

Women's rights in the Philippines Today

Contributed by Olivia H. Tripon
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It has taken many years of campaigning and education, but finally there is widespread legal recognition that women are humans too. We are no longer viewed as freaks of nature or imperfect creatures as St. Augustine once believed: We are not the evil temptress or wanton harlots that needed chastity belt: Not war booties or commodities bought and sold along with cattle and horses: Not witches to be burned at the stake.

Alas however the law, traditions and attitudes do not fully overlap and women struggle through life constantly juggling productive and reproductive work, always trying to prove that she is a human being worthy of rights and respect in equal measure..

It was only in 1937 that Filipino women won the right to vote having fought hard for it. The Suffragists marked the beginning of the Filipino women's movement that blossomed in the Martial Law years and culminated during the United Nations-led series of International Conferences on Women.

This report on the human rights situation of 44 million Filipino women will attempt to show the status of women and judge the Philippine government's success in enacting national laws enacted to protect women, as well as implementing those international instruments it has ratified towards gender equality and gender justice.

The framework of analysis will be based on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which the Philippines ratified in 1981. In August 2006, the Philippines reported to the CEDAW Committee and its Concluding Comments revealed the gaps in the fulfillment of women's rights. Alongside CEDAW, the status of Filipino women will also be marked against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and its time-bound benchmarks.

Where applicable, mention will be made of the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 on 12 Critical Areas of Concern.

I. Social and Cultural Rights

Society and culture define gender roles the world over. And these socialized roles of men and women became the basis of their rights under the law - most of which were made by men. As society changed, so gender roles have changed and laws had to follow.

A. Rural, Indigenous and Moro Women

The most marginalized in Philippine society are the rural and Indigenous Peoples (IPs). Not only are the latter poor, but they belong to a tribal society considered different from the mainstream Western- and "civilized" society. They live in far-flung areas unreachable by government in terms of access to education, medical services and basic necessities: They are frequently caught in the crossfire between insurgents, bandits and the military. They are also regularly victims of environmental degradation that affects their health and livelihood.

Women in indigenous and ethnic communities have been further marginalized, particularly with regard to land ownership. In the Cordillera region for example, indigenous women have been deprived of their rights under customary law to be co-owners of land, because government resettlement projects award land titles and certificates of titles to crops to men as "head of the family".

Moro women, both "Lumad" and IP are forgotten in "the land of promise" that is Mindanao. Although guaranteed the same rights as the rest of Filipinos under the constitution, they are also bound by the Code of Muslim Personal Laws, which allows polygamy, early and arranged marriages and inherit only half of the inheritance of the male heir.

CEDAW article 14 is devoted to rural women to ensure that they participate and benefit from rural development -- equal treatment in land reform and access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities and technology; and adequate living conditions, especially in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, and transport and communications.

To improve their plight, the CEDAW Committee recommends increased education opportunities to discourage early marriages and sex-disaggregated data on rural, IP and Moro women to show their social, economic and health needs that must be prioritized.

B. Violence against women

The most prevalent human rights violation that cuts across all sectors of society -- even the rich and highly educated -- is violence against women (VAW).

In 2006 a total of 5,758 VAW cases were reported to the police. Physical injury is prevalent, accounting for 38.86% reported attacks; Domestic violence ranks second with 26.07% of VAW cases. Rape accounts for 16.65% of VAW cases (PNP). Although rape figures are low, it is an instrument of power that has no boundaries inside the home as in marital rape; the community -where rebels and the military use rape to torture and foment fear upon the enemy: and even outside the country as in trafficking.

The Philippines has enacted several laws protecting women from violence – Anti-Sexual Harassment, Anti-Rape and Rape Victim Assistance and Protection, Anti-Trafficking in Persons, Anti-Violence against Women and Children with Women’s and Children’s Desks and Services -- yet the implementation leaves much to be desired. Knowledge of the laws among those who are supposed to enforce them -like the police and judges are scandalously minimal, and much less among those who need them for their own personal protection.

The Karen Vertido case, where the accused had since been acquitted by a woman judge will be the first Philippine case to be filed to the United Nations CEDAW Committee through the Optional Protocol to CEDAW which the Philippines has ratified in November 2003. This is for cases where all avenues for justice in the country had been exhausted

1. Trafficking

One of the most urgent and widespread of human rights issues is trafficking because of its global reach.

