

LEGAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES AFFECTING THE STATUS OF WOMEN, 1985-1993

Myrna Feliciano

BACKGROUND

The Philippines signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on 15 July 1980 and ratified it on 5 August 1981. As a signatory to the Convention, the Philippines has been reporting regularly to the U.N. Commission on CEDAW, the latest of which was in November 1992 covering the highlights of developments in each area of concern of the Convention.

The drafters of the 1987 Constitution saw fit to formulate Section 14 of Article II espousing gender equality which provides that "The State recognizes the role of women in nation-building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men." The interpretation given to this particular provision by one of the sponsors of the provision, Commissioner Felicitas Aquino of the Constitutional Commission of 1986, is that the provision should be self-executory.

It is to be doubted, however, if the provision can be as self-executory as the Commissioner would have wanted it to be. Each specific statute assailed as unconstitutional must still come before the courts for review and only upon the Court's pronouncement of its constitutionality or unconstitutionality can we consider such law valid or void.

Gender equality is further reinforced by Section 1, Article III of the 1987 Constitution which guarantees "the equal protection of the laws." Art. III, Section 1 provides: "No person shall be

deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws.” Equal protection of the laws simply means that persons similarly situated should be treated substantially the same without discrimination or preference. This guarantee is not intended to secure social equality among all people but refers to legal equality — equality to the assignment of similar rights and privileges granted by law and being subjected to like obligations by it for persons within the same class. Our courts have not much opportunity to consider sex discrimination as a violation of the equal protection clause. Under the law, classifications on the basis of biological differences between the sexes is valid. This is why classification on the basis of special considerations to which women are naturally entitled is permissible. This is also the rationale for the constitutional provisions and laws indicating the protection of working women by the State since it takes into account their maternal functions (CONST. [1935], Art. XIV, Sec. 6; 1987 CONST., Art. XIII, Sec. 14; Labor Code, Arts. 130-134).

On 22 September 1989, the Senate passed Resolution No. 77 requesting the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) to assist the Committee on Women and Family Relations in studying, in aid of legislation, the status of women under the laws of the Philippines and recommending appropriate legislation to ensure equality between women and men.

In October 1989, the NCRFW commissioned a research study on the “Gender Analysis of Philippine Laws” which covered a total of 14,958 statutes from 1900 to 1989. (M.S. Feliciano and M.L. Aranal-Sereno, authors.) It determined whether there was discrimination on the face of the statutes, as well as to their effect and implementation. This study was later submitted to the Senate Committee on Women and the Family.

LAWS AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS ADVANCING

Women's Status, 1985-1993

What follows is a review of laws passed and policy developments for the advancement of women's status and concerns within the period 1985 to 1993, more than a decade after the Philippines signed the Convention. These laws and policies are presented chronologically, according to the year they were passed or implemented.

1985 to 1990

1. Executive Order No. 51 (1986), otherwise known as the "National Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, Breastmilk Supplements and Other Related Products" aims to contribute to the safe and adequate nutrition for infants by the protection and promotion of breast-feeding and by ensuring the proper use of breastmilk substitutes and supplements when these are necessary, on the basis of adequate information and through appropriate marketing and distribution (Sec. 2). Among the measures to be provided by the Department of Health is that in health education for mothers and the general public, health workers and community workers shall emphasize the hazards and risks of the improper use of breastmilk substitutes, particularly infant formula. Feeding with infant formula shall be demonstrated only to mothers who may not be able to breast-feed for medical or other legitimate reasons (Sec. 7(e)).

2. Republic Act No. 6657 (1988), or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law, carried a provision that "all qualified women members of the agricultural labor force must be guaranteed and assured equal rights to ownership of land, equal shares of the farm's produce and representation in advisory or appropriate decision-making bodies" (Sec. 10). In practice, titles to land which are part of the conjugal property are still being titled or registered in the husband's name "married to" citing the wife's name. The Supreme Court has ruled that the words

“married to” preceding the wife’s name are merely descriptive of the civil status of the husband but is no proof that the properties were acquired during the spouses’ coverture (*Jocson v. Court of Appeals*, G.R. No. 55322, February 16, 1989). Thus, one issue being pushed by women is the titling of lands in the name of both husband and wife in law and practice.

