



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
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**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard
to the consideration of the combined fifth and sixth
periodic reports**

Philippines*

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

Constitutional, legislation and status of the Convention

- 1. The report states that a legal definition of discrimination against women that is aligned with the definition in Art. 1 of the Convention has not been put into law (para. 119). Please clarify the legal standing of the Convention with respect to national legislation. Does the Government intend to introduce legislation that will define and explicitly prohibit discrimination against women as defined by Art. 1 of the Convention? Also, please clarify the status of the Convention in the domestic legal system and whether the Convention can be used in court cases.*

The Philippine Constitution carries the ‘equality guarantee’ of the Convention, but has not explicitly stated the ‘non-discrimination guarantee’. While as of now there is no enabling law that directly translates the Convention into national law defining discrimination against women and providing sanctions/ penalties for violation of the Convention, there are laws that provide for the protection of women in specific circumstances. These are mentioned in the country report (para. 116).

While the Convention cannot be used to bring violators of discrimination against women, it can however be cited as a reference for prosecution or defense.

A proposed bill, the Magna Carta for Women Bill (House Bill 5285) was recently introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Josefina Josen. The bill is a comprehensive piece of legislation that covers the full range of women’s rights in all aspects of the family, community and society. It intensifies the State’s commitment to protect and fulfill all human rights of women, especially the women from the marginalized sector which includes rural women, fisherfolk, urban poor, laborers, women in the informal sector, indigenous peoples, girl-children, older women and disabled women.

Article 1 of the bill adopts the CEDAW definition of discrimination in Article of the Convention as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality with men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural and civil or any other field.” The bill is on its Second Reading in the House of Representatives.

- 2. The report mentions that the Family Code, the Civil Code, the Code of Muslim Personal Laws, the Revised Penal Code, and Customary Law still contain provisions that are discriminatory to women or are inconsistent with new laws, for example in defining sexual infidelity for women and men (para. 559). Please indicate whether a timetable has been put in place to review and amend these laws so as to bring them into line with the Convention.*

There are several existing laws that still have discriminatory provisions such as the Family Code (Art. 46, 96, 211 and 225) Civil Code (Art. 39, 765, 2238, 919), Code of Muslim Personal Laws (Art. 27-29), Revised Penal Code (Art. 333 and 334) and customary laws. Several bills that aim to amend these laws are now pending in the legislature.

The Marital Infidelity Bill, which substitutes the terms “adultery” and “concubinage” under Articles 333 and 334 of the Revised Penal Code with the term “infidelity,” has already been passed on 1st Reading in the House of Representatives. It will be reported out of the Committee on the Revision of Laws, pending its 2nd Reading. A similar bill was filed in the Senate and has been referred to the

Committees on Youth, Women and Family Relations, and Constitutional Amendments, Revision of Laws.

A pending bill in the House of Representatives seeks to amend Article 96 of the Family Code, which states that the husband's decision shall prevail in cases of disagreement in the administration and enjoyment of community property. Once passed, the law will grant the wife equal standing with the husband in this regard.

A similar bill has been filed in the Senate to amend Art. 96, 124, 211 and 225 of the Family Code, which provides judicial intervention in cases of disagreement between husband and wife over the administration and enjoyment of community property and conjugal partnership property, and the exercise of parental authority and legal guardianship over the person and property of unemancipated common child.

Several versions of the Anti-Prostitution Bill, which impose stiffer penalties and sanctions on pimps, operators and agents, and provide social services and programs to help victims of prostitution, have been filed in the House of Representatives. The bills are currently being consolidated based on the comments and inputs of the members of the Technical Working Group in the Committee on the Revision of Laws, of which NCRFW is an active member.

The bill to amend the Code of Muslim Personal Laws has been pending with the House Committee on Muslim Affairs since 2004. Deliberations on the draft bill to amend the said Code in the Regional Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao are likewise underway.

There is no definite timeframe set for the passage of these bills since the prioritization of pending bills depends on the political agenda of both houses of the legislature and the results of the consultations, and debates on these proposals. Continuous advocacy and lobbying by NGOs and women's groups are being undertaken to hasten the passage of these bills. Likewise, the Anti-Prostitution Bill has been included as among the priority bills of the House Committee on the MDGs.

3. *According to the report, the Government plans to complete implementation of its gender and statistics programme in order to monitor changes in the status of women and the fulfillment of their human rights (para. 25). Kindly provide information on the set of 32 core indicators of the status of women and women's enjoyment of their rights mentioned in paragraph 20 and assess progress in the systematic use of gender and development indicators in policymaking in all relevant areas.*

Among the significant results of the CIDA-supported Institutional Strengthening Project II (ISP-II) component on the "Improvement of Statistics on Gender Issues" from 1997 to 2002, has been the strengthened commitment of key statistical agencies in addressing necessary data support for analysis of gender issues. In 2002, the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), the country's policymaking and coordination agency for statistical matters, approved Resolution No. 5 Series of 2001 on Statistical Framework on the GAD Indicators.

This framework was developed based on the vision and strategies for gender and development (GAD) contained in the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD 1995-2025)—the 30 year plan of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women and the Beijing Platform

for Action (BPFA) which are closely interrelated and interdependent. Twenty (20) major indicators (with a total of 32 impact indicators), were developed to monitor and assess the state of GAD in the country and show the overall situation of women. These indicators were classified according to the 12 critical areas of concerns in the BPFA as well as on the statistical requirements and standards of the core GAD statistical framework at the macro level.

In 2001, the NCRFW introduced the Framework Plan for Women (FPW) which is the short term program of the Arroyo administration during her incumbency. In October 2005, the NSCB Executive Board approved the recommendations of the Inter-agency Committee on Gender Statistics (IACGS) to address data gaps from its latest data assessment of the Core GAD Indicators and the Framework Plan for Women (FPW) Indicators. In Resolution No. 12, the National Statistical Coordinating Board directed thirteen (13) agencies to come up with action plans to address data gaps and ensure availability of required data and statistics for monitoring the progress on the status of Filipino women.

While the Core GAD Indicators are used to monitor the changes in the over-all status of the Filipino women in the long term, the FPW indicators are essentially additional indicators that monitor the changes in the situation of the Filipino women in the short term as well as the progress of government interventions to address gender issues at the program level. When used alongside each other, both indicator sets complement data requirements and information needs in showing the state of Filipino women and determining development areas and gaps.

The NSCB has started compiling the statistics of Core GAD Indicators in one databank to ensure its proper updating and documentation. The database was uploaded and has been in the NSCB website (www.nscb.gov.ph) since November 2004 to provide relevant, timely, and user-friendly information on gender issues. It covers major sectors/areas such as population and families, work, agriculture, education, health and nutrition, social welfare, public life, and violence against women and children. Aside from the updates on existing indicators, the database has likewise been expanded to include four additional sectors – economic participation, environment, migration, and peace and human rights. It publishes and disseminates Factsheets on Women and Men annually. The 2006 Statistical Handbook on Women and Men in the Philippines, a triennial publication of NSCB, will be released by the end of May 2006. In addition to the updates from the online database, the publication will also include new indicators on human rights and those related to the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs, particularly on education, work, and economic participation of women and children.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) on the other hand generates sex-disaggregated data and publishes gender statistics through its website (www.census.gov.ph), and annual factsheet, “Gender Quickstat”, a quarterly update of NSO’s most requested sex-disaggregated statistics. Sex-disaggregated tables from surveys on demography, children, family planning, family income and expenditure, vital statistics, labor and employment, and overseas workers are available online.

The National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) utilized the Core GAD Indicators in the assessment and updating of the government’s Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010. The availability of select gender statistics enriched analysis of issues and discussion of government interventions, particularly on job creation, social justice and basic needs, health and education. It highlighted the need for the direct, sex-disaggregated measurement of income poverty to illustrate in concrete terms, the feminization of poverty. The Core GAD Indicators also

informed the data assessment in updating the Second Philippine Progress Report on MDGs. Aside from the MDG indicators, it also used the Gender and Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) to augment analysis of achievements in Goal 3 — Promoting Gender Equality. A remaining challenge is that of generating data disaggregated by sex and by province which is critical in monitoring imbalances in distribution of resources and the prioritization of development activities across the country.

The NSCB's Philippine Statistical Development Plan (PSDP) 2005-2010 includes a separate chapter on Social Needs and GAD. Considered a major breakthrough in addressing gender data gaps of Core GAD, FPW, MDGs and CEDAW, the chapter contains provisions on the problems and plans for the collection of sex-disaggregated data and statistics on priority gender issues, which shall be addressed by the government in the next five years. The PSDP serves as a companion document addressing the statistical requirements of the MTPDP. The NSCB also continuously disseminates gender statistics at the local level through its production of annual fact sheets and Handbook on Women and Men by its regional offices. The data serves as inputs to the regional development planning processes spearheaded by the Regional Development Coordinating Councils with NEDA regional offices as secretariat.

Efforts at localizing the development of gender statistics are underway through inter-agency initiatives among international development agencies, government agencies as well as non-government organizations. Under the CIDA-funded Institutional Strengthening Project II (ISP-II), a self-assessment tool (GeRL) Ka Ba? or "Are you a Gender-Responsive Local Government Unit (LGU)?" was developed to determine the current capacity levels of local government units to make their respective localities gender-responsive. This tool shall serve as an appraisal instrument for the gender mainstreaming strategy of the NCRFW at the local level.

