

Women, Bureaucracy, and the Governance of Poverty: A Preliminary Study on the Integration of Gender and Participatory Governance in Social Service Delivery In Two Philippine Cities

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Introduction

Poverty specialists have much reason to celebrate these days, as poverty makes a comeback on the international development agenda, with more vigor in terms of resource commitments, and rigor in terms of analysis compared to the 1970s. The redefinition of poverty reduction policies in developing countries by international donor agencies, national governments and NGOs in the 1990s has begun to recognize the holistic integration of complex economic, political, environmental, and social concerns, including the gender dimension of poverty. Understanding the gender dimension of poverty and poverty reduction efforts raises a number of complex questions for both policy makers and feminist planners and advocates interested in institutional structures and operational procedures in poverty alleviation planning and practice, particularly in the delivery of social services. Such understanding of the politics of both gender advocacy and poverty reduction should gain more importance not at the international level, which often undermines national commitments, but at the national and local levels.

This paper is part of a larger research project that will investigate the relationship between strategic gender planning, good governance, and poverty alleviation efforts in Southeast Asian states, and how women relate to bureaucratic politics when state bureaucracies do (or do not) target them as beneficiaries. The project is designed to explore systematically the differences and similarities in the way state bureaucracies in the Philippines and Vietnam implement programs and plans to improve the plight of women in poor rural and urban communities.¹ *Poverty alleviation* is understood in the study as a community problem and therefore a function *not so much* of creating “competent programs” for the poor, but creating “competent

communities” of poor people based on their empowerment through meaningful participation in local and national governance (Angeles, 2000). It could not be addressed solely by economic policies that simply look at increasing productivity and incomes, but also by social policies that improve overall quality of life, and recognize the importance of social structures, formal and informal institutions, and conflict of interests between social groups and political organizations that determine people’s well-being, their participation in development processes, and the distribution of costs and benefits arising from planned economic interventions (Moser, 1995: 164). *Gender planning* refers to the institutional framing and implementation of policies, programs and projects at various levels of society that contribute to the re-ordering or reconstruction of gender identities and relations between women and men. *Strategic gender planning* is the attempt to develop comprehensive national and community-based programs that will empower women by increasing their role in local governance for long-term success in improving their situation and eventually, in eliminating poverty.

The *governance* component refers to how the relationship between government, civil society, and poor people is altered or maintained in the course of governments’ poverty reduction efforts. *Participatory governance*, as understood in the paper, is a form of “good governance” based on community empowerment and grassroots democracy that is substantive, and not just based on formal democratic institutions (Angeles 2000). It goes beyond the framework of accountability of governments and increasing their powers and resources to do their job more effectively. It means allowing more space and resources for grassroots people, community organization and the NGO and voluntary sector to make decisions and take action on matters that affect their lives. This entails “the move from discussing ‘what poor people need’ to ‘what decision-making powers, access to resources and political influence should low-income people have to allow them to ensure that their needs are met, their rights respected and their priorities addressed’.” (Editor’s Introduction, 1996: 4). More importantly, participatory governance also means the transformation of relationships between rulers and the ruled in ways that recognize and respect women’s choices and autonomy, and include more accountable, participatory-based, and egalitarian political practices. This research is interested in the

theoretical and strategic implications of integrating gender analysis into good governance as a vital component of poverty alleviation, beyond the simple mobilization of women based on their characterization as beneficiaries of aid.

The strategic and policy issues of this study revolve around questions of the relationship between state policies, good governance and women's well-being and empowerment. How is it possible to integrate enhanced good governance and strategic gender planning towards women's empowerment in poverty alleviation efforts of states in developing countries? What does good governance have to offer both gender and development planning and planning for poverty reduction? And how may gender analysis transform our understanding of the good governance component of poverty reduction efforts, particularly in the delivery of social services as a tool of community empowerment? Finally, what are the conditions under which strategic gender planning may succeed in developing countries like the Philippines?

This paper in particular addresses the question of how the Philippine state bureaucracy integrates women and gender considerations in its poverty alleviation plans, and how it relates with women's organizations and NGOs involved in similar efforts. It presents the initial findings of the study based on preliminary fieldwork conducted in the cities of Baguio and Bacolod. Baguio City is the capital of Mountain Province, located in the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR) in northern Luzon. Bacolod is the capital of Negros Occidental, the top sugar-producing province, located in Western Visayas Region.

The Gender Dimension of Poverty and Poverty Alleviation Efforts of Bureaucracies

This study is informed by three related bodies of literature: on gender and development planning; women and state bureaucracies; and women, gender and poverty linkages. The plethora of studies on gender and development planning,² the integration of gender in international development organizations,³ the compliance of national governments to international agreements on women's equality,⁴ and the emergence of global women's movements and feminist advocacy networks⁵ suggest

the synergistic efforts between international agencies, national governments, NGOs and civil society forces in addressing women's issues and gender concerns. This has led to the so-called "triangle of empowerment" involving women's movements, feminist politicians and feminist public administrators or femocrats (Vargas and Wieringa 1999). Women's organizations worldwide have evolved into several types, such as service-oriented, political party affiliate, worker-based, grassroots, academic or research-oriented (Sen and Grown 1987). These organizations may combine elements of advocacy, research, or project implementation in their activities, emphasizing women's welfare, equity, poverty alleviation or empowerment, serving practical (basic) or strategic (feminist) gender interests (Moser 1993). They may be inspired by differing analyses of power that may be relational, group, internal/external, or individual (Townsend, et.al. 1999).

Anthologies on women in Southeast Asia⁶ that concentrate on the social construction of gender identity and relations give only tangential references to poverty issues and the processes and outcomes of official "development" plans, while others examine these in greater detail, in relation to gender impact of export-oriented industrialization (Lim 1978, Heyzer 1986, 1987, Chant and McIlwain 1995), international tourism and prostitution (Truong 1990, De Stoop 1994, Enloe 1990), small-scale industrialization (Baud and Bruijne 1993), and militarization (Enloe 1990, 1995; Hilsdon 1995). There are few studies that analyze the integration of gender concerns, in relation to bureaucratic politics within states, international agencies, and development NGOs (Charlton, Everett and Staudt 1989, Staudt 1997, Goetz 1997), yet little reference has been given to Philippine and Southeast Asian experiences. Despite this gap in scholarship, Filipino researchers have aided bureaucracies in becoming more gender-responsive in their operations (e.g. Torres and Del Rosario 1994, UPCWS 1995, Illo and Saloma 1997), and in interpreting gender policy and gender-disaggregated data generated in the light of market reforms, structural adjustment programs and globalization (e.g. Illo and Pineda-Ofreneo 1999, Pineda-Ofreneo 1998, Taguiwalo 1998).

Feminist scholars have examined the problematic relationship of women to the state and global restructuring, and changes that often pass as part of state-led "development" processes. They have argued

that the state must be viewed as an institution where male privileges are deeply embedded (Charlton, Everett and Staudt 1989, Agarwal 1988, Rai 1997, Staudt 1997). Such embeddedness of male privilege within states could not be adequately addressed by the participation of women in development projects, which often lead to women's "domestication" (Rogers 1984), or the replication of housework and women's reproductive roles. Neither could it be addressed by the mere integration of women into state positions and development planning. Already, there are problems being raised with the essentialist argument that conflates female embodiment and representation of women's interests, implicit in the expectation that women's participation in decision-making will result in feminist decisions and policies (Baden and Goetz 1997). We also need to avoid essentialist views that sees state actions and the content of its policies as instrumental in perpetuating male privileges, without looking at contradictions within the state and the spaces it has provided for feminist goals.