3. In health, the passage of Republic Act No. 6675 (1988), also known as the Generics Law, which protects consumers, majority of whom are women from the exorbitant cost of medicines, adoption of a new population policy with a concept that goes beyond fertility reduction to include family formation, women’s status, etc., intensified information campaign against AIDS, including its integration in the school curriculum, and screening of all blood donors and transfusions, among others.

1990 to the Present

1990

4. The *Philippine Development Plan for Women, 1989-1992*, was approved through Executive Order No. 348 on 17 February 1989. It contains policies, strategies, programs/projects and mechanisms to ensure that women are mainstreamed in the planning and implementation of government programs and services across all sectors. It authorizes the NCRFW, in coordination with the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) to monitor the Plan’s implementation and coordinate its assessment and updating. Moreover, it mandates all agencies to create WID focal points as the mechanism for Plan implementation.

5. In employment, the enactment of Republic Act No. 6725 (1989) strengthens the prohibition on discrimination against women with respect to terms and conditions of employment. Likewise prohibited is favoring of male employees over female employees based solely on their gender with respect to promotion, training opportunities, study and scholarship grants. Implementing rules, enumerating possible acts of discrimination that fall under the provisions were prepared by the Department of

Labor and Employment (DOLE). However, DOLE has still to make a study on pay equity based on actual wages received for both sexes in the private sector so that it can be determined if discrimination exists.

6. The issuance by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) of Memorandum Circular No. 14, series of 1989, to enable government workers, especially women, to adopt flexible working hours to help them cope with their dual roles as workers and home managers. For as long as workers complete an 8-hour day work they may choose a regular schedule of arrival from 7:00 to 10:00 in the morning and departure from 4:00 to 7:00 in the afternoon.

7. The CSC also passed Resolution No. 84-463 which provided for the adoption and implementation of a policy program on equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men in government employment.

Hence, the EQUADS (Equality Advocates) Program was established and institutionalized in the CSC's central and fourteen (14) regional offices to look into complaints of discrimination in the public sector on account of gender, political, and sexual harassment. In its first year of implementation, cases ranging from protest on promotional appointment to sexual harassment were either settled by the CSC or referred to proper offices for appropriate action through the EQUADS. Despite these efforts, the CSC should amend their Civil Service Rules to include all forms of sexual harassment within the offense of "grave misconduct" and the appropriate penalties for such an offense.

8. In order to stop prostitution and trafficking of women, there is the passage of Republic Act No. 6955 (1990) which outlaws the practice of matching Filipino women for marriage to foreign nationals either on a mail order basis or through personal introduction for a fee. It bans advertisements, printing, publication or distribution of propaganda materials; it includes a ban on exportation of Filipino domestics in view of reported abuses of employers and selective lifting of ban in affected countries. The Department of Foreign Affairs has issued Order 15-89 which requires all Filipino fiancées of foreign nationals, before they are

issued a passport, to attend guidance and counselling sessions at the Commission on Filipino Overseas to minimize problems relating to interracial marriages.

9. Republic Act No. 6972 (1990) mandated the establishment of a day-care center in every barangay, instituting a total development and protection of children program and appropriating funds therefor which was a tacit recognition of women's dual roles as workers and home managers. According to the Department of Social Welfare and Social Development (DSWD), only a few day-care centers can be established because of insufficient funds. With the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991, the financing of day-care centers was transferred to the local government units (LGUs) which made financing even more difficult. Moreover, the wages to be received by the so-called child-minders who are usually women are below the minimum wage level.

10. The passage of Republic Act No. 6949 which declares March 8 of every year as an official working holiday known as National Women's Day.

This declaration serves as a mechanism not only to recognize the achievements of Filipino women but to focus attention on what needs to be done in the future and is consistent with the international women's movement.