As part of the UNFPA Project on Strengthening Government Mechanisms to Mainstream Gender in the Reproductive Health, Population and Anti-Violence Against Women Programs, the Commission on Population committed to improve the Situational Analysis and Socio-Economic Profile of the Population Development Guide by requiring sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators in the local development plans. UNFPA is likewise currently supporting the Development of a VAW Documentation System to enable government to determine the extent of VAW and monitor delivery of services to VAW victims by various agencies such as the police and the Social Welfare Department (DSWD).

The Local Government Department (DILG) is currently enhancing the indicators in the Local Governance Performance Management System (LGPMS) and the Community-based Monitoring System (CBPMS) to make them more gender sensitive by including sex-disaggregated data and other gender indicators.

The Core Local Poverty Indicators (CLPIs) were approved by National Anti Poverty Commission (NAPC) En Banc Resolution 7 in March 2003, for local poverty monitoring and institutionalized at the local level through DILG MC 2003-92 providing for the adoption of the CLPI in local planning. The CLPIs are the minimum set of fourteen (14) carefully selected human development and income-based indicators for poverty diagnosis and planning which includes a maternal mortality indicator.

Violence against women

4. *The report notes that the Family Courts Act of 1997 established family courts in major cities all over the country to foster a more pro-active approach to protecting the rights of women and children against domestic violence and incest (para. 210). Please provide information on whether an assessment of the effectiveness of these courts has been undertaken and related findings, and describe any plans to establish family courts in those cities where they do not yet exist.*

As of December 2000, the Supreme Court of the Philippines has designated 71 Regional Trial Courts across the country to be Family Courts. These family courts have original jurisdiction over cases involving children, conjugal matters such as nullity of marriage and domestic violence. The Supreme Court also pilot tested a Mobile Court that is making the rounds of city jails in Metro Manila to hear cases of overstaying detainees. This Mobile Court hear cases meant for 1st level courts, including family courts. Because of the relative success of the Mobile Court, there are now plans to set up a Mobile Court in the Visayas and another one in Mindanao.

The Supreme Court also recently created the Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary which implements gender mainstreaming in the programs, projects and policies of the judiciary. Among others, the Committee has been training justices, judges and prosecutors in gender sensitive handling of cases. The Philippine Judicial Academy, the training arm of the Supreme Court has likewise included RA 9208 (Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act) and RA 9262 (Anti Violence Against Women and their Children Act or Anti- VAWC) in their teaching modules. Gender Sensitivity has also been included as one of the required subjects in the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) of lawyers which is also under the supervision of the Supreme Court. A study has yet to be made on the effectiveness of the Family Courts as well as of the Anti- VAWC Act in terms of protecting the rights of women and children against domestic violence and incest.

5. *The report indicates that from 1995 to 2001, the Philippine Commission on Human Rights investigated 377 cases of violation of women's human rights and that the perpetrators were identified as police officers, local officials or employees, civilians, military personnel (para. 131). Please provide information on the number of prosecutions that have been brought against these individuals and the sentences imposed. What measures are being taken to prevent violation of women's human rights by police officers and other public officials who abuse their authority?*

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR) cannot provide consolidated data on the status of these 377 cases of violation of women's human rights allegedly committed by police officers, local officials or employees, civilians, and military personnel, which they investigated. According to the CHR, once a resolution on each of these cases is made, whether the recommendation is for prosecution or dismissal, the case are referred to the appropriate prosecutory agency.

Unfortunately, the occupation of the perpetrator are not captured in the data collected; thus there is no way of determining how many have been committed by police officers, military personnel, local officials or employees, or civilians. At present, data from various agencies are still being collected and processed.

As a measure to prevent the violation of women's human rights by police officers and other public officials, the CHR practices a very stringent policy in issuing a certification that they have not been subject to a complaint for violation of human rights. Such a certification is often required for

promotions and to access certain benefits. Also, the Philippine National Police, Commission on Human Rights, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women among others continue to conduct awareness-raising activities to members of the civilian, police, and military personnel and government officials and employees as an important measure to prevent the violation of women's rights.

6. *The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people indicates that militarization has engendered human rights violations against women and children (E/CN.4/2003/90/Add.3, para. 50). Most of these abuses are cases of rape, sexual harassment, forcing girls to serve as "comfort women" in military camps and compulsory prostitution. Kindly explain the measures taken by the Government to address the issue of violence against indigenous women.*

There is still a need to reconcile the data gathered and received by government. While the Commission on Human Rights confirm that there are such cases of abuses committed against IP women, they do not have the exact numbers of cases or complaints filed. Meanwhile, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) asserts that they have not received nor have been notified by their regional and field offices of any rape and forced prostitution of indigenous women perpetrated by members of the Armed forces of the Philippines (AFP). According to the NCIP, no such cases were brought to their attention during the consultation of all the 63 Provincial Consultative Bodies and 3 City Consultative Bodies of the Indigenous Peoples Consultative Body from December 2004 to February 2005. At present the Philippine government is in the process of reconciling these data and tracking the status of the said cases.

There is an existing legislation in place, the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA, 1997) which aims to promote and protect the rights of IP women, as stated in Chapter V (Social Justice and Human Rights), especially Section 26, which states that "ICC/IP women shall enjoy equal rights and opportunities with men, as regards the social, economic, political and cultural spheres of life."

NCIP advocates for the rights of IP/ICC women as part of its policy advocacy on the human rights of IPs/ICCs. It conducts Information and Education Consultations (IEC) in IP/ICC communities about their rights stated in the IPRA, Universal Declaration on Human Rights, including the CEDAW.

In February 2006, a National Workshop on IP Women in Development was conducted in Baguio City, which comprised of NCIP, UP Baguio's Gender Studies Program, NGOs and IP women from seven IP/ICCs all over the Philippines. The workshop resulted in the creation of a Plan of Action for indigenous women, which would include mechanisms to promote and protect their women's rights to be free from VAW and other forms of abuse and exploitation. Writeshops and other activities to draft the said plan are ongoing.

7. *The report states that the Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 aims to stem the high incidence of violence against women and criminalize perpetrators (para. 207). The Act also provides for issuance of "protection orders" to stop violence and prevent recurrence of future violence. Please provide information on measures taken to disseminate the Act in society, especially among women and other people in the community, and how many "protection orders" have been issued since 2004. Please also provide information on action to train judges, police officers and other law enforcement personnel with regard to the provisions of the Act.*

The Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and Their Children (IACVAWC) led in the public information campaign to disseminate RA 9262 to government agencies, service providers, law enforcement officers, survivors and the general public. Orientation seminars and training on the law were given to police officers, *barangay* or village officials, health workers and social workers. A nationwide training of prosecutors on the gender-sensitive handling of cases of RA 9262 and RA 9208 were also conducted. The Civil Service Commission conducted fora on the law for different government employees. The Commission on Human Rights conducted 14 seminars, 8 lectures and 32 inter-agency symposia and dialogues on various human rights topics where a discussion of RA 9262 has been integrated. The Department of Health conducted orientation sessions for their clients in their Women and Children Protection Units to inform them of their rights and the government services that they can avail of. For their part, the Department of Interior and Local government conducted various orientation seminars to various *barangays* (villages). The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women together with the Department of Justice, conducted a national training of prosecutors to familiarize them with RA 9262 and make them gender sensitive in the handling of VAWC cases.

NGOs and local government units have initiated orientations in their respective localities among women's groups and *barangay* (village) officials, including orientation on issuing *barangay* protection orders.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

8. *The Report notes that the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 sets penalties for various types of offences related to trafficking (para. 188 (c)). Please provide information on the rate of arrests and convictions under the Act.*

Since the Law was passed in 2003, the Philippine National Police conducted 25 rescue operations, rescued 137 persons, and arrested 57 persons for violation of RA 9208. The National Bureau of Investigation received and investigated 22 cases for violation of the Anti-Trafficking of Persons Law.

In terms of prosecution of cases, the Department of Justice (DOJ) received 12 cases in 2003, three (3) of which were dismissed. In 2004, 60 cases were filed, 13 of which are pending investigation, 27 are pending trial, 4 cases were dropped, and 2 were dismissed. There were 4 cases that were later convicted. In 2005, 114 cases reached the DOJ, 67 of which are pending investigation, 29 are pending trial, 14 cases have been dismissed, and 2 cases were dropped. There were 3 cases that reached conviction, bringing the total convictions to seven (7) as of March 2006.

Based on RA 9262, *barangays* and courts are supposed to issue *Barangay Protection Orders* and temporary/ permanent protection orders to victims of VAW. There is a DILG memo for *barangays* to this effect. However, compliance to the memo cannot be ascertained as of this date, as there is no systematic monitoring system in place yet. The IACVAWC Subcommittee on Monitoring is still in the process of developing a monitoring system to systematically collect data on VAWC.

9. *In its previous concluding comments, the Committee commented on the discrimination in the application of laws against women prostitutes but not against the men involved as traffickers, pimps and clients, and suggested that measures dealing with prostitution should focus on penalizing traffickers.¹ Please provide information on what effective measures have been taken to stop discriminatory application of laws and to focus on penalizing traffickers.*

A consolidated bill, based on 11 earlier bills is currently pending in the House of Congress (HOR). Called the “Anti-Prostitution Act”, the bill seeks to decriminalize the prostituted persons and penalizes pimps, brothel and other establishment owners, and customers of prostituted persons. This bill, when passed, will amend the existing Article 202 of the Revised Penal Code which criminalizes prostituted persons.