This study is also informed by studies and strategies that link women, gender and poverty in industrialized and developing countries (e.g. Gelpi, Hartsock, Novak and Strober 1986, Beneria and Feldman 1992, Thomas 1994, Blumberg, et al 1995). Why is there a need to focus on the linkages between women's issues, governance, and poverty issues? Are women more prone to poverty than men? What does it mean to be poor and a woman at the same time? Poverty studies are given a gender dimension when they stress women's nutritional, health, and fertility status, and male-female differential access to education, credit, income, and program benefits, and propose a specific gender focus in programs and policies directed at the poor. Two lines of arguments are often used to support this gender focus:

First, it is argued that women are poorer, and more deprived, than men in a number of senses.... Therefore, there is a need for gender focus for reasons of *equity*. A related but distinct argument, which is made in favor of special intervention for the female poor, is that gender-neutral policies bypass the female poor because of additional economic, social, cultural and informational constraints facing them. (Quibria 1993: 1).

Arguments in favor of public intervention for women are essentially empirical based, although some evidence are more inconclusive than others, as conceptual difficulties often arise when poverty analysis is done in the context of gender (Quibria 1993: 2-4). Women and poverty studies, which have popularized the “feminization of poverty” thesis, proceed from the view that women are more vulnerable to poverty than men because of their disadvantaged position in the labor market, their likelihood of being single parents due to male migration or abandonment by husbands, their over-representation in low-waged informal sector employment, and their additional reproductive roles as childbearers, homemakers and nurturers. Such conditions limit women’s choices, often forcing women into prostitution, and other unbearable work conditions. Women’s greater responsibility for household reproduction also oblige women to take on the daily tasks of “making do with little”, or shouldering the burden of providing for the family.

The so-called “feminization of poverty” thesis, is often criticized for its rather essentialist view that women are necessarily more disadvantaged than men because of their assumed unequal gender roles, and less attention given to class and household dynamics. In some cases, unemployed men, disabled persons and the elderly, may be poorer than some women and single mothers who may have elder children or family relations who bring in extra household income, or have access to a part-time or seasonal work, or to preferential funds in a micro-credit or micro-enterprise project. This brings up the importance of positionality in understanding intra-household dynamics, especially the position of women within households that may still have varying interests among its members or differential vulnerabilities due to factors such as access to income and land, and location of farms and home lots, ethnicity, age, and literacy.

The poverty situation of women, according to the growing literature on the gendered impact of market reforms, is compounded in the aftermath of structural adjustment programs and the recent financial crisis in Asia. Market reforms involving trade liberalization, privatization, currency devaluation, cutbacks in social services and tax reforms are intended to “get the prices right” and to further open up the economy. They are generally associated with structural adjustment and global restructuring, and such restructuring has been

found to disproportionately affect women, the poor, and other disadvantaged groups. Studies of several developing countries in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia have documented that, in the aftermath of economic restructuring, women tend to have higher rates of unemployment and poverty than men; women's unpaid household labor and informal sector work intensify; male-female wage differentials widen, girls' health and education levels deteriorate, women experience more stress or domestic violence or they become single heads of households as domestic structures change, especially due to male abandonment or migration.⁷ These are trends that have been found to parallel the effects of economic reforms on women in industrialized countries (OECD 1994, Bakker 1995, Brodie 1996). Market reforms in the Philippines have also been accompanied by rapid increase in relative poverty, and deterioration of social service delivery (Boyce 1993, Balicasan, et. al. 1993), especially in the light of the recent Asian economic crisis (Knowles, Pernia and Racelis 1999). There are also indications that the effects of market reforms and the successive economic crises in the Philippines are harsher on women and children, and have created more poverty, austerity, and added demands and burdens on women, especially in poor rural households (FDC 1994, Illo and Pineda-Ofreneo 1999).

Successive governments in the Philippines have given attention to poverty reduction as the centerpiece of their respective official development planning, e.g. the 1987-1992 and 1992-1998 Medium-Term Development Plans of the Philippines, the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) under President Ramos, and its consolidation under the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) of President Estrada. Although the role of women in poverty alleviation have been given special mention within official development plans, it is not clear how such roles would be enhanced under restructuring as these plans do not appear to have fully considered the gaps and contradictions between larger market reforms and strategies to advance women's interests, and between the goals of economic efficiency and social equality.

It is therefore crucial to ask, "what should be done to attenuate the adverse effects of crises and adjustment and to enhance women's participation in the changing political economy?" (Moghadam 1998: 223). Addressing this seems even more important since gender planning,

whether carried out by governments or international development agencies, has been framed on the argument that market-oriented strategies work best for women who are often assumed to be not fully integrated into the market economy. Thus, when market reforms and development plans are found to produce not equity but “persistent inequality” for women (Tinker 1991), scholars, planner and advocates investigate the conditions and causes of this “gender bias” in the “development” process, often invoking the widespread assumption on the elasticity of women’s labor (Elson 1991), the complicity of adult women in the socialization of inequalities and differential entitlements in resource allocation (Papanek 1990), lack of investment in human capital of women and girls (Senauer 1990), the conditions of women’s participation in technological and educational developments (Bourque and Warren 1990, 1993), shifts in corporate strategies to reorganize production and gender relations (Ward and Pyle 1995; Fernandez-Kelly and Sassen 1995), and problems in institutionalizing gender equity or “getting institutions right” for women and not just for market efficiency (Goetz 1997).

A feminist reconceptualization of governance in gender planning is necessary in posing alternatives to current representations of women in poverty reduction programs of bureaucracies that only seem to make women, peasants and the poor “more manageable” through rational techniques of planning, assessment and other institutional practices, often done in the name of “development” (Escobar 1995, St. Hilaire 1993, Kwiatkowski 1998). Although the good governance component of poverty alleviation in Southeast Asian cities, including the Philippines, has been explored in Porio (1997), there is hardly any reference to how women and gender issues figure in the poverty question or in the governance question. Thus, there is a need to explore the governance component of gender planning as a response to “good governance” debates on institution-building and efficient resource allocation that typically lack a critique of the gendered nature of institutional constitutions and organization culture, and a serious consideration of gender equity and gender justice. Already, there are concerns being raised by organized women in developing countries about the accountability of state-sponsored women’s agencies and the increased “bureaucratization” and “professionalization” of women’s issues, or even worse, the “cooptation of former women activists” by

development agencies, especially in the context of the discernible shift in discourse and policy emphasis from “women” to “gender” in development NGOs (Staudt 1997, Goetz 1997). Often, gender and development projects, as in the case of the Philippines, become the terrain of power struggles between and among activists and women’s organizations which are often divided along different ideological traditions and political formations (Angeles 1989) or the mechanism for the “greater manageability” of women beneficiaries by development aid agencies (St. Hilaire 1993).

In light of the above discussion, a few nagging questions remain: is there a need for special forms of intervention targeting the female poor? Or, is there a need for specific gender focus in policies and programs directed towards the poor? And if so, then how may this be effected? Some may argue that if poverty alleviation is the objective, then there should be a general provision for all poor people, which should not discriminate between the poor based on their gender. Others argue that because the female poor often encounter social, cultural and religious impediment to their receiving full benefits from poverty alleviation programs, there should be special provisions for poor women. If women’s relative deprivation is traceable to the differential endowment of assets, especially education, in women, which arises from disparities in intra-household allocation of resources (food, education opportunities, etc.), then there should be measures to reduce social and cultural barriers to women’s access to publicly funded education, extension services, property rights and credit. These gender-focused direct policies aimed at the alleviation of female poverty must be combined with appropriate macro-economic policies, such as job creation, which are conducive to poverty reduction, including female poverty. (Quibria 1993: 23-4).