Trafficking is the recruitment, transport and transfer of persons with or without their consent or knowledge within or across national borders by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, including abduction, fraud, deception and abuse of power.

The poor and undocumented women overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are vulnerable to being victims of trafficking for forced labor or prostitution.

RA 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 is one of the landmark legislations to uphold human rights, especially of women and children. From 2003-2006, 1449 cases of which 40% were of minors were recorded by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). (BW 7/18/07)

There can also be trafficking in international marriages. Foreign men marry unsuspecting Filipinas who end up prostituted by their own husbands. Immigration laws in some countries discriminate against foreign wives and render their children who should be entitled to a nationality “stateless”.

One of the first laws enacted to protect women was the law prohibiting mail order brides. Yet today, web sites showing women seeking partners themselves as a way out of poverty proliferate. Moreover pornography sites using women and children abound, so too cybersex sites and online places to negotiate over sex.

The CEDAW Committee recommends strengthening bilateral, regional and international cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination and the improvement of preventive measures (starting from the point of recruitment).

2. Prostitution

The estimated number of prostituted people in the Philippines range from 300,000 to 500,000 of which 75,000 to 100,000 are children. The country ranks fourth in the world with the most number of prostituted children. (CATWAP 1999)

There is something wrong with a law that considers only women to be prostitutes (Article 202 of the Revised Penal Code) and must be amended as it discriminates against women. This is one of the priority legislative agenda to implement CEDAW. To eliminate exploitation in prostitution, demand must be discouraged and rehabilitation provided to prostituted women. (CEDAW Concluding Comments 2006)

There is a raging debate whether to legalize prostitution – some feminists argue for the protection of sex workers like any other hazardous work; other groups lobby to decriminalize prostitution. The latter maintain that prostitution is a

no-choice job for destitute women and that customers, pimps and owners of establishments profiting from this business must be held liable.

The Coalition against Trafficking in Women Asia-Pacific (CATWAP) asserted that much of human trafficking is linked to prostitution. The coalition expressed alarm over the increasing acceptance of prostitution as "work"; that women freely choose to enter. CATWAP reaffirmed its position that prostitution is Violence Against Women and therefore should be abolished. (TNT March 07)

2. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment in the workplace is still rampant, despite the Anti Sexual Harassment Law (RA7877). Unfortunately, not even judges are not exempt from inflicting this type of VAW on their employees, as reported cases abound. Moreover, each establishment must take care of setting mechanisms for complaints and establishing rules but monitoring is an immense task. Young girls who want desperately to make the grade or want to be employed are likely victims of their teachers or superiors.

3. Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can be emotional, psychological, economic, physical and even sexual such as incest and marital rape.

Domestic violence used to be considered a private matter between husband and wife. A woman who ran to the police or the priest was often told to go back to her abuser. She would suffer in silence until she finally worked up the courage to leave for an uncertain future.

Women and Children's Protection Units were set up in police stations and in government hospitals to identify VAW victims. Women usually do not say they were battered when they come for treatment. Government and NGOs provide counseling and shelters for abused women and their children. Hotlines for these services and shelters need to be widely disseminated.

With the Anti-Rape Law (RA 8353) and the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children (RA9262) Act, neighbors, relatives and others can now report abuse in the home. Until now, women are hesitant to report their situation due to shame and fear. RA 9262 gives respite from harm with protection orders that bar perpetrators from going near the victims. Unfortunately, some barangay officials are still ignorant of this provision or the order is delayed. Awareness of these laws and their rights must be made known to all.

The CEDAW Committee recommends enhanced data collection on various forms of VAW; research on prevalence, causes and consequences of domestic violence as basis for intervention.

C. Social and cultural factors of VAW

1. Religion

Religion is a factor that greatly affects women's social and cultural rights. The Catholic wedding ceremony always exhorts the bride to be "submissive" to the husband and to keep the marriage at all costs because "what God has put together, let no man put asunder".

The Philippines is the one of the last two countries in the world (alongside Malta) without a divorce law. Civil annulment is a long process where each party must show psychological incapacity to perform the obligations of marriage and if granted, renders the marriage void from the start, even if children were born from the union. The ex-husband and wife are free to marry since there was no marriage at all. The Catholic Church does not allow divorce but allows for church annulment.

