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The Philippine Development Plan: An overview

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THE PHILIPPINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN: An Overview

1. Before the adoption of the UN World Plan of Action in the IWY Conference in Mexico in July, 1975 and its subsequent approval by the UN General Assembly, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) had formulated the Philippine Development Plan for 1974 - 1977. An examination of these two documents shows common concerns and targets. The basic difference lies in the emphasis of the UN World Plan of Action on the cause and greater involvement of women, their fuller integration in national and international development whereas the Philippine Development Plan considered development *en toto* regardless of sex. The 1974 - 1977 National Development Plan which was general in its formulation of programs and strategies was addressed to the Filipino people in general, women included.

2. In the 1978 - 1982 Plan, however, there is a recognition of the importance of women in development as stated in Section 6.6 on Social Welfare Policy and recognizes the changing role of women in modern society.

3. The ultimate goal of the 1978 - 1982 Philippine Development Plan is the achievement of an improved quality of life for every Filipino.

4. To this end the Philippine government has instituted policies and geared its programs to the acceleration of socio-economic development with focus on the rural areas where 69.2% of the population lives. The Ministries, particularly the newly created Ministry of Human Settlement have come up with programs directed towards the improvement of the individuals, their homes and communities. The Private Sector has been motivated to participate in the over-all development program. Studies and statistics show the marked progress of the country over the last five years and the significant involvement of women in the development program.

NCRFW: The National Machinery on Women's Affairs

5. The creation of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) is a milestone in Philippine history. For there has been set up this machinery that can maximize Filipino women's potentials and efforts for nation building.

6. The NCRFW was created by Presidential Decree No. 633 on January 6, 1975 to "ensure the full integration of women for economic, social and cultural development at national, regional and international levels". Its functions are: to advise the President in formulating policies and implementing programs on increased contribution by women in national development; to ensure that the gains which Filipino women have achieved will be preserved and enhanced in the process of modernization; to continuously review and evaluate the extent to which women are integrated in all sectors of economic and social life at all levels on a basis of equality with men; make recommendations which could guarantee the enjoyment by women and men of full equality before the law in all fields where it does not exist; and implement programs to increase contributions by women to national development.

7. To ensure equal representation from all sectors, the Commission has representatives in its Board from the educational, labor, legal, economic, youth, diplomatic, social services, local government, human environment, history and media, science, arts, culture and cultural minority sectors both from government and non-governmental organizations - all unified under the leadership of its Chairman, the First Lady Madame Imelda Romualdez Marcos.

8. Multi-faceted programs covering various concerns have been carried out by the NCRFW in line with its functions as enumerated in the Presidential Decree. Some of these include a review of Philippine laws undertaken jointly with the U.P. Law Center, the U.P. College of Law and the Women Lawyer's Groups where discriminatory provisions against women were pointed out. Forums were conducted in 13 cities and provinces on the proposed amendments to the law. Workshops on Popularization of the Law were likewise held and these have given basic information in Philippine statutes to the working people. Among the Presidential Decrees/ Proclamations initiated and sponsored by NCRFW are the Maternity Leave amendment whereby the Social Security System shares with the employer the cost of maternity leave pay; Presidential Proclamation 1609 on Balikatan - officially recognizing the partnership of government and private sector in the development efforts, and LOI 974 directing all government arms to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. particularly in the areas of employment and work opportunities and to ensure their participation in planning, policy and decision making process.

9. The NCRFW and the Philippine Society of International Law called a forum to gather public opinion and to discuss thoroughly whether the Philippine government should ratify or accede to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women with or without reservations.

10. Literacy projects were undertaken in regions where literacy rates were lowest. These were the "Magbassa Kita" (Let Us Read) which graduated 1,018 adults in Western Mindanao and "Matiya Tanu", a replication of Magbassa Kita in Central Mindanao. Learning modules that would eliminate sexism in school curricula at all levels were produced in 1976. The NCRFW educational program is supplemented by its special library, its publication and the assistance which it extends for the printing and dissemination of information on women, on government policies and programs as well as to the various fora, conferences and symposia it holds on current issues.

11. The NCRFW maintains a National Data Bank on Women which serves as a monitoring arm for storage, retrieval and dissemination of information on women. It also conducts studies and researches which will serve as basis in formulating policies for the advancement of Filipino women and likewise establishes linkages with other organizations for purposes of exchanging information on women.