1991-1992

11. The strengthening of regional and local government units was made through the enactment of Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991. The Code widens the taxing powers and tax benefits of the LGUs and has authorized the devolution to said LGUs of certain powers hitherto exercised by the national government such as those relating to public works, agriculture, health and social welfare. It also minimizes to a great extent the dependency of LGUs upon the central government and challenges local officials' creativity in initiating projects that will result in the attainment of developmental and employment goals. It is also significant in terms of ensuring that the concerns of

women are considered in the legislative process at the municipal, city, and provincial levels. As provided under Sections 446, 457, and 467 of the Local Government Code, the *Sangguniang Bayan* (municipal council), *Sangguniang Panlungsod* (city council), and the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* (provincial council), respectively, shall be composed, among others, of three (3) sectoral representatives each, coming from the *women*, agricultural/industrial, and other sectors, including the urban poor, indigenous cultural communities, or disabled persons.

12. An important law which was passed in February 1992 is Republic Act No. 7192 otherwise known as the Women in Development and Nation Building Act. The law further strengthens the government's commitment to bring women's issues and concerns into mainstream development.

Republic Act No. 7192 is a legislative milestone in the pursuit of women's advancement in public life. Specifically, the law accords women equal opportunities for appointment, admission, training, graduation, and commissioning in all military or similar schools of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police (Sec. 7). The statute also gives women rights and opportunities equal to men in specific situations: (a) entering all kinds of contracts; (b) applying for loans and other credit facilities; and (c) joining social and cultural clubs (Secs. 5 & 6). Moreover, Section 8 of the same law provides full-time household managers the opportunity to avail of social security services. Aimed at recognizing the value of domestic work, the law specifically provides that "married persons who devote full-time to managing the household and family affairs shall, upon the working spouse's consent, be entitled to PAG-IBIG (Pagtutulungan - Ikaw, Bangko, Industriya at Gobyerno), Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), or Social Security System (SSS) coverage to the extent of one-half (1/2) of the salary and compensation of the working spouse. The contributions due thereon shall be deducted from the salary of the working spouse." An important mechanism in the law is that "within six months from the effectivity of this Act and to every six (6) months thereafter its provisions are being implemented" (Sec. 10).

On November 18, 1992, the NCFRW and NEDA issued its implementing rules and regulations for Sections 2, 3, and 4. All the different government entities were requested to submit reports of compliance to NCFRW which will forward them in a report to the President and Congress.

13. For child welfare, there is the enactment of Republic Act No. 7610 (1992) or the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act. Section 5 provides that children, whether male or female, who for money, profit, or any other consideration or due to the coercion or influence of any adult, syndicate or group, indulge in sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct, are deemed to be children exploited in prostitution and other sexual abuse. Among the acts considered as an attempt to commit child trafficking are: "(b) when a pregnant *mother* executes an affidavit of consent for adoption for a consideration; (c) when a person, agency, establishment or child-caring institution recruits *women* or couples to bear children for the purpose of child trafficking; (e) when a doctor, hospital, or clinic official, employee, nurse, midwife, local registrar or any other person simulates birth for the purpose of child trafficking." Other prohibited acts are the use of children for obscene publications and indecent shows, other acts of abuse, prohibition on the employment of children in all commercials or advertisements promoting alcoholic beverages, intoxicating drinks, tobacco and its by-products, and violence. This legislation is in consonance with the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child to which the Philippines is a signatory and likewise fills up a lacuna in Philippine law.

However, Article VIII, section 12 of Republic Act No. 7610 provides that children below 15 years of age may be employed provided that the minimum requirements are complied with. Here, all the obligations with regard to the protection, health and safety of children are given to the employers and they are considered as guardians automatically. This provision is inconsistent with the minimum age prescribed by ILO Convention No. 59 (1941). The DOLE has already received a communication from the International Labour Rights Education

and Research Fund claiming that RA 7610 is a flagrant violation of Article 2 of ILO Convention No. 59 which states clearly that “children under age of fifteen years *shall not be employed or work in any public or private industrial undertaking or in any branch thereof.* Provided that, except in the case of employments which, by their nature or the circumstances in which they are carried on, are dangerous to the life, health or morals of the persons employed therein, national laws or regulations may permit such children to be employed in undertakings in which only members of the employer’s family are employed.” Said communication even cautioned that in the event that RA 7160 is passed (as it is now), the Philippines would automatically be on the watch list for all its imports with importers required to certify that the products they purchase from the Philippines are not made by children. As a signatory to both Conventions, the Philippines is under obligation to conform with the standards set by the treaties and the “watch-list policy” will continue unless that particular provision of RA 7160 is repealed.