Sec. 11 of RA 9208 (Anti Trafficking in Persons Act) specifically penalizes using the services of trafficked persons for prostitution. Of the seven convictions for violation of RA 9208, one of is for the violation of Sec. 11. Initially however, this particular case was for violation of the heavier offenses of trafficking, but the defendant pleaded guilty to a lesser offense of using the services of a trafficked person. In view of this, the DOJ issued a memorandum to all its prosecutors not to allow a suspected trafficker prosecuted for violation of the heavier offense of trafficking, to use Sec. 11 to get off with a lighter sentence.

10. *The report states that in January 1999, the Philippine Centre on Transnational Crime was created and tasked with establishing a shared central database among government agencies for information on criminals, arrests and convictions on various transnational crimes, including trafficking in human beings (para. 198). Please assess progress in the systematic use of the Centre and evaluate its impact on combating trafficking.*

In 2003, the PCTC established a database for trafficking of persons. This project aims to integrate and systematically store human trafficking cases gathered or received from stakeholders in the government as well as from non-government organizations. To date, the database contains 6,500 entries from local and international counterparts and external sources like the print media.

Through the INTERPOL Global Communication System 24/7, the PCTC has increased its capability in gathering and disseminating information regarding human trafficking cases, especially with the growing number of trafficking cases to Malaysia. Two new cases are currently being investigated and the involved Malaysian trafficker is being monitored by the PCTC through the INTERPOL.

There remains an urgent need to increase the PCTC’s database capacity and improve its accessibility and interconnectivity with other government agencies. The PCTC will be initiating a regular Inter-Agency meeting of government agencies and NGOs to create a directory of contact persons and focal points and systematize the use of the database.

11. *According to the report, data reported on human trafficking is very low compared to the number of actual victims not reported. The report attributes this to the lack of a systematic monitoring mechanism on the movement of Philippine migrants (para. 180). Please indicate measures taken to introduce a systematic monitoring mechanism on the movement of Philippine migrants.*

¹ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/52/38/Rev.1), paras. 292 and 299.

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) has a database of Filipino emigrants called the “Filipinos Overseas Information System”. However, this contains information of emigrants who have returned their filled up forms to the Commission and cannot capture the information of those who did not respond to the CFO’s questionnaires. Many OFWs leave under various pretexts, making it difficult to protect their rights. Only when problems arise does the CFO learn of their plights. There is a difficulty of disseminating information widely, particularly on the risks faced by undocumented OFWs.

The NCRFW is currently developing a national VAW documentation system which will also capture trafficking cases. The system is envisioned to link the databases of frontline VAW service agencies such as the Philippine National Police, the Departments of Social Welfare and Development, Health, Justice, and Local Government. As part of its development, the intake and tracking forms of these frontline service agencies are being examined and supplemental forms are being developed to capture the needed data. This project is expected to be completed by 2010.

Included in the Interagency Committee Against Trafficking’s (IACAT) National Strategic Plan of Action is the setting up of a national trafficking database. However, this project has not yet taken off due to funding limitations.

Participation in political and public life

12. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee recommended that temporary special measures be adopted to increase the participation of women in top-level decision-making positions in the public sector:² Please provide an update on the status of proposed laws to provide for temporary special measures to increase women’s participation described in paragraph 43 of the report, as well as on any alternative measures contemplated or implemented to increase the number of women in public office.

Two bills — the Local Sectoral Representation (LSR) which includes women representation and Gender Balance bills are currently pending on First Reading at the House of Representatives and Senate of the Philippines in the 13th Congress. The LSR bills provide for the election of three sectoral representatives each in the provincial, municipal and councils (*sanggunians*) — one from the women sector, one from the workers and one from any of the following: the urban poor, indigenous cultural communities, disabled persons, and the elderly. The Gender Balance bills, on the other hand, propose to implement a gender quota system to ensure that women are granted the following: a) access to appointive positions in the national and local government; and b) full participation in the electoral and political process.

The LSR bills are pending with the Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms of the House of the Representatives and with the Committees on Constitutional Amendments, Revision of Codes and Laws; and Local Government of the Senate of the Philippines. The Gender Balance bills are pending with the Committee on Women of the House of Representatives and Committees on Youth, Women and Family Relations; Civil Service and Government Reorganization; and Finance of the Senate of the Philippines. All bills were filed in 2004 or 2005.

² Ibid., para. 302.

However, the LSR and Gender Balance bills are currently not included in the list of certified urgent bills of the government. A number of measures have been identified to further the efforts to increase women's participation in decision-making positions. The certification of the LSR and Gender Balance bills as urgent bills in the 13th Congress shall be pursued to speed up the enactment of the bills.

In this connection, the Mindanao Commission on Women, a women's NGO based in Mindanao, passed a position paper to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines-Moro Islamic Liberation Front (GRP-MILF) panel requesting that women be provided substantive and meaningful participation in decision-making structures (e.g. at least 30% of the Board of the Bangsamoro Development Agency should be women).

13. The report acknowledges the need for temporary special measures to increase women's participation, especially in the judiciary, police and military academy (para. 258). Has the Government introduced any temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and the Committee's general recommendation 25, to increase women's participation in the judiciary, police and military academy? If yes, please elaborate on these measures.

➤ *Women's Participation in the Philippine National Police*

The Republic Act No. 8551, an Act Providing for the Reform and Reorganization of the Philippine National Police (PNP) which was signed into law in 1998, provided specific measures to increase women's participation in the police force. One of the measures is that one (1) out of four (4) Commissioners of the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) shall be a woman. Pursuant to this provision, the NAPOLCOM had one (1) female Commissioner from 1999 to 2001, two (2) female Commissioners in 2002 and three (3) Commissioners since 2003 where one also serves as Vice-Chair and Executive Director.

Another measure is the prioritization of recruitment and training of women who shall serve in the women's desks within the next five years and the allocation of 10% of the PNP's annual recruitment, training, and education for women. According to PNP data, there are about 9,000 women (around 7% of total police strength) in the police force as of April 2006. Also, there is about an average of 759 women who were recruited annually from 1998 to 2005 for positions of Police Officers 1-3, Inspector to Chief Inspector. There has been a woman police general.

➤ *Women's Participation in the Judiciary*

As of December 31, 1998 (MCLE data), there were a total of 1,451 judges in the courts of First and Second Level (Municipal and Regional Trial Courts, and Court of Appeals). Of these, 259 (17.85%) were women. As of November 2005, there were 1,495 judges in the said levels. Of this number, 419 (28.03%) were women. In the same data, court personnel totaled 17,820, of which 9,298 (52%) were women in 1998, while in 2005, there were a total of 20,501 personnel, and 11,831 (58%) were women. As of now, there are 15 Justices of the Supreme Court including the Chief Justice. Of these, 5 are women.

A number of measures have been initiated to make the Judiciary responsive to women's or gender needs. The Supreme Court embarked on pursuing a strategic gender-mainstreaming plan for

the Philippine Judiciary System. It created the Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary to spearhead the implementation of the plan. Also, seven (7) sub-committees on the following areas were created in pursuant of Supreme Court Memorandum Order No. 32-2004: Training and Capability-Building; Gender Audit and Policies, Programs and Practices; Gender-Responsive Database on the Judicial System; Promotion of the Use of Gender-Fair Language; Organization of Regular Family Courts; Establishment of Committees on Decorum and Investigation (CODI) to hear sexual harassment cases and training of CODI members; and Resource Mobilization.

In 2005, the following critical activities under the Sub-committee on Training and Capability-Building were conducted: 1) conduct of focus group discussions (FGDs), 2) development of the module for Gender Sensitivity Trainings (GST), and 3) conduct of GST. Other activities initiated in 2005 include the organization of the CODI in each court station, and the development of criteria/accreditation of service provider for GST.

In this connection, the Philippine Judicial Academy regularly conducts special focus programs which include gender sensitivity while the Justice Department and NCRFW conducted a GST for prosecutors handling cases on VAW and trafficking in persons. In addition, the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) for all lawyers also includes GAD-related laws such as CEDAW and Violence Against Women and their Children Act.

The Justice Reform Initiatives Support (JURIS) Project consists of three major components: mediation, judicial education and reform advocacy. The gender-related activities include: sex-disaggregation of information on users of mediation, success rates of male and female mediators; inclusion of discussion on the role of gender in mediation; inclusion of concepts on VAWC in the training manual for the mediators; inclusion of gender sensitivity sessions in internship program for law students; and audit of gender programs and formation of GAD plans for members of Alternative Law Groups.

Moreover, the Office of the President recently issued a directive in March 2006 to the NCRFW, justice department and other concerned agencies to constitute a search committee for the appointment of qualified women in the Shari'a courts which currently have only one (1) woman judge.

