

ENGENDERING DEVELOPMENT: An Overview of the Philippine Experience

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Introduction

Development, according to Amartya Sen, is a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. It “requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states ”(Sen:4).

Development is also defined as “the sustained capacity to achieve a better life” (Santos:11). An individual’s capacity to do and to be determines the quality of life. Capacity to do embraces the range of activities and situations a person can engage in and utilize to achieve a better life, while capacity to be is premised on those personal and environmental resources a person can mobilize or harness to attain a better life (Santos:11).

What a person can do and can be are, however, “influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives” (Sen:5) and the “institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the exercise of people’s freedoms, through the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public

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decisions that impel the progress of these opportunities ” (Sen:5). In this sense, freedom is as much the product as it is the constitutive element of development.

The freedom to do and the freedom to be define the substance of the freedom of choice that is the heart of authentic human development. When the freedom to choose opportunities for a better life is constricted, development is waylaid. In a democratic society, the vested right of every human being to these freedoms underpins social justice that rests on the twin ideals of equality of opportunities and equality before the law. To deny or diminish these freedoms is to deny or diminish not only development but also the democratic ideals of social justice and equality.

Poverty embraces the spectrum of conditions where these freedoms are diminished, at best, and denied, at worst. Poverty vivifies the tragedy of social inequality in the deprivation of opportunities for a better life of the poor. The bigger tragedy, however, is that within the circles of the poor, the denial and diminution of these freedoms, the deprivation of opportunities for development, and the burden of social inequality have been and continue to be more oppressive and dehumanizing on women.

Gender Inequality and the Feminization of Poverty

Filipino women subsist on a terrain of gender inequality hewn from and sustained by historical, social, political and cultural experiences and conditions, that “retards the pace of their own personal development, relegates them largely to the reproductive sphere of life, affords them minimal chances or fails to harness their full potentials for development.” (NCRFW 1995:21-22)

On this terrain, the biological nature of women is used to confine them to their reproductive functions, restrict their capacities for doing and being, confer on men superior physical

attributes and legitimize men's domination of women. This **biological determinism** undergirding conceptions of gender in our society has been "reified and transmitted from one generation to another, thereby reproducing a societal system that discriminates against women and subsists on the basis of a double standard" (NCRFW:22).

Gender is the culturally specific set of characteristics that identifies the social behavior of women and men and the relationship between them. It is a social construct — created, produced and reproduced by social institutions — not a natural or biological given (Santos et al:13). Biological determinism has skewed gender conceptions in society to inflict the burdens of inequality on women. One of these burdens is **gender stereotyping** where particular traits, characteristics and roles are ascribed distinctly and strictly to women and men. Any transgression of these ascribed traits, characteristics and roles is deemed deviant or abnormal behavior. The socialization process in the family, the educational system, the portrayal of women in media, the legal system and the teachings of various religions, among others, perpetuate women's captivity in the trap of gender stereotyping.

A prevalent gender stereotyping is the attribution of weakness/emotionalism to women, and strength/rationality to men. Women are seen as frail, dependent, and unstable creatures unable to engage in activities that men as the "stronger sex" engage in. Their biological capacity to bear children is used to define, circumscribe and justify as their "natural", and thus, "logical" role the taking on of child-care and child-rearing functions, and inevitably, the responsibility of taking care of the home. Women are, thus, bound to the "ideology of familialism" which is more commonly purveyed in the prevalent belief that "a woman's place is the home".

While women's bodies determine their social role and functions, men are seen as disconnected from their bodies. Biologically unable to bear children, the "stronger sex" wields dominance in the home as *pater familias* to whom their wives owe obedience, and beyond the confines of the home where their "natural" strength are seen as best suited.

This home/beyond the home role terrain dichotomy fosters the **private/public role dichotomy**. The home is the private sphere where women must be. The public sphere - politics and the electoral arena, government, the bureaucracy, public enterprise, even the hierarchy of institutionalized religions, among others — is the natural domain of men. Concerns of men are, thus, worthy of public attention and engagement. But women's concerns - family and home, sexuality, marital relationships, parenting and family violence — are regarded as "invisible", best kept within shrouds of silence.

Because women are not naturally capacitated to engage in the public sphere, women are disabled from gaining or sharing equal power, prestige, status and social position as men. Gender relations are, in this sense, relations of power, and women are effectively disempowered by their subordination to men within the family and the larger society. Women are disenfranchised from decision-making even on matters that affect them, thus, heightening their economic, political and social marginalization.

The public/private dichotomy underpins the **sexual division of labor** into production and reproduction, the former pertaining to the public sphere, and the latter to the private sphere. Reproduction refers to work done inside the home — the care and maintenance of the household and its members, pregnancy, child-bearing, child rearing, food preparation, housekeeping and general family health care, among others. **Production** refers to

the creation of goods and services exchanged for cash or non-cash material equivalent and oftentimes are done outside the household. (NCRFW:22)

In the Philippines, production is given more value than reproduction. Reproductive work carried out by women while crucial to the survival of families is generally not considered as real work and should not be remunerated. In national statistics such as the GNP and the GDP, domestic work is not included in the computations of growth and development. Women, especially in poor households, also work to create goods and render services to help meet family needs — weaving, vegetable gardening for household consumption, vending and engaging in various informal entrepreneurial activities. These tasks are regarded as mere extensions of reproductive work that do not require compensation. Men, on the other hand, are generally expected to work for pay, and their contributions to the domestic sphere are “special” since these are not integral to their “natural” being or gender role.

Sexual division of labor rests on the alienation of reproduction and production, and is sustained by the non-valuation of reproduction and the privileging of production. A necessary corollary is the perpetuation of the **multiple burdens of women**. While women increasingly engage in the productive sphere, men do not correspondingly increase their participation in the reproductive arena. For women working outside the home, household chores and the sum of all reproductive work remain their responsibility even when these are passed on to other women, like housemaids, who take on surrogate housewife roles. Patently, women's multiple burden restrains them from exploring to the optimum opportunities for their development.

The productive and reproductive dichotomy, and its corollary, the under and non-valuation of women's work, has been carried

over to the public economic and social domain. Women are limited to jobs and careers that are largely extensions of their domestic roles and, as such, are comparatively low in status and level of compensation. They are also the last to be hired and first to be fired, with limited or no access to training, promotions and other development opportunities in the workplace. Women's rights to their bodies, the sum of their reproductive rights, and the services they deserve are severely restricted. Health services for women are largely limited to maternal concerns with little attention to other ailments and health assistance needs. Reproductive health, family planning and population policy issues are not discussed with the fullest participation of women.

Unequal gender relations erode the personhood of women – diminishing their dignity, self-esteem and self-worth. As women are pushed deeper into the mire of subordination and marginalization, the inevitable consequence is increased feminization of poverty. As “second class citizens” in the constituency of the poor, and as the more oppressed among the army of the oppressed, the burden of poverty grows heavier on women as their freedom to access opportunities for a better life, on equal terms with men, becomes increasingly restricted.

National social realities — the glaring disparity in wealth and power among citizens, an elite democracy, inappropriate development paradigms, economic policies and priorities that deepen the vulnerabilities to deprivation and oppression of the poor, bad governance, among others — further aggravate unequal gender relations. In heightening the deprivations of the poor, these realities inevitably aggravate the subordination of women and the feminization of poverty.

Reality Bytes on the Status of Women¹

Poverty

Women are among the poorest and most vulnerable groups to the debilitating impact of poverty. Gender disadvantages are manifest in women's poor health, inadequate diet, less education, early entry into motherhood and frequent pregnancies among women from poor households. By the end of 2001, more Filipino families have slipped into poverty with the poverty incidence rate estimated to be 40% to 45%. This aggravates the feminization of poverty because women are mainly responsible for the survival of their families under conditions of increasing poverty.

Majority of the poor are in rural areas and most are engaged in subsistence farming and fishing. They are seldom reached by public services. Land distribution under the CARP has been slow with only two percent of qualified farmers, among them women, having benefited from the program. Of the total redistributed land, only 11% went to women beneficiaries with the average land size awarded to women smaller than those given to men.

