

## **EDUCATION, SOCIAL PARTICIPATION, AND SOCIAL POLICY: THE FILIPINO ELDERLY**

Macrina K. Abenoja

### **ABSTRACT**

The present study undertakes the preliminary task of assessing some of the prevailing conditions of, and problems associated with, the current elderly in the Philippines. It focuses on the education and social participation of the elderly and enumerates policy directions aimed to correct inequities in their conditions in both the short and the long term.

### **RESEARCH ON AGING IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Long life is a valued goal in the Philippines where the quest for it is a continuing battle for many less fortunate members of society. Within this context of deprivation, reaching old age is a major victory, a "sign of success" (Abaya, 1982b). Reflecting perhaps the existence of more urgent problems relating to a young age structure and the positive attitude toward longevity, a distinctive body of literature on the Filipino elderly has not emerged. Thus, Sevilla (1982) lamented that while information about the young abound, those concerning the old are scant. The present decade has, however, witnessed a growing awareness and concern for the elderly. Fliieger et. al. (1981) were among the first to draw attention to the trend of increasing longevity of the Filipinos and of the corresponding need to meet the demands of an aging population. Following the explosion of studies on aging in the West, examination of the conditions of the Third World elderly is accelerating as evidenced by the completion of crossnational elderly surveys in Asia and the Pacific separately conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the United Nations University (UNU) around the mid-80s. The first two surveys included the Philippines. Their common purpose was to provide "an early signal to policymakers and planners of the potential problems that might emerge in the process of demographic transition" (Chen, 1987:7).

### **PURPOSES OF STUDY**

This study shares the similar objective of the WHO and ASEAN studies, that is, to serve as an

early warning on the nature of the aging problem in the Philippines. It focuses on two major areas on the elderly: their education and their social participation. First, the study examines the variation in the educational attainment of the elderly and attempts to explain the observed inequalities across gender and space. Second, various aspects of social participation are considered and related to education, after which the dimensions of the aging problem in the country are summarized. Finally, policy directions by which inequities in the conditions of the elderly can be alleviated and corrected in both the short- and the long-term are enumerated.

### **DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

This study utilizes data gathered in the 1983 round of the National Demographic Survey (NDS) of the Philippines. Conducted every five years since 1968 with the purpose of monitoring social and demographic changes in the country, the NDS studied a random sample of the national population. The survey sampled a total of 13,342 households comprising 74,827 individuals. The survey netted a total of 3,738 elderly persons contained in 2,732 households, representing around 5 percent and 20 percent, respectively, of the total sample of population and households.

The random sample overrepresented urban, female and ever-married subgroups of the actual population. To correct this problem, sample weights were calculated using the 1980 census population distribution which were then applied to the observations in order to get a nationally representative sample of the population.

A limitation of this data set is its exclusion of

institutional population which means missing out on elderly living in homes for the aged. However, as Abaya (1982a) pointed out, since institutionalization of the elderly is almost taboo in traditional Asia where "homes" for the aged are looked upon as "places of last resort" and bearing considerable stigma, institutions for the old have so far catered only to the utterly destitute and abandoned elderly. Abaya (1982b) estimates that only about 1,500 elderly are institutionalized, a meager fraction of the over two million estimated total Filipino elderly.

The elderly for this analysis is defined as the population aged 60 years old and older. Descriptive statistics by way of percentage distributions among crosstabulated variables are the main analytical tools of this study.

## LIMITS TO EDUCATION

A major function of education is to provide everyone with the capacity to participate actively in a society that is in constant flux and change (Grabowski, 1980). Education helps individuals to grow personally and socially and is a vital "adjustment instrument" for everybody. Educational attainment is particularly important for the elderly because they may suffer from various deficiencies.

In the Philippines, education is considered as the major vehicle for attaining upward mobility. Table 1 indicates a widespread school attendance among the elderly population -- over three-fourths of them

had attended school sometime in the past. However, the majority only finished elementary school signifying the existence of barriers.