12. One of the main thrusts of NCRFW is geared principally toward income generating activities. It has extended technical and financial assistance to duly established local units whose projects seek to promote self-reliance, increase family income, upgrade vocational competence and develop management capabilities among women. Economic projects are varied ranging from production of low-cost materials (garments, food, etc.) to formation of cooperatives. A more popular undertaking is the Scrap Recycling Project where women make use of excess and discarded cloth, can and paper materials from factories and homes and make out new things from these.

13. The National Commission has likewise participated actively in national and international affairs of immediate and special concern to women. Since 1975, NCRFW has held 3 National Women's Congresses, 2 Multi-Regional Workshops on Developing Managerial Skills for Income-Generating Projects, and a host of other seminar-workshops on the municipal and provincial levels which have made a significant impact on the people. In cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions for Higher

Learning (ASAIHL), it sponsored the seminar on the "Role of Women in Development: Implications for Higher Education in Southeast Asia". It took charge of the "Colloquium of Experts" and the "International Seminar on Leadership Training for Rural Women in Socio-Economic Development" in 1979 in coordination with the International Council of Women (ICW) and the Civic Assembly of Women of the Philippines (CAWP). The Commission assisted Philippine delegates to international conferences and seminars such as the UNESCO Conferences in Bonn, Paris and Geneva, World Women's Congress in Berlin, ASEAN Seminar on Women and Employment in Malaysia, etc., all of which were relevant to the role of women in economics, health, education, labor and social participation.

14. Considered as the most important achievement of the NCRFW was its evolvement of a program and a strategy which has become its major vehicle in reaching out to all the women in the country - the BALIKATAN SA KAUNLARAN.

BALIKATAN SA KAUNLARAN: A Philippine Strategy for
Fuller Integration of Filipino Women in National
Development

15. Balikatan sa Kaunlaran (BSK) which literally means "working together for progress, shoulder to shoulder in a synergized action towards national development" is the main vehicle in effectively carrying out NCRFW programs. Its main objective is to fully integrate women, men and youth for economic, social and cultural development through coordination of government and organized private efforts to maximize benefits for the people.

16. Balikatan launched as a movement on January 6, 1977 by virtue of Presidential Proclamation 1609, has gained wide acceptance all over the country especially in the rural area. It has become necessary to set up a structure to sustain the interest and enthusiasm generated and developed among women in the BSK units/councils/chapters.

17. BSK focuses on five (5) major areas of concern namely: conservation not only of material resources (e.g. energy and oil) but also Filipino values and way of life basic to national identity; concern for environment; consumer protection; commitment to justice, and care for children. It aims to catalyze the Balikatan spirit among existing government and private agencies and encourage women to move into a self-reliance that reaches out with compassion and commitment to unity for national progress.

18. The main target of BSK are women who constitute 49.4% of the Philippine population. It gives due recognition to the importance of harnessing this untapped sector of society which can no longer be ignored especially the rural women who comprise the bulk of the sector. Balikatan units organized at the provincial, municipal and barangay levels go through three phases of development:

Phase I - Organizational

The NCRFW makes representation with local government executives and organized volunteer/civic group to launch Balikatan in the provincial level. A survey is made on the profile of the community including organizations with their objectives, activities and officers for better coordination. With the assistance of the government officials and women leaders an orientation-seminar-workshop is arranged to formally launch the strategy in the province. Women from all sectors of society are invited to listen to resource-speakers talk about the rights and potentials of Filipino women. During the workshop, the participants exchange views and issues involving their community. They map out plans on how to carry out BSK in their province to fully integrate women in developmental activities. A set of officers is elected by the participants who will compose the BSK Provincial Councils/Chapters.

Once the Provincial Council is formed, elected officers in turn organize BSK in the municipalities adopting the same strategy applied in the provincial Council. The municipal officers in turn assist the barangay 1/ representatives to establish BSK in their respective areas.

Phase II - Operational

The Balikatan Council is formed with the representatives from government and private groups.

1/ Barangay is the smallest political unit in the Philippine consisting of from 100 to 500 families under a headman (Barangay Captain).

Activities are planned and implemented at their respective levels and coordinated by the council in line with the development plans of the place. Women are assisted in improving their socio-economic life through specific training in project management and implementation. Whenever warranted, the NCRFW extends financial and technical assistance to projects carried out by BSK units. Linkages are also established with support institutions.

