

Introduction

The Philippines is well known for its vibrant women NGOs and grassroots organizations that have critiqued and critically engaged government for decades. The tradition of having strong and independent assessments of women's situation in relation to the implementation of international agreements has been well-kept, and has been passed on from the older to the younger generation of women activists and gender advocates. Women academics have played a crucial role in keeping this tradition alive, and in infusing a solid evidence base for forwarding agendas that are meant to keep government accountable for the commitments it made in pursuit of women's human rights. Beyond this effort, another important goal has been to foreground and celebrate the gains of various contingents of the women's movement in each area of concern, and describe their best practices that can inspire and provide hope to others. The intention has been to always be forward-looking, to glean lessons from the past in order to envision a future that goes beyond official government thinking and towards women's realizable dreams.

This critical tradition of stock-taking and direction-setting began in the mid-eighties, with the production of an alternative Philippine report circulated in the United Nations (UN) Third World Conference of Women in Nairobi. The tradition became a truly concerted effort of all the main contingents of the Philippine women's movement in the mid-1990s, which saw the publication of an intensively discussed and negotiated document entitled *The Philippine NGO Report on Women: Issues and Recommendations* in preparation for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In the Beijing+5 process in the late 1990s, the close collaboration between academics and NGO advocates bore fruit in the issuance of fact sheets on the various areas of concern, resulting from a series of roundtable discussions. In 2005, a Beijing plus 10 academe-CSO review report packaged as an information kit with pull-out sheets for the various areas of concern came out with the support of UNFPA, Social Watch, and the Women's Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP). The Department of Women and Development Studies (DWDS) of the University of the Philippines College of Social Work and Community Development (UPCSWCD), together with the UP Center for Women's Studies (UPCWS) and the Ateneo Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC) Women's Studies Program, spearheaded this effort that was participated in by some 70 NGOs from the entire women's movement spectrum

TWO DECADES AFTER BEIJING

Now that the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) is almost two decades old, there have been a series of initiatives to produce an all-sided assessment of its implementation in the Philippine setting. Meetings between academics and NGO advocates have resulted in a convergence of efforts in terms of creating the research and writing teams to come up with reports that have since been assembled in this compendium. The reports sought to address the following questions:

1. To what extent has the Philippine government complied with its commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA)?
2. What have been the gains and gaps in the twelve areas of concern in the last 20 years, focusing on the first four years under the Aquino administration?
3. What have been the contributions of NGOs, grassroots and other civil society organizations (CSOs) in attaining the objectives of the BPA? What good practices can be shared?
4. What crosscutting themes and other areas of concern (LGBT, indigenous women, women with disability, Muslim women, migrant women, women in the informal economy) can be integrated in the assessment and in shaping the ways forward?
5. What recommendations from CSOs can be brought forward?

A human rights based approach (HRBA) served as the perspective and framework of analysis for this Report. The HRBA looks at the state as the principal duty bearer, and is therefore obligated to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls, reflected in the BPA and embodied in various international human rights documents (i.e., the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women or CEDAW) and in enabling national laws (i.e., the Magna Carta of Women) and policies (i.e., Women's EDGE Plan). The Report also looks at women, organized or not, as claim holders, and explores successes (and failures) at exercises of rights claiming.

WHY A SEPARATE NGO REPORT

From the CSO perspective, there is a need for an NGO Beijing+20 Report, an assessment independent of that of the Philippine government. Parts of the Report fed into different levels of advocacy and action. At the *international* level, some of the drafts were brought to the Asia Pacific NGO Forum held in Bangkok in November 2014. E-files of the completed final drafts were circulated to and by the Philippine delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and General Assembly sessions that took place in New York in March 2015, where NGO representatives were invited to participate in interactive panels meant to discuss innovative practices and new ways of moving forward. In such a setting, a separate NGO report proved to be most useful in providing, in an unfettered manner, all the issues and concerns that Philippine women NGOs wish to bring forward, their honest as-

assessment of the gains and gaps, and their celebration of their accomplishments and best practices accumulated over a 20-year period which they wish to share with the rest of the world.

At the *local* level, the NGO report is necessary, given some major differences between government and women NGOs in approaching BPA key areas of concern. The process of coming forward with an NGO report also provides the various women NGOs with a venue for coming together to highlight points of convergence (as well as divergence) for every area of concern in the BPA. The principle of inclusiveness allows all active groups to contribute to the process, negotiate differences as far as possible and respect diversity when inevitable, in order to arrive at a coherent NGO assessment of the BPA as applied in the Philippine setting. Drafts of the reports were discussed and circulated during the National Women's Summit held October 24–25, 2014 at Miriam College.