The most basic barrier to education is cultural, a context that aggravates the effects of other structural constraints to equality in education. Take for example the observed differences across gender. While education is commonly valued, the differentiated sex-role orientation especially of the past generation prescribes that the men be the economic caretakers of their families. Thus, men are usually given preferential treatment when decisions about educational pursuits, viz., who are to go to high school or college, are made. The underlying rationale for this allocation is rather simple: the men have to feed, while the women get fed. Given the highly limited resources in most families, the women (even if they be the better students) lose out to men, especially in decisions concerning higher levels of education that entail more expense. This practice underlies the higher school attendance and the slightly advantageous completion of higher levels of education among elderly men than among elderly women.

Another structural barrier is distributional, that is, the absence of school facilities in certain places. This is one aspect of the "urban-rural" dichotomy. The observed differences in educational achievement across urban and rural places are a direct effect of the urban bias in development, viz., the concentration of school facilities of higher learning in the urban areas. While a greater proportion of rural elderly reported elementary education rela-

Table 1. Educational Characteristics of Filipino Elderly: Philippines, 1983 NDS

Characteristic	All	Percentage Distribution		Residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Number of elderly*	3709	1798	1911	1321	2388
Per cent Attended School	76.3	79.7	73.1	87.2	70.2
None	23.7	20.3	26.9	12.8	29.8
Elementary	62.9	62.7	63.0	60.0	64.5
High School	8.1	9.8	6.4	15.5	3.9
College & higher	5.3	7.2	3.7	11.7	1.8

\* Exclusive of cases with no response on educational level.

tive to their urban counterparts, the proportion of rural aged who had never been to school is more than double that of the urban elderly. Presumably because of the absence of greater financial resources needed to pursue higher education in the cities and urban centers, rural elderly are much worse off in the higher grade categories: while 1 out of every 4 urban elderly had at least a high school diploma, only 1 out of every 20 rural elderly reached similar educational levels.

**Social Participation and Education**

"Through social participation, an individual maintains a personal status, expresses social roles, and both gives and receives services" (Harris,1987: 1). Social participation is a major context in the study of the elderly and is a prominent area of inquiry on the elderly. The participation of the elderly can be identified along four areas: community involvement, family and home, social network, and work (Harris,1987). This study measures social participation of the elderly in terms of their economic participation (through work and occupation), and their familial relations (through headship and living arrangements).

**Work**

Work status, simply defined as whether currently working for pay or not, measures the continuance of the economic role of the elderly. Judged from the figures below, which indicate that only two out of five of the elderly are currently working for pay, it appears that the majority of the old are generally not engaged in gainful work.

	All	Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Per cent Working	41.1	64.3	19.2	32.2	46.0
N	3714	1804	1910	1327	2387

Gender spells a big difference with respect to work: while 2 out of 3 male elderly work, only 1 in 5 female elderly does. This contrast reflects the sexist attitude mentioned earlier, viz., the traditional Filipino sex-role orientation which stipulates that the males are the ones to work to support their families while the women are to stay home to take care of the children and the home.

More rural than urban elderly work. Since the Philippines is predominantly an agricultural economy, the area differential indicates that rural elderly, probably farmers are economically active at a much older age than their urban counterparts who probably work in the formal sector where the urban elderly cease working upon reaching retirement age.

Work status, as defined, is a limited measure of the economic participation of the elderly. Since it is measured mainly in terms of gainful, cash-type remunerative activities, those non-gainful, non-cash economic activities that many of the old are involved in and from which they may gain satisfaction and status are not considered. In the Philippines, it might not be uncommon to find the elderly engaging in seemingly non-gainful activities (like baby-sitting, house tending) which allow other (usually younger) members of the household to engage in so-called gainful work. Within this context, it can be argued that the elderly still participate (although indirectly) in the wider economic market through other members of the household. Since their participation in mainstream economic activities are institutionally closed through forced retirement and other reasons, it thus appears sensible to measure elderly economic status not exclusively in direct economic terms. As Baltazar and Lopez (1987) observed, a large majority (87 per cent) of the Filipino elderly are in good health and are thus functionally able to participate in larger social and economic activities.