➤ *Women's Participation in the Philippine Military Academy*

Republic Act No. 7192 of 1993, otherwise known as Women in Development and Nation-Building Act, provides that women shall be accorded with equal opportunities for appointment, admission, training, graduation or commissioning in all military schools. From 2001-2005, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of female cadets in the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). The following are the percentage of female cadets in the PMA: 5.08% (2001), 6.01% (2002), 6.44% (2003), 8.14% (2004), and 11.52% (2005). Female cadets in the PMA have also been showing outstanding performances, landing in the honor rolls of PMA graduating classes. In the past four years, eight (8) female cadets made it to the Top Ten List of PMA graduates (one in 2002, two in 2003, one in 2004, and four in 2005). To date, there are already two female cadets who graduated valedictorians (1999 and 2003), one female cadet who received the athletic award (2002), among other female cadets who received other major awards.

Stereotypes and education

14. Please provide information on the impact of the initiatives listed in paragraph 168 to raise public consciousness and understanding of women's issues in order to address the stereotyped and negative portrayal of women and girls in the media and on any other measures taken to promote a more balanced and non-stereotypical image of women and men in the media.

In recent years, GOs, NGOs and media institutions have actively initiated individual and concerted efforts to address the stereotyped and negative portrayal of women and girls in media.

Quality TV or QTV Channel 11, a commercial television channel launched in November 2005 dubbed as "channel for the Filipina" launched in November 2005, is entirely devoted to discussing the whole gamut of issues and problems affecting the lives of Filipino women. One of the most important program is entitled "Women's Desk" helps/educates women and children victims of abuses. A long-term partnership is also currently being explored between QTV and NCRFW.

A study under the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) conducted by the Miriam College Communication Arts Department and Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA) in 2005 shows an increase in the visibility of women in the news from 1995 to 2004. However, women's under-representation and stereotyping in the news remain. The study shows that women are highest on story topics on celebrity/arts/sports (67%), but lowest on topics that dominate the news agenda, namely politics/government (19%) and economy (18%). Expert opinion in the news is also overwhelmingly male and men are also most likely to represent the popular opinion.

A print survey conducted by the Women's Feature Service (WFS) in ten (10) areas nationwide provides that the media in the National Capital Region (NCR) has an obvious effort to bring out women stories. Their overall treatment of women's stories is positive both in language and photos and there is a clear effort to strike a balance of negative and positive stories in almost all of the sections. However, in other areas covered by the survey, the frequency of coverage on women only averaged 8.5% and 8.7% in dailies and weekly publications, respectively.

NCRFW has been getting increasing requests for gender-related information and experts from broadcast and print media. During the women's month celebration in March 2006 which is celebrated nationwide around a theme (this year's theme is *CEDAW ng Bayan, Karapatan ng Kababaihan* or CEDAW for the Nation and for the Rights of Women) the Commission had 63 interviews on TV, radio, newspapers, and magazines and had also documented the publication of 25 articles on women's rights, achievements, and concerns. These do not include releases by media in local government units.

In a landmark case, women's groups and organizations, children's advocates, civil society organizations and the NCRFW successfully campaigned for the removal of offensive and sexist liquor and radio advertisements in 2004. The Advertising Board of the Philippines (AdBoard) ordered the pull-out of the infamous liquor ad and the liquor company replaced the ad.

The social welfare department's project Empowerment of Paternal Responsibilities (ERPAT) has trained a total of 530 father-volunteers and leaders on parenting and proper child rearing, while its project on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Act has served 3 million children ages 0-6, raised awareness and trained 103,525 parents and other caregivers on responsible parenthood,

prevention of child abuse, health care, among others and trained 8,658 day care workers and midwives on parent effectiveness.

The Philippines also aims to promote a more balanced and non-stereotyped image of women and men in the media. The Women's Feature Service (WFS) and the NCRFW conducted a CEDAW Forum on March 24, 2006 on the role of media and business in promoting women's rights. The government media office, Philippine Information Agency, also trains local media practitioners on gender issues and produces primers on women-related laws.

The DSWD issued a policy (Administrative Order 15) in 2004 on media coverage of victims of abuse and exploitation to safeguard and ensure respect and protection of the rights of VAW victims. The PNP also issued a Memorandum in 2004 mandating a massive campaign against pornography through measures that include mobilization of civilian watch groups, surveillance, and trainings for police personnel.

Awards and incentives are being given for gender-responsive advertisements and films. In 2004, the AdBoard and the NCRFW organized "Kababaihan Awards" (Women Awards) to recognize advertisements that raise awareness on women's issues, roles and rights. For the past two years, the Quezon City GAD Resource Center (QC-GADRCO), together with the annual Metro Manila Film Festival has a Most Gender Sensitive Film Award for the film that best portrays and resolves gender issues and biases. QC-GADRCO and Kalakasan, a women's NGO, are also directly involved in continually providing GST training to film makers.

Film festivals are being held to raise public awareness on women's issues and roles. The University of the Philippines Film Institute and its partners run an International Women's Film Festival annually. In 2005, in celebration of the centennial year of feminism in the Philippines, the National Network for the Feminist Centennial and its partners conducted the Feminist Centennial Film Festival in partnership with the NCRFW, Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), the Mowelfund Film Institute and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) gave recognition to six women filmmaker, actors, writers, and producers of quality films for their outstanding contributions to help advance the feminist movement in the country through their talents. Mowelfund and NCCA also organized a film festival entitled "Aktres: A Tribute to Movie Queens" which celebrated the contributions made by popular actresses in shaping and enriching Philippine cinema and culture.

Women's organizations are actively involved in various awareness raising activities. Isis International Manila facilitates broader exchange of information on various concerns and issues of women through print and electronic newsletters, publications, radio, and community-based advocacy. It also published a gender equality toolkit ("Women in the News: A Guide for Media") that aims to lead media practitioners, campaigners and policy-makers toward ways to shape a balanced, fair and diversified image of women.

15. Please describe the progress achieved as a result of reforms related to gender mainstreaming in the education curricula and indicate what measures are being taken to integrate a gender perspective into the curricula at all levels of education.

Significant efforts are being undertaken to mainstream gender and development in education curricula at all levels. These include:

- The integration of GAD, VAW and adolescent reproductive health issues including life skills in basic education curriculum which will be piloted-tested in three subjects areas in elementary level, namely, science, character education and home economics or “*edukasyong pantahanan at pangkabuhayan*.” As well as in all subjects in secondary level starting this school year 2006-2007. This pilot-testing will be done in five selected provinces. A trainer’s training will be conducted sometime in May 2006 to facilitate the implementation of this undertaking.
- Integration of gender in all training curriculum of government training institutions. Among the agencies that complied with this directive are Philippine Public Safety College, Development Academy of the Philippines, and Local Government Academy.
- Extensive research and publication on GAD, VAW, reproductive health and human rights by the state university (University of the Philippines) as well as other private institutions and gender resource centers. The UP Center for Women Studies, Women and Gender Institute at Miriam College, St. Scholastica’s Nursia and the Philippine Council on Agricultural Research and Development have been at the forefront of studies on gender issues.

In relation to the utilization of GAD exemplars, the Department of Education (DepEd) undertook the following activities:

- Gender Sensitivity Training for teachers, principals, administrators, supervisors, school superintendents and directors
- Three-day Orientation on the Use of the Exemplars in schools. The orientation discusses gender issues, core messages on gender-fair society and demonstration on the use of the exemplars.

The utilization of the GAD exemplars was complemented by the conduct of gender-sensitivity training in the division and schools levels, organization of GAD focal points in the regional and division levels as well as the integration of gender issues in classroom activities. Activities designed to raise consciousness of students on gender issues have been conducted such the conduct of essay and poster-making contests, observance of women’s month, *Alay Lakad*, and others.

Private universities and NGOs have significantly enhanced the education of students on gender issues through their course offerings and advocacy campaigns.

- The Women Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP), a nationwide consortium of colleges and universities, leads in the campaign to integrate gender in the curriculum at the tertiary level. Several schools such as the University of the Philippines, Miriam College, Ateneo de Manila University, St. Scholastica’s College, The Philippine Women’s University, University of Northern Philippines, Philippine Normal University, Ateneo de Davao offer gender or women’s studies either as a general subject particularly in social science, medical and allied/health, law and criminology or as a masteral degree course. The WSAP likewise holds an annual convention as a venue to showcase the latest researches and studies on feminist issues and concerns particularly in the academe. Over the years, the WSAP and its member schools has produced many books and publications on various gender issues.
- The Miriam College pioneered the training of teachers for gender fair elementary education. They are one of the few private educational institutions that actively involved in mainstreaming GAD perspective in education.

16. *The report notes that while the national school participation rate is high, it is lower in remote areas, among street children, those living in extreme poverty, indigenous people and those in living areas undergoing armed conflict (para. 288). Please provide information on specific measures or actions taken to ensure the right to education of girls and women in these groups.*

The DepEd-Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) cited the following initiatives to address the concerns of out-of school youths, adults and their families:

▪ **Mobile Teachers**

This intervention hopes to make education accessible to out-of-school youth and adults in remote, deprived, depressed, and under served communities. The mobile teacher stays in the *barangays* to conduct learning sessions with a group of learners until they become basically literate before moving to another *barangay*. These teachers likewise conduct home visits, individual tutorials, counselling and other special activities in addition to group learning sessions. As of 2004, there were 300 mobile teachers that were trained representing 17 regions. Under this program, there were 20,455 enrollees. Of this number 15,698 were completers, representing almost 77% of the total enrollees, in 2004.

