that do not have signals. These areas cannot be reached by cellphones." That the

cell phone generally has a wide reach is acknowledged as a fact. However, it is also true that there are still some areas that lack cell sites. It is also possible that the respondents were also talking about some telecommunication networks that still do not have a strong signal.

Some groups also defined the lack of access as the lack of cellphone load. They may have the phone but without the load, they cannot use it, particularly for campaigns on women's issues:

“We have campaigns that are good to promote through text barrage. For example, we just have a statement that says, ‘Women should unite, we should fight E-VAT,’ that would be nice to promote through a text phone barrage, but who can do that? Only those that have money to buy load.”

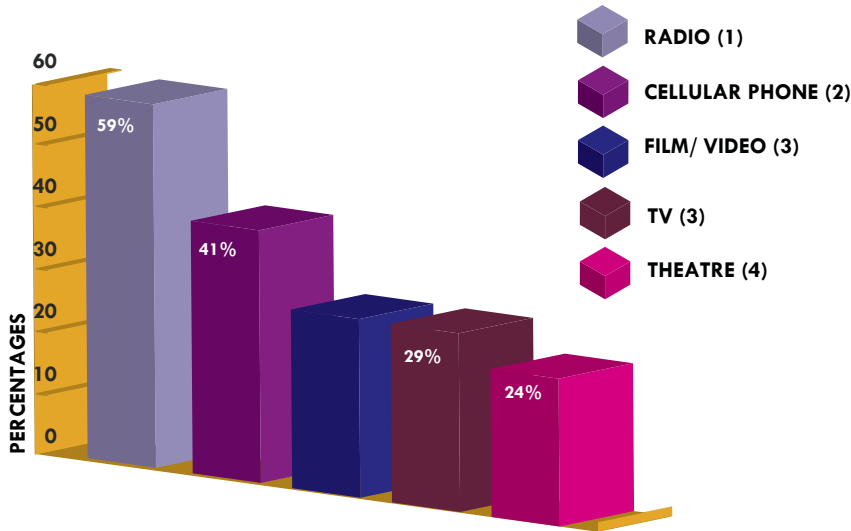
Lack of access could also be a matter of choice and age. One group observed that the older generation tends to be more hesitant about owning or using a cellphone: “Those who are older do not like cellphones.”

Seven of the respondents (41% or 7 out of 17 respondents) observed that the television is also inaccessible to grassroots women. The main factors were the lack of electricity in some areas, television's high cost, and its limited coverage: “In far-flung areas where there are no televisions, they listen instead to the radio.” The inaccessibility of the television can also be attributed to its concentration in urban areas: “Usually, they are in the urban centers only, not in the rural areas.”

## **MOST EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

When asked what they consider to be the most effective communication tools, the topmost answers were radio, cellular phone, film/video and TV. Figure 8 shows the percentages of each of these tools. Only 17 groups provided answers to this question. Based on the answers, it would appear that the wide reach or coverage of a communication tool and/or its audiovisual capacity are important indicators determining the effectiveness of the tool.

It is important to note that when the respondents gave their answers to this and the subsequent questions, they were at times not answering based on what they experienced, but on what they think would or would not be effective.

**FIGURE 8. MOST EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS (N=17)**

Radio was perceived by 10 out of 17 respondents to be the most effective tool. One of the major reasons cited was the ability of the radio to reach even the most far-flung areas:

“Because some of our areas are far-flung and cannot be reached by the television so the use of the radio is more applicable, uhm. So we communicate with them through radio.”

The radio’s powerful signal allows people even from the remotest communities to be informed, educated and entertained. It is effective because the information broadcasted over the radio has a very high probability of reaching its target communities, particularly the grassroots women, immediately. Grassroots women learn quickly about the announcement or information and are able to respond or prepare quickly as well:

“Uhhh, they can be reached! And then immediately they know, ‘So this is what will happen tomorrow, we have an activity!’ It’s also easier and faster to respond to your immediate calls. For example, it was only 2 days before an activity, but they were able to prepare immediately. Even if you don’t follow up with them, if this is the time that you appointed, they will come on that time!”

The flexibility of the radio is also evident in the different ways it can help further the

organisation's strategies. One group remarked that they were able to maximise the radio because "... even if capacity-building is the objective or even if it's advocacy for an issue or even if it's information campaign, it is the radio that we are able to maximise the most."

The radio also does not interfere with the grassroots women's activities. They can listen to it whatever it is they are doing at the moment, whether it be laundry, cooking or ironing:

"... With the radio, even if you are doing the laundry, even if you are cooking, that is what's positive about it. So while they are working, at least, they can listen to the things that are being shared to them."

Another group suggested another feature that could make the radio effective among grassroots women. Organisations could capitalize on the observation that the level of interest of many grassroots women in the radio is quite high. This interest in the capacity to entertain could become a good starting point for the organisations in their campaigns to get the community women more informed and involved:

"They like it when their names are mentioned, they listen to their songs, to the songs that they requested. So in that way, they have an interest in that. We can use that as a starting point such that we can change the content."

The cellular phone is also an effective tool according to 7 out of 17 respondents (41%). It sends messages quickly, elicits immediate replies, and is ultimately cheaper on the pocket: "it's faster and much less expensive." Due to all these, the SMS or text feature of the cellphone allows the groups to conduct a text brigade on the different campaigns and announcements:

"In the community, the cellphone is maximised such that when there are meetings or campaigns, the text brigade is utilised. I think the cellphone has become a very useful tool now."

The film was cited as most effective by 5 out of 17 respondents (29%). One group shared that their video on prostitution was effective in enlightening the grassroots women and the community in general. The audiovisual nature of the films and videos makes it effective among grassroots women. In particular, its visuals easily catch the attention of the women and allow them to easily comprehend the messages the organisation wants to convey: "if it's in video or documentary, it can be absorbed easily by the participants, because they see something, they hear something." Some groups admitted that mere

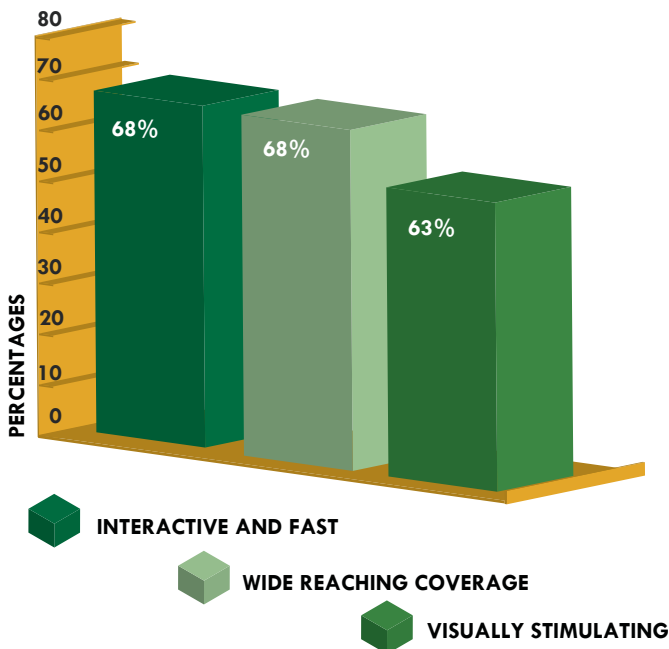
speaking or lecturing about women's issues is no longer effective: "When you only talk, it's like you're selling something... for example, in prostitution, sometimes it's not very attractive... especially to the public." Currently, it appears that it is no longer enough to rely on such a method.

Five out of 17 groups (29%) stated that the television is most effective. Like the films and videos, it was cited for its audio-visual nature.

## REASONS WHY A TOOL IS EFFECTIVE

The top three reasons given as to why a communication tool was considered effective are the following: (1) its interactive nature; (2) its wide-reaching coverage; and, (3) its visually stimulating nature. The percentages for each are shown in Figure 9. These topmost reasons coincide with the reasons cited above with regard to the most effective communication tools. Only 16 organisations responded to this question.

**FIGURE 9.** REASONS WHY A TOOL IS EFFECTIVE (N=16)



Most of the respondents (13 out of 19 respondents or 68%) cited the wide-reaching coverage of the tools as the reason for the tool's effectiveness. On the one hand, this could also refer to the radio's ability to get broadcasted even in the remotest areas:

"... we could also use our radio, we will radio to the community to tell them about a programme. Perhaps that would be a good idea, like in the mountains, many can be reached already."

Or it could be referring to the cellular phone's reach: "In my view, it is the cellphone (laughs) that is the most important, isn't it? Because anywhere, you can be reached by communication, isn't that what we are pushing for?" On another note, this can also refer to the Internet's ability to bridge even the distances between countries.

There were also 13 respondents (68%) who cited the interactive quality of the communication tools. Being interactive, these tools allow people to receive messages faster or to reply to messages as soon as they want. The immediate feedback not only cuts back on time and costs, but also potentially furthers one's understanding of the issue:

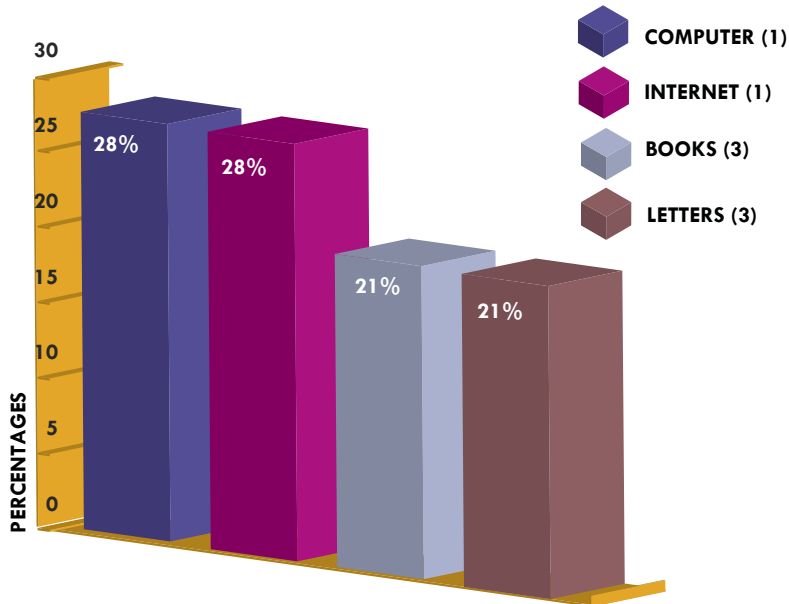
"It is also effective because... after that, there can be interaction or deepening. I think that is what makes it effective, because you can immediately get the response. Whereas with the materials, we don't... for example, upon giving, we cannot immediately ask, "So what did you get out of it?" It's like when you give it, you do not have any way of gauging what are its effects on the person."

The visual aspect of a medium is also an important factor in its effectiveness, according to 12 of the respondents (63%). When a communication tool has an ability to showcase its visuals, it also has the ability to call attention immediately. It stimulates the different senses, thereby making the message easier to grasp. Sometimes, its effects on the person can be almost visceral. As one respondent shared:

"Hmm, the audio-visual is what is really effective. If it's in print, it's not as effective even if the discussion is comprehensive. Because sometimes, I get amazed, even in the parlor when I get my haircut done, 'Hey Tita, I saw you in TV, you were being interviewed in this show,' so I realize that the TV really has an impact."

## **LEAST EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

The communication tools that are considered least effective, according to the 14 groups which responded to this question, were computer, the Internet, letter and book. Figure 10 shows the percentages of each tool.

**FIGURE 10.** LEAST EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS (N=14)

The computer, as mentioned by 4 out of the 14 groups (28%), was perceived as least effective. One respondent, however, clarified that the reason for its ineffectiveness was due to its low access among the grassroots and not to its inherent nature as a tool. Thus, effectiveness is based on access:

“In that sense I would probably say that it is least effective not because the computer is not effective, but only because there is hardly any access. So it is not effective because it cannot be accessed by people. But of course, if they can have access to computer, most especially to the Internet, it can also become potentially effective.”

This low access is, to a large extent, due to its high costs. The lack of electricity in some areas may also be hampering the access to and use of computers.

To add, low access leads to low literacy on computers. Without the requisite skills, grassroots women will not be able to benefit much from this technology. Organisations will not be able to reap as well the full impact that the computer is potentially capable of. The experiences of one organisation attest to this:



"Ah, for example, we have a paralegal formation programme that involves research and as part of the tool used in studying the law, they have CD-ROMs through which the law is available. Ah, we tried teaching it but you really need basic knowledge, such as how to turn on the computer, etc. because it seems that they find these things difficult."