Examination of the pattern in work status by education shown in Table 2 reveals that overall there is more unemployment among the more educated, particularly the males. A curvilinear pattern is observed among the females. One explanation for the trend among females is that working women are able to stay on their jobs relatively longer than men because some of them are employed in the tertiary sector that do not strictly follow any retirement practice. The urban-rural differential in levels of unemployment indicates the slower process of work disengagement among the rural elderly who are mostly employed in the agricultural sector.

Table 2. Non-Working Filipino Elderly by Education: Philippines, 1983 NDS

Highest Grade Completed	All	Sex		Residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Number of non-working elderly	2179	640	1539	895	1284
None	57.7 (508)	31.7 (116)	76.3 (392)	70.4 (119)	54.6 (389)
Elementary	58.3 (1359)	32.0 (362)	83.0 (997)	67.4 (534)	53.6 (825)
High School	63.3 (190)	51.0 (90)	80.3 (100)	69.8 (143)	49.5 (47)
College & higher	62.0 (122)	55.4 (72)	71.8 (50)	63.2 (99)	53.5 (23)

N.B.: Parenthesized figures ( ) are the number of non-working elderly.

### Occupation

The occupational distribution of the elderly in Table 3 manifests the predominantly agricultural character of the Philippine economy. The majority of those working are in the agricultural sector. The sex-role differentiation that underpins reported work status is likewise manifested here, which is, that although men commonly work in the fields and women assist them as unpaid workers, the latter activity is not acknowledged in the reported statistics. Hence, women's economic activity is recognized only in sales and service, and production. As expected, agricultural workers predominate in the rural areas with non-agricultural workers concentrated in the urban areas.

As shown in Table 4, agricultural employment is associated with lower levels of education. Although farming is a man's job (i.e., 86 per cent of all farmers of all ages are men), this is only true among elderly with at least an elementary education. Among those with no schooling, there are twice as many women engaged in agriculture as men. While farming is predominantly a rural occupation (i.e., 86 per cent of all agricultural workers are from the rural areas), more unschooled rural elderly engage in farming compared to the urban elderly. More urban than rural elderly with at least an elementary education work. It thus appears that stepping into a classroom, even for just a few years, spells the difference in the choice of farming as the only or lifetime career.

Table 3. Occupational Categories of Filipino Elderly: Philippines, 1983 NDS

Occupation	All	Sex		Residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Number of Working Elderly	1519	1153	366	425	1094
Agricultural Worker	64.6	73.6	36.2	31.2	77.6
Sales/Service Worker	18.1	9.7	44.9	35.6	11.4
Production Worker	12.7	11.8	15.3	22.1	9.0
Other*	4.6	4.9	3.6	11.1	2.0

\*Other includes clerks, professionals and managers.

Table 4. Filipino Elderly Working in Agriculture by Education: Philippines, 1983 NDS

Highest Grade Completed	All	Sex		Residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
<b>Number in Agriculture</b>	976	844	132	132	844
None	29.7	26.1	52.6	21.4	31.0
Elementary	65.1	68.1	45.8	69.0	64.4
High School	4.5	5.0	1.4	8.4	4.0
College & higher	0.7	0.8	0.2	1.2	0.6

**Family Relations**

Family relations are an important dimension of living that bear important implications for health and well-being in later life (Harris 1987). It is through them that the elderly do not appear to suffer diminished status in the household. Over half of the elderly are heads of households, while another fifth are spouses of heads who, within the context of the Filipino family, also assume relatively dominant roles. However, the real status of elderly designated heads of households would depend on the quality of these entitlements, i.e., whether merely honorary or not. Since the culture prescribes that headship status be automatically placed upon the oldest male in the household (Sevilla, 1982), headship may actually be nominal for many, particularly in the households of widowed or separated women who may be obliged to accord headship upon an elderly father, or a father-in-law. Preliminary results of the Philippine ASEAN survey, for example, indicated that half of the headship entitlements to the elderly were given not on the basis of the elderly being currently the main bread-

winner or the major decisionmaker but on their being the oldest member of the household (29 per cent) or for having always been the head of the household (21 per cent) (unpublished materials).