▪ **Family Basic Literacy**

This is a literacy intervention utilizing literate members of the family to help the non-literate members upgrade their literacy skills and improve the educational opportunities of poor families. This project was pilot-tested in 4 provinces in Luzon and was replicated in 4 new sites, namely, Cebu, Southern Leyte, Misamis Oriental and Saranggani. This undertaking targeted 60 families with 300 family members.

▪ **Basic Literacy Program through Service Contracting Scheme**

This is a partnership scheme between the Department of Education and NGOs, private institutions, State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) with extension capacities, LGUs and other GOs. This was implemented in 17 regions with 26,5000 learners served.

▪ **Adolescent Friendly Literacy Enhancement Project**

This project targets out- of -school youth ages 10-19 years old. It provides basic literacy with focus on early marriage and parenting, family planning, drug prevention education, livelihood projects, health and environmental education. It empowers the target beneficiaries with knowledge, attitude, values and skills that will help them better perform their roles as responsible and productive citizens of the country. Orientation workshops were conducted in selected cities in the NCR.

▪ **Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency Learning Support Delivery Service**

It is designed to provide learners a range of alternative pathways in order for them to continue learning outside the formal system and upgrade their skills and competencies in preparation for taking the NFE A&E test. This was implemented in 17 regions with 2, 925 learners.

- **Strong Republic School Distance Learning System**

A national government program which aims to: 1) raise the literacy rate among the impoverished sector of the population; 2) provide basic education; 3) mainstream the graduates of the program into the formal education system. It targets out-of-school children youth and adults from 500 priority poor rural/urban *barangays*, who may be indigenous peoples, rebel returnees or persons with disabilities.

- **Development of Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education**

This project aimed to develop an IP culture-sensitive core curriculum and assessment tools/instrument. A final list of IP core messages was drafted and identified skills for the development of learning materials for IP.

- **Action Research on the Development IP Education for Magbikin Tribe**

The project hopes to develop an IP educational package for the Magbikin Tribes in Morong, Bataan. An action research was conducted on the literacy factor of the Magbikin Tribes, particularly on the dialect and writing system.

- **Development of Life Skills Program for Out-of-School Focusing on HIV/AIDS**

This project intends to create awareness on HIV/AIDS through training and advocacy and social mobilization activities of out-of-school youths for them contribute to the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS messages were integrated in alternative learning system and formulated a curriculum grid for HIV/AIDS Learning Program.

The NCIP provides assistance to deserving indigenous youths who may want may be enrolled in elementary, high school, vocational, college and even post graduate courses through its scholarship program called Educational Assistance Program (EAP). Data on the program showed that from 2003 to 2004, 64% of the 11,249 beneficiaries of the program were female students and that in almost every region, women scholars outnumbered men scholars. CAR posted the most number of female scholars comprising about 72% of the total IP scholars in the region.

The International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) of the International Labor Organization (ILO), in partnership with the Bureau of Women and Young Workers of the labor department, are working towards educating the child workers, with the following programs: (a) Working and Living Conditions of Young Domestic Workers; and (b) Monitoring, Coordination and Evaluation of the National Child Labor Program: Strengthening the Capacity of the Child Labour Project Management Team (CLPMT) of the Department of Labor and Employment.

The Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) one of the foremost performing arts group in the country has a women's theater program advocating women's issues such as reproductive health and violence against women among others through performances and training in schools and communities. The all-women Mebuyan Peace Project, a theater and musical story-telling group based in Mindanao also responds to women and children's concerns. Some NGOs and LGUs also reach out to youth groups to popularize issues on women.

Employment

17. *According to the report, a bill to establish a Civil Service Code was proposed in 2001 to codify existing laws on civil service and provisions on maternity leave for unmarried women, paternity leave, parental leave for single parents, flexible working hours and a provision for a disciplinary action on the grounds of sexual harassment (para. 383). Kindly provide information on whether the pending bill has been adopted, and if so, assess adherence in practice to this legislation and any remedies available to and used by women to ensure full implementation of such legislation.*

The Civil Service Code is pending at the 13th Congress as House Bill Nos. 81 and 798 and as Senate Bill Nos. 1045, 1142, 1974 and 2034. In the House of Representatives, it has gone through public hearing and technical working group meetings. The final version is now pending with the Committee on Appropriations. In the Senate, there is still no scheduled public hearing for the bills.

On the other hand, despite the pending status of the bill, the Civil Service Commission has Memorandum Circular No. 8, s.2004 promulgated the Guidelines on the Grant of Parental Leave to Solo Parents. It allows for parental leave of seven (7) days in addition to existing leave privileges to allow the parent to personally attend to the needs of the child and perform other parental obligations. It also issued the Memorandum Circular No.

18. *The report notes the implementation of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act in the late 1990s (para. 379) and states that the law is unclear as to which agency should monitor private sector observance of the law (para. 422). Please indicate what measures are in place for the effective enforcement and monitoring of this law in the private sector. Please also provide information of measures taken to solve the problem of women suffering from many forms of subtle and overt discrimination in hiring and promotion and through sexual harassment.*

In the absence of a monitoring agency for the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law in the private sector, the labor department require compliance to certain provisions of RA 7877 (the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act) in its Checklist for Self-Assessment on Compliance of Labor Standards. These include the posting/dissemination of RA 7877, creation of Committee on Decorum (CODI) and promulgation of company policy on sexual harassment.

More recently, in a Cabinet meeting on March 28, 2006, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo directed the NCRFW to form a team composed of representatives from various concerned agencies to monitor the implementation of RA 7877 in the private sector.

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), for its part, issued a memorandum to all companies in the ecozones to establish their own CODI in compliance with RA 7877. Trade unions have also actively initiated dialogues with union leaders and their employers about issues surrounding sexual harassment.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Authority (POEA) ensures the protection of migrant workers through the following:

1. Standard employment contracts for women migrant workers such as performing artists and domestic workers, which stipulate principles of employment, standards of living adequate for health and well-being of the migrant worker, safe working conditions and a clean working

environment, reasonable limitation of working hours, rest and leisure, freedom from sexual harassment in the workplace, and freedom from forced labor;

2. Processing of papers of household workers are required to be individually verified and authenticated contracts by the Philippine Overseas Labor Officers (POLO) and Philippine Embassy;
3. Bilateral Agreements, Memorandum of Understanding and on-site Marketing Missions negotiated from a position of strength, which guarantee instruments that provide some measure of protection for migrant women and warrant the conformance of both sending and receiving countries to relevant laws, rules and regulations, and terms of employment beneficial to the stance of migrant women;
4. Strong support and adherence to the Migrant Workers' Act and Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act;
5. Setting eighteen years old as the minimum age requirement for young workers;
6. Welfare-based market development policy, upon which POEA strictly sets requirements for accreditation and regulation of recruitment agencies and promoters, scrutinizes employer's background and credentials.

19. *In its previous concluding comments, the Committee urged the State party to adopt a top-priority policy to create safe and protected jobs for women as a viable economic alternative to the current unemployment of women, their participation as subcontractors and, in the informal sector, as workers in free-trade zones, as well as prostitutes or overseas contract workers.³ Please indicate what legislative or other measures have been taken to implement this recommendation and to promote equal employment opportunities for women in both the formal and informal sectors.*

The MTPDP 2004 – 2010 stipulates that “labor policies shall be guided by the principles of providing decent and productive employment. This means that adequate income is generated, rights at work are protected, social protection is provided for, and participation in the democratic process is guaranteed through tripartism and social dialogues. It also means sufficient employment, where all workers have full access to income earning opportunities. Decent employment also entails the sustained improvement of workers' personal capabilities through a capability building in competitive skills and positive work ethics.

Apart from these, there are several legislative initiatives for the protection of workers. The *Kasambahay* (domestic workers) bill seeks to promote the welfare of the domestic workers by specifying number of hours of work, scope of work, remuneration and social benefits and protection that is due them. Said bill is certified as a priority of the Arroyo Administration.

The Magna Carta for Women Bill pending in Congress provides the overall framework for the protection of women overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) as indicated in the provisions that protect overseas workers from illegal recruitment and trafficking, discrimination in all work aspects and all forms of abuse, grant access to all support services and assistance, allow membership in legitimate

³ Ibid., para. 296.

organizations/unions, and participation in Philippine activities such as national and local elections, and policy formulation and implementation.

For its part, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) conducts pre-departure orientation seminars; requires standard employment contracts for women from local employment agencies, who are jointly and solidarily liable once overseas workers experience violation of their rights.

In April 2004, the Foreign Affairs Department signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of Korea. Said agreement allows Filipinos to be eligible for worker protection and rights, including union membership, minimum wage guarantees and industrial accident insurance. Korea is considered one of the top ten overseas employment destinations for the Philippines. The MOU designated the POEA to collect personal data on job applicants and forward it to the Korean government and employers. When employers and eligible applicants agree on an employment contract, the Filipino worker is allowed entry to Korea. Under the new work permit system, foreign workers and their employers complete a job contract under market rates.

The Trade Union of the Philippines (TUCP) is working out a tie-up with trade unions in Malaysia and Indonesia to mutually assist each other in addressing issues of workers in their respective countries.

20. The report states that the Labor Code prohibits night work for women, except in specified circumstances. The report acknowledges that, while this might aim to protect women workers, it discriminates against women, as it fails to address the real issue of security for women working at night (para. 351). Does the Government intend to change this provision of the legislation that discriminates against women?

While the Philippine Labor Code has not yet been amended with regards to night work prohibition for women, there are three (3) bills filed at the House of Representatives which supports the repeal of night work prohibition (House Bills 324, 3792 and 3851). These bills seek for call center agents to be included among those allowed for night work. When NCRFW raised this issue in the Cabinet Meeting in March 2006, The President expressed support in the repeal of night work prohibition.

Health

21. The report states that there are two bills pending in Congress that seek to establish an Integrated National Policy and Programme on Reproductive Health that recognizes women's reproductive rights, gender equality and ensures universal access to reproductive health, services, information and education (para. 450(g)). Please provide information as to whether the pending bills have been adopted and have entered into force. If so, what effects can already be seen?

The Reproductive Health bills in the House of Representatives were reconstituted into one bill called House Bill No. 3773 entitled "Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005". It is now on its Second Reading in the House of Representatives.

In the Senate, six bills on various reproductive health issues and concerns are filed, namely, SBN 2016 (Pregnant Woman's Access to Skilled Birth Attendant), SBN 1480 and 81 (Right to

Information About Reproductive Health Care Services), SBN 1816 (Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy, HIV Rate, and Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases), SBN 1280 (Reproductive Health Care Structures), SBN 1546 (Creating a Reproductive Health and Population Management Council) and SBN 62 (Establishment of a National Family Welfare Program and Creation of the National Family Welfare Commission). However, none of these bills have gone beyond the First Reading and no hearing has yet been set.

Pending the passage of any of these RH bills, there still remains no national legislation on reproductive health. Thus, the provision of RH programs and services remain at the discretion of the heads of local governments.

22. According to the report, the Health Department's reproductive health program offers a range of contraceptive methods (modern methods of natural family planning, pills, condom use, injections and sterilization) using a reproductive health care approach (para. 455(b)). The report also notes, however, that the Health Department has adopted the anti-artificial contraception position of the current Administration, and states that some local governments are already banning the dissemination of information about and sale of emergency contraception as well as artificial contraception (para. 481). Please explain and describe any measures taken to ensure availability of, information about and easy access to contraceptives in order to avoid unwanted pregnancies in accordance with the Committee's recommendations in its previous concluding comments and general recommendation 24 on article 12.

On January 2005, the Arroyo administration, outlined its 6-point policy on reproductive health (RH) to include the following:

(1) Reduce the population growth rate to 1.9% by 2010; (2) Promote Responsible Parenthood, which is the will and ability to respond to the needs and aspirations of the family, and promote the freedom of responsible parents to decide on the timing and size of their families in pursuit of a better life; (3) Promote 'Respect for Life' in accordance with the 1987 Constitution which protects the life of the unborn from the moment of conception; abortion is unacceptable as a method of family planning, such that the term Reproductive Health or Reproductive Health Services is endorsed only on the condition that it explicitly excludes abortion; (4) Promote birth spacing of 3 to 5 years from recent pregnancy to enable women to recover and improve their well being as well as the health of the child and the relationship between husband and wife and between parents and children; (5) Respect 'Informed Choice' whereby couples and individuals may choose the methods that they will use to exercise Responsible Parenthood in accordance with their religious and ethical values and cultural background, subject to conformity with universally recognized international human rights; and (6) Health services, including Reproductive Health Services, are devolved by the Local Government Code to the local government units which have the responsibility of providing couples and individuals with information and services to enable them to exercise Responsible Parenthood.

Consistent with the principles of informed choice, the Health Department supports both the modern natural and artificial family planning methods. Among the nationwide measures that DOH has taken to ensure that FP services reach the targeted clientele, especially women, include the following:

(a) *Ligtas Buntis* (Safe Pregnancy) Campaign provided information and counselling on the use of Family Planning (FP) services to 4 million women and men

- (b) “Contraceptive Self-Reliance Strategy” aims to help local government units (LGUs) provide FP services and commodities to their clientele. This strategy includes the promotion of public and private partnerships whereby the private sector helps in procuring the needed FP commodities while the public sector provides the services. It may also include commodity swapping procurement wherein the health department will procure other health commodities to free other resources to procure FP commodities.
- (c) Networking with NGOs, such as the Family Planning Organization of the Philippines which provide direct FP services to clients – Philippine Legislators Committee on Population and Development, Reproductive Health Advocacy Network, and Reproductive Rights Resource Group which are in the forefront in pushing for the passage of the RH Bills in both Congress and Senate, as well as in advocacy, public awareness, and capacity-building of legislators and LGU officials, youth and other sectors.

Other noteworthy FP program/activities include the deployment of 630 volunteer health workers in KALAHI (a community-based poverty alleviation program, detailed in responses to Question 25) areas of the NCR for the provision of FP services to the urban poor; training of *barangay* health workers in 250 municipalities on Community-based Management Information System and FP provision; door-to-door FP campaign; and local endeavors such as the UNFPA-assisted Gattaran Birthing Center Project in Gattaran, Cagayan highly acclaimed for its consistent “Zero Maternal Death” in the past five years.

Due to the devolution, the health department no longer directly buys commodities to supply the local hospitals and health centers. Instead, local hospitals and health centers are directly supported by their local governments which determine which commodities shall be bought. While there are a handful of local government units that have indeed banned the sale and use of artificial contraception, there are also those that have strongly supported health rights for women and promoted and distributed artificial methods of family planning. The province of Aurora, for instance, developed the first Reproductive Health Care Ordinance that was passed in 2005 which ensures the provision of RH services. There are also DOH-run specialty and tertiary hospitals which provide family planning services.

23. Please indicate the extent to which illegal abortions contribute to the maternal mortality rate, which, according to the report, remains relatively high (para. 445). Please also provide details on the content of the Reproductive Health Care Bill, which ‘cites the need to remove legal barriers to abortion’ (para. 481) and include update information on progress regarding its adoption.

There was an estimated 473,408 induced abortions in the Philippines in 2000. Induced abortion accounts for 76% of hospital admissions due to abortion. Twelve percent (12%) of all deaths related to pregnancy were likewise due to abortions (DOH PMAC Policy 2000). Unsafe abortion is the 4th leading cause of maternal deaths in the Philippines (DOH). Maternal mortality rate in 2003 was placed at 107.7/100,000 live births. (NSO 2003)

Induced abortions are caused by unwanted/unplanned/unintended pregnancies. Of the total 2,607,699 pregnancies in the Philippines in 2000, 55% are unintended. This is a result of decreased use of artificial contraception methods and heavy reliance on traditional methods. This, in turn, is

caused by the lack of access to family planning information and services by women with unmet need of 17.3% (NDHS 2003).

Under the consolidated ‘Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Bill’, the provision regarding the “need to remove legal barriers to abortion” found in the old ‘Reproductive Health Care Bill’ has been removed. Instead, Sec. 3 (j) of the consolidated bill states that “While the full range of family planning methods, techniques and devices shall be made available to couples and adults of reproductive age, abortion shall remain to be penalized under the Revised Penal Code.”

Vulnerable groups of women

24. Kindly provide information on the impact of initiatives to provide information and support services to women before they depart for overseas work, including the Migrants Advisory and Information Network and the skill and country specific pre-departure orientation programmes for overseas Philippine workers (para. 16). Please include information on the number of women benefiting from these programmes and their country of destination.

The impact of the pre-departure orientation seminars has not yet been assessed, since the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) to date. On a positive note, OWWA plans to study the impact of Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars (PDOS) of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) particularly those who become victims of various violations.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) conducts the following services for migrant workers:

1. Pre-employment orientation seminars that highlight the vulnerability of women, especially household workers; information on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; discussion on unwanted pregnancies as well as other information on health risks facing migrant women.
2. Assistance in helping migrants to make informed decisions by presenting the pros and cons of migration particularly certain occupational risks that women migrant workers may face on the job.
3. Special PEOS for women household workers entitled “Handa Ka Na Bang Umalis? (Are you ready to leave?) which explains the risks faced by undocumented women by citing real life tragic experiences of migrant women workers.
4. Country-specific PDOS and special courses for women in vulnerable jobs.

Pursuant to the Labor Department’s Order No, 25-02, series of 2002, which calls for the provision of special interventions for the empowerment of women migrant workers a self-defense orientation for women was incorporated in the new PDOS curriculum. An audio-visual presentation with discussion guide on self-defense was co-produced by OWWA with the International Office on Migration. A pamphlet on Avoiding Rape (“Iwasan ang Rape”) is distributed to women OFWs during the PDOS sessions.

A two day Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar is also offered to departing overseas performing artists in compliance with OWWA Memorandum of Instructions No. 005, Series of 2004, on the Implementing Guidelines for the Comprehensive Orientation Program for Performing Artists (COPPA). The first day focuses on informing the performing artist in coping with being away and working abroad. The second day, handled by NGO PDOS providers, focuses on self-development,

realities affecting the performing artist and its effect on family, basic services, financial management and gender and sexuality. An audio-visual presentation on Health and Migration accompanied by a discussion guide was also produced by OWWA and IOM.

The Migration Advisory Information Network (MAIN) is completed by sustained public information and education on overseas employment and migration through government programs on TV and radio. The two biggest TV networks ABS-CBN also run various TV and radio programs which have nationwide reach. A study has yet to be made on the impact of all these initiatives.

