

PHILIPPINE
COUNTRY REPORT
ON WOMEN
1986-1995

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Prepared by the
National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women
in cooperation with the
National Coordinating Committee for Beijing
composed of
Government and Nongovernment Organizations

AN OVERVIEW

In the decade since the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985, Filipino women have achieved significant gains, particularly in the field of politics and public policy, while continuing to face daunting challenges in their quest for economic security and equality in law and in life.

In 1985, the Philippines was in the midst of political turmoil and economic crisis. A year later, Filipinos held their first truly democratic presidential elections in over a decade and had elected their first woman president -- Mrs. Corazon C. Aquino. While the election of a woman to the highest office of the land opened many doors to women to leadership positions in the bureaucracy and in social movements, the ratio of women in both appointive and elective positions hovered around 10 per cent throughout the decade.

Economic recovery was considerably slowed by a series of coup attempts, power shortages, natural calamities and a crushing debt burden in the late '80s. Reforms instituted by the new administration of President Fidel V. Ramos have ushered an era of liberalization, while relative political stability has lured more foreign investors. But the modest economic gains have so far failed to seep down to the 40.7 per cent of the population who live below the poverty threshold, creating widespread restlessness in the face of a growing sense of entitlement. Inadequate basic services in wide areas in both the cities and countryside have meant that women have had to spend more time and effort to look after their families, a task made much more difficult by the scarcity of clean water, firewood and arable land due to environmental degradation.

True, women's issues such as rape, domestic violence and reproductive rights moved from the periphery to the center of public debate. But at the same time, social problems such as migration and labor export, poverty and structural adjustment increasingly took on a female face.

A little more than half of the Filipinos who leave the country each year to work abroad are women. But their situation is bleaker because the majority are employed as domestic helpers or "entertainers," occupations which leave them extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. Lacking in formal education and skills and for many, even the proper documents, Filipino migrant women are prey to illegal recruiters, exploitative employers and harsh migration laws in the "receiving" countries. The lack of institutional supports and the absence of bilateral agreements between the Philippine government and the host governments have only added to their suffering.

An even more pernicious form of export of female labor is trafficking in women, and in some cases, in girls and boys. Though legislative and administrative sanctions early in the Aquino administration sought to bring to a halt such practices as sex tourism, child prostitution and mail-order marriages, they persist in both old forms and new guises. While sex tourists, particularly from Japan, stopped coming, young Filipino women left in droves to work as entertainers, if not prostitutes, in Japan and elsewhere. While the worst manifestations of child prostitution have been eradicated, syndicates specializing in such a trade continue to flourish underground. Young women recruited ostensibly for employment in Europe, end up working in brothels. With the help of friendly governments and women's groups abroad, a network of support groups and legal advocates has been created to support Filipina migrant women.

Dealing with the new forms of exploitation that appear even as old evils are mitigated remains a continuing challenge for the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, the prime state mechanism for promoting the advancement of women in the country. In the last decade, the NCRFW has moved from direct organizing of women at the village level to mainstreaming women and gender concerns at all levels of government and the bureaucracy. In its work, the NCRFW has found valuable allies among the many women's groups and non-governmental organizations that sprang up in the wake of the political turmoil of the mid-1980's. The growing strength, capability and flexibility of the Philippine women's movement has been one of the brightest spots for Filipino women in the last decade.

HIGHLIGHTS

POWER SHARERS AND DECISION MAKERS

The unprecedented active role that women took in installing the Republic's first woman president, Corazon Aquino, failed to exert a permanent impact on electoral politics. As in many countries undergoing dramatic political changes the restoration of democracy did not exactly ensure an easier path for women in politics. It continues to be a male domain, an expensive and often violent contest among elite clans that has effectively kept many women from the political arena.

In the Upper and Lower Houses of Congress women are still a minority. As provided by the Philippine Constitution, Corazon Aquino appointed one representative for the women's sector. President Ramos followed suit and went a step further by adopting the women's ten-point agenda assuring gender equality in politics, the environment, industry, education, health and media.

Women in the Cabinet

According to tradition, the portfolio for the Department of Social Welfare and Development is held by a woman. President Aquino in 1986, however, broke tradition by appointing women to the Department of Education, Culture and Sports and to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the highest socio-economic planning body of the government.