The data on Table 5 confirm the practice of placing the headship position almost exclusively upon men -- nearly 9 out of 10 males, but only 1 out of every 4 women, are heads. Women predominate in the other categories, e.g., they are mostly the spouse, or the grandmothers. The proportion of women who live with their child(ren) is four times greater than men.

While elderly heads and spouses are slightly greater in the rural than in the urban areas, the other categories are correspondingly slightly higher in the urban areas. These urban patterns are perhaps outcomes of the tight economic conditions in the cities. As has been observed in the literature, urban crowding and housing shortages in Philippine cities lead to more co-residence. High house rents force urban households to accommodate newly-arrived migrant relatives (such as parents,

Table 5. Relationship to Household Head of Filipino Elderly: Philippines, 1983 NDS

Relation	All	Sex		Residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
<b>Number of Elderly</b>	3728	1812	1916	1328	2400
Head	53.8	84.5	24.4	52.8	54.2
Spouse	21.6	0.6	41.6	20.1	22.4
Grandparents	19.6	11.2	27.7	20.8	19.0
Sibling	2.7	2.0	3.4	3.3	2.4
Parent	1.0	0.4	1.6	1.1	1.0
Other	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.9	1.0

siblings and other family relatives) needing a place to stay while job-hunting, or to take unrelated persons (i.e., boarders, lodgers) as paying members of the household.

### Headship Attributes

This section examines the attributes of elderly household heads. A profile of household heads compared with the elderly is presented in Table 6. The outstanding feature is the heavy dominance of all the male heads. This pattern emerges because Filipino men are expected to be the major income generators of the family and are thus reserved the title "head" of household. Elderly heads enjoy relative advantage over the rest of the elderly on several points: their completion of at least high school is 20 per cent greater; their proportion working is 50 percent higher. Two-thirds of elderly heads as well as the total elderly population reside in rural areas. Reflecting this rural residential character is the greater proportion of agricultural workers among elderly heads and among the elderly in general, and the corresponding lower fractions working in non-agricultural occupations.

### Living Arrangements

The living arrangements of the elderly is one indicator of the extent of family relations and support (Martin, forthcoming). It is another area of inquiry that has gained prominence within social gerontology. Table 7 shows the distribution of the elderly in terms of five types of living arrangements: living alone, nuclear (living in one nuclear family household), extended (living in either horizontally or vertically, or both, extended household with only one nuclear unit), multinuclear (living in two or more nuclear family household), and other (living in household without a nuclear unit or in a household of unrelated persons).

Supranuclear (i.e., extended and multinuclear) living arrangements, when taken together, characterize more than half of the elderly and is the most popular mode of settlement. Evaluated within the contexts of reciprocity, familial responsibility (where each individual feels responsible for his relatives), and filial piety (which accords honor, respect and reverence to one's elders), shared living arrangements can be interpreted as component or a facilitating factor of filial responsibility. In other

Table 6. Profile of Elderly Household Heads and of the Total Elderly Population: Philippines, 1983 NDS

Characteristic	Total Elderly		Elderly Heads of Household	
	All	Number	Household	Number
Sex Ratio (males/100 females)	94.5	3714	329.0	2003
Per Cent Residing in rural places	64.4	3714	65.0	2003
Per Cent Attended School	76.3	3714	79.5	2000
Highest Grade Completed		3709		2000
None	23.7		20.8	
Elementary	62.9		63.1	
High School	8.1		9.3	
College & higher	5.3		6.8	
Working	41.1	3714	61.6	2003
Occupation		1519		1228
Agricultural Worker	64.6		70.4	
Sales/Service Worker	18.1		14.6	
Production Worker	12.7		10.6	
Other	4.6		4.4	

Table 7. Living Arrangements Among Filipino Elderly: Philippines, 1983 NDS

Arrangement	All	Percentage Distribution			
		Sex		Residence	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Number of Elderly	3728	1812	1916	1328	2400
Living alone	3.5	2.9	4.1	2.7	4.0
Nuclear	37.6	45.7	29.9	32.0	40.7
Extended	33.6	28.1	38.9	34.2	33.4
Multinuclear	21.1	22.0	20.2	26.3	18.1
Other	4.2	1.3	6.9	4.8	3.8

words, if one has to provide for and assist one's elderly relatives, such assistance can be best provided and maintained in a co-resident arrangement. Within similar contexts, the observed popularity of nuclear arrangements has to be interpreted strictly in residential terms since the arrangement may be functionally extended (Castillo, 1979), meaning that support to relatives extends beyond one's domicile. Given this background of strong familial ties and mutual support, the low incidence of subnuclear arrangement (viz., alone and other) among the Philippine elderly is not surprising.

Table 7 also shows that relatively more women live alone, live in extended families, or live with other family or non-family relatives. On the other hand, nearly twice as many men as women are found in nuclear living arrangements. A reason for this variation lies in the observed gender differentials in marital status. Since more elderly women are single or widowed, they are limited in the number of relatives available for co-residence. By contrast, since the majority of the men are married, their logical mode of living is nuclear.

Soldo and Myers (no date) observed that increasing old age is associated with either living alone or living with other relatives in a household. Since women dominate among the oldest-old, this explanation holds, as the following figures illustrate:

Arrangement	Percentage Distribution					
	60-69		70-79		80 & older	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Alone	1.5	2.0	1.4	1.7	0.2	0.5
Other	0.5	4.0	0.8	2.3		0.5

(N=3678)

Income has also been found to determine the viability of living alone among the elderly. Due to patriarchy, most elderly women are without gainful work forcing them to be economically dependent on others, mostly upon relatives.

Contrary to Goode's (1963) expectations, nuclear families may not abound in the cities. Since urban households provide the necessary auspices for rural-to-urban migration, urban areas in the Philippines are characterized by the dominance of households composed of family extensions and non-relatives (Stinner, 1977). The underlying context of this distinctive supranuclear household structure found in urban areas is the massive urbanward migration fostered by kinship auspices that facilitate chain migration (Tilly and Brown, 1967) with resulting urban crowding and housing shortages.

Urban areas have shown higher proportions of elderly living with family (in extended and multinuclear households) and non-family relations (Table 7). The rural areas, in contrast, have proportionately higher fractions of elderly in single and nuclear households. One possible reason for this difference is that the relative ease of building cheap nipa shelters in the barrios makes residentially-separate, although functionally-extended, living quarters for the elderly more feasible in these areas.

Table 8 shows that living arrangements vary not only by gender and residence (as earlier discussed) but also by other socio-economic attributes. The life-cycle effect on living arrangement is evident in the observed variations across age. There is a consistent increase in extended living arrange-

Table 8. Living Arrangement by Selected Socio-Economic Criteria: Philippines, 1983 NDS

Criterion	Percentage in Living Arrangement					N
	Alone	Nuclear	Extended	Multi-nuclear	Others	
<b>Age</b>						
60-69	2.7	41.4	29.8	22.5	3.5	2369
70-79	5.6	32.5	36.3	19.9	5.8	1003
80 & older	3.7	24.0	55.0	14.3	3.0	306
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Never Married	14.9	3.9	43.4	10.4	27.4	198
Married	0.2	50.5	23.3	25.5	0.4	2358
Widowed	8.3	16.7	53.3	14.0	7.7	1118
Separated	10.1	13.5	52.3	11.4	12.7	40
<b>Work Status</b>						
Working	5.1	45.1	26.6	18.6	4.5	1527
Not Working	2.4	32.1	38.6	22.9	4.0	2187
<b>Occupation</b>						
Agricultural	4.9	48.6	27.1	16.6	2.7	982
Sales/Service	9.9	36.4	26.0	18.3	9.4	276
Production	0.9	1.4	23.7	28.2	5.8	192
Others	1.1	41.8	28.2	3.2	5.7	69
<b>Highest Grade Completed</b>						
None	4.5	35.9	38.2	17.3	4.1	880
Elementary	3.4	38.1	33.2	21.6	3.7	2333
High School	2.7	37.7	29.0	23.9	6.7	298
College & Higher	1.8	38.2	24.7	28.4	6.9	198

ments, and parallel declines in both nuclear and multinuclear settlements, with increasing age presumably due to widowhood, separation, failing health and diminished economic resources of the elderly. The increase in the proportions of sub-nuclear households among those in their 60s to those in their 70s may be attributed to increases in widowhood; the drop among those in their 80s may reflect physical and health conditions that require close personal attention from family relatives; and the corresponding increase in extended households in these ages.

