

**SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE
NATIONAL SUMMIT OF WOMEN LOCAL
CHIEF EXECUTIVES AND LEGISLATORS,
MANILA, MAY 13-15, 2003**

Pursuant to the Phitsanulok Declaration crafted in June 2001 by women mayors and councilors from all over Asia and the Pacific, which called for “country level actions to achieve the goal of gender equality in local government”, the UNESCAP identified the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) as convenor of a follow-up national summit. The NCRFW elicited the support of the University of the Philippines Center for Women’s Studies (UPCWS) to serve as secretariat of the Summit and called for a mixed group of NGOs and local government leagues to meet as Initiating Committee.

The first meeting of the Committee was held on December 9, 2002, followed by another meeting on January 9, 2003. In those meetings the Center for Local and Regional Governance of the National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines (CLRG-NCPAG) was added to the secretariat.

To more adequately prepare for the Summit, a workshop was held on February 20-21, 2003. Forty participants attended the workshop. They came from the following institutions: NCRFW, UPCWS, CLRG, UNDP, Lady Local Legislators League (4L), Lady Municipal Mayors League of the Philippines (LMMAP), League of Cities of the Philippines (LCP), Philippine Councilors League (PCL), Department of the Interior

and Local Government (DILG), Women in Politics Institute (WPI), *Ugnayan ng Kababaihan sa Pulitika* (UKP), and Women Involved in Nation Building (WIN). In that workshop, materials to be used in the summit were discussed and the methodology for the Summit was planned. Issues to be tackled were also identified. The Summit was set for May 13-15, 2003 in Metro Manila.

Summit Preparations

Hectic preparations were made for the Summit. To augment what was perceived as lack of funds, the CIDA offered additional funds. UNDP also contributed. Thus, three big sponsors provided funds for the Summit — UNESCAP, CIDA, and UNDP.

In keeping with the mandate from UNESCAP for at least 100 women in local government, the organizers aimed for at least 200 participants. The venue identified was the Manila Pavilion Hotel which has space in terms of auditorium, function rooms, and bedrooms, and which quoted what the organizers thought as affordable.

CIDA's offer of financing called for scholarships for women local officials from the poorest localities, and included expenses to be incurred for a facilitators meeting to be held shortly before the Summit.

The day before the Summit, 38 attended the meeting of facilitators and rapporteurs held at the Manila Pavilion Hotel. They emerged from the meeting with a common understanding of the issues to be discussed based on a feminist framework.

The National Summit

The actual Summit opened in the afternoon of May 13, 2003. Starting at 2:00 p.m. the opening program featured greetings and messages from partner agencies — UNESCAP, UNDP, CIDA, the 4L and LMMAP. The keynote address was given by Secretary Jose D. Lina of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) who vowed to support government initiatives toward gender equality. The opening program was capped by the launching of resource materials and tools for gender-responsive governance by the DILG, NCRFW, and CIDA.

The first plenary meeting was devoted to a discussion of important documents—the UN Millennium Development Goals, the UNDP Framework on Gender, Poverty and Governance, the Phitsanulok Declaration on the Advancement of Women in Local Government, the Philippine Framework Plan for Women, and a state of the art report on Women in Local Governance in the Philippines. The discussion was led by Ms. Emmeline L. Verzosa, Executive Director of the NCRFW.

The plenary session was followed by workshops on Strategies for Building Gender Responsive Governance. Two groups discussed Legislative and Policy Actions. Another group discussed Capability Building for Mainstreaming Gender, while another group tackled Enabling Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming.

The day ended with dinner, where Congresswoman Loretta Ann Rosales discussed her pending Gender Balance bill.

The next morning's plenary session featured three women leaders who shared their experiences as local chief executives in the session titled *Winning for Women*: Leyte Governor Remedios Petilla, San Fernando City Mayor Mary Jane Ortega, and Municipal Mayor Jenny de Asis of San Francisco, Agusan del Sur.

As a follow-up to the learning session, Ms. Remedios Rikken, President of the Women in Politics Institute discussed how elected women can be agents for transforming governance not only to make government efficient and effective, but also as advocates for gender equality.

During lunch, Senator Loren Legarda talked about the role of women in local government as protectors of the environment and instruments for sustainable development.

Workshops in the afternoon focused on sharing of experiences by successful program implementers, where participants learned how to design their own programs or to replicate programs which fit their localities. One session served as venue for sharing how to provide community-based services for survivors of violence against women. Another session focused on economic empowerment programs for women, while a third one discussed comprehensive delivery of health care services. A book launching of *Freedom from Fear: Establishing a Quick Response Team for Violence Against Women*, by the CIDA Local Government Support Program was held. Two of the speakers in the workshops were male mayors: Gregorio Facula of Dujali, Davao del Norte, and Santiago Barcelona, Jr. of Escalante, Negros Occidental.

The second evening ended with the discussion and approval of the *Manila Declaration on Gender Responsive Politics and Governance*. After its approval, the participants planned their next steps. Stakeholders from different sectors pledged their assistance in various ways to make the Manila Declaration a workable reality.

The closing ceremony on the last day, May 15, was marked by the presentation of the Manila Declaration to the President of the Republic of the Philippines, Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Also presented was a resolution by the

LMMAP on making municipalities gender responsive instruments for sustainable development. Mr. Terence Jones, Resident Representative of UNDP, read the statement of commitment from the donor agencies.

Implications

As conceived, the Summit was geared towards the increased empowerment of women in the Philippines through their women local leaders. The participants were local chief executives and legislators, who were challenged to be transformative leaders. Through sharing of successful experiences in programs such as health, entrepreneurship and governance, they were able to see what they can do and what more they can contribute, as elected local leaders in the country. In another set of workshops they also learned gender mainstreaming at the local level through capability building, policy, and governance. These aim to encourage them to continue running for office, and become effective leaders in their localities to uphold the women's agenda. The Manila Declaration which they crafted and presented to the President, gave them direct experience in putting forward policy initiatives and strategies for gender mainstreaming.

PROSERPINA D. TAPALES