Phase III - Assessment/Evaluation

Regular assessment is carried out as the program progresses. Simple questionnaire are fielded to get feedbacks as far down as the barangay level. Incentives are given to private volunteers, who in all Balikatan projects work without pay and with complete dedication to the task at hand.

LOPEZ BSK: A Case Study

19. The Lopez BSK Council is presented as a concrete example of how Balikatan works as a strategy to integrate women in development.

20. Quezon province was randomly selected from the 31 provinces where at least 50% of municipalities have organized BSK. Criteria for the final selection of municipality to be studied were that it should be predominantly rural and that 75 - 100% of the barangays should have been organized. The municipality of Lopez was randomly chosen from the 30 towns which fulfilled both requirements.

21. Lopez, a third class municipality and the second largest in Quezon province, has 95 barangays with a total population of 62,921 as of January 1980. It is largely an agricultural area with farming and copra production as main sources of income. It has a port of call, a factory and several commercial establishments which provide employment for other community residents. Handicraft, fan and basket making are major sources of income among women.

22. On September 15-16, 1977 the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women conducted a 2-day seminar in Lucena City to launch the Balikatan sa Kaunlaran in Quezon Province. A delegation from Lopez headed by the

mayor's wife echoed the seminar in their municipality on October 15, 1977. This echo seminar which was attended by the wives of the municipal councilmen and barangay captains, as well as representatives from the different sectors of the community was made possible with the full support of the municipal mayor and local officials. Participants during the seminar decided to bring down the BSK to the barangay level, thus creating the 95 different chapters.

23. The objectives of Lopez, Quezon Balikatan sa Kaunlaran include: education of women to have more knowledge and skills for an integrated development; establishment and maintenance of linkages with the different agencies; mapping out programs and services that can be initiated or assisted by the units.

24. Sample barangays of Lopez were studied to determine how the local officials and other members of the community perceive BSK and to determine the activities of the BSK and their effects on the community. All 95 barangays of the town were considered in the study. Since BSK is organized to the "purok" ^{3/} level, the basic criteria in the selection of areas was the direction (N, S, W, E) and relative position (distance from each other) of the barangays. Two barangays each from the north, south, west and east and two from the poblacion (total of 10) were randomly selected from the detailed map of the town. Barangays selected were Hondagua, Mal-ay, Del Pilar, Bocboc, Banabahin Ilaya, Rosario, Concepcion, Calantipayan, Rizal and Tan-ag Ibaba. Participants to a group discussion-interview session were divided into three. The first group consisted of officers and members of the BSK; the second group consisted of local officials and other members of the council, and the third group consisted of male and female non-balikatan members. Three different sets of discussion interview guidelines based on different objectives (for interviewing each group) were used. Sessions were tape recorded.

25. Activities of the 10 barangays showed that programs and services undertaken were in pursuance of the Lopez BSK. Income-generating projects to augment the income of the families were carried out. To make use of local materials (anahaw and buri) fan making and basket weaving

^{3/} "Purok" is a defined street, block or identifiable compact neighborhood.

activities have been implemented and these generated an approximate amount of P10.00 additional daily income for about 80% of the 1,638 families. Whenever necessary selected community members undergo skills training in handicrafts, dressmaking, tailoring and food preservations under the sponsorship of the Balikatan in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), the National Cottage Industries Development Authority (NACIDA), the Bureau of Agricultural Extension (BAEx) and the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

26. Sanitation and Nutrition projects were likewise implemented to improve the general health status of the people. In barangay Hondagua, for example, sanitary inspection was conducted by a BSK medical team to survey the sanitary condition of the community. Based on their findings, the women installed 60 water-sealed toilets financed by funds they raised in the amount of P4,985.00. A total of about 288 mothers in 5 barangays participated in the feeding program held in coordination with the Ministry of Social Services and Development by giving free services in the preparation of nutritious food for the children. Food production to supplement dietary requirements is common to all barangays. The Bureau of Plant Industry extends assistance in this aspect. Free medical services are likewise provided through linkages established by BSK women.

27. To enable women to gain more knowledge and skills, educational programs geared to integrated development had been undertaken. Various seminars on leadership skills and citizenship training were conducted in order to increase the level of awareness of women of their roles towards their family and community. Mothers who have available time were motivated thru Balikatan membership to enroll in non-formal vocational courses. These seminars were held in coordination with different agencies, particularly the MEC and MSSD, who provided technical assistance.