A woman also headed the National Unification Commission from 1992 to 1993 which laid down the framework and principles for negotiation of peace with armed rebels of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front.

At present, though, there is only one woman in the Ramos Cabinet and she holds the Social Welfare portfolio.

Women in the Career Service and the Bureaucracy

More than a quarter of all foreign service employees are women, a dramatic increase from the past decade. Eight had ambassadorial rank, 9 were minister councillors. By 1993, there were 10 assistant secretaries and 13 women ambassadors.

In the armed forces, while a woman was promoted to Brigadier General in 1990, the first woman to attain star rank, there is still an insignificant number of women in the military and police force. A mere 4.7% of officers are women, while 6% of personnel in the jail service are women. The number of women fire fighters also rose to 12.

Heavy female concentrations could be found in the departments of Social Welfare, Health, Education and Labor with minimal representation in National Defense, Energy, Transportation, Finance and Public Works.

The proportion of women in professional and technical positions surpassed that of men although men still held the highest levels. With more women now obtaining educational degrees than men, the prospects are that more women can and will assume greater roles and responsibilities in the bureaucracy.

Women in the Judiciary

In the Supreme Court, the first woman justice retired in 1979 and another woman was appointed in her stead. President Aquino appointed two other women justices during her term.

Women jurists are represented in most courts except the Sandiganbayan, the Court of Tax Appeals, the Sharia's District Court and the Circuit Courts. The Court of Appeals had the highest percentage of women judges at 26.5 per cent, followed by the Metropolitan Trial Courts at 23.2 per cent.

Mechanisms for Women's Advancement and Women's Rights

At the start of the Decade for Women in 1975, a national machinery for the advancement of women was established. The body was called the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW). This is the policy-making and advisory body to the President and the Cabinet on matters concerning women.

The present NCRFW board is composed of women advocates from NGOs and government. Through seven committees: Executive, Finance, International Relations, Media, Regional Affairs, Legislation and Special Events, the Board hopes to strengthen its role in policy making, planning and monitoring of government programs and projects for women. The NCRFW Board meets with the President every quarter to update and advise him on the urgent issues and concerns of women requiring immediate attention.

To achieve the economic transformation envisioned, strategies ranging from short-term stabilization to longer-term restructuring have been laid out in the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan or MTPDP. In 1986, then NCRFW Chairperson Sen. Leticia Ramos Shahani authored the one crucial sentence in the MTPDP that spelled the difference for women: "Women who constitute half of the population shall be effectively mobilized." This became the rationale for the Philippine Development Plan for Women (PDPW) which was envisioned to serve as the blueprint for gender-responsive planning and implementation. With the participation of women in NGOs and in academe, consultations among key government agencies were held throughout 1989 to draft the Plan.

Executive Order 348 ensured the implementation of the programs and projects outlined in the plan, with the NCRFW adopting three main recommendations:

- the creation of WID Focal Points or "little NCRFWs" in agencies;
- gender consciousness-raising sessions within the bureaucracy;
- development of a data base on women

Laws were enacted to include women representatives in policy-making bodies as well as in regional and local development planning councils. This positive outlook is encouraging but so much depends on the women leaders' capacity to source funds, energize the bureaucracy and break out of the deep-seated cultural roadblocks that hamper their own advancement.

From WID to GAD

The shift from a Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) framework reflects a change in focus on the strategies to address gender inequities. From the exclusion of women in WID the focus shifted to relations of inequality between women and men in all aspects of development from problem identification to resolution. GAD ensures or encourages increased participation for women, paving the way toward proportional gender representation in development programs, and accelerate the pace of gender equality.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

While there may not be too many legal or cultural obstacles to women obtaining higher education, they generally reach a plateau in the pursuit of careers earlier than their male counterparts.

Owing to the dearth of opportunities and underemployment, a good number of female college graduates end up as domestic help to foreign employers, taking upon themselves the main breadwinning role for their families and leaving behind nurturing responsibilities. Many have become victims of violence, sexual exploitation and harassment, and unfair labor practices.

So while equality between men and women is enshrined in law, discriminatory attitudes at home and in the workplace serve to reinforce inequalities in income, training, status and rights.