The research for the Beijing+20 Report has found both gains and gaps in government compliance with the BPA. It demonstrates both convergence and divergence in government and NGO/CSO perspectives. Participatory processes have facilitated the crafting of a negotiated policy and advocacy agenda for every area of concern that can be used not only in raising awareness and building unity in the NGO community, but also in engaging government in dialogues and in exploring joint initiatives. They demonstrate the vibrancy and productivity of NGO formations, in cooperation with academics, in coming up with evidence-based and comprehensive assessments of the past and well thought out recommendations for the future. They also highlight NGO/CSO contributions and good practices in attaining the objectives of the BPA.

PRODUCTION OF THE REPORT

The research and writing effort took off from two NGO meetings—one to organize the research teams in July 2014, and the other to prepare for the AP-NGO Forum in November 2014. It involved a series of consultations with women NGOs active in the BPA area.

In due time, the research and writing teams for all the areas of concern were formed:

WOMEN AND POVERTY—Rowena Laguilles (DWDS, UPCSWCD), Rianne Riego (PKKK), Mylene Hega (MAKALAYA), Zonia Narito (WISEACT), Olive Parilla (MAGISSI), Ma Concepcion de los Santos (PKKK), Lourdes Gula (PATAMABA), Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo (DWDS, UPCSWCD; Homenet Philippines)

WOMEN AND ECONOMY—Nathalie A. Verceles (DWDS, UPCSWCD), Mylene Hega (MAKALAYA), Maritess Cruz (DWDS, CSWCD), Jeanne Frances Illo (WSAP)

HUMAN RIGHTS—Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau, Philwomen on ASEAN

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS—Carolyn I. Sobritchea, Gina Rose L. Chan, Laniza R. Lacsamana (UPCWS Foundation)

4 Introduction

WOMEN AND HEALTH—Ana Maria R. Nemenzo, May-I Fabros, Ma. Luisa Lentejas (WomanHealth)

WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING—Melanie Reyes (WAGI, Miriam College), and Elizabeth Yang (PILIPINA)

WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT—Aurora Javate De Dios (PEACE TABLE)

EDUCATION AND TRAINING—Helen F. Dayo and Jeanne Frances Illo (WSAP)

THE GIRL CHILD—Shiela Carreon, Camila Inara and Minerva Cabiles (Save the Children), May Baez (Philippine NGO Coalition-CRC)

WOMEN AND THE MEDIA—Olivia H. Tripon (Women's Feature Service), Lisa Garcia (Foundation for Media Alternatives), and Maritess Cruz (DWDS, UPCSWCD)

WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT—Myrna Jimenez (SARILAYA)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN—Prescilla Tulipat (UPDGO), Angie Umpac (Rainbow Rights), Women's Crisis Center

Modest financial assistance was provided to each team through a grant provided by HASIK (Harnessing Self-Reliant Initiatives and Knowledge, Inc.). This was used for honoraria, meetings, and subsidies for participation in women's forums.

An editing team was formed, composed mostly of academics: Jeanne Frances Illo, formerly with the Women's Studies Program of the Ateneo de Manila Institute of Philippine Culture and former president of the Women's Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP); Dr. Rosalinda Pineda Ofreneo, Professor and former Dean of the UP CSWCD; Dr. Carolyn I. Sobritchea, former Director of the U.P. Center for Women's Studies and former Dean of the UP Asian Center; and Dr. Amaryllis T. Torres, former Dean of the UPCSWCD and currently Executive Director of the Philippine Social Science Council. May-I Fabros, who served as NGO coordinator for the Beijing plus 20 review process, also joined the team.

Aside from substantive editing by the abovementioned team, technical editing was undertaken by Rowena A. Laguilles, who is with the faculty and currently Field Instruction Coordinator of the DWDS, UPCSWCD. Myrna V. Magbitang, an M.A. in Women and Development Studies graduate and currently a doctoral student at the UPCSWCD, did the layout. Both women lost a lot of sleep putting the e-files together in presentable even if yet imperfect form in time for the CSW59 meeting in New York beginning March 9.

LIMITATIONS OF THE REPORT

This report represents only the views and opinions of the individual writers, researchers, and advocates who participated in the review process. The experiences and good practices presented refer only to those within the knowledge and purview of the research and writing teams. There may be others worth presenting that may not have been adequately documented and therefore are inaccessible to the general public.

Because of funding and time constraints, not all the teams were able to do small-group discussions, consultations, and writeshops with NGOs involved in each area of concern. Best effort, however, was exerted to retrieve documentation and recommendations from gatherings such as the National Women's Summit held October 24–25, 2015 at Miriam College, where sessions were conducted on almost all the areas of concern.