A survey conducted nationwide among the poor during the first four months of 2001 (*World Bank 2001*) noted the need to improve public services for the poor.

- Only a quarter of poor households have access to home-piped water, while most got their water from springs, wells and community faucets. This means that more women carry the added burden of fetching water for their households.
- Government housing programs registered the lowest access rate among basic services. Seven out of 10 households owned their homes but only two percent of these families acquired their houses and lots through government housing or financing programs.

- Only five out of 10 families have electricity. Household chores, which are women's work, are more tiring and time-consuming without electricity.
- One in every five poor households have no access to government health facilities, and there is also a prevalent perception that government hospitals and health centers are inferior in terms of the skills of the staff, facilities and medical equipment.
- Free education is accessible but it is not considered quality education because of the large size of classes, inadequate facilities, lack of textbooks, and the textbooks available contain factual errors and sexist materials that reinforce gender stereotypes.

Employment and economic opportunities

Data culled from the *October 2001 Labor Force Survey* of the NSO show that from 2000 to 2001 :

- There was only a slight difference in the 2001 employment rates — women's employment rate decreased by 0.4% (90.1 % to 89.7%) while the men's increased by 0.9% (89.7% to 90.6%).
- Labor force participation rate of women (LFPR) rose by 4.4% translating to some 13.2 million women engaged in or seeking gainful employment. Men's LFPR (82.3%), however, was still higher than women's LFPR (52.8%).
- Sixty percent of the country's total workforce in the formal sector was male; majority of own account workers were men, estimated to be 65.2%; and majority of wage and salary workers were also men at 61.8%.
- More than half of all employed women were in the informal sector doing home-based work, vending and retailing, laundry work, domestic service, and animal and

vegetable-raising, among others. Work in the informal sector is hazardous, unprotected and mostly unregulated with workers bereft of access to amenities, insurance benefits and support systems.

- In paid work, men devoted 40.2 hours per week while women spent 41.0 hours per week.
- Women are more prone to **labor flexibilization**, the varying forms of work arrangements that render jobs less secure and force workers to accept lower wages, substandard working conditions and inadequate maternity, health and other benefits. Unions are unable to help most women negotiate for better working conditions because few women are union members and leaders.
- An increasing trend of feminization of migration has also been observed. Sixty-one percent of new hires for land-based overseas workers in 1998 were women employed mostly as domestic helpers, care givers, entertainers and other service workers (*Asis 1999 in Ofreneo 2001*). Women migrant workers are exposed to and are vulnerable to the dangers of trafficking, prostitution and other forms of exploitation and abuse.

According to the Philippine Human Development Report 2002 (*HDN/UNDP 2002*) poverty and gender roles are powerful forces that modify patterns of employment between men and women. Slightly more than half of the unemployed in the country are women, indicating a bias disfavoring female employment. Women make up a larger proportion of the poor who stay out of the labor force. Women are 81% of the nonlabor force among the poor. In poor households larger with more dependent children, women are effectively tied down to housework and they are prevented, given their traditional role assignments, from

joining the labor force. Among the poor, 73% of the women cite “housekeeping” as reason for staying out of the labor force.

Education and training

Filipino women enjoy almost equal status with men in terms of education.

- Women’s literacy rate in 2000 is 95.1% compared to 95.5% for men, while functional literacy for women is higher than that of men.
- Enrolment for the elementary levels in SY 1999-2000 showed more males than females or 51.1% compared to 48.9%. The secondary levels, however, had more female students than males, or 51.4% as against 48.6% in SY 1997-1998. In higher education programs in SY 1997-1998, there were three males (48.2%) for every four females (51.8%) enrolled in universities and colleges.
- Gender tracking continues to influence choices of courses in tertiary education. In 1997-1998, women outnumbered men in programs traditionally considered “for women only” such as education and health sciences where they comprised 77.6% and 75.2% respectively, of enrollees. They also dominated home economics (90.1%), service trades (77.2%), medicine and allied sciences (67.1%). Men dominated engineering and law courses.
- In training, more men attended programs for executives, managers and supervisors, while more women joined trainings on clerical and personal services. For 1995-1996, women comprised 39.4% of those who availed of formal training and 34.4% of those non-formal training given by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Health

Mortality rate of women is 4.2 deaths per 10,000 as against men's mortality rate of six deaths per 10,000. Women's life expectancy rate was also higher at 71 years compared to 64.8 years for men (*NSO 1998*). The country has one of the highest population growth rates in the region at 2.36% from 1995 to 2000, and 2.4% in 2001 (*2000 Census*) which means that three babies are born every minute and close to two million a year. Rep. Nereus Acosta (Bukidnon) asserts that this is like adding to the national census the population of three medium sized cities like Cagayan de Oro or Iloilo every year! With a gross domestic product (GDP) growth at 3.4%, this amounts to only one percent growth in real per capita income. A consistently expanding population base exerts pressure on existing resources and heightens the unavailability and inaccessibility of basic goods and services to the poor especially the women whose burdens multiply and who face greater health risks as poverty deepens.

The Family Planning Survey in 2001 noted that 49.5% of currently married women used at least one contraceptive method, up from 47% in 2000. Ninety-two percent (92%) of mothers received pre-natal care from medical professionals and traditional midwives/birth attendants in 1998 (*NDHS 1998*). Traditional birth attendants serviced 41.3% of the births, doctors 30.9% and nurses or midwives 25.5%. Approximately 65.5% of pregnancies were delivered at home while 34.2% at health facilities. The prevalence of anemia, thiamine and riboflavin deficiencies, and goiter continue to be more common among women than men, particularly lactating and pregnant women.

A current concern revolves around the right of women to have their health needs addressed as women and not merely as mothers. This expands reproductive health concerns to include fertility regulation, sexual health, infertility, safe motherhood,

child survival and full recognition of reproductive rights – the rights of women and couples to decide freely and responsibly on the number, spacing and timing of the birth of their children, free from coercion and discrimination. This would allow women more control over their bodies and ultimately, their lives.

Violence against women

Filipino women suffer and are vulnerable to various forms of violence such as wife abuse or domestic violence, abuse of women in intimate relationships, rape (including marital rape), incest, sexual harassment, sex discrimination, forced prostitution and international trafficking, pornography and abuse of women in media, and custodial abuse of a woman patient, ward or detainee.

The 2001 Annual report of the PNP Women's Desk cited the following:

- Most common cases are wife battering at 54.8% and rape at 9.92%. Majority of the victims are 30 years old and below;
- Most reported crime against girl-children is rape at 37.7%; and
- Forty-eight percent (48.6%) of perpetrators had no relation with the victims or survivors; but husbands accounted for 27.6% of perpetrators with almost two out of three cases occurring within the household (*PNP 1999*).

Women in Governance

Women are increasingly becoming visible as decision-makers and leaders in both the public and private sectors. While we have had two women Presidents, women's participation in the arena of leadership is disproportionate to their numbers.

- Voter turnout in elections is generally higher among women. In the 2001 national elections, the turnout rate for women was 76.74% as against men's rate of 75.9% even as there were more female registered voters (18.03 M) than male voters (17.64 M) (*COMELEC 2002*).
- Filipino women continue to have limited participation in politics and governance.
 - * There are only three women out of 24 senators (12.5%) and 19 out of 215 (17%) legislators in the House of Representatives. Majority of these women legislators belong to the social elite and to traditionally political families. Majority of them are also spouses, children or immediate relatives of former legislators or political personalities.
 - * During the 11th Congress, a women's party-list representative from *Abanse, Pinay* sat in the House of Representatives and one of the deputy speakers was a woman, Rep. Daisy Fuentes of Cotabato. (*COMELEC 2002*). There are already Committees on Women in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Local Government Code also provides for the election of women sectoral representatives in the city, municipal and provincial councils or *Sanggunians*.
 - * There are, at present, four women in the cabinet (the labor, social welfare, science and technology, and budget portfolios are held by women). But the traditionally "heavyweight" portfolios such as finance, trade, foreign affairs and defense are held by males.
 - * Only one out of the three Constitutional Commissions, the Civil Service Commission, is headed by a woman.