Origins of Women, Development and Poverty Concerns in the Philippines

In many developing countries, discursive practices on women’s empowerment are affected by rapid political and economic changes taking place at local, national, and global levels. State-initiated efforts for gender planning and the responses of NGOs and women’s groups to such efforts must be understood in the context of current discourses

on human and social development, economic liberalization (marketization), pressures towards political liberalization (democratization), and increased awareness of gender issues. Development has long been incorporated in international relations and foreign policy since the 1960s, but it was not until the 1970s that there was a systematic attempt to bring women into development, or what is now known as the WID approach, starting with the drafting of the *International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade* (1970-1980) which later led to the 1972 Percy Amendment that allocates a percentage of the U.S. budget for international development assistance to women's programs. The official recognition by the Philippine government of the need to integrate women in national development efforts began as a response to the United Nations' declaration of International Women's Decade in 1975 (Liamzon and Salinas 1985), and earlier move to WID planning's (women-in-development) emphasis on women's participation in national economic life. The milestones for international women's meetings and framing of important documents were the 1975 Mexican Conference's *Declaration on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace* to complement the *World Plan for Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year*; the 1980 Mid-Decade Women's Conference in Copenhagen which renewed earlier commitments and added the Program of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women; and the 1985 Nairobi Conference which framed *The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women* that was endorsed by all UN member-states. The Nairobi Conference also saw a stronger and more powerful lobby from the non-government sector from developing countries, compared to the previous conferences, that led to the formation of the Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN) group which drafted *the Development Crisis, and Alternative Visions: Third World's Perspectives*.⁸ The Philippine government under President Marcos sent official delegations to these international women's conferences led by Imelda Marcos and her entourage that later became key to the formation of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) in 1975. Filipino diplomat Leticia Ramos-Shahani became Secretary-General of the 1985 Nairobi Conference that witnessed the organized mobilization of the non-government women's sector, which was then part of the anti-Marcos opposition. At that

Conference, the parallel NGO delegation from the Philippines presented the *Philippine Women's Alternative Report*, a series of articles written by the Philippines Women's Research Collective written by women academics and advocates who were active in the left of center women's movement, that brought together women social democrats, socialists, and nationalist democrats.

The Philippines has, since 1986, been undergoing a liberal democratic transition under a weak but patrimonial state. This political transition started under a woman president (Corazon Aquino) whose candidacy was given widespread support by popular women's groups. Her administration, and her successors, emphasized mainstreaming women's concerns in development plans. This was accomplished through government line agencies and the reorganized NCRFW that brought feminist activists and advocates into government service. Since 1986, there has been an increased working relationship and field of interactions between the triangle of women's organizations, feminist politicians and feminist civil servants (often called femocrats) at the local, national, and international levels.⁹ In the past, there had been little interaction and cooperation among these groups which have been forced to work together, especially during and after the 1995 Beijing Conference for Women.

Various forms of women's organizing under the Marcos regime were largely inspired by a combination of nationalist, anti-imperialist, human rights and participatory development discourses. Anti-imperialist and nationalist sentiments were echoed in women's campaign against human, largely civil and political, rights violations perpetrated by the state and military. Community development organizers use human rights issues in their campaigns against development projects that lacked local people's participation and engagement. Participatory development advocates among women community organizers begin from identifying and building upon strengths already present in local communities, particularly the use of indigenous knowledge, self-help, local resource mobilization, that aim to strengthen local organizational capacities and raise the confidence of poor people, women and other marginalized groups.¹⁰ This view has inspired, for example, the work of women's institutions such as the Center for Women's Resources (CWR) in developing popular educational materials for women's consciousness

raising as an entry point for community organizing around poverty and political issues.

The demise of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, the democratization process started under the Aquino government, the end of the Cold War in 1989, and the widespread opposition to the harsh impact of structural adjustment programs on the poor, particularly women have, in combination, set the stage for increased emphasis by women's organization on capacity-building, good governance, gender mainstreaming in public management, and wider capacity development to accompany the wider goal of social development.¹¹ The realization on the part of international development agencies, that too much emphasis on financial restructuring has led to the lack of emphasis on building local institutions and capacity for development, shifted their emphasis on "capacity development" in its programs and projects based on increased North-South dialogues and partnerships. Under the leadership of the NCRFW in the late 1980s and early 1990s, led by feminist activists and academics trained in the politics of the women's movement, the mainstreaming of gender concerns within the civilian bureaucracy, especially the executive and legislature, became an important agenda of the national government. The NCRFW, with the support of international development agencies such as CIDA, UNIFEM, UNFPA, etc. and women NGOs, straddled between the continuing emphasis on women's organizing, gender sensitivity training, gender advocacy within and outside government, and the integration of gender concerns within government programs. These efforts has resulted in a number of important documents that have potential impact on the government's poverty alleviation agenda: the *Philippine Plan for the Development of Women*, 1990 to 1995, and the 30-year *Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD)*, 1995-2025, which guide government agencies in responding to Gender and Development (GAD) issues. These documents embody the Philippine government's international commitment to the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPA) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of the All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

On the last year of the Aquino administration, RA 7192 or the "Women in Development and Nation Building Law" was passed and was given added impetus by the Ramos administration with the signing

of Executive Order 273 which approved and adopted the PPGD. EO 273 directs all government agencies at the national, regional and local levels to implement the policies, programs, projects and strategies outlined in the PPGD; incorporate gender concerns in their respective annual plans and inputs to national development plans, otherwise known as the GAD Plan; and include GAD in their annual budget proposals and financial and work plans, otherwise known as the GAD budget. The GAD budget may be used in the areas of gender-responsive advocacy and training to equip development workers with skills required for gender mainstreaming; program planning to ensure that gender-responsive plans are drafted and implemented; development of a gender-responsive data and information system; and setting up of institutional mechanisms such as GAD Focal Points, Technical Working Groups, and Trainors' Pool to ensure that GAD concerns are recognized and addressed.

In the first year of the GAD budget implementation, the 1995 General Appropriations Act allowed agencies to determine how much of their annual budget should be allotted to the GAD plan, but few agencies came up with their GAD budget. To ensure that all agencies would comply, the 1998 General Appropriations Act and the Local Budget Memorandum directed all national and local government units and other agencies to set aside a minimum of 5% out of their 1998 appropriations for programs, projects and activities in accordance with the Women in Development and Nation Building Law. RA 7192 also directs agencies and LGUs to use up to 30% of their official development assistance for GAD on top of the 5% GAD budget provided for under the 1998 Appropriations Act. The GAD budget may be taken from the agencies' regular budget, and its special project fund and from the Priority Program/ Project Fund to undertake new "GAD investments" such as baseline research to identify gender issues; counterpart Philippine government fund for foreign funded GAD projects; and expansion of GAD advocacy and technical assistance down to the local levels.

The above documents on gender mainstreaming could have significant potentials in directly addressing women and poverty issues, given their strong emphasis on capability building for gender advocacy, training, planning and information systems that could improve actual

program implementation at the national and local levels. However, if we are interested in finding out the bureaucratic spaces where programs on women and poverty alleviation exist, and the resources they have at their disposal and command, we have to examine government line agencies and the gender-responsiveness of their poverty alleviation programs. Behind this backdrop, the paper will now assess the processes, and strategies of successive governments attempt to address women, gender and poverty concerns, as they are played out in two Philippine cities.