"We try to suffer as long as we can; but then of course, we have divorce," a Muslim woman said. Although Muslim women can divorce, they have to go to court accompanied by male relatives; whereas the Muslim husband, if he has valid reasons and not in a drunken state, can just say three times "I divorce you", and it is done.

CEDAW Concluding Comments calls for a divorce law, where women can have equal rights on aspects such as division of conjugal property, custody of and support for children after divorce.

2. Discriminatory provisions in existing laws

There are still discriminatory provisions in existing laws that must be repealed: Namely

a) The Family Code gives the husband the final decision in cases of disagreement over conjugal property and parental authority and legal guardianship over the person and property of a common child. This reinforces the Filipino macho male culture that the wife is their property to do their bidding.

b). A forgiveness clause under the Anti-Rape Law, nullifies the criminal dimension of marital rape and its penalties and helps perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Clearly, the above provisions are obvious residues of the patriarchal attitudes of those who made the laws. The CEDAW Concluding Comments calls for the revision of all discriminatory provisions of existing laws and the passage of the "Magna Carta of Women," which defines discrimination and translates the Convention into a national law.

3. Media

The media's portrayal of women is also a factor in women's social and cultural rights and may even contribute to VAW. Local television soaps regularly show long-suffering wives (martyrs) being beaten by the husband and saying it's her fault he's womanizing because she looks so dowdy: Similarly there are sitcoms that ridicule women (for example, an ugly actress complaining that she has not been raped!) The proposed Magna Carta of Women provides for non-derogatory portrayal of women in media and film.

II. Economic Rights

Poverty has a distinctly female face in the Philippines. A woman eats last and postpones medical treatment for herself until everyone else is cared for. Women are paid lower than men and have fewer opportunities for training or promotion, because women get pregnant and will go on maternity leave or will absent themselves when a child gets sick or when the household helper leaves.

Every one has the right to a decent living – to eat three times a day and at least have a roof over one's head and to be able to afford health care and medicines when one is sick. To have that, one needs to get a job. To be able to find work, one must have had an education or learned a skill. Unfortunately there are not enough jobs and women grab at any opportunity to work abroad, and end up as Domestic Helpers (DH).

Let us examine the various rights that would lift Filipinos especially women from poverty.

A. The right to education

Investing in education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty.

The 2003 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) showed that females registered higher functional literacy rate (86.3%) than males (81.9%). "Functionally literate persons", as measured in the FLEMMS, are those persons between 10 to 64 years old who can at least read, write and compute.

In poor households, the daily household tasks such as caring for younger siblings are assigned to girls so their mothers can work and this is one reason why they drop out of school. Some as young as 13 years old are sent to the cities to work as household helpers to augment meager family income. Children of single or separated parents are normally not accepted in Catholic schools. Due to ignorance about their bodies, teen students get pregnant and are expelled from school. One of the salient points in the Magna Carta of Women is equal access to education – no expulsion or discrimination to unmarried women students due to pregnancy.

MDG Goal 3 on women's empowerment sets to eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015. Females have a higher participation rate in elementary (85.35%) and in high school (63.53%) than males (83.56% and 53.65% respectively) as recorded in 2005-6. Although these figures suggest an equal status between males and females in terms of access to primary education, previous records will still show a decline in school participation in the past six years. In 2001-2002, the participation of girls in elementary education was 90.1% while boys' participation rate was 89.33% (NEDA, Second MDG Midterm progress report,)

B. The right to work

Women still remain the largest group facing discrimination in terms of employment opportunities and wage gaps. According to the National Statistics Office, as of October 2006 female workers comprise only 38.5% out of the total labor force of 33 million.

According to AMIHAN – the National Federation of Peasant Women, 66% of the total number of poor women in

the Philippines work in agriculture, fishery and forestry sectors and receive lower wages than men. Of the total number of women employed in agriculture, more than half (52%) provide unpaid family labor.

Gender role stereotypes, particularly in relation to reproductive responsibilities, have prevented more women from entering the labor force. Those who do work in the local economy are often found in the informal labor sector or in jobs that are insecure, lowly-paid, and take little advantage of women's formal education. A significant number of skilled Filipino women have opted to work abroad as migrant labor. But even while they may receive higher wages in destination countries, Overseas Filipino women workers often experience de-skilling and marginalization, and are vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking.