- * In the bureaucracy, women enjoy slight numerical dominance as they constitute 53% of the estimated 1.3 million total workforce. More men, or 65.2%, however, occupy third level positions of managers and executives. Women are dominant (71.9%) in second level frontline and principally technical positions. More men are eligible as Career Executive Service Officers (57.9%). While female career executives outnumber men in the social services sector, men are dominant in the areas of public order, safety and justice, infrastructure and technology, government owned or controlled corporations (GOCCs), and finance. (*CSC Report 1999*)
- * Men also outnumber female undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, bureau directors, ambassadors, chiefs of mission, and career ministers as well as those occupying first level entry positions.
- * In the Judiciary, there are only four women members out of the 15-member Supreme Court. There are also more male justices in the Court of Appeals, the *Sandiganbayan* and the regional and local courts. As of 1997, only 17.8% of the total 1,694 judges were women.

Gender-related Development Index

The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) 2000 (*HDN/UNDP Philippine Human Development Report 2002*) shows that:

- Women enjoy higher life expectancy than men;
- Primary and high school enrolment rates of men and women are about equal, but more women graduate from high school than men;

- The level of earned income of women is lower than men (as low as 30% to 35% of men's earned income);
- Female economic activity rate (age 15 and above) is consistently lower at a low of 46.4% and a high of 85.2% of the male economic activity rate; and
- There are less women in agriculture and industry, but women dominate the services sector.

Addressing Gender Concerns: From Integration to Gender Equality²

Advancing the rights and welfare of women is not a novel engagement. A quick look into the history of the women's movement in the country would reveal that women's rights and welfare is at the core of their struggles for empowerment and greater participation in local and national affairs.

The involvement of government in a sustained, systematic and institutional manner in this pursuit is, however, of fairly recent origin. It was triggered by the declaration by the United Nations of 1975 as International Women's Year and the period 1976-1985 as a Women's Decade. The intense lobbying of women NGOs under the umbrella of the Civic Assembly of Women of the Philippines (CAWP) facilitated such involvement of government specifically on the creation of a government arm that would effectively respond to women's needs and concerns – the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW).

On January 7, 1975, the NCRFW was established through Presidential Decree No. 633. As an advisory body to the President, its mandate is to review, evaluate and recommend measures and priorities to ensure the full integration of women

for economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels. For the period 1975 to 1986, the NCRFW concentrated on organizing and promoting participation of women in development efforts and on eliminating discriminatory provisions in our laws.

The Commission's work in this period was influenced by the Women in Development (WID/WAD) framework that focused on improving women's welfare and on programs and projects that address the needs of women left out of development on account of their lack of education, training, credit and low self-esteem. The welfare perspective or the WID/WAD framework does not challenge gender relations as it assumes that these will change over time. The difficulties of women are not seen as rooted in unequal gender relations and the social and political structures that perpetuate them, but on their lack of skills, capabilities and opportunities to better their lives and participate more extensively in society.

The NCRFW organized a nationwide women's movement called *Balikatan sa Kaunlaran* (BSK) that galvanized efforts and resources of GOs and NGOs toward improving the lives of women, and mobilized women leaders in the local levels for activities aimed to improve women's participation and leadership skills as well as their livelihood and income generation skills. Wives of local government officials were tapped to head local arms of the BSK.

Over the years, the BSK was seen, especially among progressive women's groups, as a political tool of the incumbent administration despite its numerous activities in meeting the welfare needs of women especially in the rural areas. The BSK has since been incorporated into a non-profit *National Balikatan Foundation* and continues to provide direct assistance to economic and social undertakings of women including the many *Balikatan* groups in the rural areas that survive to this day.

From 1986 to 1992, there was a radical shift in perspective on the advancement of women. The welfare perspective was discarded, and the gender and development (GAD) paradigm was adopted. The problem was no longer seen as the non-integration of women in development or their lack of skills and resources for development. Rather, women's difficulties were seen as the direct result of gender inequality perpetuated through social processes and institutions.

A critical view of social, economic and political structures that perpetuate gender inequality underpins the GAD framework. Gender inequalities were recognized as exacting costs not only from women but also from development as a whole. From the WID/WAD perspective that regarded women as mere recipients of welfare assistance, the GAD perspective saw women as active agents of their own and national development.

Using the gender mainstreaming strategy, women's concerns were pushed towards the heart of government development agenda as all instrumentalities of government were mandated to incorporate and address gender issues in their policies, programs and projects. The battle cry was to make government work for the cause of gender equality toward a vision of a society where women and men contribute to and benefit equally from development.

During this period, the principle of gender equality was integrated in the Philippine Constitution (Article II, Sec. 14), in the Medium Term Development Plan and in various laws, policies and mechanisms of government. The NCRFW spearheaded programs to gender-sensitize the bureaucracy so that GAD concerns can be integrated as a way of life in government with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

It was also during this period that the first *Philippine Development Plan for Women (PDPW)* covering the period 1989

to 1992 was crafted, after a process of local and national consultations, and adopted through Executive Order 348. The GAD paradigm and the mainstreaming strategy were imbedded in the Plan.

The Women in Development and Nation-Building Act (RA 7192) authored by then Senator Santanina Rasul and Representative Raul Roco was also enacted. Among the highlights of this law were provisions mandating the opening of the Philippine Military Academy for women, setting aside of at least 5% of all ODA funds for gender and development projects, and tasking all government instrumentalities to eliminate any form of gender bias in their policies, programs and projects.

For the period 1992 to 1998, the focus was sustaining the GAD framework and gender mainstreaming through institutional strengthening and capacity-building of government agencies. With the “demise” of the PDPW that covered only the period 1989 to 1992, a new plan was needed that would build on the gains of the PDPW and further advance the pursuit of women’s empowerment and gender equality. Thus, the *Philippine Plan for Gender-responsive Development (PPGD)*, a thirty-year perspective plan covering the period 1995 to 2025 was crafted through a series of local and national consultations, and adopted through Executive Order No. 273.

The PPGD, like the PDPW, was written in harmony with the then subsisting Medium Term Development Plan (1993-1998) and it adopted the development framework as well as program and policy priorities of the latter. CIDA, once more, supported the second phase of the institutional strengthening project to develop skills, tools and systems towards sustainable actions on gender equality. This resulted in policy imperatives addressing gender concerns, development planning for women, setting up of GAD institutional mechanisms, GAD focal systems,

GAD training for national agencies and offices, GAD database and gender statistics, and strengthening of partnerships with women NGOs.

A milestone legislative initiative was also realized — the GAD Budget Policy—championed by then Senator Leticia Shahani and contained in Section 28 of the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 1995. It mandated all government agencies to allocate a minimum of 5% of their total appropriations for GAD programs and projects. The inclusion of the GAD Budget Policy in the annual GAA persists to this day, the most recent inclusion being in the 2002 budget submission of the President to Congress.

From 1998 to 2001, the priority was pushing for the Medium Term GAD Plan of Action: Philippine Agenda for Women Empowerment (PAWE) for 2001-2004. The PAWE is a time slice plan for 2001-2004 based on the PPGD, and is the product of the mandated review of the latter every six years. Like the PPGD, the PAWE was the product of intensive local and national consultations to identify local and national GAD priorities and programs. It was also attuned to the Medium Term Development Plan for 2000 to 2004, adopting the overall development policy and program thrusts of the latter. The PAWE focused on three areas: women empowerment, protection of women's rights and gender-responsive governance.

A significant development in this period, aside from the increased focus on women empowerment manifest in the thrust towards organizing and assisting local Commissions on Women and Sanggunian Committees on Women, is the unequivocal pronouncement of the administration to make the national anti-poverty program gender responsive, perhaps, in consonance with its "*para sa mahihirap*" slogans. This commitment is incorporated in the PAWE. Thus, while mainstreaming gender and develop-

ment would be continued, a combined thrust of gender equality and poverty eradication would be pursued. In this sense, the national anti-poverty agenda was to be engendered. There was a clear pronouncement from government that unless inequalities between men and women are eradicated, sustainable development would not be achieved. Whether or not such commitment could be translated into reality is now moot, as the Estrada administration's legal tenure was cut short.

During this period, a P3 billion lending window for women entrepreneurs in the DBP, Landbank and other government financial institutions and a P1 billion Development Fund for Women in the nature of a perpetual trust fund to be managed by the Philippine Gender and Development Institute (PGDI) were placed in the pipeline. So was the creation of a Philippine Development Authority on Women (PDAW) to help strengthen the capacity-building initiatives of the NCRFW. Gender and women sensitive measures were also included in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan, 1999-2004, in the National Anti-Poverty Framework, in the Medium Term Youth Development Plan, and in the Philippine Plan of Action for Older Persons.

In 2002, under the Arroyo administration, the PAWE was renamed the Framework Plan for Women, 2001-2004 (FPW) but its contents were substantially unchanged.

From 1975 to 2001, various laws and issuances were also passed to advance the welfare of women, protect their rights, and create institutional structures and support systems for these purposes.

Among these laws are the Anti-Rape Law of 1997 (RA 8353) that reclassified rape from a crime against chastity to a crime against persons and redefined the acts constituting rape, the Assistance and Protection for Rape Victims Act (RA 8505) that

seeks the establishment of rape crisis centers in every province and city, the Anti-Sexual harassment Act of 1995 (RA 7877) that defines and declares unlawful sexual harassment acts in employment, education and training environments, the Women in Development and Nation-Building Act (RA 7192) that mandates the use of portions of ODA funds to support programs for women and mandates all government instrumentalities to remove gender bias from their policies, programs and projects, the Anti-Discrimination Against Women In Terms Of Employment Act (RA 6725) that prohibits lesser compensation for women as against male employees for work of equal value and favoring male employees over female employees with respect to promotion, training, study and scholarship opportunities on account of their sexes, the Househelp Minimum Wage Act (RA 7655) that increases the minimum wage of househelpers and mandates their social security coverage, the Increased Maternity Benefits Act (RA 7322), the act providing assistance to women engaging in micro and cottage business enterprises (RA 7882), the Party List System Act (RA 7941) that provides for the system of electing party list representatives, with women as one of the groups who could form sectoral parties, and the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (RA 8042) that seeks the protection of the welfare of migrant workers and overseas Filipinos many of whom are women.

Current Strategies, Policies and Programs In Pursuit of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

A slew of government publications deal with these matters, each in a less exhaustive and organized manner than desired. Transitions across three administrations since gender concerns

were first introduced into the mainstream of governance wrought palpable changes on program and policy priorities. The following discussion hopefully distills the essential features of current paradigms, strategies, policies and programs intended to address gender and development concerns from information contained in these publications to highlight those that have and may withstand the vagrancies of shifts in government's program and policy priorities.

Facets of the Problem: Women's Gender Issues

Women's gender issues can be met using these mechanisms:

- the preparation of agency inputs for sectoral performance assessment reports, public investment plans and other similar documents; and
- agency performance commitment contracts, indicating key areas for gender equality;
- and all annual budget proposals and financial plans.

The PPGD addresses GAD concerns in six major spheres: individual, family, socio-cultural, economic, political and legal. Across each of these spheres, three basic goals must be met:

- to establish mechanisms/structures for gender-responsive policy and program formulation and implementation;
- to give focus to women in special circumstances such as victims/survivors of violence and armed conflict, women with disabilities, migrant women and the like; and
- to conduct continuing consciousness-raising, affirmative action and advocacy that entails, among others, training and education programs, information dissemination, research and documentation, and revision/creation of gender-responsive laws.

In the individual sphere, personal development is the thrust. Programs that improve women's self worth via consciousness-raising and advocacy that alter attitudes of subordination to men and create sufficient support mechanisms such as child-care support systems that free women's time and enable them to pursue their development, among others, are priorities. In the family sphere, the goal is to encourage the formation of families that are characterized by a sharing of responsibilities, from child-rearing and parenting to breadwinning to domestic work so that the multiple burden of women would be eliminated. In the socio-cultural sphere, consciousness-raising is emphasized especially through the agency of the educational system and the media so that gender stereotyping and discrimination can cease to persist. In addition, programs are also intended to address women's concerns on health, nutrition and family planning.

Women's gender issues or GAD concerns are embraced within six areas of discrimination: economic marginalization, political subordination, gender stereotyping, multiple burden, violence against women and invisibility in history. Women's invisibility in history was not included in the original PPGD formulation of gender concerns. It has been recently included in NCRFW formulations to remedy the glaring omission of women's role in our history as a nation. The NCRFW is now engaged in compiling "Herstories".

The various forms of discrimination diminish the personhood of women — their dignity, self-esteem and self-worth, and ultimately, their freedom to choose and access opportunities for their own development and for the development of the larger society. These GAD concerns constitute the terrain of gender inequality that must be addressed by government.

Addressing the Problem: Policies, Programs and Strategies

The PPGD (1995-2025), a thirty-year plan that provides a perspective framework for pursuing gender equality, sets forth the policies, strategies, programs and projects that government must adopt to enable women to participate in and benefit from national development. It serves as a guide for agencies in responding to gender issues and concerns.

It was adopted in 1995 through Executive Order 273 that also requires all government instrumentalities including government owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), state colleges and universities (SCUs), and LGUs to ensure the full implementation of the policies, strategies, programs and projects in the plan by institutionalizing the integration of gender equality concerns into their planning, programming, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes. This means that gender-responsive strategies must specifically be integrated into the:

- formulation, assessment and updating of annual agency plans and inputs to medium and long-term development plans;
- the preparation of agency inputs for sectoral performance assessment reports, public investment plans and other similar documents; and
- agency performance commitment contracts, indicating key areas for gender equality;
- and all annual budget proposals and financial plans.

The PPGD addresses GAD concerns in six major spheres: individual, family, socio-cultural, economic, political and legal. Across each of these spheres, three basic goals must be met:

- to establish mechanisms/structures for gender-responsive policy and program formulation and implementation;

- to give special attention to women in special circumstances such as victims/survivors of violence and armed conflict, women with disabilities, migrant women and the like; and
- to conduct continuing consciousness-raising, affirmative action and advocacy that entails, among others, training and education programs, information dissemination, research and documentation, and revision/creation of gender-responsive laws.

In the **individual sphere**, personal development is the thrust. Programs that improve women's self worth via consciousness-raising and advocacy that alter attitudes of subordination to men and create sufficient support mechanisms such as child-care support systems that free women's time and enable them to pursue their development, among others, are priority. In the **family sphere**, the goal is to encourage the formation of families that are characterized by a sharing of responsibilities, from child-rearing and parenting to breadwinning to domestic work so that the multiple burden of women would be eliminated. In the **socio-cultural sphere**, consciousness-raising is emphasized especially through the agency of the educational system and the media so that gender stereotyping and discrimination can cease to persist. In addition, programs are also intended to address women's concerns on health, nutrition and family planning.

In the **economic sphere**, the thrust is equality in economic opportunities between men and women. Programs creating support systems for women to enable them to be economically productive such as credit, women-friendly technology and facilities, and training are significant priorities. In the **political sphere**, empowerment of women through their participation in political institutions and processes is the principal goal. Programs pushing affirmative action to afford women equal say in decision-

making at all levels are deemed imperative. And, in the legal sphere, the thrust is to incorporate women's equality and development in the legal system. This would entail the formulation of concrete legal bases to ensure equal rights between men and women specifically in the areas of property and citizenship rights, and equal opportunities for economic well-being, among others, to be supported by a continuing legal education program that enhances legal literacy for both men and women.

Programs of action in these spheres are laid out in detail in the extensive development sectors covered by the PPGD namely: Human Development (Women in health, education, urban development and housing, social welfare and community development, media, arts and culture, justice and peace and order, labor and employment), **Economic and Industrial Development** (Women in agriculture and fisheries, agrarian reform, environment and natural resources, industry, trade and tourism), Infrastructure and Technology Support (Women in infrastructure development, science and technology), and Special Concerns (Women and migration, prostitution, violence against women, women and family, indigenous people, politics and governance).

As a thirty-year "rolling plan", the PPGD is expected to evolve depending on breakthroughs that may be achieved and obstacles that may surface. It is subject to review every six years and the PAWE, now billed as the FPW, is the product of the first review of the PPGD. Its thirty-year lifespan is premised on the expectation that in that period, resistance to mainstreaming gender concerns will sufficiently dissipate to allow gender-responsive policies to take root and women empowerment to be realized.

The FPW is a time slice of the PPGD covering the period 2001 to 2004. Its goals and objectives, strategies and interven-

tions are consistent with the PPGD's, but interventions therein are more specific, doable and results-focused. The FPW primarily targets three areas of concern: women's economic empowerment, protection and fulfillment of women's human rights, and gender-responsive governance.

- To promote **women's economic empowerment**, the FPW seeks to provide women sustainable access to capital, market, information, technology and technical assistance; enhance employment and livelihood skills of women particularly in high value-adding industries and agricultural activities; establish an enabling environment that will ensure protection of women workers; increase women's awareness of their economic rights and opportunities; and strengthen women's representation in economic decision-making bodies.
- To protect and fulfill **women's human rights**, the FPW aims to expand access to and utilization of women of basic social services primarily in education and training, health and nutrition, and housing; promote gender-responsive delivery of justice to violence against women (VAW) survivors; formulate and implement legislative measures that eliminate gender bias; and promote and advance women's and girl-children's human rights.
- To achieve **gender-responsive governance**, the FPW aims to mainstream GAD in the bureaucracy; enhance women's leadership roles and participation in decision-making; strengthen women's role in promoting gender-responsive governance; strengthen partnership with media in covering various women's issues.

Both the PPGD and the FPW adopt the Gender and Development (GAD) approach and the mainstreaming strategy to achieve gender equality and women empowerment.

The GAD Approach

This approach proceeds from the perspective that the nature of gender relations affects the pursuit of national development goals. It seeks to ensure that development strategies address the structural causes of gender inequality, especially in various spheres of decision-making, i.e., the family, community and workplace, and in the control of vital economic resources such as capital. It also promotes self-reliance for women so that they can actively make decisions about development directions and options, and participate meaningfully in nation-building efforts.

In the FPW, the *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Framework* (GEWEF) by Sarah Longwe (UNICEF 1994) was adopted to complement the GAD approach. The framework calls for a holistic and comprehensive response to reduce the gender gap and respond to the systemic and structural causes of gender inequality. The partnership of government, the private sector, the academe and civil society is put forth as an essential imperative for gender-responsive governance that would support the dynamic pursuit of gender equality. It is premised on the principle that the intended beneficiaries themselves be actively involved in all stages of the development and empowerment process. Individual and structural causes of gender discrimination must be overcome on five levels. As gender disparities and gaps are addressed and surmounted at each level, higher degrees of empowerment and development are also achieved.

The first level refers to the gender gap between men and women in their **material welfare** such as health and nutritional status, and is manifested in the regard for women as passive recipients of welfare benefits rather than as individuals capable of changing their lives. Although lacking in any degree of empowerment, addressing the welfare level is essential since improving the material well-being is a fundamental step towards

achieving women's development. Improving women's welfare eventually entails increased access to resources and would involve addressing the next level.

The next level of gender gap is **access to resources**. Empowerment activities are essential to afford women equal access to appropriate and enabling resources like skills, knowledge, credit and commodities. As women are increasingly empowered to overcome the obstacles to access, they are also enabled to confront the systemic roots of their discrimination. This initiates the deeper empowerment process of conscientization.

The level of **conscientization** refers to the process of becoming aware of the extent to which problems arise not from individual inadequacies but from the systematic discrimination against a social group to which an individual belongs. Conscientization enables women to collectively analyze and comprehend the gender discrimination they face. It is crucial at this step to raise the consciousness of both women and men about the structural and systematic causes of gender inequality.

The fourth level of gender gap is **participation** that deals with having to share or take part in decision-making. To merely have a share in resources is not participation. To take part in making decisions means individuals are enabled to chart directions for improving their lives. Thus, gender equality in decision-making is essential to women's empowerment.

The fifth and final level is **control** or the ability to direct or influence events to protect one's interests. Women must have the capacity to ensure that decisions they make are carried out. It requires the institutionalization and mainstreaming of all interventions at the first four levels.

The five levels constitute different dimensions of the development process. Each stage is not separate from the rest, neither are the stages hierarchical and sequential that one must

be addressed first before the others. Rather, they constitute an interconnected cycle of empowerment where addressing inequality at one level leads to addressing it at the other levels.

Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

The strategy facilitates the comprehensive integration of women's concerns and experiences in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs and projects in all political, economic and social agenda at all levels. It situates gender equality issues at the center of broad policy decisions, institutional structures and resource allocations, and includes women's views and priorities in making decisions about development goals and processes.

As a primary strategy for achieving gender equality, gender mainstreaming involves:

- analyzing the impacts of programs and policies on women and men (gender analysis);
- making gender equality concerns central to policy formulation, legislation, resource allocation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects; and
- emphasizing the need to transform the mainstream by ensuring that the perspectives of both women and men inform the design, implementation and outcomes of policies and programs.

Thus, the key elements to a successful implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy include:

- sex-disaggregated data and statistics;
- skills and opportunities to undertake gender analysis;
- effective monitoring and evaluation systems and tools,

- national/sub-national/local structures with clearly defined roles for leadership and support for gender mainstreaming (implementing structures with clear lines of accountability and responsibility);
- effective communication networks and linkages;
- a skilled human resource base; and
- sustained civil society participation.

Gender-responsive data and statistical systems are being put in place to aid decision-makers and planners by the NCRFW in partnership with the National Statistical Coordination Board, National Statistical Office and the Statistical Research and Training Center.

GAD focal points are being established in various agencies of government to facilitate consciousness-raising activities and catalyze mainstreaming of gender concerns in their agencies plans and programs.

Gender sensitivity/consciousness-raising programs are continuously implemented. So are educative programs to enhance the skills at gender analysis of the NCRFW and other human resource base institutions harnessed for the implementation of PPGD and FPW programs and projects. Coordinative networks and linkages among government agencies, LGUs and civil society organizations have also been mapped out through the agency of the NCRFW and other departments involved in the PPGD and FPW implementation.

GAD Budget Policy and Agency GAD Plans

Gender mainstreaming requires sufficient and stable resources. This necessitated the adoption of a GAD budget policy during the Ramos administration which requires all instrumentalities of government including LGUs, GOCCs and SUCs

to allocate a minimum of 5% of their annual budgets (or Internal Revenue Allocation for LGUs) to support policies, programs and projects aimed to improve the status of women in accordance with the Women in Development and Nation Building Act (RA 7192). The GAD budget policy started as a Presidential Memorandum to the DBM and evolved to become a regular provision in the Annual General Appropriations Act, through the advocacy of then Senator Leticia Shahani beginning with the 1995 GAA. This policy is now part of the Local Budget Memorandum which the DBM issues annually to LGUs.

As a necessary consequence, the GAD Budget Policy impels agencies to develop their own GAD plans. A GAD Budget without a plan can result in the unwise dissipation of resources. GAD plans are intended to make agency/LGU programs and projects for their clientele and staff, gender-responsive. Agencies/LGUs are mandated to develop medium-term GAD plans covering three to six years, and annual GAD plans that are yearly slices of their medium term plans that must be consistent with the PPGD/FPW and the mandate of the agency/LGU.

Implementing Structures

At the national level, the NCRFW takes the lead role in coordinating and facilitating the integration of FPW concerns into the various plans, programs and projects of government. It works closely with oversight agencies such as the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), the DBM and the Department of Interior and Local Governments (DILG).

The NEDA is responsible for incorporating GAD concerns in national development planning, policy coordination, investment programming and program/project monitoring and evaluation. As the central planning agency of government, NEDA assumes a strategic role in ensuring that the goals and

strategies of the FPW are embodied in the medium term national and regional development plans.

The **DBM** is principally involved in the formulation, update and dissemination of guidelines for the preparation of the three-year GAD budget of government agencies and LGUs. This task entails ensuring that the annual component of the three-year rolling GAD Plan and Budget is integrated into the annual agency budget proposal, and that agencies comply with the mandatory 5% GAD budget policy. Relative to these tasks, the DBM regularly conducts orientation on GAD budgeting for various government agencies.

The **DILG** plays a key facilitative role in cascading GAD mainstreaming down to the lowest level of governance in the country specifically in disseminating pertinent information and providing technical assistance to LGUs in formulating their GAD Plan and Budget, aligning them with the PPGD/FPW goals and consolidating their implementation status.

National line agencies, working through **GAD Focal Points**, are tasked to integrate GAD concerns in their plans ensuring that gender gaps existing in current programs are addressed. Agency plans should incorporate GAD as a performance dimension, identifying specific GAD outcomes agencies would be held accountable for. Statistical agencies such as the National Statistics Office and the National statistical Coordination Board, and other multi-sector agencies such as the National Anti-Poverty Commission, are involved in providing information support in generating key GAD indicators useful in the design, planning and implementation of future programs on women.

In the sub-national level, **Regional Development Councils** see to it that FPW goals are integrated into the Regional Development Plans. They also provide technical assistance support to regional offices and LGUs on how to prepare GAD Plans and

Budgets, and they develop proposals to address key concerns of the FPW as they relate to specific regional concerns on women.

At the local level, **LGUs** are mandated to integrate local GAD issues in their local development plans and programs, set aside 5% of their annual budget for GAD mainstreaming and to prepare GAD Plans and Budgets. The **Local Development Council** and the **Sangguniang Bayan/Panlalawigan** are tasked to ensure that women's issues in the locality are integrated into the formulation of the three-year Local Development and Investment Plans (LDIP) and the Annual Investment Plans (AIP) of LGUs. GAD Focal Points in LGUs, like their counterparts in national agencies, provide the push and technical backstopping to ensure that PPGD/FPW concerns are considered in the planning, program implementation and budgeting processes at the local level.

The participation of women NGOs and other **civil society organizations** (CSOs) in implementing the PPGD/FPW is strongly encouraged especially at the local level. They have been actively initiating and participating in program and project implementation. The recent initiative of the DILG to have more gender balance in the Local Development Councils is a welcome initiative that could further mainstream CSOs involvement in implementing the PPGD/FPW.

Regional GAD Resource Centers (GRCs) were also created to support capacity building for GAD mainstreaming at the local level. GRCs conduct GAD advocacy and capability building, assist agencies in formulating GAD plans and in translating their GAD goals into action plans, conduct gender analysis, and identify gaps and appropriate strategies towards mainstreaming GAD in their plans and programs. GRCs also assist in GAD monitoring and evaluation activities of oversight agencies. To

support FPW implementation, GRCs act as technical resource centers for local agencies and other institutions in formulating GAD Plans and Budgets. They also synthesize local GAD experiences, identify good/best practices in mainstreaming, and develop models and tools of GAD mainstreaming that may be replicated in other agencies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation system (MES) for the FPW is intended to generate information that would be useful in directing GAD planning and budget processes, and in defining capacity development requirements for gender mainstreaming in the bureaucracy. The FPW outcome areas help agencies align their GAD programs and projects with desired GAD results as well as link achievement of results to resources.

Among the elements of the MES for FPW are:

- the GAD Compliance Monitoring System directed at agency compliance to the mandatory 5% GAD Budget for all agencies and how such budget is utilized;
- the GAD Program/Project Monitoring and Evaluation System that looks at the efficiency in the use of GAD resources for projects supportive to FPW;
- the Regional Monitoring and Evaluation System intended to facilitate an output-outcome type of monitoring for FPW in the regional level based on data generated at the agency and sub-regional levels; and
- the GAD Benefit Monitoring intended to measure or identify the extent to which FPW programs and projects are producing the intended benefits or improvements on the lives of women.

The MES will be implemented through a coordinated partnership of the NCRFW and the oversight and line agencies.

Since the NCRFW has limited manpower and resources, the monitoring mechanisms of the oversight and line agencies would be principally utilized in gathering field reports and consolidating them.

Reflections and Recommendations

Women's gender issues are not mere women's sector concerns—they are national social, political and economic issues affecting the national welfare.

Embraced in the rubric of the quest for gender equality and women's empowerment in the country, women's gender issues cannot be peripheral to the pursuit of national development. Rather, they are vital core issues foisting comprehensively permeating challenges that significantly determine the quality and sustainability of development.

Development that does not seek the elimination of unequal gender relations only perpetuates the disempowerment of women from pursuing, on equal terms with men, opportunities for development, and can only aggravate social inequality and injustice that are anathema to the very idea of development itself as a condition of greater freedom in the pursuit of a better quality of life for all people regardless of class, gender or creed.

Engendering development is, therefore, imperative if development is to authentically foster social equality, social justice and human freedom.

In this light, government's shift to the GAD paradigm in addressing women's gender issues in keeping with evolving global gender paradigms is a huge step towards the right direction.

Merely addressing the welfare needs of women to make them more economically productive is not enough to enable them to better participate as dynamic agents in the mainstream of national

life. As long as there are systemic and structural conditions and factors that perpetuate the subordination and marginalization of women, they can never be meaningfully integrated into the national mainstream as equal partners with men in contributing to and benefiting from national development. Gender inequality is the problem. Women's lack of skills and resources to effectively participate in development are mere offshoots or symptoms of this problem. The GAD approach strikes at the roots of the problem by recognizing the imperative of meeting the welfare needs of women only as a first step towards their empowerment, and the attainment of the ultimate goal of gender equality in our society.

Government has made big strides towards pushing gender equality into the mainstream of national policy and program thrusts for the past sixteen years. It is no mean feat to have crafted and adopted the PPGD — an awesome piece of what can be considered a social re-engineering agenda that is designed to evolve with the exigencies of the times across a thirty-year period, and which addresses the most extensive spectrum of women's concerns impacting on gender equality ever unraveled. There seems to be no women's need or concern that is not covered by the PPGD.

That the PPGD was drawn up in a participatory manner involving a series of wide ranging consultations with various affected sectors as well as experts in the field in the local and national levels, and that it rests on the imperative of multi-departmental/agency and civil society convergence in the implementation of its policy and program objectives are signal evidences of the Plan's "rootedness" in existing social realities. These also affirm an overarching intent to be more responsive to the authentic needs of women, and a recognition of the indispensability of a multi-dimensional approach at addressing

women's gender concerns. As much can be said of the FPW as it was also written through the same process and involved the same pattern of convergence of agency efforts in its implementation.

Not only has a comprehensive agenda, the requisite policy and program framework, the implementing and coordinating structures, and monitoring and evaluation systems to achieve women empowerment and gender equality been put in place, a stable and continuing source of funding for all programs for women at all levels was also institutionalized through the GAD Budget Policy.

Indeed, no stone seems to have been left unturned by the government in its efforts to ensure that the protracted war for women's empowerment and gender equality is won. The progressive mindset of the national leadership and key policy and decision-makers particularly in the Aquino and Ramos administrations must be given credit for building the policy, program and resource infrastructure needed to win such war. Without their commitment, and their willingness to support trailblazing initiatives at addressing social issues of progressive elements brought into government after EDSA I, GAD concerns would still be in limbo wafting in government inattention as sector bound and peripheral concerns to national development.

The strategy to mainstream GAD concerns – of integrating women's gender issues and experiences in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs and projects of all agencies and instrumentalities of government in all levels, so that gender equality issues could be pushed to the center of broad policy decisions, institutional structures and resource allocations affecting decisions on development goals and priorities is a perfectly rational strategy.

However, to achieve realization of women empowerment and gender equality requires radical social change. Big problems

require big solutions. Considering that unequal gender relations are rooted in our historical experience, and imbedded and perpetuated through and across our socio-cultural, political and economic institutions and systems, mainstreaming gender and development concerns is, conceptually or theoretically, the most appropriate and responsive strategy. The problem being systemic and structural, government is strategically equipped to effect needed systemic and structural changes as it has decisive control over policies, programs and projects that are the very instruments to achieve these changes, as well as the resources needed to effect such changes. Making government work to achieve gender equality is, thus, a rational strategy. It must be noted, however, that **government is not simply the Executive Branch**, but embraces the Legislative and Judicial branches as well.

The magnitude and scope of the government's machinery, even in the Executive branch alone — the numerous instrumentalities therein with varying functional contexts and mandates, stretching across a nationwide network of bureaucracy — sought to be infused with gender-responsiveness underscores the expanse and scale of the tasks of implementation and coordination, the resources needed, the manifold challenges of monitoring and evaluation, among others, to ensure the success of mainstreaming gender and development concerns.

The formidable demands of implementation become more overwhelming when we consider that success hinges heavily on the success of initiatives at attitudinal change — altering and raising the consciousness of the bureaucracy and policy/decision-makers — so that they can embrace, support and even advocate gender equality and women empowerment in their respective government niches.

There is nothing more difficult to change than mindsets and attitudes especially when these have been so ingrained and

continue to be perpetuated by prevailing social processes and realities. The bureaucracy, as all of government, is imbedded in a social environment, and those who constitute it have imbibed prevailing attitudes and values in the social setting. Everyday, these values and attitudes influence their acts, thoughts and beliefs, be they conscious of the dynamics of these influences or not. Gender subordination is among those values that many in the bureaucracy have come to accept as a matter of fact, as integral to their system of beliefs. Thus, it is not easy to mobilize those in government into change agents simply because they also require change in attitudes and mindsets to be able to function as such.

The problem is, thus, not in the framework of policies and programs nor in the approaches and strategies, but in the scheme of implementation. The sheer scale of the arena of implementation, the expanse of the government machinery intended to be utilized for the purpose, and the difficulty of attitudinal change or consciousness alteration needed to effectively mobilize those in government to implement gender-responsive initiatives raise solid doubts on how effectively gender and development concerns would be integrated in the policies, plans and programs of all government instrumentalities.

Training key personnel in government agencies, even only those in GAD Focal Points alone, to use the tools necessary to make their policies, programs and projects gender-responsive such as gender analysis or sex-disaggregating data is a humungous, time-consuming challenge. Also, the NCRFW, being but an adjunct of the Office of the President, has neither the resources nor the political clout to monitor all departments and agencies, LGUs, GOCCs and SCUs, much less to ensure their compliance to gender mainstreaming mandates, even with the assistance of the oversight agencies such as NEDA, DBM and DILG. Thus, among so many other questions, how can we make certain that

agencies are implementing projects that are authentically within the GAD framework? That the GAD Budgets are used for GAD programs? That programs and projects have been crafted using gender responsive tools and approaches?

Perhaps, there is a need to adopt a focused targeting approach using a set of indicators similar to the MBN-CIDSS model to ensure compliance, performance and accountability, and facilitate effective monitoring and evaluation of GAD initiatives. The Gender Development Index (GDI) can help determine priority areas of implementation. Based on a valid set of indicators to determine priority needs rooted in gender gaps or inequalities, a scale of priorities in program/project areas to be pursued can be devised.

Better yet, why reinvent the wheel? Why create a separate policy and program framework and package for addressing GAD concerns?

Since women's empowerment and gender equality are core issues in national development, and as such, must also be addressed by any national anti-poverty effort as a part of a wider social reform agenda, isn't it more rational and cost-effective, given our meager resources, to **integrate the women's empowerment and gender equality agenda into the anti-poverty agenda and use the same tools** such as the MBN (minimum basic needs), focused targeting, convergence, participatory approaches, among others, to identify, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate specific initiatives to address specific and validly identified priority needs of as similarly specific and identified women or groups of women among the poor? The MBN indicators can be infused with additional gender-related inputs, and as tested and proven by experience, can facilitate better prioritizing and focusing of gender-responsive programs and projects.

As stated earlier, government is not just the Executive Branch, but includes the Legislative and Judicial Branches as well. But

the whole GAD mainstreaming agenda and program of action involves only the Executive Branch of government. EO 273 specifically binds only executive departments and agencies including LGUs, GOCCs and SUCs to the task of rendering their plans and programs gender-responsive. The legislature, meaning the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the Judiciary, are not integrated into the loop of GAD mainstreaming. Considering that the legislature is the foremost policy-making body of government able to determine development thrusts and priorities, and whose powers of appropriation determine the deployment and utilization of government resources, it should have been given a strategic role in the mainstreaming agenda.

A Legislators Commission on Gender and Development (LCGD) may be in order. This would be a body (similarly organized as the Philippine Legislators Commission on Population and Development) composed of members of both houses of Congress that would principally conduct policy researches and studies for the purpose of crafting and passing legislation to advance gender equality and women empowerment. While the NCRFW would be the principal coordinative body for GAD initiatives in the Executive Department, the LCGD would perform the function in the Legislative Department. The proposed LCGD would serve as a “focal point” of coordination in the pursuit of initiatives at shepherding gender-responsive legislation through both houses of Congress.

There are Committees on Women in both Houses of Congress, and their creation has been hailed as a significant inroad into the terrain of enhancing capabilities at generating and passing legislation that advance the cause of women empowerment and gender equality. The paradox is while these committees are, indeed, solid evidences of the recognition of

the needs and concerns of women in Congress, there is the unintended effect of isolating the “women” and “women’s issues” from the dynamics of sustained congressional attention.

In the 10th to the 12th Congress, the leadership of the Committees on Women have consistently “required” that all measures affecting or have anything to do with women be referred to their committees. The effect is that women’s issues and concerns are kept within the circle of women legislators — discussed by **women only** (as these committees are predominantly composed of women members of Congress, with perhaps two or three token male members). For example, labor measures affecting women are discussed in the Committee on Women and not in the Committee on Labor. Thus, the full impact of the measure’s women-bound concerns on the national policy terrain on labor is not ventilated, understood and appreciated. There is an isolationist and an exclusionist effect that diminishes the social importance of women’s concerns and reduces them into mere women’s sector issues. From experience, in the scale of priorities of Congress, sector concerns rarely figure.

The proposed LCGD may fare better as its membership is more inclusionary. Gender and development concerns would be ventilated more fully and be regarded for what they are — as social and national concerns, not as women’s sectoral concerns.

The Judicial Branch can similarly be included in the loop of gender mainstreaming. Considering the “masculine” bias of court proceedings, and the patent “macho” culture pervading the courts, a GAD program can be introduced into the court system focused on “consciousness-raising” as a priority. For an initial excursion into the Judiciary’s macho terrain, a GAD lecture/course can be incorporated into the Judicial Training Course that every appointive judge at any level of the court system must go through before assuming his/her post. The creation of a

Judicial Commission on Gender and Development under the direct supervision of the Supreme Court may be in order.

Some words must also be said in regard to legislation on women. Indeed, there have been significant laws intended to uphold the rights and protect the welfare of women. In terms of “equality before the law”, specifically in relation to the grant of rights and legal protection, women have come a long way and are now enjoying equal protection. The Family Code is a signal evidence of men and women now being more of equal partners in the realm of family relations than they were under the regime of the Civil Code. Much still needs to be done. Concerns on the effective implementation of these laws on women and the identification of new measures that would push the envelope further towards the goal of authentic women empowerment and gender equality must be addressed. The Anti-Rape Law offers wider protection for women against sexual violence. But how many poor women who are victims of rape can have access to the means by which they can avail of the full protection of the law? How many can avail of the services of lawyers? How many subsist in situations where they can have the courage to stand up for their rights? More NGO help beyond currently available are called for.

There is also a need to re-evaluate existing laws to better understand their ultimate impact on the attainment of women empowerment and gender equality. This could help in rationalizing the thrust of prospective legislation on women.

Labor legislations on women are illustrative. The expansion of maternity benefits is obviously helpful for working mothers, but it entails added costs for management. Uplifting the welfare of working mothers, because of added costs for management, can have the effect of restricting employment opportunities for women.

The Labor Code also discourages women from working nightshifts palpably to protect them from the risks of working at night. The mobility restriction on women is patently intended to protect them. But threats that endanger the safety of women in the workplace or on the streets to ensure their freedom of movement, and the economic burdens that compel women to work at night are not addressed. Legislative advocacy for women empowerment and gender equality needs to be infused with a more informed consciousness of the interlinked multi-dimensional needs and aspirations of women so as to produce meaningfully comprehensive and authentically responsive legislation.

Response and Implementation

In the final analysis, while there is much to appreciate in existing initiatives to achieve women empowerment and gender equality, there is a gnawing consciousness of a deeply pervasive dissonance in what government is doing on the gender-front and in other areas of our national life that prejudices the “integrity” and the viability of current initiatives on women empowerment and gender equality.

The government asserts in the PPGD and the FPW that, through the GAD approach, it would address systemic and structural causes of gender inequality. Yet, it tied down the PPGD/FPW to the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP), in effect welding the gender equality agenda to the national socio-economic and political development policy framework of the MTDP. A cursory reading of the MTDP would show that gender and development concerns are not addressed, and worse, are aggravated by policy thrusts and structures contained in the MTDP.

Many development policies run against the stream of gender equality. The policy to debt-finance the economy in the short-

term that leads to deficit spending strain government resources to the extent that, as reflected in the 2002 Budget proposal of the Executive, limits resources available for social services. This would effectively push the poor farther away from access to social services — and among the poor, the women suffer more. The policy to let the private sector take care of family planning and population programs so as to relieve government of the burden of financing a national population program would result in more women having less and less access to family planning services. Early pregnancies, health risks during pregnancy, and bigger families that exacerbate the multiple burden of women are but some of the afflictions that this policy wreaks on women. The lack of a population policy unleashes a galloping population explosion that can only make the poor poorer, and the women far poorer and more oppressed.

We can go on citing more dissonances between the government's avowed commitment to women empowerment and gender equality and the development policies it is pursuing. The point remains that for authentic social reform to advance the rights and welfare of women as equal partners of men in society, there must be a conscious and resolute effort to make development policies and programs truly gender-responsive. At this time, government has not achieved a measure of harmony between its development policies and its gender and development pronouncements and commitments.

Engendering development is, indeed, no easy task. There are no short-cuts or cut-and-dried solutions to gender-generated social problems. There are no royal roads towards achieving women empowerment and gender equality simply because we must wage a protracted battle against historically and socially ingrained values and attitudes that have imbedded acceptance, tolerance and even perpetuation of women's subordination and

marginalization into individual and social belief systems, processes, institutions and structures.

We need a government that has the political will to pursue a genuine social reform agenda and the informed resolve to craft development policies that would support the resolute implementation of authentic social reform initiatives. We do not need a government that pursues only its political agenda and uses social reform as a political slogan or development policies as populist propaganda to further political interests.

With a government that takes social reform seriously, perhaps, the struggle for women empowerment and gender equality can be waged with greater zeal and sense of purpose within government.

In the meantime, our best hopes remain in a vigilantly activist civil society that can mobilize collective action to demand, at every turn, from government, full attention to women's gender issues in terms of policies, programs and projects that would address the needs of women for capabilities, knowledge and resources that can truly empower them, bring them closer to exercising their God-given right to a status of parity with the men in our society, and enabling them to choose with the fullest measure of freedom, the paths for their own development and their participation in the advancement of the society they live in.

ENDNOTES

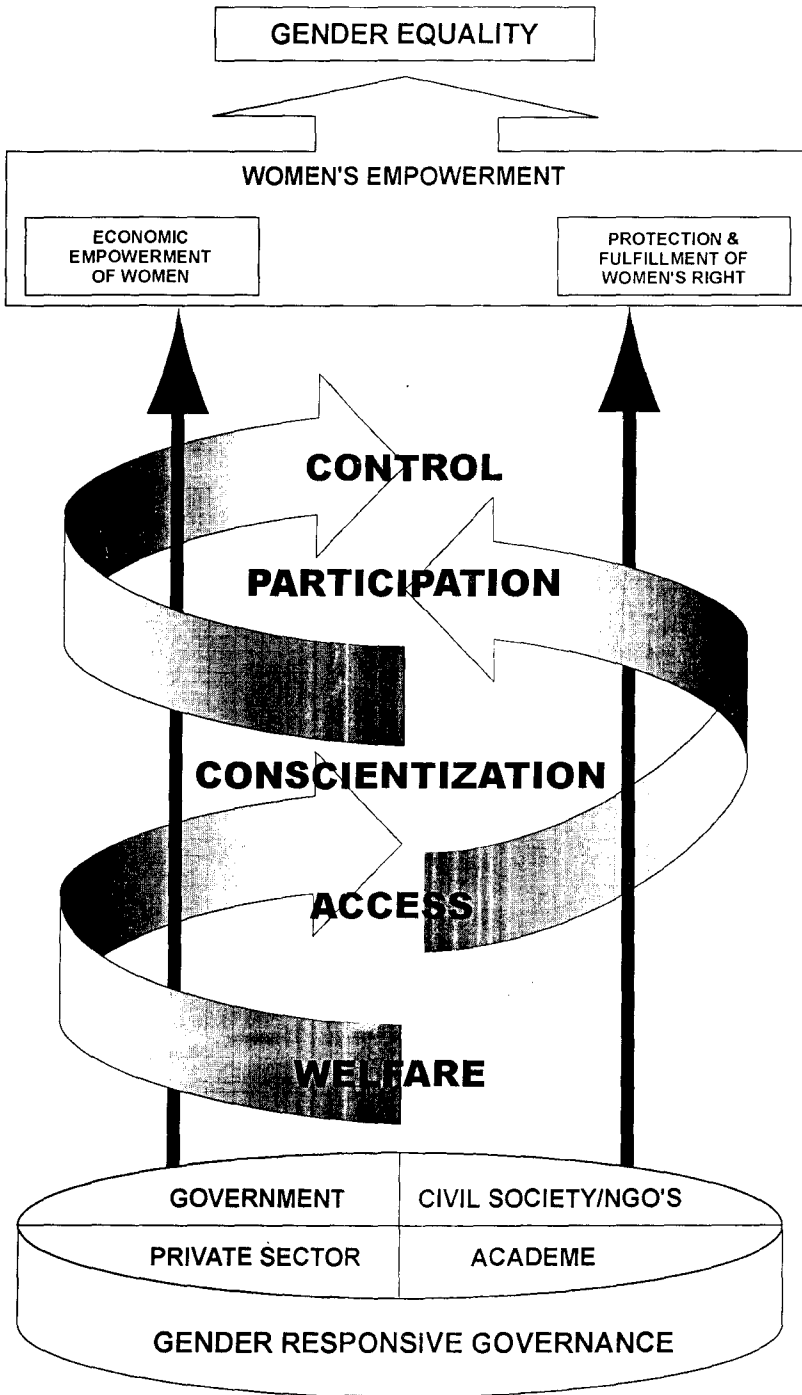
¹Data contained in this section were culled from the *Framework Plan for Women*, (Manila: Office of the President) supplemented by data taken from the Committees on Women and Labor of the House of Representatives.

²Data contained in this section were taken from *Making Government Work for Gender Equality* produced by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, (Manila: Office of the President) 2001.

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