The feminist movement of the 80's made possible the gathering of gender-differentiated data and information which, when it became

available, provided proof of discrimination in the large number of unemployed women, the low salaries of female employees, the low numbers of women in supervisory and management positions in foreign service, judiciary, law enforcement to name a few. Relatively few females enjoyed equal or better status as males in education and health according to data gathered by the Technical Working Group on Statistics in 1988.

Awareness Raising

With financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), NCRFW embarked on a massive consciousness-raising program, including the holding of gender sensitivity seminars to combat sex stereotypes targetting Cabinet secretaries, undersecretaries, planners and decision-makers.

The Asian Women's Human Rights Council embarked on an international campaign to seek compensation for Asian "comfort women" from the Japanese government.

Legal literacy programs that teach women their human rights are conducted by the U.P. Law Center and non-government groups like the Institute for Social Studies and Action, Center for Legislative Development, to name a few. However, there is a great need to carry out information campaigns among the rural poor who are the prime consumers of media, such as radio broadcasts stereotyping women as victims of discrimination and violence, and the print media glamorizing a sexist, consumerist culture that commodifies women as playthings for men. At present, both the GO-NGO sectors have taken the initiative to engage members of the media in dialogues in the hope of dismantling sex stereotyping, and encouraging them to come up with a more positive image of women in the media.

Educational Reforms

While the education department acknowledged that it had perpetuated a value system that espouses male domination in all levels from elementary to tertiary, much remains to be done to ensure quality education for girls who need more exposure to science and

technology courses and for adult women to help them overcome the consequences of past discrimination that leave them lacking in essential skills.

However, strides have been made to make traditional and stereotypical subjects such as Work Education and Home Economics learning areas for both male and female.

Overcoming gender bias has become the overriding goal for women in non-traditional Trades Technology as the need to compete for scarce job and join the labor force is emphasized.

This now raises the challenge to eliminate role-stereotyping by investing in the revision of textbooks, and adapting teaching methods to the needs of girls.

Legal Instruments and Mechanisms

The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women was signed by the Philippines in July 1980 and ratified on August 5, 1987.

The Philippine Constitution of 1987 recognizes the fundamental equality of women and men before the law. Legislative measures such as the Women in Development and Nation-Building Act of 1992 and the Family Code of 1987 strengthen the government's commitment to women's issues and concerns, and answers the clamor for the removal of many provisions in the Civil Code that are discriminatory to women.

Although many bills concerning the role and equal rights of women were filed, only a few have been enacted into law by the Senate and House Committees on Women and Family Relations.

RA 7192 "Women in Development and Nation Building Act" provides equal opportunities for women in all military schools of the Armed Forces and the Philippine National Police. It also provides equal rights in entering into contracts and loan agreements and in joining social and cultural clubs. Household managers can now avail of social security services through their working spouses. Moreover,

it ensures that a substantial portion of foreign assistance funds be allocated to support programs for women.

The New Family Code completed in 1987 removed some discriminatory provisions of the Civil Code. It did not provide for divorce but allowed the termination of marriages by providing for a declaration of nullity of marriage on the grounds of psychological incapacity to comply with marital obligations. The Code also provided more grounds for legal separation.

Republic Act 6949 declared March 8 as “National Women’s Day”.

Republic Act 7160 or the Local Government Code has been amended to provide seats for women in all of the 1,600 local legislative assemblies nationwide.

Republic Act 7877 made sexual harassment unlawful in the employment, education, or training environment.

Through a policy of equal treatment of women and men in government, the Equality Advocates (EQUADS) offices of the Civil Service Commission in 14 regions hear out complaints alleging gender-based discrimination, such as sexual harassment.

Other laws that promote equal rights center on land ownership, employment, training opportunities, increased maternity benefits; minimum wage of domestic helpers; and greater participation in micro enterprises. Enabling laws such as RA 6972 provides for a day care in each village or barangay, and RA 7305 allows married public health workers to work in the same municipality.