14. Republic Act No. 7305 (1992) or the Magna Carta for public health workers carries a provision that “a public worker shall not be discriminated against with regards to *gender, civil status, creed, religions or political beliefs, and ethnic groupings* in the exercise of his/her profession” (Sec. 9). Section 7 also directed that whenever possible, the proper authorities shall take measures to enable married couples, both of whom are public health workers, to be employed or assigned in the same municipality, but not in the same office. Since a majority of public health workers are women, the benefits given by this law would ultimately redound to them.

15. Republic Act No. 7322 (1992) which is an amendment of the Social Security Law increased the maternity benefits in favor of women workers in the private sector. Here, a covered female employee who has paid at least three monthly maternity contributions in the twelve-month period preceding the semester of her childbirth, abortion or miscarriage who is currently employed shall be paid a daily maternity benefit equivalent to one hundred percent (100%) of her present basic salary, allowances and

other benefits or the case equivalents of such benefits for sixty (60) days subject to the following conditions:

- a) that the employee shall have notified her employer of her pregnancy and the probable date of her childbirth which notice shall be transmitted to the SSS in accordance with the rules and regulations it may provide;
- b) that the payment shall be advanced by the employer in two equal installments within 30 days from the filing of the maternity leave application;
- c) that in case of caesarian delivery, the employee shall be paid the daily maternity benefit for 78 days.
- d) that the payment of daily maternity benefits shall be a bar to the recovery of sickness benefits provided by this Act for the same compensable period of sixty (60) days for the same childbirth, abortion, or miscarriage;
- e) that the maternity benefits provided under this Section shall be paid only for the first four deliveries after March 13, 1973;
- f) that the SSS shall immediately reimburse the employer of one hundred percent (100%) of the amount of maternity benefits advanced to the employee by the employer upon receipt of satisfactory proof of such payment and legality thereof; and
- g) that if an employee should give birth or suffer abortion or miscarriage without the required contributions having been remitted for her by her employer to the SSS, or without the latter having been previously notified by the employer of the time of the pregnancy, the employer shall pay to the SSS damages equivalent to the benefits which said employee would otherwise have been entitled to, and the SSS shall in turn pay such amount to the employee concerned.

However, increased maternity leave benefits no matter how long or short, can have some positive/negative effects. Positive in the sense that the increase may help them financially because of the additional 15-day maternity benefit pay equivalent to their salary and the extra time to nurse their infants. On the other hand, the negative implication can also be seen in that employers

may refuse to hire women in order to avoid having to grant them this benefit.

16. Since the Labor Code does not provide clear and adequate provisions for the protection of homeworkers, the Secretary of Labor and Employment issued Department Order No. 5 on February 4, 1992 regulating such employment. The regulation provides for the immediate payment of wages upon receipt of finished materials by the contractor or subcontractor and the SSS, MEDICARE, and ECC coverage of the homeworkers. The Secretary is tasked with the establishment of standard output rates or minimum piece rates through time and motion studies, individual or collective agreements or consultations with employers and workers organizations. It also specifies the conditions for payment of work deductions from earnings in case of damage to materials, prohibitions for homework such as explosives, fireworks, and articles of like character; drugs and poisons; and the processing of articles which requires exposure to toxic substances. The Regional Offices of DOLE are required to provide technical assistance to registered homeworkers organizations, employers, contractors, and subcontractors.

The KABAPA and the PATAMABA, both non-governmental organizations lobbied with DOLE for the issuance of the regulation. However, since it is a regulation and not an amendment of the Labor Code, the applicability of the existing wage provisions are being raised.