The Internet is another tool that is considered least effective as indicated by 4 of 14 respondents (28%). This is understandable given that the computer is not considered accessible and effective as well: "They do not have access to the Internet because they do not have computers." One group added that the Internet could in fact be effective since it holds so much information and offers services that could help the grassroots women. However, at its current state, the potential of the Internet remains unrealized. Given this, it may be considered "least maximised" rather than "least effective":

"Least effective ah, if we're going to talk about communication tools for the grassroots, for now I think the Internet hasn't been maximized yet. Uhhh, there are some initiatives, for example, I think the information that is available through the web is very effective. I think even the most basic function of sending emails hasn't even been maximised! How much more when it comes to accessing information through the website or webpage (coughs). Surfing for example hasn't been maximised as well."

Letters have been recognized by 3 out of 14 respondents (21%) as least effective as well. For one thing, letters take several days to arrive unless they are hand carried. This has become particularly evident in light of the popularity of high technology equipments like the computer and the cellular phone:

"Currently, our communication system is quite advanced. Because when you send letters, it takes how many days to arrive. Unless it's hand carried, hmm. That is our view, because we are already modernized (laughs). Currently, we use high-technology, we use communication channels that are faster."

For another, letters tend to be ignored for the most part, perhaps because these are too common and too plain to be noticed: "Yes, we do not give out letters. Because based on our experiences, they just throw letters in the trash sometimes."

Similar to letters, 3 out of 14 respondents (21%) likewise saw books as least effective. Filipinos in general are said not to have adopted reading as a habit. The grassroots women are not an exception. The lack of interest in reading is not improved by books that are too technical to be understood or too text-heavy to sustain the attention:

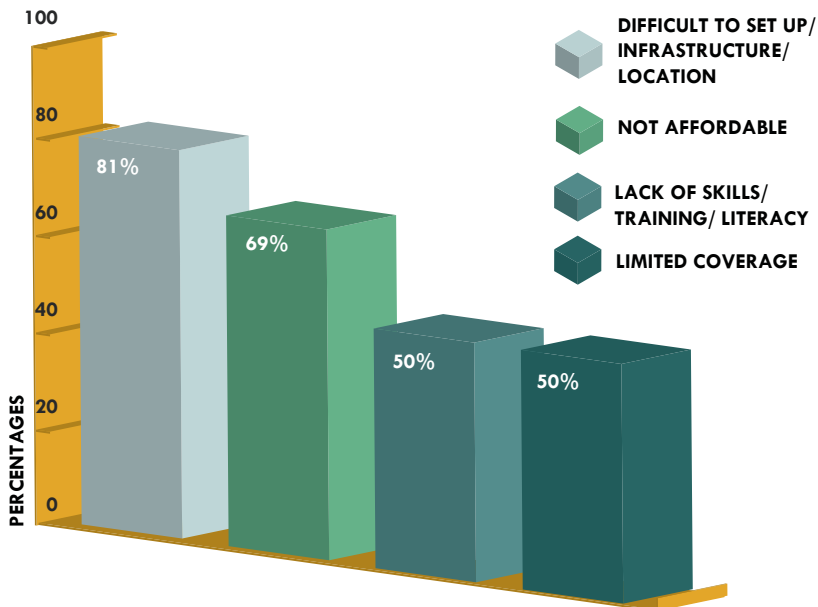
“For example, with a Piglas Diwa that is text-heavy, they complain that it has too much (laughs) too much text, that it lacks visuals. Hmm, perhaps because it is not the habit of the Filipinos to read especially in the grassroots, but with professionals, of course they like journals of Marso Otso, those are very effective.”

It is interesting to note as well that many grassroots women may not have the time to read books given everything they have to do at home and in the community: “They do not have the time to sit down to read. So that still depends on who are the mothers that you will give these books to.”

**REASONS WHY A TOOL IS INEFFECTIVE**

The top reasons cited for a communication tool’s ineffectiveness were in line with the reasons mentioned in the previous section about the least effective communication tools. The lack of infrastructure appears to be a problem, as well as the affordability of services. The lack of skills, training or literacy to operate the tool also appears to be a hindrance. Their respective percentages are shown on Figure 11. Only 16 organisations provided their insights to this question.

**FIGURE 11. REASONS WHY A TOOL IS INEFFECTIVE (N=16)**



A majority of the respondents (13 out of 16 respondents or 81%) believed that the difficulty of setting up a communication tool, particularly new ICTs, or its lack of infrastructure in their areas, has made it an ineffective tool for the grassroots. The problem with the electricity in many communities best exemplifies this:

“Like for example, as I said earlier, providing more visuals is very effective. And we think that if you let them see films, it would also be very effective. However, they do not have electricity there. They do not have those things. So we can only do so much in terms of visuals.”

The poor quality of line connections has also been mentioned as hampering communication. Thus, a communication tool's potential cannot be realised simply because the infrastructure in the place is not up to standard:

“Yes, especially in the web, especially in the Internet. That's it, our server is always down! So instead of being able to communicate faster, instead of removing barriers, too much time is wasted because it's too slow.”

The affordability of a communication tool or the access to it is also a major issue, particularly for 11 of the respondents (69%). Cellphones may have become more visible through the years but many times the grassroots women could not afford to purchase load or text and call credits. Putting up a radio programme also requires a big amount of money. Advertisements or announcements over the radio, tv or newspaper would also necessarily entail some huge expenses:

“Sometimes it's very expensive too. You're writing only on one-fourth or one-eighth of a page but it's already very costly if you will go to the newspaper. Maybe it's also possible if you could just have one piece of paper and then we just distribute it to them. But the printing is also costly. And sometimes, especially for women from the grassroots level, how many of them are going to read it?”

Furthermore, high-technology tools are beyond the reach of many grassroots women. Computers and Internet connection would never become priorities over basic needs. Even broadsheets and tabloids can become a burden:

“That is why radio, tv, print materials and even newspapers are not purchased by the grassroots because they cost five, six pesos. Even the tabloids are priced at six pesos, that's not accessible to them anymore.”

The lack of literacy or skills to operate or maximise the communication tools, especially new ICTs, has been a big problem as well. This is especially true with high-technology equipments like computer, fax and the Internet. The infrastructure or the equipment may be there but if there is no knowledge on how to use it, then it would not benefit the grassroots women at all:

“But you know, the use of Internet or information system has a very big potential now. Because if you will look at it... all municipal halls, all private institutions are connected already. Only they do not know how to use it. So there lies a huge potential that can be accessed by women.”

For some women, there is indifference to learning or maximising these tools, particularly new ICTs, because either these are too expensive for them or they do not see these as having the potential to change their lives:

“Because it seems that this is not their field. They have the ability to use the fax and to use the computer, but it’s only up to that point. If we will look at it, we need to explain to them what the meaning and importance of these things are to their lives.”

## ANNEX

### COMPLETE TABLE OF FIGURES

**TABLE 1. TYPE OF ORGANISATION (N=20)**

Type	f / %
1. Grassroots in general	10 50%
2. Grassroots women	5 25%
3. Women in general	3 15%
4. Others	2 10%

**TABLE 2. MISSION / THRUST OF ORGANISATION (N=20)**

Mission/ Thrust	f / %
1. Training/ Capacity-building	18 90%
2. Organising/ Community-building	16 80%
3. Advocacy	16 80%
4. Services	16 80%
5. Networking	15 75%
6. Research	12 60%
7. Education/ Information-building	11 55%
8. Economic Empowerment	10 50%
9. Governance	3 15%
10. Gender mainstreaming	1 5%

**TABLE 3. STRATEGY IN COMMUNICATING WITH BENEFICIARIES (N=20)**

Strategy	f / %
1. Education/ Consciousness-raising	13 65%
2. Training/ Capacity-building	12 60%
3. Organising/ Community- building	11 55%
4. Networking/ Linkages	8 40%
5. Service delivery	7 35%
6. Advocacy/ Mobilisations	4 20%
7. Economic Empowerment	3 15%
8. Others	1 5%

**TABLE 4. USES OF COMMUNICATION TOOLS (N=20)**

Uses	f / %
1. Training	14 70%
2. Education	13 65%
3. Advocacy	12 60%
4. Announcement	12 60%
5. Organising	6 30%
6. Networking	5 25%
7. Research	5 25%
8. Others	4 20%
9. Services	2 10%

**TABLE 5. COMMUNICATION TOOLS USED BY INTERMEDIARY GROUPS (N=20)**

Tools	f / %
1. Film/ Video	18 90%
2. Radio	16 80%
3. Computer	14 70%
4. Theatre	14 70%
5. Cellular Phone	13 65%
6. Photo	12 60%
7. Miscellaneous Papers	12 60%
8. Others	11 55%
9. Pamphlets	10 50%
10. TV	10 50%
11. Fax	9 45%
12. Landline Phone	9 45%
13. Letters	9 45%
14. Internet	8 40%
15. Posters	8 40%
16. Leaflets	8 40%
17. Placards/ Streamers	7 35%
18. Slides	7 35%
19. Book	6 30%
20. Comics	6 30%
21. Magazine	6 30%
22. Newsletter	6 30%
23. Songs	6 30%

**TABLE 5. CONTINUED**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>f / %</b>
24. Oral / Storytelling	5 25%
25. Print Materials (gen.)	4 20%
26. Stickers	4 20%
27. OHP	3 15%
28. Flag	2 10%
29. Newspaper	2 10%
30. Dance	1 5%
31. Puppet	0 0%

**TABLE 6. COMMUNICATION TOOLS MOST ACCESSIBLE TO GRASSROOTS WOMEN (N=17)**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>f / %</b>
1. Cellular Phone	12 71%
2. Radio	9 53%
3. Film / Video	8 47%
4. Miscellaneous Papers	6 35%
5. Leaflet	5 29%
6. Letter	4 24%
7. TV	4 24%
8. Landline Phone	3 18%
9. Magazine	3 18%
10. Photo	3 18%
11. Slide	3 18%
12. Song	3 18%
13. Theatre	3 18%
14. Fax	2 12%
15. Computer	2 12%
16. Internet	2 12%
17. Oral/ Storytelling	2 18%
18. Pamphlet	2 12%
19. Placard/ Streamer	2 12%
20. Poster	2 12%
21. Book	2 12%
22. Comics	1 6%
23. Dance	1 6%
24. Flag	1 6%

**TABLE 6. CONTINUED**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>f / %</b>
25. Newsletter	1 6%
26. Newspaper	1 6%
27. Others	1 6%
28. Sticker	1 6%

**TABLE 7. COMMUNICATION TOOLS LEAST ACCESSIBLE TO GRASSROOTS WOMEN (N=17)**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>f / %</b>
1. Internet	13 76%
2. Computer	8 47%
3. Cellular Phone	8 47%
4. tv	7 41%
5. Radio	6 35%
6. Landline Phone	5 29%
7. Fax	2 12%
8. Miscellaneous Papers	2 12%
9. Oral / Storytelling	2 12%
10. Poster	2 12%
11. Film	1 6%
12. Leaflet	1 6%
13. Newsletter	1 6%

**TABLE 8. MOST EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS (N=17)**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>f / %</b>
1. Radio	10 59%
2. Cellular Phone	7 41%
3. Film	5 29%
4. tv	5 29%
5. Theatre	4 24%
6. Fax	2 12%
7. Oral / Storytelling	2 12%
8. Print	1 6%
9. Pamphlet	1 6%
10. Misc Papers	1 6%



**TABLE 8. CONTINUED**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>f / %</b>
11. Letter	1 6%
12. Computer	1 6%
13. Others	1 6%

**TABLE 9. REASONS WHY A COMMUNICATION TOOL IS CONSIDERED MOST EFFECTIVE (N=19)**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>f / %</b>
1. Interactive	13 68%
2. Wide-reaching coverage	13 68%
3. Visually stimulating	12 63%
4. Lasting impact	11 58%
5. Clear target focus	11 58%
6. Culturally appropriate	9 47%
7. Affordable	7 37%
8. Written form	6 32%
9. Easy to set up/ Infrastructure/ Location	5 26%
10. Has skills/ Training/ Literacy	5 26%
11. Others	3 16%

**TABLE 10. LEAST EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOLS (N=14)**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>f / %</b>
1. Computer	4 28%
2. Internet	4 28%
3. Letter	3 21%
4. Book	3 21%
5. TV	2 14%
6. Cellular Phone	2 14%
7. Radio	1 7%
8. Oral / Storytelling	1 7%

**TABLE 11. REASONS WHY A COMMUNICATION TOOL IS CONSIDERED LEAST EFFECTIVE (N=16)**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>f / %</b>
1. Difficult to set up/ Infrastructure/ Location	13 81%
2. Not affordable	11 69%
3. Lack of skills/ training/ literacy to use it	8 50%
4. Limited coverage	8 50%
5. Written form	7 44%
6. Culturally inappropriate	6 38%
7. Not interactive	4 25%
8. Diffused target focus	3 19%
9. No lasting impact	1 6%
10. Others	1 6%

## CHAPTER 9

# HOW INTERMEDIARY GROUPS VIEW EMPOWERMENT AND COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES

### EMPOWERMENT

**D**IFFERENT GROUPS in the Philippines have varying notions of empowerment. The respondents' answers converge in the following ways. Many of the intermediary groups believed that empowerment is about the "holistic development of the human person," involving strengthening the individual economically, politically and socially. LIKAS and GABRIELA, for example, believe that empowering a person involves cultivating progress in these three aspects.

