

MESSAGE

Caridad Sri Tharan*

It is indeed a pleasure for us at the Ford Foundation Manila Office to be invited to the launching of a very important book, *Gender Sensitivity in the Court System*. This book truly deserves to be carefully read, discussed, debated and scrutinized and its findings given serious consideration. We are very happy to have provided support for the publication of this book through an existing grant to the UP Center for Women's Studies. Specifically, our grant aims to advance knowledge, promote debate and advocacy in the area of gender, sexuality and reproductive health which though often considered difficult and sensitive subjects, are nevertheless, essential aspects of human development which condition societies' abilities to form healthy relationships and interactions. Our partnership and support to the UP Center for Women's Studies, is very much in line with the Foundation's long-standing mission to provide resources to individuals and organizations working to reduce poverty and injustice, advance human achievement and strengthen democratic values. Since 1972, when the first grants for women's programs began, the Foundation has supported a broad range of efforts to help women shape a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.

We work mainly by giving grants that build knowledge and strengthen organizations and networks. We are guided by the belief in encouraging initiatives by those living and working where

*Programme Officer, The Ford Foundation

problems are located; in promoting collaboration among the nonprofit, government and business sectors and ensuring participation by women and men from diverse communities and at all levels of society. In our experience, such activities help build common understanding, enhance excellence, enable people to improve their lives and reinforce their commitment to society.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to dwell briefly on the work that the Ford Foundation has pursued in the Philippines. Since the establishment of our office in 1964, we have made grants to hundreds of organizations both from government and non-governmental sectors. In the 1960s and 70s, the Foundation concentrated on strengthening the social sciences and building high quality academic institutions that could develop thoughtful leadership for the country. Fellowship programs for graduate study abroad resulted in a strong core of social science scholars that staffed these institutions. By the 1980s, grants were addressing rural poverty and natural resource issues. And during the mid-80s, significant attention was given to policy research, paralegal training, and development of alternative law groups. In the early 1990s, the Foundation began to provide grants in the field of sexual and reproductive health, while local governance became a major focus of the rights and justice program. We are continuing these thrusts and about two years ago, we started an initiative which seeks to empower organizations including local government units to reform the total system and the delivery of public education including governance in schools and the provision of quality instruction. Finally, we launched last year in the Philippines the FF global initiative, the International Fellowships Program which aims to provide opportunities for advanced study to exceptional individuals and particularly those coming from a disadvantaged

socio-economic background, with the goal that these individuals use this education to become leaders in their respective fields, and further development and greater economic and social justice. This program will run for the next 10 years and we hope that it will be a most fitting legacy of the Foundation in the Philippines as we phase out our office in September 2003.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, with these remarks, I would like to thank the organizers once again for inviting us to this important event and thank you all for your participation.

Magandang hapon po.