1993

17. In order to further improve protection in the deployment of overseas household workers, the Secretary of Labor and Employment issued Department Order No. 25 dated July 21, 1993. It established a Household Workers Center (HWC) which shall supervise a nationwide registration of qualified household workers through a program of training and/or skills test conducted by the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC) or its accredited testing centers. Other functions include referral of applicants from its pool to agencies qualified to deploy household

workers; accreditation of foreign employers and principals, processing of employment contracts, computerized monitoring of registration, status of application; worker deployment and arrival outside; and the provision of coordinative assistance for necessary post-deployment welfare services. The order also created the Philippine Overseas Labor Corps (POLOS) which shall take special responsibility over the social welfare programs necessary for household workers in accordance with the peculiar needs of these workers in each country. It shall monitor the entry and departure of household workers in the respective programs on-site, conduct skills enhancement programs at the welfare center or at the Embassy together with NGOs and Filipino communities, implement welfare programs on-site; monitor and assess the welfare services of private recruitment agencies and entities on-site and implement an accreditation system for foreign placement agencies and principals and together with POEA and OWWA, assist in the development of an employer education and orientation program.

18. In employment, Republic Act No. 7655 or An Act Increasing the Minimum Wage of Househelpers, amending for the Purpose Article 143 of the Labor Code was signed on August 19, 1993. It standardizes the minimum monthly pay of househelpers at P800 a month in Metro Manila and other highly urbanized cities. The new law also mandates that employers in chartered cities in the provinces and first class municipalities pay their house helper at least P650 a month while those in other municipalities not less than P500 a month. The law indicates employers to review their employment contracts of their househelpers every three years to provide for further increase and improve the terms of the contracts. Househelpers who are receiving at least P1,000 are to be covered by the SSS and entitled to all its benefits. It should be noted that the last law setting a minimum wage for domestic helpers was enacted twenty years ago where it set the minimum monthly at P350.00 a month.

REMAINING ISSUES AND OBSTACLES

Inadequate enforcement and monitoring of implementation of laws. This is linked to a low priority given to women's concerns and compounded by inadequate government resources for implementation and monitoring. For example, RA 7192 directs all government agencies to "review and revise all their regulations, circulars, issuances and procedures to remove any gender bias therein." Not all agencies have complied with such a directive. Also, there is need for more thorough analysis of laws, government policies, forms and procedures and related matters as to their gender impact.

Generally, the low level of consciousness of women's concerns continually manifests itself in the tendency of appointing authority to favor male candidates for high level positions, the tendency of women to continue to flock to traditional and low paying jobs, the tendency of agricultural training and other facilities to be male-oriented and the inadequate access to justice. The low level of consciousness might be attributed to lack of information on laws and regulations. In the National Workshop on the Promotion of Legal Literacy Among Women held on July 22-23, 1988 sponsored jointly by U.N. ESCAP, NCFRW, PERLAS (Pilipinas for Education, Research, Law Reform, Advocacy, and Service Foundation), and the U.P. Legal Resources Center, a survey of legal information programs, formal and informal, was made based on existing directories and information gathered from its participants. The programs ranged from well-developed ones as that conducted by the U.P. Law Center, to sporadic types of instructions conducted by both governmental and non-governmental organizations. The NGOs which conduct legal literacy programs are the following:

- a. Institute for Social Sciences and Action, Inc. (ISSA)
- b. Legislative Advocates for Women (L.A.W.)
- c. Buhay Foundation (Giving Life to Women)
- d. Kalayaan

- e. Participatory Research and Organization of Communities Through Education and Self-Help, Inc. (PROCESS)
- f. National Federation of Women's Clubs (NFWC)
- g. PILIPINA, Ang Kilusan ng Kababaihang Pilipino
- h. Stop Trafficking of Pilipinas (STOP)
- i. UP Women Lawyers' Circle (WILOCI)
- j. Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina (KaBaPa)
- k. Kalakasan
- l. Circulo de Abogadas (CIRDA)
- m. Sentro ng Batas Pangtao (BATAS)
- n. Philippine Muslim Association
- o. Free Legal Assistance Volunteers Association, Inc. (FREE LAVA)
- p. Development Through Active Women Networking Foundation, Inc. (DAWN)
- q. General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action (GABRIELA)

Nevertheless, there must be concerted and effective networking among GOs and NGOs to carry out the legal literacy programs for women and men. This condition is a critical component in empowering human beings as well as in creating the conditions for full implementation of the laws affecting women.