Some organisations, however, chose to focus on the notion of empowerment as bringing about the following: (1) economic independence, (2) political participation, (3) community organising and solidarity building, (4) individual agency, (5) family transformation, and (6) societal transformation.

Some intermediary groups viewed these aspects as processes which lead to empowerment, while others viewed these aspects as indications that empowerment is already achieved. Some also chose to view empowerment as both a process and an end goal.

Moreover, one intermediary group could relate many themes on their definition of empowerment as well as how to bring this about. As many of the groups agreed, empowerment was a matter of upholding the rights and responsibilities of both the community and the individuals. For example, GABRIELA, IGOROTA, ADF, LIHOK, BALAOD, and KANLUNGAN all view empowerment as knowing and asserting one's

rights. Some intermediary groups also believed that the more one becomes aware of one's rights, the more one is aware of responsibilities that accompany them.

In many instances, respondents also answered that the key to empowerment lies in transformation: in moving from a state of not knowing to a state of knowing, from a state of passivity to a state of leadership, from a state of violence to a state of peace-making, and from a state of oppression to a state of freedom and greater autonomy.

The following provides a breakdown of the intermediary groups' answers when asked about their notions of empowerment.

## **ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE**

The intermediary groups ASCODE, PROCESS, Tagum, LIKAS, IMA, and ADF believe that bringing about economic independence is primary for empowerment. For example, PROCESS advocates for an equitable distribution of wealth. Tagum offers a model credit union building wherein community members can avail of microfinance loans, which they can pay in small installments. This method makes loans available to the less privileged in the community. ASCODE also believes that preparing for the future by having savings and a form of livelihood is crucial. They observe that one can slowly see the lives of the communities improving because of these projects, as in the case of their beneficiaries putting up *sari-sari* (variety) stores. Moreover, ASCODE looks at economic empowerment as a matter of investing in the education of one's children. This, they believe, is closely linked to improving the family's current status and quality of life.

ASCODE also believes in instilling values among members of the community in order to empower them. This involves inculcating values such as thriftiness and resourcefulness in looking for sources of livelihood:

“Through the group discussions, you also inculcate in them values such as simplicity of life, not extravagant, the value of saving, of thinking about new ways to earn.”

LIKAS also offers skills training and financial management because they believe these skills will lead to greater autonomy for the organisations they service.

IDF believes that economic empowerment is crucial because women's subservience is linked to their lack of income and ownership. This adds to the notion that they are not contributing anything to the family, while the husband provides everything. IDF believes that self-improvement is key to promoting women's attendance of seminars about the strategies and considerations in availing loans.

ADF also believes that giving women income-generating skills helps their confidence, with their newfound purchasing power bolstering their self-esteem. ADF looks to economic

empowerment as a necessary step in preventing violence. They believe that “Violence mostly comes from poverty,” as not having enough money for food leads to fighting. As such, addressing violence comes hand in hand with providing access to basic goods.

## **POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Empowerment is also conceptualised in terms of political participation, specifically in: (1) knowing one’s legal rights, (2) legislative advocacy and reform, (3) enforcing government responsibility, and (4) participation in leadership and governance. This is accomplished in the various levels of government, from the local *barangays*<sup>1</sup> to the national congress.

## **KNOWING ONE’S LEGAL RIGHTS**

KANLUNGAN, SALIGAN, PATAMBA, PROCESS, BALAOD, Al Mujadillah and TALIKALA believe that law empowerment means teaching communities to assert their rights through governance and legal literacy.

BALAOD also looks at empowerment in terms of the right to know what your government and officials are doing or not doing, the laws that need revision, as well as how these can further one’s rights. Empowerment is also enabling women to discover when one’s rights are being violated and therefore enable them to address and give solutions to the problem.

BALAOD believes that empowerment comes from people knowing their rights through the law, as well as using these laws in order to resolve their issues. Part of their advocacy is to make the law accessible by demystifying it and bringing it down to a language that the grassroots can understand. They do this by using popular education techniques to revise the intimidating view of the judiciary.

PROCESS also looks at empowerment as knowing the rights that protect women and children against violence, and in particular, knowing about the existing laws that deter VAW.

Empowerment is also seen as being knowledgeable in terms of how to use the law to one’s favor. PROCESS, for example, believes in educating women about laws on gender and the environment, so that they might assert their rights. PROCESS also believes that knowledge of laws alone could already help lessen cases of domestic violence, because knowledge of the law presupposes that women first learn self-respect and then discover the rights that protect them from battery.

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1. A barangay is a small community or district.

## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AND REFORM

Al Mujadillah, a feminist group that deals with Islamic culture, is a group that looks at empowerment in terms of pushing for legislative reforms. Al Mujadillah, a women's group geared towards Islamic women, tries to situate and reflect on the situation of women vis-à-vis the Islamic law. They also agree that there is a need to understand the justice system, as well as to establish gender-responsive governance. Their legislative lobbying includes networking with other organisations that have experience in pushing for legislative reforms, as well as in the creation of new, women-friendly laws. Al Mujadillah also believes that social reform should go together with governance and gender mainstreaming.

Similarly, BALAOD advocates for law reform and pushes for women and community-friendly ordinances.

## ENFORCING GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Empowerment is also defined in terms of having a sense of responsibility to better the community. BALAOD and KANLUNGAN, for example, look at this in terms of the responsibility of demanding that the government uphold people's rights and provide just legislation. KANLUNGAN's emphasis, precisely, is on demanding just legislation from the government. SALIGAN also engages in its legal literacy campaign by enforcing the government's responsibility to provide electricity and set up landlines to communities that have difficulties gaining access to these services.

FORWARD also engages in the electoral process and looks at the GAD, the Gender and Development Code, as well as the Republic Act 9262 (the law against Violence Against Women and Children) as entry points to tackle the issue of violence against women, particularly in asking LGUs (Local Government Units) to dismantle cubicles in Internet shops so as to prevent cybersex operations.

In lobbying for a repeal of the vagrancy law and pushing for an International Day of Anti-Prostitution, TALIKALA targets leaders and *barangay* officials in its advocacy.

## PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE: TURNING WOMEN INTO LEADERS

Aside from legislative lobbying, ASCODE also believes in empowerment through participation in the political sphere. It views empowerment as a process wherein the participants are part of the planning, decision and implementation process. Part of its strategy is to encourage members to be part of the *barangay* development council.

Empowerment can also happen through transformation, as women in the community value and engage in active leadership. For instance, the women members of ADF

transformed from being housewives to being *kagawads* or even *barangay captains*<sup>2</sup>: “They have taken the active role. Women housewives are now active leaders in the communities.” BALAOD also urges people to “participate in all levels of governance.”

## **COMMUNITY ORGANISING/ SOLIDARITY BUILDING**

Another common theme that came out in the intermediary groups’ notion of empowerment is seeing it as fostering a sense of solidarity. ASCODE sees empowerment as actively contributing to the achievement of progress in one’s community and in one’s nation and seeing oneself as part of the greater community.

### **SENSE OF SOLIDARITY WITH OTHER WOMEN**

BALAOD sees solidarity building as expression’s greater goal. People share their stories in order to inspire others and discover that their problems are not just their own. Thus, empowerment’s end result would be that of organising:

“That is the most direct. I think the second is when they exchange experiences among themselves. It’s like groups empowering other groups when they share their problems and not just isolate it within themselves, when they understand that there is a bigger world than their world. I think that is a huge motivation for them to organise themselves and also to see and hear inspiring stories about new methodologies, I think that’s effective!”

Indeed, many of the intermediary groups believe that bonding together against common oppression is key towards empowerment. For example, FORWARD was formed out of solidarity among battered women, PATAMBA among home workers, and KANLUNGAN among less fortunate migrant workers. KANLUNGAN, which has international alliances with countries such as Burma, also believes that there is a need to understand larger political situations affecting people in their communities.

Groups like PATAMBA, GABRIELA, and LIKAS acknowledge the necessity of making their members and participants understand how they belong to a greater whole. LIHOK and ADF also believe that the way to wellness and empowerment involves providing support systems or survivor support groups for its members, some of whom include abandoned children, battered wives and survivors of physical abuse. GABRIELA believes in addressing Violence Against Women, while seeing women’s organising as a way to women’s liberation:

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2. Leaders of local units.

“And then our efforts will only gain excellent results when all women work together, like what we describe as organised groups of women wherein women are united, they will become stronger and better in that community, that is the true quest for organisation and freedom for all women.”

At the same time, they believe that empowerment lies in transforming women from silence and domesticity into people who see the value of their being in the community. It is moving beyond the idea of women as merely “for the home” [*pambahay lang ako*], and coming together in an organised group.

IDF also stresses the need to instill important community values like helping each other out, as well as being loyal to the organisation: “They are not supposed to be so dependent on anybody else but they have to stand on their own, together with other women, in order that they are stronger to attain their goals.”

Through its workshops, PETA also wants to teach people the value of teamwork. Learning how to negotiate with each other and tolerate one another is crucial for the collective work necessary in empowerment-building. Because theatre is group work, it instills the lesson that one should interact with others. LIKAS stresses the need for honesty and participation, not only among its leaders but also among its members, so that the organisation is more sustainable.

The chance for people to come together can also be a source of great healing, as with FORWARD, a group borne out of solidarity with battered women. Their bond stems from their shared sense of injustice and commitment to eradicate violence.

## **INDIVIDUAL AGENCY/ SELF-TRANSFORMATION**

The organisations also view empowerment as something that acts on microlevel terrains, influencing individual habits, beliefs and behavior. Increasing individual agency, according to many of the intermediary groups, involves increasing people’s level of awareness, independence and internalisation of knowledge, creativity, expression, confidence, values and power to decide.

## **AWARENESS**

Empowerment also takes the form of awareness and agency, according to many intermediary groups. Empowerment, hence, is something that you can know and learn.

LUMAH, for example, sees awareness as an exposure to the outside world. Similarly, BALAOD believes that empowerment comes from hearing inspiring stories from one another which shows that one’s problems are not isolated.



## INDEPENDENCE AND INTERNALISATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Many intermediary groups also conceive of empowerment as internalisation, with the participants “owning” the knowledge that are taught to them. This is very much the case for IMA, which looks at empowerment as people owning the information which can make them choose what is best for them. It is also not forced or imposed on them, but rather takes hold in such a way that they can fight for the information, causing them to take action.

ADF also views empowerment in terms of when the participants are able to express and make references to the things they have learned in their own advocacy. For ADF, this is a sign that the women have learned and digested the notions.

LIKAS also looks at their cross-visits and study tours as effective if it leads the participants to internalise the gender and development agenda.

IDF also agrees that internalisation or absorption is a sign that participants are becoming empowered. The women are empowered when they are able to interact and elaborate on the issue that they are discussing. This capacity for communication and leadership comes from “absorbing” the information. The notion of empowerment as internalised by the participants also does away with the problem of inconsistent participation, as it ensures that the women are driven and self-motivated. The independence that comes from empowerment also leads to a kind of solidarity, IDF believes: “They are not supposed to be so dependent on anybody else but they have to stand on their own, together with other women in order that they are stronger to attain their goals.”

Empowerment is also seen as something which enables the people’s organisations (POs) to eventually gain independence. For PROCESS, when one is at the empowered stage of development, one can and should already be left on one’s own.

Women “owning” or taking charge of their own empowerment also ensures that they see their role in addressing how their rights are being met. For BALAOD, this means that “they are the ones who can identify the solution to their own problem and not necessarily external groups or external factors and forces.”

PETA also looks at empowerment as empowering their participants to “create something of their own.” For example, in their projects in Baguio, they have back to back performances with LAGBA, a woman’s cultural group that they have helped train, who now presents together with them.

They also emphasise the need for the participants to feel that they are not being dictated upon and to impress on them that they are actually part of the creative process so that they can be proud of the performance they put up. Thus, the participants will not just say that “It was nice because the facilitators did it. They just told us what to do.” In this way, they can sustain the effects of the empowerment. Now, PETA reports that whenever they have festivals or special workshops, they also invite LAGBA, whom they respect for their boldness and creativity in telling their story onstage.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEISURE

Against more formal, goal-oriented, political notions of empowerment, empowerment for ADF can also be seen as just having the chance to focus on oneself and have the leeway to do activities for personal development. This presupposes the condition that socio-economic needs are met.

PETA also believes that women need to laugh, emphasising the importance of games and leisure. Workshops must also be enjoyable in order to be effective: “We need the workshops to be pleasurable because women also need the time to laugh and enjoy themselves as with the games that they engage in.”

## CREATIVITY

According to PETA, “being empowered is also about making the person become more productive.” Thus, creativity also stems from empowerment. PETA also relates that, “being creative is not just about being artistic. More importantly, being creative is being imaginative, critical and innovative in finding creative solutions to their problems.” Expression also takes the form of various media as the integrated theatre arts approach which PETA uses is a cumulative weaving of creative drama, writing, visual arts, music, movement and group dynamics. LUMAH also believes in empowerment through song and dance.

Similarly, PROCESS believes that empowerment is closely linked to creative expression, while reporting that many of their POs, despite their lack of access to formal education, express their knowledge and feelings through literary writing and poster-making.

## EXPRESSION

Having the capacity to tell one’s story and express oneself is also a sign of empowerment, according to PETA. Participants gain a better understanding of the issues in question while learning songs, dances, drama, writing and the visual arts. Through these forms, one also acknowledges how the body is important for self-expression. IDF also has a conception of empowerment wherein, after undergoing trainings, women learn to speak up and be more lively and enthusiastic.

## CONFIDENCE

SALIGAN, IDF and ADF all concur that the fact that the women could communicate and verbalise their needs and opinions are a sign of their empowerment. She could communicate; she could interact. As a result of empowerment, ADF says that women are now able to express what is needed in a certain programme. They can now speak with

authority since they are confident of what they know. This confident assertiveness is also the offshoot of empowerment for those from FORWARD and ADF. LIHOK also views empowerment as women regaining their self worth. LUMAD believes that the non-educated can engage as skillfully as the educated in tools of communication like dance, thus rendering these forms an equalising force.

People from LIKAS also observe that empowerment gives women the confidence to face people and give suggestions since they know that they have an informed basis for all their actions and decisions.

## VALUES

PATAMABA also looks at empowerment as influencing the habits of the home workers with whom they interact, making them recognise the value of their work and teaching them to be more productive as they lessen the time for gossiping. The group believes that communication tools, rightly used, can transform old detrimental habits such as the “*manana* syndrome,” which is the habit of putting things off for later. Thus, the home workers learn to manage their time better and be more disciplined in terms of their schedule.

## THE POWER TO DECIDE

Empowerment, many intermediary groups believe, also leads to the capacity to make informed decisions, thereby leading to agency or to the power to direct one’s life. ASCODE, FORWARD, BALAOD, LIKAS, IGOROTA, IDF, ADF, and PETA also speak of a notion of empowerment measured through the capacity to decide what happens to one’s life.

IGOROTA believes that empowerment is when “they can participate in all decision making processes, in their family, in the community and in the bigger society.” With FORWARD, a group that tackles issues on family planning and reproductive health, empowerment is about the capacity to determine what happens to one’s own body.

On the other hand, PETA looks at empowerment as full self-actualisation through agency and decision-making:

“A person is empowered if she is able to develop her knowledge-skills and attitudes towards her full actualisation as a human person. She is also empowered if she has enough information to decide what she thinks is correct...At the same time, a person who is empowered is one who has the ability and the resources to do something about her situation. Empowerment therefore is about capacity, information, having the ability to make informed decisions, and the ability to do something and change her situation.”

IDF also believes that empowerment doesn't come from being spoon-fed, but rather from enabling one's self-sufficiency and independent decision-making:

“Empowerment means we have to make the women learn the skills on making the right decisions for them, they will not just be pampered, and they will not just be taught what to do, they will just not be told what to do, but they should know how to make the right decisions for themselves.”

## **FAMILY TRANSFORMATION**

IDF also agrees that engagement with the roots of gender misconceptions is necessary before women's empowerment is possible. They recognise that there are still women who follow the Biblical tenets of women's inherent subordination, believing in their own subordination to their husbands.

IDF attempts to dispel the notion that wives are obligated to follow their husbands' demands. They observed that in this day and age, women are also the breadwinners. Thus, they carry the double burden of having to be the one to make sacrifices and earn money, while the husbands neglect their part. For IDF, this is the reason why there is an urgent need to give women direction and make them realise what they want out of life:

“So through samples and of course as of today, we see that more women are really moving as compared to men. So it's more on modeling, it's more on analysing the situation, what do we see in the present situation... we see that there are more women who are breadwinners now... it's no longer just the man but the woman also goes out to earn money and that is a great sacrifice on the part of women, and yet husbands do not really do their part, they just wait for the remittances from their wives, so we have to make women understand what it is that they want to happen in their lives, especially those young women who should be given proper directions today.”

IDF sees women's empowerment in the change from being timid and shy to becoming livelier and more vocal. Having been empowered, educated, encouraged and agitated, the women are thus encouraged to actively question and reflect on their roles as women and agents of change.

For example, whereas previously it was considered embarrassing for the husband to do the shopping or the laundry, these activities are now becoming more visible and acceptable in modern society. However, IDF is quick to explain that this revision of traditional values does not equate to having power over men, but rather in sharing this power. “Women empowerment is not to empower you to overpower your husband,” they believe. Rather, it

means empowering the woman to be on equal footing with her husband.

The participants of IGOROTA's projects also report that "whereas before I couldn't tell my husband that we need to help each other out and I also couldn't tell him that I don't want to do what he is asking me to do, after the training, I figured out how to assert myself. I no longer fight with him, but rather try to make him understand, and he does."

After the trainings, IGOROTA also reports that mothers no longer impose gender stereotyping on their children.

Moreover, ADF views empowerment as making mothers realise that they could also have a life apart from their children, whereas before they would offer everything up for their family. This comes from their increased ability to express their opinion and verbalise their needs: "It's not like before when they think that everything about them is for their children only."

PATAMABA, which also involves men in their seminars, teaches husbands to move beyond their "macho" attitudes and to listen to and appreciate their wives more, helping them with the chores, and also providing another source of income.

## **SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION**

According to the intermediary groups, empowerment also entails the active involvement of ordinary people in social issues that impact their everyday lives. For example, PROCESS, a group that lobbies for waste segregation, and Al Mujadillah, a group that is sensitive to the impact of environmental degradation, both believe that empowerment also entails a greater respect for one's environment. Both SALIGAN and LIKAS also look at empowerment as the right and the responsibility to actively bring about peace and deal with peace concerns.

Moreover, empowerment can be seen both as an instrument to and as a result of social change. To illustrate, BALAOD, Al Mujadillah, LIKAS and SALIGAN see the management of conflict and the creation of a culture of peace as necessary components and foundations of empowerment.

LIKAS believes that "peace-building starts from the smallest things especially the family." They look at peace-building as interlinked with gender and development. Peace is also defined as the absence of fear which can then bring about solidarity: "You're not apprehensive doing something which you know is right so it promotes unity among people."

SALIGAN, sensitive to the issues of the indigenous people which it tries to serve, also tries to have a deeper understanding with regards to what led to the lack of peace. In order to bring about peace, they realise that they also need try to look at the deeper causes of war and the secession movement. They define peace not just as ceasefire or the absence of conflict, but also as justice, rectification and compensation. One must adapt

one's advocacy to the culture in which one works and work within the system in order to effect change and empower the community.

### **EMPOWERING INFORMATION**

Eight themes emerged on the meaning of empowering information for Filipino intermediary groups. Information is empowering when it is [1] accessible or suitable to the community, [2] accurate or based on research from the ground, [3] transformative or leads to change, [4] by means of interactive dialogue, [5] useful, [6] readily available, [7] based on trust, and [8] updated.

1. **Accessible or suitable to the community**
2. **Accurate or based on research from the ground**
3. **Transformative or leads to change**
4. **By means of interactive dialogue**
5. **Useful**
6. **Readily available**
7. **Based on trust**
8. **Updated**

The different intermediary groups had varying notions of empowering information. Most of them, however, answered that empowering information needed to be accurate, accessible and action-oriented.

### **ACCURATE**

Accuracy is viewed as a necessary component for empowering information. This comes from the logic that information is only empowering if it is the right information. According to certain groups like LIKAS, part of this is getting the actual person concerned for an interview so people would receive the information first hand.

Al Mujadillah also agrees with this conception of empowering information. They define "right information" as "giving you the actual real picture on the ground." Empowering information to them is the "product of thorough analysis."

### **BACKED UP BY RESEARCH**

Al Mujadillah concurs that a proper understanding of the situation is key to empowerment. Empowerment should come from thorough and grounded research, as well as a right reading of what is happening around. CWR also agrees that research is

necessary and acknowledges the need to be historical to realise the forces that contribute to women's oppression. Empowerment, to them, also starts with identification of abuse and the realisation from there that one can do something about it.

ASCODE also believes that empowering information should be objective and unyielding. It should be something that is free and unbiased, not something that is bought.

Similarly, CWR believes that empowering information should not be just a matter of propaganda ("not only 'ra-ra-ra'") but rather, backed up with research and data. The confidence that goes along with this knowledge then enables women to debate and to engage in the topic.

TALIKALA also believes that empowering information does not take side, but rather gives the "correct analysis and giving only the exact information."

TALIKALA believes that information is empowering when the women and the POs are part of its planning, strategising, and actual implementation. As such, they gauge empowering information according to the concrete support and commitment that one gets through such information.

## **BASED ON CONSTANT DIALOGUE**

PETA, ASCODE, TALIKALA and TAGUM all agree with the notion of empowering information as that which is based on constant dialogue. For TAGUM, empowering information also makes way for the recognition of the participant's own stand. PETA also describes empowering information as a process wherein:

"It is not one-way or top-down or always definitive. I think it becomes an empowering information when it is subjected to a process by which both the ones giving the information and the ones receiving the information are having a process by which they are able to enhance the information itself so that it becomes useful for future courses of action to the one receiving the information."

## **FAST AND UPDATED**

LIKAS also views empowering information as something which needs to be updated constantly, especially in terms of business issues like pricing and supply-and-demand information which the Internet provides.

IMA agrees that empowering information is something which reaches the respondents quickly and efficiently:

“For example, they discovered that somebody was beaten up in the barangay or there’s an incident, whatever it is, for example, the killings that happened this morning, it happened very fast, after the shooting, every one knew about it.”

## **ACCESSIBLE**

Intermediary groups like IMA also described their notion of empowering information as something which is accessible.

BALAOB believes that empowering information should be in a format that the participants can understand and utilise. Since media is something which can be used against them as well, people should also have the opportunity to access these types of media. They believe that part of making empowering information empowering is translating legal knowledge into basic terms that people on the ground can understand and use. Popular education techniques help in making the legal process less alienating and intimidating.

## **UNDERSTANDABLE**

SALIGAN believes that instead of explaining its more technical aspects, empowering information in terms of the law should also take the form of popular methods of communication and education so that “they will understand, in their own language and experiences, concepts which are otherwise quite abstract.”

Moreover, IMA also believes that women must not only understand information, but also be able to articulate it. IMA feels that this is usually where the problem lies, as usually the problem is not one of understanding but of confidence about their abilities to articulate that understanding.

## **CATERED TO THE INDIVIDUAL, GROUP AND CONTEXT**

Many intermediary groups also answered that empowering information should be focused and catered to the person or group that one is trying to empower. This is why BALAOB believes that the dissemination of empowering information should be through popular education tools that are already in the community, such as role play and the actual simulation of conflict resolutions and peace-building activities within tribes and *barangays*.

For example, ADF believes that the young are easier to teach as they are more enthusiastic: “if people are old, their level is different, but if they’re young they’re still very vibrant.”



PETA believes that teaching approaches should vary depending on the persons being taught. Recognising that women have a distinct process of sharing and talking, they believe that there should be nuances in handling each type of group, be it women or marginalised children. PETA also makes sure that the teaching of knowledge should be tailored to the nature of their participants, taking into consideration their local culture and making sure to look for a point of convergence within it, as in their work with the women of the Cordilleras:

“Generally, yes but much of it really depends on the nature of your participants. It depends on their level of openness and willingness.”

### **BASED ON TRUST AND RAPPORT**

PETA’s empowerment programmes involve plays that tackle the values, history and literature of a group, aiming to inform, inspire and make the audience reflect. Although they believe that “it is important to develop trust at the beginning of the process so the women would feel safe and comfortable to speak up,” it is also important to jolt the audience and make them feel uncomfortable, “in order to make them think and to challenge them to participate in what’s happening to them as a people and as a community.”

This rapport and trust-building is perhaps the reason why the group Al Mujadillah believes that empowering information is more empowering if one is also there to relay the message: “You really need to be there... People will listen [with] more if they hear that you are there or the message will come across more if you are the one there saying it.”

### **LEADS TO ACTION AND CHANGE**

Many intermediary groups also believe that empowering information translates to action and concrete results in real life.

For instance, IMA and CWR believe that empowering information should lead to transformation. IMA believes it should change people, while CWR believes that it should encourage, agitate, educate, enlighten and open one’s eyes to a greater recognition and respect for women’s assets and roles. IMA believes that empowering information replaces misconceptions and outdated notions. They try to provide a more thorough understanding of contraceptives, family planning and sex to combat the myths surrounding these issues. Through their radio programme, they teach women about the use of pills and the rhythm method, “so that information brings about change in their behavior and in their negotiation with their husbands.”

IMA also emphasises the value in helping people move from apathy to being more concerned with what goes on around them. IMA believes that consciousness-raising

through education and training is the key to empowering a person. Education makes people value the news and what goes on around them instead of their usual ways of gambling or watching *telenovelas*. Part of making them more proactive is liberating them from the old myths that oppress them: “Once that is erased, you can deliver new concepts in their consciousness and that is when you can drive them into action.” This information would make people more vigilant and drive them into action.

ASCODE agrees that empowering information is that which leads one’s community and country to greater progress. PROCESS also feels that empowering information helps marginalised communities to better their condition because without knowledge of how to use laws on fishery, gender and the environment to their advantage, they will remain oppressed. As such, because of their increased awareness, cases of domestic violence are lessened and activities like illegal fishing are prevented. Increased awareness also translates to the need to engage in projects for sustainable ecotourism and community life tours, which require the entire community’s participation.

## **USEFUL**

LIKAS conceives empowering information as that which is useful in everyday life. It is something that enables them to “make decisions that are more appropriate for their situations,” citing situations like storm preparations and disaster management. For Al Mujadillah, useful information can correspond to a collection of best practices culled from situations that are parallel or similar to those which one will also face.

## **EMPOWERING TOOLS**

### **COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN GENERAL**

The following themes present a view of the different communication tools and also include a summation of their hindrances and potentials.

Based on the interviews with intermediary groups, there is a recognition of the tool’s limits of access either because of its affordability or because of problems in coverage or language. Most of the groups also recognise the inevitability of using media and new ICTs and therefore understand the need to invest in these tools sooner or later.

Al Mujadillah agrees with the positive value of new ICTs as something that shows us the wider world and updates us on its happenings, preventing insularity. Thus, many intermediary groups have the perspective that women’s access to and knowledge about new ICTs are already significant achievements.

On another note, the negative effect of new ICTs is reflected in FORWARD’s advocacy to make LGUs regulate the distance between Internet cafes and schools. Aside from distracting kids from their studies, they are also exposed to pornography and cybersex

through the Internet. The group is also advocating for the abolition of cubicles, as it results in community women engaging in cybersex for money. They observe that Filipinas are also typified in the chat rooms as women looking for rich husbands.

There is also a recognition of the tools as a manifestation of negative forces, such as globalisation, patriarchy and capitalism (sensationalism), thus widening the gap between rich and poor, rural and urban, young and old, and also widening the digital divide and the imbalance of access. Faster spread of information via new ICTs, BALAOD warns, could also lead to faster misinformation and misinterpretation.

### “IT’S IN HOW THE TOOLS ARE USED”

Many of intermediary groups like SALIGAN share the belief that tools are neutral and can either be good or bad depending on how one uses it. Tools are only as good as far as the message that you want to impart, the group ASCODE believes.

SALIGAN believes that communication tools in general can either perpetuate stereotypes and prejudice or can be used towards peace building and empowerment: “It can heighten certain stereotypes, certain prejudice, but perhaps through a more productive use of mass media it can impart values which are more conducive to peace building.” They purport that when used wisely, far-reaching tools like the radio, can contribute to harmony and bring about inter-faith understanding, thus doing away with conflict.

BALAOD agrees that communication tools, whether traditional or new, can be a cause of misinterpretation and conflict, especially when used by the landlords who use it to discredit and disparage the group. At the same time, they can also be used to fight against these very landlords, making more people become active shapers of their community.

LIHOK similarly believes that tools are just an extension of the process of empowerment, things that facilitate communication and build on existing ties.

“I mean with all the new tools, I think we’ve already developed ah, partnership and ah, volunteerism, but that’s existing even before the tools. It’s just that now it’s easier to contact your partners. So in our grassroots, that’s what we were able to develop.”

### TOOLS ARE INFLUENTIAL

Most intermediary groups agree, however, that media is influential and is a powerful shaper of opinions and decisions. It can make or break people in power, as in the case of EDSA 2. Tools are also a kind of information gateway. PETA believes that generally, “communication tools which provide venue for interaction, participation, reflection and dialogue are more empowering.”

## TOOLS ARE NECESSARY

IGOROTA believes that to be left behind with technology is to have nothing to share with the communities that one is serving. As such, tools are crucial for holistic empowerment.

## TOOLS CAN SUPPLEMENT EACH OTHER

LIKAS and other intermediary groups also believe that tools are more effective if used together, as with the cellphone and the Internet, or the radio and the cellphone, the point of which is to be able to facilitate greater interaction.

## TOOLS AS PART OF INEVITABLE PROGRESS

Groups like ADF believe that the growth of information communication tools is an inevitable consequence of progress in the information age. It is something that one has to cope up with in an increasingly borderless world where information equals power. "ICTs," they state, "have become a necessity, a trend, a need."

## ORAL COMMUNICATION

Although for certain intermediary groups like FORWARD, finding a cheap venue to hold meetings is a challenge, other groups like Tagum still believe that consultative meetings are the most effective in empowering grassroots women.

Groups like IDF agree that even though training is the most common and "overused" method of communication, it is still the most empowering since in "TV or radio there is no interaction." Trainings are effective because one could answer queries and doubts immediately.

GABRIELA explains that they use story-telling to communicate, especially if their audience comes from the basic sector. GABRIELA and PROCESS agree that this method is the most effective because it offers immediacy, dialogue and direct interaction. For PROCESS, it also enables the participants to do the survey tool on their own and to conduct participatory action research.

CWR's module for empowerment also involves delving into the culture's conservative and traditional notions of what it is to be a woman and to work from there. Their basic women's orientation involves first going into the historical root of women's oppression, dating back to Spanish times. At the end of the session, after being made to understand the source of their oppression and abuse, they are made to realise that despite the constraints, "there is something that can be done about it," stating:

“For example, in three days, on the third day, when they see and learn about history and the involvement of women, from the Spanish period until today. They will appreciate that.”

## **THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **THEATRE: EMPOWERING POTENTIAL**

Another communication tool that is believed to be quite empowering is theatre. According to PETA, theatre poses a challenge in the sense that the participants really have to “own” the art so the intermediary group has to curb the instinct to “impose” their own standards. At the same time, the artistry of the performances should be met: “this is always a case of sensitivity and handling.” With some people having limited exposure to various artistic possibilities, they are also faced with the problem of the groups copying what they see. Theatre also takes time and dedication, and PETA reports that grassroots women also have a difficulty in terms of finding a place for it in their schedule due to household chores. Eventually however, they acknowledged its importance and started making time for it.

In spite of these obstacles, PETA believes that theatre is still the most empowering means of communication as it allows interaction and participation. One also notices its impact right away, as in instances of mothers from the lower income groups with timid voices becoming more opinionated and self-confident after the workshops.

PETA also believes that aside from giving greater self-confidence and self-awareness, theatre arts also teach one to work more effectively in a group, while at the same time, maintaining the self. They believe that the empowering capacity of theatre lies in its promise of healing, creating a chance for people who share the same issues to work together in serving as the catalyst that mobilises and organises people:

“We want them to learn in the arts, to use the arts as their means of expression, for some to use the arts as a means of therapy, for others to use the arts as a means to mobilise or to organise people, or even to develop their self-confidence, their self-worth, their understanding of themselves. In the process, people become empowered.”

For PETA, theatre is empowering for their partners because it builds on:

1. “Capacity-building for the training – through the workshops conducted by PETA, they are able to acquire KSA in the use of the creative arts as a means of expression and as a methodology for teaching;

2. Information and issue awareness – through the PETA plays and workshops, they become more aware of various issues and concerns affecting them as individuals, as an organisation or as a community;
3. It provides a space for interaction, participation, dialoguing, group processes – the theatre process is a microcosm of society wherein people are given a space to dialogue with each other, negotiate, work with each other and create and do something together;
4. It's also an advocacy tools, “which means that the issues that are promoted by the plays reflect back to them,” thereby allowing for greater reflection and understanding;
5. Self-growth – the process of theatre is very liberating for the body, the mind and the spirit. At the same time, the experience of being able to perform and speak up is an empowering process; it helps boost one's self-confidence and makes one feel good about herself.”

BALAOOD also believes that in terms of conflict resolution, popular education tools like role-playing, which are present even in the *barangays*, are the easiest to do. TALIKALA agrees that aside from removing shyness, theatre can also make people understand prostitution and oppression, and resist bad habits like drugs. The fact that it's live makes it the most empowering communication tool, according to them.

## SONG AND DANCE: EMPOWERING POTENTIAL

PETA believes in instilling artistic values in people, showing them that writing, songs, dances, drama and the visual arts can be used both as a process and as a means of expression by women. This bodily expression is of utmost importance. GABRIELA believes that old traditional indigenous forms are still the most effective. It doesn't just stay in the visual and abstract realms, but actually urges the participants to open up and talk about their experiences of VAW.

This is why GABRIELA has a cultural group called *Sining Lila*. It addresses various issues through drama, puppetry, song composition and song presentation. They reason that this is because Filipinos love songs, so through the use of this medium, grassroots women are able to understand: “It really touches on their issues.”

LUMAD agrees that there is a need to revive and honor traditional cultural forms as it teaches one to be proactive and to open one's eyes to one's surroundings. At the same time, these forms also serve as a great equaliser since they are not very costly and they do not require special training. Thus, they lead to greater confidence for the grassroots women: “When you make them dance, they dance *Bajau* and its better, so she feels she is equal to women who are educated.”

## **PRINT MEDIA**

### **LIMITATIONS**

The newspapers' empowering potential is curtailed by the fact that they are expensive to produce. With newspapers priced at six pesos per paper, "it's not accessible to [grassroots] anymore," according to GABRIELA. SALIGAN, whose constituents are grassroots, cannot produce their publications on a regular basis because of problems in funding. The group also says that although there is a desire to produce more academic-styled publications to present different frameworks to policy makers, their time and resources are spent doing more popular publications for the grassroots.

Even in terms of newsletters, especially in their Cebuano newsletter, for example, TALIKALA tries to use less text and more illustrations so that the grassroots can understand the message better. Most of the intermediary groups agree that publications, brochures and handouts need to be more visual to be understood.

### **EMPOWERING POTENTIAL**

TALIKALA also reports a unique way of engaging with their members through their publications. Knowing that their members are interested in open letters and believe in horoscopes, they try to include these in their publications so that they could be more effective in their advocacy. For them, tools are more empowering if they are interactive and adapted to the culture and belief system of the people accessing it.

GABRIELA believes that the written form is good because they can bring it home and study it.

TAGUM advertises in local newspapers because this medium is visible to the community, thus reaching many people.

## **FILM/VIDEO**

### **LIMITATIONS**

SALIGAN believes that like any other medium, film is counterproductive if not properly guided. They relate that because of women stereotypes in films, they must counter these by showing "stronger" representations of women, portrayals which are different from those to which they are exposed on a day to day basis. This, for them, is a challenging task, as the trainings have to be memorable enough to counter the everyday conditioning that beneficiaries get from popular media.

PATAMABA adds that grassroots women and home workers need further guidance in order for them to really understand what the medium is trying to say. There is also the usual problem of lack of electricity, according to FORWARD.

## EMPOWERING POTENTIAL

Nonetheless, SALIGAN believes that film could be a useful conveyor of values, especially in the context of training. It helps the participants digest the learnings more and gives context to issues and lessons.

ADF believes that videos empower by bringing about an “internal change” in their viewers. Videos are effective because they make stories more interactive, thus making them more empowering. TALIKALA also believes that the empowering potential of video lies in its capacity to move people and remove negative impressions, particularly of prostituted women. For Al Mujadillah, it also presents a visual representation of the wider world: “Ahh, so that’s how your place is, that’s how your mountains look.” Film showings, aside from providing enjoyment, also generate livelier discussions.

## TELEVISION

### LIMITATIONS

TV is seen by different intermediary groups as a battleground for mainstream ideology and alternative voices clamoring to be heard. For example, LUMAH refuses to have a TV in the social hall of Sangali since for them, this would just result in the villagers being more idle.

FORWARD also looks at television as the culprit that first introduces sex to children, while GABRIELA observes that TV’s sensationalism often leads them to cut the scene in a way that makes the interviewee speak out of context.

## EMPOWERING POTENTIAL

Despite this, GABRIELA observes that the tool should not be ignored, since people remember more from the television than just the radio. The grassroots women recall scenes from what they have seen on television. They also observe that even though people don’t have their own TV sets, they get to watch from stores.

ADF also credits TV for eliciting emotional participation and observes that somehow, people are now patronising new shows that provide legal advice as well. KANLUNGAN also sees TV as empowering because it is informative while BALAOD acknowledges its potential for conflict resolution.

## RADIO

### LIMITATIONS

GABRIELA believes that the radio can be an effective tool in airing and “doing



comprehensive discussions on issues.” It is easily accessible, and grassroots women could listen to it while they’re cooking or washing clothes. Even with the wide reach and popularity of the medium, they believe that the tool cannot be left alone and needs follow through for greater interaction. It should just be used as the entry point and not as the decisive tool, especially when the listeners are not organised and need further guidance. Its limits are also revealed, in the sense that in the absence of visuals, “even if you speak there, your name will not register, unless you constantly talk [there].”

BALAOB also observes that the automatic feedback system via cellphone in radio talk shows effectively sends the message to the local governments, in terms of what ordinances are important for the communities: “It really gets the point across to the policy makers.”

Although its benefits far outweigh its disadvantages, BALAOB also explains that they have earned the ire and anger of policy makers and local government units whose wrongdoings and inactions they exposed over the air. Such reports usually pressure them to do something about it. They also lament that the power of the tool is not maximised, as in the case of DXDB, which is mostly only available in Bukidnon, and *Bombo Radyo*, which is mostly only available in Cagayan. At times, their usage of the radio is only intermittent.

However, BALAOB reports that with time, their access to the tool has become easier since their reputation for telling the truth has made them trustworthy resource persons for people in the media, in terms of the law and human rights.

## EMPOWERING POTENTIAL

Many intermediary groups like KANLUNGAN, SALIGAN, and BALAOB believe that the radio is an empowering medium because it reaches a lot of people. LUMAD thinks that its power lies in its being affordable. As it is a familiar household appliance, it is easy to make people tune in to it at a certain time. It also appeals to the interest of the grassroots women and therefore can be used as a starting point to engage them in relevant issues without having to introduce a new technology.

For ASCODE, SALIGAN and Al Mujadillah, the tool is also effective in bringing about public awareness regarding the issue of peace and conflict. It is very influential in terms of addressing violence and encouraging a culture of peace.

SALIGAN believes that although mainstream media perpetuates some of the damaging prejudices that facilitate conflict, a more productive use of it can also impart values which are conducive to peace building and harmony, especially in Mindanao where different cultures converge. They reason that since you cannot invite all of Mindanao to training forums, the radio is one way to make them aware of issues like inter-faith reconciliation and self-governance.

Tagum sees that because listeners easily and readily relate to radio talk shows and dramas, packaging information in a conversational and engaging way through the radio seems to be a culturally appropriate and effective way to bring about peace and empowerment.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS (LANDLINE)**

High costs and difficulties in accessibility keep the landline and cellphone from being potentially empowering tools, according to many intermediary groups.

According to SALIGAN, providing equal access to electricity for all could remedy this. Thus, part of their task is to remind the government of the responsibility to put up infrastructure necessary for landlines, as in the zero backlog project of PLDT: “Then on our part, in this kind of work, we make sure that there is technology available for them, granted that technology is there, meaning at least electricity and landline, telephone line.”

Without a landline, they add, Internet connection is greatly hindered. PATAMABA voices a similar problem of people from the community running out of “credits” to utilize landlines or cellular phones.

ADF laments that in the Philippines, “unlike in the States, we have no hotline where we can call when physically violated.” Without this function, it is difficult to address the feeling of being helpless and being without a support system.

LIHOK believes that despite the inaccessibility of landlines, it is a good thing that cellular phones are fairly easy to come by so much so that if there is a court hearing, the community is informed of it via texting.

## **CELLPHONE**

Cellular phone usage is subject to the same hindrances as the landline as when the people using it do not have the money to purchase credits. Moreover, BALAOD believes that because it is easy to use, it is subject to misinterpretation such that it is easier to spread the wrong information through it.

However, they believe that when used correctly, its advantages still outweigh its disadvantages. It effectively gets messages across to the policy makers, according to BALAOD. As FORWARD accedes that the cell phone is handy and can be brought everywhere, this coincides with SALIGAN and LIKAS’ perspective that it enables fast communication and interaction, in a way bridging distances. On another note, KANLUNGAN believes that its potential for empowerment lies in its wide coverage. It reaches about 80-90% of the population, with only the exception of those in the province. GABRIELA confirms that when one goes to the communities, one will see that “there’s no mother without a cellphone.”

Because they see the potential of cellphones for empowerment, LIHOK urges people to stand up for their right to access the tool. The group uses text brigades for rallies and group mobilisations like Women's Day celebrations.

## **COMPUTER LIMITATIONS**

The computer's inaccessibility hinders its capacity to empower. According to various intermediary groups like ADE, much skills-training is still needed in order for grassroots women to be able to work with the computer. According to GABRIELA, this is usually exacerbated by the fact that it is not usually viewed as a basic necessity, unlike food. They believe that women from the community also associate it to something that only career women must have. Their thinking is: "So what if I don't have a computer, if I don't work?" They report an instance wherein they held a training session on how to use a computer, but no one attended. Still, GABRIELA reports that the other mothers will try to use the computer because they feel it's the "in" thing.

Al Mujadillah also laments regressing to the "third world mentality" of using manila paper due to their technical problems such as when their computer crashed and acquired viruses: "Sometimes technology fails you so you still have to rely on the old way of doing it." They sometimes have to transcribe things repeatedly and depend on hand-written documentation because of this problem.

## **EMPOWERING POTENTIAL**

Al Mujadillah, however, agrees that indeed, computers "get the job faster" and store more information:

"You can generate more data as much as you can. Ah, you can easily put your thoughts together. Ah, you just sit down, and then put in... You're not drafting it again, it saves time."

Aside from its efficiency, they also appreciate that it allows people to get connected "with your ideas expressed to other people immediately." Moreover, for them, laptops and LCDs are easy to use since "you just plug it" and help to catch the attention of the audience.

## **INTERNET LIMITATIONS**

Although the advent of the Internet heralded many positive changes, it could also exacerbate patriarchy and the digital divide. LIHOK believes that the community members' lack of knowledge in operating computers impacts on their inability to access the Internet. CWR reports that they have a difficulty accessing the Internet because of problems with their server, making things much slower, so instead of saving time, much time is wasted. Technical problems also abound.

## **EMPOWERING POTENTIAL**

FORWARD accedes that for 10 pesos per hour, the Internet has become very affordable, making it possible to chat with a lot of people. KANLUNGAN credits the Internet as an enabling tool which fosters international links while ADF looks to it as speeding up research. PATAMABA looks at it as a way to share knowledge and learning, as well as a way to respond to women's needs. For BALAOD, peace talks are also made faster between the government and RPMM with the Internet facilitating faster exchange of documents.

Al Mujadillah believes that the Internet fosters interaction, creativity, action and solidarity. One can connect to people all over the world and get a response immediately. For example, petitions that one can sign through the Internet are a fast campaigning tool. One also broadens one's network and knowledge base through the Internet.

## CHAPTER 10

# HOW GRASSROOTS WOMEN VIEW COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

### FGD INTERMEDIARY GROUP PROFILE

**PATAMABA**, founded in 1990, is a national network of informal workers in the Philippines who feel neglected, unrecognized and invisible in national statistics despite the contributions they give to our national economy. It was established primarily to ensure that the laws, though very limited, for the benefit of workers in the informal sector are implemented. The organization thus strives to work towards the transformation of the lives of the informal sector in the areas of credit, technology, education and training, market facilities, child care and other social services.

PATAMABA has established chapters all over the country. The organisation has a membership of more than 15,000 in its formal registry. In addition, the PATAMABA youth sector has been actively recruiting from among their ranks, and has reported a membership of at least 2,000. Their beneficiaries include all workers in the informal sector, home-based workers who are either self-employed or subcontractors, the market and street or ambulant vendors, small transport operators whether they are land-based (tricycle/pedicabs) or sea-based (bancas), non-corporate construction workers (carpenters, masons, plumbers, to name a few), service workers (beauticians, barbers, laundry persons), the youth (advocates and working) and children.

Since 1999, the organisation has been training women homeworkers to begin home-based livelihood enterprises. Projects have involved computer literacy, good business practices, and relationship-building. Some members have joined together to form a

coalition of small producers in order to compete in the export market. The organisation seeks support for participation in international trade fairs, where members gain exposure to market realities.

## **PATAMABA FGD**

*PATAMABA (Pambansang Kalipunan ng Mga Manggagawang Impormal sa Pilipinas)* is a national network of informal workers in the Philippines. The organisation is comprised of women whose diverse ages belie their common experiences, both as workers and as users of information communication technologies. The group's experiences in learning the arts of both business and technology exemplify the adage, "If you give women bread, they will eat once. But if you teach women how to make bread, they will eat many times." *PATAMABA's* ingenuity carved a path from the most fundamental resources such as bread, to other technological resources whose benefits proved equally nourishing.

The women of *PATAMABA* make this proverb come to life through one of their business ventures - the production of a popular, vegetable-based bread. *PATAMABA* utilised funds from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to start a successful bakery business. In chapters across the country, the profits from these bakeries and other small to medium-scale businesses have enabled the group's leaders to buy cellular phones; these technologies then benefited the organisation as a whole by providing a means of communication to previously isolated areas. Prior to this, the organisation itself had to fund these cellphones through loans to the group's leaders, enabling them to communicate with remote areas beyond the reach of landlines. Although many of their members still lack the monetary resources to buy cellphones because of other more pressing priorities, this anecdote demonstrates the group's transition to becoming more self-sustaining and savvy users of new Information Communication Technologies (ICTs).

When Isis International Manila met with *PATAMABA* in March 2007, these and other such stories narrated the group's complex and sometimes uneasy relationships with new ICTs. Throughout the conversation, stories of the women's negotiations with these tools painted a picture of their humour and innovation. The journey towards being comfortable with these technological resources has not always been easy. Humorous memories of challenges such as being drenched in milk while making coconut salad and ice candies for sale arose alongside recollections of their first encounters with new ICTs.<sup>1</sup>

During the focus group discussion (FGD), the *PATAMABA* participants also had a good laugh at their self-confessed awkwardness around new technology and urban space. Since most of them were self-taught and barely reached high school or college, they discovered

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1. They sold these deserts in Alabang, Pasay, Quiapo or Divisoria, neighbourhoods of varying socio-economic status across Metro-Manila.

how this lack of access to formal education has certain limitations –specifically taking a toll on their self-esteem. Moreover, they related the story of how, in one of their meetings with DOLE, dressed in their best and trying to muster all the dignity they can, they nearly fell down the chairs in the office since the chairs were “too soft,” whereas they were expecting the hard chairs that they were used to. Moreover, some of the members related how they had to restrain their colleagues from leaving their footwear outside the door, as in the entrance of malls for example, in line with one of the old rural Filipino customs. The group recounted these and many other encounters between different ways of life, often mediated through the use of various new ICTS.

## **TELEPHONE**

The group narrated their experiences with telephones in many funny anecdotes. In one such story, one of the members would brush her teeth before using the phone, not answering it until she has groomed herself after waking up—after all, she laughingly recalled, she didn’t want to be rude by speaking to the person on the other end of the line without brushing first.

The PATAMABA members related how even around 1992, they would sit anxiously by the fax machine, waiting for information on their funding, fully believing that the machine would produce their actual check. They also observed how their self-described “provincial” behavior emerged when, in attendance at international conferences, they were confounded by how the doors and lights didn’t operate with the regular key and switch, but rather with their hotel card.

## **VIDEO**

During these international conferences, PATAMABA witnessed the effectiveness of videos. Recalling their presentations during the Asian Women in Development (AWID) and South East Asia (SEA) conferences, the group explained that their experiences in these conferences enabled them to recognize the effectiveness of videos as tools of communication. This usefulness stemmed from the medium’s self-explanatory nature and its ability to reach many people at the same time. The group’s video portrays them shopping for supplies in markets such as Divisoria. The women of PATAMABA credit the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) of India for inspiring them and showing them this style of teaching. For instance, in one of their memorable encounters with SEWA’s trainings, PATAMABA members noted how the group used dolls and visual aids to demonstrate what really happens when women give birth. They noted that this style makes the concepts more obvious and easier to understand – especially for a community of women who doesn’t know how to read and write. Inspired by SEWA’s success, PATAMABA

employed similar strategies in their own work, using SEWA's technique as their model.

Joking that there are now celebrities among them, the women of PATAMABA recalled the fun they had during the production of their participatory videos. As even those in the far-flung regions and the mountainous areas can use the videos so long as they have the equipment and electricity, film presents tremendous potential for information and communication. In addition, the medium alleviates the burden of struggling to explain what they do using unfamiliar languages at times, thus crossing the language barrier for them, "There was no explanation needed because it's self-explanatory." They added:

"That was one of the best things we did... participatory video. You didn't have to talk. We'd interview people, ask about their problems, their needs, what we can do to help. From their beginnings, to where they are... We did that on video, with the help of the University of the Philippines. At a Southeast Asia conference, we showed the video in group discussions. We just played the video, we didn't need to speak. It was subtitled in English. When we show that, along with our documents, we get others to link up with us. It was easy to attract people because they could see at once the status of those in the informal sectors."

Also, the group used the participatory video for actual training and to arouse people's curiosity before proceeding into a discussion of the group's history.

## TRANSLATORS

As the previous story demonstrates, the use of language is a significant challenge. Another important lesson that they learned from these international conferences is the importance of speaking English, especially to an audience comprised of diverse nationalities. Often, although they say they can "summon it from their vaults every once in a while," they have to bring a translator along with them since they only have basic knowledge of English. Even Baby, one of the PATAMABA leaders and one of the most eloquent among them, admits that her English could be much better: "I can speak English but it is crude. I'd tell them to bear with me. Especially when I'm only going around in the Philippines, I really don't bother speaking English. [...] If I spoke in English, I wouldn't be able to express myself fully."

However, seeing the importance of English, the group has established a program that trains people in the use of this language:

"It's necessary, especially now that the organisation is being recognised, and we need to link up with other countries. We have a program here in the



Philippines and at the regional network like Indonesia. When we had a sub-regional workshop, this was one of the concerns of the leaders. They wanted to communicate but they had difficulty with English. So they asked if it was possible to teach that. In the Philippines, although we can understand English, it's not enough to really understand, especially if the conversation is in straight English. We do have a translator...from English he translates it into Tagalog and from Tagalog to English for the benefit of the foreigners.”

## **WEBSITE**

Translators and videos are not the only means of mediation between local dialects and English. Issues of translation also emerge in relation to another technological method of communication, the PATAMABA website. The site is phrased in English in order to be more accessible to international viewers. Though the language is inaccessible to many local users, PATAMABA views the potential of the website internationally, in terms of e-commerce, business and trade:

“Because most of us have various products. When you put these on the website, people will see that they are there... you can establish a market not only locally, but even outside.”

Apart from this, they also use the website to publicise the organisation within and outside the Philippines. Their website also includes the history of the organisation. They argue that since more people can read about them through the website, they will have more contacts, and therefore more people would then know about the needs of the organisation:

“When we connected with the other countries of Southeast Asia; when we visited, we saw what they had [a website], and even here the local organisations had them too. It seemed better to give information about our organisation if we had a website because you could put everything there... the status of the organisations, their locations, their needs, their links.”

They also use their website to solicit help from interested agencies, as well as to network with other similar organisations worldwide. Isis International Manila helped them establish their website.

## NEWSLETTERS

PATAMABA has come a long way since its beginnings as a small group of a few home-based workers. Part of their journey from these humble origins to an internationally known organisation is due to their ability to publicise. One way through which the group initially promoted and raised awareness about themselves was through a newsletter. Their newsletter, which used to be only available in Tagalog, is now also translated into English in view of having a wider and more diversified reach. Previously, this newsletter was released three to four times per year. Currently, the group laments that production has declined to only twice per year. Whereas the newsletter was previously produced through a typewriter, its production has now progressed to involve DOS and Wordstar:

“We only encoded the texts column by column [in the Wordstar program.] We didn’t do layouts. Then we’d send them to the printer with the pictures and they would do the layout.”

They eventually shifted to the more modern computer programs, though they described this scenario as less than perfect.

## THEIR BITTERSWEET SAGA WITH ICTS

Indeed, PATAMABA’s relationship with technology is a bittersweet one, fraught with many opportunities and challenges. Based on training their members to use the computers, they have their share of funny tales to tell. For example, the women recalled that when asked if they wanted to proceed or open a program, trainees would enthusiastically answer “yes” to the computer, instead of typing their responses. During another time, when DOS was still being used, a store technician in a computer shop asked one of their old members “do you have DOS?” Misunderstanding the question, the woman gave the man two pesos instead. As they recounted these vignettes, the group admitted that they couldn’t really blame their colleagues and co-members for not knowing any better. Being self-educated in using technology, they reasoned that they themselves only know the basics.

Except for certain groups like Isis International Manila, who give trainings on media access especially for women, there are very few groups who pay attention to whether or not women from the community can access new ICTs. A few of them had a chance to study in short computer courses in “Informatics,” a commercial ICT training company in a nearby mall. They then shared these skills with the other members. However, this is

the extent of their training. Currently however, the group is optimistic because of their younger members, who are more flexible and eager to learn. These young members design logos and explore other potentials of new ICTs.

Moreover, the group notes that the release and distribution of their newsletters, even with the advent of modern technology, is still slow compared to the swift transfer of information brought about by the Internet. They also find e-mail very convenient since they no longer have to go to courier outlets that offer slower and more expensive services. Through courier services, important news would sometimes arrive belatedly, just when the meeting was over. For a group primarily involved with organising and networking, communication is a very important issue. Because of this emphasis on communication, PATAMABA values the contributions of cellphone and the Internet as the most important technological tools.

### **THE VALUE OF CELLPHONES**

PATAMABA members who participated in the FGD believe that the cellphone is one of the most effective tools in the country in terms of reach and accessibility, as well as impact and empowerment. Due to minimal cost and easy accessibility involved in its use, they are able to maximise this tool's potential. For example, members use it to inform each other about their whereabouts before meetings and update one another regarding their projects. The cellphone is also less expensive than the computer because it requires fewer installations and gadgets, serving as a crucial alternative to other communication tools, especially in places inaccessible to local landlines like PLDT and Bayantel. For only 1200 to 2200 pesos, (approximately 22 to 42 US dollars) one can already buy a handset and prepaid card. For the PATAMABA FGD participants who are home-based workers often working away from their homes, the cellphone is an essential tool.

Because many of them live far from their families, the cellphone is one of the primary ways through which they get in touch with their husband and children. However, in a country with over 20 million people living on one dollar a day, not everyone can afford it. For these women, many of whom have hungry mouths to feed and kids to send to school, choosing their priorities is important, given a very limited amount of resources.

### **THE PATAMABA TECHNOLOGY WISH LIST**

The group believes that their organisation could go much farther if only they were more up to date in terms of technology. They also think their advocacy could improve if they have more resources to support their endeavors. For example, when Patamaba received donations of several second-hand personal computers to their various chapters through UNIFEM Manila, the vision was for them to use these technologies to promote

their products and crafts, thus advocating for the rights of workers and women. Indeed, the computers were very helpful in this project.

Since then however, PATAMABA has been unable to sustain the technology and the computers are now severely outdated. They wish they had newer computers since their old second-hand computers often break down, forcing them to resort to handwritten reports. These reports are then typed by another member in a computer rental shop elsewhere. A more advanced computer with printers already attached to it would be a more expedient way to submit the reports, which are required for their funding. They also wish that they could have enhanced access to new ICTs since it would be an effective way for them to market their products.

If they were to be trained regarding ways to use the computer, they also suggest that these computer trainings be intensive. This is due to the many household chores and obligations they have to attend to. If the trainings were intermittent, they reasoned that they might forget the information easily, as it would be drowned out by their many other preoccupations. However, if they were given the opportunity to train for several days, they believe that they could really focus on the task at hand.

Fax machines are another potentially useful tool. As such, PATAMABA hopes to have their landlines connected to fax machines in every chapter. They know, however that this dream is hard to come by, given that landlines in themselves are expensive and hard to apply for in the country.

If the group had their way, they would also acquire editing technologies in order to create more participatory videos. Because videos supersede the limitations of print, they view them as a way to better advance one's advocacy, allowing groups to really emphasise and illustrate their points.

## **RECRUITMENT AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS**

During the FGD, the PATAMABA members agreed that speaking in conferences, giving interviews and being visible in the various media in general are the ways in which one can raise awareness about the group. Moreover, they believe that interviews have an especially strong effect on the viewers.

For these reasons, the group engages in radio and/or TV interviews as often as twice, sometimes even thrice, per month. The group is happy with these "guestings" since they prove to be invaluable to PATAMABA's goals, especially recruitment. With a group that gets part of its funding from membership dues, it is important to support the group's projects and provide them with human resources. The members report that after a good interview, for example, their office phone would ring off the hook with people with inquiries and

referrals. Media exposure, they believe, is also self-sustaining since if you have something to say and you say it well, you will secure another interview: “If the show likes what you are saying, they’ll invite you again.”

Aside from being interviewed for radio and for television, they also do face-to-face interviews with students who are doing related research and reports, since “that’s really the way you raise awareness about the group.” The group also acknowledges the importance of brochures, since these are important sources of valuable and comprehensive information about the group.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF FACE TO FACE INTERACTIONS**

Although the group has found a way to gain access to new technologies and various media, they still see to it that they meet face to face, knowing how important and effective interpersonal communication is. Previously, they announced their meetings through letters and oral means, but now, texting has made information regarding meetings easier to disseminate. However, even with the advent of modern communication systems, PATAMABA still believes in face-to-face monitoring. The group meets with their local chapter every Monday and holds national meetings every year. These various meetings also become a venue to recruit members and introduce the group to people who might also want to join. This was how the group spread in Quezon City, Bulacan, Laguna, Bicol and Quezon Province, with members traveling to these parts of the country and then telling other women about the group and what it has done for them. Jema, one of the youngest FGD participants, relates that she also got to join the group through regular attendance of their meetings.

### **TEACHING THE YOUTH RESPONSIBILITY**

Jema relates how PATAMABA teaches its younger members to be responsible, despite their young age. She explains that it also teaches them to be more confident, equipped with the knowledge that they can manage their finances and generate income for themselves.

“We were assigned to do a project, and we had to do everything... deciding how much the price would be and things like that. We had to finish it at a certain deadline. Then we were divided into groups. My group was assigned to do doormats and rugs. We had to finish by this month and at this cost. We didn’t want to work yet but we were already thinking of earning money. But it was fun. In spite of our youth we already knew what to do in the future.”

She relates how the group has also encouraged them to be resourceful: “We imagine

ourselves in different kinds of predicament and think of ways how to solve it...it's hard." For Jema, being part of the group has given her a sense of pride and community:

"It's like...we're young but we talk about the country's problems. People think we're too young for that and yet we bother. We have problems in our lives as well, but we're also concerned with what's happening in our country."

## **EMPOWERMENT IS CHANGE**

PATAMABA believes that empowerment lies in teaching women how to live in the world. They were proud to report how they have taught various home-based workers to be more productive, thus bringing pride and dignity into their humble work. They look at empowerment as a matter of transformation as well. Whereas before, the women would just sit around gossiping, gambling and playing mahjong, upon joining the group, they were able to learn useful skills such as how to sew, cook, make crafts and more importantly, speak up.

The FGD participants from PATAMABA also believe that empowerment lies in making women more confident and eloquent, often as a matter of necessity. "You have to be tough and resourceful if you want them to understand your situation," they reason. Whereas the women were mostly domestic and timid before, their participation in PATAMABA has transformed them into more outspoken and principled women. According to Baby, one of the FGD participants and PATAMABA leaders:

"What we do is teach them how to face other people, so they themselves can ask for their needs. Some did not endure. But some did and they learned. So if you ask them, like Ka Huling...once she was standing in front she was so nervous she crumpled the paper. She was looking for her paper she didn't know she had crumpled it. She couldn't speak."

Baby adds that being part of the group has changed them significantly: "Before, we couldn't run after people...because we were embarrassed...the people with positions. Now somehow we know where we stand." For them, confidence is also a matter of facing more educated people. They believe in the importance of knowledge "that goes beyond the four walls," in being able to use technology that can help them better their lives.

Empowerment lies in teaching their members to be more independent so that eventually, they will be the ones to actually talk to the organisations and agencies that could help them directly. The group also believes that empowerment, aside from learning to be more outspoken, is also a matter of knowing how to expedite the communication process through tools:

“First is learning how to speak. Then to develop one’s personality, and from there to learn to use different technologies. And then to pass this knowledge on to others. That’s what you want to happen. If you consider, there are how many millions in the informal sector, how many millions of home-based workers...how do you organize them with the use of technology, without having to go to them often. If you can teach them that, they will learn...maybe not all of them but at least some leaders will. The exchange of information can be faster.”

Because of the eloquence of some PATAMABA members, moreover, they got to travel to other countries for conferences, earning the respect and admiration of their colleagues. Lastly, the group also believes that true empowerment lies in sustainability. It is in learning how to use the various technologies – videos, cellphones, computers and Internet - for their maximum benefit, thus learning how to live comfortably in the “modern” world.





**CHAPTER 11**  
**PHILIPPINES SYNTHESIS**

**CONTENT SYNTHESIS**

- A total of 20 organisations from all three major regions of the Philippines were interviewed for this study. Majority of the organisations in the sample (50%) provide services to and take on the issues and concerns of grassroots communities in general while only 25% were focused on grassroots women. Fifteen percent (15%) said they cater to women in general, and the remaining 10% were broader in their target beneficiaries but nevertheless include grassroots women. Most organisations' thrust involves capacity-building or training (90%), advocacy purposes (80%), organising or community-building (80%), and providing services that include referrals (80%). There were also quite a number of groups whose thrust includes networking (75%) and research, publication and documentation (60%). Consistent with the organisations' thrust, the most popular strategy employed by the organisations in communicating with their beneficiaries, particularly the grassroots women, was education or consciousness-raising (65%), followed by training or capacity-building (60%), organising or community-building (55%), and networking (40%). The top uses of communication tools were for training, education, advocacy and announcement purposes. Additionally, some were specifically cited for a particular administrative purpose, such as generating publicity for the groups' activities.
- The groups in the Philippines seem to prefer the audio-visual medium (90%) when interacting or reaching out to the grassroots women in particular. The films show varying themes, issues, and genre and were either feature films made by local or foreign film companies, or videos produced by intermediary groups. These are often employed

in workshops, seminars, lectures, plays and in various forums where women's agenda can be discussed. Films are seen as great aids in jumpstarting discussions, facilitating reflections, making inputs much more understandable, and synthesising points for the grassroots women. Films were also used because they are believed to help widen the perspectives of their beneficiaries, making them see worlds and images different from their own. This is closely followed by radio (80%), computer (70%), theatre (70%) and cellular phone (65%).

- The tools most accessible to grassroots women as observed by the intermediary groups are the cellular phone (71%), films/ videos (53%), radio (47%), and other paper-based tools (35%). Not surprisingly, the cellular phone is one of the most visible communication tools in contemporary Filipino life, with many people owning one or at least having access to one. The grassroots women are able to access a video tackling an issue relevant to them because they can easily borrow from the video collections of some intermediary groups. Radio is a tool found in many community households and works particularly well in the regions and in areas not easily reached by letters. The old-fashioned way of using manila papers, primers, manuals, visual aids and metacards is also something accessible to the women because one doesn't have any difficulties in bringing such materials in remote areas. As perceived by the intermediary groups, the Internet (76%), computer (47%), TV (47%), and interestingly still, the cellular phone (41%), are the least accessible tools for the grassroots. The main reason accounting for their being least accessible is their affordability, such that access to them necessitates a lot of expenses. The cellular phone was also mentioned as least accessible because there are still some areas that lack cellular sites and some telecommunication networks still do not have a strong signal in some areas. Some groups also defined the lack of access as the lack of cellphone load. They may have the phone but without the load, they cannot use the phone.
- The communication tools ranked as most effective were radio (59%), cellular phone (49%), film/ video (29%) and TV (29%). Radio is seen as effective because the information broadcasted over the radio has a very high probability of immediately reaching its target communities, particularly the grassroots women, and it also does not interfere with the grassroots women's activities. The cellular phone is also an effective tool because it sends messages quickly, elicits immediate replies, and is ultimately cheaper on the pocket. The audiovisual nature of films/ videos and TV makes it effective among grassroots women. Its visuals in particular, easily catch the attention of the women and allow them to easily comprehend the messages the organisation wants to convey. The top three reasons given as to why a communication tool was considered effective were its interactive nature (68%), its wide-reaching coverage (68%), and its visually stimulating nature (63%).

- The communication tools considered as least effective were computer (28%), the Internet (28%), letter (21%) and book (21%). The computer and the Internet were perceived as least effective not because of its inherent nature as a tool but because of its low access among the grassroots. This low access is, to a large extent, due to its high costs. The lack of electricity in some areas also appears to be hampering the access to and use of computers. To add, low access leads to low literacy on computers. Letters were also judged as least effective because they take several days to arrive unless they are handcarried. This has become particularly evident in light of the popularity of high technology equipments like the cellular phone. Books were also ranked as least effective because many grassroots women may not have the time to read books given everything they have to do at home and in the community.

### THEMATIC SYNTHESIS

Six main themes emerged on the meaning of empowerment for intermediary groups in the Philippines: [1] economic independence, [2] political participation, [3] community organising or solidarity-building, [4] individual agency or self-transformation, [5] family transformation, and [6] societal transformation.

- **Economic independence** was seen as primary for grassroots women's empowerment, as a step to ending women's subservience and as a means to preventing violence against women. Economic independence was also viewed as increasing women's confidence and self-esteem.
- **Political participation** meant women knowing and asserting their rights and women participating in leadership positions at all levels of governance. Among the women-specific activities of intermediary groups cited were making the laws accessible to grassroots women, pushing for gender-responsive governance, and lobbying for women-friendly laws.
- **Community-organising and solidarity-building** in the Philippines was described as women having a sense of solidarity with other women and seeing themselves as part of a greater community, nation, or whole. It is a bond against shared oppression and injustice and a commitment to eradicate violence. Specific groups of women who bonded together were mentioned, for instance, battered women or migrant workers.
- **Individual agency or self-transformation** consists of the following dimensions: (1) self-worth/awareness (e.g., focuses on her personal development), (2) personality (e.g., develops confidence and creativity), (3) expression (e.g., being able to speak and interact), (4) independence/freedom, (5) control (e.g., makes her own decisions,

directs her own life, controls her own body), and (6) rights/society (e.g., becomes a leader and participates in decision-making).

- **Family transformation** referred to the need to address the root of gender inequality in the home. Intermediary groups promote equal sharing of power in the home and encourage both women and men to be part of social change. Men in particular are included in the meaning of empowerment.
- Finally, **societal transformation** included addressing specific social issues such as peace and the environment in the Philippines.

### WHEN IS INFORMATION EMPOWERING?

Eight themes emerged on the meaning of empowering information for Filipino intermediary groups. Information is empowering when it is [1] accessible or suitable to the community, [2] accurate or based on research from the ground, [3] transformative or leads to change, [4] by means of interactive dialogue; [5] useful, [6] readily available, [7] based on trust, and [8] updated.

### WHEN ARE COMMUNICATION TOOLS EMPOWERING?

**Communication Tools In General.** A theme that emerged among the intermediary groups in the Philippines is that the use of communication tools, both traditional communication tools and new ICTs, is inevitable and necessary. Communication tools were considered neutral and can be good or bad depending on how they are used. Tools can also be used to complement each other for greater effectiveness. Still, tools that create interaction, participation, reflection, and dialogue were considered most empowering. On the negative side, there is a belief that communication tools, specifically new ICTs, are manifestations of negative social forces, e.g., globalisation, patriarchy and capitalism. As such, new ICTs may exacerbate the rich/poor divide, the rural/urban divide, the young/old divide, and the digital divide. In addition, some intermediary groups noted how some tools can have limited accessibility because of problems with costs, coverage or language.

The main themes on the empowering potential of **Traditional Communication Tools** are outlined by tool:

- **Oral Communication** - oral communication (e.g., meetings, trainings) is most empowering because of immediacy, dialogue and direct interaction.
- **Theatre and Performing Arts** - theatre is most empowering because it facilitates interaction and has immediate impact; if it involves the women, it builds their capacity, raises their awareness, and leads to growth; traditional communication tools such as song, dance, and indigenous forms are effective because grassroots women are able to

express themselves confidently without needing special skills (of the different modes of performing arts, **theatre, songs, and dance** were mentioned).

- **Print Media** - producing newspapers for grassroots women is too costly; popular publications need to be more visual to be understood; print media are good because women can take them home (of the different types of print media, **newspapers and publications** were mentioned).
- **Film/Video** - film/video can be potentially empowering as they “move” viewers; however, mainstream films are filled with gender stereotypes and are counterproductive; alternative films can provide counter-conditioning while providing enjoyment and facilitating discussion.
- **Television (TV)** - television is potentially empowering given its recall power; however, mainstream television still keeps alternative voices away.
- **Radio** - radio is effective because of its wide reach, affordability, and popularity among grassroots women; radio should be supplemented by interactive methods.
- **Telecommunications** – use of landline phone is a problem given high costs, difficulty in access, and lack of infrastructure.

The main themes on the empowering potential of **New ICTs** are as follows:

- **Cellphone** - the cellphone is empowering given its wide coverage, speed in communication, and “handy” quality; intermediary groups have used cellphones for mobilising grassroots women and sending messages to policymakers; problems include cost of credits and possible miscommunication.
- **Computer** - the computer is valued by intermediary groups in terms of efficiency (for work and presentations to the community) and connectivity; however, it remains inaccessible to grassroots women given high material costs and skills requirements; it is also seen as a non-necessity for grassroots women compared to basic needs.
- **Internet** - the Internet is valued by intermediary groups for its connectivity as it aids in broadening their networks and knowledge base; however, they point out that the Internet can also exacerbate patriarchy and the digital divide; it remains inaccessible to grassroots women who do not have access to computers; there is a belief that using new ICTs is inevitable.

For intermediary groups in the Philippines, **oral communication** was most empowering for grassroots women because it provides direct and immediate interaction. **Theatre and performing arts** was likewise empowering especially when performed by the grassroots women themselves. **Film** was considered as potentially empowering if in reference to alternative films. **TV** was potentially empowering in reach but not in content. **Radio** was potentially empowering given its wide reach and popularity among grassroots

women. **Print media** was not as empowering as the other **traditional communication tools**. Likewise, **telecommunications** was not empowering because of accessibility problems.

Among the **new ICTs**, the **cellphone** was viewed by intermediary groups as empowering for grassroots women. The **cellphone** has already been found useful for community organising as well as advocacy. The **computer and Internet** were valued by intermediary groups for increasing their efficiency and connectivity at work. Intermediary groups have used the **computer** for their presentations in the community and the **Internet** for networking. However, the **computer and Internet** remain inaccessible to grassroots women. In addition, the **Internet** was critiqued as exacerbating patriarchy and the digital divide. In general, both **traditional communication tools** and **new ICTs**, primarily the **cellphone**, are considered empowering by intermediary groups in the Philippines.

### FGD SYNTHESIS

Data from the FGD with PATAMABA (National Network of Informal Workers) members indicated that although the group has found a way to access new ICTs, they still believed in the primacy of face-to-face interaction in community development work, which is why they still see to it that they meet with their co-members on a regular basis. To overcome language barriers, participants rely on the use of participatory videos and on training in the English language. This appears to be primarily important given that they have different audiences ranging from grassroots women to other local and international organisations. The participants believe that the target audience should be taken in consideration in determining the appropriateness of communication tools used.

According to the participants, the advocacy work of intermediary groups enables their beneficiaries to become savvy users of new ICTs and other communication tools. Intermediary groups also facilitate regional networking and help develop the next generation, thus pointing towards the need for sustainable efforts geared towards empowerment.

New ICTs were judged to be most useful and appropriate for dealings outside of community spaces, as in national, regional and international spaces. Among the new ICTs, it was the cellphone that was deemed most useful for communication within the community. They cite the need for funds to invest in and maintain the necessary equipment for the use of new ICTs.

Empowerment was primarily defined as being about change. It entails teaching women how to live comfortably in a modern world. As such, empowerment also means being equipped with the skills and knowledge that one needs to thrive in the world. It is going beyond one's domestic roles and being confident and eloquent in sharing skills and knowledge to other people. They also cited empowerment as being able to contribute to the fulfillment of the missions of one's organisations.