Many of the reports were submitted in early or late March, which gave very limited time for editing and for pursuing data gaps.

These limitations, however, should not detract from the overall value of the Report, which represents a convergence of the best of both worlds: that of women academics with NGO roots, and women activists engaged in advocacy and movement building.

SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) with its core principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment, and rule of law, has been adopted internationally and nationally as the anchor on which to base assessments of progress made in the status of women. The Philippine government, which is the principal duty bearer, is bound to adhere to the HRBA which obligates it to implement various international human rights instruments to which it acceded, principally the CEDAW and in the case of the girl child, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Implementation of CEDAW, which contains the main principles which ought to govern state action, is reviewed every three years. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) issued by the Fourth World Conference of Women in 1995 is also a significant international instrument containing strategic objectives which every state has to aim for in 12 areas of concern. The BPA greatly influenced the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD)—1995–2025, as well as the Women's EDGE Plan, a time slice of the PPGD to cover the period 2013–2016.

Assessments of these commitments always need to be evidence-based and in this respect, the role of academe as a partner of the NGO community again proved to be important in providing a critical eye by which official claims and pronouncements can be viewed more sharply and unveiled for what they really are. Civil society is also an important source not only of ground-level information but also of people-centered interpretation. Hewing to the tradition of past reports, this 2015 report again foregrounds the fruitful interaction between academe and civil society organizations in establishing the basis for future advocacy and action.

Some Important Gains

Persistent advocacy by women's groups organized around particular themes (violence, health, the girl child) has yielded many fruits in the field of legislation. Many laws have been enacted since 1995, based on the principal tenet that women's rights (and also children's rights) are human rights. The Magna Carta of Women, passed in 2009, is a landmark law which serves as the national translation of the CEDAW. As emphasized in the synthesis of the VAW report, Philippine women's groups were the primary movers in the conceptualization of the laws on rape, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and trafficking. The health report synthesis claims that "the passage of the landmark Responsible Parenthood and Reproduction Health (RP/RH Law) is a celebrated victory of the women's movement after almost two decades of arduous struggle." The Kasambahay Act gave recognition and rights to domestic workers. A number of laws on children in conflict with the law, elimination of the worst forms of child labor, trafficking, child pornography, anti-bullying, etc. have also been passed to protect the rights of children, especially the girl child.

Advocacy for policies anchored on the universality, inalienability, and indivisibility of human rights has pushed CSO campaigns for education, social protection, and health care for all. The drive for inclusion in education that would benefit Muslims and indigenous peoples has resulted in the actual adoption of policies by the Department of Education. Organizations of informal workers, urban poor, and rural women have been campaigning for social protection for all which goes beyond the social protection floor now in place. In the words of the health report synthesis, "Adoption of the Universal Health Care or *Kalusugan Pangkalahatan* prioritized the health agenda, mainly through increasing financial risk protection. Hence, the expanded National Health Insurance Law and the new Sin Tax Law are considered to be beneficial in improving women's health by increasing resources for healthcare financing and budget allocation, which hopefully will support the full implementation of the RP/RH Law."

The Magna Carta of Women has resulted in the strengthening of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) and its mandate for gender mainstreaming, as well as in facilitating access to the Gender and Development (GAD) budget. Questions that plagued the first decade of implementation have been gradually answered through clearer policy and programmatic moves. Through enabling institutional mechanisms, including bottom-up or Grassroots Participatory Budgeting (GPB) processes, women's NGOs are able to critically collaborate with and access support from local government units (LGUs). Quotas for participation and representation have been set and utilized to increase women's visibility and voice. Women's engagement and leadership in the peace process became very pronounced, with government honoring its commitment not only to the BPA strategic objectives on women and armed conflict, but also to other international instruments. Women's

studies in higher education have been recognized and institutionalized in many academic institutions, and have been instrumental in providing a pool of well-equipped gender advocates who can influence and implement gender-related policies and programs of local government units (LGUs) and national government agencies (NGAs).

Other significant gains lie in the areas of organizing and advocacy. The primacy of organizing, especially of grassroots women, has long been recognized as an essential ingredient of women's empowerment and movement building. What is new and significant is that organizations focusing on human rights, violence against women (VAW), health, environment and disasters, have formed community-based watch groups and other modalities to address increasing incidence of abuse in the context of calamities. Community-based support groups for VAW survivors have been formed to facilitate access to justice and hasten the healing process. The Internet, although often cited as a negative force when connected to child pornography and human trafficking, also finds redeeming value in women's successful and widespread utilization of social media to strengthen and speed up their advocacies.