The rate of incidence of forms of violence against women which includes rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, incest, prostitution, pornography, and medical abuse, remains unmeasured and largely unreported. Indeed, the lack of data covering the various forms of violence against women indicates the low level of consciousness among government agencies and the public on the seriousness of the problem. This may be due to the hidden nature of the issue, and to the subsequent culture of silence that surrounds it. Inadequate laws and unsympathetic procedures compound the cloud of silence that victims use to protect themselves, especially in this conservative largely Catholic country. The PDPW noted the following limitations:

- a. Immediate medical treatment for victims of sexual abuse or violence is insufficient and inaccessible.
- b. In police stations, sexist attitudes borne out of prejudices against women often prevail. Reports on sexual assault are usually treated as mere statistics in police records and victims can expect little sympathy. (Indicate Kalakasan project and MOA with Camp Crame.)
- c. Very few legal aid clinics specifically cater to women victims of sex-related violence. Among the NGOs that offer such services are the Women's Legal Bureau, U.P.WILOCI, WLAP, CIRDA, FIDA, and the PILIPINA Legal Resources Center, Inc. ISSA is intending to establish a Women's Legal Defense Network. The criminal justice system ironically fails to convince victims to sue in court. Obstacles to filing rape charges include pressures to reveal prior sexual history as well as rigid and inhumane evidentiary rules.
- d. Only a handful of non-governmental organizations have set up crisis centers for the much-needed counselling and rehabilitation of victims. Also, most of these cater to victims of military rapes and violence and are faced with a severe lack of human and material resources. Among the NGOs that have set up crisis centers are STOP, Women's Crisis Center, Kaisahang Buhay Foundation, Inc., Kalakasang Kanlungan, Lihok Pilipino, Hasik, etc.
- e. Existing government structures like the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board are seen as powerless to counter the large and influential industry network of people involved in the pornography industry.
- f. Present laws covering rape, white slavery, prostitution are not only inadequate but also fail to consider changing realities and the increasing complexity of these crimes. The sanctions and penalties are often too light and outdated to firmly deter would-be offenders.
- g. A non-governmental organization that has taken an active role in eliminating sexual exploitation of women is GABRIELA. It has operationalized an on-site center called "Buklod" which implements its socioeconomic and educational programs specific

to prostituted women. It also maintained a night-care center where mothers working in Olongapo City (*site of former US military base — Ed.*) could leave their children.

Although the trafficking and prostitution of women have always been prohibited both by Philippine laws and tradition, amid a backdrop of a precarious sociopolitical-political condition coupled with high unemployment, the problem continues to beset the country as it thrives on the increasing poverty and marginalization of majority of the people. Young women migrants from depressed rural areas who lack the skills to compete in the urban/business-oriented and foreign arena often find themselves in the lowest paid and marginalized jobs in both the domestic and overseas labor market as entertainers, sales helpers or maids. As of October 1991, according to the Survey of Overseas Workers by the NSO, the second and third largest groups consisted of nurses and choreographers and dancers of whom 84.7% and 90.5% respectively, were women. Most of the 275,000 service workers (75%) were women working as helpers and in related housekeeping services. They were found mostly in Hong Kong and in Singapore. Statistics from the NBI also show that the proportion of women victims of illegal recruitment has been increased by 36 per cent in 1985 to 45 percent in 1990. As a result, these women become easy prey to male employers and customers, and they are vulnerable to sexual harassment, molestation and even rape. Cognizant of the nature and complexity of the problem, the executive branch of the government should further issue policy directives addressing the problem at hand by coming up with more viable and relevant solutions as well as giving support services to those who are victims to it. The Anti-Illegal Recruitment campaign must not only be nationwide but on a sustained basis. Moreover, there is the absence of a government agency solely addressing the prostitution problem which ultimately results in unsynchronized and "piecemeal" efforts, minimizing the effectiveness of some programs and projects and thus leading to more gaps in terms of service/assistance delivery.