Excepting the married elderly, data in Table 8 show that the elderly living in extended households is the most prevalent arrangement across marital status. Living alone or living in extended households with others are common among the

not-currently married elderly, especially the never married and separated, who conversely exhibit the least proportions of multinuclear and nuclear arrangements.

Moreover, nuclear living is the dominant arrangement among working elderly, while living in extended households is the most prevalent arrangement among those without work. Twice as many working elderly live alone as those without work, a pattern which indicates that a steady income makes independent living more feasible.

A nuclear living arrangement is the most commonly observed across all occupations because the working elderly are mostly married (who live for the most part in nuclear families). Among those in the subnuclear arrangements, the sales and service



workers prevail because of their preponderantly female composition. It is surprising at first to note that managerial and professional (i.e., Others) workers, who are most able to afford and maintain independent living, exhibit the least cases of sub-nuclear arrangement. An examination of this group shows that it is composed mostly of male and married elderly, thus leading to the prevalence of the nuclear living arrangement.

The education of the Philippine elderly manifests interesting patterns. While living alone or in extended families decline with increasing education, nuclear, multi-nuclear and other arrangements generally increase with higher levels of education. The explanations for these patterns rest on a number of prior observations. With regards to the monotonic decline in living alone with higher levels of education, the reason relates to an earlier finding that living alone is a distinctive feature among female elderly living in rural areas. The increasing prevalence of independent living among elderly with increasingly lower education is simply a reflection of female- and rural-based patterns. In other words, the male bias in the Filipino educational system that has produced increasingly lower proportions of females at higher levels of education explains the female character of living alone; the concentration of less educated elderly in the rural areas validates its rural quality.

The general increase in the proportions of Philippine elderly in nuclear arrangements, and the parallel declines in extended households, with increasing levels of education suggest a pattern described by Goode as the convergence of family systems with greater modernization, especially since persons of higher educational levels are located in the cities. However, these observed patterns are countervailed by greater increases in multi-nuclear households with increasing education, a pattern that was also observed by Castillo (1979) in which higher income levels of the urbanities allow them to harbor their rural relatives.

A puzzling observation that is difficult to explain is the general increase in the proportion of elderly living with other persons at higher levels of education. To understand the dynamics of this pattern, the composition of college graduates, the group

that exhibits the highest percentage of this arrangement, is examined. The composition of this group is identified to be mainly male (65 per cent), currently married (77 per cent), urban (78 per cent), many of whom are without work (62 per cent). Taking these four things into account, the most plausible explanation that comes to mind is that these elderly are a combination of both elderly commuter workers and job-seekers who live with non-relatives (either with helpers, or as boarders) in the cities but who regularly 'go home' to their families in nearby villages.

### DIMENSIONS OF THE AGING PROBLEM IN THE PHILIPPINES

The profile of the Philippine elderly that has just been drawn refers to particular cohorts of Filipinos who grew up at very different, presumably more traditional, time periods. Their experiences in the past have produced distinctive features of their current situation. Three major dimensions of this situation are identified based on the empirical findings just cited.

The conditions of the Filipino elderly have to be taken within the context of general poverty of the total population. What is disturbing is that some elderly are more deprived than others. Thus, a major aspect of the aging problem is the distinctive gap in the conditions between male and female elderly. Observed gender inequalities resulted mainly from sexism that conditioned and perpetuated overt patriarchy, where men were perceived to be the family breadwinners and the women, the child rearers and homemakers. Thus, while the men were given priorities in educational and work opportunities, the women were left relatively untrained for work outside the home. Although this attitude has undergone changes in the present generation, it was more the professed ideal arrangement at the time the elderly of today were growing up two or more generations ago.