State-Civil Society Relations and Partnerships in Poverty Alleviation

The political democratization process in the post-1986 period has led to the restructuring of state-civil society relations in the Philippines, and more sustained, yet still problematic, state and civil society relations and social partnerships in addressing poverty. Although the Aquino administration has made poverty alleviation, alongside agrarian reform, a centerpiece of its Medium-Term Development Plan (1987-1992), it was not until the Ramos administration that a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing poverty was developed. The Ramos administration's integrated anti-poverty program, dubbed as the Social Reform Agenda (SRA), depended on nationwide consultation with grassroots organizations and NGOs, some of which were drawn into the leadership of Social Reform Council (SRC). The SRA has all the current buzzwords in its three components: "access to quality basic services (imperatives to survival); sustainable development of productivity resources, and access to economic opportunities (means to work and earn a living); and institution-building and participation in governance (towards self-governance)". (See Table 1).

These components are to be carried out through nine flagship programs to be coordinated by the head of a major government agency. These flagship programs and corresponding responsible persons are: Agricultural Development (Secretary of Agriculture); Fisheries Management and Development (Secretary of Agriculture); Protection of Ancestral Domain (Secretary of Environment and National Resources); Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (DSWD Secretary); Socialized Housing (Chairman of Housing and

Table 1. Strategies Adopted by Social Reform Agenda

STRATEGIES	COMPONENTS
Promote and sustain economic growth to create employment and livelihood opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * infrastructure development * fiscal reforms * financial sector reforms and development * other reforms to remove barriers to growth * targeted government expenditure policy.
Sustain growth based on people-friendly strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * labor-intensive technologies * redirection of credit for livelihood to programs for the ultra poor * removal of policy bias against agriculture * reform in the rural credit markets to make credit more accessible to the poor
Expand social services to provide minimum basic needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * livelihood programs providing skill training * extension of credit at commercial rates without collateral * technical extension
Build capacities of the poor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * local leadership training in cooperation with local governments * assistance through private voluntary organizations and NGOs * formation of people's organizations

Urban Development Coordinating Council); Workers' Welfare and Protection (DOLE Secretary); Expansion of Credit (Secretary of Finance and Land Bank President); Livelihood Programs (DOLE and DTI Secretaries); Institution-Building and Effective Participation in Governance (DILG Secretary). Using the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) framework, the government has identified 33 MBN requirements grouped under 3 three categories: survival, security, and enabling needs. The delivery of "quality social services" would use structures and mechanisms such as women's centers, day care centers, schools and scholarships, and women's associations and cooperatives. Disadvantaged women that cut across all sectors are highlighted as one of the "target groups" for SRA.

The implementation of the Local Government Code (LGC) since 1991 has framed the new contours of state-civil society partnerships in local governance and community development. While the LGC provides for the representation and participation of civil society organization in local and provincial councils, the participation of organizations of the poor in both civil society and local governance is still limited and often used in instrumental ways. Poor people are largely unorganized and their organizations, alongside provisions of the LGC for civil society participation, are often used by political elites to further their selfish political goals. Hence, while civil society has an important role to play in testing the state's limits in initiating social transformation and democratic consolidation, it has not effectively learned to "permeate, access and engage the state...[which] entails greater political adeptness and maturity in penetrating state policy-making institutions." (Wui and Lopez 1997: 1).

The mutual distrust and ambivalence on the part of the state and civil society has been borne out of civil society's experiences in dealing with the state that is largely seen as corrupt, inefficient, and lacking the autonomy to mediate conflicting elite interests and uphold the public good. This cynicism had deepened under the Marcos regime and the current Estrada administration. And while the Aquino and Ramos administrations were viewed to be more open to the democratization process, they had also attempted to use civil society organizations to create their own base of political support and marginalize those critical of their policies.

A number of procedural problems and structural obstacles also limit the participation and utilization by the public, particularly the poor, of the various legal mechanisms and organizational venues for active civil society participation. At both levels of policy-making and implementation, the existing avenues for citizen participation are ineffective because of the lack of transparency, poor dissemination of information on new policies and participation guidelines, lack of consultation, lack of financial resources, and over-centralization of decision-making on the part of the state. On the part of civil society, the weaknesses seem to be its lack of technical expertise, poor organizational capacities, under-utilization of existing avenues, fear of cooptation by the state, general distrust of state initiatives, and

ideological differences that limit their ability to take a united position towards government, coordinate their efforts and work together (Wui and Lopez, 1997: 5-18). These problems and weaknesses are particularly striking in the case of state-civil society interactions in the policy areas on agrarian reform (Villanueva 1997), taxation and fiscal policy (Cajuiat and Regalado 1997, Gutierrez 1997), and rights and welfare of migrant workers (Villalba 1997, Tigno 1997). These national policy areas are controversial issues and have a direct impact on the poor and interests of economic elites. There is often no solid and widespread public support for these issues, as NGOs and local organization are either polarized in their respective positions, or in some cases, disinterested because these issues seem to be highly-technical debates that have no direct impact on local communities.¹²

In contrast, women's groups have achieved relative success in the passage of the anti-rape law, and local-level implementation of women's reproductive health program (Reyes 1997, Pasion 1997). National legislators have paid attention to women's issues because these are seen as "soft issues" and not directly threatening to the interests of big power-brokers in the House of Representatives and Senate. Women's organizations are also very adept in using creative strategies and tactics in their policy advocacy, as their leaders often come from middle-class, well-educated backgrounds and thus, understand the proclivities of legislators.

At the local level however, the dynamics between the city government and women's organizations do not always reflect national trends. In Baguio and Bacolod cities, the elected women councilors and municipal officials interviewed feel isolated and lacking in social support when they raise women's concerns and gender issues, which are often seen as trivial and less urgent, at local council meetings. The city-based women's organizations are very active politically, but still unable to tap broader public support for their causes, including the framing and implementation of GAD plans. Problems related to issues of civil society participation, inclusion and exclusion, i.e. who is in, who is out in the course of developing city development plans and GAD plans, have often resulted in plans that suffer from narrow consultation and lacking in broad support.

The women's groups in Baguio have also experienced episodes of internal and inter-organizational conflicts based on differences in ways of handling controversial and sensitive issues such as sexuality and domestic violence, especially in the context of Cordilleran culture and society. Likewise, in Bacolod City, progressive women's organizations often find it a struggle to balance their advocacy around issues of gender equity, domestic violence, violence against women, and reproductive rights, with the need to respond to women's practical need for livelihood and credit. As a result of the recurrent crises that plague the sugar plantation economy in the entire Negros Occidental, women from landed families in the province have formed NGOs and women's groups that provide Grameen-style micro-credit programs to women hacienda workers, or train them in handicraft production for export, or subcontracting work. Such moves have served to diversify the economic base of elite families, and channel women's energies into entrepreneurial activities that remain dependent on landed benefactors, hence nurturing the already feudal patron-client relations in the hacienda economy.

In both Baguio and Bacolod cities, government service delivery is hampered by the lack of coordination, and inability to tap into the ongoing initiatives of women's organizations of various ideological persuasions. The continued implementation of the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) program, under SRA is threatened by the lack of political will on the part of the Estrada administration to continue the programs identified with former President Ramos. Thus instead of simply strengthening the SRA implementation, the government of President Estrada came up with its own poverty alleviation strategy through the *Lingap Para sa Mahihirap* Fund and the identification of the 100 poorest families in every municipality for targeting purposes.

The government also created a policy advisory body called the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), which from the onset has been saddled with controversy around the issue of partnership between the government and civil society organizations who are involved, and not involved, in the Commission. Many NGOs and people's organizations who were supportive of the Aquino and Ramos administrations and those identified with the national democratic movement are conspicuously absent from the composition of NAPC

and its supporters. The Commission also lacks the necessary resources, human and material, as well as the political powers and credibility needed to make it not just a policy advisor-overseer but also as a permanent implementing agency. On the positive side, the elected Vice-Commissioner for non-government sector of NAPC, Princess Nemenzo, is a well-known feminist advocate who is active in the women's movement. There is also increased interest on the integration of gender concerns in poverty reduction efforts among the women members of NAPC, the women's organizations, and broad coalition networks within the Commission,¹³ which could lead to the introduction of a gender framework within the government's poverty alleviation plan.

Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Alleviation Programs

A thorough analysis of bureaucratic spaces where women and poverty programs exist would require an examination of the government's overall framework on poverty reduction, such as the Social Reform Agenda (SRA) of the Ramos administration, and all government line agencies responsible for social service delivery, such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR); Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and Department of Education, Sports and Culture (DECS). Some poverty-related programs in these agencies are carried out in cooperation with other agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Finance (DOF); and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). Such an analysis, however, is beyond the scope of this paper, which aims to focus on how the GAD Plan has been operationalized in the city-based programs of the DSWD that are related to poverty alleviation.

There are a number of issues and problems arising from current attempts on the part of the government and NGOs to mainstream gender concerns and participatory development principles in poverty alleviation efforts:

1. The lack of a clear gender framework and understanding of Gender and Development (GAD) principles in poverty alleviation programs.

Despite the comprehensive plan under SRA and CIDSS, the implementation of gender-aware programs related to poverty reduction is still scattered, sporadic, and piecemeal. This is because government line agencies have yet to develop a clear and comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the close linkages between gender and poverty concerns. In the absence of such framework, government agencies with more established turf and weight to pull could enjoy additional funding allotment for general and GAD-related programs, but only continue what they have been traditionally doing without infusing an integrated and holistic social approach, and a more profound analysis of gender and poverty issues in their programs. Front line government agencies in Bacolod for example have enjoyed increased funding between 1997 and 1998. The City Health received the highest funding at 37.3 million pesos in 1998, a 14.58% increase from 1997 level. The City Social Services Development Office got 25.5 million pesos in 1998, an increase of 29.4% from the previous year. Yet, there were no new programs that specifically target different groups of so-called poor female-headed households, or increased funding for gender-related programs.

More importantly, there is great difficulty among front-line government workers, implementers and planners, as well as feminist NGO advocates, in shifting from the original women-focused interventions under the Women-in-Development (WID) to the Gender-and-Development (GAD) frameworks that focuses on gender equity and empowerment principles. Hence, many projects that simply target women as beneficiaries and/or participants for the sake of project efficiency and cost-saving measures, are uncritically accepted as a form of GAD intervention. The conflation of women and gender, and the treatment of WID as GAD, create problems in getting the support of both male and female elected city officials who approve budgetary allocations. The allocation of the GAD budget in both cities, for example, is threatened by the lack of support by city politicians, and the parallel weakness on the part of city-based women's NGOs and other advocacy groups to lobby and get public support. GAD plans,

projects and budgets are still generally understood by the public, government elected officials and civil servants, NGOs, and women's organizations, as mainly targeting and benefiting women, and not addressing gender relations and equity issues. The GAD budget, is often earmarked for activities like day care centers, and gender sensitivity training workshops, which may not necessarily address questions around power distribution and decision-making, or challenge the existing gender division of labor, e.g. who runs the day care and who brings the children to the centers.

The conflation of women and gender, and WID and GAD, is clearly demonstrated in the way the DSWD has carried out women's programs subsumed as gender-sensitive interventions. The DSWD is perhaps the best well-known government agency that has a strong women's program in its poverty alleviation efforts. In its range of programs and services, the women-focused ones are those under the Women Welfare Program, i.e. Social Communication Skills Development, Maternal and Child Care, Self-Enhancement Skills Development, Community Participation Skills Development, Practical Skills Capability Building for Disadvantaged Women and Special Project for Women in Especially Difficult Circumstances. Although earmarked as programs for women only, these are the very same programs that are understood as gender-related and leading to gender empowerment. There is however, little attempt to integrate a gender framework into other DSWD programs such as those on family welfare and disaster relief and rehabilitation.

2. Female embodiment, participation, and representation in state agencies do not necessarily lead to the attainment of feminist goals or to the adequate handling of gender issues, which consider women's and men's concerns, and other factors of social differentiation such as disability, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation.

The representation of women in government bodies, their participation as beneficiaries and managers of poverty alleviation projects, and their role as government service providers are good, and sometimes effective means to attain women's empowerment. However, they are neither feminist ends in themselves, nor necessarily expected to lead to feminist outcomes. Women's representation in local government unites and other decision-making bodies under the Local

Government Code are already limited, and even if its provisions are well-used by women's organizations, mere female representation is not a guarantee that women representatives are capable of addressing gender problems, and the political, cultural and social constraints in doing so. Likewise, it is not realistic to expect that gender relations are improving, or that women's empowerment is occurring, just because women are targeted as participants or beneficiaries of poverty alleviation projects and programs, or just because women planners and executives are the ones who design and implement them.

To be truly effective, social policies and programs must incorporate feminist visions and goals. At the same time, male and female civil servants and service providers need to understand more clearly the feminist values and principles of gender equity and empowerment and how they can effectively bring these into their service work, advocacy roles, and work environment. They also need to ensure that such values, principles and goals are clearly understood by the local people, women and men, in the communities that they serve.

For example, the DSWD is traditionally a female-dominated agency, as 90-95% of front line social workers are women. In the DSWD office in the Baguio-CAR (Cordillera Autonomous Region), there is only one male senior staff holding the budget and finance officer position. In the DSWD city offices in Baguio and Bacolod, the only male employees work as janitors, drivers, and cottage industry trainers. The feminization of social work has more to do with its identification as a nurturing and caring profession, and less with the feminist desire to help and empower other women in poor communities. The public or government service sector in the Philippines is generally underpaid than in the private corporate sector, and not surprising, female-dominated as it involves "simply the execution of routine, unglamorous, but generally necessary duties -work much like housework, and like it, undervalued" (Stivers, 1993: 73). Unlike some feminist staff in women NGOs and members of grassroots organizations who believe in the agency of women, and do work on a shoe-string budget, or practically as unpaid volunteers, most social workers and civil servants in the bureaucratic interstices, including the women's ministries, tend to view the public as feminized clients, feminized in the political, not biological sense:

From the administrative perspective, the best client is one who follows advice, has no problems that do not fit the regulations, and is grateful for benefits; in other words, the desirable client, regardless of sex, has culturally feminine characteristics. Second, the hierarchical character of professionalism blocks the potential for genuine dialogue with *citizens*, whose opinions can more easily be discounted or dismissed because they are not considered expert. For the administrator, the best citizen is one who is decorative rather than substantive and who understands the citizen participation role as follower, supporter, and ratifier, rather than co-equal. (Stivers, 1993: 49: original emphasis).