28. Another notable project is the compilation and printing of the "Kasaysayan ng Lahi ng Bayan ng Lopez" (History of the 95 barangays) which consists of researches done by the balikatan members. The women conceived of this project in their desire to preserve the town's history and tradition. In their desire to provide an opportunity to poor but deserving youth to pursue higher studies, they raised P14,200.00 to finance scholarship grants in the secondary level. The top eleven (11) were chosen out of the 101 examinees from the different barangays.

An annual budget of P3,550.00 is allotted for the tuition fees and school supplies of those who maintain an average of 85% or higher.

29. For the past years, Balikatan women have always been spearheading the commemoration of national holidays, particularly, Independence Day celebration. In these undertakings 85% of the total Balikatan members have always been actively participating. This impressed local officials who later passed a resolution giving Balikatan the authority to plan and organize activities for the 1979 Independence Day celebration.

30. Balikatan women are also involved in other activities as an extension of their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Examples of these are fund-raising programs for the construction and repair of chapels in barangays Calantipayan, Concepcion and Mal-ay from which they were able to raise P15,000.00. They also conducted house-to-house campaigns to solicit used clothing for distribution to the indigents. On the other hand, beautification and cleanliness drives have always been one of the continuing projects of the women. A portion of P5,000.00 from the barangay fund was given to BSK for the construction of rest houses along trails and feeder roads on the way to remote barrios. Finally, BSK also provides counsel in cases of minor disputes and problems among the families.

31. As can be deduced from the Lopez-Balikatan study, the strategy indeed helped to promote the fuller integration of women in community development. The program has succeeded in organizing and mobilizing the womenfolk in the 95 barangays and the municipality of Lopez.

32. Balikatan has brought tremendous change in the outlook of the menfolk of Lopez. They ceased to look at women as plain housekeepers or as their inferior; rather they developed respect towards them as partners in community building as shown by the recognition made by municipal officials in designating them to plan and organize the towns commemoration of Independence Day. Women in return started to realize that they have potentials to assist men in the task of nation-building. The once traditional and passive outlook of women regarding their roles at home and in the community was transformed into a more dynamic realization of the challenges beyond home-making functions. Based on the interviews of 160 barangay women, Balikatan has served as a unifying force for their community. In the Balikatan way, they come to the Barangay Center to discuss matters of special interest and

which continually add to their enlightenment. Their social inter-relationship has improved and cooperation has enhanced neighborhood activities. The goodwill generated by the movement added to the atmosphere of peace and joy the women in turn bring to their homes.

BSK IN THE PHILIPPINES: Status and Highlights

33. The BSK has been organized in 57 provinces (out of 75), 46 cities, 512 municipalities and 3,592 barangays with a total membership of 1,116,007. This shows that Balikatan is gaining wide acceptance due to that fact that this "strategy" has sprung from the core of the Filipino way of life. It emphasizes Filipino values and traditions. Since it is indigenous to the culture, introducing it to the communities was not difficult. The basic concept of working "shoulder-to-shoulder" does not make the men feel threatened. The concrete contributions of these women to the community thru Balikatan and its beneficial effects to their families have motivated the men to extend their full support and cooperation.

34. While the NCRFW has initiated, assisted and implemented various projects, it is worthy to mention that it has been very active in mobilizing the private sector in its operations. A sum total of P31,595,000.00 was spent for Balikatan projects for the year 1977-1979. Of this amount only P580,814.00 or 1.8% represents the assistance of the Commission while the remaining P31,014,452.00 or 98.2% was generated by the different BSK units through fund-raising and linkages with other government agencies and private organizations. It is estimated that a total of 6,905,098 were directly benefited by these projects.

35. While the figures and listing of programs and projects are indicative of the NCRFW Balikatan achievements, what cannot be quantified is the degree of the social consciousness aroused in the women, as well as the change in their attitude of complacency and indifference. The recognition made by government officials on the potentials of women and the cooperation extended to women's projects show how the promotion of Balikatan concept has effected all of these.

36. It is significant to note that every country has its own unique set of traditions and values. Each can explore and cultivate its cultural traditions that could lead towards mobilizing various sectors to participate in nation-building - happily and effectively. This has been proven by Balikatan - Philippine strategy for the fuller integration of women in nation-building.