Migration is one of the major labor issues of the country. This issue is often brought to the fore by Philippine representatives at all international fora to recognize labor rights of migrants in their country of work.

1. Informal workers

There are at least six million home-based workers, most of whom are women. Among them are subcontracted home workers who have no written contracts with definite employers, suffer from substandard wages even while they shoulder the cost of work space and utilities, lack social protection, access to training and other resources, and are vulnerable to occupational health and safety hazards. Most home workers are not organized and if they are, they have little voice and participation in decision-making. Precisely because these workers are outside the formal economy, and operate outside the scope of regulations, the provision of health and other social protection programs has remained highly problematic (HomeNet Philippines's Advocacy Agenda for the May 2007 National and Local Elections)

The CEDAW Concluding Comments urge efforts to enhance the situation of women in the informal economy. The Magna Carta for the Informal Sector is a proposed bill that will give informal workers (a) the right to self-organization; (b) the enhancement of their entrepreneurial skills; (c) the right to just and humane working conditions, access to productive resources, and social protection.

The local household helpers are some of the most exploited groups. Abuse is rampant and hidden. They work long hours with hardly any benefits. According to the Labor Force Survey there are about 1.5 million household helpers working in private households and some are children aged 13-17. Republic Act No. 7655 obliges employers to give Social Security benefits for those receiving at least PhP1,000. In practice, wages vary according to the employer's economic class. "Batas Kasambahay", a bill to uphold the rights and dignity of household workers, is one of the priority legislations to implement CEDAW.

2. Female Migrant Workers

Migration has a female face. According to Labor and Employment Secretary Arturo Brion, a total of 1,083,538 documented Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) were deployed in more than 190 host destinations in 2006. (PDI, 1/14/07) Of the million people working overseas slightly over 60% are women. According to Kanlungan, an NGO for migrant women, women aged 35-44 and older are leaving the country when the common age is 25-34. (TNT March 2007)

OFWs can be seen in any part of the world. Major country destinations of new hires for the year 2006 were: Hong Kong, of almost 20,000 domestic helpers; Taiwan with more than 8,400 caregivers; Japan, with almost 7,000 performing artists and Saudi Arabia with almost 3000 nurses (POEA).

From a total of 184,454 women new hires, almost half are domestics. The second major occupation of women migrants are medical related jobs including care giving at 16%. (Compendium of Overseas Employment Statistics of POEA 2006)

Many domestic helpers or DHs are exposed to employers' maltreatment, nonpayment or underpayment of salary, contract substitution, long working hours and sexual abuse. The videotape of the rape of "Melissa", a maid in Saudi Arabia, by her employer, underscores the impunity with which evil employers treat their Filipino maids.

Moreover OFWs are victims of illegal recruitment by unscrupulous placement firms.

RA 8042 Magna Carta for Overseas Filipinos of 1995 protects documented and undocumented OFWs and expanded the definition of illegal recruiters to even relatives. NGOs successfully lobbied to amend the provision that left migrants at the mercy of their employers and put the responsibility to government.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) is tasked to protect migrant workers' rights such as repatriation and reintegration, and other basic assistance to OFWs and their families. In fact a whole bureaucracy of Philippine overseas labor officers (POLO) under the Department of Foreign Affairs are in Philippine embassies assigned to assist OFWs.

Pre-departure orientation normally includes some information on the culture of the country of destination. NGOs working

on migrant issues suggested that it should include information on the rights and entitlements of the migrant women in the receiving country as well as under international instruments.

The UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrants and Members of their Families now has 37 States Parties as of May 2007 ([www. Dec18.net](http://www.dec18.net)). However, most receiving countries have not yet signed nor ratified it. The CEDAW Concluding Comments urge the government to continue with efforts to have bilateral measures with receiving countries and to address the root causes of migration.

In 2006 OFWs sent in more than \$10.7 billion in remittances to their families which have created a boom in real estate, money transfers and electronic communications. Yet for all the hype about the nation's "heroes" for boosting the economy, government has failed to protect migrant workers, especially women. Cases of women accused of murder or are murdered abroad are the painful costs of working in strange lands.

C. The right to health

1. Clean environment

The right to health comes with living in a safe and sanitary environment including clean water, air, and soil that are free from toxins or hazards that threaten human health. Water is a critical component of health and women are the primary users. Without clean water and sanitary surroundings, preventable diseases such as diarrhea and dengue can spread.