Although some advances were made through legislation, there are remaining statutes which have to be changed since these are discriminatory. Foremost among these is the Revised Penal Code which was enacted in 1930. Provisions on adultery and concubinage, rape and prostitution, which identifies the prostitute as a woman, have to be amended. There is also the disparity on the granting of maternity leaves to women in the public sector which requires them to be married while it is not a requirement in the private sector. Other inequitable provisions remain in the Civil Code on donation and

succession, the Labor Code on nightwork prohibition, and in the admission to the marine profession and the immigration law.

Granting women equal rights becomes difficult when the gender bias is deeply rooted in society's psyche. This is clearly reflected in Articles 27-29 and 36 of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws. Even when statutes are relaxed to favor women, customary laws render them academic.

Law Enforcement

Inadequate enforcement and monitoring of the implementation of laws remains a problem. Titles to land which is conjugal property is still registered in the husband's name. The Department of Labor and Employment has yet to study prevailing inequities in compensation to support anti-discrimination laws.

Budgets for day care centers have to be allocated. Though they have waged many successful battles for the passage of non-discriminatory laws, NGOs should be more vigilant in monitoring the implementation of laws designed to advance women's status.

Regulatory agencies should provide technical and financial support to NGOs.

NGO Programs

The work to expand and institutionalize women's rights in law, policy and practice cannot be limited to government alone. Many women's NGOs have long been involved in this work. Among the more established groups and programs are:

(DIWA) Development Institute for Women in Asia-Pacific - addresses issues of sexism and women's discrimination.

(MAKASAMA) Makabayang Kababaihan ng Masa - conducts feminist literacy programs for the city's poor.

THE WOMEN'S LEGAL BUREAU - a feminist legal resource which fights for and protects women's rights through the creative use of the law.

CENTER FOR LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENT - provides training and research on women's participation in politics. It serves as a link between women's organizations and women public officials in legislative agenda setting and implementation.

THE INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES AND ACTION consults with NGOs on women's legislative and administrative advocacy agenda, and links key people, and organizations for action.

NGOs and POs (people's organizations) vigorously campaigned for the thorough implementation of the PDPW and some even incorporated the PDPW concerns in their organizational plans. In time, GOs and NGOs found out that much could be done in collaboration. By 1992, the Women's GO-NGO network structure was formalized with a board composed of 11 members, 5 GOs and 6 NGOs.

The National Steering Committee composed of the Women GO-NGO Network Group of 10 (G-10), the Women's Action Network for Development (WAND), the National Council of Women in the Philippines (NCWP), the Philippine Muslim Women's Association and Filipino Ethnic Women, Ugnayan ng Kababaihan sa Pulitika (UKP) and the Alliance for Women's Health, held consultations nationwide to draft a platform for action for the Philippine Country Report for Beijing. The Report's contents thus reflect the concerns of women in both public and private spheres.

WOMEN AND POVERTY

The women are more vulnerable to the effects of poverty because of the sex-gender system pervasive in Philippine society. Less than half of them have direct access to income from wages. In economic downturns, it is the women who are laid off first and employed last.

It was only in 1994 that the economy started to rebound with a 4.5 per cent growth rate. According to the ILO, it has to grow by an average of 8 per cent to generate enough jobs.

A third of the poorest-of-poor households showed that the women engaged in farming, forestry, or fishing were unpaid. The marked decrease in farm, sand, and fishery production drive women away from farms into the urban areas or foreign shores as domestic help, culturally isolated and vulnerable to abuse.

By and large the productive contributions to family subsistence of the majority of women are invisible in national income accounts.

Forty per cent of Filipino families fell below the poverty threshold. Some 60.1 per cent (3.6 million families) live in the rural areas where productivity remains low; while 39.2 per cent live in urban centers, mostly in slum settlements, beset by problems of security of tenure, sanitation and health, drugs and domestic violence. Rapid population growth continues to be a constraint to raising income per person.

President Ramos vows to reduce poverty by 30 per cent in 1998, but given the highly unequal structure of landownership when the majority of tenants have no access to credit and farm inputs, this is very ambitious.

Poverty Alleviation

The first initiative is the people-empowerment strategy, where poverty alleviation initiatives are decided on and run by the people themselves.

The second features broad-based efforts such as identifying potential growth areas, and providing growth-enhancing support systems.

The third is the Minimum Basic Needs Approach that answers not only survival needs but aims for security and empowerment as well. Ordering the basic needs hierarchically, standard indicators guide

development managers, with the help of multidisciplines and sectors, in directing efforts.