Recurrent Issues, Themes and Challenges

In any given political field, however, there are many interests at play. The state does mirror the interplay of the hierarchies in society, whether these be based on class, race, gender, ethnicity and/or other differentiating factors. It is subject to the pressures of dominant market forces, traditionally powerful institutions like the Roman Catholic Church, social movements and civil society organizations with their particular advocacy agendas. Whose interests the state serves at any given moment depends on the outcome of a confluence or a clash of forces which in a hierarchical society usually favors the already privileged and further sidelines the already marginalized. This is particularly true of recent administrations, during which the lot of the poor remained the same, if not deteriorated, and whatever social advances were made could be attributed more to people-centered forces within and outside government.

As the Beijing plus 10 NGO report observed, "Probably like many states, the Philippine state suffers from schizophrenia arising from conflicting international commitments," exemplified on the one hand by the CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, and on the other, by World Trade Organization (WTO) and similar agreements "that privilege markets and the private sector over the social needs of the majority of the population." The dominance of pro-market forces has created a mainstream that is also at once "a men's stream and a maelstrom," and highlighted the weakness of government agencies tasked with the social and gender equality agenda. Uncritical gender mainstreaming efforts therefore become an exercise that is futile and suspect, "unless the mainstream is reoriented to serve the interest of the many, instead of the privileged few."

8 Introduction

The Philippines is still an elite democracy ruled by dynasties. And as the report on women in power and decision making concludes, women's participation in politics is marred by this reality, since those who are elected are often wives, mothers, and daughters belonging to dynastic families.

It is no wonder then that at the macro-level, state policies have resulted in worsening poverty, inequality, hunger, joblessness, vulnerability, and insecurity. Despite heavy spending and indebtedness for a conditional cash transfer program (4Ps) for the very poor, poverty incidence had not significantly changed (and in fact even worsened) since 2006. Budgets for social services such as education and health fall woefully below actual need and global standards, compared to debt service, defense spending, and the billions of pesos wasted on scandalous corruption-laden disbursement programs. Data on functional illiteracy, increasing maternal mortality and teen-age pregnancy are just some of the alarming results. Poverty, lack of decent work opportunities, and gender biases continue to haunt women. With respect to women's employment and working conditions, the synthesis of the women and economy report pointed out the following continuing concerns: "limited career choices, lack of support facilities, sexual harassment, lack of protection for the informal sector and domestic workers, tenuous social protection, limited monitoring of labor standards, and unremitting promotion of labor export policy." In agriculture, the women and economy report emphasized that "women's lack of individual ownership rights is reflected in their disproportionately small possession of land instruments." Issues that continue to beset rural women in agriculture are lower wages compared to men, and their limited access to resources and participation in decision making.

Insecurity haunts large areas of the archipelago. The armed conflicts, extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, and environmental catastrophes which marred administration records during the last ten years, exacted a heavy toll on victims, survivors, and the internally displaced. In more ways than one, these harmed and disempowered women more than men. Continuing violence in Muslim Mindanao, and the formidable barriers to peace are themselves products of centuries of discrimination against the Moro people, violation of their rights, and neglect of their needs.

Various reports in this compendium lead to the conclusion that good laws and programs do not necessarily mean palpable change. As the synthesis of the health report points out,

Religious fundamentalism remains to be a huge hindrance to the realization of sexual and reproductive health programs. The conservative groups are anticipated to pose obstructions throughout the implementation process of the RP/RH Law. Moreover, deep-seated patriarchal values infuse cultural traditions, especially among the indigenous peoples and Muslim communities, to continue to accept or tolerate the practice of early/child marriage. Abortion continues to stigmatize and put at risk the health and lives of women and girls.

Patriarchal consciousness and gender stereotypes justify violence against women and children. They explain the lack of political will to end human rights abuses, and the weak implementation of human rights laws. Ultimately, they prevent women's access to justice and healing. Heteronormativity still reigns supreme, leading to discrimination and marginalization of women of different sexual orientation and gender expression. Women's visibility and portrayal in media are still heavily stereotypical; the numbers of women working in media are still too low to make a real difference in an environment heavily controlled by vested interests and by men.

Emerging Issues

Climate change and associated mega-disasters comprise an urgent concern, given the great harm they inflict on millions of Filipinos, especially women and children. They increase poverty in affected areas, cause hunger and ill health, destroy livelihoods, and give rise to greater incidence of gender-based violence.

The awesome power and reach of social media and the Internet have provided opportunities for promoting women's concerns and advocacies, but the negative impact is more heavily felt. Gender-based cyber violence and cyber-pornography involving children have hugged the headlines. Such problems have intensified and have not been adequately addressed. New information and communication technology (ICT) do have a democratizing effect in terms of access to knowledge, but a gender and class-based digital divide still exists. At the same time, ICT has become an arena for exploitation.