To demonstrate concern for the problems arising from violence against women and accompanying issues, several bills/resolutions were introduced in Congress, to wit:

- H.B. 6330. An Act Redefining the Crime of Concubinage and Increasing Penalty Therefor, Amending for the Purpose Article 334 of the Revised Penal Code.
- S.B. 635. An Act According Equal Rights to Wives and Husbands in the Philippines by Amending Articles 333 and 344 of Act No. 3815, as amended, otherwise Known as the Revised Penal Code.
- S.B. 541. An Act Exempting a Woman Suffering from Battered Wife Syndrome from Criminal Liability in Case She Shall Kill Her Husband While in the Act of Battery Against Her.
- S.B. 1042 and H.B. No. 4228. An Act Prescribing a Special Law on Rape, Redefining the Same as a Crime Against Persons, Institutionalizing Measures for the Recovery of Rape Victims and the Effective Prosecution of Offenders, and For Other Purposes.
- S.B. 4228. An Act Amending the Law on Rape, Reclassifying the Same as a Crime Against Persons Redefining it as to Include All Forms of Sexual Assault on Any Person, Prescribing Penalties Therefor, Providing Evidentiary Requirements and Procedures for the Effective Prosecution of Offenders, and Institutionalizing Protective Measures for Rape Victims, and for other Purposes.
- H.B. No. 5142. An Act Amending Article 201 of the Revised Penal Code so as to Delineate Pornography as a Particular Crime, Providing a Higher Penalty Therefor and for Other Purposes.
- S.B. 578. An Act Prohibiting a Woman Below Eighteen (18) Years of Age Directly Engaging and/or Being Used as Model for Advertisement or Promotions of Liquor, Intoxicating Drinks and Cigarettes and Providing Penalties Therefor.
- H.B. No. 3461. The Human Rights Code. Rights of women are found in Title III, arts. 211-219 and include traffic in

women, protection against wife-beating, rights of arrested or incarcerated women, rights during armed conflicts.

- H.B. No. 6804. An Act Imposing Various Penalties on Those Found Guilty of Promoting Prostitution.
- H.B. No. 5142. An Act Amending Article 201 of the Revised Penal Code So As To Delineate Pornography as a Particular Crime, Providing a Higher Penalty Therefor and For Other Purposes.
- H.B. No. 7500. An Act Banning Advertisements in Print and Television where Women Pose in Sexy or Sexually Suggestive Postures and Providing Penalties for Violation Thereof.
- H.B. No. 8072. An Act Decriminalizing Vagrancy Amending for the Purpose, Article 202 of the Revised Penal Code.
- H.B. No. 7870 & S.B. No. 1146. An Act Proscribing Sexual Harassment in the Employment Environment and Providing Penalties Therefor.
- H.B. No. 6974. An Act Establishing an AIDS Center and Appropriating Funds Therefor.
- H.B. No. 8004. An Act Creating a Special Fund for AIDS Victims and Requiring the Mandatory Establishment of Exclusive AIDS Wards in Public and Private Hospitals.
- H.B. No. 8077. An Act Providing for the Prevention and Control of the Spread of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Prescribing Penalties for Violation Thereof and Other Purposes.
- S.B. No. 1084. An Act Establishing An Independent Commission to Study the Causes of AIDS and to Propose Measures to Prevent the Spread of the Disease.
- S.B. No. 1087. An Act to Control the Spread of AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the Philippines, Prescribing Penalties for Violations Thereof and for Other Purposes.
- H. B. No. 698. An Act to Provide a Comprehensive Program Against Wife Beating, Increasing Penalties for Habitual Offenders Thereof, and For Other Purposes.

CONCLUSION

Law is the reflection of the goals and aspirations of society. The concern for women's equality and development in order to be incorporated into the legal system would require the amendment or updating of existing laws such as the Revised Penal Code and Civil Code as well as the enactment of new statutes which will ensure the empowerment of women through their full participation in political processes and structures. In this process, bills must be analyzed on their gender impact so that the necessary legislative advocacy can be made by NCRFW and NGOs like SIBOL, ISSA, etc.