The MTPDP aims to redistribute productive resource; increase the poor's access to services, and also increase opportunities for investment and employment. This is to be done mainly through a demand-led, employment-directed and agriculture-based reform program, and by instituting tax reforms.

In addition, adjunct measures such as legislative skills training are being employed in the agrarian sector to cushion the adverse effects of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

There have also been a three-fold increase in the number of public day care system, and productivity skills and livelihood for women in especially difficult circumstances, information and services for family planning and reproductive health.

GO/NGO Credit Assistance

Numerous studies on GO and NGOs show that women perform most of the volunteer work to mobilize a community in acquiring goods or public services to enhance productivity. Many gender-sensitive programs to hasten credit assistance have also been put in place.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women's access to capital, credit and technology is necessary to effect any discernible change toward economic empowerment. Women need to pursue careers in science and technology fields inspite of stereotypical images that portray them as mere adjuncts of men.

Credit in Public Banks

Republic Act 7192 passed in 1992 provided equal access to loans and credit, and gave married women equal rights in all contractual situations: 1) the capacity to borrow and obtain loans and the executive security and credit arrangements; 2) equal access to all government and private sector programs granting agricultural credit, loans and equal treatment in agrarian reform and land resettlement programs; 3) the right to act as incorporators and enter into insurance contracts.

Both government and NGOs have begun providing financial and technical assistance to rural women. A few government lending institutions now grant loans to women beneficiaries payable in 5 years with minimal interest, and no collateral. P32.5 million has been released to credit cooperatives between 1992-1993 under the Cooperative Development Authority. The (OWWA) Overseas Workers Welfare Administration gives capital assistance with low interest rates. The (GB) Grameen Bank scheme reported a high success rate and a total savings of P1.07 million. Borrowers are able to repay loans at current market rates in 50 weekly installments. As of March 1993 P7.5 million in loans were released to 2,931 members.

Women victims of Mt. Pinatubo, through the DSWD's Self Employment Assistance to Women, set up small livelihood schemes. Main sources of credit were relatives, friends and private money lenders and cooperatives. Very few borrowed from private and government banks.

Sustainable Development

The Women Ecology Group of the NCRFW composed of members of GOs and NGOs seeks to make inroads in the management of natural resources by women.

Certificates of stewardship from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) formerly given to the male head of the family are now issued to both spouses, paving the way for women to be trained in related programs. Certain laws, rules and regulations not favorable to women were revised.

Rural Land Ownership

Under the a policy of equal treatment of women and men in government, the Equality Advocates offices of the Civil Service Commission in 14 regions hear out problems concerning gender, such as sexual harassment. Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) 10.3 million hectares were to be distributed over a period of 10 years. Emancipation Patents were issued covering 363,276.75 hectares to 270,096 holders. Only 11.5% were women beneficiaries, mostly heads of families; 88.5% were men.

Real Estate Tenure

There is no law prohibiting ownership of land by women but there are no statistics on the extent of women's ownership. About 52% reported owning their lot on which their house stands. 26.5% own agricultural lands and 7% other kinds of lands, indicating that female-headed households have higher access to land.

The 1991 Agriculture Census showed that female heads of households till smaller-sized farms. Twenty five percent (25%) of these women farm an area average of 1/2 hectares or 5,000 square meters.

NGO Issues

The agrarian reform law is weak and has many loopholes. Actual land distribution is an exceedingly slow process. There is indiscriminate land conversion in the urban and industrial zones which displaces peasant families resulting in dislocation, hunger and illness.

The right to ancestral domain has not been enacted into law. Affected indigenous peoples voiced out that they had not been consulted by the DENR-CARP. Conflict arising from the implementation of customary land use and ownership of indigenous peoples inevitably arise.

GO Initiatives

Administrative Order No. 2 issued by DAR states: Husband and wife farm workers may be entitled to 3 hectares provided their vested rights to the land have been duly established.

The DAR recognizes the lack of access and control of women in land ownership.

Through the DAR-WID Focal Point network, gender responsive advocacy activities have been integrated in the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Proponents of the labor policy to send contract workers abroad like to emphasize the high literacy rate of Filipinos, a quality the women could rightfully take pride in, were it not so exploited and underutilized.

School attendance showed more females than males, and even for the poorest of the poor, has increased to about 85 % for females and 84% for the males.

Specifically, more women completed tertiary education, showing a marked increase in the sciences and technology degrees obtained and dominative business ad, medical diagnostics and service trade.

Females outnumbered the males in the teaching field comprising 94% of all elementary school teachers.

The Constitution guarantees free education up to the secondary level. Scholarships, student loans, job assistance and other forms of subsidy can be availed of by exceptional students on the tertiary level.

For depressed communities, several programs were tried. Day care centers for girls looking after younger siblings were set up. Multigrade clusters of students from the Ifugao region availed of a mobile teacher who traveled from one mountain community to the next. A condensed 26-month diploma course was given to teachers from remote villages.

However, within the last 6 years, with the unemployment levels peaking at 12.5 per cent, more women ventured overseas to seek employment, mostly as domestic help. Thousands of women lured by recruiters through the back door, have been easy prey for the police in host countries.

Trafficking and violence against women are the most pressing issues. Although there are memoranda of understanding Bilateral agreements for the protection of workers' rights must be put in place.

On the homefront, Forty four per cent of the manufacturing force were women. They also dominated the real estate, banking, and finance service. Generally women outnumbered men in 4 major occupation groups: professional, technical, clerical, and sales. Retail trade and house-based enterprise kept women within arm's length of their dependents.

Apart from holding the highest positions, men dominated production and transport. Given this women got only a third (37 centavos) of every peso that the male worker earned. Women, largely unorganized and not into trade union organizing, were preferred by the export-processing zones, where non-payment of minimum wage and sexual harassment are common.

Women NGOs continue to advocate against the exploitation of female labor, and studies also revealed the limited gains of small-scale programs if general policy reforms towards more equitable distribution were not pursued with more political will.

HEALTH

Malnutrition is a woman's concern, with the much higher incidence of anemia among adolescent girls (6%) than boys (1%).

Mortality and its Causes

Maternal mortality decreased from 10 to 8 per 10,000 in 1990. Leading cases of maternal mortality are post partum hemorrhages, hypertension complicating pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium pregnancies with abortive outcome.

Among child-bearing women, the leading cause of death is heart disease, followed by tuberculosis, cancer and pregnancy-related diseases. In the 40-49 age group, breast cancer is increasing. According to AIDS-HIV registry of 1993, the number of females with HIV is increasing. The most common mode of transmission is sexual. Thus far, only 5 offsprings got the virus from their mother these past 9 years.

Fertility and Contraception Prevalence

The total fertility rate decreased from 5 per woman to 4.08 children from 1980-1993. Contraception rate rose from 32% to 40% despite strong resistance from the Catholic Church.

In 1978 the top 3 contraceptive methods used were withdrawal (10%), the pill (9%) and sterilization (3%). Ten years later the trend is toward sterilization, rhythm and pill.

Immunization

About 67 per cent of mothers receive the tetanus toxoid shots during pregnancy. Rural mothers are even more protected than those in urban areas, and studies showed that women with higher education were more receptive to health initiatives.

NGO Initiatives

Women NGOs are at the forefront of the advocacy for women's health and reproductive rights providing much needed information and health delivery services.

The Women's Health Movement of the Philippines network supports women's health and reproductive rights.

PRO-LIFE encourages natural family planning method and counsels pregnant women.

Women's Health Care Foundation provides reproductive health care to women.

Institute for Social Studies and Action conducts research, education on health and reproductive rights of women.

Health Action Information Network works with communities and advocacy groups on health-related issues, combining formal academic research methods with community-based perspectives.

Recently, an Alliance of Women's Health have consolidated efforts to more vigorously propose initiatives for the provision of services for women's health needs as well as to advocate for a more enlightened debate on population and development.

VIOLENCE

The lack of data on rape, incest, and sexual harassment as well as other forms of violence against women indicates the very complex roots of a problem often shrouded in secrecy. All too often the families of the victims, the police and the existing system of justice tend to ignore or even trivialize severe incidents of domestic violence, or worse perpetuate a "culture of silence" around it.

Campaigns against sex tourism and prostitution, and in recent years, seeking compensation from the Japanese government for the atrocities done to the "comfort women" and the UN's special focus on women's rights as human rights, among others have broken the silence. As a result, more cases of gender violence such as wife battery and rape are now being reported.

Still and all, pornography remains a very lucrative business and sex trafficking in women and girls has become a crisis of global proportions. Sex tourism still is a foreign exchange earner. Mail-order brides, lured into marriage of convenience, face an uncertain future with socially and psychologically unfit foreigners; and now more than ever, even among indigenous communities, women complain of battery and assault when husbands get drunk.

Legal measures are underway as the National Prosecution Services of the Department of Justice has committed itself to legislating domestic violence as a crime and to assess the present legal system's responsiveness to all forms of violence against women. Moreover, it favors legislative actions to demand bilateral relations to protect migrants, and victims of sex trafficking; provide stiffer penalties for the operators of prostitution dens; and encourage regular dialogues with support groups and policy makers. Several bills that

include redefining rape as a crime against persons have been introduced in Congress.

The NCRFW levelled off with Congress on a common understanding of prostitution and decriminalizing the “prostitute”. In liaison with the female members of Congress, it lined up five priority bills.

Public Shelter

The DSWD’s Substitute Home Care for Women in “especially difficult circumstances” serving battered wives and victims of illegal recruitment have solicited the support of the Congressional Spouses Foundation. More than 10,000 have been served both within its six houses and in the community.

The non-government sector took the lead in the 80s in setting up centers for victims of violence. Presently ten groups provide shelter and care. The Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women, the recognized pioneer, goes into partnerships with prostitutes, mail-order brides and migrant workers to provide a 24-hour service benefitting some 10,000 women who are encouraged to leave prostitution, learn new skills and alternative livelihoods.

The Mennonites helped found BUKLOD, an organization assisting bar women in the former bases areas and their Amerasian children. Several shelters such as the Caritas Manila Morning Glory Shelter and the Paco Welcome House are run by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

The Women’s Crisis Center which opened in 1989, offers stress reduction therapy and feminist counselling to rape victims, battered women and others who are in crisis situations. Lihok Pilipina in Cebu and Bathaluman Center in Davao City provide similar services.

At the forefront of campaigns against trafficking and slavery and various forms of violence against women are Stop Trafficking of Pilipinos (STOP), GABRIELA, WEDPRO, KALAKASAN, DAYANG, TALIKALA, and the Cordillera Women’s Education and Research Center. International coalitions such as the Coalition Against

Trafficking in Women are engaged in the advocacy against the global sex trade at the UN level.

The Women GO-NGO Network on Prostitution and Violence Against Women seeks to mobilize barangay-level organizations in urging officials to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence; as well as train public officials, the police and the media in raising awareness that violence reinforces the social, economic and political inequality that women experience as part of their daily lives. Unless the law makers, educators, social workers and NGOs accord violence against women the serious attention it deserves, progress will remain very slow.

EPILOGUE

Towards a New Paradigm

Even as the Philippines has finally reached a take-off point of growth in the economy, it is the Filipino women, in particular, who continue to suffer the human and social costs of displacement and outmigration spawned by a largely unexamined growth model of development.

In evolving a paradigm for a sustainable and self-renewing environment for all, it is necessary to delve deeper into the larger contradictions of the country's export-focused economic strategy. For far too long, development bureaucrats have insisted on shaping the course of the economy along so-called "growth models" that have failed to extricate us from unequal trade policies and have deplorably devastated our croplands, ravaged our forests and disenfranchised the people's, especially the women's resource bases.

Unless a feminist ethic is infused into development thinking, the country will continue to face disruptive changes brought about by increasing numbers of displaced women, whether in the rural or urban areas, who remain in the peripheries of development.

The Fourth World Conference on Women serves as the global forum for highlighting the problems of women in the Philippines. The Philippine government, supported by Philippine civil society will have to make a serious commitment to making real changes in the lives of women, primarily in migration and trafficking, violence against women, and human rights.

The use of gender-sensitive indicators will strengthen the advocacy for gender-equality; amplify and project women's concerns with greater clarity and force. As Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Fourth Women's Conference once said, the revolution has begun, and there is no turning back.