2. Reproductive Health

Maternal mortality and morbidity, represent major setbacks for women's health. Everyday 10 mothers die while giving birth. Mothers who are too young and get pregnant too soon make childbirth risky. Induced abortion was the fourth leading cause of maternal deaths. Young women accounted for 17 percent of induced abortions. (NEDA, Second MDG Midterm Progress Report)

MDG goal no. 5 to improve maternal health. is to reduce maternal mortality rate (MMR) to 52 deaths per 10,000 births by 2015. In 2006, based on the FPS, it declined to only 162 deaths.

The Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Survey (YAFSS) for the period 1994-2002 indicated that the overall prevalence of pre-marital sexual activity increased from 18 percent to 23 percent. The CEDAW Concluding Comments seek to strengthen measures against unwanted pregnancies by making available sex education and a comprehensive range of contraceptives.

The Catholic Church however frowns on sex education and bans all kinds of artificial contraceptives. Yet surveys show that women across all socio-economic classes desire fewer children and would like to use modern contraceptives. 15.7 % of married women have an unmet need for contraceptives to space or plan their families. (2006 Family Planning Survey)

Failure to provide information such as sex education and access to health services and contraceptives constitutes gender-based discrimination and a violation of women's rights to health and life A comprehensive reproductive health policy for which women had lobbied for more than a decade has not been passed, due to a strong church lobby that threatens the president and the predominantly Catholic Congress.

Without a reproductive policy in place, millions of Filipino youth could resort to unsafe abortion, acquire sexually-transmitted diseases, and suffer from other reproductive health problems due to risky behavior that can leave imprints for the rest of their lives.

3. HIV-AIDS

Among RH-related problems, Filipino women are at risk to be infected with sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Evidence suggests that not only prostituted women, drug users and those who have been given transfusions with infected blood are at risk of contracting HIV-AIDS. Evidence suggests that marriage can be a major HIV risk factor for women, especially women married to seamen and other land-based OFWs. Women OFWs themselves who engage in dangerous liaisons while abroad or were trafficked are also at high risk.

From January 1984 to October 2007, there were 2,997 HIV cases reported of which 2,220 (74%) were asymptomatic

and 777 (26%) were AIDS cases. More than half (58%) of the cases was in the 25-39 years age group. Sixty-six percent (1,974) were males, while thirty four percent (1,023) were females. Sexual intercourse (87%) was still the leading mode of transmission. (DOH, 2007 HIV and AIDS Registry).

III. Political Rights

While the 1987 Constitution, guarantees equality between men and women - a right which is not enshrined in the United States Constitution or many other countries. Article II, Section 14, of the 1987 Constitution provides that "The State recognizes the role of women in nation-building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men."

This legal framework promoting gender equality is in turn elaborated in various legislations and these include the following:

Local Government Code of 1991. Provides for the election of sectoral representation, including women, in local legislative councils.

Party List Law. Provides for the creation of women-oriented or women-based parties to compete under the party-list system.

Women in Nation Building Law. Republic Act 7192 (1991) is an act promoting the integration of women as full and equal partners of men in development and nation building. The law provides that a substantial portion of government resources be utilized to support programs and activities for women. The law also encourages the full participation and involvement of women in the development process and to remove gender bias in all government regulations and procedures.

While the constitutional and legal framework acknowledges the need for gender mainstreaming, gender equality is indeed still a work in progress. Thus, one can find a myriad of projects, initiatives, and processes on the gender challenge that are corollary to gender-oriented legislations. This includes:

Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (1995-2025). This is the National Plan for Women that consolidates the action commitments of the Philippines during the Beijing World Conference on Women. This is the over-all frame that is also the point of reference for the discussions and monitoring of gender mainstreaming.

Gender and Development Budget (GAD) prescribes for the allocation of 5% of the government agency's/local government unit's budget on gender-responsive activities and projects. As a result, implementation of the development programs and policies of government also means women partaking a role in governance
Source: http://www.fes.org.ph/papers_womeninpol.htm

A. Political Participation

When women hold political office, generally, people's lives significantly gets better. That's because most women usually "mother" their constituents, treating their area of responsibility like a household. Their presence influences their male colleagues to promote education, health and protect vulnerable sectors.