When front line social workers, including two GAD focal point persons, in Baguio and Bacolod cities were asked why there was a need to focus on women in their service delivery, the common response was that they were not really intending to focus on women. However, local and nation-wide programs were later developed for women, as they are only the ones who attend the barangay-level meetings they call. Many interpret this as a function of culturally-ingrained gender roles where men provide for their families, while wives and mothers stay at home to look after the children and household reproductive activities. Women's concerns become the entry point for DSWD programs and services mainly because women are more accessible and freer to attend to community activities. In the absence of a comprehensive gender-aware framework for service delivery, this could lead to the inability of DSWD workers to reach de facto female-headed households where the men stay at home to look after while their wives migrate to look for work. They may also be unable to target unemployed men in communities where the most vulnerable and precarious livelihoods and occupations are largely done by men. In their use of the so-called "total family approach" to service delivery, they may also be unable to focus on individuals who may not necessarily belong to the traditional Filipino notion of a nuclear family household.

The notion of "female-headed households" is also a broad category and too ambiguous to be considered a meaningful concept in poverty

intervention, particularly in targeting the poor. Some of the so-called female-headed households should not also be automatically poor, just because they are female-headed; to do so may in fact, reinforce the social construction of females as weak, and dependent on a male member to improve their household well-being. In fact, some studies have shown that households headed by single women, single mothers, and widows in the Philippines tend to be better off than most poor male-headed households.

3. There is a strong need to reassess the current penchant of government and women NGOs for gender sensitivity training workshops that are rarely followed by other types of training on how to translate gender sensitivity into action, especially the advocacy, formulation and implementation of gender-responsive poverty reduction programs.

DSWD workers in Baguio and Bacolod observe that the quality of gender-sensitivity training workshops they receive from the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), national women's NGOs, and their affiliate local women's organizations vary from one to the next. Their effectiveness depend heavily on the level of competence and experience of the gender trainers. Gender sensitivity workshops have only reached a tiny minority within government agencies like the DSWD, whose functions are perceived to be directly related to gender issues. Often, there exist varying levels of gender consciousness among service providers when only a few are given intensive and successive gender training, while others are given only the most basic training. The GAD focal point person who demonstrates competence and new valuable skills are often recruited by other "more important" units or tasked to do other "more mainstream" work. This partly explains the unevenness of gender mainstreaming in the delivery of regular government services. The GAD focal point person in the Baguio City DSWD office estimated that only 3 out of 10 field workers in their office could effectively integrate gender issues in their work.

For many DSWD personnel and female politicians, a few key questions still remain unanswered. What happens after gender sensitivity training? Are there any follow-up studies or benchmark indicators to show that such training workshops have been effective in transforming

government social policies, service delivery, and poverty alleviation programs? How can gender-sensitivity more effectively reach male (and some female) government officials and staff in the face of stubborn resistance to gender concerns within bureaucracies? These questions arise in light of continued denial and often resistance of government officials to gender issues, and the absence of monitoring and evaluation tools, such as benchmark indicators, to assess agencies and their programs using gender analytical lenses. There is a need to follow-up gender-sensitivity training with an on-going training programs that emphasize the operational implications of the differences between WID and GAD, and integrate gender equity and empowerment principles into policy reform advocacy, program design and implementation, and project or program monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessments. There is also a need to engage front-line government workers to do a comprehensive gender analysis of their government agencies, in terms of their organizational structure, recruitment and management of personnel, technical expertise, incentives and reward structure, gender-related cultural attitudes, and social support, among other dimensions.

4. The absence of a clear and comprehensive framework for the analysis of gender and poverty linkages is reinforced by the rather compartmentalized and fragmented approach of government line agencies to addressing women and gender concerns.

Despite the continuing focus on the CIDSS component of the SRA, compartmentalization and fragmentation of government programs still plagues the delivery of social services and programs. This is sadly a reflection of larger political and bureaucratic dynamics affecting poverty alleviation programs that are prone to heavy politicization and patronage politics. For example, there are too many government agencies managing too many credit programs with funding facilities that are poorly utilized and managed. A tri-sectoral organization called the National Credit Council demonstrated to SRA officials that there are 111 credit windows being managed by 41 government agencies which still seem reluctant to bank on the poor, especially in the rural areas. Only 22 billion pesos out of total 91 billion earmarked for the agricultural sector has been lent out according to the NCC study, and only one-half of the available 40 billion pesos for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has been provided to borrowers. Such under-

utilization of available funds suggests that government credit programs still view the poor and small borrowers as unable to save and pay back their loans. Still, almost 70% of small agricultural borrowers access credit from informal sources. This suggests the informal credit markets' role in filling what the banks and other formal channels could not provide.

The harmonization of the government's scattered lending facilities and implementation of lending programs earmarked for the poor could take place without benefiting poor women. At the same time, establishing quotas for targeting poor women could also lead to problems. Targeting problems occur when deserving poor men are excluded, or when there is over-coverage, or when women from the non-poor are also included in poverty reduction programs. In the case of the Philippines, micro-credit programs from both government and NGOs are usually given to women. But these programs usually provide too little credit to make any business sustainable, such as the Self-Employment Assistance (SEA-Kaunlaran) of DSWD and Grameen style micro-credit programs of women's NGOs. Bigger credit facilities such as those of the Land Bank of the Philippines, are still biased against women borrowers because of stringent collateral requirements. Women are also sidestepped in big credit facilities because they tend not to have family property or land titles in their name, or are not seen as the family or household heads. Similar problems of compartmentalization, fragmentation, and ineffective targeting of poor women, plague the government's livelihood and micro-enterprise programs. These problems are compounded by the possibility that credit and livelihood programs become the vehicles for the expansion of local power bases of politicians.

5. The integration of women into poverty alleviation projects and programs that see them primarily as mothers, homemakers, and dependents of men has resulted in their domestication and so-called "housewification", which prevent them from challenging the distribution of power and decision-making within their households and communities.

With the devolution of governmental powers under the 1991 Local Government Code, local government units are supposed to implement

livelihood programs and operate *Kabuhayan* (Livelihood) Centers which will become "the basic coordinating mechanism of the national livelihood program at the grassroots level" and "link the clientele directly with the appropriate government agencies implementing various livelihood programs." The government's centerpiece livelihood program for women is still the Productivity Skills Capability Building for Disadvantaged Women (PSCB) which mainly train women in traditional female skills such as sewing craft, toy craft, food preparation and preservation, and baking. This program reinforces the domestication of women, and the view that women are only secondary breadwinners. These income-generating activities designed primarily for women are likely to be unsustainable, given the saturated market, intense competition, low profit margins, and lack of access to credit. Women who desire to enter non-traditional occupations such as plumbing, auto-mechanics, machine maintenance, and computer-related jobs, are referred to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), formerly the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC). TESDA has gone into such non-traditional training for women because of insistent requests from industries, such as AG & P, and has now an integrated Women's Center, funded by the Japan International Cooperation Authority (JICA).

There is a danger that the translation of the life experiences of poor women into neat programs in social service delivery, and their construction as *clients* by civil servants and public administrators, men and women alike could lead to the *depoliticization of needs* that administrators and civil servants can handle bureaucratically, turning poor women into passive recipients of government services instead of willful agents capable of dealing with their situation meaningfully (Fraser, 1990). More importantly, it is unclear, even within the Social Reform Agenda program itself, how the organizing and capacity-building of the poor in general, and poor women in particular, could be harnessed for policy-making and program implementation. It appears at least from the way the SRA has taken off the ground that capacity building of the poor is narrowly understood as "the formation of people's organization" and their "assistance by voluntary organizations," necessary but not sufficient conditions for poor people's meaningful involvement in participatory governance, particularly in policy making and program implementation, at the local and national levels.

Conclusions

There are at least three broader issues arising from the above discussion:

1. There is a need to a) understand local conceptions of what it means to be poor, and to be woman and poor in the Philippines; b) distinguish between the conditions of women's poverty and women's vulnerability in the local context; and c) develop social and economic policies and programs that are localized, context-based, cognizant of diversity and differentiation among the poor and their situation, and leading to the creation not just competent programs for the poor, but also of competent communities of the poor.

Unlike other Asian and African countries, where females generally occupy lower status than males, giving rise to practices such as eating last and the least amount of food, no parallel practices have been documented in poverty studies on the Philippines. Research results based on the intra-household relations and bargaining processes in developing countries show that assets controlled by women have a significant effect on expenditure allocations and investments in clothing and education of children, and that parents do not have identical preferences toward sons and daughters within or across countries (Quisumbing and Maluccio 2000). In another study by Agnes Quisumbing, it has been found out that although sons in the Philippines are generally preferred over daughters in land inheritance, daughters are given more education. Focusing primarily on land and agrarian reform as main determinants of welfare and intergenerational wealth transfer misses out on other factors such as investments on human capital which may be a more valuable asset in the new knowledge economy where non-agricultural opportunities are expanding faster than agriculture.¹⁴

Current definitions and measurements of poverty are usually developed by national and international development agencies using macro indicators in the aid of economic planning. The World Bank's international poverty threshold set at \$1 per day could not capture the local understandings and everyday manifestations of poverty in countries as diverse as the Philippines, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Haiti, or

Mali. What it means to be poor in the Philippines is described in words that give not only the local flavor but also the indicators of hard-core "*kahirapan*" (poverty) – "*walang makain sa pang-araw-araw*" or "*nahihirapang humanap ng makakain sa pang-araw-araw* (no daily sustenance, or unable to find food to eat daily), "*nagdidildil ng asin*," (eating salt with little rice), "*walang hanapbuhay*" (no job), "*walang sariling tahanan*" (no house of one's own), "*laging kinakapos sa pang-araw-araw na pangangailangan*" (inadequate income), "*walang perang ipampapaaral*" (no money for schooling), "*nagbebenta ng laman/katawan dahil sa kahirapan*" (selling one's body because of poverty) etc. Part of the success of the Erap for President campaign is the ability of Joseph Estrada – as movie star and as presidential candidate – to capture these local understandings of poverty, and explain them in a language poor people could understand.¹⁵

Social and economic policies in the Philippines, and elsewhere, carry blanket assumptions based on ideal social and gender relations, and are not informed by a comprehensive and context-based understanding of the varied and conflicting nature of social and gender relations in varied or different situations. The presence of women and gender in the anti-poverty discourse in the Philippines is not premised on an analysis of the nature of poor women's reproductive work, what it entails and how it gets done, and often based on the idealized view of women's location in monogamous, heterosexual marriage, and functional family. As Ruth Pearson explained:

[M]uch social policy is formulated on assumptions about *ideal models* of social relations and social institutions, rather than confronting the range of actually existing relations and institutions.... This trend can be identified throughout the debates and analyses of range of policies –housing, income support, credit provision, family planning, child care and transport. They invariably assume a two-adult, male-headed nuclear family, a non-working/income-generating woman, with dependent children where decisions are made 'in the interests of all household members' and resources are shared according to priority of

need....Policies designed to meet the needs of other groups - female-headed households, single mothers, divorced women, survivors of domestic violence, refugees, teenage mothers seeking abortions, homeless adolescent... are always made on the assumption that these groups are minority deviants from the dominant ideal pattern, which reflects actual as well as desired reality (Pearson 1999: 19-20).

Developing a framework for understanding the links between women's issues and poverty issues could begin by making a distinction between poverty and vulnerability, which are often equated with each other or viewed synonymously. Vulnerability means insecurity, defenselessness, and exposure to stress, risks and shocks (Wratten 1995: 17). Distinguishing between poverty and vulnerability could help disaggregate the experience of poverty among the poor, and between the sexes. The conditions of women's poverty may differ from men's poverty because of the gendered conditions of vulnerability acting on and acted upon by differential gender roles, and stereotypes. Women may experience the added dimension of vulnerability because of domestic violence, police or state intervention in women's reproductive rights and domestic life, degree of commercialization of reproductive activities, and their non-participation in decision-making over low-cost housing designs, micro-credit, and micro-enterprise. In addressing these dimensions of women's vulnerability based on gender roles, it might be possible to develop anti-poverty programs that integrate domestic violence prevention, and improve women's communication, leadership, and advocacy skills. Anti-poverty programs should not only look at the "supply" side by providing inputs and treating women as clients. They should also focus on the "demand" side by creating a critical-mass of women who could negotiate with outsiders and government for better terms and conditions for themselves, their families and communities.

Hence, what is important to emphasize is not only the creation of *competent programs* for poor women, but also the creation of *competent communities* of poor women and men, who could negotiate with both government and civil society so that they have better share of public resources and bigger roles in public policy and decision-making. It is also important to underscore not only the *outcome*, i.e. that poverty is

becoming "feminized," or that more women are poorer than men, or falling below the poverty level line faster than men, but also the *context* of gender inequities that makes this "feminization" trend possible, such as gendered differential access to education, credit and employment opportunities.

2. *The analysis of Filipino household dynamics is important to sound gender planning which focuses on different poverty conditions and outcomes deriving from unequal gender relations and women and men's differential access and control of resources and benefits.*

There appears to be a tension between two types of analysis in viewing the Filipino household and family relations. First is the view that the household or family is a *unitary unit* where all members of society work harmoniously towards common goals and objectives. Second is the view that the household or family is a *terrain of negotiation*, reflecting a combination of cooperation and conflict, where members may express differing interests or experience conflicting choices and goals. The reality in most households is somewhere between these two polarized views, as households may shift from one view to the next depending on member's position in the life cycle, and on circumstantial, temporal and spatial elements.

The "total family approach" preferred by most service providers of DSWD augurs well with the first view but clashes with the second. However, it may be appropriate in cases where the husband and wife have a harmonious marital relationship, have young children, share common life goals, and have no experience of domestic violence or child abuse. The second view, which echoes feminist analysis of the domestic sphere and Amartya Sen's household economic analysis, is appropriate in most cases where female family members have life goals which do not conform to traditional gender role expectations, and who do not view the family or household as the only unit that is able to fulfill their need for self-actualization. Hence, poverty alleviation programs may be tailored to specific conditions that affect the poverty of the family or household and its more vulnerable members such as the sick and elderly, the children, and the illiterate and unemployed. When the family and household are viewed as a terrain of negotiation, where both conflictive and cooperative behaviors exist, it should not be assumed that resources and benefits arising from poverty alleviation

programs may not be distributed evenly among the household members. Hence, poverty alleviation programs may be designed in a way that improve the negotiation skills and confidence levels of the poor and vulnerable, for example, through literacy, confidence-building, and leadership skills projects, so that they are able to get out of the cycle of learned helplessness that breeds poverty.

*3. There is a fundamental contradiction between the intended goal of the government's SRA program of a **holistic, integrated, social approach** that bridges quantitative and qualitative methods of assessment and intervention, on the one hand, and on the other, its continued use and actual implementation of the **sectoral approach** based on the assumption that particular aspects of human activity could be isolated for separate treatment.*

Echoing the bio-medical approach to health that requires physical treatment, the implementation of current anti-poverty programs still differentiates between the spheres of housing, social services, health, livelihood, etc. for individual separate "treatment" by planners and service providers. This happens despite the government's push for comprehensive and integrated delivery of social services under the SRA program, partly due to the culture of operations within and between government bureaucracies. Now, gender becomes a separate category of analysis and intervention or "treatment" by gender specialists or experts, particularly in the area of domestic violence or sexual abuse, institutionalized for example in the DSWD's program for Women in Exceptionally Difficult Circumstances (WEDC).

The government's SRA approach under President Ramos is at least aware of the pitfalls of sectoral approach and the advantage of an integrated social approach. However, social policy in the Philippines have not been redesigned to reflect this holistic social perspective, combining macro-level distributive policies through job creation and social safety net schemes, micro-level support, and coordinated service delivery to enable individuals to participate in social and economic development and strengthen their ability to stay out of poverty. The government is already aware that the causes of poverty are interlinked and must be tackled in a coordinated way. However, it could not move beyond conventional and sectoral approaches because of poor

bureaucratic coordination, heavy politicization of government service delivery, and poor support for micro-level participatory development initiatives. These initiatives require government coordination with NGOs, and grassroots organizations, as well as strong emphasis on community development. Social workers are already professionalized in the country, but community development workers are still viewed with suspicion or perceived by government as directly competing with its programs. There is often a breakdown of trust and cooperation between them as some community development workers in NGOs and people's organizations, also view government as totally ineffective, repressive, and therefore undeserving of people's collaboration.

The governance question in poverty alleviation programs therefore concerns not just the delivery of competent programs for the poor, nor the participation of the poor in program implementation. It concerns primarily the question of how to create competent communities of the poor so that poor people themselves are able to negotiate better terms of partnership with the government and civil society forces that wish to help them. Participatory development advocates have already been pointing out that poor people must be treated as agents in their own right, and that the poor actually have sophisticated analyses of the causes of poverty, and possible interventions that could be made. Current "good governance" debates must therefore go beyond the issue of bureaucratic accountability, transparency, rule of law, efficiency and predictability of services, and getting market prices right. They must address the issue of how government and NGOs view the poor and how they relate to the poor and to each other in the course of carrying out their programs. It must also address the more fundamental issue on how state powers and civil society participation could be utilized to expand the decision-making powers of the poor in public policy and their access to public resources. The mainstreaming of gender considerations in poverty alleviation plans must sharpen the focus on these governance issues, while incorporating feminist visions of gender equity and empowerment.

In his article arguing for the nationalization of the anti-poverty agenda, John Toyce, author of *Dilemmas of Development*, stresses the need for multidisciplinary poverty research, and more importantly, but more controversially, for political science and not economics to be the

“dominant discipline”, relegating poverty economists to “play the role that Keynes once envisioned for them, similar to that of humble but competent dentists” (Toyce 1999: 6). This suggests the increased attention that must be given to the political and policy requirements of poverty reduction measures that are effective, sustainable, and gender-aware (Angeles 2000). The differentiated constraints, incentives and choices which women and men face must be taken into account when designing poverty alleviation plans and programs. However, we should not also lose sight of the larger social, political, economic and cultural contexts in which these take place. Addressing gender issues in poverty reduction should be observed not only to engage human resources in the most productive way but also to address forms of gender inequities, especially the lack of women’s empowerment in decision-making. More importantly, addressing these should consider wider class and social inequalities. Poverty alleviation programs must not be gender-blind, but they should not also be blinded by gender. ❖

Notes

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¹The Philippines and Vietnam are chosen as case studies because of their differing policy contexts, political ideological environment, bureaucratic culture, levels of economic growth and industrialization, and activities of women’s organizations and NGOs. Thus, they offer contrasting insights on the intersection between gender and state bureaucratic politics, especially in the period after 1986. The 12-year period, from 1986 to 1998,

is the study time frame. The Philippines has, since 1986, undergone a formal democratic transition from authoritarian rule, marked by a liberal economic policy regime under a weak but patrimonial state. Vietnam, like the Philippines, is aspiring to become a newly industrialized country through market reforms started in 1986 under *doi moi* (change or renovation), guided by socialist state ideology. Although both countries have created an open environment for international cooperation and put increased emphasis on mainstreaming women's concerns in official development plans, they differ in terms of their bureaucratic operations and relationships between their governments, civil society and international NGO community. Research will take place at the village level, and with women's organizations, and local and national state bureaucracies. It will combine macro, meso and micro levels of analysis, and feminist participatory research techniques such as participant field observation, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and women's life history. Field work observations and focus group discussions will be conducted in four Philippine cities and provinces (Baguio-CAR, Bulacan, Bacolod-Negros Occidental, Bukidnon) and in four communes in Vietnam (a rural community in Thai Nguyen province in the North; an urban district in Ho Chi Minh City, a fishing village in Hue, and an ethnic minority community in Lam Dong province in the South) where there are active Women's Union.

²See UNESCO (1985), Moser (1993), Ostergaard (1992), Rao, Anderson and Overholt (1991), and Young (1993).

³See Harrison (1997), Pietila and Vickers (1996), Buvinic, Gwin and Bates (1996), Jahan (1995), Galey (1994).

⁴See Stienstra and Roberts (1995), and Tomasevski (1995).

⁵See Miles (1993), Stienstra (1995), Peterson and Runyan (1993), Ashworth (1997), and Dorsey (1997).

⁶For example, see Atkinson and Errington (1990); Ong and Peletz (1997), Van Esterik (1994), Barry (1996), Eviota (1991).

⁷For example, see Sparr 1994, Afhar and Dennis 1992, Beneria and Feldman 1992, Moghadam 1993, 1998, Blumberg et al 1995, Afshar 1991, 1992, Paterson, 1995, Elson 1991, Ward 1990.

⁸On the history of these conferences, see Nijeholt, Swiebel, and Vargas (1998).

⁹This has been called the "triangle of empowerment", see Vargas and Wieringa (1998).

¹⁰For good introduction to participatory development principles and practices, see Nelson and Wright, (1995); Chambers (1997), Alamgir (1988) and Ngunjiri (1998).

¹¹*Capacity development* is about "complex learning, adaptation and organization change at the individual, group, organizational and even societal levels" and is more comprehensive than social and human resource

development in its inclusion of organizational capital (i.e. what organizations can do); long-term changes in human behavior attitudes, values and relationships that support systemic or structural improvement with some permanence or sustainability (Morgan 1997: 4-9).

¹²For example, the proposal to establish a more progressive tax regime under the Comprehensive Tax Reform Package was blocked by Congress due to the strong anti-reform lobby of the business community, and lack of widespread public support from NGOs, and population groups that stand to benefit from the tax reform, particularly fixed income-earners, wage workers and low-salaried professionals. The Reform Package would have created a more progressive tax regime by restructuring individual and corporate income tax, improve tax administration, and remove tax evasion and tax shelter privileges of the business sector. See Gutierrez (1997: 179-195, 291-292).

¹³For example, the author has been invited by Princess Nemenzo and the Women's Caucus of the Freedom From Debt Coalition (FDC) to present the preliminary draft of this paper to the women's NGO sector of NAPC.

¹⁴From posting by Agnes Quisumbing to the Gender Research, Education and Training (GREAT) Network, Tuesday, 20 June 2000.

¹⁵Thus, it is not surprising that Pulse Asia Survey in June 1999 showed that the President's base of support and consistently high approval ratings come from the "confirmed poor".

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