The obvious victims of this divided sex-role orientation were the women. The implicit intention of this custom was to promote a wholesome family environment for growing children. However, once the children have left home, the mothers were left disoriented having lost the object of their role as

child carers. Their situation has been further aggravated by the passing away of their husbands, a high possibility due to women's greater life expectancy compared to men. These life cycle developments place the elderly women on a more dependent status than elderly men.

This brings us to the second dimension of the aging problem -- the dependency status of the old. The data of this study have shown that the old, in general, engaged in less gainful economic activities, and consistently withdrew from gainful work with increasing age (data not shown). This disengagement from work resulted in the loss of a major source of power and status. While the present data have shown that many of the elderly men were the heads of households, there is a suspicion that such designations were mere courtesies accorded to them.

Dependency is particularly a crucial condition for elderly women. Having been conditioned to depend on their husbands for economic support, they were relatively ill-equipped to live economically independent lives. Being widowed was thus a major turning point in the lives of many elderly women. Support may have been sought from one's own child(ren). While old-age support is one of the traditional reasons given for having children, the elderly's child(ren) may have faced a hard choice between providing for the needs of their own children or for the needs of their parent(s). The elderly may have suffered from the competition or have obtained minimal support given the limited resources of the families.

Another cause for the uneven conditions across gender is the greater tendency among men to remarry after getting widowed, and thus re-establish nuclear family relations from which they can draw the emotional and physical support necessary for living. By contrast, the fate of the widows (who remarry less) depend a lot upon the support that children and other close relatives choose to give. If such close relatives are absent or unavailable to render aid or could only provide minimal help, these women would have to spend the remainder of their lives in absolute deprivation.

A third aspect of the problem relates to the effects of the disparities in the spatial distribution of op-

portunities, not only educational but employment as well. In the long run, this urban bias in development also selects the elderly, particularly the women, to migrate to the cities to join younger member(s) of the family who had moved earlier. This presents problems of re-adjustments to the new social and economic environments on the part of the elderly migrants, and of creating the necessary infrastructures to serve these migrants on the part of the government.

## CONCLUSION

Although the Filipino elderly have not yet reached an alarming proportion, this is no reason to be complacent. They are projected to become a major force to reckon with in the coming century (United Nations, 1985). Even at their currently low levels of growth, their conditions suggest problematic features, as previously discussed.

Attitudinal and social changes have taken place since two or more generations ago when the current elderly Filipinos were growing up. For example, the sex bias in education has greatly eroded, and barrio high schools have been increasingly and widely built. However, there remains a big room for more improvement. While the Filipinas have made headway at school, their position at home and at work are far from egalitarian.

Policies to assist the elderly take two forms: short-range interventions that have immediate effects to help the current elderly, and long-range actions that are designed to benefit the elderly of the future (Grabowski, 1980). Both of these are best achieved if at the same time an educational drive about the aging process and the elderly are given to the general population. Corresponding to the dimensions of the aging problem, the following specific policy recommendations are proposed:

In terms of a long-run goal, the elimination of gender inequalities would entail creating an atmosphere of truly equal opportunity and responsibility for both sexes -- at home, at school, at work. Household chores should not be designated along gender lines. Homemaking and childcaring should be an equal concern of both sexes. Educational opportunities should be allocated more in terms of

ability than gender. Equality at home and at work has important implications for the labor force participation of women. Equality increases possibilities of women's participation in work. While the woman may choose to focus her time in the home during a certain segment of her life, her options should not be limited to home and child care. Her husband should give her the necessary support if she chooses to work outside the home. A flexible work arrangement should be devised that not only allows women to return to work after some absence because of childbearing and childrearing activities, but one that also allows for reduced worktime for the same reasons or the equivalent availability of day-care facilities. While some of these desired changes have taken place, (i.e., equality in education, more female labor force participation), others have yet to materialize.

The second policy recommendation is for a strong re-emphasis on and the expansion of vocational education program on the value and honor of manual labor, while at the same time, such emphasis must also be implemented starting at the elementary school. Expensive college degrees that do not ensure job placement will have to be de-emphasized. This de-emphasis may be called for considering the worsening conditions of the Philippine economy. The exclusion of women from educational pursuits in the past has been partly occasioned by the excessive value placed on college diplomas. Given this sexist orientation and gravely limited family resources, women often gave way when decisions on who would go to college were made. However, this picture has been changing over time. Since vocational training is much less expensive, it allows for wider participation of everybody in the educational process. Vocational training gives better assurance of making a living and it may be a superior way of preparing for one's golden years.

To augment the welfare of the currently old, retirement in the formal sector should not be determined by chronological age but rather be based on current productivity of the worker. Vocational and occupational training geared to those in their fifties and older should also be implemented on a nationwide basis and down to the barangay (village) level.

Finally, rural development in various forms (e.g., providing high school education to all barrios, land reform, programs that provide rural employment, etc.) must become a continuous effort to prevent whole families, including the elderly, from relocating to the cities. Such actions would prevent the creation of urban and rural problems that either directly or indirectly aggravate the conditions of the elderly.

To give these elderly programs proper and dynamic directions, continued research on the elderly as they affect and are affected by social changes must be constantly undertaken.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author acknowledges the permission granted by the University of the Philippines Population Institute to use the 1983 NDS data.

### REFERENCES

- Abaya, Adel. 1982a. The Elderly in the Philippine Population. Asia Regional Conference on Active Aging. *The Elderly of Asia*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas. 293- 301
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1982b. Some Aspects of Aging in Southeast Asia. ARCAA. *The Elderly of Asia*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas. 225-245.
- Baltazar, J.C., and J.P. Lopez. 1987. Health and Functional Ability of the Filipino Elderly. Paper presented at the Seminar on Research on Aging in Asia and the Pacific. Singapore: 31 August-4 September.
- Castillo, Gelia T. 1979. *Beyond Manila: Philippine Rural Problems in Perspective*. International Development Research Council: Ottawa, Canada.
- Chen, Ai Ju. 1987. The WHO Studies. East-West Population Institute. Summary report on the Seminar on Research on Aging in Asia and the Pacific. Honolulu: 7 October.

- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). 1986. *The Elderly in Asia*. Population Research Leads No. 23: Bangkok.
- Flieger, Wilhelm, Macrina K. Abenoja, and Alice C. Lim. 1981. *On the Road to Longevity*. Cebu City: San Carlos Publications.
- Goode, William J. 1963. *World Revolution and Family Patterns*. New York: Free Press.
- Harris, Ross D. 1987. Assessing Family and Social Relations of the Elderly by Survey. Paper presented at the Seminar of Research on Aging in Asia and the Pacific. Singapore: 31 August-4 September.
- Hoover, Sally L., and Jacob S. Siegel. 1986. International Demographic Trends and Perspectives on Aging. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*. 1: 5-30.
- Grabowski, Stanley M. 1980. Education and Public Policy for the Older Adults. Elizabeth W. Markson and Gretchen R. Batra (eds.). *Public Policies for an Aging Population*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Co. 81-91.
- Martin, Linda. Living Arrangements of the Elderly in Fiji, Korea, Malaysia, and the Philippines. *Demography*. November, (forthcoming).
- National Academy of Sciences. 1986. *Population Growth and Economic Development: Policy Questions*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Sevilla, Judy Carol C. 1982. Research on the Filipino Family: Review and Prospects. A Project Commissioned to the Research for Development Department of the Development Academy of the Philippines by the United Nations Children's Fund.
- Soldo, Beth J. and George C. Myers. n.d. *A Structural Profile of Living Arrangements Among the Elderly*: 1970. Working Paper No. 1. Center for Demographic Studies: Duke University.
- Stinner, William F. 1977. Urbanization and Household Structure in the Philippines. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 39(2): 377-385.
- Tilly, Charles, and Harold C. Brown. 1967. On Uprooting, Kinship and the Auspices of Migration. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. 8(2): 139-164
- United Nations. 1985. *World Population Aspects: Estimates and Projections As Assessed in 1982*. Population Studies No. 86: New York.