In the last elections of May 2007, 53 out of 239 representatives elected were women, the largest so far. Forty five are from regular congressional districts and eight are from Partly List organizations. But only one woman's party won — Gabriela. Of the 45 incoming female lawmakers, 23 were re-elected and 20 are wives of outgoing congressmen. In the Senate, there are only four women senators and 20 men. At the local level, there are 18 women governors out of 79 and 266 mayors out of 1,618.

According to the Philippine country report on the State of Women in Urban Local Government, family connection is a major factor in political involvement. "family political experience seems to be the main factor which make Filipino women who, while aware of their own influence from the sidelines, transcend the covert area of politics to the overt political domain of elections."

Another phenomenon is the so called "women benchwarmers". Due to term limits, wives and daughters have taken over the positions left by the husbands or fathers for one term and then the man makes a comeback. While this simply reaffirms that the men, to a large extent, still control the political careers of women; there are some instances also where women have carved their own niche and in some cases, have outshone men as leaders of this country. One example is in the continuum of civil society activism and public administration.

A significant venue for women in politics is the local government unit (LGU). As NGOs and POs, they can participate in

the local development council if they are accredited. Women can participate in public debate when they have a voice, not only in the halls of congress, but more so in the media. Women, especially in the rural areas need information on the issues that could affect their lives and only then can they participate and decide on local issues and concerns.. The right to information as well as the right to be heard is important if women are to achieve gender equality.

Source: <http://www.fes.org.ph/papers/womeninpol.htm>

B. Right to peace and human security

Women and children are most vulnerable when it comes to war. Women are targeted precisely because they are women. For example, they are raped in order to humiliate, frighten and defeat the "enemy" group to which they belong. Their children go missing or they themselves are kidnapped and held hostage.

Women are regularly involved as peace makers because it is in their interest and their families' to be safe from harm. They make good negotiators in the peace process. Enough to eat, a home, health, education, freedom from violence, safety during natural and man-made disasters, democracy, good governance and respect for human rights are all basic elements of human security.

Peace is not only the absence of war. It is also peace that comes with security of domicile, especially for the IPs. Indigenous peoples (IPs) are frequently located in isolated and inaccessible areas that are, however, rich in natural resources. One of the principal challenges faced by IPs is represented by so called 'development aggression' and commercial activities, since activities such as mining and logging affect their lands and ancestral homes.

Due to political conflict, rural women especially the Lumads and Moros have become internal refugees, with no clear vision of the future when fighting will end. Meanwhile their lives are on hold.

The right to shelter is a basic human right and must prevail over the business of mining and logging. As with any property, natural resources sitting on ancestral land must be weighed for the greater good and should benefit all. The implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is focused on concrete actions to promote the inter-linked issues of women's empowerment, gender equality and human security.

IV. Conclusion

Women's human rights in the Philippines are in protect and in place -at least on paper. The government has signed and agreed to all kinds of treaties and enacted laws in compliance to the Beijing Platform of Action, CEDAW, the ICPD and is currently trying to catch up with the MDGs. Yet, implementation of these laws, as well as basic services are not consistent. As we have seen in this report, rural women, IP and Moro women are marginalized. Special attention to improve their situation especially that of access to education and health should be the priority of government.

Ending violence against women and children – rape, trafficking, domestic violence, prostitution -- comes with ending poverty, and other social and cultural factors must be addressed – religion, media, and conflict.

Labor rights of Filipino women must be enforced, close the wage gap and end discrimination in the work place. Migration has a female face and there lies a big task ahead in protecting their rights all over the world wherever they are. Economic rights include the right to education which promises jobs and a way out of poverty, hopefully end migration in the future. The right to health is a matter of life and death for every woman. And healthy educated women will improve the lives of families and communities.

Lastly, women's political participation and in other decision-making bodies will improve people's lives as a whole as women are involved in planning and deciding issues affecting their communities so that everyone can be free from fear and want

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Olivia Hubilla-Tripon is the Executive Director of the Women's Feature Service Philippines Inc., a news agency reporting on development from the women's perspective. She is a former newspaper columnist, a published author and editor, and has covered most international conferences on women since the 1990s.

For this report, she was assisted by a research team of student interns: Jacqueline Cervantes, Korina Mabuan, and Izagene Padilla from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines.