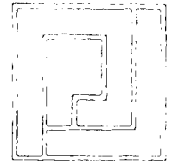


# PROGRAM INSTITUTIONALIZATION AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A STEP TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE



Aurora E. Perez

## INTRODUCTION

The role of government in the implementation of the Philippine population program is embodied in the provisions of Article IV, Sec. 10 of the Philippine Constitution which states that "it shall be the responsibility of the state to achieve and maintain population levels most conducive to the national welfare."

As early as 1976, the national government recognized the important role of the local government in the implementation of the population program. In that year, the President issued Letter of Instructions No. 436 which invoked all provincial governors, city and municipal mayors, and barangay heads/captains to "facilitate the sustained intensive nationwide implementation" of the program by:

- a) integrating population and family planning in overall socio-economic development plans;
- b) allocating and obligating funds for such socioeconomic development plans; and
- c) by coordinating with the Commission on Population (POPCOM) in the preparation, planning, implemen-

tation and monitoring of all population and family planning related activities in their respective jurisdictions with enthusiasm and interest during the past years. As aptly stated by one of the country's more active and committed provincial executives, the population program implies a "local share in a national concern" (Agbayani, 1983). Mention might be made of the pioneering efforts of the provincial government of Laguna in battling its population problems by promulgating and adopting family planning as a provincial policy.

## THE MANY FACES OF INTEGRATION

Much of the success of any development program or project largely depends on the acceptability of the rationale of the project. Acceptability is partly dictated by the accessibility of the development program to the program clientele. In the case of the national population program, acceptability of its goals and accessibility of its wide-ranging services can be hastened through the effective participation of the local government.

Earlier times saw the difficulties of integrating population into development planning. This was attributed to the acute lack of knowledge among the local chief executives concerning the relationship between population and development. More importantly, there was little, if not nil, appreciation of the potential impact of socio-economic policies, plans and programs on population variables. One might agree that awareness of the significance of population variables in national development, albeit necessary, is just the initial stage in the process of integration. Without the recognition and the belief that family planning is integrally related to other socio-economic variables, there can be no purposeful integration of activities.

Beyond this level of awareness deemed necessary for any form of integration is the developmental approach to population concerns. People's reproductive behavior is perceived as determined mainly by their socio-economic circumstances so that family planning programs are likely to have modest effects without simultaneous socio-economic change. The theme of the 1985 Population Welfare Congress focused on "population planning and development by local governments," indicating some initial steps at the integration of family planning and welfare in socio-economic programs and projects at the local level. Efforts are presently geared towards the institutionalization of the population program at the local government. The rationale is that the local leaders, i.e., the provincial and municipal executives, know their own

barangay and people and are more attuned to the needs of their constituents. The implementation of the program by the local government opens the planning process to "grass-roots" realities and will most likely result in greater feasibility of plans drawn up for the achievement of program goals.

A nagging issue in this regard, however, is the "cost-sharing" scheme between the national and the local governments. This problem poses real concern with the phasing out of support for the National Population and Family Planning Outreach Project, more popularly known as the Outreach project. Another basic problem in the institutionalization of the population program at the local government level is the absence of clear institutional responsibility for advocating and overseeing the proper integration of population in the various development concerns at the community level within the organizational set-up of the local government.

In spite of these problems, however, some provincial governments have fully absorbed into their regular budgets the salaries of the program's core workers known as the Full-time Outreach Workers (FTOWs). Others continue the current cost-sharing scheme between POPCOM and the local government for manpower complement and other resources. More specific moves such as planning for the incorporation of a budget for the Outreach project during the budget deliberations at the Batasan in the future are contemplated. This is in line with the institutionalization of the

population program in the local governments beyond 1986. Such a policy direction necessarily institutes reform. The acceptance of new ideas, especially by program professionals and workers, then becomes a subject matter of interest.