25. The report acknowledges that despite efforts by the Government to alleviate the plight of the rural poor, poverty remains a major issue confronting rural women (para. 524). Please provide data on rural women living in poverty and information on the impact of the Local Government Code and other government poverty-alleviation projects for rural women.

Determining the extent of poverty of rural women in the Philippines remains a challenge given the lack of sex disaggregation and enhanced methodology in generating lower municipal and provincial level poverty statistics.

While the basic measurement for income and consumption is still at the household level and several researches in the country tried to observe poverty incidences among male and female headed household (i.e. Family Income and Expenditure Survey), data have proven to be inconclusive and prone to error since there are still problems in the defining household heads in surveys.

Sex-disaggregated poverty and income indicators have been prioritized in the Chapter on Social needs in the Philippine Statistical Development Plan 2005 – 2010. The incorporation of sex-disaggregated poverty and income indicators will be in the priority research agenda of concerned statistical agencies. The institutionalization of these activities will support the financial resources needed in the generation of social development data to show a concrete picture on the feminization of poverty.

The National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB) has conducted several activities to improve generation of poverty statistics. It has conducted a Poverty Mapping (small area estimation) funded by the World Bank ASEM trust Fund Grant which aims to address the need for lower level disaggregation of information on the poor. It generated data on poverty incidence at the municipal level for all provinces using small area estimation and also conducted two major studies.

Researches to generate statistics on the basic sectors have also been conducted. It was funded under the project “Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms for the Convergence of Poverty Alleviation Efforts, Phase II (SIMCPAE-2), a project spearheaded by the National Anti-Poverty Commission with funding support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Under this project, NCSB conducted the study on the Development of Poverty Statistics for the Basic Sectors which generated provincial level poverty incidence and maps for eight basic sector groups namely women, youth, children, senior citizen, urban dwellers, migrant and informal sector workers, fisherfolks and farmers.

The analysis of poverty statistics on women shows that highest poverty incidence is in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (51.1%) and the least in the National Capital (NCR) (8.4%). Of the seventeen regions, women were found to be better off than the country’s general

population in only 5 regions, namely NCR, Regions II, III, IV-A and XI. The regions where women worse off were mostly found in the Visayas and Mindanao islands, where many areas are considered rural.

Statistics generated by the Assessment of Vulnerability to Poverty in the Philippines Study revealed that vulnerability to poverty is still higher the rural areas (62.0%) than urban areas (26.3%). Families in the rural areas also tended to be more highly vulnerable than those in the urban areas as the former generated a high-vulnerability incidence estimate of 39.4%, even much higher than the estimated national incidence of 27.0%. The vulnerability incidence in the urban areas was notably even compared with that in rural areas.

The Philippine report's section on Article 13 provided information on anti-poverty programs of the current administration. One of these is the Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan – Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI –CIDSS). The KALAHI program serves as an anchor program for poverty reduction and is being implemented through the convergence of services and resources provided by government in partnership with other stakeholders in the poor *barangays* in the lowest income municipalities of the country. Rural women are expected to benefit from this program which mainly targets the poorest *barangays*/communities of the country. As of 2005, 42 provinces, 101 municipalities and 2,367 *barangays* have already institutionalized the program.

The National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) as the prime mover of the KALAHI Program forged Basic Sector – Local Government Partnership through the BASELINK (at the national level) and the Regional KALAHI Convergence Groups (RKCG), a mechanism created in all 16 regions of the country to facilitate the implementation of poverty alleviation projects in poor areas targeted under the program. Said partnership allowed the basic sector representatives to participate in the preparation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation plans.

Impact assessment of implementation of the KALAHI is yet to be done. However, the local government units have adopted and implemented the Core Local Poverty Indicators Monitoring System (CLPIMS) and the Local Poverty Reduction Action Plans (LPRAPs) to ensure tracking of the country's poverty reduction goals. NAPC developed the LPRAP design and assisted in the conduct of training in the provinces of La Union, Agusan del Sur, Oriental Mindoro and all KALAHI *barangays* in CARAGA. NAPC also formulated the LPRAP/LPIMS implementation strategy, capacitated the LGUs on these, and advocated for the funding of the LPRAP process. The Commission has operationalized a prototype anti-poverty program monitoring database entitled “Enhanced-Integrated Monitoring System for Anti-Poverty Programs and Projects (E-IMSAPP). The database can already be utilized as soon as all agencies are able to submit information on the activities, projects and programs.

26. The report mentions a bill pending in the House of Representatives that seeks to protect and promote the rights of rural women by recognizing the roles and contributions of rural women to the country's economic development and food security and offers measures to enhance and develop their skills, provide employment and enable them to contribute to their communities to the fullest of their capabilities (para. 511(d)). Kindly provide information on the status of this bill and describe what specific measures have been taken to implement it.

The House of Representatives was not able to push through with the passage of House Bill 2970 otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Rural Women during the 29th Session of the previous Congress. However, a new bill, the Magna Carta for Women Bill which incorporates concerns of rural women mentioned in the Magna Carta for Rural Women Bill, was filed in the present Congress and is now pending on Second Reading. The bill focuses on women's economic and political empowerment by establishing occupational health and safety measures; creating livelihood resource centers; providing access to skills training and education and ensuring representation particularly in local development councils.

27. The report mentions that the implementation of the Indigenous People's Rights Act, which provides equality between indigenous women and men in connection with rights and opportunities in various spheres of life, and participation of indigenous women in the decision-making process in all levels, has encountered serious obstacles due to disputes over ancestral lands (para. 511(c)). Kindly provide information on measures taken to remove the obstacles and the progress made with regard to their implementation.

One of the obstacles identified in implementing the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) is the issue of land disputes and boundary conflicts. The IPRA recognizes the "applicability of customary laws governing property rights or relations in determining the ownership and extent of ancestral domain."

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) serves to facilitate the resolution of such conflicts through the Ancestral Domain Boundary Conflict Resolution. Conflicting parties meet to resolve dispute and come up with a Memorandum of Agreement before the processing of papers for the Ancestral Domain/ Ancestral Land Titles. Forty two (42) cases approved for titling had so far been brought by NCIP to the Land Registration Administration for certification. Out of the 42, 13 had been registered and awarded titles. Several ancestral domain areas have undergone boundary conflict resolution, in which NCIP acted as facilitator and documentor (e.g. Sugpon, Ilocos Sur; Alilen, Ilocos Sur; Sta. Fe and Anitao, Norzagaray; and Fianza, San Nicolas.)

28. Please report on the situation of rural and indigenous women's access to agricultural credits and loans, marketing facilities, training and education and participation at the village decision-making level.

➤ *Rural and Indigenous Women's Access to Agricultural Credit and Loan*

The agriculture department has provided credit and loans to women through its *Ginintuang Masaganang Ani* (Golden Bountiful Harvest) Countryside Assistance for Rural Employment (GMA-CARES) Program. In 2005, Quedan Rural Credit and Guarantee Corporation (Quedancor) released about 1.6 Billion under the said program to provide agricultural credit and loans to 45,173 women beneficiaries all-over the country. One of the financing programs under GMA –CARES is the *Ginintuang Masaganang Ani* Women Entrepreneurs (GMA-Women) Program that provides credit to women entrepreneurs who are engaged or would like to engage in agri-fisheries related projects. In the same year, Quedancor has also provided no less than P73 million to 971 women beneficiaries under its other agricultural credit and loan programs.

The department also provided loans to 113 Rural Improvement Clubs of the Philippines (RIC) benefiting 2,691 members and to 19 groups with 174 beneficiaries under the Home Economic

Extension Program. About P3,750,000.00 on a revolving fund scheme had been provided to these groups to fund agricultural-related livelihood projects such as livestock, poultry, cut flower production, vegetable productions, meat/fish processing, poultry and food processing.

Since its inception in 1997, the indigenous peoples' commission has implemented various livelihood and small infrastructure IP projects intended to uplift the economic status of IP women despite the agency's very limited budget for socio-economic projects for all regions nationwide. Given this, NCIP has focused on organizing IP women into cooperatives and provided them with skills and entrepreneurship training to enable them to qualify for loans and credit from lending institutions. The NCIP plans to strengthen this cooperatives and development microfinance facilities for women in coordination with government financing institutions (GFIs), Trade and Industry Department, Cooperative Development Authority, National Irrigation Authority, Energy Department, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Labor Department and the Agrarian Reform Department.

➤ *Rural and Indigenous Women's Access to Marketing Facilities*

To further promote and support the development of micro, small and medium enterprises, the government has established the One Town One Product Program (OTOP). Through this program, chief executives of every city and municipality take the lead in identifying, developing and promoting a specific product or service which has a competitive advantage. It supports MSMEs to manufacture, offer and market distinctive products or services through the use of indigenous raw materials and local skills and talents. It offers a comprehensive assistance package through a convergence of services from LGUs, national government agencies, and the private sector which includes: business counselling; skills and entrepreneurial training; product design and development; appropriate technologies; and marketing.

The Department of Trade and Industry as the lead agency and prime mover of the OTOP, facilitated the identification and selection of 15 OTOP model areas in various parts of the country. These model areas have identified focused products. DTI has established marketing facilities such as *Pasalubong* (Gifts) shops/centers in various regions and provinces in the country. OTOP products are currently being sold at 663 market outlets and 83 "*Pasalubong*" Centers nationwide. About 319 OTOP booths and kiosks/corners were also put up at trade fairs in various regions to showcase these products. As part of its MSME Promotion and Development, DTI had conducted a total and of 2,203 market matching activities in 2005.

The Rural Micro-enterprise Promotion Program (RuMMEP) was developed and designed in 2003 to reduce poverty, create employment and enhance income of the rural poor. The program will assist existing and starting micro-entrepreneurs to realize their full potential through capacity building, market linkages and policy improvements. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Group of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) together with the LGUs and the Anti-Poverty Commission will provide this convergence of assistance.

The RuMMEP will support OTOP in strengthening the development and the promotion of products services with competitive advantage. It will be implemented nationwide with priority given to micro-enterprises located in five regions of high poverty incidence subject to set of criterion

identified by the trade and industry department. The program has been launched in April 2006, and is now in its pilot implementation.

The NCIP in coordination with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) for 2006 to 2008 intends to promote IP enterprises including promotion of IP women products and local and foreign markets.

➤ *Rural and Indigenous Women's Access to Training and Education*

The indigenous peoples' commission has provided skills and entrepreneurship training to IP women which includes training on loom/mat/basket weaving, bead making, cut flower production, food processing, dressmaking and agricultural production.

The Department of Education Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) assists rural and indigenous women through its Basic Literacy Program, Family Basic Literacy Project and Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency Learning Support Delivery Service (NFE A&E LSDS).

Rural Improvement Clubs are the primary recipients of training services of the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) at the local particularly at the *barangay* level. Around 8,670 of RICs, which have a total membership of 420,574 all over the country, are beneficiaries of Home Economics Extension Program. Non-formal education and training are conducted through homemakers' classes, home/ farm visits, hands-on demonstrations, meetings, achievement days, seminar workshops and conventions. Among the activities conducted with RICs are on the following: a) food and nutrition; b) health and sanitation; c) home management; d) child care and development; e) population education and development; and g) RIC in cooperatives.

➤ *Rural and Indigenous Women's Participation at the village decision-making levels*

Participation of Indigenous Women in Community Level Consultative Bodies

The Indigenous Peoples Consultative Body (IPCB) at the Ancestral domain and Resettlement (Displaced) Community levels have mandatory indigenous women representation of at least 20% particularly in the body of different sectors such as traditional leaders, elderly, women, youth and other sectors as may be chosen by the community.

Indigenous women are also represented (with at least 20% representation) in the IPCB at the Provincial Consultative Body (PCB/CCB), Ethnographic Regional Consultative Body (ERCB), and National Consultative Body (NCB levels). However, there are only 6 indigenous women that were elected as chairperson comprising 9% of the total duly elected chairpersons of the 66 PCB/CCB nationwide.

Participation of Women in Agricultural and Fisheries Councils

The National Agriculture and Fisheries Council (NAFC) reported that women comprise only 7% of the total membership of Agricultural and Fisheries Councils (AFCs) nationwide. The ratio of membership of women to men at the Provincial Agriculture and Fisheries Council (PAFC) level is 1:4, while at the Municipal Agriculture and Fisheries Council (MAFC) level the ratio is 1:3. All 16 Regional Agriculture and Fisheries Councils (RAFCs) currently have male chairpersons while at the PAFC level, only 3 out of the 79 provinces have women chairpersons.

Participation of Women Agrarian Reform Communities

The Agrarian Reform Department has established 1,704 Agrarian Reform Communities (ARCs) as of December 2005. Agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) already reached to 1,048,361, 22% of them are female.

Beneficiaries in ARCs are organized into cooperatives and/or People's Organizations. Of the total membership in these organizations, 192,718 or 38% are female members. Women are well represented in the board of these organizations. At present, they comprise 30% of the duly elected Board of Directors. 44% of 34,769 ARBs who actively participate in committees are women. They are also involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects of ARCs and are also active in *barangay* activities.

29. *Please provide information on the situation of older women, including the impact of migration on them, and indicate what specific measures are in place to address the situation of older women, particularly in rural areas.*

The elderly comprise 3.8% of the total population as of 2000, elderly women slightly more than men (1.24) (NSO, 2000) Seventy-five percent (75%) of senior citizens, or 4,279,170 out of 5,705,591, are current members of the National Federation of Senior Citizens. Approximately 1,300 Offices of the Senior Citizen Affairs (OSCA) operate in 85% of the nation's cities and municipalities.

Older women live longer than elderly men. As of 2002, the average life expectancy for female was 73.10 years while for male it was 67.60 years. They continue to play the role of the nurturer in the family, taking care of their husbands as well as their grandchildren. While statistics say women live longer than men, these statistics do not tell about the quality of women's long lives.

In the Philippines, primary areas of concern of the elderly are those related to health, activeness and dependency (Isis International, 2000). The responsibility of caring for the elderly rests heavily on the household, even while the demand for this is great for poor families, who cannot afford care for their elderly.

The Philippine government, through the Republic Act 9257 (The Expanded Senior Citizens Act) continually provides privileges for the elderly, and enjoins private institutions to do so as well. The following benefits are articulated in the law:

- 20% discount on the purchase of medicines;
- 20% discount in land transportation, air and sea-based vessels;
- 5% discount on the purchase of prime and basic commodities;
- Free medical and dental privileges in government medical facilities

The Bill on the Magna Carta for Women includes protection and promotion of the rights of Older Women, defined in the bills as women sixty (60) years of age and above, and provides protection for older women "from neglect, abandonment, domestic violence, abuse and exploitation."

Optional protocol

30. Please provide information about steps taken to make the Optional Protocol, which the Philippines ratified in 2003, more widely known.

The Philippine government has widely disseminated information and advocacy on the convention, including the Optional Protocol. Through the project “Facilitating CEDAW Implementation Towards Realization of Women’s Human Rights in South East Asia” or CIDA-UNIFEM CEDAW-SEAP, the NCRFW and other project partners including Ateneo Human Rights Center (HRC) Communication Foundation for Asia (CFA), Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) of the Miriam College, Women’s Feature Service (WFS), Women’s Legal Bureau (WLB) and the University of the Philippines Center for Women’s Studies (CWS), are currently undertaking several national and regional information and advocacy campaigns to make widely known the CEDAW and its Optional Protocol.

The CEDAW SEAP is a regional program that aims to assist seven countries in Southeast Asia to implement CEDAW more effectively. The Philippine program involves the following elements: Public Awareness Raising, Capacity Building and Training, Research and Advocacy, CEDAW Monitoring and Reporting, Technical Assistance, and Partnership building and Networking. Through this program, nationwide orientations, fora and workshops about CEDAW to government officers at all levels (cabinet members and technical officers) and in all branches (executive, legislative and judiciary), NGOs, academic institutions and other organizations are being conducted.

Also through the assistance of CEDAW-SEAP, the WFS and NCRFW published the CEDAW 2006 Planner distributed to GO and NGO partners which includes a briefer on CEDAW and the Optional Protocol, and a CEDAW Primer translated in seven major Philippine dialects to popularize CEDAW nationwide. The CEDAW Annual Planner has been issued by the NCRFW as early as 2004 and has proven to be a popular and effective way of disseminating the Convention to both the public and private sectors.

The 2006 Women's Month Celebration revolved around the theme "*CEDAW ng Bayan: Karapatan ng Kababaihan*"* (CEDAW of the Country: Women’s Rights). The celebration focused on raising public awareness on the provisions of the CEDAW and the Optional Protocol on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the ratification of the Convention.

About 30% - 40% of national government agencies and local government units have celebrated Women’s Month in their own localities, carrying the theme. Some 800 local councils on women and members of the Lady Municipal Mayors Association of the Philippines (LMMAP) have participated in the nationwide celebrations as well, with their own commemorations.

One of the highlights of the Women’s Month celebration was the presentation by the Chairperson of the NCRFW, Ms. Myrna Yao of the Philippine Report to CEDAW and the Follow-up questions of the Committee to the President and her Cabinet as well as to members of Congress.

* CEDAW is pronounced sounding like “sigaw,” meaning a shout, or Cry, which makes the slogan also mean Cry of the People.

Based on the gaps identified by NCRFW for the effective implementation of the CEDAW, the President and her Cabinet committed to prioritize a bill to repeal the Labor Code's prohibition of night work for women workers as well as the immediate passage of the Magna Carta for Women Bill in Congress.

The NCRFW's presentation of the CEDAW Report and Follow-Up questions was graced by the CEDAW Chairperson Ambassador Rosario Manalo who oriented legislators on the key points and provisions of the Women's Convention. The NCRFW presented its legislative agenda to the legislators, led by House Committee on Women Chair Josefina M. Josen and party list Representative Etta Rosales. Among those presented as urgent and priority bills to be passed are: the Magna Carta for Women; the Anti-Prostitution Bill; the Local Sectoral Representation Bill; the Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Bill; and the amendments to Articles 333 and 334 of the Revised Penal Code defining marital infidelity.

The Women's Month celebration highlighted the importance of working in partnership with key stakeholders from the national and local government, civil society, media, and the private sector in bringing the women's agenda of respecting, protecting and fulfilling women's human rights to the fore.