There is increasing recognition of various forms of violence affecting young women, women with disabilities, indigenous women, rural women, older women, women in the Church, lesbians, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women, and women in disaster areas. LBT women have increasingly been the targets of violence and what can be considered hate crimes. Although ordinances prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) have been passed in a number of cities and municipalities, these have been disregarded and are hardly implemented. Domestic violence as well as prostitution and trafficking have increased in disaster areas such as those hit by Typhoon Yolanda, as reported by community-based watch groups. These have been associated with increasing poverty, stress, and desperation in these areas.

Awareness of the interweaving or intersectionality of gender, class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and other differentiating factors in defining and analyzing issues and problems of women and children is becoming widespread especially among women activists and gender advocates. However, those in charge of planning and implementing policies and programs in government units, both local and national, have not really employed this analytical lens capable of providing a firmer and more nuanced basis for concrete action.

Future Directions

Women's engagement in political and social life needs to be nurtured and more vigorously advocated, given that in many measures, they are still very much behind even after decades of trying to move forward. Given that most women who reach the top belong to the elite, this has to be balanced by increasing the capacity of grassroots women, through their organizations, to have more visibility and voice at all levels of governance. In the context of armed conflicts and environmental catastrophes, women need to be more involved in peace mechanisms, and in participatory disaster risk reduction and management. In the midst of widespread poverty, food insecurity, unemployment and underemployment, women need to be creative in building sustainable livelihoods and growing their businesses with concern for the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit.

The fate of Filipino women lies not only in the effectiveness of gender advocates within state structures to influence programs and policies towards the realization of women's empowerment and human rights in accordance with international standards. What Filipino women will lose or gain under whatever political dispensation depends on the collective strength of their organized forces locally and nationally, and how these forces interact with other social movements seeking an end to poverty, inequality, and insecurity. Women's empowerment in the political arena and their participation in larger movements can contribute to as well as benefit from the overall advancement of sustainable human development. At the end of the day, it is all about power and how this can be used to transform women's lives and the society they live in.

The participation of women's organizations, gender advocates, and other stakeholders is crucial not only in the generation of authentic knowledge but also in pushing for an unwavering agenda for advocacy and action at all levels of governance, starting from the local. As earlier pointed out in the synthesis and conclusions of the Report of Philippine NGOs on Beijing plus 10:

Local initiatives may be seen as part of a developing continuum that has influenced governance in areas where the women's movement is strong. Such initiatives can be broadened and replicated to create change from the bottom up, even as national, regional, and global women's networks seek to recast policies and programs at the macro level to facilitate the flowering of efforts at the ground level. Oppressive structures created by history and built on hierarchies based on resource status, gender identity, ethnicity, age, and other differentiating factors can thereby be transformed by human agency—by the force of women coming together to build a future they can call their own.

Some Action Points

On March 30, 2015, the research and writing teams together with participating organizations as well as allies from government and academe, gath-

ered at the Bulwagang Tandang Sora, CSWCD, for the soft launching of CD copies of the Beijing plus 20 NGO Report. Each team presented a short synthesis of each area of concern, from which the following action points were derived:

- Focus on assessment and implementation of laws, especially of the Magna Carta of Women, laws on VAW and children; and advocate for new laws
- Question and pose alternatives to macro-economic policies, budgetary priorities and processes anchored on sustainable human development and elimination of corruption
- Ensure inclusion and participation of marginalized groups: grassroots women, indigenous people, Muslims, the girl child, lesbian, bisexual and transwomen (LBT), migrant women and women in informal economy
- Strengthen women's claims to better jobs and access to resources, especially land
- Focus on social protection—reimagine the 4Ps to assist women out of poverty through sustainable livelihood, ensure access to social security and universal health care for all; integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and management in social protection strategies
- Support peace processes and engage women in these processes
- Promote public media literacy, media directory and monitoring, safer online spaces, women's participation in Internet governance
- Strengthen formal and community education on VAW, and provide economic support for survivors
- Engage men and boys in addressing VAW and realizing the human rights of women and girls
- Record good practices and resilience of survivors especially in disaster areas
- Integrate gender in curricula, research and extension

At the end of the day, assessment, advocacy, and action must all come together in synergistic fashion to make change happen for and by Filipino women and girls as conscious and empowered claim holders. The state, as duty bearer, will then have no choice but to sit up, listen, and deliver.

ROSALINDA PINEDA OFRENEO
JEANNE FRANCES I. ILLO
Issue Editors