### **PROGRAM PROFESSIONALS AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT "TAKEOVER" OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

Perhaps the role of local government in the promulgation of the population program finds the best articulation in one of the many recommendations from the International Conference on Population in Mexico City in 1984 which reads:

**Governments are encouraged to provide adequate resources and where appropriate, to adopt innovative measures for the implementation of population policy. To be effective and successful, population programmes and development activities should be responsive to local values and needs, and those directly affected should be involved in the decision-making process at all levels (Recommendation 12).**

The Philippine government has responded to such a call in its move for the institutionalization of the population program at the local government. This move, however, has elicited various reactions from program workers.

In 1984, a survey<sup>1</sup> was conducted to assess population-related knowledge, attitudes, practices and skills of program professionals.<sup>2</sup> The survey covered a total of 734 respondents from all over the country. This included program workers occupying high level positions in the various

technical and support divisions of POPCOM; deputy ministers or assistant secretaries and directors of bureaus or departments actively involved in the program, POPCOM regional directors and the supervising officers of various technical divisions, regional directors of partner agencies: governors and mayors; FTOWs; barangay service point officers (BSPOs); and family planning clinic and non-clinic personnel.

Of interest in this study is the knowledge and attitude of the program professionals on the gradual implementation, coordination and funding of population Outreach activities by the local government, known as the "takeover".

#### *Knowledge of the "Takeover"*

Knowledge of the "takeover" is apparently widespread as two-thirds of the program workers sampled in the study were aware of the recent development. This is especially true for all the regional POPCOM staff and the provincial Outreach staff, including the FTOWs, the workers most affected by the "takeover".

Among the local executives, majority of the provincial governors and city majors knew about the emerging role of local government in the implementation of the country's population program. There was, however, about one-fourth who were not aware of their greater roles as managers of the population program. Information on the gradual takeover of Outreach activities by the local government seems not to have filtered down to the level

of the BSPOs and the clinic workers who professed little knowledge about the move. Apparently, many of these workers are in isolation from new policy directions emanating from the national agency.

### *Attitudes Towards the "Takeover"*

More than just a constitutional statement which may or may not be implemented, the institutionalization move is anchored on specific action-oriented innovation which entails local government support for family planning in the form of locally-run services. The extent of support may mean minimal services or wide-reaching efforts to inform the public about family planning and encourage its use, to provide supplies and services through its facilities and even to deliver supplies to the most remote rural areas. All these auxiliary services to be assumed by the local government may be viewed favorably or unfavorably by program professionals.

It is indicated by the study that while some professionals favor the "takeover" of Outreach activities, some others (especially governors, mayors and field workers) view the institutionalization with less enthusiasm. The more outstanding reason for the favorable attitude was the better coordination of program activities arising from the closer and direct association between the local government and the individual members of the community. This is reflected by a response from a POPCOM regional worker that "decision-making will be faster and more direct." Likewise, the enhance-

ment of local leadership was underscored by a POPCOM central office worker who stated that "the national government does not have sufficient money to finance the entire project. It is the responsibility of local governments to plan for their own population". Others cited "better coordination of workers" or the fact that "local executives know their areas better and would be in better positions to plan or decide for their constituencies". Still others invoked self-reliance in the implementation of the program by the local government. It is common observation that as programs become better established, donor assistance decreases. Program implementation by local government injects self-reliance as we necessarily take on greater share of program costs. These attitudes seem to reinforce what had surfaced in the deliberations in the 8th National Population Welfare Congress. It was noted that local leadership and initiative, people's participation, strong political will, among others, were basic elements to a successful integration of population into municipal development plans.

A crucial factor in the institutionalization move is the financial capability of the local government to absorb Outreach costs. Local executives in favor tended to cite the viability of the "takeover" in areas where financial and other resources could readily accommodate the assumed responsibility over the Outreach activities.

Most of the governors and mayors hesitant to assume responsibility over the Outreach activities were mainly concerned about their area's resource

endowment, i.e., financial capacity. Some were convinced that "majority of municipalities cannot afford it financially. It must be supported by all other agencies. The involvement of more agencies is very necessary for the program to succeed". This idea hinges upon the multisectoral approach in the delivery of family planning services which disperses the functions of the focal population organization over other sectors of the society. Similarly, some argued that "the national government has more authority but the responsibility is given to the local government. Yet the local government has limited resources". In the same vein, others believed that "provincial governments cannot afford it. Resources are already diminished by funds for health and agriculture." What the latter reasoning clearly indicates is the difficulty of creating the conditions and climate for the implementation of the population program given budgetary constraints and competing development concerns, of which more tangible development concerns with immediate effects like better health and greater agricultural production take primordial significance. This situation demonstrates the need for the appropriate partitioning of limited resources determined by the larger social, economic, political, cultural and bureaucratic forces in operation at the community. The greatest obstacle working against the population program is that not all local leaders have sufficient understanding and appreciation of the fact that family planning can promote better health and greater economic produc-

tion. The orientation of most local officials who chart the growth and development of their jurisdictions seems to be toward output at the aggregate level remaining unmindful of the question of means or processes.

A few program workers who disapproved of the eventual "localization" of the population program cited non-financial reasons such as "It is just that others are wanting it to be integrated with the Ministry of Health" and "not all are concerned with the program. Some do not have the capacity to handle it". If the latter statement is to be assumed as true, the message seems to be the "development of an adequate corps of trained persons for the effective formulation and implementation of integrated population and development policies, plans and programmes at all levels. In this regard, increased efforts must be made by governments and training institutions, to further facilitate the integration of population studies into the training curricula for policy-makers and executives who plan and implement development programmes" (Recommendation 75, 1984 International Conference on Population).

It is also interesting to note what the program professionals perceived as effects of POPCOM withdrawal from Outreach activities. It was viewed by many as the beginning of program failure primarily due to a decline in the availability and accessibility of family planning supplies and services. To illustrate, clinic workers and BSPOs feared eventual loss of supplies, if not difficulty in the purchase of supplies by contraceptive users.

The operational terms of the pending phase-out of POPCOM from the Outreach project seems to be vague to many fieldworkers. It seems appropriate and fitting that POPCOM information, education, and communication efforts be directed also at the clarification of obvious misconceptions regarding the institutionalization to forestall "transitional problems" when local government underwrites the entire Outreach operation.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of the study clearly demonstrate the existence of the family planning and welfare program in a situation of mixed economies – that of abundance on one hand and that of scarce resources on the other. This situation inevitably leads to a state of uncertainty regarding the institutionalization of the program. Much of the reservations regarding successful institutionalization revolve around the crucial capacity of the local executives to generate resources to fund the program. It has been observed that despite increases in government expenditures, family planning still accounts for less than one-half of one per cent of national budgets in almost all countries (Nortman and Fisher, 1982). Allocation for the Philippine population program in 1980 was a mere 0.44 percent of the national budget. The International Conference on Family Planning in 1981 recommended that developing countries allocate about five percent of their national budgets to family planning and welfare programs. The sim-

plification of national development budgetary allocation systems to the maximization of objective functions such as increased gross national product (GNP) has by convenient choice, glossed over population variables resulting to low funding level of the population program. The challenge appears to be financial support that suits the requirements of the particular stage of program maturity in a given community coupled with strategies for the inculcation and internalization of "self-reliance" among our community leaders and their people as a means towards goal achievement. Added to this, of course, is the commitment of the larger political and institutional system which greatly influence the climate for successful program operations and impact.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Called the "KAPS Study of Program Professionals," this was conducted by the Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (DRDF).

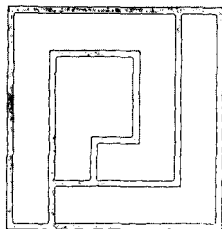
<sup>2</sup>Program professionals refer to the workers in the Philippine population program from POPCOM and the various cooperating agencies.

### REFERENCES

- Agbayani, Aguedo. 1982. *Local Share in a National Concern*. A paper presented at the Fifth National Population Welfare Congress, Philippine International Convention Center, Manila. November.
- Feranil, Imelda Z., et al. 1985. *An Analysis of the Results of the KAPS Survey of the Population Program Professionals*. Demographic Research and Development Foundation.
- Johns Hopkins University. 1984. *Law and Policy*. Population Reports Series E, Number 7. November.
- Nortman, D.L. and J. Fisher. 1982. *Population and Family Planning Programs: A Compendium of Data Through 1981*, 11th ed. New York.

San Luis, Felicisimo. 1982. *Impact of the Population Welfare Program Directed at Family Productivity, Family Welfare and Small Size to Barangay, Municipal City and Provincial Developments*. A paper presented at the Fifth National Population Welfare Congress. PICC. Manila. November.

United Nations. 1985. *Recommendations for the Further Implementation of the World Population Plan of Action*. New York.



# PHILIPPINE POPULATION JOURNAL

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR INTRODUCTORY OFFER AND GET ONE ISSUE **FREE**

Sign up for one-year subscription, get one issue FREE and save ₱40 (\$6). This offer covers the next four issues of the Journal. Price includes postage and handling.

**Our  
Maiden Year  
Special Subscription Offer!**

	FOREIGN	PHILIPPINES
ONE YEAR	US\$ 18	₱ 120
PER ISSUE	6	40

I am interested in receiving

- |  |                              |                              |                              |                              |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> one issue at ₱40    | <input type="checkbox"/> 1st | <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd | <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd | <input type="checkbox"/> 4th |
| <input type="checkbox"/> two issues at ₱80   | <input type="checkbox"/> 1st | <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd | <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd | <input type="checkbox"/> 4th |
| <input type="checkbox"/> four issues at ₱120 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1st | <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd | <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd | <input type="checkbox"/> 4th |

of the Philippine Population Journal.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTRY \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK ENCLOSED

PLEASE BILL ME

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

PLEASE MAKE YOUR PAYMENTS TO:

### PHILIPPINE POPULATION JOURNAL

Demographic Research and Development  
Foundation, Inc.

c/o U.P. Population Institute

P.O. Box 479 MANILA

Padre Faura, Manila, Philippines



## INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

- 1. Editorial Policy** The **Philippine Population Journal** publishes original papers, reviews, documents, lectures and major book reviews that may be of scientific interest to students of population of the Philippines and of practical value to population planners and policy-makers. Preference will be given to materials with clear program and policy implications. Papers which are accepted for publication will be subject to minor editorial change for reasons of style, format and expressions.
- 2. Review of Manuscripts** Articles submitted will be reviewed initially for appropriateness by the editors and, when judged appropriate, will be sent to referees who are knowledgeable about the subject area. Papers that are provisionally accepted with revisions will be sent back to the author for revision and/or concurrence within two weeks. The final judgment will be that of the editors, but they will be influenced heavily by the recommendations of the editorial staff and the referees.
- 3. Preparation of Manuscripts** To be submitted are two copies of the article clearly typewritten on one side of the paper (standard 8½ by 11 inches) only, doubled-space, with margins of at least 1½ inches on both sides. The article should be between 20-40 pages.
- 4. Abstract** An abstract of not more than 100 words must be prepared together with the article.
- 5. Acknowledgments** This must be done in a separate section.
- 6. Cover Page** Cover page should contain title, author, institutional affiliation and complete address of author to whom proofs and correspondence should be sent.
- 7. Illustrations and Tables** Tables and charts should be numbered with arabic numerals and should carry brief descriptive titles. Illustrations should preferably be submitted in a form suitable for direct reproduction.
- 8. Notes** Explanatory and supplementary material may be placed in NOTES on a separate page. However, notes should be kept to a minimum.
- 9. References** References must be listed using the format in the reference sections of this issue.